**Courage and Cunning**

**Summary**

Salazar Slytherin has had enough of Dumbledore and Voldemort's stupidity, so on October 31, 1981 he decides to put a stop to the wizarding war. Things do not go according to plan. He loses his memories, but 10 years later he regains them when he gets a familiar letter. BASH! Some Weasleys & manipulative Dumbledore! Salazar is NOT a Superhero! A twist to the Harry is Salazar genre.

**Notes**

I just want to let everyone know that Salazar is not all knowing and is not all powerful. He will make mistakes! Also, please keep in mind that he is a Founder and he will know things about the castle that others may not. Some of the things he knows will follow cannon, but some will not.

I also would like to let everyone know that this is a multi-year fic, but years two and three will be combined, and years six and seven will be combined. I will be keeping all the years together under this title though, so this fic may get pretty long!

I hope you enjoy the story, and please let me know what you think!
Chapter 1

Prologue

October 30th 1981

*Godric’s Hollow, oh how you have changed.* Salazar thought as he stared around in wonder. *It’s been 500 years since I last saw you. Well, nevermind that. On with business.*

Salazar sighed and pulled his hooded black cloak tighter around himself as he made his way towards the little cottage on the outskirts of the village. He, unfortunately, could see it now thanks to a certain little rat.

“Must I think of everything?” He grumbled to himself. “I know Dumbledore is a Gryffindor, but Merlin, the man is just *too* reckless *and* a touch mad. This war needs to be stopped, and it needs to be stopped now.”

With a little concentration, the cottage came into view and he smiled as he heard the little family shuffling around inside. They were still hidden to the outside world of course, not that it mattered now though.

“This is not going to go very well.” He muttered with a sigh as he knocked loudly on the door.

He heard more shuffling and the door opened just a crack.

“Who are you?” A man with messy black hair and glasses asked.

“A friend.” Salazar answered. “Your family has been betrayed by Peter Pettigrew. I need to speak with both you and your wife.”

“We do not know you, so why…”

“Please Mr. Potter. Not on the front step. We need to discuss this inside.” Salazar said, hitting the man with a very light compulsion charm.

“Very well.” James said, opening the door to let him through.

Salazar stepped inside the small cottage, looked around, and smiled at the coziness of it. He hadn't been this warm in over two months. Not since…

“Who are you?” Lily demanded as she stood in the foyer, gripping her wand tightly in her hand.

Salazar snapped out of his thoughts, lowered his hood, and both Potters gasped in fright. Salazar knew that they recognized him. After all there are many, many pictures of all the Founders all over the wizarding world. Not to mention all the chocolate frog collectables, but he figured he would introduce himself properly anyway.

“My name is Salazar Slytherin, and your family is in grave danger. A few hours ago your friend Peter Pettigrew betrayed your location to Voldemort. It is imperative that you leave the country immediately. He is planning on attacking tomorrow.”
“And we should trust you because…” James asked, letting his voice trail off and looking at Salazar cautiously.

“Because I was there when he did it.” Salazar said with as much patience as he could muster. “I know it sounds unbelievable, but trust me, it’s not.”

“If you were there, then how do we know you’re not here to kill us? And how do we know your information is correct?” Lily started to ask.

“Do I look familiar?” Salazar asked, before hanging into his animagus form.

James and Lily gasped at the 15 foot python that was suddenly laying at their feet.

“Voldemort’s snake!” Lily cried, as she backed up a few steps.

Salazar reverted back to human form and sighed. “I am not here to harm you or Harry. You must believe me. That wretched Heir of mine needs to die a slow painful death for what he has done, and I aim to see that it gets carried out.”

“So why haven't you done anything yet?” James asked pointedly, as he kept his wand trained on Salazar.

“For the last 20 years I have been abroad. I have traveled to many different countries, and the news coming out of Britain has been very slow to reach them. I was in South America, Brazil to be exact, up until six months ago. When I learned of the horror that he has caused I came back to help defeat him, though I must admit that at the time I had no idea that he was my Heir. It has taken me nearly as long to play ‘catch up’. Voldemort ‘acquired’ me two months ago after he killed his other pet snake for disobeying him. He is so stuck on this blasted prophecy that he has become obsessed with killing an infant child. The whole thing is a load of bullocks in my opinion, and I can't believe that Dumbledore has gotten ensnared in it too, but never the less, Voldemort needs to be stopped.”

“You don’t believe in it?” James asked, lowering his wand just a bit.

Salazar scoffed and shook his head. “No I do not. I have lived for over 1,000 years and never once has a prophecy come true. Divination is a load of crap and I can't even began to tell you how disappointed I am over the fact that Hogwarts teaches it.”

“How have you lived this long?” Lily asked.

“Immortality is a funny thing.” Salazar said with a slight smile. “It’s good at first, but after a while it becomes stale. I performed a spell, a spell mixed with runes, charms, and the dark arts. I achieved what no other wizard in history has been able to do, and believe me when I tell you, I wish I hadn't.”

“What do you suggest we do?” James asked.

Salazar took a deep breath and sighed. “I suggest you leave the country. From what I know from being at Voldemort’s side for the last two months, killing him isn't so simple. He has let slip to me about his horcruxes. Plural. He has made more than one.”

James’s widened in surprise. “You are kidding. Does Dumbledore…?”

“No.” Salazar said shaking his head. “And I don’t trust Dumbledore either, but Voldemort needs to be stopped now. Killing him right now won't make it permanent, but it will save more lives. It will also give me more time to study his life, and figure out what, and where, they are so I can destroy them.”
“You don’t trust Dumbledore?” James asked.

“No I don’t.” Salazar said gravely. “I know things about Dumbledore that would make your hair curl. The whole thing with Grindelwald was a bit fishy, and he has known about Voldemort all this time and has done nothing to stop him. Why didn’t he stop him years ago before he became this powerful? He spouts about ‘the greater good’, and that was Grindelwald’s philosophy too. I know Dumbledore is a great wizard, and I know he is a champion for the light, but this war is so much more than that. You cannot win a war using stunners and tickling jinxes. You need real spells and you need to fight as dirty as they do, or you will die. Voldemort and the Death Eaters are out to kill you, and he makes you all play with leg lockers and body binds in the hope that you can capture and ‘reform’ them. That simply won’t work. Trust me, I’ve seen many more wars than I care to mention.”

“That never made sense to me either.” Lily admitted quietly. “I don’t want to kill anyone, but this is war, and whether we like it or not, we are part of it. Killing someone who is trying to kill you is not murder, it is self-defense.”

“You are a muggle born, and you have the ability to see the difference.” Salazar said with smile. “You have the advantage of being from both worlds. Most wizards are at a disadvantage because it has been drilled into their minds from birth, light is good, dark is bad. Muggle borns can see grey better than most.”

“My grandfather was a soldier in the muggle World War II.” She said, looking up at Salazar. “He had to kill or be killed. I tried to explain that to Albus, but he wouldn’t hear it. He said to kill another person is bad, no matter the circumstances.”

“Well he is wrong.” Salazar said firmly. “That’s why I don’t trust him. He thinks what he knows is the best, but he is simply wrong. You have a good head on your shoulders Mrs. Potter.”

“Do you want to leave Lily?” James asked, looking over at his wife.

She looked up with tears in her eyes. “Yes, and no.” She said softly. “Albus is just as hell bent on this prophecy as Voldemort is. I don’t want to run, but Harry is just a baby. Albus says Harry is the only one who can stop him, but James, it will be years before Harry can do that. He expects us to stay hidden in this house until then. It’s simply not logical. I don’t want to leave our friends, but we have to think about our son.”

James took his wife’s hand and gave it a gentle squeeze. “I understand Lily.” He said softly. Then he turned back to Salazar. “I am assuming you have a plan.”

“I do.” Salazar said with a nod.

Lily nodded. “Come and sit Salazar.” She said, motioning for him to follow her into the kitchen. “I’ll make us some tea.”

“That would be lovely Mrs. Potter. Thank you.” Salazar said, as he sat down.

“I have one more thing.” James said, as he also took a seat at the kitchen table. “Why haven’t you just killed him? You have been with him for two months, so why not just do it?”

“Because not all the Death Eaters are in one place.” Salazar said simply. “They are all spread out, and not even I know where they all are, or who they all are. I know the inner circle of course, but not all the rest. Tomorrow when he comes here, they will all be gathered at a special meeting place. I will be able to get rid of him here, and hopefully get to the rest of them before they flee. Getting you all out of the country is just a precaution. If I’m not able to kill them all, no doubt they will come after
you, and Harry will be in even more danger.”

“Crazy followers out for revenge.” James said.

“Not to mention, he will still be around. Just not in his body.” Lily added.

“That too.” Salazar said with a nod.

James looked to the window where the shades and curtains were closed tightly. “They are out there right now, aren’t they?”

Salazar nodded. “Yes. Which is why I cannot leave the house tonight. No doubt they will try to kill me. I know they are not supposed to attack you, but the anti-apparition wards extend all the way into the main village, and Dumbledore, the fool that he is, placed anti-disapparition jinxes on the house. They would get to me before I could apparate out. Not that they could kill me, but still, they would no doubt try. I had to be careful just coming here.”

“Why should we trust you?” James asked, narrowing his eyes at Salazar. “You’re Salazar Slytherin for crying out loud. Hater of muggles, muggle borns…”

“Please stop.” Salazar said, throwing up his hand. “I know I have past demons, and I know I am the root cause of all this stupidity, but time has a way of changing a man. The world has changed, and I am not the blasted idiot I once was. For many centuries I stood by and let what has happened, happen. I am not proud of it, but this war…” He sighed and shook his head. “This war is stupid and pointless. Voldemort is killing off families who oppose him. Good families…ancient families, and he doesn’t understand that he is no better than the muggles who killed witches and wizards all those many years ago. The pure bloods of today cannot see past the end of their up-turned pompous noses, and it’s a wonder they don’t drown when it rains. I am not proud of what I have caused, but I want to help stop it. For centuries I have hidden away from wizard society, but no longer. I want to try and change their way of thinking, but first we need to get rid of Voldemort.”

“So what is the plan?” Lily asked, serving the tea.

Salazar sighed again. “I have a portkey to Brazil. It will take you right to my villa in Rio de Janeiro. It’s an illegal portkey I admit, but it’s untraceable by the Ministry, which Voldemort has infiltrated. There is a wizarding populace there of about 2,000, and they have an alley similar to Diagon Alley called Rio Way. They mainly speak Portuguese, but they are fluent in English too. Not many from the British Wizarding world have gone there, if any. Most have fled to America or France. The plan is for you to leave tonight, and not come back until it’s safe.” He said, as he took a small tin can out of his pocket. “I have two very old house elves who have been badly mistreated by their masters, and they have agreed to help me in this matter. When Voldemort comes tomorrow night, they will drink Polyjuice Potion and disguise themselves as you, and I will disguise myself as Harry. I cannot be killed, so don’t worry about me. The killing curse bounces off me and rebounds onto the caster. James, Lily, and Harry Potter will die tomorrow, but Voldemort will also be destroyed. Once he loses his body and flees, I will revert back to my normal appearance and hunt down the horcruxes he has made, and I will destroy them. Once he regains his body, and he will, I will kill him. After that, you can return here if you wish. I know you have friends, and I know it will be hard for you to allow them to think you are dead, but it’s for your own safety and theirs. Voldemort is consumed by this prophecy, and believes in it fully. As long as he is alive, he will hunt you if he thinks you are too. It is vital that this remains between us. No one else can know.”

“Are you sure this will work?” James asked.

Salazar nodded. “I am positive, but I don’t know how long it will take me to figure out how many
horcruxes he has, what they are, and where they are. You have to understand that this may take many, many years. You must not return, under any circumstances, until I say otherwise.”

“I don’t know how I feel about sacrificing two house elves to this cause.” Lily said, shaking her head.

“Would you feel better if you met them?” Salazar asked.

Lily seemed to think about it for a moment, but then she slowly nodded. “Yes, I think I would.”

“I do too.” James said quietly. “At least to thank them for what they are going to do.”

Salazar smiled at the young couple. “Very well then. Fripsy! Mitzy!” He called out softly.

Two very old and ancient looking elves appeared. Lily and James’s eyes widened in surprise at their appearance. It was plain to both Potters that these elves had been abused. There were scars all over their bodies, their skin hung on them like bags, and their eyes were dull with age.

“Mr. Salazar called for us?” One of the elves asked in a very horse whisper.

“Yes Fripsy.” He said gently. “Mr. and Mrs. Potter wished to meet you.”

Both elves turned to look at the Potters. “It is an honor to meet you both.” Fripsy said. “It is also an honor to carry out this plan for Mr. Salazar.”

The Potters were too shocked to say anything, but Mitzy went on to speak. “We are old and have grown weary of working for our family. They mistreat us, and we have decided to sever our bond with our Masters. This action has sealed our fate. We will die either way, but we chose to die under our own terms, and in our own way.”

“They were owned by the Malfoys.” Salazar said sadly, shaking his head in disgust.

James’s eyes grew dark with fury, but Lily got down on her knees and took their hands gently. “We have never believed that creatures, especially elves, should be treated cruelly as you have clearly been. Is this what you truly want to do?”

“It is Mrs. Potter.” Fripsy said with a bow. “It will be an honor for us.”

“Then I will honor your request.” She said, wiping a tear away.

“Never should an elf be treated the way you have.” James said. “This is appalling.”

“Our Masters are evil. They care not for anyone but themselves and those like-minded as them.” Mitzy said, shaking her head. “We chose to defy them and help get rid of the Dark Lord.”

James nodded. “Very well. I think Lily and I are in agreement. Salazar, we will take you up on your offer. Am I to assume that we should leave immediately?”

Salazar nodded. “Yes. The quicker the better. Voldemort plans on being here tomorrow, and he will come alone. He believes that you are unaware of what has happened, and thinks he can kill you quickly without a fight. We want him to keep believing that.”

The Potters nodded. “I will go and get Harry ready for traveling.” Lily said, standing up to leave.

“Take only what you will need for the immediate future, the rest can be replaced. It won't be good for the house to be emptied because it will look suspicious. Take only the most valuable and
treasured items such as a few pictures and things. As for your finances, the goblins will know that you are not dead because your wills will not be activated, but they can be trusted. They are not as stupid as most wizards make them out to be. Contact the goblins in Rio as soon as you can. There is a Gringotts branch there, and have all your money transferred from here to there. I have left a packet with directions to Rio Way, along with fake identities, on a small table in my villa’s foyer. Make it your home, because we do not know how long this will take. There are elves there that have been instructed to care for you, and help you settle in. I will contact you when I can.”

James and Lily nodded, and began to pack a few things. It didn’t take very long, and soon they were back in the kitchen with Lily holding Harry in her arms.

“Take care of your family, and be safe.” Salazar said.

“Thank you.” James said, shaking Salazar’s hand. “You have given our family something to look forward too.”

“Yes, thank you very much.” Lily said, giving him a light hug, while trying not to rouse a sleeping Harry.

“You are young, and you don’t deserve all that has happened to you, but you are welcome.” He said with a smile. “I will see you when I can. To activate the portkey, just say Salazar’s villa.”

James and Lily nodded, and Harry stirred lightly in Lily’s arms as she maneuvered him so that he could place a small hand on the tin can. With one last goodbye and round of thanks, James called out the phrase, and James, Lily, and Harry Potter left a war torn land, and arrived in the safety of Rio.

October 31, 1981

Salazar, Mitzy, and Fripsy spent all day taking swigs of Polyjuice from small hidden goblets, but at 11pm, the front door suddenly blew off its hinges.

“Lily, Lily! He’s here! It’s him! Take Harry and go! Run Lily! Run!”

Voldemort smiled cruelly and lazily lifted his wand to cast a killing curse at an unarmed ‘James Potter’. Upstairs, ‘Lily Potter’ pleaded for her son’s life like any good mother would do, but refused to back down and get out of the way when Voldemort told her too.

From his position in the crib, ‘Harry Potter’ stared at this odd display of mercy from the ruthless killer, and wondered what it could possibly mean. When ‘Lily’ still refused, Voldemort killed her and then turned his wand towards the ‘baby’ in the crib.

‘Harry Potter’ wasn’t worried about dying, and didn’t even flinch when the green light sailed towards him, but something unexpected happened. Something that the ‘baby’ sitting in the crib could not have foreseen.

The green light hit his forehead, and ‘Harry’ screamed in pain as an explosion blasted apart the roof of the house. The last thing ‘Harry’ remembered was a black mist screaming with rage and flying away. Then darkness consumed him.
Ten Years Later

Harry Potter was a normal boy just like any other, but deep down Harry knew he was different. Ever since he could remember he felt off, like there was something he was supposed to be doing. Almost like he was supposed to be someone else entirely. He never told this to his relatives though, and shivered as he remembered the first time that he had. He spent almost three days in his cupboard as punishment for talking about abnormal things.

Harry though, always knew something wasn’t right. Not just with himself, but with his home life. His Aunt and Uncle treated him like a second rate citizen. They verbally abused him, starved him, and occasionally beat him if they felt like he had done something abnormal. His cousin used him as a punching bag at their encouragement, and he didn’t even have a room of his own. He slept in a cupboard! Even at the grand old age of eleven, Harry knew that something wasn’t right.

It all became clear on one summer day though. He had been fixing breakfast for is relatives, when the familiar sound of mail being slipped through the letter slot was heard. He was ordered to go get the mail, and sighed as set down the tea pot he had been holding. He quickly scurried into the front hall and gathered up the small pile. A strange looking envelope caught his eye, and he shuffled through the letters until it was on top.

Harry stared at it dumbfounded as he caught sight of his name written in green ink. He slowly turned it over and saw that the back was sealed with wax, and it had a strangely familiar looking ‘H’ embedded in it. He cocked his head to the side as he stared at it.

“It also looks like it has a lion, a badger, a bird, and a…and a…snake.” He whispered as he peered closer at it.

Suddenly he screamed and clutched at his head as memories flooded his mind. Memories too old to be an eleven year old boys. The letters in his hand went flying up in the air, and the special letter floated down and somehow wedged itself underneath the gap of his cupboard door.

Harry Potter laid on the floor shaking as the memories continued to batter his mind, and he vaguely felt his Uncle Vernon snatching him up and yelling in his face.

“BOY!” The pompous man roared. “What is the matter with you?!”

Unable to control the shaking, but somewhat coming to his senses, Harry managed to make something up.

“A…a…spider. A really big spider. It scared me. I'm sorry Uncle Vernon.” He croaked out. “It…it went over there.” He said, pointing towards the little table by the front door.

Vernon eyed the direction in which Harry pointed very carefully.

“Find it and kill it then.” He said, roughly releasing Harry, who nodded and backed away.

Grumbling, Vernon picked up the letters and waddled back into the kitchen where Harry heard him making snide remarks about being scared of such things. Harry just shook his head, and still trembling from the constant onslaught of memories, took off his shoe and began banging it on the floor. He quickly opened the front door to make them believe he had thrown it out, and slammed it shut again, before carefully making his way into the kitchen.

“I got it.” He announced.
“Good.” Vernon grunted. “Go to your cupboard. I don’t want to hear any more out of you today.”

“Yes sir.” Harry mumbled, and quickly made his way to it, and shut the door behind him.

He sat on his makeshift bed, and stared at the letter laying at his feet.

“Son of Morgana. Son of Morgana. Son of Morgana.” He whispered over and over, as he rested his head between his hands. “How could this have happened? What went wrong? I need to sort this out.”

‘Harry’ laid down on his bed, and began sorting through the jumble of thoughts and memories that were still assaulting his mind. It wasn’t painful, but it was shocking to have all this happen in a span of five minutes, and the disorganization wasn’t helping.

Salazar had always been a stickler for a well-organized mind, so this, to him, was a nightmare. His occlumency had gone to pot, and all of his memories of being ‘Harry’ had to be sorted through. Clearing his mind was going to take time.

For hours he laid there sorting and clearing his mind, and the more he sorted and cleared, the angrier he became.

_These people are lucky that I know all muggles don’t act like this._ He thought, as he scowled at the cupboard door. _Because if I was still the old me, I’d kill them where they stand. Fat bunch of…_

“BOY!” Vernon yelled. “Get out here and start supper!”

Clenching his fists and gritting his teeth, ‘Harry’ opened the door and made his way into the kitchen.

_I need to get through this day and began planning. I need to act as normal as I can before I make my escape. This has to be done with the up most caution._ He thought, as be busied himself with dinner.

Wishing he had his wand so that he could make the process go faster, ‘Harry’ painstakingly cut up onions, potatoes, and spices to add to the roast that he was making. Upon completion, and knowing it would take several hours before it was finished cooking, he turned towards his ‘Uncle’ who was sitting at the table.

“I’m finished. It will be a few hours before the roast is ready.”

“Good. Go back to your cupboard then.”

“May I go and use the loo?”

“Hurry up.” The odious man grunted.

Glaring at the man stuffing his face with a piece of cake, ‘Harry’ made his way upstairs. He used the loo, and being careful not to flush just yet, stared at himself in the mirror. His lightning bolt scar was still there, and for all it was worth, he looked like a young James Potter.

_What the hell went wrong?_ He thought, as he studied himself. _Why do I have a scar? Obliviously I'm growing like a child, but why? The Polyjuice should have worn off loooooong ago, so why am I like this? What went wrong!?_
He was roused out of his thoughts as Dudley banged on the door.

“Hurry up in there you freak!” He yelled.

Salazar gritted his teeth, flushed the toilet, washed his hands, and opened the door. He scowled at his ‘cousin’, and was shoved into the opposite wall for it.

“Watch it freak, and learn your place!” Dudley yelled, and laughed when ‘Harry’ winced and rubbed his elbow.

*Filthy muggles. Now it all makes sense. They must know I'm a wizard, but why haven't they ever told me? Hmm, this needs careful study. Who exactly are these people? I know they are Lily’s family, but why do they act this way? Why don’t they like wizards? Petunia is Lily’s sister, so it’s not like they don’t know that magic exists. I need answers.* He thought, as he closed the door to his cupboard.

Salazar picked up the Hogwarts acceptance letter, opened it, and began to read.

**HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY**

Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore

(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorcerer, Chief Warlock,
Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)

Dear Mr. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Inside you will find…

*Blah, blah, blah, blah. Some things never change.* Salazar thought with a sigh, as he tossed the letter aside. He picked up the envelope and studied the address.

Mr. H. Potter

Cupboard under the Stairs

4 Privet Drive

Little Whinging

Surrey

*Hmm, standard auto quill written. Nothing new there, but Dumbledore is still Headmaster. Ok so, nothing can be drawn from that. They think I'm Harry, but why? Harry Potter is supposed to be dead. What happened that night?*

Salazar racked his brain and brought up memories of what happened.
I remember the killing curse coming at me, and bouncing back like it was supposed to. I remember Voldemort becoming a black mist, which is normal for a horcrux maker. I remember pain...why pain? Nothing was supposed to hurt. I remember blacking out, and nothing more until I got the letter. BLAST! I need a pensieve to better study what happened! Wait...was I obviated?

Salazar reached deep inside himself to study is magic, which he was now well aware of.

No. I haven't been obliterated, but my...oh what is this?

Salazar let his magic flow around himself, and he began to feel out his surroundings.

Hmm, wards. What kind of...blood wards! What in the name of Merlin!? Why blood wards? That does not make any sense. What is that? A tracking charm!? That will have to go. Hmm, there is an anti-apparition jinx, but there are no anti-disapparition jinxes on the house, so that is a plus. I can leave, but I can't return.

“Not that I’d want too.” He muttered bitterly.


Salazar stood up as best he could in the short space, and began the process of apparition, but stopped just short of completing it.

Ok good. I can apparate, and tonight I will. My first stop is Godric’s Hollow to get my wand. It’s been ten years so hopefully it’s still there where I hid it.

“It better be anyway.” He said loudly.

He nearly jumped out of his skin when Petunia banged on the door.

“Why are you talking to yourself?!” She yelled. “Get out here so can eat your dinner. We want to eat in peace tonight.”

Shrew. Salazar thought as he opened the door.

He shuffled into the kitchen, and began to eat his meager dinner of a sandwich, half an apple, and a glass of water. When he was done, he was told to go back to his cupboard and remain there for the rest of the night. He was locked in as soon as the door closed.

Hours passed and as bedtime drew closer, and Salazar listened to the Dursleys preparing for bed.

Who put me here? Why? This is going to drive me insane. It was fine before I remembered who I am, but this is getting tiresome now. This is no way for a child to live. Who is responsible for this mess?

As the hours ticked on, the house finally became still. Salazar stuffed the Hogwarts letter in his pocket because he knew he would need to get it off to Hogwarts as soon as he could. He had a sneaky suspicion that was where most of his answers laid. He stood up in the small space, and not caring about anything else in there, he apparated. The Dursleys didn’t hear a thing.

Salazar landed in the graveyard at Godric’s Hollow. It was a warm summer night, but knowing that he was unaware of the times, and what state the wizarding world was in, he remained alert as he
made his way toward the cottage. When he arrived, he stopped and shook his head in horrified awe. The brightly lit full moon cast eerie shadows over the destruction. The half of the roof had been blown completely away, and the damage was worse than Salazar had previously thought.

*There is no way any of them would have survived that.* He thought as he glanced around.

He carefully made his way past the gate, and up the porch stairs to the front door. It had been blown inward just like he had imagined from the ruckus of that night. He crept past the broken door, and for once was thankful for his small frame as he squeezed through some of the rubble.

The inside looked worse than the outside. Years of water damage had taken its toll on the house. Mold and mildew grew on the wallpaper. The floorboards were rotted, and he had to carefully watch his step as he made his way to the back of the house. He stopped just outside the master bedroom, and carefully opened the door, least it fall off its hinges and send the whole house down on top of his head.

He smiled in relief as he spied his hiding place. The dresser that held the Potter’s clothes was untouched, though it was badly damaged from the elements. He quickly made his way across the room, bent down, and wrenched the dresser drawer open. He sighed in relief as he rustled through the dirty and stained clothes.

He had found his wand.

Salazar held it close and let the wand acclimate to his magic once again, and stood there rapidly breathing in and out as it re-bonded to him.

*Thankfully wands don’t rot.* He thought, as he quickly dispelled the pesky tracking charm that plagued his person. *No doubt whoever cast it will be alerted now.*

Salazar made his way his way carefully out of the room, but stopped suddenly when he heard voices coming from just outside the front door.

“The tracking charm disappeared just after the wards alerted me that someone was here. I checked, and this is the last place Harry was.”

“How is that possible Albus? How would the boy get here so quickly?”

“I do not know.”

*Dumbledore!* Salazar thought.

He quickly backed into the kitchen, and tested his magic to see if it was strong enough for an animagus transformation. Thankfully it was, and just as they entered the house, Salazar completed the transformation.

*That’s a problem.* He thought, staring at the wand in the middle of the floor. He quickly slithered over to it, and used his tail to bat it across the floor where it came to rest under a kitchen cabinet.

“What was that?” A voice asked, as the wand clattered loudly across the floor.

Salazar cringed away at the sudden brightness that illuminated the room.

“Merlin!” A woman exclaimed, stumbling backwards as she caught sight of the snake laying in the middle of the floor. “Albus!”
Salazar coiled around himself for protection, as the woman aimed her wand at him.

“What is it Minerva?”

“A snake. It startled me. Do you think it scared Harry off?”

“Perhaps. We are the only ones here, besides our little friend.”

“Little?” Minerva asked. “It must be at least 8 feet long.”

_Hmm, I do feel a lot smaller than my normal size. Perhaps it’s because of my smaller human size, or my weak magic._

“I think Harry must be long gone by now. Perhaps we should check at the Dursleys to make sure all is quiet there.”

“Harry got his Hogwarts letter today. We need to find him Albus. He can’t just wander around the wizarding world.”

“I know Minerva. Maybe it was a case of accidental magic that removed it. Maybe I read the tracking charm wrong. I’ve been known to make mistakes before.”

_More than a few I’d say._ Salazar thought, glaring at Dumbledore.

Salazar waited until they left and he had heard the familiar cracks of two people apparating away, before he resumed human form again. After collecting his wand, he grabbed a near-by piece of rotted wood.

_I know of a place that might have answers to some of my questions. Though I am pleased that a few have already been answered._

He quickly made a portkey, and set off for Rio.

---

Salazar landed in an ungraceful heap in the middle of his own dining room, and nearly knocked himself out on the table as he stood up.

“Ouch.” He said, rubbing the back of his head. “Blasted weak magic.”

He heard an eating utensil clatter off to his left, and looked up to see a healthier and much bigger copy of himself staring at him in stunned surprise.

“MUM! DAD! COME QUICK! I HAVE A TWIN!”

“Harry James Potter what are you going on about…JAMES! COME QUICK!” Lily Potter screamed frantically, and Salazar found himself staring at the wrong end of a wand. “Who are you?” She demanded.

“Hello Lily.” Salazar smiled. “I’m glad to see you are healthy and doing well.”

“Who are you?” James asked, coming up behind his wife, also pointing his wand at Salazar.

“I’m the one who sent you here. It’s me Salazar.”
Both Potters dropped their wands and stared at him in awe. “Salazar?” They asked in unison.

“Yes. I came here hoping to shed some light on what in the hell went wrong.”

“You look like…you look like…” Lily sputtered.

“Harry Potter?” He asked. “Yes, I’ve realized that.”

“This is wicked! I have a twin!”

Salazar laughed. “It’s good to see you are all doing exceptional.”

“You don’t look like you are doing well at all Salazar. What happened to you?” James asked, eyeing his clothes and his size.

“That is also what I’d like to know James. I apparently somehow lost my memories that night, and this afternoon when I received ‘Harry Potter’s’ Hogwarts letter, they suddenly came pouring back. I’ve been living with the Dursleys for the last ten years.”

“Petunia and Vernon?” Lily asked.

“One and the same.”

“You poor dear. Come and eat something. For crying out loud you’re all skin and bones. What did they do, starve you?”

“Among other things.” He said quietly.

Lily wheeled around with wide eyes. “You can’t be serious!”

“I am afraid I am.” He answered. “Truth be told, I’m more tired than hungry right now. My magic is weak from lack of use, malnutrition, and an unhealthy life. I just need to rest.”

“Well come in the sitting room and let’s talk.” James said. “Harry you need to finish your dinner and then get your bath. We will say goodnight soon.”

Harry didn’t move, but he gazed at Salazar. “Are you Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived? You have the scar and everything.”

Salazar looked at him in confusion. “I’m afraid I don’t know what you mean.”

“You defeated Voldemort. Some people call him You-Know-Who though.”

Salazar looked from Harry to his parents. “I don’t know…”

“We need to talk you Salazar. Harry do as your father said. You can talk to him in the morning.”

“Ok Mum.” Harry said, and watched as they walked out the room.

When they entered the sitting room, James cast a privacy spell, and poured them all a drink.

“It’s best if you only drink one.”

“Not to mention slowly.” Salazar agreed taking a small sip. “Goodness that is what I needed. Ok, you all start, and I’ll try and piece together what happened.”

Lily and James got Salazar caught up on the ‘Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived’ story, and even
brought out some old newspaper articles to help Salazar get a better understanding of what they knew. They told him that they figured something might have gone wrong that night, but decided to remain in Rio like he told them too. In turn, Salazar told them all about his life at the Dursleys, and what happened the night that Voldemort was defeated, and also what had transpired earlier that night. Needless to say, Lily was furious.

“I have a half a mind to walk up to Petunia and hex her into oblivion! You can't imagine how I feel right now!” She shouted. “Never, NEVER would I do that to Dudley. I don’t care how much I dislike my sister and her husband. NEVER would I harm a child in such a fashion. This is outrageous! A broom cupboard James! A broom cupboard!” She shouted.

James did his best to calm her down, but it didn’t do any good.

“At least it was me and not really Harry.” Salazar said. “I am, despite my appearance, an adult and I can cope with the emotional and physical trauma.”

“That still does not excuse what they have done.” She said shaking her head. “And to never tell you that you are a wizard is just despicable. They hate magic Salazar. Unfortunately, they are the embodiment of the muggles you knew in your past, and truth be told, I wouldn’t blame you if you killed them, because I certainly want too.”

“I wouldn’t do that Lily. As odious as they are, I wouldn’t. They have a young son, and I won't be the cause of the child losing his parents. On the other hand, if there was no Dudley…” He said letting his voice trail off.

James snorted. “Well from what you tell me he is just like his father. Spoiled little prat.”

“Indeed.” Salazar said, raising his glass. “I need to see my pensieve though. Is it still in my study?”

James nodded. “Yes, it is. We kind of sorted through the library and placed all the dark arts books in there. We sealed the room so Harry wouldn’t stumble upon them.”

“That’s fine. I should have thought of that myself before I sent you here.” Salazar getting up and walking across the room.

They left the sitting room, and walked down the spacious and brightly lit hallway. James unsealed the door to the study, and when they entered, Salazar headed right towards the desk.

“Ok, let’s see if I can make some sense of the matter.” He said, dropping the silver memory strand into the pensieve.

“Do you want some company in there?” James asked. “Another set of eyes perhaps?”

Salazar hesitated. “It might be disturbing for you. It’s not a pleasant memory by any stretch.”

“It’s ok. I’ve always wondered what happened that night.”

“I’ll stay here and keep an ear out for Harry.” Lily said.

Salazar nodded. “If you are sure James.”

“I am.” He answered.

They entered the memory, and claimed a spot just behind ‘Lily’, and leaned against the wall. They heard the shouting and commotion coming from downstairs, but James paled and started shaking
when Voldemort entered the nursery.

“Why is he telling her to step aside?” He asked suddenly.

“I was hoping you could tell me.” Salazar answered.

The memory kept going, and when the curse rebounded, Salazar pointed and shouted, “There! Look at that!”

They watched as a small piece of black mist detached itself from Voldemort just before he exploded into a bigger black mist. Salazar and James watched the smaller piece as it sailed around the room and latched itself onto Salazar/Harry’s forehead. The baby screamed in pain as the scar appeared, and the memory ended as Salazar/Harry blacked out.

When they landed back in the study, James had to sit down, but Salazar started pacing back and forth.

“I’m a horcrux.” He said, stopping suddenly and looking up at James and Lily. “That’s what happened, but I still don’t understand why I didn’t revert back to my normal self.”

“How can a living being be a horcrux?” James asked, pouring himself another drink.

“It’s not entirely unheard of, but it is very rare. The only times I’ve heard it done is with animals though, and that was only twice. Both times the animal was killed with Fiendfyre, but since I can’t die, I don’t know if that would work.”

“You used Polyjuice, didn’t you?” Lily asked.

“Yes.”

“Maybe it had something to do with the soul part sealing itself inside your head. You, for all intents and purposes, were Harry at that point. Maybe the dark magic of the horcrux negated the potion’s transforming effects. We all know that Dark Magic can’t be reversed. It’s a long shot, but maybe that’s why.”

“You might be on to something Lily.” Salazar said nodding at her. “It’s actually not as crazy as it sounds. A horcrux is the darkest form of magic. Polyjuice is a physically transforming potion. It’s not like a headache potion, or calming drought. In theory, the dark magic of the horcrux would void the physical effects of the Polyjuice, and since I used Harry’s hair, I remained him and grew up naturally from that point on. I’m beginning to think that the horcrux is the reason I lost my memories temporarily, but I don’t understand why I would suddenly regain them from a Hogwarts letter.”

“Muggles call it amnesia.” Lily said. “When a muggle suffers head trauma they often forget who they are. Muggle doctors tell the person suffering from amnesia to go with family and friends. They say that being in familiar surroundings with familiar people will eventually jog their memories and they will go back to being themselves. We, of course, have a way of treating that with no problem, but since you were taken by people who thought you were Harry, there was no need to check you for that. You were put with muggles who wouldn’t know any better as well, but when you saw that letter, and the familiar seal of Hogwarts, you remembered.”

James suddenly burst out laughing. “Salazar Slytherin suffered from a muggle ailment for ten years! That is hysterical! Sirius would love that bit of…OUCH!”

Salazar smirked when James jumped from being hit with his stinging jinx.
“And it serves you right!” Lily laughed.

James snorted. “Sorry, I just find it really funny.”

“Amusing.” Salazar said dryly, but smiled and winked at Lily.

“Well I guess all of that answers the most pressing problems about what happened.” James said, trying to get himself under control.

“Yes, I do believe it does, but I still do have minor questions.”

Salazar, Lily, and James stayed up until the wee hours of the morning. When asked if she knew why Voldemort would ask her to step aside, Lily didn’t know. James however, mentioned that Snape had been a Death Eater, and given his and Lily’s past, it could have been because of him. It made sense to Lily, and she told Salazar about their history. James, based off Salazar’s tale of earlier in the night at Godric’s Hollow, suggested that it was Dumbledore who placed him at the Dursleys, though he didn’t know why Dumbledore didn’t place him with Sirius, seeing as he is Harry’s godfather.

They also talked about the prophecy. Salazar told them what he knew about it, and Lily and James told him the rest. Salazar still held the firm belief that it was all a bunch of bullocks. Little else was talked about though, due to Salazar being exhausted, and slightly buzzed, so they finally called it a night just as the sun started to come up.

Salazar ended up staying in Rio for a week. He practiced his magic and ate good portions of food at every meal so that his magic would get stronger and back to normal. He also shrank all of his clothes that he had left there, so now he had robes that fit.

He spoke to the goblins at Gringotts in Rio Way, and they assured him that all was fine with this finances in both Rio and Britain. This eased his mind a lot, because he was worried about being ‘Harry’ and not being able to get to his money in Britain. When James asked him about a place to stay when he returned to London, Salazar assured him that he had a small flat in Diagon Alley. He also let them know that he was good at hiding his appearances, seeing as he has done it for centuries.

The real Harry Potter was excited to meet ‘Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived’ and they talked a lot about Hogwarts and Quidditch. Harry had been accepted to The South American School of Wizardry, and Salazar assured the Potters that it was a top notch school, second only to Hogwarts. Lily teased him and said he was biased, which he freely admitted to being.

Salazar told them that he was, in fact, going back to Hogwarts as ‘Harry Potter’. He decided that it would be the best course of action, seeing as the people with answers were there, and he wanted to try and gain as much information as he could. Once he had gained all that he could, he was going to find all of Voldemort’s horcruxes and destroy them all, and also work on a way to get rid of the one in his own head, as well as getting his normal appearance back. Salazar told the Potters that he would keep them updated on his progress because after all, he was posing as their son.

Salazar however, didn’t know about the frantic search back in Britain for ‘Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived’. He was in for a shock at what his disappearing act had caused.
Salazar landed, yet again, ungracefully in the middle of his sitting room. Thankfully he had the common sense to send a few elves from the villa to make sure that his flat was prepared for his arrival.

He sighed and picked himself up off the floor. It looked just like it had ten years prior. He walked over and gazed out of the charmed windows. They had been charmed to be able to see out into Diagon Alley below, but anyone looking up would only see a blank brick wall. The security was top notch. The only way in or out was via portkey or apparition, and the whole flat was under a Fidelius Charm, and he was its secret keeper. Although, there was a small hidden window for owls to deliver the paper and other correspondence. Yes, Salazar felt very comfortable here.

The flat also showed plainly that he was the founder of Slytherin House. It had emerald green carpet, black furniture, and slivery grey walls to lighten it up a bit. There were a few statues of snakes, and a few decorative skulls to remind him of the Slytherin common room, but overall it wasn’t really all that ‘dark’. He had a large library, kitchen, bedroom, bath, a potions lab, and it had a comfortable feel to it. Salazar sighed, he was home.

He walked over to the large window that over looked the Alley from his sitting room, but furrowed his brow in confusion as he saw all of the Aurors roaming around.

That is odd. Perhaps I should go and investigate.

He changed his appearance so that he had blond hair and brown eyes, and he managed to find an old pointy hat of his that he could shrink to fit, but still cover the scar. Then he apparated into an out of the way spot so that he wouldn’t bring attention to himself. It would not be good for someone to ask why a seemingly eleven year old boy was apparating.

When he arrived, he headed for The Daily Prophet and bought an addition to hopefully shed some light on what was happening. Needless to say he was shocked by what he found.

**Harry Potter Still Missing!**

*Albus Dumbledore has confirmed that Harry Potter, the boy responsible for ridding us of You-Know-Who, has gone missing from his relative’s home. Aurors are on the lookout for the Savior of the wizarding world. If you have any information, you are asked to contact the Auror office immediately.*

Salazar shook his head, and tucked the paper under his arm.

*Well that explains that. He thought. I wonder if Dumbledore has found out about how the Dursleys treated me. If he did, I wonder if he thinks they killed me out of hatred when I got the letter. It seems like something they might do. Ok, maybe not, but then again…*

“How excuse me lad, but have you seen this boy?”

Salazar looked up to see an Auror with a baby picture of Harry.

“No sir, I haven’t. Is that him? Is that Harry Potter?”
“Yes, I'm afraid it is. Don’t know why they don’t have a picture of what he looks like now though. It doesn’t make much sense to me.”

*It does to me.* “Well if I see him, I’ll be sure to let someone know.”

“Ok, thanks lad.”

“You're welcome sir.”

Salazar rolled his eyes as the Auror turned away, and pulled his hat lower over the scar.

*I need to talk to someone. I can't get answers by wandering around the alley. I need an owl.*

Salazar sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose before walking down to Eeylops Owl Emporium.

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A few hours later, he found himself back in his flat with his first year school supplies. He also managed to find a beautiful snowy white owl at Eeylops. He was a little sad about the loss of his old owl, but he knew that it would have found a home, or just decided to live on its own in a forest somewhere. However, he stared at the new owl for a while and tried to think of a name for her.

“I think Hedwig suits you too.” He said, smiling fondly at the beautiful bird and lightly petting her. “Do you feel like making a few deliveries right from the start?”

Hedwig hooted again, and stuck out her leg expectantly.

“Well I haven’t written my letters yet, but if you can give me a few minutes, I’ll have them ready.” He laughed, and she drew her leg back and waited.

He filled out his reply for Hogwarts, and then began to write another.

*My Old Friend,*

*I know it must be a shock hearing from me after these many years, but I have an unbelievable story to tell you. I need your help, and was hoping you could meet me at my flat in Diagon Alley. I hope this letter finds you doing well.*

*Your Old Friend,*

*Me*

He sealed the letter with wax, and gave it to Hedwig.

“Please deliver this letter first, and then take the reply letter to Hogwarts.”

Hedwig bobbed her head, and took off through the concealed window. Salazar knew that there was nothing else he could do until his friend either came or sent back a reply, so he began sorting through his school supplies and organizing his trunk.

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Twenty minutes later, Salazar was carefully arranging his ink pots and quills in his trunk when
someone apparated into his flat, and nearly landing on him in the process. It startled him, and he jumped up, tripped over his own robes and landed on his bum.

“I make such an awkward child.” He muttered, picking himself up off the floor. Then he looked up at his friend. “Well that was fast. Either my new owl has powers unknown to me, or you were close by.”

“Salazar?” The man asked in disbelief.

“Hello Nicholas.”

Nicholas Flamel stared down at his friend in shock. “Need I ask?”

“No,” Salazar said with a chuckle. “I will explain.”

Salazar went on to tell Nicholas about everything that happened, and the man listened in silence. By the time Salazar finished, Nicholas was pacing around the sitting room.

“So the Potters, all the Potters, are alive?”

“Yes. I have been with them for the last five days trying to piece together what has happened. I won’t tell you exactly where they are though. That is for their security, and yours.”

Nicholas nodded in understanding. “Albus is worried sick about ‘Harry Potter, The Boy-Who-Lived’, and is doing everything he can to try and find you. You should tell him you're alive.”

“He will find out when I get to Hogwarts. He left me in that muggle hellhole for ten years, so he can suffer another week.” He growled. “I've already figured out it was him that placed me there.”

“You and your need for revenge.” Nicholas said with a chuckle.

Salazar sighed. “I need you to promise me that you won't tell him, or anyone, who I really am. I need to do this on my own, and no doubt the meddlesome old fool will try to interfere with my plans.”

“You don’t trust Albus, do you?”

Salazar shook his head. “I know he is your friend Nicholas, but no, I don’t trust him. Nor would he trust me with any information. You know how he is with this ‘light’ and ‘dark’ nonsense. One mention that ‘Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived’ is really Salazar Slytherin will have him clam up and keep his secrets to himself. He will no doubt think I'm working for Voldemort.”

“I can't say that I disagree with you my friend. Albus is very secretive when he wants to be. He will watch you closely though, there is no doubt about that. He is now even more convinced that this prophecy is real, and he will do everything he can to watch over you.”

“And no doubt try to control me.”

Nicholas nodded in agreement. “He has had a squib watching you these last ten years. Are you familiar with Arabella Figg?”

“Mrs. Figg! Yes, she was my babysitter!” Salazar exclaimed. “Are you telling me that he has known of my home life all these years and never once came and got me? Nicholas, if I don’t kill Albus on sight I will surely hex him, and you wonder why I don’t trust him.” He said through gritted teeth.

“I'm sorry my friend.” Nicholas said, shaking his head.
Deciding that this line of talk would likely see him blowing up his coffee table, Salazar abruptly changed the subject. “Does he know about the horcruxes?”

“If he does, he has not mentioned them to me. He is however, very curious on why Voldemort didn’t die that night, and I must admit that I was too. We did throw around ideas for a while, but neither of us thought about horcruxes.”

“I would have clued you in on the plan had there been time, but there was none. I had less than a day to come up with the plan in the first place and find ready-made Polyjuice in Knockturn Alley, but I need your help with Albus. I need you to be a go between for us, if you are willing.”

“I can try, but I can tell you he is very concerned about ‘Harry Potter’ and has taken a direct interest in your life. However,” Nicholas said in a hopeful tone, “he is protecting my stone. Perhaps I can use that to my advantage. I was here in London when your owl found me. I had just come from Hogwarts.”

“Your stone? Whatever in the world for?” Salazar asked.

“Voldemort is on the move and is actively looking into ways to regain corporeal form. My stone, and what it does, is very well known and Albus convinced me that the stone was in danger. I have agreed to have him protect it for me.”

“Albus convinced you.” Salazar said, in a condescending tone. “Albus convinced you.”

“Well what was I supposed to do? You were gone, and the very thought of Voldemort getting a hold of the stone was terrifying to me.” Nicholas said with a hint of anger in his voice.

“Where will it be kept?” Salazar asked with a sigh, and pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Hogwarts.”

“HOGWARTS!?” Salazar shouted, jumping up from his seat. “Well, let us just hang a sign on the front door inviting Voldemort to come and grab it. Yes, let’s keep something like that hidden in a school full of children.” He ranted. Salazar did everything in his power to keep from blasting apart his coffee table, but thankfully the coffee table was spared, yet again, as he reigned in his anger. “I'm sorry my friend. I realize you don’t have a lot of options. Please forgive me. What does he plan to do with it?”

Nicholas watched in amusement as his friend tried to hold back the childish temper tantrum. “I don’t know what his plans are at the moment, but I will find out.”

“Act first, plan later. Typical Gryffindor.” Salazar said dryly. “Thankfully I will be there, so you know Voldemort will not be getting it one way or the other.”

“I have no doubts.” Nicholas said with a chuckle.

“However it may prove useful.” Salazar said begrudgingly. “When, not if mind you, when Voldemort shows up, perhaps I can somehow figure out where the rest of his horcruxes are. I don’t know how yet, but this may prove somewhat useful.”

“Well I have no doubts that both of you will see that it is safe.”

“Indeed. I can use this to my advantage, but I assure you, Voldemort will not lay a hand on that stone. I will keep you updated as best I can.” Salazar said. “It’s your stone and you have the right to know what is happening with it. If I can get my hands on it, I will bring it here myself. You,
Perenelle, and I are the only ones who know of this place and it will be safe here.”

They sat and talked about various topics for a while. Nicholas told Salazar about the political climate, and got him up to speed with the goings on of the Ministry. Not a lot had changed since the war ended. Pure blood bigots were still in control, Fudge was a bit of an idiot, and several laws had been passed over the years. He did however, tell Salazar about the Death Eaters that went free. Salazar was very angry to hear about Lucius Malfoy, Crabbe Sr., Goyle Sr., and Severus Snape. He was even angrier about finding out that Snape was teaching at Hogwarts, and began wondering what Dumbledore was playing at. In his opinion, Snape should be in Azkaban. No Death Eater should be teaching children.

Nicholas stayed well past dinner that night, but when he left, it was with a promise to gain as much information from Albus as possible. He also assured Salazar that he would mention the horcruxes to Dumbledore, and said he would let him know what Albus said. Salazar fell asleep that night with his cunning mind working overtime to come up with a plan.

A week later, Salazar found himself standing on platform 9-3/4 looking none too pleased at seeing a certain blond pure blood seeing his son onto the train. He had disguised himself again, and had decided that he would keep an ear out to see what the students were saying. Salazar already knew that some of these children were going to irritate him to no end, but had decided to try and keep his annoyance with them to a minimum. He was after all, a one thousand year old man.

Trying his best to blend in and not draw attention to himself, Salazar had already placed a feather light charm on his trunk, but pretended to struggle to get it on the train like everyone else. He managed to find an empty compartment, and settled down so he could observe his surroundings.

He admitted to himself that he had always been curious about the train, seeing as it was not part of the transportation to Hogwarts in his day. It was by no means the first time he had ridden on one, he did venture into the muggle world quite often, but still, the fact of this train carrying all the students to Hogwarts was quite the concept. He had thought about by passing it all together though, and favored just apparating to Hogsmeade, but he figured he would do this right.

As the train began to leave, four boys came in, ignoring the fact that Salazar was there. He nearly snorted when he realized who they were, but chose to ignore them in return. He pulled a book out of his pocket, and pretended to read, all the while keeping his ears on the conversation going on around him.

“My father thinks that Potter ran away on purpose to get attention.”

One of the bigger boys snickered and nodded his head.

Hmm, just as brainless as their fathers. No doubt that’s Malfoy Jr. The other two look like their fathers as well. The other boy though, I’m not so sure.

“Who are you?” Not-so-sure asked.

Salazar pretended to look up a bit startled. “Oh, uh, I’m Evan Evans. Not very creative on my parent’s part, but that’s me.”

“I’m Theo Nott, this is Vincent Crabbe, Greg Goyle, and Draco Malfoy.”

All children of Death Eaters. Salazar thought, suppressing a scowl. “Nice to meet you all.” He
answered with a polite nod.

“Evans. Never heard of your family. You're not pure blood, so are you half-blooded or worse?” Malfoy asked.

Salazar faked curiosity. “Worse?” He asked.

“Yeah you know, muggle born.” He spat.

Salazar lifted an eyebrow. “I take it from your tone that you don’t like muggle borns.”

“Not really.”

“Well I guess you could call me half muggle born. My parents were magical, but I was raised by muggles all my life.” He answered, and tried not to laugh out loud at the looks of confusion and disgust on their faces.

Malfoy looked at him if he had a disease and moved further away, Goyle who was sitting right beside Salazar, moved closer to the door, and Crabbe and Nott scowled at him. Salazar just ignored them all, and went back to his book.

Several hours passed and his compartment companions ignored him, while he pretended to read his book. They left at one point to try and find ‘Harry Potter’, but Salazar laughed when that happened. For the most part, the children weren’t talking about anything important, so he tuned them out. It wasn’t until a girl with brown bushy hair opened the door that he looked up again.

“Has anyone seen a lost toad?” She asked. The others shook their heads no, but Salazar put his book down. “Have you tried summoning it?”

She looked at him in surprise. “Well no, no I haven't. Is that a first year spell? I don’t recall it being in any of my books.”

Blast! My need to teach always outweighs everything. “No it’s not a first year spell, but it should be because it is very simple. The incantation is Accio and the wand movement is like thus.” He said, and demonstrated the wand movement. “You have to concentrate on and specify what you want to summon. For example, Accio Goyle’s chocolate frog!” He cried, and the frog in Goyle’s hand soared towards him.

Her eyes lit up, and she cleared her throat. “Accio toad!” She cried, and they waited, and waited, and waited. She turned to him in confusion. “I don’t think it worked.”

“Well it was your first try, and I don’t think you concentrated hard enough. Here let me…Accio lost toad!” He cried, and a few seconds later it came zooming into the compartment, and into Salazar’s arms. “Did you catch the difference? You have to make sure you specify.” He said with a smile, holding the toad up.

Her eyes lit up for the second time that day. “Yes, I did! Thank you so much!” She exclaimed, taking the toad from him. “I'm Hermione Granger. Both of my parents are non-magical. What’s your name?”

Salazar knew they would be arriving in Hogsmeade at any time, so he decided to drop all pretense and introduce himself properly. “I'm Harry Potter.” He answered, and dropped his disguise.

Everyone in the compartment sat there in stunned silence, and their eyes traveled to his forehead. He
took off his hat and pushed back his hair.

“See scar and all.” He said with a laugh. “I'm a half blood raised by muggles, seeing as my parents died.”

“I'm sorry.” She mumbled.

“It’s ok. They died trying to save me, and whatever it was they did, it worked.” He said with a shrug.

“I suppose you might be in Gryffindor then.” She said.

“Nope, actually I think I’ll be in Slytherin.”

At this point Malfoy snorted. “I really don’t think that will happen.”

“And why not?” Salazar asked, leaning back against the seat and steepling his fingers.

“You a Slytherin? I just don’t see it. You're going to be the Gryffindor Golden Boy. Your parents were Gryffindors.”

“So? Slytherin prides cunning, resourcefulness, ambition, determination, along with a whole mess of other things. Besides, where else would someone who could talk to snakes go?”

“Y-you are a-a parselmouth?” Malfoy asked, staring at him in disbelief.

“Yes, now I remember. That is what it’s called. I read in *Hogwarts: A History* that Slytherin could talk to snakes.” He said with a grin.

“Prove it.” Nott demanded.

Salazar turned to Hermione. “Don’t be afraid. I won't let it hurt you. I promise. I read about a charm that could summon snakes, and I have gotten fairly good at it, though I set them free in a forest.”

“W-what?” She stammered.

“Serpensortia!” He cried suddenly, and a small black snake appeared on the floor of their compartment.

“Who dares to summon me!?” It cried as it looked around, ready to strike at the shrieking children.

“Forgive me my friend. I wanted to prove point. Please don’t attack the loud ones. They are just afraid.”

“A Speaker! How wonderful! Very well then. I won't hurt them, if they don’t hurt me.”

“Come my little friend. I will set you lose in a big forest when we get to our destination.”

“That sounds very nice. I like you Speaker.” It said, and slithered up his arm, and disappeared under his sleeve.

He turned back to Malfoy and company. “See. Where else would a Parselmouth end up besides Slytherin?”

The children stared at him in shock and fear, but didn’t say anything. Salazar knew exactly what he was doing, and letting his gift be known was all part of his plan.
“Come Miss Granger. Let us find the owner of that toad. No doubt they are worried.”

“Y-yes. O-ok.”

“There is no need to be afraid.” He chuckled, as she made it a point to steer clear of his right arm where the snake was. “It won't hurt you. I promised to let it go once we get to school.”

They found the owner of the toad, a shy boy named Neville Longbottom, and Hermione rejoined Neville in his compartment. By the time Salazar made his way back to his own compartment they had arrived in Hogsmeade.

“My friend, I'm afraid that I will not be able to set you free tonight. I am a bit worried about your safety. It is dark and there are a lot of owls that reside here. I don't want to see you end up as one's dinner. Would you agree to being set free in the morning?”

“Yes Speaker. I think that will be fine, but I am hungry. Can you feed me?”

“It won't be fresh, but there will be chicken at the dinner I'm going to be attending. Will that suffice?”

“I suppose that will be fine.” It said with a hint of disappointment.

The children that were gathered around him stared at him with wide eyes as he talked to the little snake peeping out of his robe sleeve. They began whispering and backing away from him, but Salazar paid them no mind. They followed a large man to the boats, and made their way across the lake towards the castle. However, something happened just as they crossed the protective enchantments that surrounded the school.

You feel me don't you? He thought with a chuckle. Hello Hogwarts. I am pleased that after all these centuries you remember my magic.

Indeed Hogwarts had, and the magic surrounding the castle was nearly singing with welcome. Even those inside the castle could feel the change as the magic hummed, and the closer Salazar got to the castle, the more it hummed.

Settle down my dear. I'm afraid if you hum too much that you may hum yourself into a heap of rubble. He thought with a smile.

The magical hum abated, but it didn’t disappear altogether. It continued until Salazar and the other first years reached the front doors. When they arrived they found a stern looking witch, who looked slightly shaken, as she glanced over the crowd.

Salazar noticed that she was the same woman from the night in Godric’s Hollow, and when her eyes landed on him, it looked like she let out a breath she had been holding. She quickly composed herself, and began telling them the expectations of Hogwarts. After that, Salazar Slytherin entered Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for the first time in nearly ten centuries.

Chapter End Notes

If you are concerned about Salazar and Hogwarts, I just wan't to let you know that yes, Hogwarts knows that Salazar is there, but he won't be able to fully control the castle. That power lies with Dumbledore only.
Thank you for reading, and I hope you continue to enjoy the story!
As soon as both of Salazar’s feet crossed the threshold, the bell towers that framed the entrance hall began to chime in welcome. The entrance hall vibrated and dust fell from the ceiling. The portraits that resided there, along with the first year students, covered their ears because it was so loud. Through it all, Salazar blinked back tears and struggled to get his emotions under control.

Thank you my dear. Your welcome means so much more to me than you realize. I am truly honored, and I promise that one day I will step foot through those doors in my true form, but for now, I must remain as I am. Thank you Hogwarts. It feels good to be home.

“What was that racket?! I felt sure that the whole place was going to come down on us!” The little black snake demanded, as they made their way into the great hall.

“I’m sorry my friend.” Salazar whispered into his sleeve. “The castle was welcoming us.”

“Well tell it not to do that again.”

Salazar chuckled lightly, patted the snake’s head, and glanced around the room. All the students looked stunned, and he could hear whispering all around him. People, it seemed, were more interested in why Hogwarts did what it did, versus the upcoming sorting. The Professors looked confused, but Dumbledore was talking to the witch who led them in.

The sorting commenced and Salazar waited patiently for his turn. Neville and Hermione became Gryffindors, and Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, and Nott became Slytherins just like he expected.

“Harry Potter.” Professor McGonagall called out.

The room hushed, and Salazar saw Dumbledore sit up and stare at him. He also noticed Severus Snape sneering at him, but McGonagall smiled before placing the Sorting Hat on his head.

“SWEET MOTHER OF MERLIN!” The hat shouted out loud, and nearly leapt off his head in surprise. “Sa…..”

The hat couldn’t finish what it was going to say, because Salazar reached up clamped its mouth shut. Thankfully nothing but mumbling was heard.

Did you honestly have to yell that out loud? Salazar grumbled.

Well I'm sorry Salazar, but I was expecting Harry Potter, not you!

I'm sorry to disappoint you.

Oh it’s not that, in fact I'm thrilled! No wonder the castle was singing. It all makes sense now. Shall I call out Slytherin and be done with it?

Not yet. I know that Dumbledore is going to want to know what all that was about, but you must
promise me not to tell him.

You're secret is safe with me. You obviously have a purpose here, and I will not stand in your way. I must say though, Harry Potter was likely to go to Gryffindor, are sure about Slytherin?

I am. No doubt I would murder half of Gryffindor house for getting on my nerves before the first week was over. Besides there are people in my house that I wish to keep an eye on.

Salazar could hear the hat chuckling in his ear.

I understand. Well let me call out the house.

Very well.

"SLYTHERIN!" The hat shouted, and Salazar placed it back on the stool.

Salazar chuckled, folded his hands behind his back, and nearly skipped over to the Slytherin house table. He had a large grin on his face as he took a seat at the very end of the table. The entire great hall was deadly silent, and Dumbledore looked to be on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Salazar knew that whatever plan he had for ‘Harry Potter’ had just been shattered.

After the sorting finished, Dumbledore stood up to announce the feast, and the table sprang to life with all the food they could eat.

“What is that I smell? Is that the chicken you promised me?”

“It is.” Salazar answered, as the little black snake emerged from his sleeve and slithered onto the table. Several people sitting around him gasped in surprise.

“I think so. I'm starving.” It answered.

“Take that! Take that I say!”

This time Salazar laughed at its antics, but then began to place food onto his own plate. During the meal he looked around the great hall. Nothing about it had changed since he last saw it, but he thought that was a good thing. He happened to look up towards the head table and saw that Professor Snape was staring at him in shock, but there was another Professor with a turban on his head who was sitting beside Snape. That man was watching him and the snake with curiosity, and a bit of amusement. Salazar didn’t know what to make of it.

The feast ended, and all the food disappeared. The little black snake didn’t like that and demanded that it come back immediately, but Salazar told it that the food would be back in the morning.

Dumbledore stood up to make announcements during this time, but Salazar was only half listening. There was one thing Dumbledore said that caught his attention though.

“The third floor corridor is off limits to everyone who doesn’t wish to die a painful death.”

Dumbledore said, and then he finally dismissed them.

Like I said. Put a sign on the front door. Reckless Gryffindor. Well at least I know where to begin my search for the stone. He thought as he sighed and shook his head.
They headed down into the dungeons, and despite the excitement around him, Salazar was tired. Being a one thousand year old man in an eleven year old body was not easy. When they reached the common room, he smiled and looked around. Nothing had changed, and this pleased Salazar even more.

“Where are we? What is this place?” The snake asked, as it poked its head out of his sleeve.

“I am home my friend.” He said simply, as he followed the prefect to the first year dorm.

“I like it here.”

Salazar smiled but said nothing as he claimed a bed along the back wall. There were five other boys in this dorm besides himself. Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, and Zabini all claimed beds either by the door, or the bathroom, but Salazar was content with what he chose. The others kept an eye on him and the snake, but for the most part they ignored him.

He changed into his pajamas and carefully coaxed the little black snake off his arm and next to his pillow.

“Speaker?”

“Yes?”

“I like it here, and I think I want to keep you as my pet. You keep me safe, fed, and warm. I think I want to stay here.”

Salazar smiled into the darkness. “I would like that. I think I’m going to need a friend. Shall I pick a name for you?”

“Yes. I would like that.”

Salazar thought for a moment before he decided. “Nora. I like Nora. You are a female I believe.”

“That I am Speaker. I like Nora, and your name is Speaker. I like that name for you.”

Salazar grinned at the snake burrowing next to his pillow. “Goodnight then Nora.”

“Goodnight Speaker.”

The next morning at breakfast, Nora yelled in a way only snakes could about the amount of owls that came swooping into the great hall. She tried to attack Hedwig when she landed to visit, but Hedwig just stared at Nora and clicked her beak in annoyance at the little nuisance. Hedwig turned her back on the little snake to show her displeasure, and Nora used the end of her tail to flick Hedwig’s tail feathers. Hedwig turned around sharply and used her wing to knock Nora off the table and onto the floor. As you can imagine, Nora didn’t take kindly to that.

“Listen here you haughty overgrown feather duster, I will not be treated like that!” She yelled, as she climbed up Salazar’s leg to get back onto the table.

“All right that is enough out of the both of you.” Salazar sternly. “Let’s try to get along shall we?”

“I don’t like her.” Nora said, and Hedwig bobbed her head and hooted in what seemed to be mutual agreement.
“It will be all right. You just need to get used to each other.”

Hedwig ruffled her feathers, and Nora glared at the bird, but neither made a move toward the other.

Salazar smiled. “There, see. It is possible. I don’t have any letters for you today Hedwig, but you can have some of my bacon and juice if you want.” He said, and held up a piece of bacon.

Hedwig took it, hooted in thanks, and drank some pumpkin juice before flying off.

“Pigeon.” Nora mumbled.

Salazar rolled his eyes. “She is my friend, just as you are. She won’t hurt you or try to eat you. I promise. I think you both were just startled by each other.”

“Well I don’t like her. You can’t be her pet because you are mine.”

“I’m not her pet, she is my pet.”

“Oh! Well that does make a difference. I suppose I can tolerate her then. She is just a common pet. HA! Take that Pigeon!”

Salazar shook his head and chuckled. Nora wasn’t hungry this morning because she had eaten a great deal the night before, but she stayed coiled up on the table watching what was going on around her.

Salazar was nearly finished with his breakfast when a smiling Hermione Granger made her way towards him.

“Hi Harry.”

“Hermione, how are you this morning?” He said with a smile.

“I’m doing really well. I just wanted to tell you that I practiced that charm you taught me and I did it! I made some discarded parchment fly to me!” She said excitedly.

“Well that is really good. I am happy you were successful.”

She smiled at him, but then looked at Nora as the snake gazed back at her. “I see you haven’t set her free yet.”

“She decided that I’m her pet, and she didn’t want to leave.”

Hermione laughed. “Is she dangerous?”

“I can be you silly girl.”

“It depends.” Salazar answered with a slight smile.

“What kind of snake is she?”

“She is a Black Adder. She’s venomous, but not deadly. She will grow to be about two feet long.”

“I am deadly! I am the deadliest snake alive!” Nora argued.

“Ok then, deadliest snake alive. Will you let Hermione pet you?”

“I suppose.”
Salazar chuckled. “She will allow you to pet her if you want too. She won’t bite.”

Hermione looked at him in surprise, but then smiled softly. She reached out slowly and placed a shaky finger on the top of Nora’s head. “I thought snakes were slimy, but she’s not slimy at all, and she seems nice.” She said, as she began to pet her more.

“It’s a common misconception. Snakes have different personalities just like humans. Nora is…feisty, but she is a good snake.”

“I like her.” Nora said, and rolled over on her back to let Hermione pet her belly. “She gives good pettings. Learn from her Speaker.”

Salazar laughed. “Apparently she likes your pettings and said that I need to learn from you.”

“Uh…umm…Hermione. Umm…Professor McGonagall is passing out schedules. You need to uh…get yours.” A voice behind them said.

They both turned around to see a very nervous looking Neville. “OH!” She exclaimed. “Thank you Neville. I’m coming.” She said, then turned back to Harry. “Thanks Harry, and Nora. I’ll see you later.” She said with a smile, and she patted Nora on the head.

“H-hi Har-Harry.” Neville said shyly.

“Hello Neville. Did you have a good night sleep?”

Neville blinked in surprised. “Uh…yeah I did. You?”

“It was the best sleep I’ve had in a while. I think all the excitement wore me out.” Salazar said with a laugh.

Neville smiled. “Yeah I think the same happened for me. Well we better get going.”

“Ok I’ll see you two later.” Salazar said, and they waved as they walked away.

“Why would you talk to that Mudblood and that Blood-Traitor?” A voice asked.

Salazar gritted his teeth and turned to glare at the blond, who shrank away because of the scowl on his face. “Because so far they have been the only two to not run away from me, or gawk at me from a distance. So far they are the only two that have been cordial. My mother was a muggle born and my father was a pure blood who sided against the man who murdered them. I will associate with whoever I want, whenever I want. I don’t need your approval Malfoy.”

“No Malfoy, you watch yourself. The hat put me in Slytherin for a reason, so I don’t need yours or anyone’s approval for my actions. I could care less about what people think or say about me. It is not my attitude that needs to be corrected.” Salazar spat, then he turned his back on Malfoy.

“Shall I bite him?” Nora asked, glaring at Malfoy, who was scowling at them.

“No Nora. I can handle the puny little boy.”

“Puny. That is a good name for him.”

Salazar smiled, but looked up when Snape came over to stand in front of him.
“Potter, detention on Saturday for having an unauthorized pet. Here is your schedule, and the Headmaster would like to speak to you. You will find him in his office.” He said sharply, then turned on his heel and left to pass out the other schedules.

“I'm not a pet you overgrown looking bat!” Nora yelled.

He could hear Malfoy snickering behind him, but Salazar just shook his head.

I noticed that he didn’t tell me where the Headmaster’s office was. No matter, it’s a good thing I already know. The Death Eater is already passing out detentions though. I will bide my time with him. Salazar thought as he gathered Nora and his belongings.

As Salazar approached the Gargoyle that guards the Headmaster’s office, he was thankful to see that the corridor was empty.

“Do you know who I am?” He asked looking at the gargoyle.

“I do.”

“Tell no one.”

“As you wish.” It replied, and moved to the side to allow him passage.

He rode on the stairway to the door, and knocked lightly.

“Come in.” Dumbledore’s voice called out.

“You wanted to see me Headmaster?” He asked politely.

“Yes Harry. Please come in.”

Harry is it? Not the common greeting. “Am I in trouble sir? Is this about Nora my snake? Professor Snape already gave me detention because of her.” Though snakes are an authorized pet. I made sure of that, and it can't be changed.

“No Harry this is not about Nora. I am however surprised that you can speak to her.”

“I am surprised it’s not common. I thought all witches and wizards could talk to snakes. I was shocked when people seemed afraid of it.” Salazar replied innocently.

“Well it is not a common gift Harry.” Dumbledore said.

“Who is this man Speaker? Shall I bite him? Is he friend or foe?” Nora asked, peaking out of Salazar’s pocket where he had placed her.

“No, he is the Headmaster. He is very respected. He is not a foe. Please don’t be mean.” Salazar answered.

He knew very well that Dumbledore could understand parseltongue, but the man could not speak it himself. He looked up at Dumbledore who was smiling at him.

“I'm sorry sir. She’s a bit feisty, and she is young. She asked if you were friend or foe and asked if she should bite you. I told her who you are and that she shouldn’t because you are very respected.”
Dumbledore chuckled. “It’s alright Harry. I called you in here because you gave us quite a fright this summer. It seems you disappeared on us after you got your letter. Can you tell me where you were?”

Salazar knew this was coming sooner or later, but he had already thought up a story. “Well sir, I was surprised at my letter. I didn’t even know I was a wizard before I got it. When I did, I was just so excited that I thought I didn’t have to stay with my Aunt and Uncle anymore. They kept me in a broom cupboard all my life, and they starved me. I was beat up by my cousin all the time, and they did nothing to stop it. They verbally abused me, and beat me on occasion, but not enough to cause suspicion. I was sent to my cupboard for days at a time, and wasn’t allowed to come out if I did abnormal things, but now I know that those abnormal things were magic.” He said quietly, as he looked at the floor. “I ran away, and luckily found a nice wizard who helped me. He seemed to recognize me right away. He told me about Diagon Alley and helped me to get there. He showed me the bank and I went in and told them who I was. I was ever so surprised to learn that I have money.” He said, nearly bouncing in his seat. “For the first time I was able to buy new things. I bought new glasses, clothes, and I found a book shop!” He said excitedly. “A shop full of magic books! I bought all that I could carry. I’ve never had anything new before, and I was so happy.”

“Did you not see that people were looking for you?” Dumbledore asked.

Salazar became quite again. “Yes sir, but I had bought a book about disguises and I somehow managed to disguise myself. I was afraid that I would be sent back to my relatives. I don’t want to go back there.” He said with a shiver. “Not to that awful place. I thought they might kill Hedwig and put me back in my cupboard and not let me have food for days. That’s what they used to do.”

“I will eat them when I’m bigger Speaker. Show me these people, and I will bite them. I’m the deadliest snake in the entire world you know.”

Salazar chuckled and patted her head. “No Nora. It’s ok. What’s done is done.” He said, then looked up at Dumbledore. “She wants to eat them, but I told her no. The past is the past. I was unloved, unwanted, and treated badly, but I think I can get past it. The wizarding world is amazing to me.”

Dumbledore studied him a moment. “Who was the man that helped you?”

Nothing about the way I was treated? “He said his name was Peter Pettigrew, but he left me at the bank. He told me all about The Dark Lord, and said he was the one who killed my Mum and Dad. When I asked who the Dark Lord was, Mr. Pettigrew said he was a really dark wizard named Voldemort, but he looked really scared to say his name. After that, he said he must find his Master and tell him that I am alive. I didn’t see him again though.” Salazar said innocently, and tried not to laugh at the expression of horror on Dumbledore’s face. “Oh, oh, I do remember that he turned into a rat when he ran away, but I don’t think he knows that I saw him do it.” Salazar added. “Can people really turn into rats? Can I?”

“Yes Harry, but not for a very long time. Tell me, where did you live while you were away from your Aunt and Uncle?”

“I used my disguise and stayed at the Leaky Cauldron. I didn’t cause any trouble though. I-I promise!”

Dumbledore smiled at the squirming boy. “I’m sure you didn’t Harry, but can you answer me one more thing? What happened with the sorting hat?”

“I already told you that Albus.” A voice above their heads said. “Do you not trust me? I told you that I was surprised that he was the famous Harry Potter.”
“Yes thank you Hat, but I want to hear it in Harry’s own words.” Dumbledore said with a frown.

“I was just surprised that the hat yelled at me. I told him that I was sorry that I squished his mouth.” Salazar said quietly.

“That is all right Harry. Ok, I do believe that you have Transfiguration. You will be late if you don’t hurry to class.”

“I-I don’t know the way.” He said, purposely growing red in the face.

Dumbledore smiled at him. “So you don’t. Very well I will escort you.”

They left the office and Salazar followed Dumbledore through the castle. When they got to the classroom, Salazar realized that they could have been there in half the time by using at least three different shortcuts, but he didn’t say this out loud of course.

“Pardon me Professor McGonagall, I have Mr. Potter. I apologize for keeping him so long.” He said with a twinkle in his eye.

“I understand Professor Dumbledore. Mr. Potter, please find a seat.”

“Yes ma’am. Thank you Professor Dumbledore.”

“You're welcome Harry.” He said with a grandfatherly smile, and then he turned to leave.

Class was pretty boring for Salazar. After all, he could turn a match into a needle wandlessly and in his sleep, but he purposely said the incantation wrong just so he wouldn’t get it on the first few tries. They were sharing the class with the Ravenclaws though, so after one of them managed to get a match to turn pointy, he decided to just compete the spell. McGonagall was impressed and praised him for it. She showed it off to the whole class, much to Salazar’s amazement. He felt sure the Head of Gryffindor would just nod and walk way.

Nora sat on the edge of his desk the whole time, but she managed to remain quiet. She seemed to think that the stern witch would turn her into a needle if she spoke even a word. Professor McGonagall seemed a bit unnerved by Nora, but she didn’t say anything bad about her.

Herbology was next, and Salazar enjoyed Professor Sprout’s teaching. Nora seemed pleased with the class too, though not necessarily the teacher. Nora liked hiding in the dirt and among the plants, but Professor Sprout had asked Nora not to jump out of the plants and scare the other students. This class was shared with the Hufflepuffs, who all seemed afraid of them, but thankfully Nora was not targeting them. She was targeting the Slytherins, but Professor Sprout seemed to find her antics, and choice of victims rather funny.

After lunch came History of Magic. Salazar chuckled when Uric the Oddball was mentioned because he remembered the eccentric wizard when he was at Hogwarts. The lad had been sorted into Ravenclaw, and Salazar remembered Rowena saying how odd the young wizard was because the lad wore a jellyfish on his head. He was not impressed with Binns though. The ghost put the class to sleep and didn’t even notice it. Nora even took the opportunity to catch a nap.

Defense against the Dark Arts was different though. He was not impressed with Quirrell at all. The man’s stuttering problem was a hindrance to his teaching, and Salazar had half a mind to stun the man and teach the class himself. Nora, who sat on the edge of his desk, didn’t like the Professor
either and said she would bite him if he didn’t start speaking correctly.

There was something odd that happened in the class though. Every time Salazar would lock eyes with the Professor the horcrux in his head hurt. It wasn’t something Salazar expected, and it seemed very odd to him. He decided to think on it before jumping to conclusions, because there could be many reasons on why that happened. Needless to say though, it unnerved him.

The rest of the week went by much the same, but Salazar took the time to refamiliarize himself with the castle and its secrets. Some aspects of Hogwarts had changed over the years, but for the most part things were the same. Most of the secret tunnels were intact, but there were a few changes. The tunnel that led from Hogsmeade to the castle no longer started in an empty shack, but instead in Honeydukes cellar. This tunnel had once been an escape tunnel, so that the residents of Hogsmeade could find shelter from the muggles in the more fortified castle. This was before the invention of muggle repelling charms though. Most of the other tunnels were there, but one was caved in.

Salazar’s personal tunnel that he had built for himself was still intact. That one led from the dungeons to the front gates, and was the easiest way to sneak off the grounds if he needed too. He decided to leave the Chamber of Secrets alone for now though, because Dumbledore seemed to be watching him very closely. The entrance was now in a girl’s bathroom and hidden by a sink instead of the simple trap door it had once been.

Salazar had also spoken to a few of the ghosts, mainly Helena, Baron, and the Fat Friar. These were the ones that he knew when he was first there, though they were only students at the time. Helena was delighted to see him again, because she had always called him Uncle. Baron, who Salazar taught and was like a second son at the time, was also pleased to have him back. The Fat Friar had always been afraid of him in life, but wasn’t so much in death. He too welcomed Salazar home, and they all agreed to keep his secret, especially from Dumbledore.

Peeves was a different matter. He too seemed to know that ‘Harry Potter’ was really Salazar, and he took to calling him Lord Slytheryness, much to Salazar’s displeasure. Thankfully though, the poltergeist agreed to keep the secret as well, because he was afraid of Salazar more than he was the Bloody Baron.

Overall, Salazar was pleased with his classes and the Professors that taught them, the exceptions being Quirrell and Binns. There was one more class and Professor that he was interested in though, and that class was on Friday.

Snape had either ignored or avoided him the whole week, and they hadn't spoken since that first day when Snape handed him the schedule. That however, was fine with Salazar. He was still amazed that Dumbledore had employed a former Death Eater, and he wanted to know why. He was going to find out, one way or another.

Friday came, and with it the first potions class of the year. Salazar wasn’t sure how this would turn out, but he knew it was likely to be interesting either way because it was the only class he shared with the Gryffindors.

As they lined up outside the classroom, a custom Salazar was pleased to see hadn't changed, the Gryffindors eyed him suspiciously. He knew that the whole school now knew he was a Parselmouth,
but he honestly didn’t care. He knew what was being whispered about him, and he heard a rumor that the Gryffindors were upset that he wasn’t in their house. He didn’t care about that either. The whispering about him being evil and dark had reached his own ears, but he just had to laugh. He was not evil or dark, well not anymore at least, and he knew that the wizarding world was big on gossip. Again, he didn’t care.

There was two bright spots though, and they were in the form of Hermione and Neville. Neither of them could be considered his best friends, but they were friendly with him. Neville seemed to get over his shyness when around him and Hermione cared more about her studies than gossip. Salazar appreciated them both, and always took the time to be patient with the two Gryffindors and helped them when he could.

The door opened to the classroom, and they all filed in. Slytherins went to one side and the Gryffindors went to another, but there was a table in the middle that he sat down at. Nora came out to sit on the table so she could see the new classroom, but to his surprise, Hermione and Neville sat on either side of him.

“Hello Harry.” Neville whispered. “Did you have a good week?”

“I did actually, but some of the Professors aren’t very good teachers.”

Hermione gasped. “How can you say that? They are Professors!”

“You can’t possibly think Binns and Quirrell are good teachers?”

Hermione closed her mouth with a snap. “Well yes, ok you have a point.” She finally admitted.

“I like Herbology the best so far, but I seem to be rubbish at everything else.”

“It will come in time.” Salazar said with a smile. “You just have to practice.”

At that moment the door burst open and Snape came swooping into the room. He started talking about foolish wand waving and silly incantations, but Salazar began using subtle Legilimency to try and get a read on the former Death Eater’s true intentions. However, Snape seemed to have strong occlumency shields, and that was something Salazar hadn't been expecting. He would have to push harder, but now was not the time for that.

Snape’s eyes landed on him, then flickered to the two Gryffindors sitting on either side of him.

“Mr. Potter, how is our new celebrity doing today?” He asked with a sneer.

Salazar raised an eyebrow, but Nora coiled up on herself.

“No Nora don’t strike. Yes he is hostile, but I will deal with him in my own way.”

“Very well, but I will keep my eye on him.”

Snape watched this exchange with a small barely noticeable flinch, but Salazar caught it. He steepled his fingers, sat up straight, and looked at Snape with a condescending smile.

“To be honest Professor, I don’t really like being the center of attention. There are rumors about me going around that are really hurtful and untrue. I've lived with muggles my whole life and I didn’t even know I was a wizard until I got my letter. I just want to learn all I can about this new life I never knew existed.”
Snape stared at him, and his eyes flickered over his body posture. Then he glanced at Nora, who was still coiled and sitting in front of him. Salazar smirked slightly when Snape turned away quickly and headed away from the table. He knew that Voldemort would often sit like that in Death Eater meetings, and Salazar was determined to rattle Snape’s cage as much as possible.

“Today you will be making a cure for boils. The list of ingredients are on the board, along with examples of how to cut them up. The instructions will follow shortly. Began.” Snape said, before sitting down at his desk at the front of the class.

“He doesn’t seem to like you.” Neville whispered a few minutes later.

“It will be ok.” Salazar assured him. “Let’s just not give him a reason to target us. Pay attention to how you crush the snake fangs though. You still have some big chunks. They need to be crushed to a fine powder like the picture on the board. Your potion might blow up if you don’t.”

Neville stared at him and paled. “Oh, ok. Thanks Harry.”

“You're welcome.” Salazar said and smiled as the boy began correcting his mistake. He chuckled silently when Hermione immediately rechecked her own crushed fangs.

The class passed with little incident, and Snape paid him no mind. Except at the end of class.

“Potter!” He snapped. “Stay behind.”

Salazar raised another eyebrow, but nodded and turned to Hermione and Neville, who looked nervous for him. “Don’t worry about it. I’ll see you later.”

They smiled and shut the door behind them, leaving Snape and Salazar alone.

Salazar walked up to the desk and stood in front of Snape. “You wanted to see me sir?”

What happened next shocked Salazar completely. Snape stared at him, and before Salazar realized what he was doing, Snape cast a wandless Legilimency.

He didn’t get very far.

Salazar threw him out of his mind before Snape could get any information. Then he cast a wandless disarming charm, and had Snape tied up in ropes and bound in his chair before the disarmed Death Eater could blink.

“Accio veritaserum.” Salazar said through gritted teeth, as Snape stared at him with wide and frightened eyes.

Behind him, Nora was hissing with rage, but Salazar told her to keep back just in case she got hurt.

Salazar smiled when the veritaserum landed in his hand. “I figured you’d have something like this laying around Severus.” He said coldly, and forced the liquid down the man’s throat. “That’s a good lad. Swallow it. Very good.” He said, when Snape’s eyes went glassy. “Why did you attack me?”

“I wanted to know your secrets. I think your lying about your life.”

“So you thought attacking a student with legilimency was the right thing to do?”

“Yes.”

“Legilimency is NOT supposed to be performed on a student. The mark of a good Professor is to
figure out if the student is lying or not. It’s called using intuition. You NEVER attack a child with something like that.” Salazar growled, as Snape stared at him. Salazar sighed, then glared at Snape.

“Why do you hate me?”

At this question, Snape began trying to fight the truth serum, but he succumbed anyway. “Because I have too. The Dark Lord would know if I treated you like I cared about you.”

Salazar raised an eyebrow. “Do you care about me?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“You are Lily’s son.”

Salazar leaned back in his chair. “What does Lily have to do with anything?”

“I loved her, and when she died I swore to protect you.”

“Where does your true loyalty lie?” Salazar asked, looking at the man curiously.

Again Snape tried to fight the serum, but it was no use. “With Dumbledore.”

“Why?”

“I was a spy for him. I spied on the Dark Lord. He knew I loved Lily, and when The Dark Lord targeted you, Dumbledore used that knowledge.”

“Do you regret being a Death Eater?”

“I do.”

“Do you oppose everything Voldemort stands for?”

“Yes.”

Salazar stared at the frightened young man, but didn’t ask any more questions. He summoned the antidote for the veritaserum and gave it to him, but kept the Professor tied up. Snape stared at him with wide eyes while Salazar sat lost in thought.

“Who-who are you?” Snape asked cautiously after a few minutes had passed.

Salazar cast several privacy spells and warded the door. As a show of good faith, he released Snape, but did not return the man’s wand to him.

“My name is Salazar Slytherin. On Halloween 1981, I used polyjuice potion to disguise myself as Harry Potter. Two Polyjuiced house elves posed as James and Lily Potter that night because the day before had I sent all three Potters someplace safe.”

At these words Snape’s eyes widened in shock. “Lily-Lily is-is…”

“Alive? Yes. Yes she is.”

Salazar went on to tell him everything, and when he was done, Snape just sat there in shocked silence.
“So you see, I have a mission to complete. My friend Nicholas and I may need your help. Nicholas is a brilliant man, but when it comes to the Dark Arts he lacks the necessary skills. I have realized that my size is somewhat a hindrance to me, but you, you can help me.”

“Forgive me, but I need proof of your identity. I will not help you otherwise.”

“I understand. Do you have a pensieve?”

“Yes, I do.” Snape nodded, and stood up to get it.

Salazar pulled his memories of the night he sent the Potters away, and the night of the attack. He also threw in some memories of the Dursleys and the day he got his letter, as well as some memories of the five days he spent in Rio. Both he and Snape entered the pensive and they both watched snippets of the last ten years of his life, but when they were done, Snape turned to him and nodded.

“Forgive me sir.” He said bowing his head. “I thank you for the proof.”

“If you hadn't asked, I would have thought you a fool.”

“What do you wish me to do?”

“First, I want you to understand that I am neither Voldemort, nor Albus. I will not use you like they have, and yes, Dumbledore has used you for his own gain. I will not use your love for another to hold you to an oath that is unnecessary. Seeing as the real Harry Potter is safe with his parents, and since I am the one who you swore to protect, I release you from that oath.”

At those words, a bright blue light surrounded them, then disappeared with an audible pop.

“You made a mistake many, many years ago Severus, and I will not hold that against you. I am not my wretched Heir. That boy will die by my hand one way or another. Your life is your life to spend as you want. You have clearly been pulled in two very different directions for many years. If you permit me, I will look into ways of removing that mark from your left forearm, and you will not have to live with that mistake hanging over your head. The only thing I will require of you is an oath to never speak a word of this to anyone unless I say. If you choose to help me, that is your decision, but I will not force you to help me. I want you to understand that you have a choice.”

“May I have a few days to think about it?”

“Of course. I understand that this is a lot to process. Take as much time as you need, but I will require the oath before you walk out that door.” He said, pointing to the classroom door. “I could obliviate you, but I want to avoid another confrontation such as this.”

Snape nodded, and Salazar handed his wand to him. “I, Severus Tobias Snape, do hereby swear on my magic that I will not speak of this to anyone unless given permission by Salazar Slytherin. So shall it be.”

The magic swirled around them, and Salazar nodded in approval.
Snape sat in the staff lounge for the weekly staff meeting on Saturday morning, barely listening to the chatter going on around him. He was thinking about the conversation he had the day before. After Salazar had left the classroom, it had only taken him thirty minutes to come to a decision. He would indeed help the Founder of his House. Snape felt it was a great honor to be asked, and when Salazar showed up for his detention that afternoon, he would let him know of his decision.

He was snapped out of his thoughts when the topic turned to the ‘boy’ in question.

“How has young Harry been this week?” Dumbledore asked with a smile, and his customary twinkling eyes.

Snape raised an eyebrow and sneered at the Headmaster. He hadn't been able to talk with Salazar, but Snape thought it best to pretend that things hadn't changed.

“He’s a natural in Transfiguration Albus. He was able to turn a match into a needle in the first class.” Professor McGonagall said with a smile.

“In Herbology he seems fine, he mentioned to me that he tended his Aunt’s garden and kept it up. He seems very interested in the difference between magical and non-magical plants. Though I did have to ask his pet snake not to jump out of the plants and scare the other students. They share the class with my Hufflepuffs, but the snake was only targeting the Slytherins for some reason.” Sprout said with a chuckle. “It was actually quite amusing to see.”

Snape raised another eyebrow in amusement, but held back a snicker. “No doubt a prank.” He spat. “Just like his father.”

“How has Harry adjusted to Slytherin House?” Dumbledore asked.

Snape sighed in annoyance. “He is shunned by the entire house. They seem to be afraid of him because of his ability to speak Parseltongue. I heard whispers that he is the next Dark Lord and other such nonsense. He can often be found by one of the windows with that snake wrapped around his shoulders, doing homework or sitting lost in thought. He seems to be a loner with no friends.”

Dumbledore frowned. “Can you do something to encourage the boys of his year to interact with him?”

“I doubt it Headmaster. Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, and Nott are not likely to be…friendly…towards him, if you get my meaning. Zabini on the other hand might be promising, but he mostly sticks to Malfoy. However, in Potions yesterday he seemed to be friendly with two Gryffindors. A muggle born female by the name of Granger, and the Longbottom boy.”

“Yes, they do seem friendly with Mr. Potter.” McGonagall said. “I have observed them in the library together. He seems to help Mr. Longbottom a great deal with his studies.”

“Is that so?” Dumbledore asked curiously, and she nodded. “Are they afraid of his ability to speak
Parseltongue?”

“Not that I’ve noticed. Mr. Longbottom seems ok with it, and with Miss Granger being a muggle born, I don’t think she understands how that is really perceived.” She answered. “They seem to like the snake, and I have observed both Mr. Longbottom and Miss Granger petting it.”

“Is it ok for him to have that snake Albus? Should we discourage its presence?” Flitwick asked. “It hasn’t caused any trouble to my knowledge. In my class, it sits on the desk in front of Mr. Potter and observes the other students. I do find him talking to it quite a bit, but in Charms, he’s at the top of the class. He got the levitating charm right away. It only took him three tries. He also helps the other students, once he has completed the task.”

“It’s the same for my class.” Several other Professors said in unison.

“No. In truth snakes are an authorized pet. Salazar Slytherin himself made it so. It’s just in the last sixty years or so we have discouraged them. We only say they are allowed an owl, cat, or toad because snakes are looked upon unfavorably. Especially since Voldemort.” He answered, and ignored the flinch that everyone displayed at the mention of the name. “As long as little Nora doesn’t cause any problems she is free to stay.”

Snape scoffed. “So he gets special treatment because he’s a Potter.”

“I-I-I find i-it o-odd that the boy who def-defeated Y-Y-You-Know-Who i-is able to talk to s-s-snakes.” Professor Quirrell said. “Should w-we watch him in c-c-case he is a da-rk w-w-wizard?”

Dumbledore frowned at the stuttering man. “No, I do not think Harry is a dark wizard. However, I do think he needs to be watched. Severus, as his head of house, I want you to keep an eye on him. Pay attention to what he reads and who he speaks too. Also, try to get some of the more neutral and lighter Slytherins to interact with him.”

Snape sighed loudly. “Of course Headmaster.” He said, shaking his head.

Dumbledore smiled at him. “Thank you.”

“Albus, what of the boy’s home life? Several of us have overheard him say that he was mistreated at his muggle relatives. From what I understand, they worked him like a house elf and they abused him both physically and verbally.” Madam Pomfrey said. “I want to check him...”

“That won’t be necessary Poppy.” Dumbledore said, putting up a hand. “I realize Harry is small for his age, and I too have heard him speak of his home life, but I think it is a simple misunderstanding. Children often claim abuse when there is none. Their minds work on a different level than ours. I believe he is fine.”

The medi-witch huffed, but remained silent. Snape raised an eyebrow, but he too kept quiet. However, McGonagall spoke up.

“Albus, you heard me say that they were the worst sort of muggles...”

“I know Minerva, but I had a talk with the Dursleys and they assured me that they didn’t go too far with discipline. They are his family after all, and they have agreed to allow him to stay with them next summer, despite his disappearing act.”

“Very well.” McGonagall said in an unsure tone as she sighed.

“Now, I have one last thing. Severus, it has come to my attention that you gave Harry detention
because of Nora. Is there a chance that I can talk you out of that?” Dumbledore asked.

“No.” He said sharply. “Regardless of my new knowledge that snakes are authorized, I will still have him serve detention. His letter said owl, cat, or a toad, not a snake. He will receive no special treatment from me.” He sneered.

Dumbledore sighed with disappointment. “I see. Very well then. I thank you all for being here this morning. Have a good weekend.”

After breakfast that same morning, Salazar decided to spend some time outside in the warm sunshine. He was sitting beside the lake, and Nora was playing around in the shallow water. He had his homework for the week spread out in front of him, but looked up when he heard footsteps approaching.

“Stay away from Hermione and Neville you stupid Slytherin snake.” The red haired boy said, trying his best to look menacing.

Salazar raised an eyebrow. “I'm sorry but I don’t think we have met yet. What is your name?”

The red head was caught off guard by the lack of acknowledgement to his threat. “Um…Ron Weasley.”

“Hello Ron. I'm Harry Potter. It’s nice to meet you.” Salazar said, and grinned at Ron’s obvious confusion.

Ron narrowed his eyes and glared at Salazar. “Don’t think I'm fooled by your niceness for one bloody second. I know you're evil. Anyone that can talk to snakes is evil. You stay away from Hermione and Neville.”

“Speaker? Is that carrot bothering you?”

“Yes Nora, but you have to understand, he is young and confused. He doesn’t know any better. Everything is fine.”

“Ok then. I will go back to playing in the water. It’s quite refreshing you know.” She said, and slithered back to the shallow water.


Salazar rolled his eyes. “What makes you think I'm evil? Besides the whole ‘talking to snakes thing’.”

“You’re a dark wizard. Everyone says so! You…you…are a Slytherin!”

“So talking to snakes and being a Slytherin makes me a dark wizard?”

“Yes!” Ron shouted. “You want to corrupt Neville and Hermione. Yes that’s it! You want to corrupt them and make them dark wizards too!”

“Why would I want to do that?” Salazar asked in a slightly amused tone.

Ron looked at a loss for words, but glared at Salazar. “Because you’re evil, and anyway, your plan won't work! They are Gryffindors.” Ron said smugly, as if that was the final word on the matter.
“So let me get this right. I'm an evil dark wizard because I'm a Slytherin and talk to snakes. I want to corrupt two Gryffindors and turn them into evil dark wizards too.”

“Yes.” He said, though he sounded unsure now.

“So why Gryffindors and not another Slytherin who would be more open to the idea?”

Ron wavered for a moment, but then sighed. “I don’t know.” He mumbled.

Salazar chuckled. “Truth is Ron, I never knew I was a wizard until I got my letter. I'm no more evil than you are. Hermione is my friend because we have something in common. We were both raised in the muggle world and can talk about things we know about from that world. My mother was a muggle born too, yet that seems to be something that most people forget. My father was a pure blood who fought against You-Know-Who. Neville is a pure blood whose family also fought against You-Know-Who. They are the only ones who don’t run away from the sight of me. They are the only two who have been friendly.”

Ron scowled at him. “Well just know that I will be watching you very closely.” He said, then turned and stomped away.

“That was interesting Speaker. You dealt with the Carrot...differently.” Nora said, as she slithered back toward him.

“Yes well, to deal with a Gryffindor often takes an extreme amount of patience. I am surprised you didn’t offer to bite him though.” Salazar said, looking at her with amusement.

“I don’t eat vegetables.” Nora answered, stretching out in the grass beside him.

Salazar burst out laughing. “Indeed you don’t.”

A few hours later, Salazar was sitting in the great hall eating lunch when an owl fluttered down beside him. Looking up in surprise, he took the letter from the owl’s leg and read it.

My Old Friend,

I have spoken to my other friend about the multiple problems that you mentioned. He admitted that the thought had not crossed his mind, but said that he would look into it. I asked about the location of our mutual enemy, and he assures me that he is fully aware of where he is, but refuses to tell me.

I also asked about my property, but he refuses to tell me the measures in which he has taken in order to assure its safety. He said it was for my own protection.

I don’t know what to make of all this, and I already know what your reaction is. It is one thing for you to refuse me information about the whereabouts of other people for mine and their safety, but it is entirely another thing when it involves my own property. I can tell you that something seems off to me. Please find my property my friend, and put it in the safe place.

Your Old Friend,

Me

Salazar reread the letter from Nicholas, and immediately shook his head. He didn’t know what Albus was playing at by refusing to let Nicholas know about the security measures for the stone, but it
didn’t set well with Salazar.

He looked at Nicholas’s plain brown barn owl and sighed. “Give me a minute to write a reply.”

The owl hooted in acknowledgement, and settled down beside him.

*My Old Friend,*

*I agree something is not right, and I cannot imagine why you would be refused such important information. However, I have recently been proven wrong about a certain person who I thought was no good. This person might be able to give us the answers we seek. I do not know for sure if this person is willing to work with us yet, but I have had them swear an oath to not speak about our secrets.*

*I questioned this person rather vigorously with Veritaserum and I am thoroughly convinced about their loyalty, so there is no reason for concern. If this person agrees to help us, I will most certainly pass on any information I can gather.*

*Your Old Friend,*

*Me*

Salazar rolled up the piece of parchment, sealed it, tied it to the owl’s leg, and watched it fly off. He sat there pondering over why Albus would not be forthcoming with this very important knowledge, but he could not understand the logic or come up with any sensible conclusions. He was still sitting there trying to make sense of it all when he was interrupted by two very excited Gryffindors.

“Harry, Harry!” Hermione breathed in a frantic whisper, as she and Neville plopped down beside him at the Slytherin table. “We have got something to tell you!”

Neville took a deep breath, leaned over towards him, and whispered quietly. “We were in the common room when Fred and George Weasley came in looking really frightened about something. Their friend Lee was sitting near us, and we overheard them talking about the third floor. They unlocked the door because they wanted to know what the ‘pain of death’ part of Dumbledore’s warning meant, and they came face to face with a vicious three headed dog!” He finished fractically.

Salazar felt his blood run cold as he stared at the two frightened children. “Have you told anyone else about this?”

“N-no.” Hermione said. “We told you because we wanted to warn you, but if this gets out, other students might want to see it and get hurt!”

“That is very good thinking Hermione, and I agree. This needs to stay a secret. Were the Weasleys hurt at all?”

Neville shook his head. “No we don’t think so. They just looked really scared.”

Salazar felt himself relax a bit. “Ok, *do not* tell anyone else about the dog.” He whispered.

“We won’t.” They said in unison.

Salazar nodded and refrained the urge to hex the idiot Headmaster, who had just entered the great hall, and tell the man that locking up a *Cerberus* inside a school full of *children* was the dumbest thing in the world. Instead, he sighed and pinch the bridge of his nose. He didn’t know what to think about all this, but he needed to get his thoughts together on the matter.
Suddenly, Hermione let out a shriek, and Salazar looked up to see that someone had dropped a pitcher full of pumpkin juice over her head. She sat there dripping wet, with a look of shock on her face. He glanced down the table and saw that Draco, Crabbe, and Goyle were sitting a few seats away and were laughing.

“Sorry Granger.” Malfoy said in a tone that implied otherwise. “We were practicing the levitating charm. We must have messed something up.” He laughed.

Neville jumped up with his wand in his hand. “It doesn’t sound like you are all that sorry Malfoy.” He accused.

“Ooooh! The squib has guts!” Malfoy sneered. “You two need to go back to the Gryffindor table where you belong. We don’t like your kind.”

Salazar calmly flicked his wand at a bowl of chips, a plate of sandwiches, and a pitcher of milk, and sent them flying at the three pompous clowns. The milk hit Draco square in the head, which made it splash all over him. The chips flew into Crabbe’s face, and the sandwiches flew apart and sprayed their ingredients all over Goyle’s robes.

“Sorry about that.” Salazar shrugged, as a few Hufflepuffs began laughing from their table. “I was practicing the banishing charm that I read about, and something must have gone wrong.”

Draco jumped up from his seat, and drew his wand. Salazar also jumped up, along with Neville and a still soaking wet Hermione. Despite his small size, Salazar shoved them behind himself in order to shield them as best as he could, and glared at Draco.

Draco however, decided he didn’t like being on the business end of Salazar’s wand, so instead he clenched his fists.

“Potter! You wait until I tell my father about this!” He shouted, wiping milk off of his face. Then he turned around with Crabbe and Goyle in tow, and began stomping out of the great hall.

“You tell your father Malfoy!” Salazar shouted after him. “You tell him, and warn him that if he has the nerve to come after me, that I will tie his slimy arse up into a blasted pretzel!”

Draco wheeled around to face him. “Don’t threaten my father Potter! I’ll make you pay!”

“Don’t threaten me with your father! Learn to fight your own battles without involving dear old Daddy you bloody coward!”

This last comment sent Draco into a fit of rage. “Petrificus Totalus!” The blond screamed.

“Protego!” Salazar cried, throwing up shield charm that was large enough to protect himself, Hermione, and Neville.

The full-body bind curse bounced off the shield and flew back towards Draco. The blond stood rooted to the spot in shock, and his own curse hit him right in the chest. Draco’s whole body seized up and he fell over with a loud thump.

“How did that work out for you Malfoy!? A third year Slytherin exclaimed, and most of the great hall started laughing.

Crabbe and Goyle drew their own wands, but Salazar lazily summoned them, along with Malfoy’s. He calmly grabbed them as they sailed toward him and placed them in front of a strangely amused looking Dumbledore. Then he turned to face the three boys.
“I’m sure if you ask Professor Dumbledore very nicely for your wands, he will give them back to you.” He said loudly. Then he turned his full attention to Hermione and Neville. “Are you two ok?” He asked with concern.

Neville nodded, but Hermione shook her head.

“No, I’m covered in pumpkin juice.” She said, looking at him with tears in her eyes. “I feel…gross.”

“Do you want me to teach you a new spell?” Salazar asked gently. Her eyes brightened up a bit, and she nodded. “Ok, this one is a cleaning spell that I read about, and the incantation is ‘tergeo’. What it does is siphon liquids off of something, or in this case, someone. Are you ready?”

They nodded, and began practicing the spell. Hermione was able to get it after a few tries, but Neville took a little longer. They were standing in front of the head table, and Salazar noticed that Flitwick, Sprout, and McGonagall were smiling in their direction. Dumbledore was strangely beaming with pride, but Quirrell seemed to be studying him in an odd sort of way. The way Quirrell was looking at him made Salazar’s scar sting.

“Thank you Harry.” Hermione said after they were finished. “I’ve never had friends as nice as you and Neville. I’m used to being picked on, but no one has ever stood up for me before.”

Neville blushed, but Salazar smiled at her. “I’ve been there Hermione. I know how it feels, its ok.”

“Will you also show us that thing you did to make Malfoy’s curse bounce back at him.” Neville asked hopefully.

Salazar laughed. “It called a shield charm, and yes, I will.”

They grinned at him, and then started laughing at the memory of Malfoy falling over.

“I have detention with Professor Snape though, so I better get going. May I suggest that you two go back to Gryffindor Tower? I know you must still feel sticky Hermione, and would like to freshen up.”

“Yes Harry, you are right.” She said with a giggle.

“I will walk with you.” Neville offered, and Hermione giggled again as they caught sight of a 7th year Slytherin finally canceling the curse on Malfoy.

When he stood up, he glared at them, but fled the room as people pointed and laughed.

“Should I go with them Speaker?” Nora asked, as she glared at Draco’s retreating form from Salazar’s pocket.

He took her out, placed her on the head table, and looked at her curiously. “Why?”

“To make sure they get there safely of course. I am deadly you know.”

He chuckled, and turned to his friends. “She wants to know if she can go with you. To make sure you get there safely.”

Hermione and Neville grinned, and Neville held out his hand. Nora happily slithered into his robe sleeve, and poked her head out.

“I’ll keep a watch out for Puny. He won’t get past me.”
Salazar shook his head and laughed. “I have no doubts about that my friend.” Then he repeated what Nora said. “I better get going though. I’ll see you all at dinner.”

They nodded, and Salazar began making his way to the dungeons.

As Salazar neared Snape’s office, he noticed that the door was slightly ajar and that there was a loud voice coming from the room. He double checked the corridor, and quickly used the disillusionment charm to make himself invisible. He crept over to the door, peeked in, and almost laughed out loud at the sight. Draco was ranting to Snape, who was calmly sitting at his desk and listening.

Salazar carefully opened the door a bit farther and slipped in. He noticed that Snape caught the slight movement, but the young Potions Master didn’t acknowledge it. He silently sat down in a chair in one of the dark corners, and briefly lit the tip of his wand to let Snape know where he was. When Snape slightly nodded his head, Salazar knew that Snape knew exactly who it was that came in.

“…and he humiliated me!” Draco cried, as he stomped back and forth in front of Snape’s desk. “Wait until my father hears about this!”

“Where did Potter put your wands?”

“He gave them to that muggle loving fool Dumbledore.” Draco spat. Then his voice softened, and he looked at Snape. “Can you get them back for us?” He asked hopefully.

Snape shook his head. “I’m afraid I cannot. The Headmaster will tell me no. You will have to do it yourself.”

“Stupid Potter.” Draco said with a scowl. “He will pay for this!”

“Might I suggest you tread carefully where Potter is concerned?” Snape asked.

“Are you siding with him?” Draco asked in a deadly tone.

“Don’t be daft you stupid boy.” Snape snapped. “I am saying to tread carefully because, in case you have forgotten, he defeated one of the darkest and most powerful wizards of our time as a fifteen month old baby. I know for a fact that he was raised by muggles and didn’t know he was a wizard until a month ago. If he can pull off the spells that you say he has performed just by reading about them, then he is extremely powerful. Most seventh years can’t pull them off, so tread carefully Draco.” He warned.

Draco scowled at him. “Fine.” He spat. “Come on you two, let’s go get our wands.” He said, and Crabbe and Goyle loyally followed him out of the room.

When the door had shut, rather forcefully, behind the boys, Salazar shook his head and laughed.

“I applaud your ability to cunningly use words that say, ‘mess with Potter at your own risk’.”

“Thank you sir.” Snape said with a slight smile.

“Draco is a child, so I won’t hurt him.” Salazar said, as he canceled the charm on himself. “But I will defend myself and those in my company from blatant bullying.”

“I wish I could say that I can put a stop to it, but I can’t.”
“I know. You’ve been playing the role of a double spy most of your adult life. If you suddenly appeared on the ‘light side’ you’d lose the respect and confidence of those in the House, and they would never tell you anything.”

“That is true.” Snape said with a sigh.

“Having been a Professor at this very school, once upon a time, I know how hard it is to keep children in line. Yet at the same time, letting them make their own mistakes. They won’t learn if you coddle them all the time. Trust me.” Salazar said.

Snape nodded in understanding. “I have thought about your proposal, and I will indeed help you. However, I think I should remain a spy. One day all children in Slytherin may need me, and my help.”

“Thank you. I was hoping that you would agree to help, but if you wish to remain a spy, that is your choice. I agree though, the children are our most important priority. However, Slytherin house is not the only house that needs to be protected. Please don’t forget that Severus.”

Snape nodded. “I do tend to forget that. I must admit, I do favor Slytherin more than the others.”

“As do I.” Salazar said with a smile. “I suppose I should get on with my detention though. It would not look right if someone came in and saw us simply having a chat.”

“I normally have the students scrub caldrons without magic, but for the Slytherins I have them write lines. I am unsure of which one you’d prefer.”

“I’ll scrub the caldrons. That way we can talk. I received a letter from Nicholas today.” Salazar said, reaching into his bag. “And what he had to say honestly leaves me baffled. I was hoping you knew anything about the topics that have been mentioned.” Salazar said, handing the letter to the young man.

As Snape read through the letter, Salazar began to scrub the caldrons. A few minutes passed in silence, but then Snape sighed loudly.

“If he knows the current whereabouts of The Dark Lord, then that is news to me. Unless he is speaking about Albania. That was the last place we knew of. However, we know that The Dark Lord knows the new location of the stone, obviously, so I’m assuming that Albus knows where he is now. As for the horcruxes, he has not mentioned them to me yet, but I will let you know if he does. Now, about the stone. I know he has set up a number of different traps under the trap door that resides on the third floor. I don’t know exactly what they all are, but I know he has involved several of the Professors, including myself.”

“Really? Do you know who is responsible for the Cerberus?”

Snape stared at Salazar. “Cerberus?” He gasped.

“Yes.” Salazar said with a frown. “Apparently a few curious students decided to venture to the third floor to find out what the ‘pain of death’ would be and came face to face with the beast. I was told this today at lunch. Thankfully Neville and Hermione told only me, but I told them to remain quiet about it. Hopefully no more children become curious. I knew, I knew when that bloody Gryffindor mentioned that at the feast, that that was where the stone was, and I knew that some child would get curious. You don’t say things like that unless you want a child to find it. It should not have even been hinted at.” Salazar ranted.

Snape nodded his head in agreement, but then rolled his eyes. “Let me guess, the Weasley twins
discovered it.”

Salazar laughed and nodded. “Yes. What concerns me though, is the fact that two third years were able to easily access the third floor.”

“The Cerberus would be Hagrid’s doing. I know he is one of the people protecting the stone. The door to the third floor is locked though.”

“Just locked!” Salazar cried. “What the hell is Albus thinking!? A simple unlocking charm can cause it to open. A first year could do that!” Salazar sat down in a nearby chair, sighed, and pinched the bridge of his nose. “There are other reasons why I don’t trust Dumbledore, but this, this is just… mind blowing. If I may, who are the other Professors protecting the stone.”

“Myself, Hagrid, Pomona, Minerva, Filius, Quirrell, and Albus himself.”

“Quirrell?” Salazar asked curiously.

Snape nodded. “Yes sir, why are you surprised? He is the Defense Professor.”

“What do you know about him?”

“Well, he was the muggle studies teacher for the longest time, but when Albus couldn’t find a Professor this year, Quirrell volunteered for it. I must admit that I ask every year for the position, but Albus never grants my request. He is afraid that I will revert to my old ways.”

“Would you?”

“Not to the extent that I was, but he still refuses.” Snape said bitterly.

“Well whether you would, or would not, is really beside the point. There is something…odd…about Quirrell though. Every time he looks at me, the horcrux in my head hurts.” Salazar said, tapping his scar. “I haven’t worked out what that means yet, but it is very odd.”

“It hurts? What could that mean? Do you think Quirrell is a lower ranking Death Eater that I was unaware of? Do you think the Dark Mark causes it?”

“It had crossed my mind, but no, I don’t think that’s the cause. I can look at and converse with you and not have any pain, but he is different.”

Salazar sat lost in thought for a few minutes, and Snape watched him in silence. As Salazar processed everything that Snape had told him, one nagging thing kept coming to the forefront of his mind. Finally, he turned to Snape.

“What is Albus’s plan for Harry Potter? Over the summer, Nicholas mentioned to me that Albus has taken a direct interest in my life. Do you know anything?”

Snape sighed and nodded. “Yes, and it deals with that bloody prophecy. He wants to keep you safe and, to some extent, control you. Just this morning at our staff meeting he was asking about you, but he has never done that with any other student. He asked how you were doing in your classes, and I must admit you have gotten on all of the Professors good sides.” He said with a smile. “Then he asked how you were getting along with those in Slytherin, so I told him. He wants me to get some of the lighter and more neutral students to befriend you. He is pleased with your friendliness with Granger and Longbottom though.”

Salazar smiled fondly at the mention of Neville and Hermione. “They are a bright spot in my day.
Neville is a very shy boy, but I think he’s coming out of his shell little by little. He is not incompetent, but he does have trouble using his magic, and I plan to figure out why. Hermione is a very bright little girl, and honestly, I find talking to her to be quite enjoyable really. Her brain is amazing for one as young as her. Sometimes I find myself almost calling her Rowena on occasion. I wonder why the child didn’t end up in Ravenclaw.” He muttered thoughtfully, but then shook himself out of his musings. “As for Dumbledore, I'm not surprised. His motto has always been…his way or no way. He tried to control the Potters because of the prophecy, and he do doubt will try to control me.” He said with a sigh. “He will find it difficult to do so though.” He said with a mischievous grin.

Snape chuckled lightly. “That will certainly be entertaining to watch.”

“Even more fun to play.” Salazar laughed. “However, I did send a letter back to Nicholas informing him that I have brought you in. I didn’t mention you by name, but he will know who I’m talking about. We need to keep as many people in the dark as we can though.”

Snape nodded in agreement. “I do want to discuss something else with you sir.” He said reluctantly, but Salazar nodded for him to continue. “Before you came here, I had a preconceived idea about how you would be. I am ashamed to say that it was an unfavorable idea. I find myself at a lost on what to do, and wonder how you feel I should act towards you. Everyone believes that I think you are spoiled, arrogant, pampered, and act just like James Potter.”

Salazar smiled and chuckled. “James and Lily both warned me that you may think like that, and given your attitude the first week, I figured that’s what it was. I also want to tell you that I had an unfavorable view about you as well, but I am happy that I was proven wrong. However, I think we should continue to act like we dislike each other. More so you, than me. If those in Slytherin see you treating me in a favorable manner, your life may be in danger. On top of that, if they see you treating me with contempt they are more likely to run off at the mouth and give us useful information. Besides, it should be fun for you.”

The corners of Snape’s mouth quirked up in a smile. “Indeed.” He chuckled. “However, if for any reason I anger or offend you with any of my comments or actions, please let me know.”

Salazar nodded his head slightly and smiled. “I will indeed let you know.”

For the rest of his detention, Salazar scrubbed the cauldrons, and him and Snape talked. Salazar learned a few surprising pleasant things, but he also learned some horrifying truths.
Salazar you blasted idiot! How could you be so stupid?! Pettigrew is dead! Now Albus knows you're lying, and your little plan to rat out Pettigrew as the traitor has blown up in your face! Stupid, stupid, stupid! That is a Gryffindor mistake! Why didn't you check to make sure the rat was still alive?! Salazar ranted to himself, as he ran down a dimly lit shortcut.

He was obviously not in a good mood. He had just come from the common room, where he had written a letter to Lily and James giving them the details about Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew. Salazar, of course, had learned this information from Snape during detention. Snape wanted to know how Dumbledore reacted to the news about Salazar meeting a dead Peter Pettigrew, so Salazar told him that Dumbledore looked shocked, but hadn't said anything.

Now Salazar knew why Dumbledore had looked shocked. Pettigrew was dead!

It was also one of the reasons why Salazar was running full speed down a dimly lit, and very dusty shortcut, that he was pretty sure hadn't been used in a few centuries. This one led from the dungeons straight to the second floor, and for once he was thankful for all the running he had to do to get away from Dudley.

Just two more shortcuts to the owlery! I have to get this letter to Lily and James. They are going to be so disappointed! I hate to have to tell them this news about Sirius, but I cannot believe I was so stupid!

He was so busy yelling at himself that he wasn’t paying any attention to how close he was to the end of the shortcut. He burst out of the hidden exit in a massive whirlwind of dust, and crashed into the back of a man wearing a purple turban.

Then a few things seemed to happen all at once.

Professor Quirrell let out a surprised scream at the same time Salazar felt his nose make a horrible crunching sound. Salazar spun around wildly with tears in his eyes from the sudden blinding pain in both his nose and his scar, but he managed to see that Quirrell was now laying sprawled out on the floor because of the impact.

He wasn’t alone though.

A very surprised Snape, McGonagall, and Dumbledore were also standing there, and they had all apparently been talking with each other. The Professors were now coughing and sputtering because of all the dust in the air, but Salazar just stood there in shock trying to process what happened. He was covered in so much dust that he looked like a ghost, with blood pouring out of his nose, and tears streaming down his face.

“Mr. Potter!?” McGonagall gasped, as the dust began to settle. “Are you alright!?”

Dumbledore stood there with an amused expression on his face. Snape’s eyebrows had disappeared into his hairline, and Quirrell was slowly getting back to his feet.
“Mr. Potter?” McGonagall asked again.

Salazar was honestly at a loss for words about the situation, but he couldn’t say anything even if he wanted too.

Because he had to sneeze.

Deciding to make the best of a bad situation, and to avoid any questions for the time being, he decided to sneeze onto the portrait that hid the next shortcut that he needed access to. This action not only hurt because of his broken nose, but also gave him a reason to ‘accidently’ find the shortcut through the painting.

After spraying blood all over the painting when he sneezed, he waited a moment for it to soak in before ‘accidently’ leaning against it. Then he disappeared through the painting with a ‘surprised’ scream, before sliding down the wall to catch his breath.

“MR. POTTER!” McGonagall yelled frantically, as she banged on the painting in an attempt to figure out what happened. “Mr. Potter can you hear me!? Albus! What do we do!? He’s trapped in the wall!”

“Now Minerva, I'm sure our young Harry is fine.” Salazar heard Dumbledore say calmly, as he healed his nose.

“Albus! He had a bloody nose!” She shrieked. “Where did he come from, and why was he running so fast?! What if he got hit in the face!?”

“I think that had more to do with the impact.” Snape said with a laugh.

“Severus!” She chided. “Don’t laugh, he could be seriously hurt!”

“W-w-where did the b-b-boy go?” A very confused Quirrell asked.

“Well it seems that young Harry has managed to find one of Slytherin’s blood activated shortcuts.” Albus said nonchalantly.


“Oh yes. All the Founders created their own shortcuts. Salazar used blood, Rowena and Helga used charms, and Godric used passwords. They are all usable by everyone and sometimes crisscross each other. The walls of Hogwarts hold more shortcuts than we often realize. The trick is finding them all because no one knows exactly where they are, or how to access them. For example, on the fourth floor there is a brick that is set in the wall vertically, and to access the shortcut you need to change the color. What that color is, no one knows. It could even be a combination of colors, and unless you have lots of free time and a good memory, you could be trying to figure it out for years. Also there is a portrait of Salazar in the dungeons that conceals a shortcut that leads to the entrance hall. Godric set the password as ‘mortal dread’.”

Salazar rolled his eyes. Yes, and Godric thought it was hysterical.

“But blood activated shortcuts!? That’s dark magic!” McGonagall shouted, not really wanting to let it go just yet.

Dumbledore sighed. “Yes, I do agree that it’s a little disturbing, but it is Salazar Slytherin we are talking about.”
“A-and how do you know about t-t-the blood activated s-s-shortcuts?” Quirrell asked.

“Years and years of past Headmasters’ written ramblings.” Dumbledore simply said.

“But do you think Mr. Potter is alright?” McGonagall asked. She still sounded uncertain about the whole ordeal.

“I’m sure he’s fine Minerva. He is probably already on the seventh floor, or wherever this one happens to lead to. He more than likely feels rather embarrassed by it all.” Dumbledore said.

“B-but where did t-the boy c-c-come from?”

“Another shortcut it looks like.” Snape said, though his voice sounded muffled this time.

“Severus stop laughing!”

“Well it serves the Potter brat right! Strutting around the castle like he owns it. I should give him another detention!” Snape shouted.

“Now, Severus I do think you are overreacting. Harry is apparently having a string of good luck this evening, but I must say he did manage to find one that obviously had not been used in a while. It was rather dusty.” Dumbledore said.

After that, Salazar heard them shuffle away. McGonagall was still muttering about finding him to make sure he was ok, but Salazar breathed a sigh of relief when Dumbledore assured her that ‘Harry’ would eventually show up at dinner. If ‘Harry’ didn’t show up, then Dumbledore said he would send someone to look for him.

Salazar took a deep breath and stood up. Right! Now, on to the owlery.

After leaving the owlery, Salazar decided to take the long way back so he could stop off in a bathroom to get himself somewhat cleaned up. He had stressed to Hedwig that the letter was important, but not as important as her life. He was worried about her having to cross the open ocean to get to Brazil, and told her to rest as often as she needed to before she made that crossing. Salazar knew he wouldn’t see her for a couple weeks.

After cleaning the dust off his clothes and blood off his face, he finally felt good enough to go to dinner. He still wasn’t as presentable as he’d like to be, but it would have to do until he took a shower.

As he entered the great hall, he noticed McGonagall watching the doors like a hawk and saw when she let out a breath that she had seemingly been holding. Snape was there as well, and actually smirked when they locked eyes. Dumbledore smiled at him, and Quirrell was scowling, but not at him.

Salazar followed his gaze and that’s when he noticed that the Gryffindor table looked rather odd. There was a big space in the middle where no one was sitting, and from that space lots of hissing could be heard.

Nora!

He made a beeline towards the Gryffindor table, but when he got closer, that’s when he heard what
was going on.

“…and another thing you stupid vegetable, I am the deadliest snake in the world! Speaker is not evil, Bushy and Bottom are not dark, and if you keep saying that they are…I will bite you!”

Nora was commanding an audience. Gryffindors were watching the little black snake carefully as she hissed and slithered back and forth across the table. Her head was raised, and it was clear that she was talking to Ron because that’s who she was facing.

Ron, for his part, looked pale and too scared to move. Obviously he thought that if he did, she would strike.

“What is going on here?”

Every head whipped around to face him.

“Harry!” Hermione exclaimed, at the same time Neville cried, “What happened to you?!”

“Speaker, my patience with the Carrot is almost at an end. He yelled at Bushy and Bottom and told them to ‘take me over to where I belong’. He also said that you were a stupid evil Slytherin and that Bushy and Bottom are going dark! I may have to start rethinking my vegetable intake!”

“Ron, I advise you to keep your false accusations to yourself. In case you haven’t noticed, Nora can understand English, and your comments about Hermione, Neville, and myself have nearly caused you to be bitten. Do yourself a favor, and keep quiet.” Salazar said sternly.

“But you’re a slimy Slytherin! You’re trying to…ahhhhh!” Ron screamed, as Nora lunged at him.

He fell out of his seat and landed on the floor on his back. Thankfully Nora was only threatening Ron and had no intention of actually biting him. If she had really wanted to though, she could have easily got him when he hit the floor.

“I warned you.” Salazar said, as Ron glared up at him. “Nora, come to me. I don’t want to take a chance of someone shooting a spell at you.”

Still hissing as loud as she could, Nora complied. She slithered over to him, and disappeared in his robe sleeve.

“Are you two alright?” Salazar asked, looking at Hermione and Neville.

They laughed and nodded. “We haven’t had a problem until just a few minutes ago.” Neville said. “Ron had actually been talking to us all day. He was trying to warn us about you being evil, but he didn’t know Nora was around until we sat down for dinner. That’s when Hermione offered Nora some chicken. She came out, and that’s when Ron started yelling.” He laughed.

“That’s also when I finally lost my patience.” Nora added. “If that stupid Carrot would stop talking bad about you and pay more attention to his homework, he wouldn’t have gotten a ‘T’ on his charms paper. Whatever all that means.”

“A ‘T’ on his paper?” Salazar asked.

Hermione laughed. “She understands a lot, doesn’t she? Earlier, Ron was complaining to us that he got a ‘T’ in charms.”

“What did that stupid snake say about my homework!?” Ron yelled.
“That if you stopped worrying about me and what I'm doing, and paid more attention to your studies, you wouldn’t get bad marks.”

Ron glared at them before stomping to the far end of the table. He sat down in a huff, and began piling food onto his plate.

“Stupid vegetable.” Nora grumbled.

“So Harry, what happened to you?” Neville asked. “You look a mess.”

Harry sat down at the Gryffindor table and began to place food on his own plate. He ignored the curious looks and glares of the Gryffindors though.

“Well, I found a shortcut.” He said, and began to explain what had happened earlier.

After a lot of laughing, and curious grins from the Weasley twins, Salazar finally calmed down enough to realize that he hadn't apologized to any of the Professors, and said as much.

“You really should go apologize Harry. It’s the polite thing to do.” Hermione said. “We will watch your food.”

“It is the polite thing to do, thank you Hermione.” Salazar said with a nod. Then he took a deep breath, got up, and headed for the head table.

“M-Mr. P-Potter, what can I-I do f-for you?” Quirrell asked, as Salazar approached him.

Salazar sucked in a deep breath as pain flicked across his scar, but he tried not to let it show.

“Sir, I just wanted to apologize for knocking you over. I was telling Hermione and Neville what happened when I realized that I hadn't. Are you ok? I didn’t hurt you did I?” He asked, looking as innocent as he could.

“N-no Mr. P-Potter you didn’t h-hurt m-m-me. However, I am c-curious about where y-you ended up.”

“Oh I came out on the 5th floor. I honestly don’t even know how I fell through that painting. I was just out exploring because I haven't had a chance to yet. I had overheard some older Ravenclaws talking to first years about shortcuts. They said that the Founders used magic to hide them, so I went around trying to find them. I honestly didn’t know what I was doing, but I read about the revealing charm and decided to see if anything came of it.”

“And did it Potter?” Snape asked curtly.

“Oh yes sir. I found a shortcut from the dungeons to the second floor.”

Quirrell glared at him, and that made the scar sting even more. “And why w-w-were you in such a-a hurry?”

“It was scary, dark, and full of dust.” Salazar said with a grimace, as he rubbed his scar. “I don’t know if I will use it again.”

Snape eyes flickered between Salazar and Quirrell, but Salazar decided not to acknowledge it right now, especially in such close proximity to Quirrell.

“And what about you Mr. Potter? Are you alright?” McGonagall leaned over and asked with
“Yes ma’am.” Salazar said with a nod. “I fixed my nose. I think I broke it.”

“You fixed your nose?” She asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Yes ma’am. I read about a minor healing charm in a book I bought over the summer. I used ‘episkey’, and I think I got it to work properly. At least it doesn’t hurt now.”

“Still, I would like you to visit Madam Pomfrey in the hospital wing just to be sure. I warn you, I will be checking with her to make sure you went, so don’t try to skip out.”

“Yes ma’am. Again, I’m so sorry for running into you all like that. Especially you Professor Quirrell.”

“It’s a-a-alright Mr. P-Potter.”

Salazar nodded his head slightly, turned, and made his way back to the Gryffindor table. It had been a very long day, and he was hungry.

A few days later, Salazar found himself in yet another amusing situation. Only this time he hadn’t caused it. Well, not entirely that is. Apparently the little blond nuisance known as Malfoy had indeed ‘told his father’, and now Salazar found himself in the Headmaster’s office facing said father.

He had been studying in the common room when Snape came to get him, and on the way to Albus’s office Snape had filled him in. Salazar really didn’t know what to make of all this, so in the short time it took to get from the dungeons to the Headmaster’s Tower, he decided to wing it.

When he got there, he was surprised at who all was gathered in the room. Dumbledore obviously, and with McGonagall being Deputy Head, he understood her presence. Snape too, for the obvious reason of being Head of House. Draco, Lucius, and Narcissa of course, but why was Quirrell there? That had surprised Salazar more than the meeting itself. It seemed to also throw Snape for a loop, because when they arrived, he glanced at Quirrell, paused for a moment, but then stood in a dark corner to watch the confrontation.

Salazar sat in one of Dumbledore’s squashy arm chairs, and looked around the room innocently. Draco was smirking proudly, Lucius and Narcissa looked at him like he was a disease, Dumbledore looked strangely unperturbed, McGonagall looked nervous, but Quirrell somehow looked both nervous and angry. Salazar didn’t know how that was even possible.

“Am I in trouble? I don’t understand what this is about.” Salazar said, as he shifted uncomfortably.

Dumbledore smiled. “I will explain Harry. The other day in the great hall you…”

“Attacked my son and threatened me.” Lucius said, cutting across Dumbledore abruptly.

Salazar was immediately on the defensive, but he didn’t let it show. He did however, decide to deal with the Death Eater like the Professor he once was. He was going to have fun chastising Lucius, as if the man were a common pupil. He was also going to enjoy making the man a tad uncomfortable.

He shifted around until he was sitting up straight in the chair. Then he steepled his fingers, cocked his head to one side, and called for Nora without taking his eyes off the Malfoys.
“My dear, perhaps you should make your presence known. I would not like for anyone to accuse me of hiding you. You can sit on the arm of my chair.”

“Very well Speaker.” She said, sliding out of his robe sleeve. “I want to see what Puny’s family looks like anyway.”

Salazar smiled, but suppressed a chuckle as Lucius and Narcissa’s eyes widened in fear at suddenly hearing Parseltongue. He was also happy to notice that Lucius’s eyes flicked across his body posture, but they zeroed in on Nora when she coiled up on the arm of the chair.

This should go a little easier. Salazar thought. It could even be entertaining.

“I’m afraid I don’t understand Mr. Malfoy. Could you elaborate?” Salazar asked curiously.

Lucius recovered quickly and was back to his normal arrogance. “We are here today to settle this little matter and see that there will be no more threats from you towards me and my son. You attacked my son, and threatened me. I do believe the words were, ‘tie his slimy arse up into a blasted pretzel’. That is a threat Mr. Potter, in case you were unaware.”

“I am aware of that.” Salazar said cold voice. “However, did little Draco also tell you that he attacked a friend of mine in the middle of the great hall? I responded by banishing a pitcher of milk at him. He also cast the full-body bind curse at me, and I responded with a shield charm that caused the full-body bind to rebound. I am sure that you are fully aware that shields can do that. It is not my fault that your son lacks the self-preservation skills that Slytherin prides itself on. Draco attacking his peers in the middle of the great hall, like a hot headed Gryffindor, doesn’t bode well for the Malfoy family name. But as the muggles say, like father-like son.” Salazar said with a sigh.

Salazar noticed that the Malfoys visibly stiffened at the verbal barb. Dumbledore chuckled, McGonagall sucked in a breath, and Quirrell let out what sounded like a tiny snort. He, of course, couldn’t see Snape, but he did hear the young man shuffle around.

Lucius narrowed his eyes. “How dare you Potter!” He spat. “My son does not act like a Gryffindor, nor do I!”

“Are you sure?” Salazar asked. “Because I have only been here for a week and a half and I have been trying to figure out how the Malfoys ended up in Slytherin in the first place. Your son starts things in the middle of the great hall so that he gets laughed out of the very room. He threatens me by yelling about telling his father, when he is the one who starts it. Then he runs to dear old Daddy to fix his problems for him. Well, I suppose that last part could be considered Slytherin like, but not by much. As for you acting like a Gryffindor Mr. Malfoy, well a Death Eater who screams imperius just after Voldemort is destroyed is very brave. Bravery is a trait of Gryffindor, not Slytherin, last I checked.” Salazar said, and the room suddenly became very still and quiet, as everyone stared at him in shock.

“How dare you!” Lucius shouted, jumping out of his seat. “I have never been so insulted in my life! You don’t even know what you are talking about!”

“Sit down you pompous clown!” Nora yelled, as she lifted her head and hissed loudly. “You spit all over me because of your insane ramblings! I do not appreciate that!”

“He just doesn’t like to face the truth my dear.” Salazar said soothingly, as he absentmindedly caressed her head. “It is all right.”

Salazar smirked at Lucius, as the man backpedaled and sat down when the Parseltongue was spoken.
“Actually I do know what I’m talking about. Granted, I have only known about the wizarding world for little over a month, but I do read. When I learned who I was, and what happened to my parents, I decided to pay The Daily Prophet a little visit. Back dated issues of the paper came in very handy, and your trial caught my eye. At first I believed that you had been imperiused, but now that I have met the Malfoy family, I am beginning to rethink that. I looked into the Unforgivables Mr. Malfoy. I read all about them and I know what they are, and what they can do. Even I, an eleven year old child, can see through the façade that you have created. While most in our world believe that Voldemort is dead and gone, some very important people do not. A Death Eater who screams imperius is not very Slytherin like in my opinion. It is very brave and Gryffindorish. What would Voldemort say to you, if he returns? Would he have mercy on you? You turned tail and screamed imperius. I don’t think he would be very happy with you. I know I wouldn’t.”

“Speaker, there is a feeling of great fear in the air, and I smell human urine.”

“Where is the urine smell coming from?”


Salazar smirked and started to chuckle. Then he looked right at Lucius and gave him a cold condescending smile. “Nora tells me you have soiled yourself Mr. Malfoy. Perhaps you should go take care of that.”

Lucius paled and looked around nervously before rising out of his seat. “We are done here. Come Narcissa and Draco, let’s go.” He said, as he roughly grabbed his son and dragged him towards the door.

Salazar watched as the Malfoys left in a hurry. It seemed that the tension that had built up in the room had left with them, but Salazar was in no way going to drop his guard. He knew that he might have gone a little too far with the Death Eater and Voldemort thing, but if asked about it, he would just act as innocently as he could. Or at least try too anyway. However, rattling Death Eaters and making them feel uncomfortable was quickly becoming a favorite pastime of his. He just hoped Severus would forgive him.

“At least that horrible smell is gone now.” Nora said, as she slithered off the arm of the chair to settle in Salazar’s lap.

Salazar just chuckled, and petted her head lightly.

“I-I must applaud you M-Mr. P-P-Potter. I-I don’t think I have e-ever s-s-seen Lucius M-M-Malfoy run from a-a-an eleven y-e-year o-old before.” Quirrell said with a chuckle.

Salazar really didn’t know what to say to that, but he smiled. “Thank you sir. I just said how I felt about the matter. I don’t know what Draco told him, but at least he heard my side of the story.”

“I do believe Professor Quirrell was referring to the Death Eater and You-Know-Who comments Mr. Potter.” McGonagall said. “Personally, I find it all a little disturbing myself.”

“As do I.” Dumbledore agreed. “Tell me Harry, how do you feel about Voldemort?”

Salazar stared at Albus in disbelief. “With all due respect sir, he killed my parents. Am I supposed to give him a hug if I ever have the misfortune of meeting him?” He asked, and nearly jumped when Quirrell laughed loudly.

“What w-w-was the b-boy s-s-supposed to s-say A-Albus?” He asked, and received a glare from Dumbledore.
Behind him, Salazar heard what sounded like a cross between a snort and a scoff. “Arrogant little prat. Just like your father. You have no respect for...”

“Severus.” Dumbledore said in a warning tone. “No Harry, I do not think you should hug Voldemort.” He said a bit more kindly. “I am disturbed that you have read about such dark magic like the Unforgivables though.”

Salazar internally rolled his eyes, but did not let his feelings on the matter show. This subject needs to be deflected, or else I will blow up the man’s office. “I’m sorry sir, but the muggles have a saying… knowledge is power. When I found out about the wizarding world, I read nearly everything I could about it. When I read what happened to my parents and me, I wanted to know how they died. The killing curse was mentioned, so logically, I investigated.”

“But Harry, you are too young…”

“Headmaster,” Salazar said trying to control his anger. “I have lived what seems to be several lifetimes.” Oh how true. “I have lived a life of hardship, cruelty, and abuse. I have learned that to have knowledge is to have power. I know have knowledge that will help me keep my enemies at bay, if even for a sort time. The Malfoys, and the Dursleys for that matter, are my enemies and I can deal with both of them.”

“You say you have lived a life of hardship, cruelty, and abuse Harry, but I have met and talked with the Dursleys. They have assured me that they didn’t go too far with discipline. Surely you must know that a swat on the bottom is not abuse.” Dumbledore said kindly.

“A swat on the bottom!??” Salazar cried. “Is that what they told you? I was locked in a broom cupboard for ten years! My Hogwarts letter was addressed to Harry Potter, Cupboard under the Stairs! I was beaten if I did ‘abnormal things’! I was starved for days! I was bullied by my cousin! Does this look like a swat on the bottom!??” He shouted, as he ripped off his robes and undershirt to reveal the scars all over his torso and back. “The person responsible for dumping me with my magic hating Aunt and Uncle needs to be tied to a horse carriage and dragged through the streets in shame!”

Salazar was out of control and he knew it. His head was throbbing from the pain in his scar, and Dumbledore’s desk was vibrating violently, He knew that if he did not get out of that room, something bad was going to happen.

Just not the desk. Please not the desk. Godric built that with his bare hands without magic. Not the desk, not the desk.

BOOM!

That side table will do!

One of Dumbledore’s side tables had indeed exploded, and it sent wood splinters, and the trinkets it was holding, flying all over the room. Salazar knew he had to get out of there before Dumbledore and the others regained their senses. He snatched up Nora and ran to the door, only to find it locked.

“Let me out!” He shouted.

“No Harry, we need to talk about this.” Dumbledore said with a shaky voice. “I’m not letting you out.”

“I was not talking to you!” Salazar wheeled around and shouted, as another table exploded. He looked towards the ceiling. “I said let me out!”
The door made several clicking sounds and Salazar wrenched the blasted thing open. He ran all the way down the stairs, and when he reached the bottom, he ran a few feet towards his right and stopped in front of a suit of armor.

“Muggle borns are the future.” He whispered.

The suit of armor took its sword and tapped the stone. Salazar waited as the stone melted away, and disappeared into the shortcut just seconds before the Professors exited from the gargoyle.

A few hours later, Salazar was still sitting in that very same shortcut. His head had finally stopped pounding, but it did still hurt a bit. He knew it was late and past dinner, but he didn’t care. He also knew that he should not have lost control like that. Severus had warned him how Dumbledore thought about his life at the Dursleys, but seeing it firsthand and with Dumbledore acting so nonchalant about it, sent him into the rage.

Children are one of the most important things on the planet, and for the Headmaster of a school to dismiss a seemingly child’s claim is just deplorable. It should have been investigated vigorously, and Albus should not have taken the named abusers word so faithfully. Of course the Dursleys would deny it! He ranted to himself.

“Speaker, are you alright? We have been sitting in the dark for a very long time.”

“Yes Nora, I am fine now. I just needed to get away from Albus. I shudder to think at how many real children have suffered because he refuses to believe that family can hurt one another.”

“He should be dismissed.”

“No, I’m afraid I may have to disagree with you. Albus has many faults, but as long as he is at Hogwarts, the school remains safe from an outright attack by Voldemort.”

“But isn’t Morty coming to get the stone?” Nora asked curiously.

“Himself?”

“Yes.”

Salazar sighed and shook his head. “No, I believe that he would have a follower do it for him. Doing it himself doesn’t seem to be his style. Besides, he doesn’t have a body and wouldn’t be able to touch the stone, much less use it.”

“I understand.” She hissed. “So we should be looking for a follower then?”

He nodded. “Yes, and I think we should keep an eye on Quirrell. My scar hurts too much when I am around him. I am convinced it’s not a coincidence.”

“And your scar involves Morty, right?”

“That is correct.”

“Speaker, I am hungry. You must feed me, or I will bite someone and eat them.”

Salazar laughed and patted her head. “Alright my dear. We shall see what the elves in the kitchen can give us.” He said, then stood up and began to make the short trek to the kitchen.
They only had an hour until curfew, so this would have to be a quick meal.
A few days after the confrontation with Harry Potter, Lucius Malfoy was still pacing around his study. He didn’t like how that meeting went at all. How could he have let an eleven year old child get the best of him like that? He was furious at himself, furious at Draco, and even more furious at Potter and Dumbledore.

However, there was something about the boy, something he didn’t like to think about. The body posture, the coldness of the eyes, the tone of the voice, and the Parseltongue.

Lucius shivered.

It couldn’t be, could it? He thought.

Even he knew it was possible that the Dark Lord wasn’t dead. He wasn’t stupid. The Dark Mark was inactive, not gone.

Could the boy actually be the Dark Lord? He asked himself, and the thought made him stop in his tracks in front of the fireplace.

He didn’t know if it was even possible, but then again…the voice, eyes, posture, and Parseltongue.

Lucius shivered again.

“Narcissa!” He shouted, turning and running out of the study and into the library, where he knew she’d be reading. “Narcissa!”

“What is it Lucius?” She asked, placing the book onto the table beside her. “You look ashen. What is wrong?”

“The boy.” He said, looking frantic. “I think the Potter boy is the Dark Lord.”

She stared at him with wide eyes. “Surely you don’t think…”

“I don’t know how it would be possible, but it is the Dark Lord we are talking about. He is very powerful and capable of anything.”

She gasped and searched her husband’s face frantically. “Draco has been antagonizing the Dark Lord.” It was not a question, but a statement. She too had caught the similarities, but had been afraid to voice them out loud. “Are we in danger Lucius? Has Draco angered him?”

“I think I have angered him more than Draco. Surely Draco antagonizing him hasn’t helped though.” Lucius said, nervously running a hand through his long blond hair. “You heard what the Potter boy said. ‘I don’t think he would be very happy with you. I know I wouldn’t’. The Potter boy said that!” He exclaimed.

“We need to warn Draco.” Narcissa said, placing a hand on Lucius’s arm to calm him. “Talk to Severus, and tell Draco not to irritate Potter. However, DO NOT tell Draco that we think Potter is
the Dark Lord. *If* we are wrong, we don’t want to anger the real one. Understand?*

“That is very wise thinking my dear. Excellent suggestion.” Lucius said, kissing his wife lightly on her cheek. “I will return, and I’ll let you know what Severus says.”

Narcissa nodded, and watched as Lucius flooed to Hogwarts.

Draco had already left the Potion Master’s office, and Severus watched as Lucius flooed back to Malfoy Manor before he let loose with loud and boisterous laughter.

It was rather uncharacteristic for him, but it felt good.

Once he calmed down, but still grinning like a school boy, he made his way over to one of the cupboards he used for spare potion phials, and poured himself a drink. He really couldn’t fault Lucius though. After all, if Severus didn’t know the truth, he would be thinking the exact same thing.

He sat down in his desk chair, swirled the amber liquid in his glass, and pondered about how much his life had changed in the last few weeks. It felt like a giant weight had been lifted off his shoulders. He felt lighthearted and free, and it all started when he realized Lily was alive.

Severus closed his eyes and remembered the memory Salazar had shown him that day. Lily was sitting on a black leather couch, in what seemed to be a study, with Potter right beside her and Salazar sitting across from them. She looked older, but still as pretty as ever. Her hair was still just as red, and her eyes were still the vibrant green he loved. She was crying though. Crying over Severus.

“I feel it’s all my fault.” Lily said through her tears. “If I had forgiven Severus for calling me a mudblood, he would have never joined Voldemort. It’s my fault he turned out like that.”

“I know he was your best friend Lily, but you can’t blame yourself for his choices.”

“I understand that James, but I still feel somewhat responsible for it.” Then she looked at Salazar with pleading eyes. “Salazar, promise me something.”

“What is it Lily?” Salazar asked gently.

“Promise me that if Severus has changed, that if he opposes Voldemort and regrets being a Death Eater, promise me that you will take him under your wing. Trust him. James is right. Severus is the reason Voldemort asked me to step aside. I know it in my heart. Please Salazar, I know how you feel about Death Eaters, but please, put aside that anger for him. I know deep down in my heart that Severus is a good man.”

James Potter nodded in agreement. “Sirius and I gave him hell, and I feel that it is partly our fault too. I judged him too quickly. Even as young as we were, I loved Lily the moment I set eyes on her, and I was jealous because of their friendship. I should not have tormented Snape, and I regret that I did. If Lily knows in her heart that he is a good man, then I believe her.”

Salazar nodded. “I will take it under advisement.”

“Thank you Salazar.” Lily said with a hopeful bright smile. “I love him. He was my best friend, and if he regrets his decisions, please tell him I forgive him.”
Snape’s eyes opened at that moment, and the words floated around in his head.

*She loves me. He thought. If only as a friend, but she loves and forgives me. I heard it in her voice, and seen it in her eyes. Forgiveness and love.*

He smiled and nodded to himself. He, as ludicrous as it sounds, even forgave James Potter that day. James had apologized, vouched on Snape’s behalf, and agreed with Lily. Both of them sent Salazar to him, and he certainly wasn’t angry over that. How could he be?

To all those who have been sorted into Slytherin House, Salazar Slytherin was a man to be admired and respected. It was widely believed that Salazar was ruthless, cunning, cold, stern, and uncaring. Most in Slytherin mimicked that perceived image, and Severus was one of them. He had molded his own ruthless, cunning, stern, cold, and uncaring behavior after him, but he was quickly realizing that that perceived image was far from the truth.

Salazar was not a god, that much he knew. The man was not perfect. He had his fair share of sorrows and regrets, and had made many mistakes in his life. Salazar had admitted to him that immortality was his greatest mistake and regret. When Snape had asked why, he saw the pain in Salazar’s eyes, but the man had sighed and told him.

> “I regret my immortality because that was the final straw. For years Godric and I had bickered over muggle borns, muggles, and dark magic, but we always got past that. I understood his views and he understood mine. We butted heads from time to time, but it was not what drove us apart. What drove us apart was my quest for immortality. He told me it was too dark, and that he could not condone it. I argued and said living for ever would be wonderful. We could see the world change before our eyes. Watch as each new generation of witches and wizards came through the doors of Hogwarts, and learned all they could. I even tried to entice him by saying that one day we could live side by side with the muggles in peace. Just like in Merlin’s early years. He didn’t fall for it. I wanted my best friend to take this journey with me. We were brothers, best friends, war buddies even. He had my back, I had his, and there was no question about it. But he refused. He said he couldn’t bring himself to meddle with that kind of dark magic. It was unnatural. He was fine with the subtler dark magic such as potions and blood magic, but not immortality. I never understood why. He told me I’d regret it. I told him I wouldn’t. He tried, for all he was worth, he tried to get me to see his reasons. All I saw was my best friend abandoning me. I was a stubborn fool, and I left that night. Helga and Rowena were devastated, but Godric took it the worst. He was never the same after that, or so I was later told. They said he was lost, and so he threw himself into Hogwarts to take his mind off my absence. It worked for a time, but in the end he died angry. Angry at me. I last saw him at his funeral. It was held in these very walls, and I haven’t been back to Hogwarts since, until now. My greatest regret and mistake is immortality because I lost my best friend over it. I hurt the ones I loved, and I watched them die. My wife had died in childbirth years before, and my other children were grown with families of their own. They weren’t interested in immortality, but I promised that I would watch over our family line, and I wish I hadn’t because of what it has become. The world is not what I had hoped. It is worse, much worse. All I have is memories, and because I can never die, I can never tell Godric I’m sorry. I can never tell him he was right. I will never be able to hear him say, I told you so.”

That night, Severus had learned that even THE Slytherin, the original and most cunning of them all, had made mistakes and had regrets. Just like Severus did. Salazar also told him that you can’t let your mistakes and regrets run your life. Hold on to the regrets and remember your mistakes so that you learn from them, but don’t let them run your life.

Salazar had told him that in many ways Severus was even more fortunate than himself. At least Severus could hear Lily tell him that she loves and forgives him, and that is why Severus’s life had
changed. That is why he can now forgive. He no longer had the desire to hold a grudge. He no longer had a reason to despair.

It is also why he could now laugh.

Severus smiled and sipped his whiskey as he remembered the shortcut incident. He didn’t even know if Voldemort himself could have pulled that off and seem innocent in the process. If he didn’t know any better, he would think it had been an accident for Salazar to disappear through that painting.

Also in Dumbledore’s office with the Malfoys. Severus himself had been shocked at what Salazar said, but it’s how he said it, and how he pulled it off that had left him in awe. Salazar had come out of nowhere with his words, and left Lucius thoroughly speechless at the verbal lashing he had received. The man was truly cunning, and Snape knew he had a lot to learn from him.

And learning from his mistakes, regrets, and his new mentor, was what he was going to do.

My Old Friend,

I am happy to inform you that the person I mentioned in my last letter has agreed to help us. They tell me that your property is here, and will be guarded by several traps. Some of these traps are already in place, but some are still being worked on, so your property is not in place just yet. What exactly those traps are though, he does not know. However, we do know of two. One he placed himself, and one that I found out about.

Speaking of the traps, you won’t believe the one I found out about! Two STUDENTS found it, who told ANOTHER student, and the tale was overheard by ANOTHER TWO students, who told me! I am OUTRAGED that this ‘trap’ was placed in a school full of CHILDREN! I will go into detail later, but suffice to say, your other friend is lucky I haven’t hexed him!

It doesn’t matter about the traps though, because I have a way to retrieve your property easily without risking life and limb to get it. I also plan to make the trap that was told to me a little less accessible by CHILDREN that could be EATEN by it! As soon as my friend lets me know that your property is in place, I will get it and put it where it will be safe.

Also, I have a lead on what our mutual enemy is doing. I am watching a person who I think is a follower.

Oh, and I am sorry for all the shouting. Please forgive me.

Your Old Friend,

Me

With shaking hands, Nicholas placed the letter on his dining room table, after reading it out loud to his wife.

Perenelle had her face buried in her hands and was shaking her head. “Children could be eaten!?” She moaned. “Oh Nicholas, we should have never…”

“I know my darling, I know. But I have full confidence that Salazar will make sure that the children are safe. As well as getting the stone and putting it in his flat. My confidence in Albus however, is now shaky at best. What in the world has possessed him to put the children in danger of being
eaten?” He asked in disbelief. “My stone is not worth that.”

“Well, I know I won't breathe easy until this mess is over.” She said with a dignified huff.

Nicholas nodded his head. “I agree my dear, I agree.”

It had nearly been a week since Harry blew up his office with accidental magic, but Albus sighed as he watched the young man sitting at the end of the Slytherin table that was closest to the head table. He was reading a book and eating breakfast just like every morning.

Albus sighed again and studied the boy. The other Slytherins were still ignoring him. No one wanted to sit near Harry because of Nora, and because Harry had the ability to talk to her. There were at least four seats between him and the next person, but no one dared to sit in front of him because the little black snake always sat in front of his plate. He noticed that the other Slytherins always looked at Harry with either fearful looks or hateful ones, and Albus didn’t like that. Worse than that though, was how Harry reacted to it. It seemed that Harry didn’t care, and actually preferred it that way.

It seemed that Harry liked not having any friends.

Sure the Longbottom boy and the Granger girl were friendly with him, but they weren’t really friends. Harry taught them things, and was also friendly with them, but he didn’t get to close to them. They mostly studied together, and asked him for help from time to time. They would sit with Harry every so often and play with Nora and talk a little, but never for long because of the hostile glares they received from the other Slytherins, and Harry had only sat at the Gryffindor table that one time. Albus didn’t like that either. Harry needed friends that he could trust and rely on. No child should be without friends, especially Harry.

Albus also didn’t like the fact that Harry was a Slytherin. He should be in Gryffindor just like his parents had been. He should not be in a house that was full of dark families that could influence his young mind. Albus was already unnerved by the fact that the boy had read about the Unforgivables and wondered what other kinds of dark magic he had read about. Albus could not allow any more of that sort of thing to happen.

Albus however, couldn’t deny the fact that the boy was cunning. The verbal lashing that he gave Lucius Malfoy was testament to that, and Albus was still shocked by the boy’s words, actions, and downright coldness. It made Albus shiver because it reminded him of another boy that walked the halls of Hogwarts almost fifty years ago. Tom Riddle had also talked about power, and having knowledge that would give him an advantage over his enemies. Harry shouldn’t be having these same thoughts. He was an eleven year old boy! He shouldn’t be having such thoughts because he was too young!

What could have caused Harry to be this way? He wondered, as he continued to study the boy. Was it from the abuse he had to endure from his family?

Even Albus couldn’t deny the fact the boy had been abused. He saw it with his own eyes that night. He knew that the boy would have a hard life with Petunia and Vernon, but it was the safest place for Harry to go, and unfortunately it still is. Even if it meant that Harry would still be abused, Harry still needed to go live with his family in the summer.

He tried to explain it to Minerva, but she wouldn’t hear of it. She was furious, and let Albus have an earful. She wouldn’t let it go, so he finally had to obliviate the poor woman’s knowledge of the
It had been for the ‘Greater Good’. He knew Severus wouldn’t care about that the boy had been abused, so he did not have to obliviate him, and as for Quirrell, well….

Albus was worried though, worried that he had already lost Harry to the Dark. However, he would soon know for sure. He looked down the length of the head table and glanced at Quirrell, and his eyes flickered to the man’s turban. Yes, Albus would know if Harry was light or dark by the end of the year.

Quirrell, nor his companion for that matter, saw Albus looking at them because they were also studying the boy. Voldemort was quite intrigued with Harry, and dare he admit, amused as well. The child had trumped Lucius that night and blown up Dumbledore’s office.

Voldemort chuckled at the memory. If the old fool wasn’t careful, he would lose his precious Potter. The boy was not stupid, even the Dark Lord had to admit that. Harry deserved to be in Slytherin with his cunning, talk of power, and his clear ambition to deal with his enemies.

But does Potter consider me an enemy? Voldemort wondered. Surely he does, but yet he didn’t outright deny it when Albus asked how he felt about me.

It was no matter though. Voldemort would just keep a close eye on the boy and figure out what to do about him later. Right now he had to concentrate on getting the stone.

He was certain that Albus didn’t know he was actually here himself, possessing the incompetent stuttering fool Quirrell. He would know if Albus suspected, because Albus wouldn’t let him be this close to the Potter boy if he did.

So for now, he was fairly comfortable where he was and would be patient, until it was the right time to strike.

Draco glared at Harry and wondered what was so special about him. His father had told him not to antagonize him, but really hadn’t said why.

Stupid Potter. He thought as he glared at him. It’s like they think he is the bloody Dark Lord or something.

Draco didn’t care. He was angry at Potter for calling him, and his father, Gryffindors and he swore revenge. He didn’t care what his father said, he was going to get back at Potter.

Salazar sat at the breakfast table eating his omelet and drinking his milk, completely oblivious of the fact that he was being watched so closely. He had decided to catch up on his Herbology reading this morning, and try to find a way to ‘dumb down’ his essay that he had to write for it. It was rather hard, and irritating, having to write like he was an eleven year old, but that is what he had to do.

Nora was, as always, sitting in front of his plate, but this morning she seemed to be restless over something because she was slithering back and forth across the table.
He lowered the book slightly and looked at her. “Nora, are you alright?” He asked.

“She is still out delivering the letter I told you about. I suspect she won't be back for a few more days. Why? Are you worried about her?”

“Of course not.” She said with a huff. “It's been rather quiet without that haughty feather duster coming in here every morning to steal your breakfast.”

“I see.” Salazar said with a slight chuckle, and went back to reading his Herbology book.

A few minutes passed, and Nora continued to slither back and forth in front of him. After another minute or so however, her head popped up over the top of the book and she peered at him with concern in her eyes.

“Speaker, do you think Pigeon is alright?”

Salazar suppressed a chuckle, but he couldn’t stop the grin from breaking out on his face.

“Yes my dear, I do think Hedwig is alright. She is a smart owl. She will be back soon.”

“Alright.” Nora said a sigh.

A few moments later the owls arrived to deliver the morning mail. Both of them looked up to see if Hedwig had returned, but when there was no snowy white owl to be seen, Nora sighed again and continued her ‘pacing’.

However just as Nora began to ask another question, an old brown barn owl literally fell out of the air and almost landed on her. She began hissing angrily, but the owl paid her no mind as it rolled over and hopped up, sending a plate of toast crashing to the floor as it did so.

It dropped the red envelope it was carrying, and immediately took off again. Salazar stared at the letter confused, but Nora started hissing at it.

“What is a howl…?”

“HARRY JAMES POTTER!” The howler bellowed in a shrieking woman’s voice.

“It's a Banshee!” Nora cried when the howler paused for a moment, and she dived under Salazar’s Herbology book to try and get away from the noise.

“How DARE you tell that bloody snake of yours to attack my son! My boy Ron Weasley is a good boy, and if I find out you or your snake have attacked him again, you won’t like the CONSEQUENCES! I knew your mother Lily, and she would be ashamed to know that her son…”

Salazar had had enough of the woman’s rude and obtrusive screaming, and stood up. He calmly pulled his wand out and began waving it around the howler. The air around it became frigid and the howler began to freeze solid. The screaming stopped, but the heat from the vibrating howler was
causing it to melt, so he surrounded the thing in a small block of ice and it fell to the table with a loud *clunk*. Then he levitated it, and forcefully sent it flying into the solid stone wall in the back of the great hall, where it exploded into a thousand pieces in one of the corners.

The entire hall was dead silent and staring at him, but Salazar ignored them and looked over at the Gryffindor table. Ron was red in the face and scowling at him, but his brothers were looking at him in awe with their mouths hanging open, before they turned and grinned at each other. Salazar just raised an eyebrow at Ron before smoothing out his robes, and calmly sitting back down.

“Ten p-p-points to Slytherin M-Mr. P-P-Potter!” Quirrell called out loudly. “E-Excellent work!”

“Thank you Professor!” Salazar replied, slightly nodding his head in acknowledgement, and Quirrell chuckled.

Snape half smirked, half scowled in his direction, McGonagall stared at him wide-eyed, but Dumbledore just shook his head and looked at him. Salazar ignored Albus, just like he had been doing for the last few days.

“*Speaker, you silenced the Banshee.*”

“Yes I did. It was rather rude and I didn’t appreciate it. I could have disposed of the howler without the pomp and flare, but I wanted to prove a point.”

“I think you made a very good point. You made the Banshee explode. Does the Carrot belong to the Banshee? He looks angry.” She asked.

Salazar nodded. “Yes, he does.”

“I will bite them.” She said in a huff, as she glared over in Ron’s direction.

Salazar just laughed and kept on reading his Herbology book. He couldn’t be bothered about the howler. He had to concentrate on impersonating an eleven year old, and it was getting harder and harder to do that with each passing day.
“Quiet! The others will hear you.”

“No they won’t. I spelled the curtains closed, and placed a silencing charm around them. All we need to do is find out which Professors are on patrol tonight.”

“Fine, fine. Bloody hell! Look at that! Salazar Slytherin just appeared on the first floor!”

“Salazar Slytherin!? Where do you think he’s going?”

“I have no clue…wait! He just disappeared!”

“There! Third floor. I bet he’s going after that dog!”

“Why?”

“How am I supposed to know?”

“It was a rhetorical question.”

“Maybe he is going to kill that dog.”

“Would you be sad?”

“No! That thing was scary!”

“Why is Salazar Slytherin slinking around the castle after curfew, going after a three headed dog, and not dead like he is supposed to be?”

“I have no idea. He’s just standing there!”

“Maybe he is in shock. I know we were.”

“Nope! There he goes. Maybe he is running away now. Oooh, he is going to run into Filch!”

“Nope! It looks like Filch walked right by him! How did Filch not see him!”

“I don’t know. I wonder what he is doing. He is just standing there outside the door to the third floor.”

“I don’t know, but Filch is long gone now.”

“He’s on the move, and he just disappeared again!”

“Think he’s retracing his steps.”

“Let’s see where he goes. Maybe we can solve this mystery.”
“Ok, first floor again. Yeah I think he’s retracing…he’s disappeared again!”

“The dungeons! Look!”

“Well where else would the Founder of Slytherin House go? The dungeons make sense.”

“Slytherin common room?”

“Why would he go in common room? Those people sitting in there will see him.”

“Well he just walked in there, and he’s heading to the dorms!”

“He’s going into the first year dorms! Look! Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, and Zabini are all in there.”

“Where’s Potter?”

“I don’t know.”

There was a moment of silence, and the twins looked at each other.

“Bloody hell!” They cried.

_____________________________________________________

“Speaker, did you accomplish your mission?”

“Yes my dear, I did. The Cerberus is now in a deep hibernation sleep, and I warded the door with strong spells. Albus can still get in, as well as any other adult, but no child will be able too.” Salazar said, as he canceled the disillusionment charm that he had placed on himself.

“Good. Now I can get some sleep without worrying about you gallivanting around the castle, and getting eaten by vicious beasts.” She grumbled sleepily.

Salazar smiled to himself, as he patted her head. Albus is in for a shock when he finds out what I have left for him. He thought to himself.

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It was the next morning and Salazar was sitting in his usual place at the Slytherin table. It had been nearly two weeks since the howler incident, but thankfully Ron had kept his distance. His brothers though, were a different story. They had cornered him later that day, and begged him to show them how he got rid of the howler, because they knew for a fact that their mother placed all kinds of charms on them. She had apparently learned that one their older brothers had been destroying the howlers she sent him. Salazar chuckled, and since the twins told him that they get at least one howler a month from her, he showed them, and they had been grateful for his help. Today though, he smiled and waved at them, but they became wide-eyed at the sight of him and nearly ran away. He didn’t know what to think about that.

Hedwig had returned a few days ago, and Nora finally stopped pacing and worrying over her, though she tried not to let it show that she had been. Hedwig had brought back a letter from Lily and James, and James was adamant that Sirius could not have murdered the muggles, and he asked Salazar to somehow look into it. He did say however, that Sirius quite possibly could have murdered Peter.
About halfway through breakfast though, a very frantic gamekeeper came bursting into the great hall, huffing and puffing loudly.

“Professor Dumbledore sir! Professor Dumbledore! Fluffy is sleeping and won't wake up!” He cried. “The door was locked up tight, but I need to feed him! Poor Fluffy! He won't wake up!”

Salazar stared at the gamekeeper carrying on in such a fashion, and began to wonder why the man was worried. He should be able to figure out that the dog was only in a hibernation sleep, but everyone’s attention was suddenly diverted when Peeves came flying into the room.

“Oooh! Is poor Fluffy dead!? The poltergeist cackled. “Fluffy is dead, Fluffy is dead!” He sang, and it only made Hagrid cry harder.

“HE’S NOT DEAD! HE’S SLEEPING!” Hagrid roared. “GO AWAY!”

“Fluffy is dead, Fluffy is dead!” Peeves cackled, as he began throwing toast at Hagrid.

Dumbledore tried to get Peeves to be quiet and stop him from assaulting Hagrid, but he wasn’t listening to the Headmaster like he normally did. Peeves was apparently having too much fun at Hagrid’s expense to stop. After a few more minutes of this display, Salazar finally had enough and stood up.

“PEEVES!” He yelled.

Peeves suddenly halted his attack on Hagrid and turned his attention to Salazar, who was glaring at him.

“Lord Slytheryness.” Peeves said in a sickly sweet voice and with a mocking bow.

“Enough.” He said simply.

Peeves was about to say something rude, but stopped and changed his mind when the Bloody Baron suddenly materialized right beside Salazar. They both gave the poltergeist stern glares, and Salazar drew his wand and pointed it at him. That action caused Peeves to immediately drop the toast.

“Don’t banish Peeves! Don’t banish Peeves!” He screamed as he flew straight out of the hall.

Salazar smirked at the retreating poltergeist, stowed his wand, and turned to Baron and bowed. “Thank you for your help sir.”

“You're welcome Mr. Potter.” He said with a smile, and also bowed before disappearing.

The great hall was silent, but Hagrid’s sobs could still be heard. “T-Th-Thank you Harry.” He said through his sniffles. “I don’t like that awful ghost.”

Salazar nodded and smiled before he sat down again. Dumbledore seemed to study him for a moment, but then he turned to Hagrid.

“Come Hagrid, let us see what is wrong with Fluffy. Professor Snape, Professor Quirrell, please follow me.”

Both Quirrell and Severus looked up startled, but they got up and followed Dumbledore. Salazar pretended to pay them no attention, but he caught Snape’s curious looks as they left.
“Potter is always showing off.” Snape spat, as they made their way to the third floor. “First a howler and now he thinks he can control the bloody poltergeist. He’s lucky I don’t take points from Slytherin if at all possible, but I think a good detention for showing off ought to bring his ego down a notch.”

“Now Severus, you know as well as anyone that Peeves is not scared of any student. I’m sure the Bloody Baron had more to do with it than Harry did.” Dumbledore said.

“I’m thankful that Harry distracted Peeves.” Hagrid said, and they all missed the eye roll from Quirrell. “The Bloody Baron seems to have taken a liking to him.”

“That’s not unusual.” Snape growled. “The Baron will take the side of any Slytherin. It’s well known.”

“Oh.” Hagrid said quietly as they reached the third floor. “Poor Fluffy!” He cried as he caught sight of the dog again.

Quirrell let out a yelp and hung around the doors, but the others went to investigate Fluffy.

“Hagrid, are you aware that a note is tied to his collar?” Snape asked as Dumbledore began waving his wand over the dog.

“N-No. All I know is that he won’t wake up!” He sobbed.

Snape sighed and snatched the letter off the collar, then began reading it out loud.

To Whom It May Concern,

I don’t know whose brilliant idea it was to leave a vicious Cerberus locked up in a school full of CHILDREN, but they should be ashamed of themselves. Nothing is worth the life of a child. NOTHING! Not to mention that it was placed behind a SIMPLE LOCKED DOOR THAT A FIRST YEAR CAN GET THROUGH! So I solved that problem too. No child will be able to get through those wards, I promise you.

Sincerely,

Someone who actually cares about the students AND Hogwarts

Snape couldn’t stop the outright snort that escaped, and Dumbledore glared at him over his half-moon spectacles because of it. Hagrid was still crying over Fluffy and Quirrell looked amused.

“F-Fluffy isn't vicious.” Hagrid sniffed. “He’s only a baby!”

“Hagrid it’s alright.” Dumbledore said gently. “Whoever did this only put Fluffy in a deep hibernation sleep. He won't die, and he won't need to eat. He will be just fine. However this does pose a problem. The only one who can wake Fluffy up is the one who cast it, so we will have to find something else to replace him.”

“I know what we can use.” Hagrid sniffed as he wiped his eyes. “We can use the Griffin. He’s real gentle and won't hurt anyone.”

Snape stared at the man with wide eyes, as if he couldn’t believe Hagrid had just said that, and Quirrell just shook his head and let out a strangled cry.

“I think the Griffin will work nicely.” Dumbledore said with a smile.
“I-I-I agree.” Quirrell said. “E-Especially s-s-since the door is now well w-warded.”

“Yes, well warded.” Dumbledore mumbled. *And that will have to be changed.* He thought.

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It wasn’t until later that day in Transfiguration that Salazar realized that there were many more students that also knew about Fluffy. He had overheard some of the Ravenclaws whispering about the three headed dog, and nearly broke his quill in half because he was so angry.

*How in the world could Albus condone that beast to be inside the castle? I understand the trap door needs to be guarded, but there are many spells that can do the job just as good. Why doesn’t he use them?*

“Mr. Potter, did you hear me?”

Salazar jerked out of his thoughts and looked up. “I’m so sorry Professor, I was lost in thought. I didn’t hear you.”

She looked at him sternly. “Five points from Slytherin for not paying attention. I asked you to do your demonstration of a switching spell for me.”

“Oh, of course Professor. I'm sorry.” He replied, and switched the front cover of his textbook into a lily pad.

“Very good Mr. Potter, and now switch it back.” She said, and he did. “Excellent. Full marks for today Mr. Potter, and you are exempt from the essay.”

Salazar gave her a grateful smile. “Thank you.”

She smiled back and nodded at him before moving onto Crabbe who was one desk over. “Mr. Crabbe, half of the class has already moved on to switching spells, and the rest have at least managed to turn the match silver with a dull point. You however, have not managed even managed to change the color. I want a twelve inch essay on the theory behind this spell.”

Crabbe groaned, but then nodded, and glared at her when she turned her attention to Goyle. She gave Goyle the same essay to write, because he also had not managed to make a difference in his match. Draco had progressed better than they had, but his match was still dull and there was no eye for the needle. Nott’s was about the same as Draco’s, and she gave them both five inch essays to write. Then she moved onto Blaise.

“Very good Mr. Zabini, now all you need to do is make your needle pointier, and then demonstrate it for me several times with fresh matches. That way I know that you have a firm grasp of the spell. Then you can move on.”

“Yes ma’am.”

Salazar was only half listening to her, but shook his head. *That just proves another point Godric tried to make to me. Blood purity has nothing to do with magical talent. Hermione is proof of that. Godric was right...again.* He thought.

He sighed, took out a library book, and began reading it. It was a 5th year O.W.L. level Transfiguration book, but he figured that if he was seen reading such material that he could get away with some of the things he could do a little easier. Freezing the howler in the manner in which he had...
was actually considered 6th year level, and he had used the excuse that he had ‘read about it in a book’. Thankfully most people had bought the excuse, but he needed to be more careful in the future.

“Speaker, that boy keeps staring at you.”

“What boy?” He asked, looking up from his book.

“That Zabby boy.”

Salazar glanced over his shoulder and saw that Blaise was, indeed, looking at him. Blaise sighed, shook his head, and glanced back down at his match. He tried several more times to get his needle pointier, but then he looked back up at Salazar.

“Do you want some help?” Salazar asked.

Blaise nervously glanced at Draco, who was now scowling in his direction, but Blaise furrowed his brow and glared at him. Then he turned to Salazar.

“Yeah, if you don’t mind.”

Salazar smiled, got up and sat in the empty seat next to him. He studied Blaise’s needle and nodded.

“You have a firm grasp of the theory, but I don’t think you have the determination to complete it.”

“What do you mean?” Blaise asked in confusion.

“Let me ask you something. What is the strongest jinx that you can cast successfully?”

“Umm…the leg locker jinx.”

“Ok, so when you cast that jinx at someone, you really, really want that person’s legs to lock up, right?”

“Yeah.” Blaise said.

Salazar smiled. “So you have the determination to cast that jinx successfully, right?”

Blaise’s eyes lit up. “I think I get it now.”

“Theory is good, because you have to understand what you are doing, but determination, concentration, and intent play a big part in the practical application. You have to want it. So try again.” Salazar said, motioning toward the needle.

Blaise took a deep breath, stared at his needle for several seconds, and then said the incantation. He smiled and held his perfect needle up for inspection.

“Good job.” Salazar said with a smile, and then he raised his hand.

“Yes Mr. Potter?”

“Can we have some extra matches so that Blaise can practice on some fresh ones before showing you?”

She smiled at them. “Of course. They are on my desk.”
Salazar got up and grabbed some, then hurried back to Blaise so that he could practice. After a few tries, he was able to get the first one down, then he was able to get the rest with no problems. Salazar moved back to his desk, and watched as Blaise demonstrated the spell for McGonagall. After she had him change three matches into needles, she finally advanced him to the switching spells. Salazar smiled them, turned around, and continued to read his book.

“Hey Potter.”

“Yes?” He asked turning to look at Blaise.

“Thanks.”

He nodded. “You're welcome. If you want my help, just ask. I’ll be happy to do what I can.”

“I will.” Blaise said with a small smile, and then began reading about the switching spells.

“Speaker, is that Zabby boy our friend like Bushy and Bottom are?”

“I don’t know. Time will tell.”

“Alright then. I won't bite him.”

Salazar laughed. “You and your need to bite people.”

“It is always good to remind people that I am the deadliest snake in the world. I consider it a valid threat.”

“Ah, I see.”

“I will bite you too, if you forget that.” She said with a small gleam in her eyes.

Salazar laughed again. “Then I won't forget.”

“Good, because then I won't have anyone to talk to too, except maybe Pigeon, and I don’t even like her.” She said, as she coiled up on the desk to take a nap.

Salazar just chuckled and patted her head. “If you say so my dear.”

“A GRIFFIN!?” Salazar yelled.

“I'm afraid so sir.” Severus replied.

Snape had found Salazar in the common room that evening and said that the Headmaster wanted to see him, but that was a ploy to get Salazar alone to tell him what happened earlier that morning. Salazar was obviously none too happy about the new ‘guard’ for the trapdoor.

“They plan to move ‘Fluffy’ out tonight, and bring the Griffin in.” He said with a roll of his eyes.

“Well, at least my wards will be in place. Half the school knows about that blasted Cerberus. Apparently other students have ‘gotten curious’ and went to investigate. It’s only by Merlin’s good graces that no one has been mauled or eaten by the thing. No one is missing are they?” Salazar asked sarcastically.
Snape shook his head and sighed. “No they aren’t, but about your wards, I think Albus is going to take them down. I’ve seen that look on his face before, and I don’t think he was too pleased with the suggestions in your note.”

“If he takes down that ward, I promise you that he won’t like what I do next. As for the note, well I was going to sign it ‘Sincerely, Not a Bloody Gryffindor’ but I thought that would have been too petty and obvious.”

Snape snorted. “It would have been funny though.”

“Yes, it would have. Especially to see the look on Albus’s face.” Salazar said with a grin, but then he sighed. “Nicholas is not going to like this. How much longer until the stone is in place?”

“I’m not sure, but I think it will be in place shortly after Christmas.”

“Christmas? Half the school year would be over by then. Why not just leave it where it is, and return it to Nicholas at the end of the year?”

“I don’t know.” Snape said shaking his head.

“I’m beginning to think Albus has an ulterior motive for all this.” Salazar said thoughtfully. “But what it is, I don’t know. Why did Albus tell Quirrell to follow you all this morning?”

“I don’t know that either. Quirrell had no reason to be there and he just hung around the door.”

“Just like that night in his office.” Salazar said, shaking his head. Then he looked at Snape sharply. “Do you think Albus knows that Quirrell is working for Voldemort?”

Snape stared at him. “I-I don’t…I don’t know. Why would he let Quirrell know about the stone? Why would Albus ask for his help in protecting it? Not all of the Professors know that it’s here. Just those of us protecting it.”

“Nicholas told me that Albus convinced him that Voldemort was on the move, and was actively seeking a way to regain a corporal body. This I believe. What I don’t believe is Voldemort’s sudden interest in the stone. Why now? Why not five years ago, or ten years ago for that matter. Why now? The stone has always resided with Nicholas, and was never in danger. Voldemort would not have been able to get it, if it still resided with Nicholas. The stone is well known, so it has always been well protected. I know this because I invented the spells that protected it.” Salazar said.

“I know that Albus placed the stone in Gringotts when it was given to him. I also know that he sent Hagrid to get it. On that same day, a break in was attempted, and it failed. The same vault that the stone had been in, was the one that was broken into. Hagrid said he saw Quirrell in Diagon Alley that day, because he was sent there to look for you and get the stone and bring it back to Hogwarts. Quirrell was supposed to be in Hogsmeade searching for you, and nowhere near Diagon Alley.”

Snape said, and suddenly the pieces started to fall into place for Salazar.

He got up and started to pace around the room. “Albus knows. It’s the only explanation. Albus knows that Quirrell is working for Voldemort. You said yourself that Albus knew that Voldemort was in Albania. I’ll bet all my galleons that Albus ‘let slip’ in front of the wrong person, probably Quirrell, that the stone was coming here, and Quirrell went to go find Voldemort to tell him. Voldemort would know about the stones existence and he would be tempted to come for it. This is a trap.” Salazar said suddenly, and looked over at Snape. “This is a trap for Voldemort. Albus wants to draw him out.”

“In the same year that Harry Potter comes to Hogwarts.” Snape said suddenly, as if the thought had
just dawned on him.

Salazar stared at him. “You don’t think…”

“That he wants to force a confrontation? Yes I do. Albus has talked about nothing but you for the last six months. Harry this…Harry that…How powerful is he…yada, yada, yada.”

“THAT BLOODY GRYFFINDOR!” Salazar shouted, and blew up several empty cauldrons that Snape had stacked up in the corner of his office. “How DARE he put an eleven year old child in this kind of danger. This is preposterous!”

Salazar sat there seething for a good ten minutes before he calmed down. He could not believe that the ‘Leader of the Light’ would do this. It was simply unthinkable.

“What do we do?” Snape asked.

“Well, I’m not going to play Albus’s game. That’s for sure. I don’t know exactly what I will do yet, but I’ll think of something. I do want to let Lily and James know what is going on though, as well as Nicholas. Oh, he is going to be angry. I am seriously glad that I am not Albus Dumbledore right now.” Salazar said with a small chuckle. “But I want to be a snake in the grass when Nicholas gets a hold of him. That will be an interesting confrontation to see.”

“And in the mean time?”

“In the meantime, I will check the wards around the door to the third floor every night, and every time it can be opened with a simple unlocking charm, I will re-ward it. I can't really lock it down until the stone is in place, but once I have it, Albus is going to wish he never tangled with me, because I am going to make his life miserable.”

“Can I watch?”

Salazar laughed. “You’ll have a front row seat my friend.”

Later that night, Salazar stood under a disillusionment charm on the landing of the third floor and watched as Hagrid, Dumbledore, Snape, McGonagall, and Quirrell levitated the sleeping Fluffy out. He stood there for almost twenty minutes until they came back with a very large ferocious looking griffin that clearly looked like it didn’t want to be indoors.

Once they wrestled the beast inside, they closed the door and locked it. All of the Professors looked relieved that it was over, but Snape, McGonagall, and especially Quirrell looked like they didn’t agree with the new ‘guard’.

Albus thanked them for their help, and sent them away before turning toward the door. He studied it for a minute, then began dismantling Salazar’s wards. Salazar watched as each part of the wards glowed red as they dissolved before his very eyes, and his blood boiled with anger. He absolutely could not believe what he was seeing.

“This has to be done. It’s for the Greater Good.” Albus said with a satisfied nod after he was finished, and then he left.

Salazar stood there for another ten minutes or so before he moved towards the door. He checked it for monitoring charms and found none, so he proceeded to re-ward the door. The door glowed with
a series of blue lights as each ward was replaced and he stepped back with a scowl.

“And that is for the safety of the students.” He said, and then he left.

None of them realized that they were being watched by a set of red heads that had been hiding behind a statue the whole time.

“FRED AND GEORGE WEASLEY! How dare you turn that cat’s fur blue and make it spikey! I AM FURIOUS! Mr. Filch works hard…”

“It’s melting George!” Fred yelled, as he struggled to keep the howler frozen.

“I can't remember the spell!”

“…to keep the castle clean! He does not need you two…”

“Speaker, should we help them? The Banshee is attacking them.” Nora said as she looked up at Salazar, who was too busy laughing to reply.

“Hurry up George! It’s going to…”

“…making his life miserable! If I hear…”

“Help! Harry! Please help us!” George cried. “I can't remember the spell for the block of ice!”

“…that you two…”

Salazar stopped laughing long enough to run across the room, with his wand drawn and aimed at the howler. He actually missed the howler and incased a goblet with the ice instead, but when he got closer, he was able to hit the howler.

“…have acted out of line again…”

“Glacies obstructionum!” Salazar cried again, and the howler fell to the table.

Fred and George let out a sigh of relief, and George levitated it and sent it flying into the back wall of the great hall where it shattered.

“There. That should…”

“I will not be happy! I will…”

“FRED!” George yelled over the screeching, while holding his hands over his ears. “You didn’t keep the howler frozen!”

All three of them ran to the back of the room where the howler was still screaming. This time George froze the howler, and Salazar once again in cased it in the block of ice. Fred didn’t even try to shatter it, he just picked it up and tossed it out of the open window behind him.

“Well that’s one way to do it.” Salazar said, as they watched it fall to the ground.

“Oh no. It didn’t shatter!” Fred cried.
“I think the ground is too soft.” George said, and then burst out laughing. “I wonder how long it’s going to take for it to melt.”

“A galleon says it will be during 4th period.” Fred said.

“Five galleons says 5th period.” Salazar said with a grin.

The twins looked at him in surprise, but then they grinned.

“You're on!” They said in unison, then they all started laughing.

Salazar was in Defense class when it melted. That was 4th period. He lost the bet.
Catch Me If You Can

Chapter 9

Catch Me If You Can

“What do you think George?” Fred asked as he looked at his brother with concern.

George shook his head. “I don’t know Fred. I don’t know what to make of all this. They are both just standing there now.”

The twins were, once again, watching the map, and for the last three weeks, they had watched a nightly dance. Salazar would wait on the third floor, somehow unseen, and would watch as Dumbledore would dismantle the wards, then he would replace them. The twins had even snuck out a few times to hide behind the statue and watch the two men. It was always the same. Dumbledore would say something about the ‘Greater Good’, whatever that meant, and Salazar would say, ‘for the safety of the students’. That, to the twins, was pretty obvious. Especially since they knew that a griffin was now behind that door. Even they knew it was best not to tangle with a griffin.

They also knew what was going on with the door. For years they had watched their Dad tinker around in his shed with those muggle things. They had watched as he set wards and dismantled them. They knew red meant that a ward was being taken apart, and they knew that blue was putting a ward back up. The one thing they couldn’t understand is, why was Dumbledore placing the students in danger, and why was Salazar Slytherin, of all people, trying to protect them?

To the twins, Salazar seemed pretty nice. He was friends with Hermione and Neville, and this shocked them because of Hermione’s blood status, but he seemed to not care about that. He also had showed them the thing for the howler, and on the day he had made that bet, Salazar had paid up. Five galleons for the both of them. They had thought he would go back on his bet, and accuse them of making it melt faster like every other Slytherin would have, but he didn’t. That night at dinner he had walked over to the Gryffindor table with a large grin on his face, congratulated them, and handed them the galleons. They had been shocked.

But they knew that something else was going on, something darker and more sinister, and truth be told, they were a little frightened by it. If Salazar Slytherin was Harry Potter, then where was the real Harry Potter? Was he dead? Did Salazar kill him? Is the real Harry Potter hiding somewhere? How exactly was Salazar Harry Potter? Would Salazar kill them if he found out that they knew his secret? They didn’t know the answers to those questions, and despite being Gryffindors and being brave, they had no desire to find out and possibly get killed over it. Well, at least not yet anyway. For now the twins were just going to watch and wait. They were going to learn all they could, and then they would make a decision on what to do.

“Fred, what do you say to a little nighttime wandering? We know that Salazar is trying to protect us, but for some reason, the Headmaster wants to put us in danger. Let’s show him that Salazar is right by trying to keep that door locked up tight.”

“George, I like it! But I think we should just call Salazar Harry. We don’t want to slip and give ourselves away.”

“I agree. Ready?”
Salazar stood on the third floor with a piece of parchment in his hand. He kept glancing at it every few minutes. He knew Albus was there, even if the man was under a disillusionment charm. Salazar had placed an old outdated version of the tracking charm on Albus, and the piece of parchment told him that Albus was about thirty feet to his right. This form of the tracking charm didn’t work as well as the newer version, but it worked well enough for his purposes. It would only tell the caster how far away and in which direction someone was from them, versus the new charm that could tell the caster where someone was anywhere in the world, right down to the specific building. There was no way for Albus to know it had been placed on him though, even if he did check himself for a tracking charm. This one was about four hundred years old, and it had been lost to the simple passage of time.

This time Salazar saw that Albus had placed a monitoring charm on the door, but that was no matter. He would dispose of it as soon as Albus left, and he didn’t care if he had to stand here all night. He would ask Severus for an invigorating drought in the morning.

Albus stood there fuming. How dare someone have the nerve to thwart him every night. He didn’t know who it was, and for the last week, he had been waiting around to catch them. He briefly thought of Quirrell, but dismissed that. He didn’t think Voldemort would care who was killed. Then he thought of Snape, but Snape would go along with anything Albus wanted. After all, Albus had kept him out of Azkaban. Minerva was his third choice, but Albus knew he would have heard about it from her if that was the case. Not to mention, she didn’t know of his plans.

So he was honestly at a loss on who to suspect. He had tried dismantling the wards at different times of the night, but in the morning they would be right back up again. He didn’t like this game, and was determined to find out who it was that kept messing up his plans.

“Ouch Fred, you almost pushed me into that statue!”

“I’m sorry George. I just want to see if the rumors are true.”

“Well so do I, but quit shoving me.”

“Shush! Or Miss Norris will catch us, and bring Filch!” Fred said in a loud whisper.

Both Salazar and Albus looked up sharply at the sound of the voices. Albus knew that the Weasley twins couldn’t be the ones doing it because they were children, but he was curious about what they were doing. Salazar on the other hand, felt his blood run cold. They were going to get hurt, or worse.

“Do you really think there is a griffin behind that door?” George asked curiously.

“That’s what the rumors say. The whole school knew about that three headed dog.”

“True. Can you believe that Hagrid named it Fluffy!? Who names a dog like that ‘Fluffy’?”

“Hagrid apparently.” Fred said with a laugh.
No, no, no! Don’t open the door! Salazar thought frantically.

“Alohomora.” George whispered, but then suddenly let out a yelp. “Something just stung me!”

“Was it the door?”

“No, it stung the back of my head. Did you hit me?”

“No maybe it was a stinging jinx.”

Both of the twins pretended to look around cautiously, but then they turned back to the door.

“There’s no one around.” Fred said, and went to open the door, but he too let out a yelp. “Something stung my hand!” He whispered loudly.

“Did it feel like a stinging jinx?” George whispered sarcastically.

“Shut up George.”

Bloody Gryffindors! Salazar thought as he heard the door creak open, and then he thought fast.

He sent two powerful stinging jinxes at each of their backsides, which caused the twins to cry out loudly in pain and surprise. Then they whipped around and leapt to either side of the door, and flattened themselves against the wall. Salazar finally had a clear shot of the door handle, now that the twins had moved, and so he used the whip spell to change his wand into a solid black whip, and used it to grab ahold of the door handle and yank it shut again.

By this time, the griffin was making a lot of noise on the other side of the door, and was trying to paw its way out. The twins were looking around frantically, and then they heard the old caretaker making his way towards them and yelling something about Peeves.

“It’s Filch! Let’s get out of here!” Fred said loudly, and they finally took off down the corridor.

Salazar breathed a silent sigh of relief, and glanced at his parchment. Albus was still standing in the exact same spot, and had not done a thing. Salazar just shook his head. He knew that the white light from the stinging jinxes gave away the fact that he was there, and he briefly thought about throttling the two red heads, but he decided he wouldn’t. Maybe this would show Albus that he was right, though he doubted it. He silently moved from his position, and went to stand somewhere else. He checked his parchment again, Albus was still there.

Albus however, glared at the spot where the white light from the stinging jinxes came from.

So someone is here. He thought. They must be under a disillusionment charm like I am. But how do they know I am still here? Tracking charm maybe?

He waved his wand around himself but he didn’t find anything.

Hmm. This will have to be thought out carefully. I can't have an unknown person sneaking around the castle messing up my carefully laid plans. I will catch them sooner or later. Albus thought with a smile, as Filch finally came around the corner to see what made all the noise.

When he didn’t see anything, Filch turned around and left.
“I think I’m going to kill Harry in the morning.” Fred said as he rubbed his left ‘cheek’. “I don’t think I’ll be able to sit for a week.”

“Are we sure it was him and not Professor Dumbledore?” George asked, trying to not laugh at his brother, because he too was in the same predicament.

They had just gotten back to their dorm, and took out the map to study it.

“I think so.” Fred replied. “Harry has moved, and if you remember he was standing here.” He said jabbing his finger at a spot on the map. “He would have been in the perfect position to do it.”

“So Professor Dumbledore was going to let us get mauled to death, and Salazar Slytherin saved our lives?” George asked in disbelief.

“Apparently.” Fred said sadly, shaking his head.

“We need to find out what is happening around here. We also need to figure out how they can make themselves invisible.” George said, and Fred nodded his head in agreement.

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“POTTER!”

Salazar jumped a foot in the air, and sent his, Hermione, and Neville’s empty potions phials crashing to the floor. Some of the Gryffindors snickered loudly, but all of the Slytherins started laughing at him.

“Sir!?” He answered automatically, and looked up to see Snape’s face just inches from his. He reeled back in surprise, and would have fallen out of his seat if Neville hadn’t caught him. Salazar did however, catch the very brief moment of silent laughter in Snape’s eyes.

“How dare you fall asleep in my class!?” Severus shouted. “Arrogant little nuisance! Just like your father! Probably strutting about the castle all night! Serves you right for being tired! Granger, five points from Gryffindor for not waking him up! Potter, see me after class!”

“It’s not our fault that Potter fell asleep! Why don’t you take points from Slytherin?!” Ron shouted, and Snape turned toward him.

Ron shrank back in his seat because of the scowl on Snape’s face, and the Gryffindors groaned. The Slytherins started laughing again, but Snape silenced them all with a glance.

“Are you questioning how I run my classroom Mr. Weasley? You can’t even recite the twelve uses of dragon’s blood. Twenty points from Gryffindor for questioning me.” He sneered, then he swooped back to the front of the room.

“I’m so sorry.” Salazar said shaking his head.

“It’s ok Harry. He could have taken more. In fact, I’m surprised he didn’t.” Hermione said with a sigh.

“Me too.” Neville agreed. “We did try to wake you up though, but you were dead asleep.”

“I was up late last night studying, but let’s try to get through the rest of class, and kick me if I fall asleep again.”
Hermione giggled. “Ok.”

“Quiet!” Snape snapped.

They instantly became quiet, and began picking up the phials that Salazar had knocked over, and thankfully the rest of class went by without any more incidents. When class did end though, Hermione whispered that they would wait for him, and he nodded. Snape glared at the two Gryffindors as they hurried out of the room, but when they were alone, Snape grinned.

“Having fun?” Salazar asked with a chuckle, and Severus laughed.

“Late night?”

“Indeed. I'm so sorry for falling asleep. I didn’t mean to.” Salazar said with a sigh. “Albus didn’t leave until an hour before breakfast, so I wasn’t able to get any sleep last night.”

Snape nodded, and went to one of his cupboards and pulled out a purple potion. “Take this.” He said, offering the invigorating draught to him.

“Thank you. I will have to fake being tired now, but better to fake it than let someone figure out you helped me.” Salazar said downing the potion. He instantly could feel the effects, and sighed as he felt his body ‘waking up’.

“You can't keep doing this.” Snape said. “Let me help.”

“No, you need to teach your classes. Besides, the tracking charm I placed only allows one person to monitor the one whom it was cast upon. Not to mention, if Albus catches you it will only cause problems. I do however, want to ask you if you will accompany me to meet Nicholas. I plan to write him today and ask him if he can meet us here two Saturdays from now. He needs to be old exactly what is happening.”

“It would be an honor to meet him.” Snape said in surprise. “Where will we meet?”

“I'm thinking somewhere on the grounds, and I know just the place that will give us privacy.”

Snape nodded. “Just tell me when.”

“I will, but I better be going, before I'm late.”

“Indeed. Oh sir, if I may, why is Peeves so afraid of you? I've been meaning to ask.” Severus asked curiously.

Salazar laughed. “Peeves came into existence when the others and I built the castle. He was a menace then, just as he is now. However, Godric and I came up with a spell to banish him permanently from the castle and grounds. It’s dark magic, but it’s the only thing that will work on a poltergeist. It takes two people to cast it, but only one wand, and seeing as the Baron was one of the first students to attend Hogwarts, he would know of the spell because Godric and I threatened Peeves all the time with it. Helena and Friar would never banish him, so Peeves isn't as afraid of them, as much as he is the Baron. Peeves thinks the Baron will tell someone the spell, that’s why he’s the only one Peeves will listen too.”

“And now that you’re here…” Snape said with a laugh.

Salazar grinned. “Peeves knows that I can use it. Even if the Baron is a ghost, it doesn’t matter. The magic comes from the one holding the wand, which would be me. Baron only needs to speak the
“words.”

“Well its one way to get some peace and quiet around here.” Snape laughed.

“Indeed. Alright, I better go. No doubt Hermione and Neville are worried. Thank you for the potion Severus.”

“You're welcome sir. If you need another, please let me know. I will be brewing some more today.”

“I will.” Salazar said with a nod. “I’ll see you later, and I’ll let you know about Nicholas.”

Snape nodded, and Salazar left the classroom, but when he got halfway up the stairs he heard shouting, groaning, and wondering what could possibly be wrong now, he hurried up the stairs. When he got closer he realized Hermione was the one shouting.

“…and it’s not his fault that Professor Snape hates him Ron! He hates Harry just as much as he does all of Gryffindor!”

“How can you defend that evil slimy snake!? He’s a Slytherin Hermione!”

“That does not matter, and he is not evil!” Neville yelled.

“He can talk to snakes!” Ron shouted.

“It is just a language Ron! It’s no different than speaking French, Spanish, Mermish, or even Gobbledegook! It’s no different than any other regular or magical language!” Hermione shouted back.

“But You-Know-Who could talk to snakes! Everyone knows that!”

“And your point is?” Salazar asked, and everyone stopped shouting and turned to look at him.

Salazar noticed that the first year Slytherins and Gryffindors were crowded around the top of the staircase watching the shouting match. They were also blocking the third year Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs from getting to potions, but the third years seem more interested in the argument than actually getting to class.

“This is your fault!” Ron shouted at him. “You have brainwashed them or something!”

“The only people who are brainwashed Ron is you and others who think similar to you. You Ron Weasley, are no better than the pure blood Slytherins who think all muggle-borns and half-bloods are scum. You think that all Slytherins are scum. Your prejudices are just as bad, if not worse, than theirs. Having brainwashed prejudices seems to be a pure blooded thing. At least most half-bloods and Muggle-borns have the common sense to see the individual person, and not judge them by their blood status or house. You Ron Weasley, act more like a Slytherin in that aspect, than a Gryffindor.”

“I DO NOT ACT LIKE A BLOODY SNAKE!” Ron screamed.

“Actually Ron, you do.” George said.

“What little Harry here said makes a lot of sense, if you stop and think about it.” Fred added, looking at Salazar with a small smile.

“Not you two too!” Ron moaned. “You are my brothers, how can you side with him!?”

“Because what he said is true. Though I hope you don’t lump all pure bloods together like that.”
George said, looking at Salazar.

Salazar laughed and shook his head. “Of course I don’t. You two and Neville are proof, as well as countless other pure bloods.”

“That’s a relief.” Fred grinned.

Salazar chuckled. “I’ve read *Hogwarts: A History*, and I can’t imagine what Salazar Slytherin and Godric Gryffindor would be thinking if they were alive today. They were the best of friends you know. Granted, Slytherin messed up their friendship by leaving the school, but they were still best friends. I’m sure both of them would be devastated to know what their houses have turned into. Godric would be so disappointed in Gryffindor, and Salazar would most likely want to turn all of Slytherin into saw dust. It’s a shame really.” Salazar said, trying to push his way through the crowd. “I suggest we all get to class before we are late.”

“And who are you to tell us what to do!?” Ron shouted as he pulled out his wand.

“Ron DON’T!” Salazar heard one of the twins scream, just as he felt something catch him around the ankles.

Ron had already cast a tripping jinx at him, and Salazar couldn’t stop himself from falling. He twisted himself around and brought his right arm close to his chest in order to not crush Nora when he fell, but this action caused him to land on his back and his unprotected head to bounce off the stone floor. The last thing he remembered was a streak of black scales shooting out of his robe sleeve, and a scream.

“I want that snake KILLED, and I want that boy EXPELLED!”

“Mum, it’s all Ron’s fault, not Harry’s!”

“Yeah, if Ron wasn’t being such a prat…”

“I’m not a prat!”

“You two are on the verge of being yanked out of here, so you best hope I don’t get any more letters about your silly *pranks*! And besides, Ron is your brother, you should be taking his side, not the side of that evil Parselmouth *Slytherin*!”

“Just because Harry is a Slytherin and a Parselmouth doesn’t mean he’s evil!”

“Yes it does!” Ron shouted. “That bloody snake of his bit me!”

“Nora, where are you?”

All the shouting stopped, and every head looked Salazar’s way. He had been awake for the last few minutes, and now he was concerned for Nora’s safety. Salazar however, hadn’t opened his eyes yet because his head felt like it was going to split in two. He didn’t know if that meant Quirrell was around, or if it was because his head had landed on the stone floor.

“Nora is safe Harry. She is with Mr. Longbottom.” A voice said gently.

*Dumbledore*. Salazar thought, and he sighed in relief at hearing Nora was safe. Then he decided to act surprised, because he wasn’t supposed to know that Dumbledore could understand Parseltongue.
“You can understand me?” He asked, slowly turning his head towards the Headmaster’s voice.

“Yes, I can. Though I cannot speak Parseltongue myself.” Dumbledore replied just as gently as before.

“It feels easier to talk like this. It hurts less. Is Ron ok?”

“Yes, Mr. Weasley is fine. Madam Pomfrey has a wide variety of anti-poison potions on hand. Don’t worry though, you nor Nora, are in any trouble. She did what any pet would do. She guarded her friend. You, by the way, are in the hospital wing.”

“Thank you.” Salazar said, and for once he was grateful that Dumbledore had some common sense.

“You're welcome Harry. Now, how do you feel?”

“My head hurts, and my throat is very dry.”

“He says his head hurts and his throat is dry.”

“Well he has a concussion, so I don’t doubt it.” He heard Madam Pomfrey say.

“I want to see some punishment for that boy!” Molly yelled.

“If you don’t stop shouting in my hospital wing, I will have you escorted out!” Madam Pomfrey said in a commanding tone.

“Ladies please.” Dumbledore said calmly. “Molly, I'm sorry to say, but I have viewed pensieve memories of the event. Harry did nothing wrong, and it was Ron who escalated things by casting the curse.”

“Yeah if anything, Ron needs a detention.” One of the twins said.

“Listen here George…”

“Molly…”

“Don’t Molly me Arthur! That boy should not have a snake. They are not authorized.”

“Actually, they are.” Dumbledore corrected her.

“Here Mr. Potter, drinks this.” Madam Pomfrey said, as she glared at Molly. “Can you open your eyes for me?”

Salazar gulped down the cool water from the goblet she had placed in his hands, and it helped with the dryness of his throat, but he groaned loudly when he tried to open his eyes.

“Too bright.” He mumbled.

“I'm not surprised. You just lay back down. Like I said, you have a concussion, and you need plenty of rest.”

“That boy is the reason that my Ron was bitten and poisoned. He better be punished!”

“Correction! ‘Your boy’ is the reason he was bitten, and the reason why we are all here.” Salazar growled.
“Now you listen to me…!”

“No Madam, you listen to me!” Salazar shouted, though it hurt to do so. “Your idiot son seems to think I’m evil just because I'm a Slytherin and can talk to snakes. It is clear to me where he gets it from! Thankfully your other children aren’t as brainless as you are. Oh, and if you ever send me a howler again, you will not like my response. I do not care if you knew my mother or not. I do not know you at all. It does not give you the right to reprimand me like one of your children!”

“Well I have never…”

“Oh Molly, tell me you didn’t…” Mr. Weasley groaned.

“Don’t you talk to my mother that way!” Ron shouted.

“Your mother is way out of line with her actions!” Salazar sat up and shouted. Then he groaned, grabbed his head, and laid back down.

“Oh and Mum by the way, he taught Fred and George how to destroy your howlers!” Ron suddenly shouted.

The twins groaned and buried their heads in their hands, but Molly’s face turned as red as her hair. “WHAT!?” She bellowed.

“Ok that’s it! You all need to go!” Madam Pomfrey shouted. “Out! All of you! Out! Now! Mr. Weasley, you are free to go. You are fine now.”

“I want some punishment Albus! I want some…”

“We will discuss it in my office.” He said calmly.

“Fred, George, can one of you ask Neville to bring Nora to me. I want to see her.” Salazar asked, as they shuffled out the door.

Molly glared at her sons, but Fred (or George) smiled and nodded at him. “Sure thing Harry.”

“Thank you.” Salazar said, as he closed his eyes again, and Molly started yelling again.

The sudden silence was a welcomed relief as Madam Pomfrey practically strong armed them all out of the hospital wing. Salazar finally relaxed, but he heard the Medi-witch huff in annoyance.

“I swear that woman is part banshee.”

Salazar laughed. “That’s what Nora calls her.”

“Really?” She asked with a chuckle, coming over to sit at his bedside.

Salazar nodded. “She never calls anyone by their rightful names. I'm Speaker, Hermione is Bushy, Neville is Bottom, Ron is Carrot, Draco is Puny, Lucius Malfoy is Clown, and Mrs. Weasley is Banshee.” He explained with a chuckle. “There are others though.” He said with a sigh, as he rubbed his head and looked at her.

He noticed that she was looking at him rather oddly, but then she sighed, looked around, and cast a privacy ward around the bed. “Well Mr. Slytherin, I think you need to get some rest.”

Salazar’s blood ran cold and he stared at her, but then he groaned out loud. “Your diagnostic spells. Did you tell Dumbledore?” He asked in alarm.
“No I didn’t, and don’t worry, I won’t. Minerva and I both know you were abused. Minerva told me before she was obliviated. I had to remind her, even though she doesn’t remember the incident. Trust me, she is not happy with the Headmaster at the moment.”

“That meddlesome, manipulative…” Salazar had to bite his tongue. “I wondered why she hasn’t mentioned it since that night.”

“She remembers you blowing up his office, but she doesn’t remember you talking about being abused. She let Dumbledore have an earful and wouldn’t let up for days, but like I said, she told me before he did it.”

“Thank goodness.” He sighed. “I can't believe he would go this far.”

“Nor I, but if you are Salazar Slytherin, then where is Harry Potter?” She asked with concern and a bit of fear.

“Madam, I would love to tell you the whole story, but my head is killing me. Severus knows the truth. I made him swear an oath to not speak of my secrets, but tell him I give him permission to talk to you, and Professor McGonagall, if you and he both agree that she can be trusted. But I need an oath from both of you. It is too dangerous for me not to ask you for one, but I will tell you this to ease your mind. The Potters, all the Potters, are alive.”

Madam Pomfrey’s breath hitched in her throat, and her hand flew to her mouth as tears sprang into her eyes. “Truly?” She asked.

Salazar nodded. “Yes, you have my word.”

The medi-witch nodded, and held up her wand. “I, Poppy Pomfrey, do here-by swear on my life and my magic that I will not reveal any of Salazar Slytherin’s secrets told to me by Severus Snape, or Salazar Slytherin himself. So shall it be.”

Salazar sighed and nodded as the magic swirled around them.

“Thank you.” He whispered, as he felt his eyes closing again.

“You're welcome.” She said with a smile. “Now, get some rest.”

She covered him up with a blanket, and sat there until he fell asleep.
Salazar had spent two whole days in the hospital wing, and learned that Madam Pomfrey didn’t do things haphazardly. In fact, he learned pretty quickly that she could be a bit overprotective of those that ended up in her care. His brief visit to Poppy for his broken nose didn’t warrant a full diagnostic scan, but his concussion and being knocked out did. Though had he been conscious, he could have avoided that all together.

Still though, the last week and a half had been a bit nerve racking for Salazar. He didn’t like so many people knowing who he was and knowing his plans, even if he could trust them. His thinking on the matter was, the more people who knew, the more things could go wrong. However, he decided to use this to his advantage. Severus, Poppy, and Minerva could bring him valuable information about Albus, and to his surprise, they were more than willing to do that.

Poppy and Minerva had cornered the poor Potions Master after dinner the night Poppy found out the truth, and had demanded answers. Thankfully Poppy had told him that Salazar gave him permission, and he finally showed them both the same memories that Salazar had shown him, plus a few more of their talks since. Needless to say, both witches were beyond angry.

Minerva couldn’t believe that Albus would go as far as to obliviate her, and when she saw Severus’s memory of the night Salazar blew up Albus’s office, she was enraged even more. Severus and Poppy both had to stop her from turning Albus into a toad, and outright hexing him. When her temper finally calmed down, she went from angry, to completely devastated. She couldn’t wrap her mind around the fact that the great Albus Dumbledore would go through such lengths to get his way. Minerva knew he talked about the ‘Greater Good’ all the time, but she never really put it all together.

It had been Salazar that finally put all the pieces together for them.

Despite what it seemed like, Salazar was not a hermit. He did get out into the wizarding world, and he knew things that most people would dismiss as unimportant. He finally sat down with Poppy, Severus, and Minerva and explained it all to them.

They were sitting in Snape’s office, and it had been a two weeks since they found out the truth about Salazar, and now he was finally able to tell Poppy and Minerva everything he knew, and why he was doing the things he was doing.

Albus Dumbledore talked about the ‘Greater Good’ because it is what be believed. It was Albus, not Gellert Grindelwald, who came up with the phrase. Dumbledore and Grindelwald were the best of friends and met when they were teenagers. Albus had dreams of power and wanted to rule over the muggle world. He claimed that wizards were better than muggles because of their magical abilities, and he thought that the muggles needed ‘guidance’ and they would have used force if necessary to get the muggles to comply. Albus had planned to rule both worlds side by side with Grindelwald.

His plans changed however when his sister, Ariana, was killed in a duel between Albus, his brother Aberforth, and Grindelwald. It was his sister’s death that made him realize that this might not actually be the way to go about doing things, and he severed ties with Grindelwald.
It was then that Grindelwald adopted the phrase ‘For the Greater Good’ for himself, and went on to commit the horrible acts that he had in the 1940’s. He and Albus then had their duel, and the rest is history.

Then came Voldemort.

Salazar went on to explain that Albus had ample time deal with Voldemort before he became as powerful as he had. He also told the group that Voldemort was his Heir, and that his real name is Tom Riddle. He explained that Riddle graduated from Hogwarts in 1945. He grew up and was in school for most of the Muggle World War II, and also Grindelwald’s reign of terror in the wizarding world. That, and the fact that he was in an orphanage, probably didn’t help his way of thinking at all. However, the fact remained, Albus knew who he was, and what he was planning to do before the First Wizarding War ever started. Salazar also told them that the war could have been avoided if Albus had just dealt with Voldemort in the first place.

But then came the prophecy.

Salazar used himself as proof that the prophecy is a load of bullocks, and went on to explain what had happened and why the Potters went into hiding. Then he told them his role in what happened that Halloween night, and what he had been doing since.

He stressed to Poppy, Severus, and Minerva that if Dumbledore was willing to put a, seemingly, eleven year old child in harm’s way for ‘The Greater Good’, then something was terribly wrong.

It was at that moment that Minerva broke down in tears.

“I just don’t understand why.” She said, as she shook her head. “Why would Albus do this?”

“Because he apparently thinks that Harry Potter is the only one who can defeat Voldemort, but I disagree. A child cannot defeat the most powerful dark wizard of this age. It seems that Albus has taken the phrase, ‘For the Greater Good’, and has morphed it into something different. To him, it no longer means ruling over the muggles for their own good. I think he now believes that he alone has the knowledge and power to ‘help Harry Potter in his quest to defeat Voldemort’. ‘For the Greater Good’ now means ‘I’ll do what I think is right, and no one will get in my way’. Even if it means putting a, seemingly, eleven year old child in danger. The fact that he obliterated you, and is using the stone to force a confrontation is proof of that. He is willing to put this school and its students in danger. The Cerberus, the griffin, letting Quirrell know things he shouldn’t, and the fact he keeps taking down my wards all point to that.”

“Do you think Albus is a dark wizard?” Poppy asked with a worried expression on her face.

Salazar shook his head and sighed. “No, I do not. If anything he is too light, but he is very manipulative though. During the first war, The Order of the Phoenix was a laughing stock. Many witches and wizards died because Albus doesn’t believe in killing Death Eaters. I don’t know if he thinks they can be reformed, and change their ways, or what-have-you, but I know you can't fight a war with stunners and tickling charms. All the Death Eaters did was, revive their comrades, and escaped to fight and kill again. You all may not like this, but I believe war is war. If someone is trying to kill you, you kill them first.”

“I agree.” Severus said. “The Order was a laughing stock. Granted, I was on the wrong side for the first part of the war, but by the end I saw what a mistake it was. The Dark Lord and the Death Eaters had figured out that Albus had ordered us to be captured and not killed. That, in their minds, told them that they could pretty much do whatever they wanted to do. They knew they wouldn’t be harmed.”
“Exactly.” Salazar said with a nod. “The next war needs to be fought differently.”

Minerva sighed. “Alright. I can accept that war is coming eventually, but what do we do in the meantime?”

“It all depends on the horcruxes, but unfortunately I have no way of knowing what they are, and were they are. Albus knows more about Voldemort than I do, and I need his help. The problem is, I don’t trust him and if he found out who I really was, he wouldn’t trust me either. Our ideas won't mesh well, and there is no way we can work together. I can however, work around Albus, but I need help to do it, and that is where you all come in. I need information. Albus now knows about the horcruxes thanks to Nicholas, but he hasn’t told anyone else about them, nor has he given Nicholas any information either. Severus and I are hoping that he tells him.” Salazar said, and Severus nodded.

“He hasn’t yet though.” Snape said.

“Which is understandable if he is working on how to figure out where and what they are.” Salazar said. Then he sighed dejectedly. “In a fit of anger, I said I wasn’t going to play Albus’s game, but I'm afraid I have to eat those words. I will, in fact, have to play his game. To an extent. He thinks I'm Harry Potter, so Harry Potter I will be. I won't however, let him put this school and the students in danger. As soon as the stone is placed, I'm going to get it because we are not ready for Voldemort to regain corporeal form just yet.”

“The stone will be in place just as soon as Pomona’s devil snare has grown in. Quirrell is going to use a troll, but it can take a while to find one. All Albus is waiting for is the devil’s snare.” Minerva said, and everyone stared at her.

“You know this for sure?” Salazar asked.

She nodded. “As Deputy Head, Albus has told me what everyone else’s traps are. He won’t however, tell me what his is.”

“It doesn’t matter. I don’t care what the traps are because I have a way of getting the stone without having to go through them.”

“You do?” Poppy said in surprise.

“Yes, it’s very simple, but I won't say how just in case Quirrell finds out. I will tell you after I have the stone though, I promise. Suffice to say, the castle will help me.” He said with a smile. Then he looked at Minerva. “Do you know how much longer?”

“Soon. In a few days. I know it’s before Halloween though.”

“I thought it wouldn’t be until after Christmas.” Severus said looking a bit shocked, but Minerva shook her head.

“That’s what Albus is telling everyone. I don’t know why he is telling everyone that, but the stone will be in place in a few days.”

“With Albus, there is no telling why he does certain things.” Salazar said dryly.

“What about the door?” Poppy asked. “What has been going on with it?”

“He has backed off for now. I'm not sure if he’s letting me get comfortable and trying to get me to become complacent, or if it’s because Fred and George almost died that night. I will keep checking it though.”
“So it is still warded?” Poppy asked.

Salazar nodded. “Yes, it is.”

“I’m concerned about you Salazar. What of the horcrux in your head?” She asked. “I’m a healer, and I don’t know if I feel right about you walking around with a piece of You-Know-Who lodged in there.”

“I know it is disconcerting for you Poppy, but I have a feeling that the horcrux is what is keeping me looking like this. If we remove it, all our plans fail. It does not influence me, but it does hurt when Quirrell is around. I don’t know why, and I don’t know how, but perhaps it could become useful.”

“What about when the time comes to destroy it?” Severus asked.

“That I don’t know. Fiendfyre and basilisk venom are the only known ways to destroy one. A living horcrux though can be destroyed by Fiendfyre, that I know for sure, but I don’t know if basilisk venom will work on me.”

“Why, and what about the killing curse?” Severus asked.

“Well, the killing curse just bounces off of me because of my immortality, but I don’t know if basilisk venom would work any better. I guess we will, as the muggles say, cross that bridge when we get there. I’ll look into it, but it’s not a priority right now. Getting the stone to safety, and keeping the students safe is what we need to be concentrating on.” He said, and everyone nodded in agreement.

“Speaker, what do we do if Dumbly ever finds out the truth?” Nora asked suddenly.

“Well my dear, I don’t know. Hopefully he never does, or at least doesn’t find out until it’s all over.” He answered, and she nodded her little head understanding.

After Salazar repeated what was said, the meeting broke up, but not before Salazar informed them that he had written Nicholas. He invited all three of them to come with him when he talked to Nicholas, and needless to say, they were all excited.

“Do you think McGonagall, Snape, and Madam Pomfrey know the truth?” Fred asked, as he stared at the map.

“They might.” George replied, not looking up from the book he was reading. “They have been in Snape’s office talking for hours.”

“True.” Fred said with a yawn, but then he stopped and stared at the map again. “George, why is our little brother sleeping next to someone named Peter Pettigrew?”

George looked up and shrugged. “I don’t know. Maybe another firstie had a bad dream or something. Hey I think I found something!” He suddenly cried. “The disillusionment charm is a spell that is used to conceal the target. The charm makes that which has been bewitched act as a chameleon, taking the color and texture of that which is behind and around them, and therefore granting them a form of invisibility!”

“Hey let me see that!” Fred said, grabbing the book out of George’s hand. “This is brilliant! It doesn’t seem that hard to do, but it is considered seventh year level.”
“And when has that ever stopped us?”
“Never.” Fred replied with a grin.

“Shall we practice then?” George asked, and Fred nodded eagerly.

Salazar had just come from the meeting in Snape’s office, and headed up to his dorm. It was still an hour or so before curfew, but he was tired and wanted to relax in his bed with a good book. However, as soon as he stepped in the dorm room, he had a feeling something was off. Draco, Crabbe, Goyle, and Nott were there, and they seemed to be acting unusual. Blaise was there too reading a book, but he was sitting on his bed cross-legged with his elbows on his knees and his head resting in his hands. Salazar caught his eye, and Blaise quickly glanced towards the four other boys and back at him, then he glanced at Salazar’s bed, then back to the four boys.

Salazar nodded ever so slightly to show he got the silent message. Something was amiss.

“How did they put a Flagrante Curse on my pillow? He thought, as he narrowed his eyes at them. An older student perhaps?

“Speaker, are you hurt?” Nora asked, as she slithered out of his sleeve and onto the bed.

“I will be fine my dear. The pillow burnt me, but not too badly. If you hadn’t sensed the heat difference however, I would have been hurt worse.”

“Puny is getting bolder.” She said, as she glared in their direction.

“So he is.” Salazar said. Then he smiled at Draco. “How very Gryffindor of you Draco. Placing a charm on my pillow that would burn me. Clearly you aren’t aware of the fact that snakes can sense heat and cold changes.” He said pointing to Nora. “That’s not a very well thought out cunning plan, but it is very rash and, like I said, Gryffindorish.” He finished with a small applauding clap.

Blaise snorted, but didn’t take his eyes off the book he was reading, and Draco became red in the face and glared at him. Then he scowled at Salazar and started to say something, but Salazar cut him off.

“However, it makes me wonder what other little surprises you have in store for me. Shall we find out?” He asked rhetorically. “Now, where did I put that book on blood magic?” He asked himself, as he turned to fumble around in his trunk. He did keep one eye on Draco and his lot though, and smirked when the boy paled.
“Blood magic is dark magic.” Draco said in a shaky voice.

“It can be.” Salazar replied nonchalantly, as he pulled out an old black leather book from his trunk. “Now where is that one spell?” He asked, making a production of flipping through the pages. Then he finally stopped and smiled. “Ah here it is!” He exclaimed, and then began reading out loud. “This spell is used to erect a protection ward and is one of the strongest and most easily erected due to using blood. By using the caster’s blood, any object can be turned into an anchor for the ward. The ward has been successfully placed when the area emits a yellow glow, and all cursed items that can harm the caster will glow a deep blood red. The protection ward will last until the caster has no more use for it, and removes the anchor.” He read, and then looked up at Draco. “Perfect!”

Salazar made another production of muttering about what to use as an anchor, before plucking a balled up piece of parchment out of the waste bin and declaring it suitable. Then he ‘double checked’ his book for the instructions. He proceeded to cut his hand using the severing charm, and sprinkled the blood from the cut onto the balled up parchment. After ‘double checking’ his book again, he scrunched up his face in concentration, pointed his wand at the parchment, and muttered the incantation. When the parchment glowed a soft blue, he smiled.

“Now, where do I put it?” He asked out loud as he looked around.

Deciding where to put the anchor was not that difficult. Salazar wanted to protect Blaise too, seeing as the boy had made an effort to be nice to him since that day in Transfiguration. Salazar had even helped him with some of his homework since then, and they had talked a little. He knew that Draco had been giving Blaise lots of grief because of it, but Blaise had chosen to ignore Draco, which only angered the blond more.

After placing a sticking charm on the balled up piece of parchment, he turned to a clear space on the wall in between his and Blaise’s beds, and Salazar walked over to it. However, just before he placed the anchor, his scar suddenly started to hurt and he gasped in surprise at the sudden pain.

“Headmaster! Potter is using blood magic!” Draco suddenly yelled.

Salazar glared at the wall in front of him, and quickly stuck the anchor to it and silently muttered the final incantation so it would be activated. Then he turned around, and watched as the ward began to take effect.

“Potter! What have you done?!” Snape shouted, as the area around both Salazar and Blaise’s beds began to glow a faint sunshine yellow color.

Salazar looked up to see Albus, Quirrell, and Severus standing in the dorm room doorway, and they all looked surprised at what they were seeing. Salazar however, wasn’t surprised to see that his pillow, the handle for the drawer on his nightstand, and a pair of Blaise’s shoes were glowing a deep blood red.

“I placed a simple protection ward.” He answered, with unconcerned innocence.

“Potter! You will take down…” Severus started to shout as he made his way towards Salazar, but he was cut off.

“Sir, I advise you not to take a step closer. If you or anyone has the intention of harming me, the ward will bounce you backwards and you will land very painfully on your bum.” He said quickly, and Snape stopped in his tracks and looked at him in surprise.

“Why is my area glowing too?” Blaise asked confused.
“It has a twenty foot radius.” Salazar said. “I suppose it’s a happy accident though, considering your shoes are glowing a blood red.”

“What!?” Blaise yelled, suddenly breaking his cold and unconcerned demeanor. “Draco, you sorry sodding piece of dragon shi…!”

“Mr. Zabini!” Severus yelled in warning, and Blaise stopped and glared at the blond.

“Incidentally, the Death Eaters-in-training also cursed my pillow with some kind of curse that burns the skin, and they have also placed another curse on my nightstand drawer handle.” Salazar said, and held up his finger. “Nora spotted the heat change in the pillow, and when I touched it, it burned me.” He added, as he stood by his bed with an innocent smile on his face.

“Harry, where did you learn this spell?” Albus asked.

“From a book I bought over the summer after I got my letter.” He lied.

“What shop did you get it from?”

“Oh.” He said scratching the back of his head. “I don’t remember the name of the shop, but I know it was somewhere in Bocktorn…Knockton…Knock…”


“Yes! That’s the name! Knockturn Alley.” He said. This wasn’t actually a lie though. He had bought the book in Knockturn Alley…two hundred years ago.

“What else did you get in Knockturn Alley Harry?” Albus asked gently.

Salazar grinned innocently and held up his wand. “My wand.”

Albus paled drastically and his eyes widened in shock. “Harry, if I may, what is it made of?”

“Oh um…the maker said it was a perfect match for me, and he also said it is made from yew wood and the core is basilisk hide.” He said, and internally laughed hysterically as Albus’s face resonated shock and horror.

Quirrell on the other hand, started laughing. “Those a-are v-v-very i-interesting materials Mr. P-Potter.”

“I didn’t even know what a basilisk was, but when I found out, I thought it was pretty funny, seeing as I can talk to snakes. Did you know that the muggles have a saying, that if looks could kill, I’d be dead? That kind of rings true if you run into a basilisk.” He said innocently, and Quirrell chuckled lightly.

“Harry, why didn’t you go to Ollivander’s to get your wand.” Albus asked, finally recovering from his shock.

Salazar shrugged. “I didn’t know I was supposed to. The wand shop was right next to the book shop, and my letter said I needed a wand.” He said.

“Tomorrow is Saturday Harry, so I would like you to accompany Professor Snape to Diagon Alley. I would prefer you have a wand from Ollivander’s.”

Salazar narrowed his eyes slightly and Snape looked at Albus in a mix of shock and disgust.
“With all due respect Headmaster, I'm not giving up my wand.” He said a little coldly.

“No, no Harry, you misunderstand. You can keep that wand if you choose, but I prefer you have one from Ollivander’s also.”

“Two wands?” Severus asked in surprise, and even Quirrell looked a bit startled at the suggestion.

“Well yes, it’s always good to have a backup. You never know when you will need it.” Albus said. “Now Harry, let’s talk about the protection ward you have set up. Are you aware that blood magic is dark magic?”

Salazar suddenly felt like banging his head against the wall, but he sighed internally and looked at the old fool.

“Well, I do admit that some of the spells in that book are pretty disturbing, and I would not ever use them on someone, but this spell seems fine enough. I’m more concerned about the spells that the Death Eaters-in-training have placed on mine and Blaise’s things. Whatever is on my pillow burnt my finger. Imagine if Nora hadn't noticed and I placed my head on it.” Salazar said pointedly. “Apparently that is a spell that is only used to hurt people. I’d say that was ‘dark magic’. In fact, it’s darker than my supposed ‘dark magic’ protection spell.” He said angrily.

“Firstly Harry, I will kindly ask you not to refer to Mr. Malfoy and his friends as ‘Death Eaters-in-training’.” Albus said a bit heatedly. “Secondly, all blood magic is considered dark magic simply because it uses blood. Blood by its very nature, in relation to magic, can cause very bad consequences.”

Salazar raised an eyebrow. That is a bunch of hogwash, and it didn’t even make sense. All it was was a bunch of useless words strung together to make it sound thoughtful and wise. What is your game Albus? Salazar thought, but then he shrugged.

“Sir I'm sorry, but I have to disagree. The only consequences that will happen with this particular spell is the fact that the cursed objects show blood red and the perpetrators get caught. The other consequence is that if someone intends to harm me they are thrown backwards by the ward and will land on their bum. That is hardly anything horrible, unless you don’t like being embarrassed. Now, if the ward decapitated someone, then that would be a major problem and I obviously wouldn’t use it. I hardly see the danger here, other than not knowing what things of mine, and incidentally Blaise’s, have been cursed.”

“I am very disappointed in you Harry.” Albus said shaking his head sadly.

For What!? Salazar thought, as the same time Quirrell asked “F-For w-w-what Albus? T-Thinking for himself?”

Dumbledore shot Quirrell a nasty glare, but then turned to Salazar. “I must ask you to take down this ward.”

“No.” Salazar said. “I won't.”

“Why you little...you have no respect for anyone. You will do as the Headmaster says!” Snape shouted.

“No.” Salazar said standing firm. “Next time Draco and his friends might try something worse. I don’t even know what is on my pillow, my nightstand drawer handle, or Blaise’s shoes. I’m not taking a chance that this will happen again.”
“Harry you must forgive them. I'm sure they are sorry.” Albus said.

“They don’t look like it, and as for forgiving them, no. They did this intentionally.”

“I am so disappointed in you.” He said again, shaking his head. “Your mother and father would be also.”

“I didn’t know them, so I can't say if they would or wouldn’t, but that’s not exactly my fault, now is it? Trying to gain an advantage over me by using my dead parents to make me feel guilty, isn't exactly wise. All it's going to do is piss me off.” Salazar said with anger flashing in his eyes.

“POTTER!” Snape shouted.

“You forget how I was raised Headmaster.” Salazar continued, purposely ignoring Snape. “Self-preservation was key. Determination just to make it through each day alive was key. Cunningly thinking up new ways of getting away from that fat useless no good excuse for a muggle was key. They are lucky I didn’t go back and hex them.”

“W-w-would you h-have?” Quirrell asked curiously.

“No, because that would have made me no better than they are.” Salazar said pointedly. “And I'm better than those muggles.”

“I can honestly say that I'm happy to hear you say that Harry.” Albus said with a smile. “But do you think you can afford the same feelings for Mr. Malfoy and his friends?”

“No.” Salazar said simply, and crossed his arms in front of his chest in a childish manner.

“Then I must do this. I'm sorry. Twenty points from Slytherin, and you and your dorm mates will serve detention on a night I deem and with whom I deem.”

Salazar glared at the Headmaster, and briefly thought about hexing the man. Blaise protested the punishment (and rightfully so) by saying he didn’t do anything, and Draco began screaming about how his father would hear about this.

Salazar rolled his eyes, stomped over to where his pillow lay, levitated it over to the fireplace, and promptly set it on fire. He asked Blaise if he had another pair of shoes, and when the boy nodded, he did the same with those, saying he’d buy Blaise another pair. As for his nightstand drawer handle, he grumbled loudly that he would deal with it later. Then he climbed into bed and glared at Albus, Severus, and Quirrell who were looking at the small tantrum with a mix of amusement (Snape and Quirrell) and sadness (Albus).

Albus sighed loudly. “As for the original reason that we are here, I stumbled upon Professor Quirrell in the dungeons. He was looking for the entrance to the secret shortcut you discovered. I admit that I'm curious about it too, and we tried to find it, but we were unsuccessful. Will you tell us where it is?” He asked gently, and in his best grandfather voice.

Salazar just glared at him from his bed where he was now sitting. “I'm sorry Headmaster. I have forgotten where it is.” He said angrily, and snapped his bed curtains closed in a true eleven year old child fashion.

He grinned when he heard Albus sigh loudly, and chuckled as he heard Snape mumbling about ‘the Potter brat’ as they shuffled out the door. Salazar thought that this new way of doing things, and handling Albus, was going to be fun.
My Old Friend,

Tomorrow night is good to meet. I will admit that it will be good to talk to you face to face. My other friend has not given me any information pertaining to my property, but from the tone and words of your letters, I don’t think I'm going to like what I hear. My better half is concerned for the children’s safety and will be accompanying me. We will meet at the scheduled time.

Your Old Friend,

Me

Salazar sighed with relief as he read Nicholas’s letter, then he looked at Hedwig. “I have no reply for you to take. It’s all taken care of.” He said, as he scratched the top of her head.

She hooted in reply, and began to eat a bit of Salazar’s bacon.

“Why can’t you find your own breakfast you silly Pigeon?”

Hedwig glared and hooted angrily at Nora, who was staring at a bowl full of mice that appeared to either be stunned or dead. She had already eaten one and was thinking about eating another, but she was still undecided.

Over the last several weeks the house elves in the kitchen had been catching the mice and serving them in a bowl at Salazar’s end of the table. Nora had been delighted by this new form of food, and had taken a liking to it. She said it was much better than the chicken and sausage that Salazar had been pulling apart for her.

Hedwig however, eyed the bowl hungrily and before Salazar knew it, Hedwig had used her wing to knock Nora away from the bowl, then she snatched up one of the mice and began circling above their heads.

“You stupid Pigeon! You stole my breakfast! Give me back my breakfast!” Nora yelled, as she raised her head up.

She started trying to attack Hedwig, but the owl made sure to stay out of her striking range. Hedwig began teasing Nora though, by hovering above them and swooping down low every so often.

“Listen here you haughty feather duster!” Nora yelled, as she continued to try and reach Hedwig.

“You won’t like what I do to you, if you don’t give me back my breakfast!”

Salazar just shook his head and laughed at their antics, but Hedwig suddenly dropped the mouse, which landed on Nora’s head, then it rolled off the table and onto the floor. Then she swooped down low, and appeared to try and grab another mouse out of the bowl, but Nora suddenly launched herself off the table and somehow managed to wrap herself around Hedwig’s foot.
This did not go over well with Hedwig, who immediately began trying to shake her off. By this time the entire great hall was watching them, and Salazar was laughing too hard to do anything about it.

Hedwig managed to shake Nora off her foot and the snake landed on the floor, and quickly slithered over to the mouse, but Hedwig cut her off. The owl used her wing and batted the mouse further away from Nora, who stopped and glared at the bird as she landed several feet away from her.

Most of the Professors were laughing, some looked curious as to who would win, and others looked on disapprovingly at the showdown.

And it was a showdown. The mouse now lay between Nora and Hedwig, and both were staring at the other. Hedwig looked slightly ruffled, and Nora was hissing loudly.

“Try for it Pigeon, I dare you! It is my breakfast and you can't have it!” Nora said, and Hedwig hooted at her and flapped her wings.

“Why can't you both share?” Salazar asked, as he tried to regain control of himself. “There is plenty of mice.”

“That is not the point Speaker. The Pigeon is a vicious savage animal, because she stole my breakfast!”

Salazar snorted, and really didn’t know what to say, but the two animals continued to stare at each other. Suddenly Hedwig took flight and tried to grab the mouse again, but this time Nora launched herself towards her and managed to wrap herself around one of Hedwig’s wings and body. Unable to fly now, Hedwig landed with a thump on the floor and laid there with her eyes closed.

Salazar raised an eyebrow and began to wonder what Hedwig was doing, but Nora raised her head up and slithered out from under Hedwig. Then she peered closer at the owl, who was still just lying there.

“Pigeon? Pigeon?! PIGEON!?” Nora yelled as loudly as she could, then she took her tail and began thumping Hedwig on the chest. “Pigeon wake up! Speaker, I killed Pigeon! What do we do? Pigeon!?”

Salazar was trying to keep a straight face, but Nora was so frantic and worried about Hedwig that it was hard to do so. Nora again peered into Hedwig’s face and kept shouting at her, but suddenly Hedwig hooted loudly, which scared Nora, and she slithered backwards quickly. Hedwig jumped up, snatched up the mouse, and flew out of the great hall.

Salazar and several other people started laughing, and it took a moment for what happened to register with Nora, who began yelling again.

“That stupid Pigeon tricked me! I thought she was dead, and she STILL stole my breakfast!”

“I'm sorry my dear, but there are plenty of more mice. Would you like another one?” Salazar asked as Nora made her way back towards him.

“No Speaker. I am full, but next time Pigeon won't be so lucky. I will bite her.”

Salazar chuckled softly and picked her up off the floor and sat her back on the table. She coiled around herself and began grumbling about ‘feather dusters’, ‘stupid pigeons’, and ‘biting things’. Salazar just chuckled again.

Blaise, who had been one of the many people laughing the whole time, moved from where he was
sitting and sat in front of Salazar. Nora lifted her head up and looked at him, but then laid it down.

“Hello Zabby. Perhaps you can get Speaker to stop laughing at me.”

Salazar snorted again, and looked at Blaise, but he was watching Nora carefully.

“Is it ok if I sit here? Will she bite me?”

Salazar shook his head. “No, as a matter of fact she greeted you, and said that maybe you can get me to stop laughing at her.”

“Really?” He asked in surprise, but then he chuckled. “I thought she didn’t like anyone but Granger and Longbottom.”

“Oh no. There are several people that she doesn’t mind. She likes Fred and George, Hermione and Neville, you, and several of the Professors.”

“She bit Weasley though.” Blaise said, still watching Nora warily.

“Only because the Carrot attacked Speaker.” She said, and Blaise looked at Salazar questioningly.

“She said she only bit Ron because he attacked me.”

“Oh. Can I pet her?”

Salazar nodded, and Blaise reached out cautiously to pat Nora’s head. They sat there in silence for a few minutes as the boy petted Nora, and finally he began to relax more and more. Nora seemed to not mind him, and actually nudged his hand when he quit petting her.

Blaise smiled at her before turning to Salazar. “I never got a chance to thank you for last night. I stayed in the room so I could hopefully warn you before you laid down. They asked a seventh year to put the flagrate curse on your pillow.” He whispered. “Draco actually did your nightstand drawer handle. He used a biting hex, but he must have placed it on my extra pair of shoes before I came in. I'm pretty sure that's what it was anyway.” He mumbled.

“I was wondering why you were sitting on your bed reading because you always stay in the common room if you're doing that. Draco and company however, were the ones that tipped me off that something was wrong. Hanging around, snorting, and giggling like a bunch idiots, or should I say, Gryffindors.” Salazar replied, as he took a sip of his pumpkin juice.

Blaise snorted. “But you seem to be friends with Gryffindors more than anyone else.”

Salazar shrugged. “They are the only ones who aren’t afraid of me. Truth be told, Hermione and Neville don’t get on my nerves like the others do, and Fred and George are the same way. Fred and George like to laugh and play pranks, but honestly, who doesn’t like to laugh. Besides, they aren’t as brainless as the rest of their family.”

“I suppose that’s true.” Blaise said thoughtfully. “The Weasleys and the Longbottoms are pure-bloods, although they are considered blood traitors, but Granger is a mud…”

“If you say mudblood, I’ll curse you.” Salazar said sharply, as he glanced at the boy.

Blaise reddened slightly. “Muggle born.”

“That’s better.” He said with a smile. “Neville and Hermione like to learn, and I've realized that I like to teach. Even at the muggle primary school I attended before getting my letter, I would find myself
helping those that needed or wanted it. I don’t know why, but I can read and retain information better than most. I’ve always been like that though. Fred and George seem to like me only because I helped them with their mother’s howlers, but that’s fine too. I don’t mind.”

“You do seem to pick up things pretty fast, but I guess you’re like a Ravenclaw in that aspect. Most people say you can do the harder bits of magic because you’re powerful, but I suppose you’d have to be, since you defeated You-Know-Who.” Blaise said, but whispering the last part.

Salazar just shrugged again, and placed his napkin down on the table. “Whether that is true or not, I can’t say, but I do know that it is fun surprising people that I can do these things.” He chuckled. “I suppose I could have hid it, but really, what’s the point in that? All it would do is hinder my studies.”

“I suppose you’re right.” Blaise said with a smile.

Blaise started to say something else, but suddenly a dark shadow loomed over them and they looked up to see Snape glaring down at them.

“Potter, if you are done providing the morning entertainment, the Headmaster insists that we leave for Diagon Alley. I personally have better things to do in the Alley, other than babysitting you. Be in my office in ten minutes.” He said, and turned on his heel and stalked away.

Salazar sighed and rolled his eyes. “I suppose I better go.”

“He sure does hate you. He doesn’t act like that with anyone else in the house.” Blaise commented, as Salazar stood up.

“I don’t know why though.” He said with a shrug. “But if I'm not back by lunch, send someone to check his potion ingredients cabinet. There might be bits of me in it.”

Blaise laughed as Salazar scooped up Nora, and after taking one last bite of his toast, he quickly followed the Potions Master out of the great hall.

Snape walked briskly down the corridors with Salazar struggling to keep pace beside him, and it was at times like these that Salazar missed his normal tall form. Once they got into Snape’s office however, Salazar plopped down in a chair to catch his breath, and Snape turned to smirk at him.

“Sir, may I suggest an exercise routine? Some of the muggle raised and born often take to jogging around the lake.”

Salazar glared at him, but then grinned and sent a stinging jinx at the Potions Master, which was blocked with an easy flick of the young man’s wand.

“Cheeky doesn’t suit you Severus.” He laughed. “You forget that I'm a pure blood, and we only run if we are being chased by the demons of hell itself.”

Snape chuckled. “So I've noticed. Do you have any thoughts on why Albus wishes you to have two wands?”

Salazar threw his hands up in the air and scoffed with exasperation. “No.” He said simply, but then he sighed. “The only thing I can think of is that he wishes me to have a ‘light’ wand instead of a ‘dark’ wand. I was truthful about its materials and buying it in Knockturn Alley, and I mainly did that to rattle him. I didn’t however, expect him to act so idiotic about it.”
Snape rolled his eyes. “Well, you are the Savior of the Wizarding world, The-Boy-Who-Lived, and other various names. We can’t have you running around with a dark wand now can we?”

Salazar chuckled. “What did I say about being cheeky?”

Snape smirked at him and pointed to the floo. “Shall we?”

“I suppose.” Salazar said with a sigh.

Salazar and Severus stepped out of the floo at the Leaky Cauldron, and basically went their separate ways from there. Snape had to make a trip to the Apothecary for some potions ingredients. Apparently some of the younger years had already ruined enough ingredients and blown up enough cauldrons to warrant a trip.

Salazar on the other hand, begrudgingly made his way towards Ollivander’s wand shop. It wasn’t busy at all, but there was an older lady who needed a replacement wand so Salazar waited patiently for her to be sorted out.

Salazar knew Ollivander of course, from living in the Alley for the past few centuries. He knew the man had a tendency to be ‘creepy’ as some of his customers put it, but he also knew the man was an excellent wand maker. He himself had owned several wands that had been made by the Ollivander family. Most recently, his last wand had been made by Ollivander’s great grandfather Gerbold. Though, he had purchased that one nearly one hundred and fifty years ago.

When the shop was clear, Ollivander turned to Harry and smiled brightly. “Ah, good morning Mr. Potter. How are you today?”

“I’m doing fine sir. Professor Dumbledore sent me here because of my wand.”

“Yes, yes. Albus floo called me this morning, and told me to expect your arrival. It’s very curious that he wants you to have two wands, and I myself honestly don’t know why. However, he did ask me to take a look at your yew and basilisk hide wand. Would you permit me?”

“Of course sir.” Salazar said handing him the wand that offended Albus so much.

Ollivander took it, carefully rubbed his expert hands over it, and peered at the wand closely. Then he slightly tilted his head to the side and held it up as if to study it, before smiling at Salazar.

“This is a very powerful wand Mr. Potter, and I sense that it is slightly dark, but I suspect that is because the core is made from basilisk hide. I don’t know why Albus is all that worried about it though. It’s expertly made and the wood and materials are of very high quality.” He said, placing the wand up to his ear. “However, it is a very old wand. Nearly eighty years old to be precise.”

Salazar nodded. “Yes sir, that’s what the man said when I bought it.”

Ollivander seemed to ponder this statement for a moment then looked at him curiously. “How does it work for you?”

“It works really well. I can get most spells on the first few tries with it, and when I first touched it, I felt all tingly, but in a good way.” Salazar said with a smile, shaking his body as if to demonstrate the tingly feeling.
Ollivander smiled and nodded as he handed Salazar the wand back. “Well, I suppose we better get you situated with another wand, though I don’t really understand why.” He said, as he began pulling boxes of wands off the shelf.

An hour later saw a shocked Ollivander telling Salazar all about the holly and phoenix feather wand that had just bonded to him. Apparently, Ollivander had sold the yew and phoenix feather wand that had given Salazar the lightning bolt shape scar on his forehead, and the old wand maker said that his and Voldemort’s wand cores came from the same phoenix. Salazar grew more and more angry with each word, but he held his temper and anger in check until he could exit the shop.

After paying and thanking Ollivander for his help, Salazar ducked into a small alcove so he could apparate into his flat, where he promptly began blowing up his furniture. After letting out a cry of disgust and anger, he glared out of his charmed windows down into the Alley below.

_How has Albus managed this? _Salazar thought, as he watched a few young children run about in the Alley. _How did he manipulate this? _Ollivander looked genuinely shocked, so I know he wasn’t a part of it, but how!? DAMN YOU ALBUS!

He briefly thought about repairing his furniture just so he could blow it all up again, but he spotted Severus ducking into Ollivander’s and ducking back out a few moments later. Then he saw the young man look around, before heading over to Flourish and Blotts.

What was it that Ollivander said? The wand chooses wizard? That’s what his forefathers always said as well.

He suddenly had an idea and checked his little alcove spot, before apparating back into the Alley. He entered Flourish and Blotts and spotted Severus right away, but gave the man a ‘we need to talk later’ look before heading up towards the checkout counter. Salazar took a deep calming breath and then smiled at the clerk.

“Excuse me sir? Can you tell me where I might find books about wandlore?”

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Severus raise a questioning eyebrow as the clerk pointed to a dusty section in the back of the store. Both men quickly retreated to the section, and Salazar began scanning the titles on the spines. Every once in a while he would pluck a book off the shelf, scan the contents, and either put it back or place it aside.

Severus watched him, but didn’t say anything until they had left the book shop and were heading back to the Leaky Cauldron.

“Sir?” He whispered quietly and a bit curiously, as they entered the ancient pub.

“Not here Severus.” Salazar whispered back as they reached the floo. “Most certainly not here.”

Albus looked around the room with a happy smile. He had gotten a floo call from a very stunned Ollivander just after Harry had left his shop, and the old wand maker told him the whole story. He had a feeling that this would happen, and he was glad that he suggested to Harry to get another wand. To Albus, this new set of circumstances pushed aside any doubt that the prophecy was false. He now knew that it was 100% true. Harry Potter is the one that will defeat Voldemort.

He was shaken out of his thoughts when the door to the staff lounge opened and his Potions Master walked in, looking grouchy as usual.
At least he doesn’t look angry. He thought, as the man took his usual seat.

Albus smiled around at everyone. “Thank you all for being here a little later than normal, and I’m sorry that your Saturday afternoon is taken up by our meeting. Before we dive into our usual business, I wish to inquire about young Harry. Severus, were there any problems this morning?”

“None.” Snape said in a bored tone. “However, the brat can’t listen to what he is told to do. I told him to go to Ollivander’s and stay there after he got his wand, while I went to the Apothecary. He, just like his father, doesn’t listen and I had to track him down. I finally found him in Flourish and Blotts.”

“Did he buy anything?” Albus asked, suddenly alarmed.

“Just some old books about children’s tales and such. That is what his reading level is I believe. The boy can’t even get anything worthwhile.” He said, telling Albus what Salazar had asked him too.

Several people looked at him with disapproval because of what he said, but Minerva and Poppy glanced at each other.

“Are you sure of that?” Albus asked, looking unconvinced.

“After his display of using blood magic last night, yes. I made sure.” Severus said, rolling his eyes.

Several people gasped, and Albus gave him a stern glare.

“Albus? Is that true?” Professor Sprout asked, as her hand flew to her mouth.

Albus sighed, and nodded. “Yes, he used what he calls a blood magic protection ward. He used a piece of parchment sprinkled with his blood. The ward glows yellow and he claims it protects the caster from harm while inside it. It also shows anything that has been cursed within its perimeters.”

“I-it is a l-l-legitimate ward, and he cast i-it p-p-properly.” Quirrell said, and several people glanced at him. “I-I am v-very impressed, and i-it works because s-several items turned the p-p-proper blood red. S-Severus cursed his t-things.”

“Quirrell is correct. The ward he cast is also protecting Mr. Zabini, whose things were also cursed.” Severus confirmed. “I looked into it last night, and Potter did indeed cast the ward correctly and it does what he claims. It is a very simple ward to do, and any first year with enough control over their magic can accomplish it, so I’m not surprised Potter could. Even if he is a dunderhead.”

“Other students cursed his things?” Flitwick asked in shock.

Albus sighed. “Yes, his dorm mates.”

“I think the others put a Flagrate Charm on his pillow.” Snape said, and everyone’s eyes widened in shock.

“Well I never thought I’d say this about dark magic, but good on Mr. Potter for protecting himself and others.” Minerva said with a nod. “I hope you weren’t too hard on him Severus. He was obviously displaying…what do Slytherins call it? Oh yes, self-preservation.”

Snape sneered at her, but Albus sighed again. “I took points from Slytherin and gave all the boys detention.”

“All of them?” Minerva asked, and Albus nodded.
“But why Mr. Potter?” Flitwick asked.

“Because he used dark magic.” Albus said sharply.

“But Albus, you can't punish the boy for protecting…” Minerva started to say, but she was cut off.

“It’s done Minerva.” He said impatiently. “Its dark magic no matter how you look at it. He bought the book in Knockturn Alley, along with his wand. It’s a dark wand, and is made from yew and basilisk hide. That is why I sent him to Ollivander this morning. He now has a proper wand. Ollivander tells me it’s made from holly and phoenix feather.”

“Yes, and apparently it’s the brother wand to the Dark Lords.” Severus said suddenly, which made everyone at the table gasp in horror. “He was spouting off about in the middle of Diagon Alley. I had to tell the stupid boy to remain quiet about it. So much for self-preservation.” He said with a sneer.

Albus scowled at the Potions Master and sighed again. That was not something he wanted to be known, especially in present company. Quirrell looked startled and stared from Albus to Severus, then back to Albus.

“I-Interesting that the boy w-who defeated You-Know-Who w-would have a brother wand. W-What does that m-m-mean exactly?”

“I don’t know, but Ollivander tells me that both feathers came from Fawkes.” Albus said, then he decided to change the subject. “How has Harry been preforming in class? Is he still doing well?”

The change of topic worked and everyone started to talk about how good he was still doing in their classes. However, there were two certain witches that would be cornering Severus after the meeting. It worked for the witches, and Severus filled them in on what was really going on. He told them that Salazar believed that Albus somehow manipulated this, and bought a few books about wands and wandlore to better figure it all out.

It was Sunday night, just after midnight, and Salazar was in his animagus form laying in the grass just several yards away from the front door of the school. Nora was back in the dorms, just in case one of the other boys woke up and discovered him missing. She would let him know what they did and if they told anyone.

He lifted his head slightly when the doors opened and the heat signature of a cat walked out. It stopped on the bottom step, and cocked its ears in Salazar’s direction when he hissed loudly. Then it turned towards him, silently padded over to him, and sat down. The two continued to watch the door, and it opened again a few minutes later. Then a heat signature of a person walked out. This time when Salazar hissed, the cat meowed loudly and the invisible person quickly made their way to them. After another minute or so, the process was repeated again as another person joined them.

As soon as they were all together, they set off towards the meeting spot to meet with Nicholas and Perenelle. The two disillusioned humans followed the animals into the Forbidden Forest, and after a few minutes of walking, they came upon a spot that was flat and devoid of any trees and bushes. Soft grass covered the area, and Salazar saw the heat signature of two more people. He nodded his head, and returned to human form.

“Did you have any problems finding this place Nicholas?”

Nicholas chuckled as he and Perenelle canceled their charms. “We can’t hide from you, can we
Salazar?"

“No I suppose not.” He said, giving him a friendly hug. “Perenelle, you look lovely as always.” He said, bowing slightly and kissing her hand.

She smiled. “Salazar you're always such a charmer, and trying to flatter me.”

“Yes well, you always refuse my offers for marriage, though I can't understand why, so I keep trying.”

“Who else would keep this barmy old fool in line if I did?” She teased.

Nicholas laughed. “You’ve been trying to steal her away for five hundred years. It must be something in the Slytherin line that won't let you give up.”

“It’s called determination.” Salazar said with a grin, and Nicholas chuckled. “My old friends, I’d like to introduce you to my new friends. This is Minerva McGonagall, Head of Gryffindor, Severus Snape, Head of Slytherin, and Poppy Pomfrey, our resident Healer.”

Minerva, Poppy, and Severus bowed their heads slightly out of respect, but Perenelle smiled brightly.

“I'm so glad that there are two competent witches that are able to keep Salazar in line and out of trouble, but watch out for him. He may look like a cute eleven year old boy, but he’s a devil with a silver tongue, and he needs your guidance.” She said with a grin, and everyone laughed as Salazar started grumbling, but then Perenelle looked at Severus and smiled. “As for you young man, you also need to keep him in line, least he starts to over think things and causes problems. Salazar’s been known to do that.”

Severus, Poppy, and Minerva chuckled, but Salazar raised his head up and grinned. “I’ll have you know woman that I am Salazar Slytherin, and I am perfect. Stop telling them anything otherwise.”

“See what I mean.” She said with a laugh.

“I tell you this my friend, it’s good to have you back.” Nicholas said with a laugh. “But on to what we are here for. Details.”

“Yes.” Perenelle said with a nod. “Salazar, please tell me you were overreacting about the children being eaten. This has greatly disturbed me.”

“I wish I was.” He said with a sigh.

He went on to explain all that was happening, and with every new detail, the Flamels grew more and more angry. They were outraged about the fact that Salazar thinks that Albus used the stone to lure Voldemort out into the open. Perenelle was especially angry over the idea that Dumbledore would be so cavalier with hers and Nicholas's lives, and place a, seemingly, child in this much danger. If Voldemort somehow managed to get the stone, they would die.

Salazar went on to explain the door, Cerberus, and Griffin, and Minerva told them about the other traps. Nicholas, if it was possible, was even more angry about that. A troll, chess set, devil’s snare, potions riddle, flying keys, and an animal were not his idea of protections. Strong spells, enchantments, and wards were. He did not fault Minerva and Severus in this, because it was revealed by Minerva that Albus had told them to use their area of expertise. He said that protecting the stone was Albus’s job, not theirs.

Needless to say, by the time they were done talking, the Flamels wanted to march up to the school
and demand their stone back, but Salazar told them that they would have it soon. Minerva said that the stone would be in place by Halloween, which was on Thursday. This eased their minds greatly.

There was several minutes of silence as everyone was lost in their own thoughts, but then Salazar sighed, and looked at Nicholas.

“I hate to ask something of you, but I need your help in another matter.”

“What is it Salazar?” Nicholas asked curiously.

“I got a letter sometime back from Lily and James Potter. James is adamant that Sirius Black couldn’t have killed the muggles. He said that is not something he would do, even in a moment of grief. Would you be able to ask some of your contacts in the Ministry to give you a copy of the trial transcripts? I want to read about what happened, and what was said during the trial.”

“I can do that. You’ve done so much for us, so of course.”

“Thank you. James did say that it was possible that Sirius Black killed Peter Pettigrew, but not the muggles.”

“PETER PETTIGREW!?” Two identical voices cried out from behind one of the very large trees that bordered the clearing.

All the adults turned around with their wands raised.
“You have thirty seconds to tell me why I shouldn’t obliviate you two!” Salazar cried, as he realized that those two bloody Gryffindors had, once again, shown up out of the blue. 

The twins came out from behind the tree, and canceled their disillusionment charms. They were wide eyed and stared at the adults fearfully. 

“We…we…I…I…” Stuttered one. 

“Silencing charms on our clothes, disillusionment charm, and the map.” Said the other. 

“That only tells me how you managed to sneak up on us. That’s not a reason why I shouldn’t obliviate you!” He shouted. “15…14…13…” 

“We have seen Peter Pettigrew…” 

“…sort of…” 

“…kind of…” 

“…on the map. When you said his name, it surprised us.” 

“We’ve known who you really are for weeks….” 

“…But we haven't told anyone.” Said one twin hurriedly. 

“Right. We knew you and Professor Dumbledore were there that night with the griffin, and we know that it was you who saved us.” 

“We did that so that Professor Dumbledore would know that you were right by keeping the door warded.” 

“At first we thought you killed Harry Potter…” 

“…or took over his body…” 

“…and killed his Mum and Dad…” 

“…but then we realized that you couldn’t have because Professor McGonagall and Madam Pomfrey wouldn’t be on your side if you had.” 

“Not to mention you’re friends with Hermione…” 

“…Who is a muggle born.”
“We know about Dumbledore…”

“…and Quirrell…”

“…and the guy who keeps following him around. What’s-His-Name…”

“…Tom Riddle…”

“…Yeah that guy…”

“…Always follows Quirrell around.”

“We know that the Headmaster is up to something…”

“…we just didn’t know what it was, until tonight.”

“We are so sorry please don’t obliviate us!” They cried together.

Salazar was still trying to process what all the twins had said, and he was slightly dizzy from their speech, but he was suddenly brought back to the here and now when Madam Pomfrey started laughing.

“Two Gryffindors have out ‘Slytherin-end’ the Slytherin.”

That got a chuckle out of Perenelle, but then she spoke with a stern voice. “Salazar, they are children. I don’t care if you are older than me, I will not permit you to erase their memories.”

“What map.” Severus asked, glaring at the insufferable Weasleys.

“You-Know-Who is here!” Minerva cried.

This was all roughly said at the same time, and Salazar finally was able to, sort of, process it all and regain his senses.

“What map?” He asked, repeating Severus’s question.

“This map.” One of the twins said, handing the map to Salazar.

“It shows all of Hogwarts…”

“…Including the grounds…”

“…and where everyone is…”

“…and what they are doing…”

“…at all times.”

“You said you saw Peter Pettigrew and Tom Riddle on this map?” Salazar asked.

“Yes sir, if you look in Gryffindor tower you’ll see Peter is sleeping next to our brother Ron.”

“We thought he was a first year who was having bad dreams at first.”

Salazar looked at the twins suddenly. “He has a pet rat.”

“Yeah Scabbers, why?”
Ignoring their question he asked another one. “And Tom Riddle?”

“He is sleeping next to Professor Quirrell.” They said together.

“Where did this map come from?” Minerva asked, glaring at them.

“We don’t know, but it says it’s the Marauder’s Map…”

“…And it was made by Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs.”

Salazar suddenly burst out laughing. “Remus Lupin, Peter Pettigrew, Sirius Black, and James Potter.” Then he caught sight of the others shocked faces. “James told me. They are all animagi, well except Lupin. Remus is a werewolf so he’s Moony, Peter is a rat, so he’s Wormtail, Sirius is a black dog, so he’s Padfoot, and James is a stag, so he’s Prongs.”

Minerva didn’t know whether to look proud or angry, but Poppy laughed. “Well that explains a lot.” She giggled, and Severus glared at her.

“So Voldemort is here, and he’s with Quirrell.” Nicholas said suddenly, with a bit of anger in his voice. “Albus knows he’s here.”

That brought a sudden quiet to the group, and the twins paled and gasped.

Salazar turned to his friend and nodded. “He must know. He’s already told you that he knows where Voldemort is, but he wouldn’t tell you where he is.”

“That’s because he is here!” Nicholas spat.

“But how!?” Minerva asked.

“Possession. Voldemort is possessing Quirrell. It’s really the only thing he can do, considering he is nothing more than a wraith at this point.” Nicholas said, and Salazar nodded in agreement.

“That would explain the sudden turban.” Severus said thoughtfully.

“And why my scar hurts when I’m around him.” Salazar said, glancing up at him, and Severus nodded.

Salazar sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. He honestly didn’t know what to do. On one hand, this answered a lot of questions, but on the other hand, it caused more problems.

“But what do we do?” Poppy asked, as if she was reading Salazar’s thoughts. “We can’t let You-Know-Who run around the school!”

“We don’t have a choice.” Salazar said solemnly. “We can’t risk a change in the status quo until we have the stone, or until we know for sure what Albus’s end game is.”

“We know Albus’s end game.” Minerva spat. “To place a, seemingly, eleven year old child up against one of the darkest wizards of our age.”

“We have a decision to make though.” Severus said abruptly, glaring at the twins. “Detention until they graduate, loss of points, loss of Hogsmeade visits, and whatever else I can think up.”

“Use them for potions ingredients.” Salazar said with a chuckle, which made the twins’ eyes widen in alarm.
“Intriguing…” Snape said, purposely letting his voice trail off.

“Salazar, I won't let you do it.”

“Then what do you suggest Perenelle?” He said, looking at her expectantly.

“Without these boys, we would not know what we now know. We should let them help us, if they wish, but in a small capacity. They have their map, let them use it to keep an eye on Pettigrew, Quirrell, and Voldemort. The rest of you have enough going on, and you can't keep an eye on everyone. These boys have a way. It will lessen your burden.”

“And what of their knowledge? They do not know Occlumency. They are children, and I cannot ask them to make an oath. They don’t understand the consequences…”

“We know what oaths are.” They said together.

“Our Dad taught us. We understand what they are and what they can do. We will make one, and we would love to help. We could watch the map, and let you know what they do every day.”

“We won’t get in the way, we promise!” They cried desperately, and Snape glared at them again.

Perenelle glanced at her husband. “Nicholas, I think this warrants a few old family spells. Salazar is right in that they are too young to make oaths, but I cannot condone them being obliviated.”

“Are you sure my dear?”

“Absolutely.” She said with a firm nod.

Nicholas turned to his friend and smiled. “Salazar, do you trust me?”

“Of course. Why?” He asked in a confused manner.

“I can't tell you about these spells or what they do. I know you understand family magic, and how important it is to keep it a secret. I will do something to them, it won't hurt them and it will keep all our plans and secrets safe. I just ask you to trust me.”

Salazar sighed and nodded. It set him on edge as he watched the Flamels approach the twins. They waved their wands around the boys’ heads, and also watched the glow that surrounded them. He did trust them, it’s just that he wasn’t in control of the situation, and that was where the problem lay. He wasn’t in control. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what the spells would do, but he still didn’t like the fact that the twins would know. He was all for erasing their memories and taking the map, but he did have to, begrudgingly, agree with Perenelle. They were just children.

After the Flamels were through, Minerva turned her stern glare on the twins and took fifteen points from Gryffindor. She didn’t give them detention because of the new information that they had provided the adults, but she did warn them not to follow the adults again. If there was something that the twins needed to know, they would be told. They nodded their heads, and made a quick retreat out of the clearing, and headed back towards the castle.

Seeing that it was late, and everyone had classes the next day, the meeting broke up soon after that. They would keep a close eye on Quirrell/Voldemort, but Salazar did not like the fact that he was roaming around the castle, but until he could figure out what to do, he would just have to keep a sharp eye out. Nicholas, once again, promised to get a copy of the trial transcripts for Sirius Black. Especially now, seeing as he obviously did not kill Pettigrew. Salazar wasn’t going to write and tell Lily and James anything just yet though. He wanted all the facts and details first.
It was Tuesday at lunch time, and it was one of the rare days when Hermione and Neville sat with Salazar at the Slytherin table. Blaise was sitting with them too, and he had been growing used to Hermione, and was surprisingly cordial towards her. He had finally fully separated himself from Malfoy, and he and Salazar were just as much friends with him as he was the others. Well, as friendly as Salazar would let them be, considering they were all eleven years old.

They were all sitting at the end of the Slytherin table, and working on their charms essay and practicing the wand lighting charm. Neville however, was still practicing the levitation charm. He could get it some of the time, but mostly his feather stayed firmly planted on the table. Salazar watched him get more and more frustrated with himself, and wondered why the lad was having so many problems, and then it hit him.

_The wand chooses the wizard._

His eyes widened slightly as he realized what the problem might be. He had never paid that much attention to wands and wandlore before, having never seen the reason for it, but after reading those books he bought, he was beginning to understand it more and more. He cleared his throat, and looked at Neville curiously.

“Neville, where did you get your wand?”

The frustrated boy looked up at him shyly. “It was my Dad’s.” He said quietly.

“Let me ask you, when the first time you touched it, did you get a tingly feeling? Did it feel like the wand sort of bonded with you?” He asked gently.

“N-no. Why? Was it supposed too?”

“Mine did.” Hermione said.

“So did mine.” Blaise offered.

Salazar nodded. “Ollivander told me that the wand chooses the wizard, and I wanted to know what that meant so I read up on the subject. If your wand didn’t choose you, that might be why you are having so many problems. It’s not you or your magic, it’s the wand you’re trying to use.”

“But my Gram wanted me to use this one.” He said, staring at the table. “She wouldn’t buy me my own. She said that if this one was good enough for my Dad, then it’s good enough for me.”

“She wouldn’t let you get your own wand?” Salazar asked in shock, and Neville nodded. “All it’s doing is keeping you from your full potential. Do you think if you wrote to her and told her this that she would take you to get one of your own?”

Neville shook his head again. “She won’t listen to me.”

Salazar wanted to roll his eyes, but he was well aware of who Neville was and what happened to his parents. He also knew of Augusta Longbottom and knew the woman was rather…harsh.

“All she is doing is hindering your studies and learning ability. You’re not a squib Neville. I know that’s what some people call you because you can’t do a lot of magic. It’s not you, it’s that wand.” He said pointing towards the thing. Then he pulled his other wand out of his robe. “This one has already bonded with me, but give it a try. It can’t be any worse than the one you have.”
Neville nodded and took the wand carefully. When he touched it, it gave off a few weak sparks, but Neville eyes widened.

“It feels sort of better. It kind of tickled, but not anything like what you all said.” Then he pointed it at the feather. “Wingardium Leviosa!” He cried, and watched happily as the feather rose a few inches off the table. “It worked! I didn’t have to try as hard!”

“Well it is not a perfect match, but it will work for now. You can use that one until you get a proper one that fits you. As a matter of fact, come with me. Let’s go talk to Professor McGonagall. Maybe she can make your Gram see reason.” Salazar said, standing up and motioning for Neville to follow.

Neville paled, but got up and nervously followed him over to the head table. Salazar apologized to Minerva for interrupting her conversation with Professor Sprout, but then he explained what was going on.

Minerva smiled at them. “I will speak with your Grandmother Mr. Longbottom, and we will try to get her to see reason.”

“If I may Professor, can you encourage her to also speak with Mr. Ollivander? Perhaps if she hears it from a wand maker, she would be better persuaded.”

“I can do that Mr. Potter.” She said with a nod.

“Thank you ma’am. Also, my other wand works better for him than his father’s old one, but it’s still not a perfect match. It is alright with me if Neville uses it, seeing as I don’t really need it.” He said, saying the last part a bit loudly, and pointedly. He had to force himself to keep a straight face when he saw Dumbledore frown at him.

Minerva’s mouth twitched, but she too kept the smile from appearing. “I think that is fine for the time being.” She said, before turning to Neville. “Is this arrangement all right with you Mr. Longbottom?”

“Yes ma’am.” He said with a grateful smile.

“Very well, I will owl Augusta tonight and explain the situation, and I expect to see some improvement in my class.”

“Thank you Professor!” Neville exclaimed happily. “And I will try my hardest!”

They turned around to head back to the Slytherin table, and then they heard a loud screech. Salazar looked up quickly to see what had happened, but Hermione was grinning wildly.

“That’s a terrific idea!” She exclaimed.

Fred and George were now sitting at the table, and they were also grinning, but theirs was more of a mischievous grin. Salazar raised an eyebrow at them, but Hermione jumped up, ran over to Salazar, and dragged him back to the head table. Fred, George, and Blaise followed looking somewhat excited at whatever Hermione was so enthusiastic about.

“That’s a terrific idea!” She exclaimed.

Fred and George were now sitting at the table, and they were also grinning, but theirs was more of a mischievous grin. Salazar raised an eyebrow at them, but Hermione jumped up, ran over to Salazar, and dragged him back to the head table. Fred, George, and Blaise followed looking somewhat excited at whatever Hermione was so enthusiastic about.

“Headmaster, is it hard to learn?”

Albus looked at her somewhat quizzically. “Is what hard to learn Miss Granger?”

“Parseltongue!” She exclaimed breathlessly. “Fred and George mentioned that you said you could understand it, but not speak it. Is it hard to learn?”
Albus looked slightly taken aback, but then he smiled warmly. “It is not hard to learn once you learn the basics of the speech, but it is difficult at first.”

“You have to teach us Harry!” She said with a big grin, as she rounded on him. “Please! You have to teach us. It would be so wonderful!”

Salazar looked at her in surprise, and then looked at all the others. Fred and George looked quite proud of themselves, and once again, Salazar felt like throttling them. His scar however, was suddenly starting to hurt, but he tried not to let it show.

“Speaker, it would give me more people to talk to. You can be boring sometimes.” Nora said, as she looked over at him.

Blaise, who had been holding her, looked up at him. “What did she say?”

“That it would give her more people to talk to because I can be boring. The thing is though, I don’t think you all would ever be able to speak it, just understand it. Parseltongue is a gift, and it can’t be taught…”

“But how do you know?” Hermione demanded.

“Because I read a book written by Salazar Slytherin. There is one in the library that tells you all about Parseltongue.” He said, knowing full well that it was still in there. “It says it can be understood, but one can’t speak it unless they have the gift.”

“Oh.” Hermione said slowly. “But can you still teach us to understand it? Please! I think it would be fascinating! Nora can understand English, and we could still talk to her!”

“I think it’s a great idea.” Nora said a bit too happily. “I like Bushy, Bottom, Zabby, and the Minions. I would like them to understand me. Do this Speaker, or I will bite you.”

Salazar snorted, but his scar was becoming a bit unbearable. He knew that Voldemort must not be happy with this. Especially because Hermione was a muggle born. He looked at the twins who were both grinning at him, then at Neville, Blaise, and Hermione, who looked hopeful, and he sighed in defeat.

“Alright, I’ll try.”

“Thank you Harry!” Hermione cried as she flung her arms around him. He almost fell over backwards from the force, but he managed to stay upright.

He patted her back awkwardly, but smiled when she let go of him. “But I suggest you all read the book. It’s called, Understanding Your Gift by Salazar Slytherin. It is a short book, but once you all have read it, I’ll start teaching you. You won’t be able to speak it, but it is possible for you to understand it.” He repeated as he winced and rubbed his scar.

Voldemort was apparently not happy with this decision.

“Great!” Hermione exclaimed. “I’ll go check it out straight away, and we can all pass it around to each other. Accio Hermione’s bag!” She cried loudly, and her bag zoomed from the Slytherin table into her hand. “I’ll see you all later!”

They all watched her run out of the great hall at top speed with amused expressions on their faces. Fred and George kept grinning at him, Blaise and Neville started discussing the possibilities, and Minerva and Poppy were trying not to laugh. Albus looked a bit amused, Severus was trying to
remain neutral, but Quirrell looked down right angry.

Salazar just laughed and looked at the twins. “Did you two put her up to this?”

“We may have…”

“…planted the idea.” They said with sheepish grins.

Salazar shook his head. “The two of you are more Slytherin than you realize. You do know that, don’t you?”

Fred and George feigned shock, disgust, and anger, but then they grinned. “Well honestly, the hat said we have the potential to do well in both Gryffindor and Slytherin, but we begged for Gryffindor.” Fred said.

“Yeah, we didn’t want to be disowned. You’ve seen how our Mum is.”

“Yeah, I have.” Salazar said with a sigh. “But you two owe me for this.”

“We know.” They said in unison. Then they grinned, gave Salazar a mock bow, and retreated to the Gryffindor table.

Salazar laughed, shook his head, and turned to Blaise and Neville. “Well I suppose we better finish our lunch.” He said, though he winced and rubbed his scar again. He needed to distance himself from Quirrell.

“Are you ok Harry?” Blaise asked.

“Yeah, just a bit of a headache.”

“Do you need a headache potion Mr. Potter?” Poppy asked, looking at his scar with concern.

“No ma’am. I think I’ll be alright, but thank you for asking.”

She nodded, though she still looked worried. Salazar turned and headed back to the Slytherin table. His scar didn’t stop hurting for the rest of the day.

“I think this will be fun. I get more people to talk to. Speaker, you have done well.”

Salazar chuckled and shook his head. He and Blaise were sitting in the common room trying to do homework. Nora had been chatty all day, but he knew it was because she was excited. She truly did think teaching the children to understand Parseltongue was a good idea. Salazar had admitted that there was no harm in it, other than angering Voldemort, which could be a potential problem and he said as much.

“Morty will get over it.” She huffed. “What is he going to do, starting killing people?”

“He might, if he gets angry enough, and he would likely start with Hermione. He’s not the type that would be pleased with a muggle born learning the language.”

That seemed to quiet her for a minute, but then she spoke up again.

“Are you mad at the Minions?”
“No, I’m not. I’m just surprised that they would want to learn it. The language is feared, and for four Gryffindors and a Slytherin to want to learn it is unheard of.”

“Have you ever taught anyone to understand it before?” She asked curiously.

He nodded and smiled. “Yes. Godric, Rowena, and Helga, along with Nicholas and Perenelle.”

“I should have known.”

Salazar chucked, but then looked up to find Blaise staring at them thoughtfully, but Blaise smiled sheepishly.

“I’m sorry, I was just trying to listen. I hope that doesn’t seem rude. Is she always talking when she hisses, or is it only part of the time?”

“Only some of the time.” Salazar answered. “If she is just hissing and not speaking, then it will be a long hiss without interruption, and it will be at a constant level. If she is mad, it will be loud, if she’s not, it will be much softer. You can tell when she is speaking if the hissing is choppy.”

“Right now I’m speaking.” Nora said, looking at Blaise.

“She said, ‘right now I’m speaking’, listen closely. Nora, can you repeat that?”

She did, and Blaise stared at her intently. Then she hissed loudly, which seemed to startle the others who were sitting around them, but then she hissed softly.

“Yeah, I can see what you mean by it being choppy. There is a difference.” Blaise said with a nod.

“I think I’m going to like this. We can name the class-Learning to Speak with Nora, the Deadliest Snake in the World. You can just translate.”

Salazar laughed loudly and repeated what Nora said, which made Blaise chuckle.

“And what if they fail the class?” Salazar said, already knowing what the answer would be.

“I will bite them.” She answered.

“You are predictable my dear.” Salazar said, as he laughed again and patted her on the head.

“What happens if we fail?” Blaise asked.

Salazar laughed again. “She said she will bite you.”

Blaise’s eyes widened in sudden alarm, but Salazar shook his head and laughed. “She threatens to bite everyone, even me, but the only person she has ever bitten is Ron Weasley.”

“He didn’t taste like vegetables though. He tasted like chicken.”

Salazar didn’t know what to say to that, so he just laughed and told Blaise what she said. When Blaise finally stopped laughing, he said, “That’s what people say snakes taste like.”

“What?!! How dare they?! Who are these people that eat snakes Zabby!? I will bite them! Let them try to eat me. I dare them. They will find out, just like Pigeon did, that I don’t go down easy!” She yelled, as she slithered back and forth across the table in front of them.

“I won’t let anyone eat you, I promise.” Salazar said, as Blaise leaned back to get away from the
clearly agitated snake.

“Perhaps I shouldn’t have said that.”

“Perhaps not.” Salazar said, still laughing. “I’ll tell you this though, when you learn to understand Parseltongue, you will laugh just as hard as I do.”

Nora settled down and began grumbling to herself, but several of the people sitting near them eyed them carefully, especially Draco.

“Who would want to learn to understand snakes? It seems pretty pointless to me, especially if a mudblood is wanting to learn. Hey Potter, are you going to celebrate Halloween with us, or are you going to mope around crying about dear old Mummy and Daddy?” The blond asked loudly.

Salazar laughed at him. “Well, considering that I never knew my parents, it really doesn’t bother me much. Now, why don’t you shut up and go away.”

“How dare you talk to me that way!? Wait until my father hears about this!” Draco yelled, as he pulled out his wand, and Salazar sighed and shook his head.

Severus had told Salazar what Lucius said about him. He nearly laughed himself silly when he learned that they thought he was Voldemort, and he was willing to run with that advantage until he no longer had it.

“Draco, I absolutely can’t wait until your father hears about this. As a matter of fact, I think I’ll write to him myself and tell him all about it. However, I advise you to think before you point that wand at me. You won’t like the consequences.” Salazar said sternly.

“And what are you going to do about it Potter?” Draco sneered, as the idiot boy did just that.

“Grab his wand hand and hold him there until I say, but don’t swallow him.”

Unfortunately for Draco, he was standing in front of one of the many snake statues in the common room. Any parslemouth could command them, if they figured out the secret of course. It was one of the many unique things Salazar loved about his design for the room. He wasn’t sure how many of his descendants, one in particular, had figured it out, but that wasn’t the real issue right now as far as he was concerned.

Draco however, didn’t see the snake until it was too late. It was slightly amusing to see him start screaming like a girl as it slithered into position, and clamped down on his wand and hand. The snake statue held him in place, and no matter how much Draco jerked and fought with it, it wasn’t going to let go. Crabbe and Goyle tried to pull his hand out, but Draco started yelling at the two idiots and said that they were going to rip his arm off if they didn’t quit. Several of the older students tried casting blasting curses, but that didn’t do any good either, seeing as the statues were charmed to withstand that kind of damage.

Nearly everyone in the common room was laughing at the spectacle. Salazar however, just calmly sat there watching. This continued on for several minutes until one of the prefects came back in with Severus, Minerva, Albus, and the ever present Quirrell. Salazar chuckled, and shook his head. He was beginning to think that Albus stuck close to the man because of who he was carrying around with him.

The room hushed, except for a few snickers and snorts at the still struggling Draco, but for the most part, it was quiet.
All three of the adults looked at Salazar at once, but he just shrugged. “Draco was acting like a Gryffindor again.” He said, and several people started laughing once more. “I do intend to write to his father though, clearly his behavior won’t straighten up if I don’t.”

He knew Severus would get the meaning of that, but it was still slightly amusing to see his facial expression. Quirrell was staring wide eyed at the scene, and Minerva and Albus looked astonished.

“Harry, what is the meaning of this?”

“Draco threatened me...again. He mocked the death of my parents, and I told him to behave himself, but he is as thick headed as Ron Weasley, and I…”

“Shut up Potter! I am nothing like that blood traitor!” Draco yelled. “Now get this thing off me!”

“No. Maybe if I leave you there all night it will teach you some manners.”

“Now Harry, you can’t go around animating statues and have them attack people you don’t like.” Albus said in his best grandfatherly voice.

“I didn’t animate it.” He, sort of, lied. “I just told it what to do in Parseltongue. Apparently old man Slytherin charmed them so that Parselmouths could do that. I actually discovered it by accident one night.”

Quirrell’s eyes became larger than galleons, and Salazar knew that Voldemort never discovered that little secret.

“And I didn’t do it because I don’t like him.” He continued. “I did it because he drew his wand on me. I warned him he wouldn’t like the consequences, but like any Gryffindor, he didn’t listen.”

This caused several people to snicker again, but one look from Severus was enough to make them become quiet again. However, several people in the common room did confirm what Salazar said was the truth.

“Will someone tell him to release me?!” Draco demanded, as he tried once again to pull his hand out of the snake’s mouth.

“I swear, Malfoys have no manners.” Salazar said, shaking his head. “Say please and I’ll consider it.”

“Now Potter!” Draco screamed.

“No, and I don’t care if I get detention from now until I graduate. I’m not letting you go until you stop demanding things, and show some manners by asking nicely and saying please.” Salazar said with a smirk.

“I’m not apologizing to a filthy half-blood!”

Salazar started laughing loudly and very obnoxiously. The absurdity of the supposed ‘insult’ was indeed hysterical, considering Voldemort was a half-blood. He snuck a quick glance in Quirrell’s direction and noticed that he was smirking himself, and unbelievably, that just made Salazar laugh even harder. However, Salazar wasn’t about to reveal that information just yet. He would need the ‘time’ to ‘study’ family trees and ‘stumble’ upon that bit of information. He would bide his time…for now.

“Forgive me, but seeing as Draco would blurt that out in a room that has nearly half as many half-
bloods as pure-bloods, I find that hysterical, and as I have mentioned before…brave and Gryffindorish. Is there a way to have Malfoy resorted?” Salazar asked hopefully and innocently, and Draco looked around uncertainly, and found that many in the house were glaring daggers at him.

“Wait until my…!”

“…father hears about this.” Salazar said with a sigh while rolling his eyes. “Yes Draco, we know. I have already told you that he will. I will personally write him and tell him about this.”

“My father won't listen to you!” He screamed.

“Is that what you really believe?” Salazar asked, purposely lowering his voice so that it was cold and slightly commanding. He was pleased to see that Draco suddenly became still, and the boy looked slightly afraid.

“Harry, there is no need to write to Mr. Malfoy. I’m sure Severus will take care of that.” Albus said.

Salazar made a snap decision and decided to put Severus on his toes. Besides, he needed some information, and this would give it to him. “Do you really think Professor Snape is going to say anything that is true? He hates me! He’d feed me to a giffin before he actually stuck up for me!” He shouted, and he noticed a slight bit of…hope?...in the Headmaster’s eyes.

So you DO want me to find the giffin. Salazar thought with triumph.

“POTTER!” Severus shouted. “How dare you! Let Mr. Malfoy go NOW!”

“NO!” Salazar yelled back equally as loud. “No one but me can release him, unless you happen to have another Parselmouth laying around somewhere. I'm not letting him go until he apologizes to me, and every other half-blood in this room!”

Salazar knew that everyone was now thinking he was the one acting like a Gryffindor, but Severus, and probably Minerva, knew exactly what he was doing.

Severus gritted his teeth. “Mr. Malfoy, it seems that Potter has us all in a bind, and it would behoove you to apologize, or else the insolent brat…”

“Professor Snape!” Minerva yelled in warning.

“Forgive me Deputy Headmistress.” He spat. “Or else Potter will let you stand there and rot.”

“No!” Draco yelled in defiance, and Salazar chuckled at how easy Draco was making this. He knew Malfoy would rather die than apologize to some ‘beneath’ him.

“All I'm trying to do is teach a lesson in manners.” Salazar said with a smirk and threw his hands up in the air in mock frustration.

“Manners?” Severus spat. “Yet you sit there and purposely defy authority?”

“Defy authority?” Salazar asked. “Other than yourself, when has either Professor Dumbledore, McGonagall, or Quirrell asked me to release him? Answer, never. If you had asked without yelling at me, I would have done it. Do you also need a lesson in manners?” He asked with an innocent smile.

Albus, Minerva, and Quirrell all chuckled, which made Severus start seething, and he was doing an excellent job at making spittle fly out of his mouth while doing it. Salazar also knew that he would
never have gotten away with this if both Minerva and Severus didn’t know who he was. Albus was somewhat predictable, and Voldemort wasn’t about to take a chance and reveal himself by asking the statue to release Draco.

“Furthermore,” Salazar continued, “I can’t see any of you bowing to the demands coming from Malfoy. He has done nothing but demand you to tell me to release him. Personally, I think he needs this lesson in manners, don’t you?”

“I think M-Mr. P-P-Potter is right. M-Mr. M-Malfoy needs a-a lesson in m-manners.”

Salazar was honestly not stunned by this, seeing how Voldemort treated his Death Eaters, so Salazar decided to shake up Albus’s little world just a bit.

“Thank you Professor Quirrell. It seems we think alike. I appreciate your support.”

“A-Any time M-Mr. P-P-Potter.” He said with a smile.

Salazar saw Albus stiffen immediately, and smirked internally.

“Shut up you stuttering fool!” Malfoy yelled, and suddenly Salazar’s scar exploded in pain.

He gasped at the suddenness of it, but was able to cover it with surprise at Draco defying a Professor so blatantly. He wasn’t the only one though, as nearly the whole house’s eyes widened in shock. Quirrell however, looked murderous and Salazar saw him reach for his wand. Albus and Severus saw it too, and Albus stepped between them, while Severus quickly reached for his wand, but thankfully didn’t draw it.

“Mr. Malfoy, apologize for your words and actions here tonight, or you will find yourself in detention for the rest of the year.” Albus said angrily.

Draco glared at him, but a short, quick nod from Severus made him grit his teeth. “Fine.” Draco spat. “Potter, I’m sorry for drawing my wand on you, and I’m sorry for calling you and all the other half-bloods filthy. Also, I’m sorry for calling Professor Quirrell a stuttering fool.” He said with forced politeness.

“Apology accepted Malfoy.” Salazar said nonchalantly, as the pain from his scar lessened slightly. “Release him.”

The statue immediately let go and moved back into its original position. Draco breathed a sigh of relief as he flexed his hand and inspected it, and his wand, for damage. Then he turned around and glared at Salazar before stalking out of the room towards the dorm.

“Harry, I would like to see you in my office immediately after breakfast in the morning. To the rest of you, I suggest heading to bed. It’s late.” Albus said sternly.

Salazar wasn’t surprised about this as he watched the Professors leave, but he gathered up Nora and his homework, and headed for the dorm.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* I hope you guys aren't mad about Pettigrew not being caught! There is a reason for it that will be addressed later in the story! Please don't hate me!
Also, i think i need to explain a few things about this chapter, so please forgive me. This chapter is somewhat of a filler chapter, and i apologize for that, but it does have it purposes. With the knowledge that Salazar now has, things are going to start moving a little faster. I want to try and get Neville a new wand, because he is important to the story and i cant have him running around with a wand that doesnt work. Salazar realizing the problem was blatantly intentional, and to me it makes sense that the holly and phoenix wand would sort of work for Neville, seeing as he was the other potential candidate for the prophecy. I hope that makes sense to you all as well. As for Dumbledore manipulating the wand thing for Salazar, well you'll just have to wait and see!

Also, the whole 'teaching the kids Parseltongue thing' is important, especially when we get into second year. Please dont flame for it. Harry Potter wiki says, JK Rowling admitted that Dumbledore does understand Parseltongue. (She admitted it in a chat session which i have read.) If Dumbledore can learn it, Salazar teaching it to the kids is possible. Not to mention, it adds to the 'manipulative Dumbledore thing'. But more about that in second year!

Another thing, please dont flame me for the whole Draco thing. There is a reason for it that will be addressed later in the story. I can honestly see canon Draco pulling a wand on someone and threatening them in the Slytherin common room, because he would think he has enough back up to pull it off. It's just that he doesnt realize who he is really dealing with in my story. Also, i think Canon Draco really does need a lesson in manners!

Anyway, this A/N is nearly as long as the chapter so i will end it! LOL Please leave me a comment and let me know what you think! The story will pick up now, and up next is the race for the stone, the troll, and other things! So, with that, i'll see you all next time! Thank you so much to those who have commented, left kudos, subscribed, and bookmarked!
Chapter 13

Mirrors, Stones, and Trolls

Salazar woke up the next morning feeling like he hadn't slept all. He had a massive headache curtesy of Voldemort’s bad mood, and he really wished his Heir would stop pouting. It wasn’t doing anyone any good.

He stumbled around the dorm as he got ready for the day, and decided to go see Poppy before breakfast. He wasn’t sure if a headache potion would do him any good, but there was no hurt in finding out. Besides, he had Defense class first thing this morning and it was going to be rough.

With bleary eyes, he somehow managed to make it to the hospital wing and found Poppy going about her morning routine, but she looked at him closely as he walked over to her.

“You look like you haven't slept at all.” She observed.

“I didn’t.” He answered, with a slight smile. “I think I'm going to take you up on your offer, though I don’t know if it will help in this case.”

She smiled sympathetically and walked over to the cabinet that held all her potions, and plucked a blue from its resting place.

“Bottoms up.” He said with a hopeful smile, and drank it one gulp.

He knew the potion was supposed to have instant effects, but he waited for a moment and was relieved to note that it did lessen the headache slightly.

“It worked, but it’s not totally gone. May I have another one? Perhaps the combined effects will get rid of it.”

“I don’t know about that.” She said hesitantly. “It's not good to take two headache potions at the same time. I'm sure you know that it could cause worse problems.”

“It’s not going to kill me Poppy.” He said with a tired chuckle.

“I realize that, but what if it knocks you out or poisons you? You might not be able to die, but you're not immune to pain, sickness, and other complications. I won't give it to you. I'm sorry.” She said with a firm, yet sympathetic tone.

He glared at her, but then he sighed in defeat. “Alright.”

“Come see me after lunch. We can try again.”

Salazar nodded. “Very well. Thank you Poppy.”

She nodded, and Salazar headed back out into the corridor. There was still an hour before breakfast,
so he decided to return to the spot where he and the others had met Nicholas and Perenelle a few nights before. He wanted a little peace and quiet, not to mention, it would put more distance between himself and Quirrell. There was a special reason why he had chosen that spot, but no one else needed to know that.

With a sigh, he glanced around to make sure that the corridor was deserted, then he cast the disillusionment charm on himself and began heading towards the forest.

Minerva’s eyes flitted around the great hall. Breakfast was almost over, but there was no sign of Salazar anywhere. She had something really important to tell him, and it regarded the stone. Albus had finally put it in place last night, after Quirrell/Voldemort had finally found a troll, so now the final ‘protection’ was in place. Minerva however, was not the only person to realize he was missing.

“I wonder where Mr. Potter is this morning. He never misses breakfast.” Professor Sprout commented.

“He came to me early this morning.” Poppy answered. “He looked like he hadn’t slept all night and said he had a headache, so I gave him a headache potion. He left without saying anything to me about where he was going.”

“He’s probably trying to avoid speaking with the Headmaster about his little stunt in the common room last night. It wouldn’t be the first time a Potter…”

“Severus, that’s enough.” Albus said. “If Mr. Potter doesn’t show up, I’ll go look for him.”

Severus sneered at him, but he looked at Minerva and Poppy and shook his head in ‘disgust’. When Minerva nodded back, he knew she got the message. He hadn’t seen Salazar either.

“I’m sure the brat is fine. Potter goes missing for one meal and everyone becomes all flustered.” Severus said rolling his eyes.

In truth he really didn’t see what the fuss was about. Salazar was capable of taking care of himself after all. However, if his scar was hurting him it might be a problem, seeing as they didn’t know much about it yet. All they knew was that it was a horcrux and that it hurt when Voldemort was near.

“He knows I want to speak with him this morning. I'm sure he will turn up.” Albus said confidently.

Then, when no one was looking, Albus smiled to himself. He knew exactly where Harry was.

“I can’t. I can’t come with you. You were right, and I was foolish. I should have listened to you. Please forgive me.” Salazar begged through his tears.

He had been on his way to the forest when a noise in an empty classroom on the first floor caught his attention. He went in to investigate and found a large mirror sitting in the back. At first he didn’t think anything of it and started to turn away from it, until he caught sight of Godric in the mirror. It wasn’t only Godric though. Helga and Rowena were there as well, and they were all standing around in the clearing in the forest, only the clearing wasn’t as empty as it seemed.
Their gravestones were in plain view now.

That is what Salazar saw as he looked into the Mirror of Erised. Godric, Helga, and Rowena standing beside their graves in the forest. They were beckoning to him, and trying to get him to join them, but no matter how hard Salazar tried, he couldn’t. There was even a gravestone with his name on it, but he couldn’t get to them. He clung to mirror and tried to jump in it, but he couldn’t. No matter what he tried to do, he couldn’t join them. He wondered if it was real, but he didn’t dare to hope. All he knew though, was that he wanted to join them. So he kept trying.

That’s how Albus found him when he walked into the classroom just after lunch. Harry hadn't been seen all morning, and his Professors were becoming very worried now. He had placed a few charms on the room so only Harry could find it and so no one else would disturb the boy, so Albus decided to go and get him versus waiting for Harry to show up on his own. When Albus walked in though, he found Harry clinging to the mirror and trying to jump into it.

“I want to join you! Please just take me with you!” Salazar cried, as tears poured down his face. “I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I do want to die! I want to join you in death! I want to talk to you! I want to see you all face to face! Please! Take me with you!”

Albus’s eyes widened in shock and fright and he ran over to the struggling ‘boy’ and yanked him away from the mirror. That was not how he expected to find Harry, and the boy’s words frightened him. He thought he would just be calmly sitting in front looking at his parents, but clearly he was wrong.

“Harry! Harry!” Albus cried, trying to shake the boy back to his senses. “It’s just a mirror Harry. It’s alright. Shush now.” Albus said, trying to hug the struggling child and bring him to his chest in the hope of calming him down.

But Salazar was having none of that.

He began to fight Albus, and tried to scramble back to the mirror, but Albus finally had to tie him up in ropes. Then he sat Salazar down in a chair, and didn’t release him until he calmed down a little.

“What is that thing?” Salazar asked through gritted teeth as he stood up and brushed off his robes. His head was pounding from the combination of all the crying and carrying on and Voldemort, so needless to say, his patience was about at an end.

“It’s called the Mirror of Erised. It shows the deepest desires of our hearts.” Albus explained, as he looked at the shaking boy. “You saw your family, didn’t you?”

Salazar felt like hexing the man, but seeing as he was calming down and starting to regain some of his senses back, he decided to play along and see if there was anything he could find out.

He nodded. “Yes sir, I did. Can everyone see what I saw in it?”

“No.” Dumbledore said gently. “Everyone sees something different, and if someone had been with you, they couldn’t have seen what you saw. Only one person at a time can use the mirror.”

Salazar let out a breath of relief, but tried to pass it off as still being winded from all of his crying and carrying on. The last thing he needed was a stupid mirror blowing his cover.

“Oh.” Salazar said quietly.

“Harry, do you really want to die?”
“I don’t know sir. So far my life has been hell on earth, but I know I’m young and still have a life ahead of me. I do want to be with my family though.”

“You’re conflicted.” Albus stated.

“Yes sir. I think so.”

“It is understandable. Tell me Harry, what do you want out of life?”

Salazar wondered what kind of question that was, but decided to see where this led.

“I don’t know really, but I know I like to teach.” He said, deciding to stick with what he told Blaise a few weeks ago. “I’ve always liked teaching. Things just come naturally to me, and I like to help people out if they need it.” He said with a shrug.

“I think that is admirable.” Albus said with a smile. “Hold on to that and maybe one day you can be a Professor here. Teaching is a very rewarding thing you know.”

For the first time ever, Salazar gave Albus a genuine smile. “I like the sound of that. I guess that is something I can look forward too.”

“Indeed.” Albus said, as his eyes twinkled. “You learn at a very remarkable rate, and if you keep going like you are, you will reach your goals, and also, you will have a better life.”

Salazar nodded, but then he looked at Albus uncertainly. “Sir, I’m sorry about last night.”

“I will be honest with you Harry. Some of the things you do leave me a little unnerved. Blood magic, using statues to ‘teach manners’, and certain things you talk about. Such as power, knowledge, and dealing with your enemies. It brings to mind another boy that walked these halls years ago. It didn’t turn out to well for him, and I don’t want to see you end up like him.”

Salazar was almost sure he knew who the ‘other boy’ was and started to ask, but his stomach rumbled loudly.

Albus smiled. “Well, we can talk about that another day. You have missed both breakfast and lunch. How are you feeling? Madam Pomfrey mentioned you went to see her this morning.”

Salazar was shocked to hear how long he had been here, but he tried to not let it show. “Honestly sir, I feel like I have been run over. I guess all of my carrying on made my headache come back. I’m also real tired because I didn’t sleep good last night.”

“I see. Go and visit Madam Pomfrey then. Tell her I sent you, and that you need to be looked over and fed some lunch. I’ll inform your Professors that you won’t be attending class today. Get some rest.”

“Yes sir, and what about the Mirror sir?” Salazar asked, as he looked at it and shivered. He really didn’t want a student to find that thing. Who knows what it could do to someone else.

Albus looked at him with concern. “Harry, don’t worry about The Mirror of Erised. It has been known to drive people much older and stronger than you to the brink of insanity. It will be moved to the third floor in a few days, but I ask you to never look for it again. I would hate for you to fall under its spell again.” Albus said, with a twinkle in his eye.

Salazar wanted to ask the obvious ‘then what the hell is it doing here in the first place’ question, but
he decided to just leave it be. Especially before he hexed the man.

“I understand sir.” Salazar said, also not missing the ‘slip’ of its next location.

“Very well Harry. Go visit Madam Pomfrey now. Off you go.” Albus said gently, shooing him towards the door.

Salazar nodded, stood up slowly, and headed to see Poppy…again.

Poppy glared at Salazar as he entered the hospital wing for the second time that day looking bedraggled, but then she sighed, pointed to one of the beds, and went to her potions cabinet.

“Let’s try a pain potion this time.” She said, handing him a yellow potion. “And where in the world have you been?”

Salazar drank the potion before he looked at her. “You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.” He said, then he shook his head. “This one got rid of everything else, except my scar pain, but I do think Voldemort may have calmed down now. It’s only a dull ache and I think I can live with that.”

“You need rest.”

“I agree.” He answered tiredly, as Poppy steered him to one of the beds.

“Minerva has something very important to tell you, but she’s in the middle of classes so it will have to wait until later. Do you want to eat, or do you just want to sleep?”

“Just sleep for now.” He said, as he stepped behind the curtain to change into the hospital clothes she had handed to him. “Will you wake me up in time for dinner though?”

“I will, and I’ll let the children know how you are doing if they come looking for you.”

“Thank you.” He said gratefully, as he laid down.

Poppy checked him over with her wand to make sure we was truly alright, and she smiled when her scans showed nothing out of the ordinary, with the exception of being exhausted. Then she shuffled away quietly when another student came in.

“Speaker, if you ever scare me like that again, I will bite you.” Nora said as she settled down beside his pillow. “You weren’t listening to me. I couldn’t get your attention, and that scared me.”

“I’m so sorry my dear. I couldn’t help it.” He answered sleepily.

“You must be more careful in the future.”

“I plan on it.” He said, as sleep finally engulfed him.

“So the stone is in place?” Salazar asked, as he looked up from his dinner plate.

Minerva and Severus had come into the hospital wing after they had finished their own meal, and Minerva looked relieved to finally be able to tell him. Salazar had been awake for about an hour
already, though Poppy had to wake him up. She hadn't wanted to, but she knew he needed to eat something.

“Yes, it was placed last night, but Albus told all of us who are protecting it after lunch this afternoon.”

“So Voldemort knows.” Salazar said simply, as he took a bite of his potatoes.

Both her and Severus nodded. “It’s in the last room in the underground chambers. Albus has not said if his protection is in place, or what it is.” Severus added.

“I’ll go and get it tonight after curfew. Have the twins track my progress on the map as a precaution, if they can. I have noticed that the map is not anywhere near complete though, so I may disappear and reappear quite often. When I contact James, I will ask how they made the map, and then we can see about truly completing it.”

“The Minions will enjoy that.” Nora said as she peered at him from the foot of the bed. “They like sneaking around.”

“Indeed they do my dear.” Salazar laughed, then repeated what Nora said. “If it’s alright with you Poppy, I’ll stay here tonight. It will be easier to get around and I won’t have to worry about my dorm mates.”

“I’m fine with that.” She said with a smile. “And I think it’s the first time someone volunteered to be here, verses me having to force them.” She laughed.

“I do believe you’re right.” Minerva chuckled.

Salazar also laughed. “Tell the twins to give me one hour. If I’m not back in this bed in one hour, they need to alert you.” He said looking towards Minerva. “That should give me time to get the stone, put it in the safe place, and get back here. Severus, have an invigorating draught for them in the morning. It’s important that they are not tired tomorrow, seeing as we have classes.” He said, and Severus nodded.

“What areas should I tell the Weasleys to focus on?” Minerva asked.

“Tell them the hospital wing, seventh floor, and the grounds by the front gate. I don’t think the underground chambers are on the map.” He answered, and she nodded in understanding.

“What happens once the stone is safe?” Poppy asked.

“Then we can relax and have some fun, and I will teach you all how to manipulate an old manipulative Gryffindor.” Salazar said with a grin.

“I’m looking forward to it.” Minerva said with a smile.

“As am I.” Severus smirked.

Salazar continued to grin at them as his plate disappeared. Things were about to get a lot more interesting at Hogwarts.

Shortly after midnight, Salazar cast a disillusionment charm on himself and began making his way up to the seventh floor via a few shortcuts. It only took him about five minutes, but he finally found
himself standing in a room that, in his opinion, was one of Rowena’s greatest accomplishments.

The Room of Requirement.

He smiled as he glanced around the room. There wasn’t anything in it right now, but that was fine. He didn’t need much.

I need a perfect replica of the Philosopher's Stone. He thought as he stared at the ceiling, and a moment later, a red stone the size of his fist landed with a *clunk* by his feet. He picked it up, inspected it, and grinned widely.

Now, I need a tunnel straight into the last underground chamber. Make the exit of the tunnel invisible to those standing in the underground chamber, but allow me to look out into the room so I can observe the surroundings.

It took several minutes, but finally he heard a low rumble off to his right as a plain wooden door appeared. The he grinned at the door, and opened it.

The tunnel was dark and just big enough for him to fit into, and he needed to use his wand to light his way. Salazar knew this was going to take up much of his hour, but he wasn’t prepared for how difficult it was actually going to be. The tunnel needed to snake through the walls of the castle, and at times it became so narrow that he had to turn sideways. At one point he actually had to place the stone in his mouth, set Nora on the floor, and change into his animagus form because the tunnel was so narrow and low to the ground.

About fifteen minutes later he found himself crouching at the end of the tunnel and observing the last room of the underground chambers. It looked deserted, but if there was one thing Salazar had learned over the years it was…looks can be deceiving.

The real stone was laying in the middle of the floor and was wrapped up in a dirty piece of burlap cloth. Glancing around once more, he stuck the very tip of his wand out of the exit.

“Homenum Revelio.” He whispered.

He waited a few moments, and was pleased to see that the spell detected no human presence in the room. However, he wasn’t done yet. He kept his wand in the same spot and began muttering incantations under his breath, but he frowned at what he found.

Which was absolutely nothing.

*What is Albus up too?* He thought to himself. *There is no protections around the stone at all! There is no monitoring charms, alert charms, enchantments, or wards! It’s just sitting there!*

Shaking his head in disgust, he cautiously stepped out of the exit and held his breath. When nothing happened, he quickly made his way over to the stone, switched the real one for the fake one, and placed the burlap cloth back in its original position. Then he made his way back into the tunnel, and back towards the Room of Requirement.

Once he was back in the main part of the castle, he began the short trip to the dungeons and towards the entrance to his personal tunnel. Wishing that he had given himself a little bit more time, he began running full speed down the dark slippery tunnel towards the front gates. This took him about five minutes, but then he popped out of the large boulder that hid the exit/entrance, slipped out the gates, and promptly apparated to his flat in Diagon Alley.

Once he was there, he sighed with relief, but then shook his head and laughed. His flat was still a
mess from when he blew up his furniture several weeks before, when he had gotten his second wand. He didn’t have time to repair everything though, because he was already five minutes past his hour, but he did repair his coffee table and placed the stone down on it. He would just have to warn Nicholas about the destruction in his letter.

After that he apparated back to Hogwarts, and made his way back through his tunnel. He wished he could have taken time to visit Helga, Rowena, and Godric’s graves, but he knew that he didn’t have the time. He made a promise to himself that he would visit them soon though.

It was 1:15am when he slid into his bed in the hospital wing, and he was thankful that the twins allowed him a few extra minutes before alerting Minerva, because there was no one waiting for him. He slid down into his bed, and promptly fell asleep. It had been a long day.

My Old Friend,

_It is done! Your property has been put in the safe place! When you get there, please excuse the destruction. I may have lost my temper a few weeks ago, and well…you know how I can be. I didn’t have time to repair all the damage, so I apologize._

_Your Old Friend_

_Me_

“Hedwig, please take this to my friend.” Salazar whispered, as he looked at her hoping she would understand.

She hooted knowingly, took a sip of his juice, and flew off.

It was Halloween morning and Salazar was in a pretty good mood. It felt like a large weight had been lifted off his shoulders and he smiled as he thought about what to do next. Since the stone was now safe, his attention turned to the next problem...Voldemort. What to do about him?

Salazar wasn’t exactly sure what to do, other than stand up in the middle of the great hall and shout that Voldemort was in the back of Quirrell’s head and that Dumbledore had known all along. Which could get a lot of people killed, if Voldemort decided to start casting killing curses in all directions. He knew he had to get the maniac out of the castle though, especially before Voldemort found out the stone was gone. He certainly wasn’t going to be happy to find out that it was, and there was no telling what he would do then.

For now though, Salazar was content to take a step back and just enjoy the quiet. Voldemort wasn’t going to do anything for the time being, because he wouldn’t want to jeopardize his chances and risk being exposed, but the problem couldn’t be ignored for long. Salazar knew he had to come up with something soon.

The morning and afternoon passed fairly quickly, and classes went along as normal. He saw people giving him a few stares, and heard a lot of whispering about him, but he paid it no mind. There was always going to be talk about what happened on this day. A few people even came up and thanked him, and a few more said that they were sorry that Lily and James had died. Salazar took it all in stride and smiled, nodded, and thanked them for remembering the sacrifices that were made that night. He vowed that when all of this was over and Voldemort was gone for good that he would publically honor Mitzy and Fripsy, and tell the world what the two elves had done for the wizarding world.
Aside from the very few who remembered what happened ten years ago, the main talk of the day was the feast that was going to be held that night. From what Salazar could gather, it was going to be ‘brilliant’. He had no reason to think otherwise though, Halloween at Hogwarts was always something special.

As he walked into the great hall that evening, Salazar smiled at the sight. The great hall was decorated with giant floating pumpkins, live bats were fluttering around the room, and rumor had it that the Hogwarts ghosts were going to be flying in formation and singing them a song. Nora was in awe, and even she commented on what a wonderful job had been done.

The feast got underway and everyone was chatting and eating, but about halfway through Quirrell came running into the great hall looking terrified about something. Salazar didn’t have to wait long to figure out why.

“Headmaster! Headmaster! Troll! There is a-a-a troll in the dungeon! I-I tried…I t-tried…to contain it…got loose…couldn’t…” Quirrell started screaming, but then he fainted.

Instant chaos erupted around the great hall as students started screaming. Dumbledore had to fire several blasts from his wand to get everyone’s attention, but finally some sort of order was restored and the students all turned towards him.

“All students are to return to your dormitories! Prefects, you are to lead them there! All Professors are to follow me to the dungeons!”

Panic gripped Salazar’s insides as everyone made for the doors, and it wasn’t until they were halfway to the Slytherin common room that Salazar realized what a stupid mistake this was. If the troll was in the dungeons, then they were heading right towards it!

Why in the hell didn’t I think of that before we left the great hall! He scolded himself.

The entire house was in one long line, and Salazar was somewhere in the middle of the line, but as they rounded a corner, they heard a giant roar come from the front, followed by several screams.

“Go back! Go back!” Several prefects screamed as the troll rounded the corner.

Students began tripping all over each other in the attempt to get out of its path, and Salazar knew that there was only thing he could do amidst all the confusion.

Hogwarts my dear, now would be a good time to activate Helga’s security enchantments! He thought wildly as the troll began to bear down on the children.

“By the blood of a founder, so shall it be.” He whispered, as he cut his hand and smeared the blood on the wall.

Every stone in the entire castle turned black as coal and small yellow badgers formed on every wall. The badgers began snarling and moving in the direction of the troll. The troll gave a mighty roar and lifted its club to strike the students in front of it, but it suddenly found itself stuck to the wall as if it were a living decoration. Hundreds and hundreds of yellow badgers poured in from every direction, and the students stood rooted to their spots and stared in horrified awe as the badgers began attacking the troll.

“Go, go, go! Run back the other way! Get back to the great hall!” A few of the prefects screamed as
blood from the troll started spattering the walls.

The entire house turned to run, and they made it back to the great hall in record time. Salazar noticed that Quirrell was gone, but that was the least of his worries at the moment. Several students were bleeding, and some had broken wrists and sprained ankles from falling on the ground and being trampled, so someone ran to get help.

A first year girl by the name of Daphne Greengrass had a broken nose, which Salazar quickly healed, followed by several others with small to medium sized cuts. One prefect realized what he was doing and began helping him, while another began leading the ones with broken bones to another table so they could be treated by Poppy when she arrived.

Nearly all the first years were huddled together because they were still shaking from the whole ordeal, but Salazar couldn’t really blame them. He walked over to Blaise who was now sitting with Daphne and two other girls named Pansy Parkinson and Millicent Bulstrode.

“Are you all alright?” Salazar asked, walking over to the little group. Draco and his lot where there and were scowling at him, but they seemed fine so Salazar ignored them.

Blaise nodded. “Yeah, other than Daphne’s nose I think so. I wonder what happened. Where did all those badgers come from?”

Salazar shrugged. “I don’t know…”

“Don’t lie Potter!” Nott cried loudly with a scowl on his face. “You do know! I know you did something. I saw you smear blood on the wall. You also said something just before that! I saw you! You made the badgers show up!”

“Theo, I have no idea what you are talking about.” Salazar said calmly as he turned to face the boy. “Obviously Hufflepuff had something to do with the badgers. Maybe Professor Sprout did something, or it could have been the castle itself. It’s very old. Who knows what kind of enchantments it has.”

“It was you!” Nott cried, just as Severus, Poppy, Minerva, Albus, and Quirrell rushed in. “I know it was you Potter! I know you made the badgers appear. I saw you!”

“And I’m telling you it had something to do with Hufflepuff!” Salazar said, trying to ignore the pain from his scar.

“STOP LYING TO ME!” Nott screamed. “You whispered something, smeared the blood on the wall, the stones turned black, and the badgers came and killed the troll! I KNOW IT WAS YOU!” He cried, as he jumped up and pointed at him. “You preformed blood magic again!”

“And I’m telling you it had something to do with Hufflepuff!” Salazar repeated, which was mostly true. “Theo, look around you. How many people are bleeding from various cuts and wounds? I was pushed into the wall several times. Yes, my hand is cut and yes my blood ended up on the wall. Yes, I was whispering to myself, but how many of us weren’t? There was a bloody troll trying to kill us! I'm sure nearly everyone was screaming and whispering to themselves. How many of us were saying ‘I need to get out of here’, ‘Ouch, I'm hurt’, and ‘Merlin help us’? Are you sure you saw what you think you saw?”

Theo stared at him, swayed slightly on his feet, and opened and closed his mouth several times, but then he sat down heavily and buried his head in his hands.

“I don’t know. I don’t know.” He mumbled.
“I think you're in shock and need to be looked over by Madam Pomfrey.” Salazar said calmly.

“I don’t need…”

Severus cleared his throat. “As much as it pains me to say this, I agree with Potter. Nott, you are in shock. Let Madam Pomfrey take a look at you.”

Theo looked up at him and sighed. “Yes sir.” He mumbled, as he stood up and walked over to where Poppy was healing those with more serious wounds and broken bones.

“Where did the badgers come from Headmaster?” One of the sixth year prefects asked, and everyone became quiet and looked at him.

“I do not know.” Albus said gravely. “This has only happened three other times since the Founders passed away. No one knows where the badgers come from or how they appear. Perhaps it’s something Helga Hufflepuff ensured would happen if the castle and those within it were in great danger, but I cannot say for sure.”

Salazar stared at Dumbledore with a dumbfounded expression on his face. *This has happened before? When? Why? How?*

“W-W-well I for o-one didn’t a-a-appreciate it.” Quirrell stuttered as he looked at Albus with a scowl.

Severus rolled his eyes. “That’s because we had to pry you off the wall because you were stuck to it.” He said dryly.

The only reason Salazar didn’t burst out laughing was because his scar exploded in pain, and he gasped and clutched at it, though no one noticed.

“Well, let it be said that Hogwarts protects her own from danger.” Minerva said ominously.

“Indeed.” Albus said with a wide smile.

“Well I-I think that s-s-sending Slytherin House to their common r-r-room was a bit s-stupid. No offense Headmaster.” Quirrell spat.

“Yes, I agree. I didn’t realize what I was doing at the time, and for that I apologize. Thankfully you all are all right.” Dumbledore said as he looked around the room.

“What happened to the troll?” A fourth year asked.

“It seems that the badgers left bits and pieces of it laying all over the corridor, but it has since been cleaned up.” Severus said. “I suggest that you all head back to the common room. The rest of the feast has been set up if you are hungry. Those that need to be looked at by Madam Pomfrey stay here, and mind what she tells you to do.”

Everyone nodded and began shuffling out of the great hall. When they reached the common room, Salazar paid no attention to the food and headed up to the dorm room to change into his night clothes. He had a lot on his mind, so he laid down on his back and stared up at the ceiling, as Nora coiled up on his chest.

“Speaker, what do we know about the badgers?” She asked.

Salazar sighed and shook his head. “I'm not sure. We all have our different security enchantments,
but only the blood of a Founder can activate them. It may be possible that over time descendants could activate them, since technically they carry a Founders blood, but I don’t know for sure. I know Helga told her children about hers. Rowena didn’t have any other children other than Helena, and she died childless. Godric had two sons who also would have known, and I told my own children as well.”

“So you think a decendent of Helga’s set the badgers loose those other times.”

“It the only logical conclusion my dear. I'm the only Founder left, and I haven't been back here since Godric died, and he was the last to pass away. Helga died first, then Rowena, and lastly Godric. I was here for the other's funerals as well, but as I said, once Godric passed, I never came back.”

“Until now.” Nora said.

“Correct.” Salazar said as he patted her head.

“How did Morty become stuck to the wall?” She asked suddenly.

Salazar chuckled. “Well perhaps because he is dangerous. He didn’t get killed by the badgers because he doesn’t immediately pose a threat to the students, so that’s the only reason he is still alive.”

“I wonder where they found him.”

“I'm sure Severus will fill us in as soon as he can.” Salazar said, as he continued to pet her head.

“I see. Very well then.” She said, as she slithered off of him and settled down next to his pillow. “I suppose we better get some sleep.”

“I agree my dear. It’s been a long two days.”

“Yes it has Speaker, yes it has.” Nora mumbled, as she drifted off to sleep.

Salazar soon followed behind her.

Chapter End Notes

I hope the badgers werent to much for you all, but there is a point to the them i promise. However, it will addressed later in the story. I dont like writing things just because they sound cool at the time. There is a method to the madness i assure you! LOL I hope you all liked this chapter. Please let me know what you think!
Chapter 14

A Not So Good Morning

The month of November and first part of December flew by for Salazar, and before he knew it, it was almost the Christmas Holidays. He was, of course, staying at Hogwarts for Christmas. Quirrell seemed to be getting more and more agitated, and Salazar's scar was hurting almost constantly now, so he decided to keep a closer eye on him. Severus had told Salazar that Quirrell had been found on the second floor, and in Severus's opinion, Quirrell had let the troll in as a diversion so he could attempt to get the stone.

During the Christmas Holidays though, Salazar was going to have the whole common room to himself, seeing as every other Slytherin was going home. Draco took this opportunity to make fun of the fact that he wasn't going home, and that he would be alone for Christmas. Salazar just laughed and ignored him.

Speaking of Draco, the letter Salazar had written to Lucius had been strongly worded and full of subtle hints about a certain Dark Lord. According to Severus, Lucius nearly flipped out and sent a very angry letter to Draco, and Draco had thrown a temper tantrum in the middle of Severus's office because of it. Draco had stopped bullying Salazar and the children for a while, but eventually he'd gone right back to his old ways.

The Quidditch season had started, so Fred and George weren't around as much anymore because of practice and other Quidditch related activities. Salazar liked Quidditch well enough, but he didn't like brooms. During the first years flying class at the beginning of the year, he had shown up, but did just enough flying to get by. He liked his feet planted firmly on the ground, but that was because of an accident in his youth. He had hit a tree on a crudely constructed broom, and nearly broken his neck. Brooms had only been around for about five years before he was born, and they weren't as good as the ones made now, but that didn't matter. Salazar still didn't like flying.

The one thing that the twins did make special time for was Parseltongue lessons, which Nora took very seriously and threatened to bite anyone who didn't show up. They met twice a week on Wednesday and Friday after dinner, and the kids were doing fairly well. They had learned their names in Parseltongue, both their real names and 'Nora's names'. Hermione had been slightly insulted to learn that Nora called her 'Bushy', but once she found out what Nora called everyone else, she laughed about it. The twins loved the fact that they were known as 'The Minions', (even if Nora was only talking about one of them) and decided that, that was what they were going to go by from now on. They especially thought it was funny that their Mum was named 'Banshee'.

Of course though, these lessons were not without their problems. At some point, Ron had written to Mrs. Weasley and told her about the lessons, and you can guess her reaction. Two howlers arrived on the same morning, and due to them going off at the same, no one understood half of what was said. Apparently she placed some other kinds of charms on them, so Salazar, Fred, and George spent
the whole time trying to figure out how to destroy them with no success, but Salazar did answer in kind.

He sent a howler back to her that was recorded in nothing but Parseltongue. This sent Molly into a rage and she sent another one back, which Salazar also tried to figure out how to destroy. When he still couldn't figure it out, he sent Molly another one in Parseltongue, but this time with the twins attempting to translate what he was saying. Which, as you can imagine, was nowhere near anything that Salazar had said, so the English translation part ended up being a mishmash of nonsense words.

This still didn't set well with Molly Weasley though, so she sent another one, which Salazar finally figured out how to destroy by using a slightly 'dark' spell that was over three hundred years old. It could be compared to Fiendfyer, but it wasn't nearly as dangerous as Fiendfyer. This of course, nearly gave Albus a nervous breakdown, and Salazar had to sit through another lecture about 'dark magic'.

However, good old Ron once again blabbed that they figured out how to destroy the howlers by 'using Fiendfyer' so Molly herself showed up one night at dinner, and began screaming at Salazar for teaching her sons 'dark magic'. In a stroke of genius, the twins cast a voice amplifying charm and stood on top of the Gryffindor table and began 'speaking' Parseltongue, which actually sounded like a slurred version of some unknown language. Hermione and Neville quickly followed, and Blaise added to the chaos as well. The look on Molly's face was priceless, and Salazar was laughing so hard that he nearly fell out of his seat. Albus thought it was funny too, because he started laughing and even Quirrell looked highly amused by it all. Though Snape took ten points from Gryffindor for standing on the table, and Minerva took ten from Slytherin for the same.

Molly actually fainted after that, and Arthur, who had just shaken his head the entire time, levitated her out of the great hall and took her home. The twins dubbed it the best prank they had ever played on their Mum, and Salazar vowed to send the memory of it to James so he could have a good laugh over it too.

Not everything had been all fun and games though. Nicholas had written to Salazar that he couldn't find any trial information for Sirius Black, which led to the belief that an innocent man was sitting in the horrible prison. Salazar had written back asking if there was anything that Nicholas could do to get Sirius a trial. Nicholas said he would try, but that he'd have to be extremely careful about doing it, so that they wouldn't tip off Dumbledore since he was head of the Wizengamot.

Nicholas had already called in a few favors to keep his name off anything pertaining to the non-existent trial transcripts, and didn't know if he had enough favors left to keep his name out of a bid for a trial. Salazar knew it would raise more than a few eyebrows if Nicholas's name got dragged into this, so he told Nicholas to hold off doing anything for now, and said he'd have to come up with some kind of a plan.

However, Nicholas and Perenelle were very happy to have the stone back in their possession. Especially once Salazar told them he had planted a fake one in its place. Nicholas was going to see how long it took Albus to realize that they had been switched, and even hinted at visiting the castle to demand an update on the status of his stone. Salazar couldn't help but grin at that.

It was a few days into the Christmas Holidays and Salazar had a plan. He wanted to see how Voldemort would react to a certain piece of information, and Salazar knew that his only chance to do this was in the great hall at breakfast. He knew what he was planning to do would cause a lot of questions, but he would pick and choose what to answer based upon his 'knowledge' of the situation. No one other than the Professors and the Weasleys were inside the castle, so there wasn't a chance of anyone else overhearing this information. The Weasleys were a 'light' family, and Salazar knew they
would never dream of doing anything with it anyway. It was also a fun way to rattle Albus even more.

The Weasleys were staying over the Holidays because their parents had decided to go to Romania to visit their brother Charlie who worked with dragons. Ron had accused the twins of ruining Christmas and blamed the sudden change of plans on them. Thankfully Percy didn't see it that way, and disagreed with Ron, but that only made Ron even angrier and the red head had been in a bad mood ever since the holidays had started.

Salazar walked into the great hall carrying a very old, very large, very think leather bound book and began to read it. He waited for about twenty minutes then he put his plan into action.

"Well that is just about the dumbest thing anyone could ever do!" He cried loudly and in a somewhat shocked voice from the Slytherin table, hoping Severus would take the bait.

He did.

"What are you babbling about Potter!?" He snapped from the head table.

Salazar looked up at him innocently. "Horcruxes." He said simply, and the entire head table seemed to have turned to stone as everyone stopped what they were doing to look at him. "It says here that in order to make one you have to murder someone, but it comes at a terrible price. It's just…stupid."

"Harry, what are you reading?" Albus asked with alarm.

"Oh." He said nonchalantly "It's a journal that I found in the common room. I found it when I was rearranging the snake statues to say 'Happy Christmas'. The Bloody Baron taught me to conjure Christmas decorations and so I thought I'd decorate. I asked one of the statues to open its mouth so I could hang some holly leaves and berries and I found this book, and a few other things." He said, holding up the book. "It belonged to Salazar Slytherin. Apparently he was looking for a way to live forever, and briefly thought about using a horcrux, but he dismissed the idea because of what would happen to him if he made one."

"What would happen?" Minerva asked, before Albus could shut the conversation down.

"Oh, well according to what Slytherin wrote, the purpose of a horcrux is to seal a piece of one's soul inside a random object so you can live forever, but in order to do that you have to murder someone, like I mentioned before. Unfortunately, if you make a horcrux not only do you lose half your soul, but you also lose half your mind, and eventually your ability to use reason, logic, and to think rational thoughts. He dismissed the idea when he found the original inventor of the horcrux, Herpo the Foul. After talking to the ancient Greek wizard, who was still alive after nearly two thousand years, Salazar located Herpo's horcrux, destroyed it, and killed old Herpo to put the man out of his misery. Slytherin says," he continued, squinting at the book, "that the more horcruxes you make the more insane you become." He said looking at Minerva.

"Harry, you do realize you're reading about dark magic, don't you?" Albus asked gently.

"Yes sir, seeing as it involves a dark ritual that talks about killing people. It's not like I'm going to make a horcrux. I'm not an idiot, and I happen to like my rational thought process thank you very much." Salazar said firmly, taking a bite of his toast.

There was silence throughout the great hall as everyone stared at him. Quirrell looked really pale and somewhat disorientated. Severus and Minerva were trying not to laugh, and Albus just stared at him with alarm, but Salazar smirked internally when he saw Albus very briefly glance at Quirrell.
"Is that book full of dark magic though?" Professor Sprout asked, somewhat concerned after a few minutes had passed.

"Oh no ma'am." Salazar said with a chuckle. "Did you know that Godric Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin were considered the very first pranksters of Hogwarts? That's what Rowena Ravenclaw called them."

"Really!?" The twins cried in unison from the Gryffindor table. Then they jumped up and ran over to the Slytherin table to sit with him.

Salazar nodded and laughed. "Yeah. It says here," he said, flipping to a page in the middle of the book, "that Salazar once asked all the snakes on the grounds to follow Godric around for an entire week. Godric could barely move without tripping over one. He couldn't sleep, eat, or teach because of the amount of snakes that were around him. Godric did get him back though."

"How?" they immediately asked.

"Well apparently Godric transfigured a rock into a lion, and it carried Salazar around in its mouth for three full days. Godric had charmed it so that no matter what Salazar did, he couldn't get rid of it. By the time Rowena figured it out, Salazar was covered head to toe in lion slobber."

Everyone burst out laughing at the mental image that produced, and snickers could still be heard after several minutes.

"But it sounded like they were friends." Percy said with confusion. "I thought they were bitter enemies."

"Not according to this journal." Salazar said with a shrug. "They were best friends, and fought in several battles together against the muggles that were trying to kill witches and wizards in those days. If a big battle broke out somewhere, Godric and Salazar were there to help defend those who were magical. There is a story in here somewhere about the time Godric beheaded a muggle for killing a half-blooded child. There is another story in here about the time Salazar killed the mother of a muggle born for trying to drown her son in a river for simply being a wizard. The child was three years old, and he brought the child to Hogwarts and took care of him."

"What?" Percy said somewhat shocked. "But Slytherin hated muggle borns."

"True, but once they came to the castle to begin their schooling, Slytherin knew he had to protect them from the outside world." Salazar said, motioning to the book. "He just hated the muggles more than muggle borns because they were trying to kill witches and wizards."

"Yes, it is true. He raised me like a son." The Baron said, appearing in the great hall. "I will forever be grateful. Salazar even advocated to have all the muggle borns remain at the castle during holidays and summers so that they could be protected from their muggle relatives. The others, of course, agreed with him. It was after my incident that Salazar realized that muggle borns needed to be protected just as much, if not more, than the half-bloods and pure-bloods. He learned that what Godric, Helga, and Rowena had been saying about muggle borns was true."

"You're a muggle born!?!" Minerva blurted out in surprise.

"Yes, I am. I am the only muggle born that has ever been in Slytherin house. He killed my mother, and took me away. I was three years old, and had no idea what magic was, yet I was to die because of it. What would you have done? Let me die?!"

"I would have spoken to your Mother." Albus self-righteously said. "I also would have explained the
joys of having magic."

"Then you would have also died." Baron said pointedly. "Muggles today are nothing to fear, but the muggles of my day would kill you quickly for being magical. You do not understand how it was back then Headmaster. The world was different a thousand years ago, and you cannot apply the logic and reasons of today, to yesterday nor can you apply the logic and reasons of yesterday, to today." Baron said, then he turned to Salazar and smiled. "I'm am glad you found that book Mr. Potter. Salazar may have left it for his descendants to find, but I think it will do better in your hands. Beware to those who would try to take it from you, for if they try, they will find themselves cursed. Share the stories you find in it. Let Salazar's true image be known because for far too long it has been tarnished. He was not the blood thirsty monster history makes him out to be."

"I will do what I can sir."

"See that you do." Baron answered with a wink. "Now, if you will excuse me, Peeves is on the fourth floor trying to topple a statue." He said, then he floated out of the great hall.

"What else is in that book Potter?" Severus asked in genuinely curious tone.

"Well, I have been reading through it for a few days now, and I skimmed through some of the sections. There are spells that he invented, some are nasty, but a lot are harmless and there is even a few pranking spells for, and I quote, 'to get back at that bloody Gryffindor'." He said, and the twins stared laughing. "There are potions that he invented, and then there is the journal part, which I just began reading last night, and I didn't sleep at all because of it." He chuckled. "There is also this potion here." He continued, holding up a green potion. "But I don't know what it is. Here sir, I think you should take it."

He walked up to the head table and placed the potion in front of Severus, who looked at him in shock.

"It's not labeled, but the muggles have a term called reverse engineering. It means to take something apart to figure out what it is and how it works. Is there a way to do that with potions?"

"There is." Severus answered simply.

"Well here you go, I guess." Salazar said motioning towards the potion.

"Severus, let me know what that is as soon as you find out." Albus said gravely. Then he turned to Salazar. "Thank you Harry for turning that potion over."

"Of course sir." Salazar said with a nod. "I'm not about to play with something that could possibly kill me."

"And it probably would too!" Ron shouted from the Gryffindor table, where he had been sulking since breakfast started. "Salazar was an evil slimy git, and a barmy old fool."

Salazar was walking back toward the Slytherin table, and he had to hold on to the Ravenclaw table because the pain in his scar flared up so suddenly that it made him swoon. He managed to stay upright though.

"I don't think he was anything like that." Percy scolded. "Maybe misguided about some things, but he did help found this school. You should have more respect for him Ron."

"Why!?" Ron shouted. "He was an evil git!"
"From what I have read so far, yes Salazar was a dark wizard, but not all dark wizards are created equal. By today's standards, Slytherin was a fluffy bunny rabbit compared to say...Voldemort. Salazar didn't run around killing off half the country, and exterminating pure-blood lines simply because they didn't believe what he believed. He only killed muggles when he had too. Does that make Godric Gryffindor a dark wizard? What about sweet little Helga Hufflepuff? She killed muggles too, as did Rowena Ravenclaw. From what I've been reading, back then it was kill, or be killed." Salazar said, looking at Ron, who had turned red in the face and was glaring at him.

"Did Salazar Slytherin kill any witches and wizards?" Percy asked.

"No, I don't think so." Salazar answered. "It says in that book that Slytherin valued *all* magical blood. He may have disagreed with half-bloods and some pure-bloods, and he may not have liked muggle borns, but after the incident with Baron, he learned that muggle borns were in the most danger, especially children. Slytherin himself would have died before he killed a magical child, regardless of blood status."

"What about muggle born adults?" Professor Sprout asked.

"I don't know ma'am. I either haven't read far enough yet, or it's not in there." Salazar admitted.

"I see." She replied. "But history says that he left the school because of the muggle borns."

"I don't think that was true, seeing how he ended up feeling about them, but I don't know why he left. Like I said before, it's either not in there, or I haven't read that far yet." He answered, knowing full well that information was in there, but he was not willing to divulge it just yet. His quest for immortality was also mentioned a few times, but how he achieved it was not.

Salazar glanced at the twins, who were leafing through the book and probably looking for the pranking spells. Nora was coiled up between them and appeared to be studying Percy, who was creeping closer and closer to the book and was trying to look over the twins' shoulders. Ron was still sitting at the Gryffindor table, looking upset and glaring at his brothers. As for the Professors, Minerva was talking quietly with Poppy and Professor Sprout, Severus was studying the potion, Albus was lost in thought, and Quirrell was staring at the book curiously.

Salazar knew that Voldemort wanted to get his hands on the book, and he was fine with it, except for the nasty spells that were in it. He knew Voldemort would likely use them against other people. He wasn't hoping for a miracle, but he did want to let his Heir know that what he had done with the horcruxes was completely foolish. Salazar also knew that Voldemort would never destroy his own horcruxes because in order for a person to reverse the effects of the horcrux, they would need to feel regret and remorse, and *that* was not something Voldemort was going to do. Salazar regretted the fact that he would have to eventually kill off his own family line, but it was necessary. Voldemort was a madman, to put it nicely, and he wasn't going to change.

"Harry, may I borrow that book?" Albus asked suddenly, and in his best grandfather voice.

Salazar knew it was a ploy to get the book out of his hands, and judging by the look Quirrell was giving Albus, he knew Voldemort had come to the same conclusion.

Salazar scratched the back of his head. "I don't know sir. You heard what the Baron said, and I don't want you to be cursed." He answered truthfully. "I know in the muggle world they have ways of copying things, is there a spell for that? Maybe if you copy the book, you wouldn't get cursed."

Albus frowned at him, but quickly changed it into a smile. "Yes Harry, there is a spell that can copy books, but many books have a spell placed on them so that they can't be copied. Such as the ones in
book shops and our own library here. Otherwise it would be considered stealing."

"I understand, but if this one doesn't have that special spell, can we also make one for Professor Snape?"

"Potter?" Severus asked in surprise.

"Well I figure you're the Head of Slytherin, and it just seems right to me." Salazar said with a shrug. "Besides there are potions in there that Slytherin invented, and seeing as you are the Potions Master as well, he probably wouldn't mind you having them."

"Perhaps you're not as much of a dunderhead as you seem Potter." Severus admitted begrudgingly, as he got up from the head table and made his way down to Salazar.

They all watched as Severus made two copies, and he handed one to Albus, and kept one for himself. The twins however, grinned at the cranky Potions Master as he sat back down at the head table.

"Professor Snape, will you make a copy of just the spell part for us? Please." Fred asked with a grin. "We don't really care about the dark spells…"

"…but the pranking spells would be…"

"No Weasley." Snape said sharply, cutting them off. "Not on your life."

"Speaker, you will copy the spells for the Minions, won't you?" Nora asked.

"Oh! She said Minions!" George said, looking at Nora, then back to Salazar who nodded.

"Yes Nora, I'll hand copy the spells for them. I don't see the hurt in it." Salazar answered with a chuckle.

"Hey Nora, what is a good name for Percy?" Fred asked.

"I do not know Minion. I've been trying to figure it all morning." "She doesn't know." Salazar said offhandedly, as he began looking through the book again.

"A name?" Percy asked curiously.

George laughed. "Nora doesn't call people by their correct names. We are the Minions, Ron is Carrot, Mum is Banshee…"

"What?!" Ron shouted. "That stupid snake better call me and Mum by our proper names!"

"She is just a pet Ron." Percy said. "She doesn't…"

"I'm not a pet!" Nora hissed loudly.

"Don't call her a pet. She gets very offended if you do. I'm her pet."

"Oh, uh…I'm sorry Nora. I didn't know." Percy said uneasily.

"But now you do, so see that it doesn't happen again." She said with a huff, and Salazar repeated what she said.
"How can you apologize to it!?" Ron shouted, as he stomped his way over to the Slytherin table. "She bloody bit me!"

"Only because you were being a prat." Fred pointed out.

"I was not, and you know what!? It's because of you two that Mum and Dad went off to Romania!" Ron shouted. "They left because you wanted to hang around a stupid Slytherin git and learn to speak to snakes! You're going to end up dark wizards just like him. YOU TWO RUINED CHRISTMAS!" Ron bellowed, drawing his wand and sending a hex towards one of the twins.

Salazar just shook his head and laughed at Ron, but it all turned into horror in a split second. Ron had cast the dancing feet hex at George, but he jumped out of the way. Unfortunately, Nora was right behind him and she took the curse. She hissed and writhed in pain, seeing as she didn't have any feet, and Salazar could only stare at her in horror.

Until he came to his senses.

"NORA!" He cried, just as Percy quickly canceled the charm on her.

Fred and George started yelling at Ron, but Salazar rushed to her side. She was laying on the table limp and barely breathing. Professor Grubbly-Plank, the Care of Magical Creatures Professor, was already making her way towards them, and she gently pushed Salazar aside to check on Nora. Poppy had also jumped up, along with Minerva and Albus and were also making their way over to them.

Salazar could only stare in horror. There was a hundred things he could do, but all of them would give him away. He was torn on what to do, but he didn't have to think about it long.

"She's fading." Grubbly-Plank said shaking her head. "Her spine was broken in several places. I healed it, but I-I don't know what more I can do for her Mr. Potter. I-I am so sorry."

This was not what Salazar wanted to hear.

"She not going to die! She can't!" He shouted, as he wandlessly and non-verbally summoned the Sorting Hat. "Hang on Nora. Hold on. Please!" He cried, as tears ran down his cheeks.

He didn't even care that he was crying. Nora had been his one confidant that he told everything too. All his fears and worries, and all his plans. What would work, what wouldn't, and how he should go about doing things. It was her. Not Severus. Not Poppy. Not Minerva. Nora was the one that knew absolutely everything.

"Please don't leave me." He sobbed, as he cradled her head gently. He could already tell that she was fading fast, but suddenly the Sorting Hat was there, and fell onto his head.

Help me Hat. Please! I need Godric's sword! Please hurry! He thought frantically.

The Sorting Hat leapt off his head, and Salazar heard the sword as it fell out of the hat's hole. He grabbed it out of mid-air, and glared at Ron as the hat settled back onto his head.

"Should I stab him with it?!" Salazar cried, but he turned and made his way to the front of the head table instead.

Oh very clever. Hat said with a half-hearted laugh. But you better hurry, and don't kill the boy Salazar. It would do no one any good.

Salazar knew the hat was right, but he was feeling murderous at the moment. However, he ran over
to the largest stone in the floor. It was the one stone that the stool sat on every year. For almost ten centuries the first years were sorted on this very stone as they sat upon the little four legged stool, and over time the four legged stool had rubbed four perfectly round circles into it.

Salazar however, knew this stone's real secret. He took Godric's sword and stabbed the middle of the stone, right between the four small circles, and twisted the sword clockwise so that it made a small 'H'. Everyone stared at him in shock as he jumped backwards to avoid falling off of it as the stone began to rise, with Godric's sword gleaming from the top.

"Hold on Nora! Please!" He cried again as he cast a glance over his shoulder. Poppy was waving her wand over Nora, but she had a worried look on her face.

"Whatever you are doing Mr. Potter, make it quick." She called back to him.

Salazar took a deep breath as he turned back to the stone, which was rising up out of the floor. Underneath it, a large golden pillar was quickly appearing as the stone rose up to it full height. Fresh tears rolled down Salazar's face as he felt the ancient magic of his friends roll off of the pillar in waves, but he quickly glanced over the pillar, and spotted his target.

Helga's cup.

He grabbed it, and cast an expert eye over the pillar as he plucked a potion from just underneath where Helga's cup had been sitting. He ignored everything else that the pillar held, and poured a small amount of the potion Helga had brewed so long ago into the cup, and rushed back to Nora.

"Nora, please. Please drink." He whispered, as he looked at her limp form. "Please, just stick out your tongue. Please, you must." He sobbed. "Please."

Nora managed to weakly stick the very end of her forked tongue out, and Salazar nearly placed her whole head in the cup so Nora could get a little bit of the potion on her tongue.

"Try and swallow it my dear, please try and swallow it." He pleaded.

She was able barely able to, but when Salazar saw her glow a soft blue, he knew she managed to swallow it. There was a few tense moments but then Salazar heard her hiss softly.

"Speaker, what happened?"

"Not now my dear." He answered, as he tried to catch his breath from holding it for so long. "Just rest."

"She's healing." Poppy said in disbelief. "What did you do?"

"He did exactly what I told him to do." Hat said from his place on Salazar's head, then he jumped off Salazar's head and landed on the table. "Your little friend will be all right now Mr. Potter. Helga Hufflepuff was an excellent healer, and her cup increases the potency of any healing potion placed in it by five times. She just needs rest now, and lots of care."

Salazar knew all this of course, but he was thankful that the hat had thought to make it his own idea so quickly.

"Thank you." He managed to croak out.

"You're welcome, but now you must place everything back inside the pillar."
Salazar nodded, and turned back to the pillar. He stared at it for a moment, and a small wistful smile flickered across his face as he took it all in.

Rowena’s diadem was perched at the top, and was next to the empty hole where Helga’s cup and been. Underneath that was Rowena’s own sword. It was bronze with gleaming sapphires embedded on its handle, and her name was delicately engraved on the blade. Just underneath her sword were books that were written in her hand and filled with her knowledge.

Sitting beside Rowena’s things was Salazar’s own things he had left behind. His locket was sitting beside Rowena’s diadem, and underneath was his own sword with its silver blade and emeralds, along with his own name engraved in it. Just underneath his sword lay a textbook he had written for Defense against the Dark Arts.

Then there were Helga's things. The empty hole where her cup had been, and then her sword perched underneath, with its gold blade and onyx gemstones, and her name engraved on its blade. Under that lay several healing potions she had brewed, as well as books on healing and cookbooks filled with her recipes.

At the top, and still stuck inside the stone, was the key to unlocking the pillar. Godric's sword. Sitting in front of the sword were journals filled with his thoughts, ideas, and general ramblings.

Salazar closed his eyes for a moment and pictured the day they all stood in that very spot and placed their items inside the pillar, then they poured their magic into it, and thereby giving Hogwarts its partial sentience. That had been a monumental day.

"Mr. Potter?" Minerva asked, gently placing her hand on his shoulder.

Salazar shook himself out of his thoughts and looked at her with a smile. "I'm sorry ma'am. I'm just…in awe."

"I understand." She said softly. "I had no idea this was even here. Albus, did you know?"

"No Minerva, I cannot say that I did. Hat, why did you never tell me?" He asked.

"Because you didn't need to know. Very few Headmasters have ever known. That pillar is the heart of Hogwarts. I keep its key, and I'm the judge of whether someone is worthy enough to open it."

"And how was Mr. Potter worthy?" Albus asked in a slightly biting tone.

Salazar glared at him. "Apparently because my friend was dying." He answered.

"In a nut shell." The hat answered. "I knew he needed help, so I came."

"I see." Albus said with a scowl, as Salazar replaced Helga's cup and the rest of the potion back into its rightful place.

The hat leapt off the Slytherin table, and everyone watched as it sailed towards Godric's sword and fell upon it. The sword disappeared back into the hat, and the pillar descended back into its resting place. Minerva gently picked it up, and placed it on the head table.

"Thank you for your assistance Hat." She said, and the hat nodded, jumped off the table, and flew out of the room.

Salazar took a deep breath, rubbed his eyes, and then glanced around the room. Fred was laying on top of the Slytherin table next to Nora, as Poppy waved her wand over her again. Minerva was
looking at Salazar with concern, Albus was staring off into space, Severus and Percy were staring at the stone where the pillar was in total shock, and Quirrell looked downright pissed off, though Salazar didn't know why. George however, was glaring at Ron, who was looking at Salazar and the red head looked very scared at the moment.

With good reason.

Salazar was now glaring at Ron so fiercely that it's a wonder that the Weasley hadn't exploded into flames yet, but Salazar glanced at Nora, then back at Ron.

And then Salazar exploded in anger.

Chapter End Notes

Please don't hate me! LOL! Another cliffhanger! Im so sorry, but i figured that i should stop it here, otherwise this would have been a very long chapter, and i was afraid some key details would get lost because of it. However, this will be the first time we see Salazar get really angry, so i hope it is worth the wait for you guys. Also, please remember what i posted in the last chapter. I know the pillar thing is kinda weird, but there is a method to the madness, and considering what lies within the pillar, you should know something is very fishy here! **grins evilly** See you guys in the next chapter.
A Happy Christmas

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*A/N* One of my guest reviewers on 'the other site' pointed out to me that Professor Grubbly-Plank was not the COMC Professor at the time. It was in fact Professor Kettleburn. I had completely forgotten about him! Grubbly-Plank was the substitute Professor for Hagrid in book 5 and i think that where my confusion came from because i remember her taking care of Hedwig when she was hurt. Anyway, Im so sorry for the mix up, but i think i'll leave it as is. Kettleburn was known for getting seriously hurt while teaching, so lets just assume that he was hurt and Grubbly-Plank was subbing for him! I hope you guys don't mind!

Chapter 15

A Happy Christmas

In the back of his mind, Salazar knew that Ron was only a child. In the back of his mind, he knew Ron hadn't meant to do it. In the back of his mind, he knew that Ron had not been aiming for Nora, but was aiming for George instead. However, in the back of his mind is where all that knowledge stayed, and Salazar only saw what was right in front of him.

Which was…that Ron had nearly killed Nora because of his hot-headedness.

The air in the great hall became cold and still as death, as if dementors had entered the room. The clear blue sky of the enchanted ceiling suddenly formed angry dark clouds that began roiling and churning. The Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw tables began vibrating dangerously, then they exploded violently into nothing but fine saw dust.

'Harry Potter' stood there glaring at Ron as a fierce wind sprang up around him. He had his wand in his hand, and for the moment it was pointed at the ground, but everyone wondered how long that would last.

Minerva took a few steps back and looked extremly concerned. Severus had gotten up from his seat and was inching towards Percy, Fred, George, Poppy, and Nora, as if to protect them somehow. Albus had a look on his face that was a mixture of awe and fear. All the other Professors had flattened themselves against the wall, but Quirrell looked absolutely gleeful, and he wasn't even trying to hide it.

Ron, for his part, looked completely terrified.

"For months I have put up with your pettiness! For months I have put up with your false accusations! For months I have put up with your scathing comments and the rumors that you have spread about me! For months you have been saying that I'm evil! For months you have said that I'm dark! Is that what you what?! Is darkness what you want to see!? ANSWER ME YOU PATHETIC IDIOT!"

Salazar roared, as every window in the great hall shattered, sending the glass into the snow covered ground below. "I am NOT a dark wizard Ronald Weasley, but if that is what you want to see me as, then by Merlin you're going to see it!"

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" Ron screamed as he stumbled backwards and fell down on his bottom. "Please don't hurt me! I didn't mean to hurt her!"
"YOU ALMOST KILLED HER BECAUSE OF YOUR STUPIDITY!" Salazar roared. "Do you think just because you now have a wand that you can just whip it out anytime you want and start hexing people?! I don't think you are even mature enough to have a wand! Shall I take it from you and snap it in half?"

"No! No don't! Please…" Ron babbled.

"SHUT UP!" Salazar bellowed, as he stood there glaring daggers at Ron. "Do you want to see some dark magic Ronald Weasley? Do you? You are so focused on people going dark, so I think you should see what dark magic is really all about! Do you want to see some?"

"No! No! I'm sorry! Please don't, please!" Ron begged, as he shuffled backwards on his bottom in an attempt to get away from Salazar's wrath.

Out of the corner of his eye, Salazar saw Albus raise his wand at him, but with a flick of his wandless hand he sent the Headmaster's wand sailing out of his hand and everyone watched as it skittered across the floor. The old man's eyes widened in shock as he stared at his hand where his wand used to be, then his gaze turned to 'Harry', who had yet to take his eyes off a blubbering and babbling Ron Weasley.

With a complicated wave of Salazar's wand, the long mounds of sawdust that used to be the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tables began to solidify into very large snakes, one turned into fire and the other into water. Everyone's eyes widened at the display, but Ron screamed and pointed a very shaky wand at the two giant snakes as they reared up to their full height and towered over the terrified red-head. Then the idiot boy did the stupidest thing he could have done.

Ron pointed that very shaky wand right at Salazar.

Salazar narrowed his eyes and sent both snakes crashing down on top of the boy, and Ron screamed when they collided right above him. The giant water snake came first and the fire snake followed almost simultaneously, and the steam that resulted from the collision engulfed the entire great hall.

A few people screamed, but most coughed and sputtered as the steam dissipated. When it had all cleared, 'Harry Potter' was still standing in the exact same spot, and the great hall was back to normal with all the windows and all four house tables intact and back in their rightful places.

Ron Weasley slowly got to his feet, looking very rumpled and slightly damp from the steam bath he had just received, and stared at 'Harry Potter'.

"You used dark magic." He accused, in a raspy voice.

"No I didn't. That was what a few charms and a bit of transfiguration can do. Not a single thing I did was dark, but you obviously didn't know that." Salazar replied, as he began to calm down. "Perhaps you should study and read more."

"You could have killed me!"

"I could have," he admitted, "but do you know why I didn't? It's because you are just a child to me, despite us being the same age. If I was a dark wizard, I would have maimed, killed, and/or tortured you."

"Not in front of them!" Ron shouted, pointing to the Professors.

"That's not true, because a dark wizard wouldn't care who was around. They would take pleasure in watching the horrified faces of those watching. From all the reading I've been doing, I have come to
the conclusion that dark wizards are no different than muggle serial killers." Salazar said, and nearly laughed when the pain in his scar flared.

Albus quickly scurried across the room to grab his wand, and he let out a breath of relief when he touched it. Then he stared at 'Harry' with a new mixture of awe, pride, and…happiness?

"Ron, do you know the difference between a dark wizard and dark intentions?" Salazar continued, and judging by the blank look on the boy's face he didn't. "I will explain. You see, a dark wizard is someone like Voldemort who uses nothing but dark magic, and uses it to maim, torture, and kill his victims. Dark intentions are when someone casts a dancing feet spell at his brother in order to embarrass him, or to 'get revenge' on him. Dark intentions are when someone uses giant snakes to scare the mess out of someone. Dark intentions are when someone is manipulating someone else into doing something they might not necessarily want to do. Do you see where I'm going with this?"

"I'm not dark!" Ron shouted defensively.

"No you're not." Salazar agreed with a nod. "Everyone has dark intentions every now and then. Having them doesn't make you a dark wizard. I am not a dark wizard, but I do have dark intentions. Just like you, just like Percy, just like Fred and George, Professor McGonagall, Professor Snape, and even Professor Dumbledore. Just to name a few. I bet even Madam Pomfrey has dark intentions every once in a while." He said, then he grinned at the Medi-witch. "She keeps people trapped in beds."

The tension in the room seemed to dissipate as everyone smiled and chuckled at that statement.

"He's right Mr. Weasley." Minerva said, nodding her head. "Not everyone has to be a dark wizard in order to have dark intentions, and I think that is where you get confused."

"But he is evil! Look at what he did just a minute ago! He used snakes and stuff!" Ron shouted, and Salazar sighed and shook his head.

The whole room seemed to deflate as everyone looked at Ron and also shook their heads. However, Dumbledore was staring at Salazar rather oddly now, and quite frankly, it was beginning to unnerve him.

"Well, I'm done trying to teach Ron anything. If you all will excuse me, I need to tend to Nora's needs and well-being." He said.

He walked over to where Fred was still sitting with her, and gently scooped her up. Then he made his way into the dungeons, and headed for the common room.

"The boy is powerful, and he is smart. However, I wish he would have displayed some uses of dark magic, but I suppose with Dumbledore standing there, it wouldn't have been wise." Said a cold raspy voice that rang out inside the Defense classroom. "I'm also beginning to think he really doesn't care for Dumbledore all that much. This could work in my favor."

"He could be a threat to you Master. He disarmed Dumbledore without so much as a glance in the old man's direction."

"Yes, he did." The voice agreed. "However, I think it had more to do with Dumbledore being off his guard and not expecting it."

"Of course, you are right Master."
"We need to get the stone Quirrell. Your methods thus far have been...disappointing. I also need to check on some of my...possessions. I feel they may be in danger. I also need to look into a few things. Get that stone soon, or I will be displeased with you."

"I will get it Master." Quirrell replied as he winced slightly.

"See that you do, and when I have it, I will see if the boy wants to join me."

"Yes Master."

In the Slytherin common room, Salazar was idly stirring the contents of a small cauldron. There were several other small cauldrons spread out over a large study table, and each was in various stages of completion. The room was decorated for Christmas now, and he had also placed a small Christmas tree right beside the fireplace. It was also silent in the large room, with the exception of Salazar shuffling around and the softly bubbling potions.

Nora was stretched out on a blanket that was laying on one of the couches, and she was fast asleep. Salazar smiled as he watched over her. She had grown quite a bit since he had summoned her that day on the train. Back then, she had just been a mere six inches and skinny. Now she had grown to about ten inches and she had fleshed out and put on some weight. Before she fell asleep though, Salazar had done his own examinations of her, and found that Poppy and Professor Grubbly-Plank had done an excellent job of healing her. He was satisfied that her injuries were gone, and now she was well on her way to recovery. Granted, Helga's potion and cup had a lot to do with it too, but if the two witches hadn't thought so quickly, things wouldn't have turned out so good.

Salazar was also thankful for Percy's quick action in canceling the spell. If it had gone on any longer, Nora would have been beyond saving. He made a mental note to personally thank Percy the next time he saw him.

He was still shuffling around and attending to the potions when he heard the familiar soft rumble of the entrance to the common room open, and Severus appeared a moment later with his robes billowing around him in their normal fashion.

Severus stopped and raised an eyebrow at him, but then he caught sight of Nora asleep on the couch, and looked at Salazar with worry.

"Sir, is she alright?" He asked with concern.

"Yes, she is just sleeping. These are just to help me relax. I decided to brew a few healing potions for Poppy for when the students come back. I'm sure that with everyone returning it will cause all their germs to mix, and the 'back to school bug' as Petunia called it, to surface again. Dudley and I always got sick because of it."

"That does seem to happen." Severus agreed with a small chuckle. "It happens at the beginning of the year, and after every winter break."

"Indeed." Salazar said with a smile. "To what do I owe the pleasure of your company? Does Albus want my head on a platter?"

"Actually that is why I'm here, and surprisingly, the answer is no."

"Really?" Salazar asked, as he looked up from the simmering Pepper-Up potion in shock.

Severus nodded, as he took a seat in one of the chairs that was situated around the table. "Yes sir. I
just came from a mandatory staff meeting because he wanted our opinions about your little display. Needless to say, Flitwick liked the excellent charm work. I, of course, spoke up with my usual prattle, but Minerva and Poppy came to your defense and pointed out that you could have actually hurt the dunderhead, but didn't."

"What about Quirrell?" Salazar asked curiously.

"From what we could gather through all the stuttering, he was quite impressed. Albus didn't like that too much, considering the source, but he hid it well enough to fool the others. Albus himself admired your self-control. Minerva admitted that for a moment she thought you were going to hurt the idiot boy, but quickly caught on to what you were doing when you transfigured the tables. The other Professors also admitted that they were afraid at first, thinking you really were going to use dark magic, but once they realized what you were doing, they relaxed and didn't want to interfere. Albus himself agreed with them, though he is slightly upset that you managed to disarm him. They all admitted that that came as a shock."

Salazar laughed. "I guess I can say I'm not surprised after your explanation. Albus is probably happy that I'm powerful, and will no doubt try to use that for the 'Greater Good'. I knew he might try to stop me at first because of what I was saying about using dark magic, but I didn't see the point of actually taking his wand. I was more focused on Ron. I do admit that I wanted to hurt him badly at first, but I had to keep in mind that he is a child. An idiot child, but a child none the less. I did try to turn it into a lesson when I began to calm down though."

"Speaking of your logic on the issue, Albus was very impressed with that as well, and agreed with your points of reason and is amazed that you think like that, given that you are so young." Severus said with a chuckle. "He asked Minerva to sit down with Weasley and try to explain it all again. Time will tell if it sinks in though."

"Well, I'm not all that surprised about that either really. Despite Dumbledore's feelings on dark magic vs. light magic, even he knows the difference between dark magic and dark intentions. He's not completely blind to the issue. Is Ron going to receive any punishment for his actions though?"

"No." Severus said with a scowl. "They said he didn't do anything wrong."

"Good. I agree with that decision. Especially considering that what I did should have warranted punishment as well."

"Sir?!" Severus asked, in a completely shocked tone.

Salazar sighed as he looked up from the cauldron. "The whole thing was an unfortunate accident Severus, and I lost my temper because of it. It started with a harmless spell, one that normally wouldn't warrant detention or loss of points, just a stern warning. He was aiming for his own brother who jumped out the way. If Nora hadn't been right behind George, nothing would have happened. However, if Ron had blatantly attacked her, that would have been a different matter altogether."

"I suppose if you put it that way I see your reasoning, but that doesn't mean I agree with it."

Salazar nodded in acknowledgement in the difference of opinion, but then he continued. "However, I fear that if the boy doesn't straighten up that he will be a lost cause. His mother has done a number on him. Thankfully Fred and George aren't like that, and from what I have observed of Percy Weasley, he seems rational. I don't know much about the boy, but he seems stern and tries to keep his younger brothers in line."
"To his credit, he does." Severus admitted, as he began helping Salazar with the potions.

"Ron Weasley is the Gryffindor equal of Draco Malfoy I'm afraid. Both boys are extremely prejudiced, hot-headed, and reckless. Also, they are both whiny, petulant, and petty, but at least that makes them predictable. That may change as they grow up though. However, I fear that Draco will follow in his father's footsteps, and that is not the life I'd want to see any child fall into. I may have work with him on changing that, but seeing as I am 'Harry Potter', that may not be received well. Not to mention, my 'lesson in manners' may have humiliated him a bit too much. I now regret doing that, and I'm afraid that did irreparable damage to the whole situation."

"I'm afraid you might be right. I'll do what I can to help steer him away from his father's path, but I don't know how to accomplish that without blowing my cover completely."

"A lot of it is up to Draco. If he will stop listening to his father's prattle and stop throwing around his father's name, he might see reason one day." Salazar said.

Severus nodded, and they spent the rest of the afternoon brewing potions and chatting. Severus did ask about the potion that Salazar had given him, but Salazar just smiled and said that he would have to take it apart to figure it out, but he did say the answer lay within the book he had 'found' in the common room.

Dinner that night was a quiet affair. Nora was still asleep in the common room, but Salazar decided that he would take her some small pieces of cut up chicken in case she wanted to eat later.

He had brought the book again, but this time he sat at the Gryffindor table with the Weasleys. He let Fred and George look through it, knowing that they were after the pranking spells and nothing else, but Percy did ask Salazar questions about what he had read about The Founder of Slytherin. Salazar answered most of his questions, but not the rest simply because 'he didn't know'.

Ron sat several seats away from his brothers and Salazar, but didn't partake in any conversations. He was subdued and didn't cast any glares. In fact, he didn't even look their way, and when he was finished eating, he immediately left the great hall. Salazar didn't blame him though, and he hoped that whatever Minerva had said to boy actually got through.

A few days later, Christmas morning dawned and Salazar woke up with a start as a loud banging sound echoed throughout the dorm room. After sitting up and rubbing his eyes, he realized that Nora had woken up and was pilfering through the presents that were stacked up at the end of his bed. The banging sound was all of them falling onto the floor.

"I'm sorry Speaker, I didn't mean to wake you." She said, as Salazar looked at her with bleary eyes. She didn't look sorry though, she looked like she had done it on purpose. "It's time to get up. You have to help me open my presents. I think Pigeon left me something. I can smell it."

He chuckled softly and since it was a bit chilly in the room, he stayed half covered and 'accioed' all the presents onto the bed.

Hedwig had returned from delivering presents to Brazil the day after Nora had been hurt, and when she learned what happened, she had decided to spend the next few days in the common room. When Salazar had asked if she was watching over Nora, the owl ruffled her feathers and hooted angrily at him, but she still kept watch over Nora. Salazar just laughed at her, much to Hedwig's displeasure.

"Open mine from Pigeon first." Nora requested, and Salazar did.
The Hogwarts house elves had apparently placed it in a box, but it was a dead mouse and had one of Hedwig's feathers placed in it as if to signify that it was from her.

"Pigeon has done well. I will enjoy eating that for breakfast. She can have one of my mice from my bowl as a present from me."

"I'm sure she will like that." Salazar said with a chuckle, as he began opening the other gifts.

From Nicholas, Perenelle, and Blaise he had received books, but books were always a favorite of his. Neville had sent him some chocolate frogs, and he laughed when he opened one because the card turned out to be his own. Hermione had sent him a book on advanced charms, but she also sent something else. It turned out to be a muggle hat with reindeer antlers, a small Father Christmas hat, and a piece of red fleece fabric that looked like a long skinny sock with a bit of white fur at the opening and a white puff ball at the end. He was confused at first, until he read her accompanying letter.

Harry,

I racked my brain to try and find a gift for Nora. At first I couldn't, until I saw the reindeer antler hat. (That's for you by the way.) When I saw that, I got an idea. I think you can shrink the small Father Christmas hat down to Nora's size and use a sticking charm to make it stay on her head. The red fleece 'sock' is the rest of the Father Christmas 'costume' for Nora. I thought it would be funny for you to be the reindeer and for her to be Father Christmas, seeing as you are her pet. I hope you and Nora like it and don't think it's too weird!

Your Friend,

Hermione (Bushy)

Salazar burst out laughing, and once again wondered how Hermione hadn't ended up in Ravenclaw. Her creativity was simply brilliant. He reread the letter out loud to Nora, who was so excited that she immediately demanded that he do what the letter said. He shrank the hat, and put a sticking charm on it, but they had to make some adjustments to the red fleece sock, because it wanted slide off of her as she slithered around. A sticking charm around the opening did the trick though, and Nora now looked like a snake version of Father Christmas. Salazar didn't stop laughing at her for nearly ten minutes.

"If you don't stop laughing at my costume, I will bite you!" She huffed. "Now, you have to do what Bushy said and put on the hat. We still have more presents to open."

"Alright." Salazar said, as he stuck the hat on his head and laughed again.

Severus had given him a potions kit full of rare ingredients, which Salazar was excited over, and Minerva and Poppy had banded together and got him a nice pair of dragon hide boots.

The box of presents from Lily, James, and Harry contained gifts for everyone 'in the know'. There was one from Lily to Severus, two more from James and Lily to Minerva and Poppy, and one from James to the Weasley twins. Salazar could only guess what that was. James had sent Salazar a two way mirror with instructions on how it worked. He explained that this was a faster way to communicate, instead of sending Hedwig back and forth across the open ocean. Salazar was so happy that there was a better way, and vowed to contact James later on that day.

As a gift, Harry had sent Salazar a short hand written, hand drawn book that made him laugh loudly. The title was How to Act Like an Eleven Year Old Boy (Just in Case You Forgot) by Harry
Potter. The inside consisted of things like…

When in trouble, deny everything and blame the closest person near you. (Even if they are an adult.)

Make sure to stomp around and throw temper tantrums at least once a week.

Forget to brush your teeth every other day, and NEVER brush your hair.

Take baths and showers only when told.

Make sure you get all muddy right before you have to go somewhere important.

Make sure you know your Quidditch teams.

And last but not least, eat a bunch of sweets so that you are always HYPER!

Salazar thought that was the best gift he had ever received and decided to show it to Poppy, Severus, and Minerva. The charmed drawings that accompanied the 'rules' were simply hysterical. Not to mention, Salazar had a sneaky suspicion that he had just been pranked.

The last gift however, made him mad. When Salazar first opened it, he was amazed that someone would give him such a fine looking cloak, but then a part of it fell over Nora it made her completely invisible. A note fell out of the cloak as he unfolded it, and he picked it up and began to read.

*Harry,*

_Your father left this with me before he died, and I thought you should have it. Use it well, but please remember to not go near the third floor corridor._

*Albus Dumbledore*

He sat back against his pillows and frowned. If this cloak belonged to James, then the first thing he was going to do was get it back to its rightful owner. Secondly, Dumbledore was becoming bolder with his not so subtle manipulations.

Salazar just sighed and shook his head. He was going to have to deal with the whole third floor nonsense sooner or later. He was surprised that his wards were still in place on the door, but he had a feeling that would soon change.

Breakfast was relaxed, yet lively. Since it was Christmas day, the other tables had vanished and there was just one long table for everyone to sit at. Salazar was the last to make it to breakfast that morning, but as soon as he entered the great hall, Fred and George burst out laughing because of his new hat.

He explained what it was and all about and who gave it to him. The twins laughed even harder after that, and of course, Nora threatened to bite them. However, she enjoyed the 'ohhs and aahs' she received because of her little costume, and happily slithered around the table with her head held high because of them.

Hedwig came for a visit, and Nora happily gave her a mouse for her Christmas present, and Hedwig hooted her thanks. Salazar told Hedwig that her gift was a new perch that she could use in the common room, until the other students got back, but then she could have it during the summer as well. He left out the part that it wasn't going to be at the Dursleys though.

After the feast later that afternoon, Salazar ended up in a snowball fight against the twins, which he
lost miserably. Fred and George took great delight in pelting him with the charmed snowballs, but seeing as it was two against one, Salazar really had no chance. However, the three of them did see Quirrell walking along the side of the castle, so Salazar waved them over and motioned for them to be quiet. He sent a mild blasting curse at the show covered roof, and managed to bury Quirrell and Voldemort under a large pile of show. All three of them hid behind a tree and laughed as the possessed man blasted the snow away from himself, and stomped off soaking wet and muttering angrily.

Later that night, Salazar met up with Severus, Poppy, Minerva, and the twins on the seventh floor. Throughout the day he had told each one of them to meet him there at 8pm because he had something for them.

After entering the Room of Requirement, he asked the room for some comfortable chairs and an art easel. After setting that up, Salazar enlarged the mirror James had given him, and called out his name.

"James Potter!" He said loudly, and they waited a few moments.

When James answered, he smiled brightly at everyone, and immediately called for Lily and Harry. James must have enlarged his mirror too, because they had no problem seeing the three of them.

"I was wondering if you were going to call today." James said with a grin. "Minnie, Poppy it is so good to see you after all these years. Severus, now that I can say this to you directly, I'm so sorry."

"I have moved on Potter, and I humbly accept your apology." Severus said.

Lily smiled brightly at him. "It's so good to see you Sev, and I'm so glad Salazar brought you in."

Salazar glanced at Severus as he gazed at Lily, and saw the emotions in the young man's eyes.

"I'm so glad that all of you are alright." Severus said, as his voice cracked slightly.

"As am I." Minerva said, as she dabbed her eyes, and Poppy could only nod as she blew her nose.

"Lily, James, and Harry, I would like to introduce you to some troublemakers, who managed to find out about me due to a certain map of yours. This is Fred and George Weasley." Salazar said with a grin, as the twins laughed. "Boys this is Lily, the real Harry Potter, and Prongs."

The twins grinned at them and bowed low. "It is an honor to be in your presence oh Great Ones!" They said together, and the Potters laughed loudly.

"I like you guys. You're funny." Harry said with a grin. "Salazar said in a letter that you do a lot of pranks. What all have you done?"

The next five minutes consisted of the twins, James and Harry discussing pranks, while Minerva Poppy, and Severus gave them all exasperated looks, but by the time Lily called a halt to the joke talk, everyone was laughing.

"Well I have yet to give you all the presents they sent to me to hand out." Salazar said with a smile, and began passing out the gifts.

"Mum, it's like he's Father Christmas." Harry said with a laugh.

Salazar grinned at him. "Well, I'm certainly old enough to be." He said, which caused everyone to
laugh again.

Severus received a very old potions book that had been written in a different language, but Lily explained that she had placed a translation charm on it. She found it in a very old book shop, and mentioned that she had never seen one like in England, and thought he might like it. Salazar knew Severus would treasure that book always.

Poppy received a healer's potion belt so that she could carry potions around, instead of running back and forth to her cabinet all the time. However, when Minerva opened her gift she half glared at James and half smiled.

"James Potter, I'm going to throttle you!" She exclaimed as she held up a bag of cat nip and a cat toy.

James and Harry started laughing loudly, but Lily shook her head. "I tried to talk him out of it Minnie, but I couldn't. I hope you like the winter cloak though."

"I do Lily, it's beautiful. Thank you so much." She said with a smile.

Last came the twins, who were shocked that they had received something, but when they opened their gift from James, they grinned wickedly.

"The Complete Compendium of Marauder Pranks by Padfoot and Prongs." The boys read together as their eyes shone brightly.

"Just remember to not target individual people." James said, as he looked at Severus and smiled sadly.

"We won't." The twins said sincerely.

"Also, I understand Peter is living in Gryffindor Tower and at your house, so remember to hide it well. If he sees it, he will know what it is."

"Yes, sir."

After Minerva scolded a grinning James for placing that book in the hands of the two greatest mischief makers since the Marauders, they all talked with the Potters for at least another hour. Today had been time for catching up with old friends, and making new ones. Needless to say, it had been a wonderful and lighthearted Christmas Day.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* I know it's a bit fluffy at the end, but i hope no one minds. I figured that would be a nice thing to do, seeing as everyone had previously thought the Potters were dead, and being able to see and talk to them seemed like a good gift. Anyway, we are soon coming to the end of year one. I think there will be 2 maybe 3 more chapters before it is over.

Please remember to leave a comment, and let me know what you think! Thank you so much!
Detention

Chapter 16

Detention

Salazar had been right in assuming that the wards around the door to the third floor would come down soon because they had come down the day after Christmas. He had warned Fred and George not to go near there, and told them why. He knew Percy wouldn't go near it, and Ron had been so quiet lately that Salazar was beginning to wonder if he had traumatized the boy so badly that he was now unable to speak.

He had also contacted James and mentioned the cloak to him. James confirmed that he had indeed given it to Dumbledore shortly before they had left the country. Salazar told him that he would return the cloak to him as soon as he could, which James was thankful for. He told Salazar it was a family heirloom, and had been passed down from father to son for many years.

Nicholas sent him a letter saying that he was planning a little trip to Hogwarts in a month or so to 'demand answers'. When Salazar learned this, he immediately began to think up a plan. He was going to enjoy giving Albus a massive headache between now and then.

Salazar put his plan into action just before sunrise on the day the students were to return from the Christmas Holidays. He chose that day simply because it would be the most inconvenient time for Albus. He had warned Minerva, Poppy, Severus, and the twins not to be alarmed, but he wouldn't tell them anything beyond that.

He woke up early that morning and told Nora it was best if she waited for him in the dorm, just in case something went wrong. She protested, but in the end she agreed to stay put. He left the dorm and made his way through several shortcuts until he was standing in front of the door to the third floor, and he shook his head and sighed when he unlocked it with a simple unlocking charm.

Even though he was disillusioned, the griffin, who by now was starting to look ragged and sickly from being indoors, lifted its head and sniffed the air. It got up and looked around, but then laid back down in what appeared to be a depressed heap. Realizing that the poor creature wasn't going to make it much longer, Salazar was sure what he was about to do was for the best.

"Bombarda Maxima!" He cried.

The startled griffin jumped up just as the spell connected with the back wall of the corridor. The blast blew a giant hole in the castle's walls, which made the entire castle shudder violently. The freezing cold outside air came rushing into the corridor, and the griffin just stood there for a few moments breathing in all the fresh air.

"Go." Salazar said gently to the weakened creature. "Go. You are free now."

The griffin looked towards the sound of Salazar's disembodied voice, then looked back down the corridor and took off running towards his unexpected freedom. It stopped at the opening and flapped its wings as if to test their strength, and took off out of the hole and headed for the rising sun.

Salazar stood in the opening and watched it fly away, then he quickly stuck a piece of parchment to the trapdoor, cast a quick spell, and headed back to the common room.
Albus and company arrived about ten minutes later and everyone stared at the scene with dumbfounded expressions. Hagrid came huffing and puffing into the corridor shortly after and said he had heard the explosion, and watched the griffin fly off into the sunrise.

Albus could only stare at the destruction, but then quickly shook himself out of it.

"Filius, will you kindly head to Gryffindor Tower and assure the Weasleys that everything is alright, and Pomona, will you do the same in the dungeons for Harry?"

They both nodded and headed out the door, but not before looking back and casting one more glance over the scene. Meanwhile, Hagrid started to sob over the loss of his 'pet'.

"A-Albus there is a-a-a giant h-hole in the c-castle."

"What wonderful observation skills you have Quirrell." Severus said sarcastically as he rolled his eyes. The mutinous glare that Quirrell gave him did not go unnoticed by the Potions Master, but he chose to ignore it.

"There is something stuck to the trapdoor Albus." Minerva said, as she made her way towards it. She reached down to pick up the note, and began to read it out loud.

To Whom It May Concern,

Once again those in charge of this school amaze me. Why on earth would anyone lock that poor griffin up when they know full well that griffins do not do well indoors? The poor thing was half dead, so I took care of the problem just like I took care of the Cerberus. I have placed a spell on the trapdoor to keep it from being opened. Now you don't have to lock up vicious animals in a school full of CHILDREN! Merlin save us from your stupidity.

Sincerely,

Someone with Common Sense

Albus scowled at the note in Minerva's hand, but Minerva herself kept a smile from creeping across her face. Severus's eyes danced with laughter in the semi-darkness, but he too schooled his features to be unreadable. Quirrell on the other hand, snorted.

"This is t-the s-s-second time that p-person has bested you A-Albus." He said with a chuckle.

Albus glared at the man, but quickly made his way over to the trapdoor. He waved his wand over it for a minute, but then he frowned.

"There is no spell on this door." He said, looking at the others. Then he reached down to grasp the handle of the trapdoor.

That was a mistake.

He squealed like a little girl when small bolts of lightning sprang up from the handle, and the electric shock sent him flying into the wall.

"Albus!" Minerva cried, as she rushed over to him.

"I'm alright. I'm alright." He assured her, as he unsteadily got to his feet.

Quirrell didn't even try to hide is amusement over the situation, and Severus eyed the trapdoor in fascination.
"I-I guess that m-makes it t-three times he h-has b-bested you." Quirrell said through his laughter, which caused him to receive another glare.

"Headmaster, if I may, if a note from an unknown source says that they have placed a spell on an object, perhaps it is best you not touch it." Severus said, in a slightly amused tone.

"Yes, thank you Severus." Albus said dryly, as he half leaned on Minerva for support.

"Come on Albus, let's get you to Poppy. Hagrid, will you take him while Severus, Professor Quirrell, and I clean up?" She asked.

"O-of course P-Professor." Hagrid said, as he blew his nose, and looked at the sky again.

"Oh stop blubbering Hagrid." Severus said. "Perhaps it's for the best."

"He was starting to look awful." Hagrid agreed, as he gave one last glance at the sky. "Maybe he will be better off."

"Yes. Now, get Albus to Poppy." Minerva said a bit impatiently.

They watched as Hagrid led a still unsteady Albus out of the corridor, then the three of them began to repair the hole in the wall.

Poppy did her part by keeping Albus in the hospital wing all day, much to the Headmaster's annoyance. He tried to assure her that he was perfectly fine, which he was, but Poppy wanted to 'keep him under observation' because she had never heard of a spell that electrocutes people before.

Severus and Salazar watched the memory of the event in Severus's pensieve, and Salazar nearly laughed himself silly over the whole thing. Severus asked what the spell was and Salazar told him that it was one he had invented. The muggles had actually given him the idea when they invented electricity, and he had just adopted the basics of it. It won't power muggle electronics, but it will give off an electrical shock. It is also undetectable, but not deadly unless someone is repeatedly exposed to it over a short period of time.

The rest of the day Salazar spent in the library, which is where he had been for most of the holidays. He had been studying books on law, and trying to figure out ways of getting Sirius out of Azkaban, but he hadn't had much luck.

James told him that the information about their secret keeper was in their wills. Unfortunately, with them not being dead, they had no way to access the wills, and the goblins were the only ones that knew the Potters had even made wills in the first place. Also, the goblins weren't about to break protocol and release the wills because the parties in question weren't dead, even if the Potters told them too.

Salazar couldn't do anything himself either, seeing as he was a 'minor', and short of Nicholas walking into the Ministry with knowledge he shouldn't have and demanding a trial, they were stuck. Even if they had Pettigrew in their hands. It would cause too many questions, and not only would it blow Salazar's cover, but it would put the Potters in danger.

And that was not something they could afford at any cost.

As much as it pained him to do so, James told Salazar to leave well enough alone for now. They knew where Peter was, and as long as they kept an eye on him and didn't let any information slip out, he shouldn't get suspicious and run. It killed him to know that his best friend was sitting in the
worst prison in the world, but with Voldemort in such close proximity, it was safer not to make a move.

The only thing Salazar could do was agree with the logic.

Poppy finally let Albus out of the hospital wing just as the train arrived in Hogsmeade, and he had to run all the way to his rooms to freshen up before the children arrived and dinner began. He had spent most of his day split between trying to get Poppy to let him go, and thinking about the current situation.

He needed to find some way to get Harry to confront Voldemort over the stone, but the boy was being uncooperative. He clearly didn't have his father’s curious spirit because he hadn't even gone near the third floor the entire holiday.

_The boy has spent the entire break in the library or in the common room reading! He needs to get out and explore the castle!_ Albus thought to himself, as he changed out of one gaudy set of robes and put on another. _He needs to get into mischief, just like his father did. He should be in Gryffindor!_  

_But he's not in Gryffindor._ Said a little voice in the back of Albus's mind. _He's in Slytherin._

Albus sighed as he sat on the edge of his bed. He hated that fact. He hated that Harry was in Slytherin. He had been hoping that since Harry was friends with the Weasley twins that some of their mischief making would rub off on him, but that clearly wasn't the case. He needed to figure out how to deal with Harry, and get him to face Voldemort. He wasn't worried about Voldemort getting the stone. It had already been safely placed into the Mirror of Erised, and Albus had placed several strong enchantments on it.

There was also that _other_ problem. The one who kept messing up all his plans. He needed to figure out who this mysterious person was, and stop him. How was Harry and Quirrell supposed to get into the underground chambers and fight for the stone, if the trapdoor was going to electrocute them?

Albus didn't know, but he was going to find this person, and make them disappear…if he had too.

"Harry! Harry! Harry!"

"Neville! Neville! Neville!" Salazar answered with a teasing grin, as the excited boy came running towards him.

The students had just arrived and dinner was going to start soon, but Hermione and Neville decided to pay him a visit at the Slytherin table. Blaise had just sat down, and he grinned as the two Gryffindors rushed over.

"My Gram took me to Ollivander's the day after Christmas and I got a proper wand! I even got to test it out in Ollivander's shop, and it works great. Its thirteen inches long, and is made from cherry wood and unicorn hair. Gram even conjured a match and I was able to turn it into a needle with no problems, and she was so proud of me!" He exclaimed breathlessly as his eyes shone brightly.  

"When we got on the train, Hermione, Blaise, and I ran through the charms and other transfiguration spells that we learned, and I was able to do most of them with no problem too!"

"He did do really well." Blaise confirmed as he grinned at Neville, who was smiling so broadly that Salazar was afraid his face would stay like that.

"I am very happy for you Neville." Salazar said with a sincere smile. "Now you shouldn't have a
"Yeah, I am hoping my grades will improve now since it won't be such a struggle." Neville grinned. "Anyway, I wanted to give your wand back to you, seeing as I won't need it anymore. I told my Gram what you did for me and she was very surprised. She said that even though you're a Parselmouth and a Slytherin that you are ok with her. She even told me that our Mums were best friends in school, and that she is happy that we are friends." He said, though his cheeks grew red with embarrassment at the last part.

Salazar laughed. "I didn't know our Mums were friends, but it's always good to know things like that. I'm so glad I was able to help you."

"You did Harry, you really did. Thank you so much." Neville said, as he handed over the holly and phoenix wand.

"Bushy, thank you for my present." Nora said, as she slithered out of Salazar's robe sleeve.

She still had on the hat and fleece sock, but Salazar had changed the colors to green and silver now since it was after Christmas. Nora liked it that much, and since it was often cold in the castle, it also kept her warm.

"Oh look at you Nora! You're so cute!" Hermione exclaimed as Blaise and Neville started laughing.

"I had to give up my hat, but she refuses to part with her costume, so I changed the colors. It also keeps her warm."

Hermione grinned at them. "I'm so glad you didn't think it was too weird, but I didn't even think about it keeping her warm. Snakes don't like the cold."

"No we don't." Nora said, as she held her head up to allow Blaise to pet her. "Speaker, tell them class starts again next week, seeing as it is already Thursday night, I'll let them have tomorrow off."

Salazar laughed, and repeated what she said. By that time though, dinner was starting so the Gryffindors said goodbye and headed for their table.

Salazar stuffed the extra wand in his pocket. After reading all that he could about wands and wandlore, he had come to the conclusion that Albus could not have possibly manipulated that event. It had surprised Salazar. The wand chooses the wizard, and there is no getting around that. He just didn't understand why this particular wand chose him. It was simply baffling.

"So Potter, did you enjoy your time alone. With no parents, relatives, or anyone who cares about you really. It must have been depressing."

"Puny is asking to be bitten." Nora hissed, as she glared at the boy.

"It's fine. Let him blabber on." Salazar said, but then he turned to Draco. "Actually Draco, I had a brilliant time. I read a lot, and learned lots of new spells."

Blaise picked up on the meaning immediately, and he laughed. "That means you got to practice them too. I bet you became really good at casting them."

"Yes I did." Salazar said with a nod, as Draco's eyes widened. "I learned the Bat Bogey hex, the pus squirting hex, the stinging jinx, the tail growing hex, and the knee reversal hex. Just to name a few." Salazar rattled off as he looked at Blaise with a grin.
"You'll have to teach me some of those Harry." Blaise said with a laugh. "They sound brilliant."

"They are, and I'll teach them to you."

"Just as long as it doesn't interfere with my lessons." Nora said, as she slithered over to the end of the table and coiled up.

"It won't my dear." Salazar assured her.

"Ok, I caught 'lessons'." Blaise said, as he looked from Salazar to Nora, and Salazar nodded and repeated what Nora had said.

"You're learning pretty fast." Salazar commented. "As are the rest."

"Did you have lessons with Fred and George over the holiday?"

Salazar shook his head. "No, they were more interested in pelting me with snowballs." He said with a grin, and Blaise laughed.

"It still seems pretty stupid to learn a language you can't speak, but I suppose the idea did come from a mudblood. By the way, your snake looks stupid." Draco said with a sneer.

Salazar had to quickly grab Nora as she lunged off the table, and over his plate towards Draco.

"Say what you want about me, but DON'T call Bushy that awful name!" Nora yelled as she twisted and struggled to get out of Salazar's grip.

She was hissing loudly, and it all happened so suddenly, that Draco jumped backwards in his seat. His bottom slipped off the bench and he lost his balance, grabbed Crabbe, who grabbed Goyle, who grabbed his plate of all things, and they all tumbled to the floor in a large heap. There was the sound of a bone snapping and Salazar cringed, as the trio slowly separated.

"Madam Pomfrey! I think someone broke something!" Blaise shouted, as he tried to hold in his laughter. The other Slytherins didn't even try to hold it in though. Those around them burst out laughing and began pointing.

"Draco, I have told you before, you need to watch what you say." Salazar said. "You almost got bit."

As they stood up and began brushing food out of their hair and off their robes, Draco glared at him. "Shut up Potter!"

"Which one of you has a broken bone?" Poppy asked as she came bustling over.

"Oh uh…me." Crabbe said, showing her his arm and wincing slightly.

"Come with me then." She said, and led him out of the great hall.

"What happened Potter?!" Severus snapped as he came up behind them. "Are you causing trouble?"

Salazar opened his mouth to speak, but Draco cut across him. "His stupid snake tried to attack me for no reason!" He shouted, pointing at Nora, who was still hissing at him.

"He called Hermione a mudblood." Salazar said, summing it all up.
Severus glared at both of them, but grabbed Draco by his robes and forcefully dragged the blond away. He also snapped at Goyle to follow, and they all began walking out the great hall.

"When I tell my father about this, he's going to have that stupid snake killed! You'll see Potter! This is all your fault!"

Severus pushed him out of the room, as Salazar shook his head and rolled his eyes.

"One day he will hopefully learn to stop riding his Daddy's coat tails." He said, as he sat back down.

"What?" Blaise asked, looking at him with confusion.

"It's a muggle expression." He said with a sigh, and then explained it.

Blaise laughed. "Well, Draco accused Hermione of coming up with the idea for the Parseltongue lessons. I wonder what he would do if he realized that it was actually two pure-bloods."

"Considering that it was Fred and George, he would still call it stupid because they are 'blood-traitors'." He said with a sigh. "It's the stupidest word ever thought up."

"Yeah." Blaise agreed with a nod. "But for what it's worth, my Mum thinks it is neat that I'm learning it. She also thinks that us being friends is wonderful."

"Well I suppose it's always good to have parental consent." Salazar said with a laugh.

"You sure don't have Mrs. Weasley's consent." Blaise laughed.

Salazar grinned at him. "I don't think Fred and George really care."

"Time and time again your father has told you NOT to antagonize Potter! What part of that hasn't sunk in yet?" Severus hissed at the blond.

He had dragged them down into his office, and now Severus was pacing back and forth behind his desk, as Draco scowled at him.

"I don't see why!" Draco shouted. "They haven't given me a reason!"

"They have their reasons Draco, but if they haven't told you, then it is not my place to do so. I suggest you listen to them." Severus answered a bit more calmly.

"But it's like they think he's the bloody Dark Lord or something! I don't..."

"Show some respect!" Severus shouted, but decided not to elaborate on just who the boy should be showing respect towards.

Draco scowled at him at him again. "Potter is not special. So what, he's good in class, but that's about it. I don't get why everyone wants to walk on eggshells around him! The whole house is scared of him, except Zabini, who's an idiot anyway! I'm not scared of Potter! You don't like him, so why shouldn't I!?"

"I have my reasons Draco." Severus said in a cold voice. "But I am an adult. You need to heed your parents' warning. You do realize that the Headmaster is going to force me to write to your father, don't you?" He asked and Draco glared at him.

"I don't care."
Severus sighed. "One day Draco, one day you will be sorry you ever antagonized Potter." Severus said, shaking his head. He so badly wanted to shake some sense into the boy, but he knew he couldn't. "Just heed your father's warning, and expect another angry letter from him later in the week."

"Fine!" Draco shouted. "Come on Goyle."

Severus watched as both boys stomped out of his office. He suddenly began to wonder if there was any truth in the book that the real Harry Potter had sent to Salazar.

The next few weeks flew by for Salazar as winter faded into early spring, and before he even realized it, it was the beginning of March. Nicholas was out of the country on business, so he hadn't dropped by for a chat with Dumbledore yet, and the only thing that kept Salazar distracted was the ever increasing pain in his scar. He was now going to see Poppy nearly every day to get pain potions.

He knew Voldemort was getting angry because he didn't have the stone yet. Quirrell himself was looking even paler these days than he normally did. Salazar knew Quirrell was dying. It was unavoidable. The possession was literally sucking him dry, and if they didn't get the stone soon, Voldemort would have to leave Quirrell's body behind. Salazar did not feel sorry for the man though, if he was stupid enough to let Voldemort possess him in the first place, then he deserved to die.

It was during this time that Albus called in the detention he had set for the boys at the beginning of the year during the whole blood magic debate. Salazar had secretly been hoping that he had forgotten about it, but apparently luck wasn't with him. So that is why he and his dorm mates found themselves walking with Filch towards Hagrid's hut in the middle of the night on a Saturday. Draco was complaining like he always did, but when Hagrid said they were going into the forest, they nearly flipped out.

"It's called Forbidden for a reason!" Salazar shouted.

"There are werewolves in there!"

"Vampires!"

"Bats!"

"Snakes!"

"Well at least Potter can talk to those, and Zabini can understand them." Nott said rolling his eyes at Goyle, who had mentioned the snakes.

"You do have a point there." Salazar said.

"Professor Dumbledore set this detention, and I don't want to hear any more about it, you hear?" Hagrid said sternly. "Now, you all just stay close to me and we'll be off."

With lots of grumbling and complaining, most of it surprisingly coming from Salazar, they set off. He decided that if Hagrid was in the front, then he was going to take the back in case anything nasty snuck up behind them.

"Nora, wrap yourself around my neck, and keep a look out. Let me know if you see the heat signatures of anything big."
"Yeah Nora, please warn us if you see anything." Blaise said with a shaky voice as he inched closer to Hagrid.

"I will keep a look out Speaker. Don't worry Zabby, I'm the only one allowed to bite you." She teased.

"Normally I would laugh Nora, but right now, I just can't." Blaise answered.

"What did you say to her Harry?" Hagrid asked curiously, as they made their way deeper into the forest.

"She's a snake so therefore she can see heat signatures. I told her watch for anything big."

"Oh right. Yeah that's good thinking." He replied. "I got Fang too, so he can sniff stuff out."

"Let's just hope he can eat whatever attacks us." Nora said sarcastically.

This time Blaise and Salazar snorted.

They continued to go further and further into the forest. The children had their wands held high to try and provide more light, and Hagrid held his lantern straight out in front of him. They were making as much noise as possible to scare off the critters, and they kept hearing the leaves rustle as they scurried away. All the while Salazar kept mumbling about 'bloody Gryffindors' under his breath.

"Speaker, there is a large horse off to the right."

"Where to the right?" Blaise nearly shrieked, and everyone but Crabbe turned in that direction.

"Crabbe that is your left, and she said it's a horse." Salazar said with a sigh.

"Centaur." Hagrid corrected. "They must be following us. Just stay close."

_Centaurs_? Salazar thought. _Since when are they allowed to roam the grounds of Hogwarts?_  
He shrugged off the thought though, and kept walking. Then all of a sudden Hagrid stopped beside a bush, and all of them crashed into the back of him.

"We are getting close." He said, lifting up his fingers to show them a thick silvery substance. "This is unicorn blood, and it's what we are here to find. This one is hurt really bad, so we need to split up. Half of you come with me, the other half go with Harry. I say that because you're pretty good for an eleven year old. Just like your Mum." He said with a smile.

Salazar smiled back, but he didn't like the idea of splitting up. "Are you sure that's a good idea Hagrid?"

"I'm sure." He whispered. "We need to find the unicorn."

Salazar sighed. "Alright then, who's coming with me?"

Unsurprisingly, no one moved.

"Alright then, I'll choose the teams." Hagrid said. "Zabini and Crabbe go with Harry, and the rest of you follow me."

They sighed as they split off into teams. Salazar started grumbling again, and Blaise kept turning his head in every direction so fast that Salazar was afraid the boy was going to give himself whiplash.
Crabbe on the other hand, almost tripped over every stick he encountered.

"There are more horses Speaker." Nora said nervously.

"Where are they?"

"All around."

Blaise gave a little whimper, but Salazar shushed him. "Just stick close to me."

"What's going on?" Crabbe asked.

"Centaurs are all around us."

"Oh ok."

Salazar rolled his eyes, and plowed on ahead. After a few minutes, they came to a small clearing, and that's when Salazar's scar exploded in pain. He gasped and clutched at his head, but then he looked up. What he saw nearly made him sick. There was someone leaning over the unicorn and drinking its blood.

"Run! Get back to Hagrid!" Salazar shouted, as the figure stood up and began advancing towards them.

Blaise and Crabbe screamed bloody murder and began running away, but Salazar fired several loud blasts from his wand to alert Hagrid to the danger. The figure, who Salazar was pretty sure was Quirrell judging by the amount of pain he was in, staggered backwards for a moment when the blasts went off.

Then Quirrell drew his own wand, and tried to hit Salazar with a stunner.

The duel that followed was nothing short of chaotic. Stunners were flying through the air from both of them now, but soon it turned a bit nastier. Quirrell started firing off the Crucius curse, and Salazar didn't want to tangle with those, so he began dodging them. He didn't want to respond with any Unforgivables just in case someone checked his wand later, but he did start responding with the 'nasty curses' he read about in the book he 'found' in the common room.

He sent a beheading curse, leg vanishing curse, and a stunner for good measure, but somehow Quirrell was able to block and/or dodge them. Salazar knew that Quirrell wouldn't know what the first two were, but the stunner he knew, but apparently Quirrell had enough and started responding with killing curses.

Salazar was tempted to just stand there and let them all hit him, but figured he better not because it would raise too many questions. Besides, he didn't want Voldemort know about that particular little secret just yet.

He ran around behind a large tree and quickly disillusioned himself, and stood as still and quiet as he could, considering that he was breathing heavily.

A few minutes passed, and he could hear Quirrell searching for him, but suddenly he heard yelling, and then the tell-tale 'thowng' of an arrow hitting the tree he was hiding behind. He heard Hagrid shout something, but then he saw Quirrell flee for his life as more arrows began flying through the air.

Finally it was all quiet, and he cautiously poked his head around the tree and saw Hagrid standing
there, with the children huddled up behind him.

"Harry? You there? It's alright. Please say something! It's just me!" Hagrid called out frantically.

Salazar quickly dispelled the disillusionment charm, and stepped out from behind the tree.

"I'm here. I'm alright, just a little beat up."

"Are you sure? I saw a bunch of red and green flashes!"

"Yes sir, I think they were stunners and killing curses. Who was that man?"

"I don't know Harry, but we better get back to the castle. I need to tell Professor Dumbledore about this." Hagrid said gravely, as he gazed at the dead unicorn.

At the mention of Dumbledore's name, Salazar suddenly felt the urge to begin blowing stuff up.

"Over there Mr. Potter." Poppy said, pointing towards an empty hospital bed. "I need to check you over."

Salazar was so angry that he didn't even protest. She had already checked the other children over and deemed them fine, so she had sent them off to bed. It was just her and Salazar in the hospital wing for the moment, and he knew she had questions, but honestly, he didn't feel like answering them. He was tired, sore, and had cuts and bruises all over his face and arms from dodging all the curses Quirrell had thrown at him. He was also covered in dirt and had bits of leaves and twigs stuck in his hair, so needless to say, he looked like a mess.

During the trek back to the castle, he had been lost in thought. He wasn't an expert on unicorns, but he did know that unicorn blood could sustain someone even if they were close to death. This to Salazar only meant that Voldemort was getting desperate, because even Salazar knew that killing a unicorn and drinking its blood was a big no no, because it would leave the drinker with a cursed life.

Poppy's curiosity finally got the best of her and she whispered, "What happened?"

Salazar just sighed and shook his head. "Voldemort." He answered simply.

Her eyes became wider than galleons and she started to ask another question, but she was interrupted by the hospital wing doors opening.

Albus strolled in with Minerva and Severus following along behind him, but they were shooting glares at him behind his back. Quirrell must not be back from the forest yet because he was nowhere to be seen.

Albus was smiling his grandfatherly smile and his eyes were twinkling as he looked at the boy laying in the bed.

"Harry, what happened? Hagrid said you were attacked by an unknown wizard." He said calmly.

HA! Unknown wizard my left foot! You know exactly who it was! Salazar thought as he glared at the Headmaster.

"Harry?" Albus asked as he peered at him over his glasses. "Will you tell us what happened?"

Salazar's glare deepened, but then he had a thought and began to smile. "Yes sir, I'll tell you what happened." He said with a bright smile. "You see, my dorm mates and I were out serving our
detention that you set. The party consisted of six children with barely enough magical knowledge to
defend themselves, and a gamekeeper who, for some reason, can't use magic. We were just trailing
along, sniffing the flowers, and having a grand old time out in the Forbidden Forest looking for a
hurt unicorn, when all of a sudden…we stopped!" Salazar exclaimed, as he wildly waved his hands
around, but then he continued.
"We found the blood of the hurt unicorn, and so we split up to find it. My two dorm mates and I
continued on, and pretty soon we realized, thanks to Nora, that we were surrounded by Centaurs!"
He shouted in a fake happy voice. "But they aren't anything to worry about, because you know, they
just don't like humans. Anyway, we continued on until we came to this creepy clearing and…" He
said, pausing for effect, "there was a man!" He said exclaimed.
Then he lowered his voice as if he were telling a campfire tale. "He was dressed in all black and was
drinking the blood of the dead unicorn. We all gasped in surprise, and he looked up and started
walking towards us. My dorm mates started screaming, and they ran, but then all of a sudden…
BOOM!" He shouted loudly, making all the others jump. "He started firing curses at me. I
recognized the bright red ones as stunning spells, and tried to return them. I don't know how
powerful they were, but at least a red light came out of my wand. He deflected them, so I guess we
won't know. Anyway, that went on for a bit, but then he stared firing some sickly looking red spells
at me, and from my reading, I think it was the Cruciatus Curse, but I'm not sure."
"What!?" Minerva exclaimed loudly, but Poppy shushed her.
"Hush Minerva. This is a good story, and I want to hear more. Go on Mr. Potter, what happened
next?" She asked in a fake curious voice.
Salazar wanted to kiss her, but he settled for grinning.
"Well, what happed next was…I started using some of the nasty spells I read in the book I found. I
don't know if I did them right, and I don't think the man knew what they were, but I used a
beheading hex, leg vanishing hex, and a stunning spell. The man seemed to not like that at all, and
started firing green spells at me! I think it was the killing curse, because I read that that one is green."
This time both Poppy and Minerva exclaimed, "WHAT!?"
Salazar just ignored them, but he put on false happy smile. "Well, after that I ran around and hid
behind a tree. The man tried to find me but he couldn't, and that's when Hagrid and the rest showed
up. It was the best detention EVER Headmaster. Thank you for allowing me to have such
a wonderful experience!" He exclaimed with a smile, but then he glared him. "Forgive me
Headmaster, but I think you're an idiot for sending us all in there, in the middle of the night,
practically defenseless, and obviously without a care to our safety."
"POTTER!" Severus shouted in warning, but he was standing behind Albus and was grinning like a
fool.
Salazar ignored him, and continued to glare at Albus. "This school, under your leadership, seems to
not care about the safety of the students. You have locked up a three headed dog, a griffin, and who
knows what else, that is, if the rumors are true. Those creatures are dangerous, and I have half a mind
to find another school to transfer too. Researching other magical schools will become a priority over
the summer, and if next year is anything like this year, I will be leaving."
Salazar knew he wouldn't leave, but he wanted to give Albus something to think about. Then he
sighed heavily, and laid down in his bed.


Albus stared at him as if he was lost for words, but then he put on his best smile and spoke in his best grandfatherly tone.

"Harry, I don't think there is any reason for that. It sounds like you handled yourself well, though I don't agree with the beheading and leg vanishing curses, so I will ask you not to use such dark curses in the future."

Salazar raised an eyebrow at him. "Sir, with all due respect, if someone is trying to do me serious harm, my reaction will be to return in kind. Especially if they are trying to kill me. If someone is trying to kill me, I will try to kill them. In my opinion, it is not murder, it is self-defense. It's only logical."

"I think I remember Lily saying something similar as well." Minerva said, and Albus glared at her for it.

"We need to talk about this Harry." He said, and began to sit down, but Poppy stopped him.

"There will be no talking about it tonight. I'm sorry Headmaster, but this boy needs medical attention and rest. It can be talked about later, so out. All of you!" She said firmly, and began shooing them out of the hospital wing.

She made Salazar get cleaned up and gave him hospital clothes to change into. Then she made him take a pain and dreamless sleep potion. He didn't remember anything else after that.
**Facing the Truth**

Chapter Notes

A/N* THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT! PLEASE READ!

***WARNINGS AND TRIGGERS FOR THIS CHAPTER***

This chapter involves character death with mentions of possible suicide by jumping. I do not go into gory details and I do not dwell on the matter. It is briefly touched upon in two very short paragraphs, and then no more is said about it. I wanted to warn anyone who may have sensitivities to this issue. I hope this subject does not offend anyone, and I deeply apologize if it does.

Chapter 17

Facing the Truth

"...and then I blew a giant hole in the castle's walls and set the griffin free!" Salazar laughed as he laid there on his back and stared at the sky. "Rowena, you would have killed me, Helga, you would have had to somehow bring me back to life, and Godric you would have laughed and probably helped."

It was a clear spring day, and Salazar was laying in the grassy clearing where he had met with Nicholas and Perenelle. He hadn't been able to come and visit as much as he had wanted to, but today was Sunday, and he took a moment to get away from all the chaos.

Hermione was in full-fledged panic mode, seeing as exams were right around the corner. She and Salazar had pulled together some of their year mates and formed study groups. He was surprised that some of the Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws were willing to join, but they were gladly taking advantage of the opportunity. The only Slytherins in the group were him and Blaise because no one else would join the 'mudbloods' and 'blood-traitors'. As for the Gryffindors, it was only Hermione, Neville, Dean Thomas, and Parvati Patil. Come to find out, Minerva's talk with Ron hadn't sunk in. He had just been too scared to do anything for a while, and so, he didn't want to study with 'greasy Slytherins'. His best friend, Seamus Finnigan, felt much the same way, and the other Gryffindor girls could care less about studying.

Salazar sighed as he continued to lay there. "You would all be proud of me though. I have made friends with a muggle born and she's a Gryffindor." He said, looking at Godric's gave. "Also, I have befriended another Gryffindor who Helga would love to get her hands on because he loves Herbology. I have befriended two more Gryffindors who are brilliant pranksters. Rowena, you would hate them simply because they could give Godric and I a run for our galleons." He said with a chuckle.

Then he smiled softly. "I say friends because I think that's what they are. Granted, they are children, but they are very bright children. None of them are my best buddies, because I do want to keep that line drawn, but I think it's alright to call them friends. It's been so long since I've had so many.
Nicholas, Perenelle, the Potters, and another that I can't mention do to an Unbreakable Vow, are the only other ones. I love to teach the children new things. Hermione is a brilliant little girl and I always wonder why she didn't end up in Ravenclaw, but I keep forgetting to ask her that. Neville was shy at first, but he came out of his shell and is a wonderful lad, very polite and caring. Fred and George are the only ones that know the truth about me, but they don't care about that. They love to hear stories about the pranks Godric and I pulled, and dare I have the audacity to say, I think they may even look up to me. Blaise wasn't my friend at first, and quite frankly, he's my only Slytherin friend, but that's ok I suppose. Seeing that I am portraying 'Slytherin's Arch Enemy' I guess it's to be expected." He said with another sad smile. "I've also been teaching the children Parseltongue. They have enjoyed it immensely and can understand it fluently now. I've also been teaching Severus as well, but his lessons are sporadic at best, because we have to find time around our schedules. Not to mention, find ways to be secretive about it, seeing as he's supposed to hate me. We have plans to continue over the summer though."

"But, I suppose I've bored you all with the retelling of this past year, so I will leave you in peace. I do want to say though, Dumbledore will have a lot to answer for, and my goal is to have him answer for some of the wrongs he has committed. In the short term though, I need to take care of that blasted boy who fancies himself my Heir. While that may be true, I am none too pleased with him, and Tom Riddle will be answering to me for what he has done." He said with a scowl, but then his face softened and he smiled again.

"I love you all, and I miss you so much." He continued, as he gazed sadly at the graves. "I wish I hadn't done what I did, and I regret it terribly. I was selfish and I should not have left you all. Godric, I am so sorry I didn't listen to you. You were right, and I was wrong. I hope that you know that, and I hope that you can forgive me. I must go though. Hermione has probably sent out a hunting party for me, but I'll come back another time, so for now, goodbye by friends." He finished, and then he stood up and quietly headed back towards the castle.

Salazar was rounding the corner and heading towards the library when Hermione burst out of said library. She looked like a frazzled mess. Her hair was frizzed out, she had an ink stain on her nose, and she was carrying a small stack of parchment in one of her hands. However, she stopped in mid-stride, and threw her hands up in the air when she caught sight of him.

"There you are!" She exclaimed, and proceeded to drag him towards the library.

"I was headed that way Hermione, you don't have to drag me." He chuckled.

She let go of him and sighed. "I'm sorry, I'm just so...so...ugh!" She said, throwing her hands up again in frustration.

Salazar laughed as he followed her to one of the back tables. The study group was sitting there and they all looked up and grinned when they approached.

"That was quick." Blaise whispered.

"I found him in the corridor." Hermione whispered back, and then she got that frazzled look on her face again and started talking really fast. "Ok, now that Harry is here, we can start properly. Dean, you need to quiz Neville in charms, and...no...that won't work. Parvati needs to quiz Neville in charms. Dean can go over..."

"Hermione stop." Salazar said, giving her an amused grin. "Breathe. Just breathe." He said, taking in a deep breath as if to show her how.
"But we have too…"

"I know." He interrupted her. "But you also have to realize that a lot of studying has to be done alone as well. One cannot learn if someone keeps hounding them. When it comes to memorization, then it's time for partners. Otherwise, no one will learn a thing."

"But grades are…"

"I know." He said again. "Good marks are extremely important, and I don't deny that. You just have to breathe."

"Yeah, in and out, in and out." Justin Finch-Fletchley, a muggle-born Hufflepuff said.

She shot him a dirty look, and then laid her head on the table. "You guys are right. I'm sorry. I'm just so worried that I will fail everything."

"Well unless your Crabbe or Goyle, I don't think you have to worry about that." Blaise said.

"Ok, let's not do that." Salazar said sternly. "But no, you won't fail everything. You just need to calm down and get focused, because honestly, I'm not above spiking your pumpkin juice with a calming drought."

She looked at him with wide-eyes. "You wouldn't."

"I would." He answered with a grin.

"He is a Slytherin." Terry Boot said with a laugh.

"That's right. I'm a sneaky, slimy, stinking, sodding, slippery Slytherin serpent." He said with a grin. "But at least I warned you first."

"True." Hannah Abbot said with a giggle. "But you forgot 'git'."

"That too." Salazar said, as Blaise and Neville snorted.

"Would you really spike my juice?" Hermione asked.

"No, but I can threaten it." He said honestly. "I would never spike your juice without your knowledge. However, I would say 'Hermione, I'm going to put this calming drought in your juice', and then I would make you drink it."

"Because he is a Slytherin." Neville laughed.

She glared at both Salazar and Neville, but then she giggled. "I don't think you really would, but I do understand your point. I just need you guys to keep reminding me to calm down."

"We promise." They all chorused, and then the whole table began giggling.

Salazar just laughed and shook his head as they began to study. It was only the middle of April and exams were still a month away, but he was delighted, and a bit amused, by the children's willingness to study.

The day after Hermione's near breakdown in the library, Salazar received a letter from Nicholas saying that he would be arriving in two weeks' time. Well, those two weeks had passed, and now Salazar was at dinner, and he had been glancing at the doors every so often. Blaise was thankfully
distracted by a conversation with Nora, so he didn't notice.

He had warned Poppy, Severus, Minerva, and the twins about Nicholas's arrival, so they were also expecting it. From where Salazar was sitting though, Minerva looked like she was about to burst with anticipation. They didn't have to wait long though. The doors to the great hall flew open, and both Nicholas and Perenelle walked in briskly.

Albus sat there stunned, and just stared at them with his mouth open. Perenelle glared at him, but Nicholas began to speak loudly.

"Albus, I am very sorry to interrupt your dinner, but I am a very busy man and don't have much time. You refuse to give me answers, so Perenelle and I have come to demand them! Get up young man, and let's go to your office to have a chat."

"Nicholas I can assure…"

"I'm done with your assurances Albus. I want real answers, and you will give them to me. Bring with you who you must, but come along. I'm not getting any younger just standing here."

Salazar was hysterically laughing internally, but he tried not to let it show on his face. Albus's expression was priceless as he stood there gaping at Nicholas. Perenelle was still glaring daggers at him, and that only made Salazar want to laugh even harder.

Albus sighed in defeat, but then he smiled at Nicholas. "Very well. Severus, Minerva, Pomona, Filius, and Quirinus, will you all please follow me?"

"Of course Albus." Minerva said, practically jumping out of her seat.

Salazar rolled his eyes though. He didn't see the need for all of them to go, but at least Severus was going as well. Just in case Voldemort tried anything. What made him nervous though, was that he had no idea what Nicholas and Perenelle were going to do.

"I'm sorry Albus, but you have left me no choice. I want to see my stone. I want to see the spells that are protecting it. You have refused me such knowledge with something that is my own property. Perenelle and mine's very lives depend on that stone. I want to see it."

"All right, but I assure you that it is well protected." Albus answered.

"We will be the judge of that." Perenelle answered in a haughty tone.

They made their way up to the third floor corridor, and stopped just at the trapdoor. Nicholas reached down but Severus stopped him.

"Forgive me Mr. Flamel, but that trapdoor electrocutes anyone who tries to open it."

"Is that so?" Nicholas asked, and they all nodded. "Well, can someone remove the spell?"

"We have tried." Albus said. "We can't remove it."

Perenelle raised an eyebrow at him. "Come again Albus? What do you mean, you have tried and cannot remove it?"

Albus shifted around uncomfortably. "Someone placed this spell here. Someone who I am unaware of."
"Voldemort?" Nicholas asked.

"No, I do not think so." Albus answered. "He has not even been here."

"Nicholas, have you ever heard of a spell that can electrocute people?" Perenelle asked.

"I have, but I have to make sure it's the same spell my dear. Who here can describe it to me?" He asked, as he looked around the group.

Minerva spoke up and told them what happened to Albus when he tried to touch the door handle, and Severus tried not to laugh at the memory of it all.

"Very good. Yes, that it is the very one." Nicholas said, and he waved his wand over the trapdoor.

The trapdoor glowed red, then blue, then a brilliant orange before a very faint pop was heard. He reached down and opened the trapdoor without any problems and peered into the darkness below.

"What's next?" He asked, looking right at Albus.

"Now we have to jump into the trapdoor." Professor Sprout said anxiously. "My devil's snare is next, so perhaps I should go first."

"Are you sure Madam?" Perenelle asked kindly. "There are plenty of strong lads standing here that I'm sure would be glad to go in your stead. In fact, Albus I think you should go."

Professor Sprout blushed a deep red. "No, it is alright. I can go."

"Albus, I insist." Perenelle said with a stern glare, and he sighed loudly.

"It's alright Pomona, I'll go."

Professor Sprout nodded awkwardly and everyone watched as Albus jumped into the hole. They heard him land, but then a bright orange glow began emanating from the darkness. A moment later, Albus called up to them.

"It's a long drop, but aim for the middle. I didn't destroy it all."

One by one they all gently landed beside him by slowing their own descent, and then they began making their way towards the next room.

Professor Flitwick cleared his throat, and opened the door. When they all walked in, they looked up and noticed that high above their heads keys with wings were flittering around.

"They are charmed and cannot be vanished or summoned. They only way to get the real key is to catch it on the broom." He said, and pointed to a shoddy looking broom that was hovering in the corner. "The real key is the old one." He added.

"Albus, I do believe you should be the one to get it." Perenelle said in an offhanded way. Then she turned to Minerva. "It's very chilly down here. Are you cold as well Madam?"

Minerva smiled and nodded, but chose not to say anything for fear of laughing out loud, while Albus glared at Perenelle for suggesting that he be the one to get it.

"Albus, I would appreciate it if you didn't glare at my wife in such a fashion. You're young enough to fly around on that broom, so get to it. I want to see my stone sometime before this century ends." Nicholas said with a hint of anger.
Albus sighed again, and for the next forty-five minutes they watched with somewhat amused expressions as Albus flew around on the shoddy old broom. When he finally caught the key, he landed looking somewhat winded and very annoyed. He unlocked the door, and they once again gathered to look at the next 'protection'.

"You have to play your way across the room, and then the door can be opened." Minerva said as they all stared at the giant chess board.

"Albus, I hear you're good at chess." Perenelle said pointedly.

"He is very good at chess my dear. He has beaten me hundreds of times." Nicholas said happily, as Albus glared at them.

"Don't think I don't know what you two are up to." He said with a hint of anger in his voice. "You want me to go through all this because I wouldn't tell you anything."

"We never pretended it was anything otherwise." Nicholas said calmly. "You had ample opportunity to tell us all of this before, and you chose not to. You Albus, not your staff, but you were charged with protecting the stone, and so far, I'm not impressed. A first year can make their way through these so called 'protections'."

"Please do not think that we speak badly about any of you." Perenelle said kindly, as she looked around the rest of them. "Nicholas is right, it was up to Albus to protect the stone."

"Well Albus, off you go. Get us through the next door."

Albus glared at them, as the rest of the staff either tried to hide their amusement or looked around nervously, but the next twenty minutes saw Albus nearly get crushed by the giant chess pieces. Finally though, they were able to move forward.

When they got to the next door Quirrell took charge.

"I-I am rather g-gifted with trolls, and m-mine is the next one. It's a t-troll."

"I think Albus can handle it." Perenelle said. "We will all wait here."

With muttered obscenities, Albus blasted the door off its hinges and cast several blasting curses at the troll which ended up killing it when one of the curses hit the troll's head.

Perenelle chuckled at Albus's obvious annoyance, and glanced at her husband.

*Salazar would love this.* She thought.

*Indeed my dear, but I fear he would have given us way because he would have been laughing so hard.*

*What do we do about Voldemort?* She asked.

*Once I reveal that the stone is a fake, I would like for you to stand in a safe spot just in case he decides to get angry. Salazar has told Severus and Minerva where the tunnel for the Room of Requirement is. He had to remake the tunnel, but Minerva and Severus know where it is. I want you to go with them if things turn ugly.*

*What about you?*

*I will be alright. I'm sure that between myself and Albus that we can contain him.*
Perenelle nodded as they all made their way towards the next room, and that's when Severus spoke up.

"It's a logic puzzle, and I must warn you that flames will appear in both doorways when we all cross the threshold, so don't be alarmed. Also, the bottles are charmed to refill themselves, so we will all have to take a sip of the correct potion."

Perenelle looked at Albus expectantly, and he visibly gritted his teeth as he snarled at her. Nicholas made a move towards his wand, but Perenelle stepped between them.

"It's fine Nicholas. I feel we are coming to the end."

Nicholas stowed his wand, but didn't take his eyes off Albus. "Very well my dear. As you wish."

Albus glared at them, but turned and stalked through the doorway, as the others followed along behind him. Purple flames blocked the door they had just come through, but black flames sprang up in the doorway that led into the final chamber.

It only took Albus a minute or two to work out the logic puzzle though, and pretty soon they were standing in the last chamber, and the Mirror of Erised stood before them.

"This is the final protection. I charmed the mirror and placed the stone within it." He said in a cold voice.

"Let me see." Nicholas simply stated.

Albus sighed again, stepped in front of the mirror, and after a moment he handed the stone to Nicholas, who smiled brightly and took it from him.

"Yes, yes, very good. Excellent." He said, then he looked at Perenelle. "It is a very good copy."

"Really?" Perenelle asked with a bit of excitement. "Let me hold it." She studied it closely for a few short moments, then she nodded. "Indeed. This is an excellent copy. He did a very good job."

"Yes he did."

"What are you talking about?" Albus asked suddenly, looking between the both of them in shock.

"Oh this?" Nicholas asked, taking the stone from Perenelle and tossing it over his shoulder, and it hit the floor with a loud clatter. "Is a fake. A copy. You see Albus, when Perenelle and I learned of your 'protections' we were very alarmed because my spy told me that you were putting innocent children in danger. I asked my spy, who is a very good friend of mine and someone I trust completely, to get my stone any way he could. When you told me Voldemort was after my stone, I gave it to you to protect. I thought you would hide it in your office under a Fidelius Charm, or have Fawkes take it somewhere and hide it. I never expected a Cerberus, and then later a griffin, to be brought into a school full of children."

"You used us, and our stone, to lure Voldemort here. Thankfully Voldemort never showed up, but isn't it interesting that of all this would happen in the very same year that Harry Potter came to Hogwarts. You put our very lives in danger because of your need to test an eleven year old child." Perenelle said angrily, as she glared at a still stunned Albus. "For years our stone has been safe under real protections, enchantments, layers of wards, and other unpleasant things, but you said it was in danger, so we trusted you, and clearly, that was a mistake."

"Indeed it was my dear." Nicholas confirmed. "You see Albus, we have had the real stone in our
possession since Halloween. My spy has been here the whole time keeping me updated on things, and by listening and paying attention to your comings and goings, he was able to learn a lot of things. He told me that Harry Potter is a Slytherin, and a very fine mannered young man and very powerful. Thankfully he is also not an idiot because he did not fall for your manipulations. You Albus, are not the only one in this school who can understand Parseltongue. Harry Potter loves to confide in that snake of his."

"Indeed. He saw through all of your manipulations, and is a true Slytherin through and through." Perenelle said with a haughty tilt of her head, as she looked down her nose at Albus.

"Albus, is all of this true? Have you purposely placed the only son of James and Lily in danger? Would you really concoct a stupid plan like this and try to lure You-Know-Who of all people here!? Where there are innocent CHILDREN!" Minerva shouted in anger. "This is a school Albus! Not a playground for you to test your wild ideas! If I wasn't worried about the children, I would resign!"

The rest of the staff, minus Quirrell who looked to be in too much pain to speak, was glaring at Albus. Severus though, looked unreadable as always, but he was silently cheering on his Gryffindor partner in crime.

"You wouldn't be the only one to resign Minerva." Pomona said, glaring at the still stunned and speechless Headmaster, but then she turned to the Flamels. "Sir, Madam, you have my deepest apologies for my role that I played in this nonsense. Had I known all of this, I wouldn't have had anything to do with it."

"Well said Pomona." Flitwick said. "Goblins have a word for people like you Albus, but out of the small amount of respect that I still hold for you, I won't say it. However, I will say that the Board of Governors should hear about this nonsense. As much as I dislike Lucius Malfoy and would hate to have to speak with him, I'm sure he would have a field day!"

At the mention of the Board of Governors, Albus finally found his voice. "Now Filius, there is no need for that. I realize now how wrong I was."

"See that it doesn't happen again Albus, because I will be keeping a close eye on you, as will my spy, who by the way, has no problems staying here to babysit you. Now, if someone would be so kind as to show us the way out, we need to be going." Nicholas said, turning quickly towards the door. "Also Albus, I'm afraid this marks the end of our friendship."

"Nicholas, what is the muggle term for the trinkets that muggles keep on their desks?" Perenelle asked.

"I believe you are thinking of a paperweight my dear." He answered.

"Yes, yes, that is it. Here Albus," she said, as she picked up the fake stone and tossed it at him. "Keep this paperweight as a reminder of us."

Albus fumbled it slightly as he grabbed it out of the air, but with a solemn sigh, he followed the group out of the underground chambers and back into the main part of the castle.

The next day the whole school was buzzing about the apparent suicide of Professor Quirrell. Hagrid found him on the ground under the astronomy tower, and rumor had it he had become tired of everyone mocking him and his teaching methods.

Salazar, Minerva, Poppy, and Severus sat down and talked about it, and after Salazar witnessed the
memory of what happened in the underground chambers, they all came to the conclusion that Voldemort was so angry that he had been set up by Albus, and that the stone he had been chasing all year was a fake, that he forced Quirrell to jump. They also believed that Voldemort fled from the man's body just before he landed in order to keep Quirrell from saving himself. Severus agreed that it would be something that Voldemort would do.

Defense classes were canceled, but Albus sat with each class as they took the exams Quirrell had already prepared. Exams were slightly stressful for Salazar, but not because he was worried about his grades. He just wanted the children to do well.

Hermione fretted the entire week after they had taken the exams though, and was nearly at her bursting point when the results came back. No one was surprised that she had aced every one of them though. Salazar was also pleased to see that all those that had joined their study group got an 'A' or better. Neville received an 'E' on everything but potions, which he got an 'A' in, but that was only because he was still slightly afraid of Severus. Blaise did really good as well, and received an 'O' or an 'E' in all his classes. Salazar was really proud of them for doing so well.

As for Nora's 'exam' results though, she said that their passing grade was not being bitten.

The last week of school was a quiet one, and Salazar spent his blissfully pain free days sitting on the ground in the clearing talking to Godric, Rowena, and Helga. He told them everything that happened with Dumbledore and the Flamels, and said it was the funniest thing he had ever seen. He mentioned that Nicholas and Perenelle always seem to know what the other is thinking and they always know how to 'play off' of each other. He told his friends that he had been trying to figure out how they do it for centuries, but he had never come close, or so the Flamels had told him.

Salazar had been making it a point not make eye contact or even look at Albus, and to avoid the man altogether, but luck was not on his side the day before school ended. Severus had told him that Albus wanted to see him in his office, so they used a few shortcuts to make their way towards the Headmaster's office.

When they got there, Severus stood in his usual dark corner and Salazar sat down in one of the squashy chairs that sat in front of Dumbledore's desk.

"Harry do you know why I called you here this evening?" Albus asked gently.

Salazar was immediately on his guard because if Albus was playing nice, it meant he wanted something.

"No sir." He answered truthfully, and a bit curiously.

"I wanted to talk to you about your living arrangements. I know that you spent time at the Leaky Cauldron last year after you got your letter, but I must ask you not to do that this year. You Aunt and Uncle have agreed to take you for the summer. I have spoken with them, and they have assured me that you will have a proper room and meals."

"I'm sorry sir, but I'm not going back to that house. Ever. I can take care of myself. I've pretty much done that all my life, and I can manage for the next two months."

"Harry I'm afraid that I must insist. You see, when your Mother died to protect you, she did something very remarkable. She protected you with love. That is why you survived the killing curse all those years ago. Your Aunt Petunia is your mother's sister, and therefore has that connection with you and your mother. Through your Aunt, your mother's blood still protects you, and as long as you
remain in your Aunt's house Voldemort cannot get to you, and you will be safe."

*Well that explains the blood wards.* Salazar thought. *Too bad they are useless.*

"Safe?" Salazar laughed. "Hardly. My so called family hate me. I am no safer there than I would be living with Voldemort. I'm sorry Headmaster, but I'll be fine on my own."

"But Harry you see, I placed a Blood Bonding Charm on your relatives house. It not only keeps you safe, but your family as well. It works off of love, and ties back into your mother's sacrifice. As long as you can still call their house 'home' you will all be safe."

"I don't care. They hate me, and I hate them. There is no love towards me in that house, and I'm guessing that makes your Blood Bonding Charm useless. You have seen the evidence of what they have done to me. I have told you how they treated me. I'm not going back to that house, and I'm sorry to say, you can't make me."

"Harry, I'm afraid I must insist."

"And I'm afraid I must decline. You are not my guardian, you are my Headmaster. When I am not under this roof, what happens to me is not your concern. I will return to school next year, but I will not go back to Privet Drive."

"Very well, as you wish." Dumbledore said with a sigh. "Off you go then. Severus, will you remain behind please?"

"Of course Headmaster." He answered, giving Salazar a stern glare as he walked by him.

The only thing Salazar could think of as he made his way back to the common room was that, that had been way too easy.

"Hey Harry, Fred and I were wondering if we could talk to you, so can you come here for a moment?" George asked, as he poked his head into the train compartment that Hermione, Neville, Salazar, and Blaise were sharing.

He looked up at them a bit startled, but then he nodded and followed them into one of the few empty compartments and sat down.

"Alright, what has you two so secretive?" Salazar asked with a grin as he studied the boys closely.

Fred laughed. "Well we know it's a long shot, seeing as you're ancient and full of authority and all, but we were wondering if you knew of a way to remove the trace. You know, the one they place on underage wizards."

Salazar grinned at them, then he burst out laughing. "And you think calling me ancient is going to make me help you." He teased. "I do know the way to avoid the trace, but I'm afraid you have already been charmed for the upcoming summer. However, since you will be fifteen next summer and going into your fifth year I will tell you how to avoid it, IF you promise me you will be responsible with the privilege. Oh, and also not tell your mother."

The twins laughed. "We promise that we will hide it as best as we can, be responsible, and we certainly won't tell our Mum." They said together, as they raised their hands in a mock oath.

"Very well." Salazar said with a chuckle. "You know that piece of paper your Head of House gives to you at the end of the year that reminds you not to use magic away from school during the
summer? Do you know how your Head of House stands there in the common room to make sure everyone opens it up and reads it?"

"Yeah." They chorused.

"Next year don't open it and read it." He said. "It's simple really. When the folded piece of parchment is open and read, the charm sticks to you and the Ministry will be able to trace you. The charm stays on you and only breaks when you enter the gates of Hogwarts for your next school year, or you turn seventeen. I tell you this in confidence and ask that you not tell anyone. The truth about that piece of parchment is not very well known, otherwise we would have scores of underage witches and wizards using magic in places where they shouldn't."

"We promise." They said with sincere nods.

"Very well, now you have to prank me." Salazar said.

"What?" Fred asked in astonishment.

"You have to prank me so that I have a cover story on why you wanted to talk to me alone."

They burst out laughing, and by the time Salazar left the compartment, his black robes had been permanently changed into half red and half gold for Gryffindor, and his hair had been charmed to be half green and half silver for Slytherin. Apparently this was a combination of two Marauder pranks.

When they reached the platform at King’s Cross, Salazar noticed that Severus was there, but he didn’t have to wait long to find out why. As soon as Salazar stepped off the train, Severus yelled at him.

"POTTER! Get over here now!" He snapped.

Everyone else looked at him curiously and some even gave him sympathetic looks, but Salazar just shook his head, sighed, and headed over to him.

"Seeing as you think you can run around the Wizarding World on your own, the Headmaster has deemed it my burden to make sure you are escorted beyond the barrier and delivered to your relatives."

Salazar raised an eyebrow and then rolled his eyes. "I understand Professor, but will you give me a moment to scribble a note to the Headmaster?"

"Make it quick." He said with a sneer.

Salazar scribbled a quick note, and then he and Severus walked through the barrier, where Severus watched Vernon grab 'Harry Potter' none to gently, and steer him towards the waiting car.

When Severus was sure that no one was watching, he unfolded the crumpled up piece of parchment that Salazar had given him.

_Obviously do not give this to Albus. Remember this address and destroy this note after you read it. The only way to get into my flat is to apparate or arrive by portkey._

_Salazar Slytherin lives at Number 93 Diagon Alley._

_See you tomorrow._

*A/N* Woohoo! 1st Year is over! Jumps up and down and does the happy dance! LOL!
Please remember to leave a comment for this chapter! You guys have been so good to me and I thank you so very much!
Chapter Notes

This chapter officially marks the end of First Year and the beginning of Second Year!

Chapter 18

Summer Chaos

When Salazar and the Dursleys arrived at Privet Drive, he was thankful he had the good common sense to send Hedwig on head from Hogwarts, because she also would have been locked up in the cupboard under the stairs. Nora was safely hidden under his robe sleeve though, so thankfully they hadn't spotted her.

Petunia told him to put his 'freakish stick' into his trunk as they locked it up, so Salazar graciously handed her the holly and phoenix wand. She also yelled at him for wearing 'freak clothes' and told him to put on something proper, but he told her that he didn't have any muggle clothes, so she threw some of Dudley's old ones at him and told him to change as soon as he got upstairs.

Vernon yelled at him because of his half green half silver hair, and threatened to cut it all off, but Salazar told Vernon that if he touched his hair the curse would transfer from him to Vernon and stay like that for a week.

That put an end to that discussion.

After enduring the ranting about running away last year, his 'freakish ways', and all it entailed, Salazar was finally able to head up to Dudley's second bedroom and have a moment's peace. However, even after all he had endured at their hands over the years, he was not expecting the sight that met his eyes as he ascended the stairs.

Dudley's second bedroom door was covered with locks, and there also appeared to be a cat flap placed at the bottom of the door.

"That freak man with the long beard said that you can't do magic outside school, and that is the only reason we allowed you to come back here boy. Now get in there so that I can lock you up and keep you away from us normal people!" Vernon yelled from the bottom of the stairs.

Salazar had had every intention of leaving quietly during the night. He already knew he wasn't going to be there in the morning when the Dursleys woke up. He had decided that the moment Severus escorted him through the barrier.

During the time the Dursleys had been ranting at him, he had been secretly letting his magic flow around and test the wards that had been placed on the house and himself. He had planned to quietly dispel the tracking charm that had been placed on him. He had had every intention of quietly selecting one of Dudley's broken toys, and use it as portkey to by-pass the anti-disapparition jinxes, so that he could leave Privet Drive in peace.

The keyword had been...quietly.
Seeing those locks on the door, and hearing Vernon tell him what Albus had said made Salazar see red. These filthy muggles had had the audacity to try and cage him up like an animal! They were the ones who were freaks! They were the ones who needed to be caged! Salazar wasn’t going to stand for all this, and right then and there he decided he had had enough of the Dursleys, and decided to leave in a not so quietly fashion.

"YOU DARE TO TRY AND LOCK ME UP LIKE SOME ANIMAL!" He bellowed, as he wheeled around and quickly pointed his yew and basilisk hide wand at Vernon. "You are the ones who are freaks! Child abusers! You starved me, beat me, locked me in a broom cupboard for ten years, and let your fat arse son bully me! Freaks! The lot of you! Freaks!" Salazar yelled.

The look on Salazar's face coupled with the wand in his hand made Vernon start shaking horribly. Petunia was standing behind her husband and Dudley was behind her, but both of them tried cowering behind Vernon. Salazar whipped back around to face the top of the stairs and a curtain of orange fire burst forth from the end of his wand and blocked the access to the top floor of the house. It wouldn't burn the house, but it would stay put until someone showed up to dispel it. Not to mention, he had just cut off access to the bathrooms, bedrooms, their clothes, and pretty much everything else.

Petunia screamed and Dudley ran into the living room, but Vernon had turned purple and started to open his mouth.

Mistake.

Salazar blasted apart the small table that sat beside the front door, and wandlessly shoved Vernon to the ground and held him there as he descended the stairs. Petunia scurried over to her husband, and whimpered as Salazar passed by her.

He walked over to the cupboard that had been his room for ten years and blasted the little door off its hinges. He retrieved his trunk and levitated it out, then he summoned Petunia's favorite vase from the living room, and dumped out the fresh bouquet of flowers onto the foyer floor. Then he silently turned the vase into a portkey that was keyed to his flat.

Deciding to be just a bit more vindictive, and perhaps a bit petty, two more curtains of orange flames burst forth from the end of his wand and cut off both inside accesses to the kitchen. Now if they wanted to get in there, they would have to walk out the front door, walk all the way around the house, and enter in through the back door.

It was ok though, Vernon and Dudley could use the exercise.

He turned back to the two cowering adults that were now huddled in a corner, and scowled at them.

"Listen to me you filthy muggle freaks! When Albus Dumbledore gets here, tell him I said to piss off!" He shouted.

Petunia whimpered again and nervously nodded her head as Salazar glared at her. He quickly dispelled the tracking charm, took hold of his trunk in one hand and held the vase in the other, then he headed out the front door.

He looked around quickly to make sure no one was watching, and then he said, "Activate."

And then he was gone.

It wasn't until the next evening that Severus finally arrived at Salazar's flat. When he landed, he heard
an explosion, followed closely by a loud yelp, and hurried to investigate. What he found was Salazar standing on top of a small stool, trying to vanish the mess he had just created.

"Watch where you step! This stuff will eat through your shoes!" Salazar exclaimed, as he looked around for any of the potion he had missed. When he was sure he had gotten it all, he stepped off the stool and grinned at Severus. "Ah, the joys of creating a potion."

Severus chuckled knowingly. "Forgive me for being late, but your disappearing act caused Albus to drag me all over the city of London. We also searched all of Diagon Alley, Little Whinging, and everywhere in between."

"Well bugger, he got to the Dursleys quicker than I had hoped. I was hoping they would be trapped like that for at least a day or two."

"He noticed that the tracking charm wasn't activated this morning. He floo called me, and when we arrived at the Dursleys we saw the locks, cat flap, and the bars on the window. Albus wasn't very happy with them."

"There were bars on the window?" Salazar asked, somewhat shocked, and Severus nodded. "Well, I didn't see that. I was going to leave quietly, until I saw the locks and cat flap, then I lost my temper."

"So we noticed. Severus said with a chuckle. "Petunia accused you of thievery and she also said you told her to tell Albus to 'piss off'. He didn't like that a bit. He is also trying to figure out how you managed to do underage magic without tipping off the Improper Use of Magic Office."

"Well I'm not about to tell him, but yes, I stole Petunia's favorite vase and turned it into a portkey."

Salazar answered offhandedly, just as another cauldron in the potions lab exploded.

This one burst into black flames, melted the cauldron, and started oozing onto the floor in a big goopy glob. Salazar let out another yelp, and vanished that mess too.

"Scratch that recipe off the list." He muttered, as he grabbed the piece of parchment that was sitting beside the cauldron. He placed it on top of a small stack of other disregarded pieces of parchment, and checked on a third cauldron that was bubbling away in one of the corners.

"What are you trying to create?" Severus asked as he looked over the stack.

"I'm trying to create a potion that is the equivalent of phoenix tears. I'm using unicorn blood as the base, but I think I need to add more fairy wings, and possibly add another 'stirring counter clockwise' step."

"Unicorn blood?" Severus asked in shock.

"Oh yes. I collected it in the forest as we were tromping back towards the castle during our 'detention' last year."

"But won't the drinker of this potion have a cursed life?"

Salazar shook his head. "No, because they did not slay it. It was slayed by another. Voldemort to be exact. I've been studying about unicorns actually. They will, from time to time, allow a person to collect blood from them. Doing it that way will not curse the drinker, nor will doing it this way." He said as he motioned towards the large vile of blood.

Severus's eye lit up at the prospect. "Do you want some help?" He asked hopefully.
"Of course." Salazar answered with a smile.

As they worked, they chatted about a few things. Severus mentioned that Hagrid was upset because Fluffy hadn't woke up yet. Salazar admitted that he had completely forgotten about the Cerberus, and said that he would go to Hogwarts in a few days to wake it up. He also told Severus that in a few weeks he would be leaving to go visit the Potters. Harry had been hoping that Salazar would come for his birthday party, so he had told Harry that he would be there.

They talked about Severus's Parseltongue lessons, which pleased Nora, and they decided to start again once Salazar got back from Brazil. It was agreed upon that Severus would come over every afternoon and stay until after dinner. Salazar said that if Severus worked hard, he would know it fluently by the end of summer.

But before all of that happened though, Salazar just wanted to rest for a week or two. He was an old man after all, and it had been a very tiring year.

It was a week later, and Albus was staring at a map of Surrey when all of a sudden, all the little silver instruments in his office began to explode. A long deep sigh escaped his lips as he turned around to gaze at the smoke now emanating from them.

The wards at Privet Drive had just fallen, and now there was no use in trying to sway Harry to ever return there.

*If only the boy had just listened!* He thought angrily. *It would have only been for two months! Surly the boy could have handled that!*

He sighed again and turned back to his map. He still needed to find Harry though. The boy was only twelve years old, or at least he would be in a week or so, but still, he was young and wondering around somewhere without anyone to watch over him.

Albus needed to change that.

He knew his best chance at finding someone to watch over Harry wasn't going to be easy. The Grangers couldn't do it because they were muggles and where therefore not an option. The Zabinis were a neutral family, but they were still Slytherins and Albus didn't want them to influence Harry in any negative way.

The Weasleys though, seemed to be the best option. Harry was friends with Fred and George, and he also seemed to be somewhat friendly with Percy. They were a nice, light family, and they could be a good influence on the boy.

Albus sighed again.

*Now all I have to do is talk to Molly.* He thought with a bit of trepidation.

"Well, Pigeon is just going to have to stay here then." Nora said with a huff as he glared at Salazar.

He sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. He was busy packing for his trip to Brazil, but Nora was…to be honest…being a downright pain in the bum.

You see, contrary to popular belief not everything in the wizarding world can be shrunk and placed in a pocket. Most items that have special charms on them can't be shrunk because it would destroy those special charms, and replacing the charms wasn't as simple as recasting them. Most special
charms were family secrets that had been created specifically for the wizarding family's occupation, and no one wanted to part with family magic. Not only that, but most shop keepers charged an arm and a leg to recast the special charms if they had been taken off of an object, so they either had to be hand carried, or packed.

Hedwig's perch that Salazar had gotten her for Christmas was made of gold and had a self-cleaning and a self-refilling water charm on it. Nora's new favorite rock to lay on was very large and had a permanent charm that mimicked the sun's heat and light. Because of this, neither of these items could be shrunk, and the rock was to big to fit in the trunk, so for the last thirty minutes Salazar had been arguing with Nora to leave her rock behind.

Nothing he had said so far seemed to be working.

"Nora, I have already told you that I cannot portkey safely by carrying so many bulky items. I cannot carry you, Hedwig, my trunk, your rock, and the perch all at the same time. I just don't have that many hands."

"So leave Pigeon and the perch here, or grow another hand." She replied, and Hedwig hooted and ruffled her feathers in protest.

Salazar sighed with exasperation. I swear, it's like having children again. He thought as he shook his head. "My dear, you will not need your rock in Brazil. It is very warm there this time of year, and there will be plenty of large rocks to lay on, and real sunshine to lay in."

Nora seemed to study him closely as if she thought he was playing a trick on her, but then she looked at Hedwig, who had just flown to her bowl and grabbed a dead mouse which she had caught that morning. Hedwig flew back to the bed and gently placed it beside Nora, who finally sighed.

"Very well, but you better be right about the real sunshine, or I will bite you." She warned.

Salazar grinned in triumph, and Hedwig hooted happily as she rubbed the top of her head against Nora's.

He placed the rock in a corner, and spent the next hour packing everything up. Once they were ready to leave, he gathered up all that they were taking as best he could, and held Hedwig tightly against himself. Using a cheap necklace as a portkey, they headed off for Rio.

Unfortunately for Salazar, when they arrived…it was raining.

"I will not have that boy in my house!" Molly exclaimed. "He attacked Ron with giant snakes, and his pet snake actually bit Ron. He taught Fred and George dark magic, and also, he taught them Parseltongue without my consent! That Harry Potter is a rotten boy Albus! He's dark, and I won't have him around my children! I won't!" She said firmly.

"But Molly, he is just twelve years old. He needs guidance, and you are the best person I can of to give it to him." Albus pleaded, but then he sighed heavily. "To my great shame, the people I placed him with after that night in Godric's Hollow, abused him. They are muggles who hate magic, but they were the only family he had. I thought that because they were family that they would treat him well, but they did not. They locked him in a broom cupboard for ten years, and starved, beat, and bullied him. Frankly, it is because of that, that Harry has developed the traits which made the hat place him in Slytherin. He's not dark Molly, he just needs guidance, care, and most of all…love."

Molly's eyes grew wide and she gasped. "The boy was abused?"
"Yes, and he has never been shown an ounce of love or care."

"Oh my…oh my. That poor child." She said quietly, as she slowly slid down in her seat at the Burrow’s kitchen table.

Albus grinned internally. He was almost there. The only thing he needed to do was play on her heartstrings just a little more, and then he'd have what he wanted.

However, Molly stiffened slightly and looked at him. "But what about the Parseltongue. He taught it to Fred and George."

"He taught Fred and George only how to understand it, not to speak it. To speak Parseltongue is a magical gift and it cannot be taught. Molly, I know how to understand Parseltongue. Does that make me dark?" He asked, and she shook her head vigorously.

"But he can still speak it." She said pointedly.

"That is true, but I'll tell you my thoughts on that. On that night in Godric's Hollow, I believe that Voldemort accidentally gave that gift to Harry when the curse rebounded. Now, that does not mean that he is Voldemort reborn or anything like that. Parseltongue is a very unique gift, and it so happens that here in Britain, we look down upon it because we have had very evil wizards that could speak it. I learned Parseltongue from a very fine, very light family in India. Over there, many can speak it, and they are no more evil than you. Here Molly, look at this picture. I took this on Christmas Day."

He pulled out a magical photograph from his pocket that showed 'Harry' sitting at the table during the Christmas dinner feast. He had on his reindeer antler hat, and Nora was proudly showing off her Father Christmas costume. 'Harry' was in the midst of laughing loudly, and sitting right beside him, Fred and George were ginning and teasing Nora.

"What is he wearing?" She asked with a small chuckle.

Albus laughed. "Molly, that is a muggle hat with fake reindeer antlers attached to it and Nora is wearing a Father Christmas costume. A muggle-born Gryffindor sent that to him as a Christmas gift. Her name is Hermione Granger, and she is one of Harry's closest friends. A muggle-born Molly. That right there should tell you a lot. Most of his close friends are Gryffindors. Aside from Fred, George, and Hermione, Neville Longbottom is a friend, and Harry even seems to be somewhat friendly with Percy, so you see, he's not evil if he has friends like that."

Molly stared at the photo and a small smile appeared on her face. "Oh, he looks so happy." She whispered, as she continued to gaze at it.

"He was Molly. All that Harry needs is care, and lots, and lots of love." He said in a gentle, grandfatherly tone.

She looked up at Albus with a small smile on her face and gently nodded her head. "All right Albus. We can take him in. He may have to squeeze in with Fred and George, or we can place him with Percy, seeing as he and Ron don't get along that well, but we can manage."

Success! Albus thought triumphantly. "Thank you so much Molly. I do want to warn you, seeing how you two…clashed…with each other last year, he may not warm up to you right away. You'll just need to give him time. However, we need to find him first."

"I understand." She said softly, as she returned the photo to Albus. "I'll talk to Arthur when he gets home from work, and we will sit down and talk to the children about it."
"Very well. Thank you again." Albus said kindly, and Molly saw him to the door.

The children didn't need to be told though. Fred, George, Ron, Ginny, and even Percy, who was trying to pretend that he wasn't interested in the conversation, had heard every word as they all huddled on the stairs.

Fred and George had listened to it all with narrowed eyes. They knew that the Headmaster had just manipulated their mother into doing what he wanted her to do, and they were not happy about it. Although, they had grinned at each other when Albus said that they needed to find 'Harry' first. They knew that 'Harry' wasn't going to be found, unless 'Harry' wanted to be, but just the thought of Salazar possibly coming to stay with them was a wicked one. Oh the fun they could have and the mischief they could get into! They just hoped he would agree to stay with them, if they found him that is.

Ron, on the other hand, was fuming. He couldn't understand why his mother would all of a sudden have a slimy Slytherin in their house. Potter had attacked him for crying out loud! He didn't understand why Harry Bloody Potter was so special. He was an evil slimy git, and Ron vowed to make him pay for it!

Percy was secretly delighted though. He was hoping that Harry would stay in his room because he was very bright for an almost second year, and Percy had enjoyed the in depth talks about politics and magical theory that they shared last year. Harry didn't treat him the way other people did. Harry didn't pick on him because he took his school work seriously. He liked that about Harry, and so, he hoped that Harry was all right and that the adults would be able to find him soon, so that he could come and stay.

Ginny held an altogether different view about the whole thing. The-Boy-Who-Lived was coming to stay in *her* home! She was going to be able to see him every day, and possibly... hopefully... maybe... he might just kiss her on the cheek. She giggled slightly at the prospect and her eyes held a joyful hope as she scurried up the stairs and ran into her bedroom. She was going to have to find her best dress and wear it on the day she would meet him. After all, Mum always said that first impressions are the most important, and Ginny wanted to make a good one.

*But* they had to find him first.

"You made it!" was the happy cry that greeted Salazar as he landed in the dining room of his villa two weeks ago.

Those two weeks had been a whirlwind of fun though. He spent most of it hanging out with the Potters, swimming and going on site-seeing trips, but he also managed to find time to look over his finances, business investments, and stocks in both the muggle and wizarding worlds. Thankfully, all was going well on that front.

Today had been nothing short of chaotic though. There had been fifteen twelve year olds running round the villa all day because it was Harry's birthday. He was introduced to Harry's school friends as 'Cliff Danielson', a local friend who was homeschooled, and spent the entire day forgetting that he was a thousand years old, and embraced being a twelve year old for a few short hours. Needless to say, he was now ready for bed, and perhaps a stiff drink.

Nora had a blast too and the kids loved her. However, she kept threatening to bite one boy who kept pulling on her tail, but they managed to avoid a crisis by placing a touch-me-not charm on her.

Tomorrow he was leaving, and because of that, he, Lily, and James were having a hard time getting
Harry (who was still wound up from all the cake and sweets) to go to bed.

"But you haven't told me about all the phoenixes yet!" Harry protested, as Salazar said good night when Lily began to tuck him into bed.

"There isn't much to tell really. There was a large colony of phoenixes that resided in the mountains that surround Hogwarts. It was neat to watch them though. At night you could look out over the mountains and see brief flashes of flames as they came and went, and during the day they would fly over the grounds and sing for us. It was a beautiful sight."

"Are they still there?" Harry asked with wide, interested eyes.

Salazar shook his head sadly. "No, they are not. Over time they have left. It has been a thousand years you know."

"Well what about the dragon?"

"Aren't you too old for bedtime stories?" Salazar asked with a chuckle.

"Only if they are baby stories, but your stories are wicked and full of adventure."

The adults laughed, but Salazar sighed. "Very well. Yes, the dragon still guards Hogwarts to this day, but he is sleeping, just as you should be."

"What does he look like?" Harry asked as he grinned at Salazar, who looked at him sternly, but then he smiled mischievously at Harry.

"He is solid black, with large shiny black claws." Salazar said, lowering his voice as he crept closer to Harry's bed. "His teeth are sharp and they drip poisonous venom. He breathes hot fire, and when he wakes up...he eats little boys who won't go to sleep!" He suddenly cried, as he tickled Harry's sides.

Harry laughed loudly and yelped in mock fear as he pulled the covers over his head, but then he grinned and lowered the covers to just beneath his chin.

"I guess that's a hint huh?" He asked with a giggle.

"Yes." All three adults replied together.

"All right. I'll go to sleep now." He said with a yawn.

They all said goodnight, and the adults headed back towards the study. Salazar, James, and Lily all poured themselves a stiff brandy, but Lily suddenly cocked her head to one side and looked at Salazar curiously.

"Salazar, isn't Hogwarts's motto, 'Never Tickle a Sleeping Dragon'?" She asked.

Salazar chuckled and took a sip of his drink. "Yes it is Lily, and for good reason."

When Salazar arrived back to his flat in Diagon Alley, he immediately sent Hedwig off with two letters. One for Severus confirming that he was back in London and was ready to resume his Parseltongue lessons. The other was for Fred and George also letting them know he was back.

He was surprised to get a return letter from them explaining everything that had happened with Dumbledore and their Mum. Salazar was surprised by Molly's sudden change of heart towards him,
but wrote back to the twins saying that he wasn't going to be able to make it to the Burrow this summer due to prior commitments. However, he did say that he would greet them on the platform on September 1st to make amends with their mother, and possibly make arrangements for next summer. Fred and George were disappointed, but they understood.

It was during one of Severus's Parseltongue lessons that the Hogwarts letter arrived, but when Salazar opened it to scan its contents, he looked up at the Potions Master in confusion.

"Gadding with Ghouls, Year with the Yeti, Break with a Banshee? What is this rubbish for Defense? It sounds like a bunch of storybooks."

Severus rolled his eyes and shook his head. "That's because they are. Albus's new Defense Professor is Gilderoy Lockheart."

"I'm not familiar with him. Who is he?" Salazar asked with mild curiosity.

"Oh, I keep forgetting that you have been out of the loop for ten years. Well, that man is a fraud. He is a menace, and only cares about himself, his celebrity status, and his hair. Believe me, this year will not be a picnic with him around." Severus answered with a sneer.

"Are you serious?" Salazar asked, looking at him skeptically.

"I am." He said sincerely.

"Then why did Albus hire him?"

Severus sighed and shook his head. "He was the only applicant. Albus also knows he is a fraud, and is hoping to expose him as one. You see sir, many believe that the defense position is cursed. Every year for the last forty years Hogwarts has had a different Defense Professor. Albus said that one day the Dark Lord came to him, before he started the first war, and asked him for the job because the previous Professor had just retired. Albus, knowing who he was and what he had been doing, told him no. Albus believes that was when the position was cursed because no one has stayed more than a year since."

Salazar looked at the young man thoughtfully. "Perhaps I should look into this curse. It's obviously a dark one, so maybe I know of it and can remove it. I'll see what I can do about it when we return for the year. As for this Lockheart fellow, I'll reserve judgment until I meet him."

Severus laughed and shook his head. "I already know you won't like him." He said. "And you will see why."

Salazar just sighed and nodded.

In a small house located in a forest somewhere in Scotland, a man was sitting at his dinner table eating. He had old issues of The Daily Prophet and a book that gave details about certain family trees spread out before him.

This man had a small obscure hunch and had been searching to see if he was correct, but he almost choked on his stew when he found more than he had bargained for. He stared at the family line of a certain wizard, and shuffled back through the papers and reread the 'details' of what happened that night in Godric's Hollow.

The man's very soul began to fill with emotion, and several tears ran down his cheeks. He sighed and pushed his stew away as he glanced from the book back to the papers.
"Oh Salazar," he whispered to himself. "Is this the real reason why you have gone through so much trouble?"

All right you guys! I hoped you enjoyed the summer fun! Please remember to leave a review, and to all of you who are keeping track of this story, I thank you so very much! You guys are awesome!
Chapter 19

Nothing but Aggravation

Merlin,

It has taken me a long while and I know this is cutting it close to the deadline you requested, but I have finally finished the testing phase and the stone you requested is complete. Forgive me for saying this about my own work, but it is perhaps a true work of art. It will not fail, and it has all the properties you requested. The other stone you requested is not finished yet, but hopefully I can finish it by the end of the year. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

You have my deepest respect, and I thank you for the honor and privilege of working on these two projects with you.

Your friend,

Nicholas Flamel

Merlin sighed with relief and opened the small box that had accompanied the letter. He pulled out a very small yellow stone that was about the size of a green pea, and held the stone up to inspect it, then he smiled.

"Salazar," He said to himself as he continued to gaze at it. "I know that I don't get involved with the wizarding world anymore because I don't like the direction it has gone, but sometimes it never hurts to help out a friend, and you my good man, will need more help than you realize before all of this is over. There is a reason why I ask for an Unbreakable Vow from all my friends to not speak of me still being alive, and I can guarantee that you are in for a pleasant shock."

Merlin chuckled quietly and placed the stone back in the box, then he turned to a bird sitting on a perch to his right. "Please see that this gets to the right person."

The bird nodded knowingly, and flew out the window.

The platform at King's Cross wasn't very crowded when Salazar arrived so he was able to find an empty compartment and get his trunk situated with no problems. He spelled the doors shut so that no
one else would take it, then he headed back onto the platform.

He stood by the barrier and waited for the children to arrive. He greeted Hermione and met her parents, and shortly after, he met Neville and his Gram, and then Blaise and his Mum. However, it was almost right at eleven and the train was about to depart when the Weasleys came hurrying through the barrier.

"Ah! The wayward orphan returns! Harrykins my old chap, how are you this fine summer day!" Fred exclaimed, bowing low as he and George caught sight of him.

"Hello Fred, George." Salazar said with a chuckle. "How are you?"

"Very well my good man!" George said, also bowing.

Salazar glared at them. "If you two don't stop talking like that…"

"I'll bite you!" Nora cried suddenly, as she poked her head out of Salazar's robe sleeve. "Hello Minions."

The twins grinned at her, and George held out his hand. Nora slithered out of the robe sleeve and curled around George's arm.

"Harrykins, Percy here has some news that he has been wanting to brag about since he got his Hogwarts's letter this summer. Here Percy, you tell him." Fred laughed as he steered Salazar over to his red faced brother.

Percy smiled and shuffled his feet slightly, but then looked up at Salazar and grinned. "I got twelve O. !" He happily cried out.

Salazar's face lit up in honest delight. "Percy that is wonderful! Congratulations! With those results you can pretty much get any job at the Ministry you want. I really am happy for you!"

Percy beamed, but blushed an even deeper shade of red. "Thanks Harry. You always encouraged me to study, so I wanted to tell you."

"Well, as I said, that is wonderful and I am very happy for you."

"Thanks." Percy said, but then he looked over Salazar's shoulder and smiled. "I have to go, but I'll see you at school. There is someone waiting for me."

"All right. I'll see you later." Salazar said with a chuckle as Percy hurried off. Then he turned to Fred and George, who were standing next to Molly. Salazar stiffened slightly, but he managed a small smile. "Mrs. Weasley." He said with a polite nod.

"Harry, I just wanted to say that I'm sorry for how I acted last year. I realize that I was very much in the wrong, and I hope you will forgive me. Fred and George told me that they got in contact with you a few days ago, and that they told you all about what happened."

"Yes they did." Salazar said with a nod. "I'm willing to put the past behind us and start over."

"Very good." She said with a relieved sigh. "I do want to invite you for Christmas if you can come, and also, I want to let you know you are welcome to stay with us next summer if Dumbledore hasn't made other arrangements."

Salazar internally scowled at the mention of Albus, but he didn't let it show on his face. Instead he
smiled. "Thank you very much. I'd like that."

"You're welcome dear." She said, just as the train's whistle blew. "Oh dear! Ginny, let's get you on the train!" She exclaimed.

Salazar suddenly noticed a girl who had been hiding behind her mother the whole time. The girl was staring at him with wide brown eyes, but he smiled politely at her and nodded.

"Hello." He said softly.

She let out a squeal, but then took off running towards the train. Salazar looked at Fred and George curiously, but they rolled their eyes.

"Our sister Ginny." George said, as he gave Nora back to Salazar. "We will explain later."

Salazar laughed, and they boarded the train just as the final whistle blew. Fred and George went off to find their friends, but Salazar was able to quickly find Hermione, Blaise, and Neville. He showed them where the reserved compartment was, and they all settled in as the train began to pull away from the platform.

Salazar was hoping for a quiet ride, but alas, that was not the case. Ron came in yelling about how he was trying to hurt his family and his Mum. Ron also was yelling about how Salazar would never be part of his family no matter how hard he tried, and he didn't care if the muggles Salazar lived with killed him. Ron warned Salazar that he better watch his back as well.

Salazar took it all in stride, but stared at the red head with an amused expression. This only made Ron angrier, and so he started yelling again, until Salazar placed a silencing charm on him. After Ron realized that he couldn't be heard anymore he finally stomped off, but not before sending a rude gesture at Salazar, who just laughed.

He thought no more could happen, but he was wrong. Draco came in a short while after that and started taunting not only him, but Hermione, Blaise, and Neville as well. Salazar was able to get rid of him easily though. He took a page out of the Marauder's book, and colored Draco's hair half gold and half red for Gryffindor. Draco let out a horrified yell and demanded he reverse the spell, but Salazar told him he was stuck like that for a week. After that, Draco stomped off just like Ron had, and Salazar could only laugh at their similarities.

When they arrived in Hogsmeade, they took the carriages up to the castle. Salazar was astonished to find out that they had a herd of thestrals to pull the carriages though. He mentioned them, but everyone thought he was crazy. Hermione insisted that nothing was there, but Salazar challenged her to go look up thestrals in the library before she dismissed their existence completely, and Hermione agreed that she would.

When they entered the great hall, Salazar let out a small sigh of satisfaction. He had always loved this time of the year, even when he was a Professor. The excitement of the soon to happen sorting and the nervousness of the upcoming classes always made the castle seem more alive.

For tonight he had to sit near the others in his house instead of his usual place at the very end, but Blaise sat right beside him as a 'buffer' from the rest of his house mates. Salazar didn't know why some were still afraid of him. He thought he had proved himself last year, but he realized that wasn't the case. The ones who didn't like him however, knew enough to keep their distance because of the clashes he and Draco had had last year, but people were funny and Salazar knew he had to watch his back regardless.
Nora was delighted to be back at Hogwarts and she sat coiled up on the table in front of Salazar's plate like always, and her, Blaise, and Salazar began a conversation about the upcoming sorting and placed bets on how many new house members they would gain this year. However, all conversation stopped when Minerva led the first years in.

Salazar had always loved to watch the sorting, and this year was no different. He was pleased by the number of students that Slytherin gained. There were four boys and three girls, but two of the girls were twins, and Salazar recognized their last name. Carrow.

More children of Death Eaters. He thought with a sigh.

The last person to be sorted was a boy. Unlike the other new students who tried not to sit near him because of Nora, this boy plopped down right across from Salazar and grinned broadly at him. He had very pale skin, dark red hair, and dark green eyes.

"Hi!" The boy said cheerfully, after Albus made his announcements and the feast began. "You're Harry Potter aren't you?"

"Yes I am." Salazar answered with a polite nod. "And you're Gordy...forgive me, what is your last name again?"

"Roffin." The boy replied, as he piled food onto his plate. "Gordy Cigrd Roffin, but I hate my middle name. I think my parents either misspelled it, or they had had too much to drink when they named me. I don't even think it's a word to be honest."

Salazar chuckled. "I don't think so either. So, are you pleased to be in Slytherin?"

"Oh, yes. For the longest time I've wondered what it would be like in Slytherin. I think I'll like it just fine though." Gordy said with a giant smile. "I'm half-blooded by the way, but both of my parents are magical."

"Speaker, is this boy our friend too? If so, I think I need a name for him."

Salazar laughed. "I don't know my dear."

Gordy stared at him and Nora in awe. "Wow, you're a Parselmouth! That is so wicked! You're not evil though, are you?" He asked with a sudden bit of apprehension.

Salazar chuckled and shook his head. "No, I'm not evil, but people seem to think I am just because I can talk to snakes. This is Nora." He said, motioning towards her.

"Oh, well that's good to know." Gordy said with a relieved smile. "Can I pet her? Will she bite me?"

"It depends." Nora said eyeing him closely, but then she looked at Salazar. "Jolly."

Salazar and Blaise looked at her in confusion. "What?" Blaise asked. "Did I understand right? She said 'Jolly'."

Salazar nodded, but Nora sighed. "His name. Jolly."

Blaise started laughing. "Oh, I get it." He said, then he looked at a very confused looking Gordy. "She just named you 'Jolly'. I'm Blaise Zabini by the way. Nora calls me Zabby though."

"Nora calls everyone she's come into contact with a different name. For example, Professor Snape, our head of House is 'Bat', and Professor McGonagall is 'Kitty', though you'll find out why she calls
them that on your first day of class." Salazar said with a laugh.

Gordy grinned and laughed. "I like it. Thank you Nora."

"You're welcome, and I suppose you can pet me. Though I must warn you, I am the deadliest snake in the world, and I will bite you if I see fit."

"She says you're welcome, and that you can pet her." Salazar said with a laugh, and repeated the rest of what Nora said.

Gordy laughed, and began petting her. Nora said that he gave good pettings like 'Bushy' did, and decided she liked the boy. Salazar though, was a little thrown off by Gordy, but then again, he just supposed Gordy was excited to finally be at Hogwarts, and at least Blaise wasn't the only Slytherin not afraid of him anymore.

The feast finally ended, and they headed to the common room. Salazar raised an eyebrow when Gordy started laughing loudly and pointing at nearly everything in there, but he had been talking to another first year boy by the name of Robert at the time.

The second year dorm was the same dorm room they had last year, and Salazar and Blaise immediately reclaimed the same beds. Salazar also wasted no time placing the blood ward back up. He had taken it down at the end of last year, because he didn't trust Albus not to tamper with it. With that done, Salazar changed into his night clothes. It had been a long day and he was happily prepared to welcome sleep.

It was not to be though. As soon as he started to drift off, Salazar felt a sudden light weight at the end of his bed. Nora hissed loudly in surprise, and Salazar reached for his wand and lit the tip.

At the end of his bed was an elf with graying skin and large green eyes that looked like tennis balls.

"Please don't hurt Dobby sir." The elf said, as he nervously twisted his hands together. "Dobby had to make the others go to sleep because Dobby has to warn Mr. Harry Salazar Potter Slytherin sir."

Salazar's eyes widened in alarm. "How do you know who I am?"

Dobby lowered his head sadly. "Before Dobby was forced to bond with his current family, Dobby was friends with Mitzy and Fripsy. Dobby knows that Mr. Harry Salazar Potter Slytherin sir helped Dobby's friends, and Dobby wants to help Mr. Harry Salazar Potter Slytherin in return."

"Who are your masters?" Salazar asked cautiously.

Dobby suddenly started to whimper and pull on his ears. Salazar knew right away that the elf had been ordered not to ever reveal that information to anyone, but suddenly Dobby stopped and smiled.

"Dobby was summoned by young Master tonight. He told Dobby to fix his hair. Dobby had no choice, and had to get rid of the red and gold."

It took Salazar a moment, but then he understood. Dobby was owned by the Malfoys, and if they were still treating their elves like crap, it was no wonder why this elf was standing on his bed talking to him.

"Aren't loopholes a wonderful thing?" Salazar said, as he smiled knowingly at the elf.

Dobby grinned at him. "Yes sir! Dobby likes and uses loopholes a lot. Masters don't pay attention to
what they say, they just order Dobby to do things. Dobby spends lots of time looking for loopholes."

Salazar chuckled. "All right, can you tell me what you need to warn me about?"

"Dobby cannot say details sir, and there is a lot he doesn't know, but he can say that there is a plot to make terrible things happen at Hogwarts sir. Dobby knows you can help stop them. Dobby doesn't want anyone to get hurt."

"Can you tell me who is plotting them?" Salazar asked, but Dobby shook his head no, and began tugging on his ears again. "All right, don't hurt yourself." He said quickly, and then he thought for a moment. "Can you tell me if it is your Master's idea, or if it is your Master's Master's idea?" He said, and pointed to his left forearm.

Dobby pointed to Salazar's left forearm and shook his head no.

"Does the plot, in any way, involve the one who made a tattoo?"

Dobby once again tugged on his ears, and whimpered.

"Ok, thank you Dobby. Don't worry about it." Salazar said. "Can you tell me anything else?"

Dobby looked at the ceiling in thought, but then he smiled. "Only that history is to repeat itself."

"What history and how long ago?"

Dobby shook his head. "Dobby cannot say what history sir, and Dobby does not know how long ago. Dobby is sorry Mr. Harry Salazar Potter Slytherin. Dobby wishes he could say more!"

Dobby suddenly began to cry because he couldn't help with anything else, but Salazar was able to quiet him.

"It's all right Dobby. I'll figure it out, and please just call me Harry or Harry Potter. Not the other name, just in case."

Dobby nodded and wiped his tears away. "Yes sir, Mr. Harry Potter sir, and Dobby promises to never reveal your secret."

"All right. You better go before you are found missing. Let me know if you can tell me anything more."

"Yes sir, Mr. Harry Potter sir! Dobby will do that!" He said happily, and then he apparated away.

Salazar laid back down and began to think. If Lucius was plotting something then Severus might know about, but the one thing Salazar didn't understand was, if Lucius thought that Salazar was Voldemort, then what was Lucius trying to do? Dobby's lack of answering and tugging on his ears told Salazar that it had something to with Voldemort, but what was it?

Salazar didn't know, but he hoped Severus might.

It was just after sunrise when Salazar got up the next day. He knew no one else would be up yet, and he was hoping to catch Severus to tell him all that happened with Dobby and ask him some questions. He knew Severus would have told him something by now if he knew exactly what was going on, but perhaps Lucius had said something offhand to the young man and maybe he didn't see it for what it was. Salazar was hoping that was the case, and if so, hopefully he could put a few more clues together.
He was just coming down the stairs and was exiting the door that led to the common room when a bright flash of white light caught him off guard. Salazar was momentarily blinded, and he stumbled backward and landed hard on the stairs he had just stepped off of. Then he heard someone gasp loudly, then start laughing.

"Harry! I'm so sorry!" A voice cried, as Salazar felt someone help him to his feet. "Are you ok?"

"Y-Yes, I think so. Gordy?" Salazar asked, as he vision started to clear up somewhat.

"Yeah, it's me. I'm so sorry."

"What are you doing?"

"Well, I couldn't sleep so I got up and started exploring. Then I went into the great hall, and I saw this other kid. His name is Colin Creevey and he is a Gryffindor muggle born, but I don't care about blood status. Anyway, he was taking pictures with this thing, so I asked him about it. He told me that it was a camera and showed me how to work it. He wanted to take a bunch of pictures of different things and people. I told him that I'd take pictures of our common room, so here I am. He also asked me if I had met you yet, and I told him I had. He was real excited and said that he had read all about you. I have too by the way, and anyway, he asked if I could get a picture of you, so I told him I'd try, but I didn't mean to take one of you just now though. I was trying to get that snake statue."

Salazar blinked owlishly at the boy. It was too early in the morning for all this.

"Speaker? Are you all right? You have gone unusually quiet." Nora asked, poking her head out of his sleeve.

Salazar shook his head to clear it. "Yes my dear, I'm all right."

"Oh hey! Nora is here! Hey, can I get a picture of both of you standing beside that statue? I think Colin will like that!" Gordy exclaimed.

"Speaker, I want my picture taken." She said, as she slithered out the sleeve and up his arm. "Make sure you hold me up so it can be a good one. I just shed my skin so my scales are a nice shiny black."

Salazar sighed and rubbed his eyes. "All right."

"I'll take two if it's ok. One for me and one for Colin. It would be neat to have a photo of Harry Potter!" Gordy said, as Salazar went to stand beside the statue.

"Tell him to take three. I want one, so that I can admire my scales." Nora said, turning to look at Salazar, who had sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.

"Nora asks that you take three so she can have one." He said.

He didn't have time for this, he needed to talk to Severus, but he also didn't want to be rude to the boy. Even if Gordy was being a bit…forward.

Gordy grinned and agreed, then he snapped off the pictures. Salazar then excused himself, but Gordy decided to follow him out of the common room.

"Are you going to breakfast? Is it going to start soon? I'm hungry. Oh hey, I heard a rumor that there are shortcuts. Do you know any?"
Salazar glared at the boy that was quickly trying his patience, but he sighed and nodded. "Yes, if you go to the picture of Salazar Slytherin and say 'mortal dread' it will open. The shortcut leads right into the entrance hall."

"Oh wow really!? Wicked!" Gordy exclaimed, but then he blushed. "Will you come with me? It's a bit scary down here."

Salazar sighed. "Very well."

Maybe when he got Gordy back to the great hall, Salazar could finally find Severus.

Colin Creevey turned out to be Gordy's Gryffindor twin. They weren't related by any means, but both boys were the same personality wise.

Nora absolutely loved both of them and the attention she got from them. She named Colin 'Hyper' and Colin took a bunch of pictures of just her because 'she is just so wicked'. Nora was posing every which way, and of course, talking to them the whole time, which meant that Salazar had to translate.

By the time the boys had finished asking Salazar every single question they could think of, and taking the pictures of Nora, the great hall was already filling with students. Salazar sighed because now he would have to wait to talk to Severus. He excused himself from the Gryffindor table where the three of them had been sitting, but of course, Gordy followed him back to the Slytherin table.

Breakfast was semi-quiet, but only because everyone was eating. Hermione and Neville ate with Blaise and Salazar, but when that happened, Colin decided to come over and eat with Gordy. The rest of Slytherin house kept shooting glares at the Gryffindors, and Salazar could hear grumblings about 'trash', 'mudbloods', and 'blood-traitors'.

It all stopped when Severus swooped down from the head table to pass out schedules. When he got to Salazar, Severus sneered at him and thrust his schedule in his face.

"Potter, it seems that once again your unwillingness to do as you're told has caused the Headmaster to request your presence. As I recall, this time last year you were also called to his office. Keep it up and we could call it a tradition." He spat, then he sneered at everyone sitting around him. "Your fan club is not allowed to accompany you." He added, then he swooped away.

Salazar suddenly had a thought. "You know Professor," he sneered, and Severus whipped around with a scowl on his face. "I don't know what your problem with me is, but ever since I walked through those doors last year you have been nothing but nasty to me. What have I ever done to you?"

"You're arrogant!" Severus shouted, making every head in the great hall turn towards them. "You're lazy! You think the rules are beneath you! You're just like your father!"

"Don't talk about my father!" Salazar yelled. "I put up with your bullying of me last year, but I won't this year!"

"Be quiet you insolent whelp!"

"NO!" Salazar shouted.

"DETENTION POTTER!" Severus bellowed. "For yelling at a Professor." He said with a haughty smirk. "Be in my office tonight at 7 sharp, and if you're late Potter, I'll have you in detention for the
rest of the year." He spat.

Salazar glared furiously at Severus, but he kept quiet. He had gotten what he wanted. He also knew that Severus knew what he had done, but it was all right. It would get sorted out this evening.

Salazar sat back down as Severus moved on to finish passing out schedules. He started looking over his own schedule, but looked up when Hermione spoke.

"Harry! You just back talked a teacher!"

"Yeah well, he's a greasy git."

"Harry!" She gasped. "I know he's unpleasant…"

"Unpleasant!?" Blaise interrupted. "Hermione, Snape hates Harry."

"Blaise is right Hermione." Neville said. "Snape treats Harry worse than he treats Gryffindors."

"But he's still a teacher!"

"That's what makes it so bad." Gordy suddenly said, making everyone look at him. "Professor Snape should not act like that."

"It's all right you lot. It'll be fine, but I better go talk to the Headmaster. Neville, Hermione, I'll see you in Defense later because we have class with you all. Blaise, please save me a seat in Charms if you can. Colin, Gordy, don't yell at the Professors."

Gordy started laughing. "Or call them names."

"That too." Salazar said with a chuckle. "I got to go. Bye you all." He added, then he hurried off to Albus's office.

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Salazar was just about to exit the great hall when a blond man in periwinkle robes intercepted him and began to walk along beside him. He had a large bright smile, and grinned down at Salazar who glanced briefly at him.

"Harry Potter!" He exclaimed. "It's an honor to meet you! Did I just hear Professor Snape say that you have a fan club? You're starting early I take it! That's good! That's good!" He cried happily, without giving Salazar a chance to correct him. "I can teach you all about fame and how to manage it. I do, of course, know what I'm talking about. I have…"

"I'm sorry sir, but who are you?" Salazar asked, cutting him off mid-speech. The wizard looked slightly affronted, but he recovered quickly and gave Salazar another bright smile.

"That's right, you have lived with muggles your whole life. Well Harry, I am Gilderoy Lockhart! Order of Merlin, third class, and I have won Witch Weekly's best smile award numerous times, and I'm also your new Defense Professor!"

"I see." Salazar replied. "Well, it was nice to meet you, but I have to see The Headmaster."

"Oh yes, yes, of course. I'm heading that way myself. Not to see the Headmaster, but I think we can take this time to talk."
"Ok." Salazar said a little unsurely. "But I have to say, I don't have a fan club. Those were my friends."

"Ah yes, that may true young celebrity, but not all friends are fans, and not all fans are friends. You have to be very careful. I can help you to see the difference, seeing as I have plenty of experience myself!"

"They don't care about the famous thing."

"Ah yes, but they may…"

"PEEVES! Leave them alone!" Salazar suddenly shouted.

They had just rounded the corner onto the second floor, and Salazar caught sight of the Poltergeist dropping water balloons on the heads of some first year Ravenclaws.

Peeves suddenly stopped and was about to make a rude comment, until he saw who it was.

"Lord Slytheryness, how nice to see you this morning." He said in a somewhat sickly sweet voice that was tinged with nervousness. "Peevsie was just poking fun at the lost first years. No harm. Just honest fun."

Salazar gave him a leveled glare. "It looks to me like they are soaking wet."

"Yeeeesss." Peeves drawled.

"Away with you, before I summon Baron." Salazar said with warning.

Peeves suddenly yelped, tossed the balloons up in the air, and zoomed down the corridor. Salazar thought quickly and drew his wand.

"Immobulus!" He cried, and the balloons froze in mid-air. "Come you lot, so I can set them down."

The first years hurried over to them and stood behind Harry, but Lockhart suddenly drew his wand.

"Not to worry Harry. I'll set them down! Reducto!" He cried.

Salazar had only a second to conjure a shield before the balloons exploded, but he managed to get it up in time to avoid the water that splashed everywhere. Lockhart however, wasn't so lucky. He had been standing in front of Salazar and took the full blast of the exploding water balloons, and now the man was standing there soaking wet.

Salazar just started at Lockhart. He's an idiot. He thought, but then he turned to the first years. "If you looking for the great hall, go straight down the corridor and then take a left. The main staircase will be to your immediate right, and you can take that all the way down to the entrance hall."

"Thank you. You've been very helpful. Not at all what I expected from a Slytherin." A girl with long pale blond hair and a dreamy voice said, as she smiled at him.

"You're welcome." Salazar replied.

They hurried off, whispering about how 'The-Boy-Who-Lived' had just saved them, but the blond haired girl ignored them, and continued to gaze around in wonder. Salazar turned back to Lockhart, who was muttering to himself, but then he looked up to find that Salazar was staring at him.

"So sorry about that Harry. Just a little slip of the tongue. Well, I guess I better be off. I need to…"
"I don't think I like him Speaker. He seems like a stupid man."

"He is my dear. Severus was right. I don't like him." Salazar said, as he slipped down a shortcut to get to the Albus's office.

"Good morning Harry. Come in and have a seat." Albus said cheerfully. "How have you been this morning?"

Between hyper children, idiot Professors, and now you…not so good. Salazar thought bitterly, but then he smiled. "Fine." He answered.

"Very good. I wanted to see you this morning to find out how you've been. You disappeared again this past summer, and I'm happy to see that you made it back to us safely. May I ask where you were?"

"Traveling." Salazar stated simply.

"I see." Albus said with a frown. "May I ask why you didn't stay with the Dursleys?"

Salazar glared at him. "They were going to lock me up like some caged animal!" He cried. "I wasn't going to put up that, so I left."

"Yes, and I noticed you used magic at the Dursley also. Are you aware that you are not allowed to use magic outside of school?"

"Yes sir, but seeing as escaping from the Dursleys was a self-defense of sorts, I thought it was ok."

"But it didn't register with the Improper Use of Magic office." Albus stated.

"Probably because they recognized it as self-defense as well. I did a lot of reading about that last year, and even more when I left." He replied.

Albus frowned at him. "And how did you travel?"

"By muggle transportation. I summoned the Knight Bus and went to Gringotts. Then I turned some galleons into pounds, and traveled around by muggle means."

"But you would have been safe at Dursleys. You don't need to be out there alone because it's not safe! Why didn't you just endure…?"

"Because I endured the Dursleys for ten years, but I won't any longer. I also didn't appreciate you sending your pet Death Eater to escort me to them." He said, and smirked when Albus looked shocked. "Oh yes, I read and learned a lot over the summer. Professor Snape is a Death Eater. Now I know why he hates me."

"Was a Death Eater Harry. Was. He has turned from that path."

"I doubt it."

"Professor Snape risked a lot to serve the light side in the last war…"

"Spare me the sob story Professor. His actions towards me, and his clear favoritism towards Malfoy and his lot, tell me all that I need to know."
"You're wrong about that Harry."

"That's because you always think you're right." Salazar said.

He knew of course, that Albus was right, but for the sake of arguing he stuck with his 'view' on the matter.

Albus glared at him, but then he sighed. "I see that we are going to have to agree to disagree on that subject."

"I believe you are correct." Salazar replied. "From what I've been reading, and from my observations, Death Eaters won't change their…tattoo." He said with a slight smirk.

Albus glared at him again, but then he smiled. "You're a very bright boy Harry, but there is a lot you don't know."

"Then why don't you fill in the blanks?" Salazar asked.

"Because I don't think you're ready for it because you're too young."

Salazar laughed. "Again, you think you're right. I may be young Professor, but I can handle it."

"I don't think so, but we are done here. I believe you have a Charms class to attend."

"Yes sir." Salazar said, then he immediately stood up and left.

He had given Albus the chance to tell him about the prophecy, but clearly the man wasn't going to. If Albus really wanted 'Harry' to be prepared to face Voldemort, wouldn't he have taken the opportunity? Salazar just had to laugh, but he also wondered what other things Albus was going to 'keep' from him, and why he wanted 'Harry' to remain ignorant. The excuse of 'you're too young to handle it' seemed flimsy after all the things 'Harry' had went through last year.

Salazar just chuckled. It is fine, let Albus play his games. He doesn't have to know that I am already fifteen steps ahead of him. Salazar thought, then he laughed loudly.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* Luna made a cameo appearance! I just love her, and she is so fun to write, so i hope no one hates me for putting her in this chapter.

Also, its MERLIN! Now, before i get tons of eye rolls, and people start flaming me because of his existence in this story, let me explain. J.K. Rowling has stated that immortality cannot be achieved, BUT clearly it can, and I'm not talking about my version of Salazar. Merlin attended Hogwarts and was sorted into Slytherin. HOWEVER, according to Harry Potter wiki, all the King Arthur stuff happened almost 500 YEARS, before Hogwarts was founded in 992. That means Merlin was AT LEAST 600 years old when he went to Hogwarts. Clearly Merlin knew how to live a long life, and (maybe) he obtained immortality in cannon. Also, The Flamels have a way of living forever, as does Voldemort through the Horcruxes. So yes, i can see
Merlin, the greatest wizard ever to live, being smart enough to come up with a form of immortality of his own.

"But what is Merlin up too?" You ask.

"I cannot say." I reply. "You'll just have to wait and see!"

LOL! Thank you all so much for following this story! Please let me know what you think about this chapter!
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 20

What Could It Mean?

It had been a month since school started, and to be honest, Salazar was already at his wits end. He was looking for Voldemort to pop out from around a corner at a moment's notice, but so far, nothing had happened. Severus didn't know what Lucius was up to, and he and Salazar had sat down and brainstormed with Poppy and Minerva to try and figure it out, but to no avail. The twins were also watching the map, which was now complete thanks to James, for anything suspicious, but so far… nothing.

Severus said he would keep in contact with Lucius to see if the man would let something slip, but there was no guarantee that would happen. Severus also said he couldn't outright ask Lucius what he was doing either, seeing as this was knowledge that Severus wasn't supposed to have.

Albus was grating on Salazar's nerves even more than normal. He had taken to watching over Salazar with an even closer eye, and began popping up out of nowhere to 'just catch up' at least twice a week.

As far as the children went, Salazar was doing everything in his power to keep them in the dark about everything, but with his mood the way it had been, they were growing concerned. Salazar didn't want them to have to worry about any of this. They hadn't caught on to anything last year, for which Salazar was thankful for, but this year was different. It was almost like something was in the air, and it was just waiting to burst free. Salazar couldn't put his finger on what it was though, but it was disturbing.

Hermione, Neville, and Blaise asked him at least five times a day if he was all right, and he always told them that he was, but that wasn't going to satisfy them for much longer. Colin, who had taken to Gordy, and therefore Salazar, was just too hyper to really pay attention to more than one thing for any length of time. He was doing well in his classes though, and that was what really mattered.

Gordy however was something else. He had calmed down a lot, but he still followed Salazar everywhere except for classes. It was like having a little shadow, but as aggravating as he was, there was just something about Gordy that made Salazar not want to be rude to the young lad. He just couldn't explain it.

As for classes, Salazar was mostly happy with them and the material that was being taught this year. In Herbology they were studying mandrakes at the moment, and he was pleased with how Professor Sprout was conducting the class.

Nora however, was slightly miffed that she had to spend the classes outside the greenhouse because their cries would affect her too and the earmuffs wouldn't work for her. She spent most of class time playing around in the grass outside and 'jumping' out of the bushes to scare anyone who walked by. She had already caught Lockhart twice, and Albus once.

In Potions, Severus had them studying the Sleeping Draught, and in Transfiguration, Minerva was teaching them how to change beetles into buttons.
In Charms they were learning the severing charm, which caused a few problems because the children kept overpowering their spells and slicing things in half. One of the Hufflepuffs ended up cutting off the tip of her finger, but Flitwick was able to quickly reattach it and sent the poor girl to Poppy.

History was as it always was, and Salazar was beginning to get fed up with it. There was so much more to history than goblin rebellions and giant wars, but that was the only thing Binns would teach. He hoped that after Voldemort was gone for good that he could revamp the history class and replace the old ghost, but that was far into the future.

Defense was another matter though. He had figured out what the curse was and was planning on breaking it soon, but it didn't matter. Lockhart would soon be gone anyway, Salazar would make sure of that. Salazar hated him, pure and simple. Despite his first impression of Lockhart in the hall during the Peeves incident, Salazar had been willing to give him the benefit of the doubt.

It turned out to be the wrong thing to do.

The man was vain, arrogant, and worst of all, a very inept Professor. He had decorated the entire classroom with nothing but pictures of himself, and during their first class, the idiot had given them a test. At first Salazar thought it was a smart thing to do. Perhaps it was to see what the children knew, but that was not the case.

It turned out to be a test that was all about Lockhart himself. It had questions like what his favorite color was, what his greatest achievement was, and how he liked his picture taken. Salazar had gritted his teeth, but held his tongue and took the test, which he failed, but he didn't care.

THEN on top of all of that, the idiot set loose a bunch of pixies in the classroom. Most of the children ran out screaming, as did Lockhart himself, but Hermione, Blaise, Neville, and Salazar managed to reign them in. Hermione and Blaise immobilized some of them, while Salazar and Neville froze the rest. The frozen ones fell out of the air like stones and shattered everywhere. Salazar had received a 'talking to' about 'killing things' from Albus over that incident because most of the pixies died. Thankfully Neville was spared from 'the talk' though.

After that, Lockhart had decided not to bring anything else into the class, and so for the last month, Lockhart had been reenacting his 'adventures', and he always picked 'Harry' to help him with them. In Salazar's mind, the man...Needed. To. Go.

"Speaker, how am I supposed to help you if you sit lost in thought?" Nora asked, as she peered at him.

It was a week into October and they were sitting at a study table in the common room. Salazar was pretending to look over his Herbology essay that involved mandrakes, but Nora knew it was a ruse because of the look on his face. She called it his 'thinking expression'. Gordy was sitting across from Salazar, though he was a few seats away, and he was writing in some sort of black book that looked like a diary, but at least he was preoccupied for the moment.

"Zabby is in the library with Bushy and Bottom, so we can talk freely. Talk to me Speaker, there is something troubling you."

"You mean something other than the obvious?" Salazar asked.

"Of course I mean something other than the obvious." She huffed. "We know that The Clown is planning something to do with Morty, but we don't know what. Dumbly is being even more bothersome than usual, and there is nothing we can do about it. So other than that, what else are
"Lockhart."

"Poncy? What about him? Has he hurt you because of his stupidity? Shall I bite him?" Nora asked with alarm.

"No, no, nothing like that." He assured her. "But he needs to go. He is a useless teacher, and he is not teaching anyone anything other than how to smile. I have stunned him five times during class already because of his stupid reenactments, yet he continues to tout about how great he is. Even Hermione is now realizing how much of a fraud he is, and you know how she can be when it comes to the Professors."

"What do we do?" She asked, as she stretched out on the table.

"Other than kill him, I have no idea." Salazar said with a scowl.

"All right, what do we know about him?"

Salazar sighed. "Well, from what I can gather just by watching him, he is incompetent..."

"Obviously." Salazar glared at her for interrupting, but then he continued. "Minerva said that Albus told the staff that he uses the memory charm to obliterate other wizards and to take credit for their work. She also mentioned that Albus said he actually knew a few of the people who Lockhart had obliterated. That's why Albus hired him, to expose him as a fraud."

"Why don't we put veritaserum in Poncy's pumpkin juice to find out the truth?"

Salazar stared at Nora. "My dear that is a brilliant idea!" He suddenly cried. "But how do we go about being sneaky with it?"

"Who says you have to be sneaky? Do it during dinner one night, so that he gets exposed for what he is. I'm sure you, Bat, Kitty, Healthy, and the Minions will think of something."

"Indeed." Salazar nodded, and he started thinking about the different possibilities.

"What about tonight?"

"I have that all worked out. The curse on the Defense position will not be hard to break. I just need to do it at night because it may take a few minutes and I can't risk someone coming in during the day and catching me. It will cause a loud bang when it breaks though, so be ready for it. The curse is juvenile at best, but it is obscure and very old. Albus wouldn't think to look for it. You'll need to stay here though, because it could get dangerous."

"All right." Nora said with a hint of disappointment. "Just be careful."

"I will my dear."

It was an hour after curfew when Salazar left Nora laying on his pillow, and he quietly slipped out of the dorm room. He had a plan for tonight. There was no way around the loud bang that would happen, and it would likely shake and wake up the entire castle. That's why he had Fred and George helping him, and Minerva, Severus, and Poppy running interference, and giving him and the twins time to escape the scene.
Once the curse broke, the twins were going set off a large prank in the corridor as cover for the noise, but they were going to have to be quick about it because Lockhart's living quarters were up the stairs in the classroom just off of his office. He no doubt would be the first one up and on the scene.

The curse itself was centered in the classroom, but it was tied to the job title, so even if the Defense Professor moved classrooms, the curse would still find the teacher. It was pretty complex for the type of spell it was, but Salazar knew it could be broken.

Using his snake form to look for the disillusioned twins, Salazar spotted them in the designated meeting place and quickly changed back into human form, and headed towards the small alcove located just outside the Defense classroom.

"Hello lads. Where do we stand?" He asked.

"Lockhart is in his room either sleeping, practicing his smile, or getting his hair ready for tomorrow." Fred said, brandishing the map.

George snorted. "We are all set up and ready to go. This prank will be brilliant. Magical confetti, glitter, and paint. We can't go wrong."

"Just be careful." Salazar warned. "Remember, let me get out of the classroom and into the shortcut before you set off the prank so I don't get covered in the stuff. Then you two get to the shortcut that leads to the fifth floor. You'll need to hurry though, because Professor Flitwick will be coming from Ravenclaw Tower which is near there, and unless Minerva runs fast to head him off, you might run into him."

"Yes sir!" They whispered as they saluted him.

"Stop that!" Salazar laughed, and he swatted the closest twin to him. "All right, here we go."

Salazar slipped out of the alcove and quietly entered the Defense classroom. He set up several wards that would help him locate and see the exact center point of the curse. When he did that, a small ball of energy with two 'strings' began glowing an ominous dark red. One 'string' led from the center point, the ball, which was laying just beneath the stairs. It went straight up into the ceiling, and was the one tied to Lockhart's teaching contract. The other 'string' led up into the office above it and was the one that was attached to Lockhart himself. All Salazar had to do was cut the 'strings' and disable the ball. Thankfully it could all be done at once.

He raised his wand and began to wave it in a complex pattern while chanting in Latin under his breath. He had to push hard with his magic, but finally after several minutes, the 'strings' were cut, and the ball began to glow.

Salazar began to quickly back way as the ball went from red, to dark purple, then to black. He was almost at the door when it disintegrated.

BOOM!

The loud sound shook the castle, and Salazar ungracefully went sailing through the air and out the slightly ajar door because of the shock wave. He managed to quickly get to his feet, and hurried over to a shortcut that led to the first floor. He heard the twins snickering, but seconds later he heard three more loud bangs as the pranks went off.

Just as he entered the shortcut though, he ran smack into a body that was just a little taller than himself. Both of them went crashing to the floor, and Salazar hurried to light the tip of his wand.
"Gordy?" Salazar asked in shock, as he and the red headed boy got to their feet. Gordy was rubbing his elbow, but had his customary large grin on his face.

"Hey Harry, fancy meeting you here."

"What are you doing here?" Salazar hissed. "And how do you know this shortcut?"

"You showed it to me, remember? The first week of school, and I saw you sneak out of the common room so I followed you. What are you doing here?"

Salazar racked his brain, and he didn't recall ever showing Gordy this particular shortcut, but then again, the boy was like his second shadow.

"Setting off pranks. Come on." Salazar said with a sigh. "We have to hurry before someone sees us."

Gordy laughed as they began to run down the shortcut. When they got to the exit, which came out on the first floor, Salazar stopped to check if the coast was clear.

It wasn't.

"Blast!" He murmured under his breath.

"What is it?" Gordy whispered.

"Filch, Dumbledore, and Snape." Salazar replied.

"Uh oh."

He could have signaled for Severus to distract the other two, but with Gordy there, he couldn't. Albus and Filch's backs were towards them though, and maybe they could sneak by if they were disillusioned. The only problem was that the shortcut to the dungeons needed a password, and it was protected by a suit of armor.

"Oh Albus, there you are!" Minerva cried as she hurried down the main staircase. "It seems someone has set off a bunch pranks in the Defense corridor. Paint, glitter, and confetti are everywhere!"

Salazar heard Gordy snicker behind him, but Salazar shushed him.

Albus started chuckling. "Ah the joys of youth."

"Have you checked on those infuriating Weasley twins of yours?" Severus sneered. "This sounds like something they would do."

"I have, and they are in the common room. There is no way they could have done it. I would have seen them as I came down the stairs." Minerva replied hotly.

"I bet it was Peeves then!" Filch shouted. "Bloody poltergeist!"

"Well, I suppose we better go take a look." Albus said with another chuckle.

They moved off, and Salazar waited a few minutes before making a beeline for the suit of armor, then he stopped and rolled his eyes.

"Salazar acts like a baby." He whispered, and he heard Gordy snort loudly behind him.

The suit of armor stepped aside, and they headed for the dungeons.
"How did you know that, and who set that up?"

"I told you a few weeks ago that the Founders had their own shortcuts. That was one of Godric Gryffindor's, and he set the password."

"Why do you think he chose that one?"

"Because they were the best of friends." Salazar replied quietly.

"They were?" Gordy asked. "I thought they hated each other."

"No, they didn't, but Slytherin messed it all up."

"How?"

"By being selfish." Salazar answered softly.

"Oh. How do you know that?" Gordy asked.

"I read a lot." He replied as they slipped into the common room.

It was jammed packed. It seems that the loud bang had awoken everyone and the whole house was congregating in there, but thankfully that allowed him and Gordy to slip in unnoticed.

"There you are Harry!" Blaise cried when he spotted them. "Where have you been? Nora wouldn't tell me anything." He said holding her up.

"I've been pranking the Defense corridor." Salazar said with a grin. "Well actually I was helping Fred and George do it."

Blaise started laughing. "That was you!?"

"And Fred and George." He laughed.

Salazar began to tell Blaise everything that happened prank wise, and of course, Gordy listened to every word with rapt attention and starry eyes. Blaise burst out laughing when Salazar told him how Gordy followed him, and Gordy had the good sense to blush. Blaise knew how much the red head followed 'Harry' around.

After a while though, Severus came in to tell them that everything was all right and to get to bed. They all breathed a sigh of relief and did as they were told. Salazar slept better that night than he had the last few weeks, because he finally felt like he had gotten something done.

For the next few days, the topic of conversation in the halls was the gaudy monstrosity that was the Defense corridor. The walls, floor, and ceiling had been completely coated with paint, glitter, and confetti. Lockhart was walking around grinning and smiling like usual, and kept saying that it was a nice change from the plain grey walls it had been. The way he was going on about, one would think it had all been his idea.

Filch was still trying to clean up the mess, but none of the students volunteered to help the cranky caretaker. After a few days of watching him struggle though, Flitwick took pity on him and helped by using magic, so the mess was finally gone after a few hours later.

It was Saturday though, and Salazar was sitting in an unused classroom on the fifth floor. Well, he was more like hiding really. The children were growing more concerned by the day, and he was
trying to avoid them as much as possible so they wouldn't ask him for the umpteenth time if he was all right.

Nora was sitting beside him, and they were trying to figure out ways of exposing Lockhart. He hadn't had a chance to really speak with Minerva, Poppy, and Severus yet, but that wasn't going to stop him from trying to come up with a plan. However, he suddenly had an idea and reached into his pocket to pull out the mirror James had given him.

"James Potter." He said in a loud whisper.

He waited a few moments, but when James didn't answer he tried again, only this time a little louder.

"James Potter." He said, and waited again.

Finally Lily appeared in the mirror with a smile. "Salazar! It's so good to hear from you. Sorry it took me a bit to get here. I was tending to the back garden. James isn't here though. He's in Rio Way drooling over the new Nimbus 2001 that came out. Apparently we were a little behind Britain in getting it."

Salazar laughed. "Brooms, I hate them." He said, but then he sighed.

"Is there something wrong?" She asked. "Maybe I can help?"

"You actually might Lily." He said, then began to explain the Lockhart situation.

Once he was done telling Lily everything, she pursed her lips in concentration. "Maybe if you had Minnie place a sticking charm to his chair, and Severus slip the veritaserum in his drink and ask him a question it would work. He would be trapped in his seat, and forced to answer questions. The only drawback is actually using the veritaserum so publicly, seeing as it is regulated by the Ministry."

"And that is where I'm stuck." Salazar admitted. "But the rest is a good idea. I hadn't thought of doing that way."

Lily stared at him. "Salazar, surely you must know that veritaserum isn't the only truth serum out there. Just use a plain mild truth serum. From what you told me about this man, it should still work."

This time it was Salazar who was the one staring. "Lily that is brilliant!" He cried. "Perenelle always tells me I have a tendency to overthink things at times, and this is one of those times. It's so simple really."

She smiled at him. "Well I'm glad I could help. I'm going to tell James what all you told me, but he will probably laugh himself to death and ask you to send him the memory of it." She said with a chuckle, but then she grew sort of quiet. "Is there any news on Sirius? I know James will ask me about him."

Salazar shook his head sadly. "No Lily I'm afraid not. I'm so sorry to say, but there is so much else going on this year that I haven't even thought about it. Aside from Lockhart the Fraud, Lucius Malfoy is planning something that involves Voldemort, but what it is I don't know. I only know this because his mistreated house elf came and told me. Whatever Lucius has going on, it is very, very dark. There is a dark object here at Hogwarts and the castle knows it's here. Whatever this dark object is, it is evil and it is active. I can feel it, and because of that, I have this overwhelming sense of dread that is mounting each day. It feels like a dam is fixing to break free, and because I don't know what it is, I can't stop it."

Lily stared at him with frightened eyes. "Oh goodness. Salazar I had no idea, if I had, I wouldn't
have brought up Sirius and caused you more…"

"No it is all right Lily. Don't worry over it." He assured her.

"Do you think you can feel it because you are a Founder?"

"Oh yes, and I think Albus knows it's here as well. Hogwarts would alert him too because he's the Headmaster." He said, but then he got a thoughtful look on his face. "In fact, that would explain why he keeps popping up and asking me how I'm doing."

"You mean, Albus thinks that you are causing whatever is going on?" She asked, looking slightly angry.

"Yes, I think so."

"Oh you wait until the day I get to see him face to face. I swear I'm going to give that man a piece of my mind!" She shouted, as she stomped her foot in anger.

Salazar chuckled. "I'll disarm him so that you can have a go."

She laughed loudly. "I might not need you too." She giggled, but then she stopped and cocked her head to one side. "Why didn't Hogwarts tell you that Voldemort was there last year?"

"Because he's a wizard. It's impossible to detect dark wizards because they are people, and their emotions and intentions change all the time. Hogwarts won't pick up on that, even if they are in wraith form. However, dark objects are different because of the wards that Godric placed. She is able to pick up on those because they don't change. They are constantly dark. This object, whatever it is, is active and very evil. That's why Hogwarts is instilling a sense of urgency in me and Albus."

"It's like the castle is telling you to hurry before something bad happens." She said.

Salazar nodded. "Yes." He said with a small smile. "As for Sirius though, Nicholas and I have pretty much exhausted very legal option, short of Nicholas demanding a trial. That wouldn't be good because that would raise too many questions. The only thing left is illegal options."

Lily stared at him. "You mean a breakout!?" She asked in surprise.

"Yes, the only problem with that is…"

"You can't breakout of Azkaban." She muttered.

"Right."

Lily sighed softly. "All right. I'll tell James all that's going on just so that he knows. It's going to hurt him about Sirius, but I know he will understand, just as I do. The most important thing is protecting the school from whatever Malfoy is doing. Deal with that first, and then hopefully we can figure out Sirius's situation."

"Thank you for understanding." He said.

"You're welcome." She said with a smile. "I don't know Mrs. Flamel, but I know she's right. You can't keep overthinking things because when you do, you miss the small stuff. Overthinking things will just make the problems more complicated. So stop doing that."

Salazar laughed loudly. "Oh my dear, Perenelle would love you. She says the same things to me all the time."
"Then she is a smart lady." Lily grinned. "All right, you better go run that Lockhart plan by Minnie and Sev to see what they think. Maybe they have a better one."

"We will see. All right, get back to my back garden and keep it looking nice." Salazar teased.

"I'll make sure I destroy it."

Salazar laughed again, and they broke off the conversation. He felt a bit more lighthearted after talking to Lily, and as he stared at the opposite wall, he realized that she was right. He had been overthinking things. He needed to take a deep breath, step back, and look at all this logically. He also need to stop bottling all of this up, and talk to someone. He decided right then that he needed to talk to Severus, Poppy, and Minerva…and soon.

He had been able to corner Severus earlier that day, and tell him about his conversation with Lily and all the bottled up feelings he had been keeping to himself. Severus thought that the plan for Lockhart was brilliant, but he whacked Salazar over the head with a stack of parchment for keeping things bottled up. Severus claimed that 'Perenelle told me to do that', which Salazar actually believed. They hadn't had a chance to talk with Minerva and Poppy yet, but they agreed to talk with them about everything soon.

Right now though, Salazar was sitting in the common room with Blaise and Gordy, and they were all glaring at the Quidditch team that had just came in.

"How in the world did I miss this?" Salazar asked rhetorically.

"Well, to be perfectly honest," Blaise said quietly. "You have been slightly self-absorbed recently."

Salazar sighed. "Yes, I suppose I have."

"Whatever is wrong with you seems to be effecting your shadow too." Blaise laughed. "He's becoming moody just like you."

Gordy chuckled. "That's not true Blaise."

Salazar took a moment to look at the young lad. He did look awfully pale and sort of distracted, and not at all like the happy-go-lucky person he normally seemed. He was holding the black book that he always seemed to be writing in though, but he quickly stuffed it in his pocket when he caught Salazar looking at it.

"It's just a diary full of ramblings." He said quickly.

"All right." Salazar answered, but still eyeing the boy carefully.

"So what do we do about that?" Blaise asked, motioning towards the Quidditch team

Draco was standing in the middle of the common room boasting about his recent spot on the Quidditch team. He was holding up a brand new Nimbus 2001, and was bragging about how his father had bought one for each player on the team.

"You should have seen the looks on those Gryffindors!" Draco laughed. "They were so angry, and those pathetic Weasleys were so jealous! You see my father can afford the best things, and their father can't even afford food!" He cried. Then he smirked over in Salazar, Blaise, and Gordy's direction. "Then that filthy little mudblood Granger had the audacity to claim that I had bought my way on the team. You should have seen the looks on the faces of those stupid Gryffindors when I
called her that too. They were hopping around crying 'don't call her that'!" He said little mocking
voice, and then laughed again.

"He's just taunting us Harry." Blaise said angrily as he glared at Draco, while keeping a tight grip on
Salazar's arm. "Don't…don't fall for his taunts…Gordy!"

Salazar hadn't even seen Gordy move because he had moved so quickly, and before anyone realized
what was happening, Draco was laying on the ground screaming in pain. He was covered in painful
boils from head to toe and the blond was sporting a brand new pair of shiny black horns that were
growing out of his head.

"Merlin Gordy! You're lighting quick!" Blaise managed to shout over Draco's screaming.

Everyone in the common room had backed up as Gordy stormed over to the fallen boy.

"LISTEN TO ME YOU POMPOUS SORRY EXCUSE FOR A WIZARD! If you EVER call
ANYONE by that name again, you will get worse! Do you understand me!?" Gordy shouted, as he
lifed Draco up and roughly sat him down in a chair.

Crabbe and Goyle made a move towards Gordy, but he pulled himself up to his full height and stared
them down. Gordy wasn't a scrawny little kid though. In fact, he was almost the size of Crabbe and
Goyle, even if the two buffoons were second years, but they suddenly found themselves tied up in
ropes with no hope for escape. No one even saw Gordy cast the Incarcerous spell.

Salazar could only stare at him though. Gordy was strong, Salazar already knew that, but this…this
was something else. The look on Gordy's face, his mannerisms, and just the sheer quickness and
aptitude he displayed seemed…familiar.

"You are not the only one who has wealthy parents you little git!" Gordy shouted, as he got right in
Draco's face. "I WILL be talking to my family, and we WILL be gifting Gryffindor new brooms!
Now get out of my sight!" He yelled, and Draco quickly jumped out of the chair, but he fell over and
hit the floor because his legs gave out.

"And my family will be gifting new brooms to Ravenclaw!" Blaise suddenly shouted, as Snape
came running in with a prefect trailing behind him.

"POTTER! What is going on here!??" Severus asked.

Salazar couldn't speak. He was too stunned by what happened, and Severus picked up on that as he
glared around the room. Severus quickly made his way over to Draco, who was still covered in boils
and with horns growing out of his head, and quickly canceled the curses. Then he looked over at
Crabbe and Goyle, and canceled the Incarcerous spell that had been placed on them.

"Crabbe, Goyle, Nott!" Severus yelled. "Get him to the hospital wing! Potter, Roffin, Zabini my
office NOW!"

Salazar nodded numbly, and Blaise grabbed Gordy, who was still glaring at Draco as Crabbe,
Goyle, and Nott dragged the mumbling blond out the common room. They followed behind Severus
as he led them to his office, and when they were all inside, the Potions Master slammed the door
behind them.

"Sit." He ordered through gritted teeth, as he leaned over his desk to glare at them.

Salazar and Blaise did so quickly, but Gordy didn't budge.
"He got what he deserved. He called Hermione a mudblood, and I…will…not…put…up…with…that." Gordy growled, as his grip tightened on the back of the wooden desk chair he was leaning against. "Also, the little braggart wants to spout off about how much money his Daddy has, well so can I. I have money too, and I will be gifting Gryffindor new Nimbus 2001s." He stated, as Severus glared at him.

"Gordy's right." Blaise said. "I think everyone should be on an even foot though. If Gordy has Gryffindor, then my Mum will happily gift the same to Ravenclaw. It is her old house after all."

"I'll take Hufflepuff then. The Potter wealth is well known." Salazar said, finally managing to take his eyes off Gordy long enough to find his senses.

"How very noble of you all." Severus sneered. "Mr. Roffin, you have a week's worth of detention for assaulting Mr. Malfoy. Now I suggest you peel yourself away from Potter, and get back to the common room. Potter, you remain here. I'm not done with you yet. Mr. Zabini, no punishment for you…for now." He spat. "Now go!"

Blaise grabbed Gordy, who clearly didn't want to leave the room, but he finally relented and let Blaise drag him out. When the door was finally shut, Severus sat down heavily.

"Before you ask, I have no idea." Salazar said. "Gordy jumped up so quickly that I didn't have time to stop him. He fired off those hexes so quickly that I didn't even see them hit Draco, nor did I see the incarcerous spell hit Crabbe and Goyle. Not only that, but he did them silently Severus. That is the mark of a well-trained, very talented duelist. Quick draw, quick reflexes, and complete silence. I realize that anyone can pull off silent spells, but not everyone can cause them to be invisible and silent like Gordy did. I can't even do that."

"What do you think?"

"I have not a clue." Salazar answered. "All I really know about Gordy is that he is a half-blood with two magical parents. He doesn't speak about his Mum and Dad at all, but then not many Slytherins do, with the exception of Draco." He said with a sigh. "There is something about him though. As aggravating as the lad can be, there is something about him. I didn't know what it was before, but after tonight, I think I have it somewhat pin-pointed. He is familiar to me."

"Huh?" Severus said, slightly confused. "Familiar?"

Salazar nodded. "Yes, and what is highly disturbing is, the only other time I have felt this familiarity was last year. Despite the pain I was in from Voldemort being so close, I had this feeling of familiarity. Now mind you, I'm not 100% sure about this, but I think the horcrux in my head was reacting to Voldemort's magic on a small scale. It's the magic that seems familiar, and Gordy's magic feels familiar. I think that's why I don't mind his clinginess, it's…a comfortable feeling." He said with a heavy sigh.

"Is it dark?" Severus asked in alarm.

"Slightly, but not anywhere near as dark as Voldemort's, and Voldemort's was very uncomfortable feeling. Gordy's isn't though, and that's what makes it so tough to…to pin down." Salazar admitted with a frustrated sigh.

"Do you think Roffin is somehow connected to what has been happening with the castle's warnings?"

"I don't know?" Salazar said, shaking his head. "I sincerely hope not, because the lad is very kind,
polite, and caring. IF he is caught up in this mess, then I don't think he is a willing pawn. Thankfully the boy sticks to me like glue, so I won't have a problem keeping an eye on him."

Severus sighed heavily. "I'll let Minerva and Poppy know so that they can keep an eye on him as well. He does excellent in my class and Minerva has said that he is extremely talented in Transfiguration, but we will let you know if he starts slipping in his studies, or starts showing any other signs that are abnormal."

"Thank you, but I better go before Gordy storms the room thinking you are turning me into potions ingredients." 

Severus chuckled, and Salazar stood up to leave. When he exited the office, he just had to chuckle. Gordy and Blaise were waiting for him just down the hall from Severus's office.

"You didn't get in trouble, did you?" Blaise asked, as Salazar caught up to them.

"No, but he seems to think I had something to with it though, as usual." Salazar said with a sigh. He really did hate having to lie to the children all the time.

"Well that's good." Gordy said with a smile. "It would have been my fault. I'm sorry I lost my temper like that, but that boy gets on my nerves."

"Yeah, you really acted like a Gryffindor." Blaise laughed.

Gordy laughed loudly. "I'm sorry, is that bad?"

"Yeah, if you're in Slytherin." Salazar said with a chuckle, and the other two snorted.

"Well, we better get back to the common room before Snape catches us." Blaise said. "I really don't want to face him again tonight."

Salazar and Gordy agreed, and they quickly headed off in that direction. Salazar wanted to head to bed early. He had a lot of thinking to do about the new situation, and what it could possibly mean.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* WHEW! This chapter has a lot going on, and it was hard to write! Im a little nervous about this one because it is still not as good as I'd like it to be, but i was able to get everything that i needed to in it. I hope you enjoy it and can still get a sense of what is happening! Salazar is a little down in the dumps, but hopefully things turn around for him soon. Thanks for reading you guys, and please let me know what you think!
Chapter 22

Good Riddance!

It had been another long week for Salazar, and Halloween was fast approaching. The feelings were getting more intense, and he was no closer to figuring out what was going on. Whatever Lucius was up too, he wasn't speaking a word about it.

Dobby had come to Salazar to check in, but he didn't have any more information that he could give Salazar. All that he could say was that Lucius kept muttering that 'he' would get what was coming to him. Dobby didn't know who the 'he' was though.

He had finally been able to tell Minerva and Poppy everything. Minerva was excited about the Lockhart plan, and Poppy just laughed about it and said that Lily had always been a very clever witch. However, they both yelled at Salazar for keeping all his feelings and thoughts to himself, 'just like Perenelle told them too.' Salazar was beginning to wonder if Perenelle was secretly writing to all of them.

The only thing that bothered Salazar about the Lockhart plan was that he was afraid that Albus would be angry at Minerva and Severus. After all, that would mean that Albus himself would have to teach Defense until he could find a replacement, which according to Severus was going to be very hard to do, seeing as no one wanted the job. However, Poppy mentioned, rather nastily, that it would keep Albus busy, seeing as all he did was sit up in his office trying to think up ways to place a 'child' in danger. Everyone agreed with her, and Minerva and Severus didn't care a bit about Albus's getting mad at them.

Severus decided not to write to Lucius about what had happened with Draco because he wanted to see what Draco was going to do. It turned out that Draco didn't do anything though. He just kept out of Blaise, Salazar, and Gordy's way, much to Gordy's amusement.

Slytherin House was not happy with the three of them because of the brooms they were going to give to the other houses. Salazar became concerned for Gordy's safety in the dorms because of it all, so he placed the same blood protection ward around Gordy's bed that he had placed around his and Blaise's. This one though, was centered right above Gordy's bed, so it wasn't protecting anyone else. Thankfully, when they had placed the ward nothing turned up cursed.

Speaking of brooms though, today was the day that they were set to arrive. Everyone in the school knew that Slytherin had received the new brooms, but no one knew what was about to happen. Severus promised that he wouldn't tell the other Heads of House because he was 'sulking' and 'angry' over Slytherin not having the clear advantage this year, so that meant that none of the other Heads had any idea what was going on either. Salazar hadn't told Fred and George, and he, Blaise, and Gordy decided it would be a nice surprise to let everyone find out together, and Slytherin House certainly wasn't going to mention it to anyone else.

Salazar, Blaise, and Gordy were currently sitting at the breakfast table, and kept giving each other secretive smiles. They knew that at any moment…
"WOW look at that!" A fourth year Hufflepuff suddenly shouted.

The great hall was buzzing as a massive flock of owls swooped into the great hall carrying twenty-one long packages. It took three owls to carry each one, and everyone watched dumfounded as all of the owls laid seven of the packages in front of each Head of House. Then one owl dropped a letter a single letter in front of each Head, who looked very mystified by the number of owls.

The great hall was silent as everyone stared, but it was Flitwick who read his letter first. He squeaked loudly and fell out of his seat, but then he gathered himself up and stood on top of the head table, and cast a voice amplifying charm that made his squeaky voice boom out into the great hall.

"Dear Professor Filius Flitwick, Head of Ravenclaw House. It is with great pleasure that we at the Nimbus Racing Broom Company are able to send you our new Nimbus 2001 racing broom for each member of the Ravenclaw Quidditch team! This was made possible through a donation by The Zabini family. We hope you all enjoy!"

A beaming Professor Sprout stood up. "My letter says the same, except our brooms were donated by the Potter family!"

"As for Gryffindor," a very teary eyed, excited Minerva stood up and said. "Ours were donated by the Roffin family!"

The great hall was dead silent as everyone stared around at each other in shock, but then Blaise got a wicked grin on his face and stood up.

"You can all thank Draco Malfoy's father for the idea!" He shouted.

Chaos suddenly reigned in the great hall as all the other houses began whooping, cheering, and hugging each other. The Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, and Gryffindor Quidditch teams ran up to the head table to collect and unwrap their new brooms, and they all held them up high to show them off. Slytherin House stayed silent for the most part and glared at their house mates, who just shrugged, but some in the house stood up to clap politely. These of course, were mostly families who were light or neutral.

Fred and George were the first to make it to Slytherin table and nearly squashed poor Gordy with a hug. Oliver Wood was close behind them with tears in his eyes, and wouldn't stop shaking his hand, while Angelina Johnson, Katie Bell, and Alicia Spinnet wouldn't stop kissing his cheeks in thanks.

Blaise was surrounded by the Ravenclaw team, and found himself hoisted on their shoulders, and Hufflepuff surrounded Salazar and shook his hand and gave him hugs.

"Thank you! Thank you so much Potter!" One of the players said. "My name is Cedric Diggory, I know we have never met before, but thank you so much!"

Salazar smiled at the young man and nodded. "It was my pleasure. Hufflepuffs aren't the only ones who are allowed to believe in fairness."

Cedric beamed at him. "No, I guess not. If there is anything I can ever do for you, please let me know. This is an amazing gift, and someday I'd like to repay you for it."

Salazar shook his head. "That's not necessary, it's a gift, and I'm sure you'll use it to its fullest potential."

"Oh I will!" Cedric laughed. "Well, I better go. Hufflepuff is probably going to throw a party"
without me."

Salazar laughed as he watched Cedric bound away, then he took a deep breath and looked around. Most of Slytherin had left the great hall, but there were still a few sticking around to congratulate their friends in other houses. Salazar looked at these Slytherins and nodded. There was only a few of them, but they gave him hope, hope for the future of his house.

The other houses were still in a state of celebration, and he grinned as he watched them. Up at the Head table, Severus was 'sulking' and 'sneering' at Minerva who was clearly teasing him. All the other Professors were smiling and talking, but it was Albus who caught his eye.

Albus was looking right at him with twinkling eyes and a genuine smile. He raised his glass in Salazar's direction when they looked at each other, and for the second time ever, Salazar nodded his head, raised his own glass, and gave Albus a genuine smile in return.

"Gryffindor tower is still talking about it Harry." Neville laughed.

It was Saturday and Salazar, Blaise, Hermione, and Neville were taking advantage of one of the last few semi-warm days before winter really set in, and they had been sitting outside beside the lake doing homework and just relaxing for a few hours. Gordy, along with Colin, managed to get themselves into trouble with Severus and were serving detention for back talking. Apparently, Severus had made a scathing remark about 'Harry' in class and because they had potions at the same time, both Gordy and Colin yelled at him for it. Needless to say, Gryffindor had lost a lot of points that day.

"Neville's right. The Quidditch team has hung their brooms on the wall of the common room." Hermione said as she rolled her eyes. "I'm not a huge fan of Quidditch, and I think what you all did was very nice, but I just don't see the need in constantly talking about it."

"I think it's great." Neville said with a laugh, but then his face darkened. "Ron didn't like it though."

Salazar looked up from his Charms paper a bit startled. "What do you mean? He loves Quidditch. I figure he'd be happy."

"Yeah." Blaise said. "What's up with Ron? He's been awfully quiet this year. He only glares at us now, but he hasn't said much to us."

"He's jealous." Hermione said rolling her eyes again as she flipped through her Transfiguration book.

"Hermione's right. He jealous." Neville said shaking his head. "He was spouting off in the common room about the 'greasy, slimy Slytherins' and how they probably 'jinxed the brooms'. He's mad because he doesn't have one, and was talking about how 'Potter is always showing off that he has money'. Fred and George told him to shut up, but he started yelling at them about 'being family traitors' and how 'Potter better watch his back'."

"Merlin, Ron has issues. It wasn't even Harry who gave the brooms to Gryffindor in the first place." Blaise said.

"He doesn't care who did it." Hermione said. "I personally think he just likes to hear himself talk. He does seem a lot angrier this year though."

"I'm not worried about Carrot. I will bite him again if I have to. He only needs to come near Speaker and I'll have him." Nora said with a huff as she stretched out in the grass.
"Well Nora, after what Gordy did to Draco I don't think he really wants to get too close. The whole school knows about that." Neville said.

"I did thank him for sticking up for me." Hermione said quietly.

"We know you did Hermione. Gordy told us." Blaise said.

She looked at him and smiled, but then she caught the look on Salazar's face. "Harry, are you ok? You're staring off into space again."

He looked at her and nodded. "Yeah I am. I think I'm going through one of those pre-teen hormone puberty change…things." He said waving his hands around.

Hermione burst out laughing. "Well, if you are that sure does answer a lot of questions."

"And explains why you have been so moody lately." Blaise teased as Salazar glared at him.

Truth was, Salazar had been thinking about the Lockhart plan because after tonight, no more Lockhart, or at least they hoped. Severus had just finished brewing the completely legal general truth serum and would slip it in his drink tonight. Salazar was just worried that they would get in trouble with Albus.

"Hey you were right! There they are!" They heard Colin suddenly shout. "Hey guys! We made it through detention in one piece!" He said with a laugh as he plopped himself on the grass.

"Did you manage to keep your temper in check this time?" Salazar asked looking at Gordy with a smirk.

Gordy laughed loudly. "Yes, you would have been so proud of me. Snape tried getting a rise out of me, but I didn't fall for this time." He said, looking rather smug.

Salazar chuckled. "All right, as long as you held it together."

"Yeah, at least you didn't act like a Gryffindor again." Blaise teased.

"HEY!" All three Gryffindors protested together, and everyone broke down laughing when Colin picked up a handful of grass and threw it at Blaise.

Blaise picked up his own handful of grass and tossed it back at him, which caused Neville to jump in and defend his house mate. Pretty soon lumps of grass were flying through the air as the six friends faced off. Dirt and grass was everywhere, and all six of them were covered in the stuff, but after a while, there was no more grass in the immediate area. Refusing to give up though, wands were pulled and a friendly war of tickling charms began.

However, it all came to a screeching halt when everyone's least favorite Professor, second to Severus, showed up wearing powder blue robes.

"Ah! Such youthful innocence!" Lockhart exclaimed. "You know, I remember a time in my earlier years when I went toe to toe with a young wizard. He pulled his wand out like so," He said, demonstrating with an exaggerated flair. "And we dueled for hours! By the time that I got him stunned he was…"

Suddenly Lockhart hit the ground in a crumpled heap, and everyone turned around quickly to find Gordy standing there with a smug grin on his face. He just shrugged his shoulders and laughed.
"He was getting on my nerves." He said with a grin.

Salazar just stared at him because he hadn't seen the stunning spell that had hit Lockhart. Gordy looked right at Salazar though, and gave him a small smile. Salazar took a small step backwards as he caught something in Gordy's eyes.

What was that!? Salazar thought to himself, but he didn't have time to dwell on it because Neville's laughter shook him out of his thoughts.

Colin started laughing too and began to take pictures of Lockhart, and Nora even slithered on top of Lockhart's chest and posed for him. When he was done, Colin looked around at everyone grinned.

"Now what do we do with him?" He asked.

"I don't know about you guys, but I have suddenly forgot the spell that wakes people up. How about it?" Neville said with a snicker.

Blaise laughed loudly. "Neville, are you acting like a Slytherin right now?"

Neville grinned at him. "Maybe."

"Neville! You can't just leave him here!" Hermione exclaimed.

"Who says we have to leave him?" Blaise said with a grin. "I'm thinking we should drag him through the dirt first because honestly, I have suddenly forgotten the levitation spell. What say you Harry?"

"That would be so wicked!" Colin exclaimed. "I'll take more pictures of him looking all dirty!"

Salazar sighed. Can I really condone this? He thought as he looked around at the children's faces, but then he looked back at Lockhart. Yes I can, because I really don't like him. He thought with a grin.

"All right." Salazar chuckled. "Who is going to drag him?"

"I'll do it!" Gordy laughed, as he grabbed Lockhart's hands and began to drag him through the dirt and scattered clumps of grass.

They dragged Lockhart for a good twenty feet before Hermione started yelling at them to pick him up, so Salazar levitated him and they headed for the castle. They passed several students along the way, and most of them laughed. A few of Lockhart's fan girls grew concerned, but Hermione assured them that he was fine. Although Hermione herself was fretting about getting into trouble. Salazar assured them that they wouldn't.

Once they reached the castle, they passed by both Minerva and Severus, and after Salazar and the children had explained what happened, they each awarded ten points to both Gryffindor and Slytherin. The three Gryffindors nearly fainted because Severus never awards Gryffindor points if he can help it. They also passed by Albus, who look highly amused at the sight, and awarded five points to both houses, along with a few other Professors and students, most of whom laughed. Hermione felt a lot better about the situation after that.

Salazar had conveniently forgotten the most direct route to the hospital wing, and by the time they had gotten Lockhart to Poppy, they had paraded the stunned idiot around the entire castle…twice.
"You look awfully happy about something." Gordy leaned over and whispered to Salazar.

It was dinner time, and they were sitting at the Slytherin table. Salazar was in his normal seat at the very end, Gordy was beside him, and Blaise was sitting across from him and was engrossed in a conversation with Nora.

After they had gotten Lockhart to the hospital wing, they had left quickly, and obviously Poppy had woken him up and sent him on his way. He was now sitting up at the head table looking slightly miffed about his encounter with the first and second years. Rumor had it that he spent most of the day in his rooms 'getting cleaned up'.

Right now though, Salazar was grinning like a fool because Severus had just slipped the truth serum into the man's drink, and Lockhart hadn't even noticed. However, he turned to look at Gordy and chuckled.

"Just one of my mood swings I guess." He said with a smile, but then he noticed the mischievous gleam in Gordy's eyes.

"You're about to pull a prank, aren't you?" He asked with a grin.

"No, what makes you think that?" Salazar looking at the young lad.

Gordy shook his head and laughed. "I've seen that look on your face before."

Salazar looked at him a bit startled. "When?"

"A few weeks ago with the Defense corridor."

"Oh, well I'm not playing a prank on…"

"Why yes Severus! I am a fraud!" Lockhart suddenly declared loudly.

The entire great hall stopped, and became still and quiet as everyone looked at the Defense Professor, who seemed completely oblivious to the fact that Minerva had cast a voice amplifying charm on him. Severus had a wicked feral grin on his face, and Salazar couldn't help but snort, but he did notice that Severus seemed to ask another question.

"Yes I do! In fact, I search out wizards who have accomplished great things and I get them to tell me all about it! Then I obliviate them…and…and…"

Lockhart suddenly stopped and looked out across the hall to find that everyone was staring at him in shock. Severus must have asked another question, because Lockhart suddenly clamped his hand over his mouth to stop himself from speaking, but Severus pressed harder.

"And I obliviate them and take credit for their work!" Lockhart shouted. Then he jumped up and immediately fell over because the chair was stuck to his bottom. "Yes! Everything I have done is a lie! No, stop asking me questions! Please! Yes, I'm a fraud! Stop! Please…and I'm a liar…Please Severus stop!" He pleaded, as he tried to stand again.

He managed to waddle in a crouched position around the head table, but he fell down the few steps that led up to it and somehow landed in an upright proper position in the chair, and stared out over the great hall.

Students began yelling and throwing food at him, and many were shouting about how they would be telling their parents. Lockhart began waddling out of the great hall, but it was a slow going process.
seeing as the chair was still stuck to his bum.

Albus glared at Severus, but the Potions Master just sat there watching the retreating Lockhart with a smug smirk on his face. Minerva and Poppy were giggling, and the rest of the Professors were out right laughing. Salazar just laughed, and he knew that Lily and James were going to love this.

"You can't tell me that you didn't have anything to do with that." Gordy laughed as his dark green eyes danced with mischief.

"I have no idea what you are talking about." Salazar snorted.

"All right Harry, whatever you say my friend." Gordy chuckled, as he ate the last few bites of his dinner.

Salazar just stared at him. How does he know that I had something to do with it? He thought with alarm.

The thought had plagued him all night, and into Sunday. Even now, as he and the children sat in the library finishing up the weeks homework, he was still pondering the mystery that is Gordy Roffin.

The lad had known about the shortcut, and Salazar was pretty sure he hadn't shown him that one. The way he talked, his mannerisms, his magic, and he had the skills of a very well trained, talented duelist. It all seemed too familiar to Salazar.

He watched the lad out of the corner of his eye though. Gordy was helping Colin with a bit of Transfiguration homework, and he seemed to have knowledge about the subject that he shouldn't have. It was starting to become a bit too much for Salazar, but then he had an idea.

"Hey you lot. I left my History essay in the dorm. I want to check over it again, so I'm going to go get it. I'll be back in a bit."

They all nodded without looking up from what they were doing, so Salazar stood up and headed for the library's doors.

It was the truth, mostly. He did want to check over his History essay, and it was in the dorms, but he had an ulterior motive as well. He needed to find Fred and George. This was something he should have done weeks ago, but he hadn't thought about until now. He needed the twins to keep an eye on Gordy at night because he wanted to see what the young lad was up too. Salazar went to bed? Salazar didn't know, but he was going to find out.

He was just exiting the library when he ran right into someone, and would have fallen over if that someone hadn't caught him. He looked up in surprise, but smiled when he saw who it was.

"Oh Percy, I'm so sorry."

"It's all right Harry. Are you ok? You look a bit off." He asked with concern.

"Yeah I am. I'm just a bit distracted at the moment and I feel a bit…overwhelmed."

Percy smiled at him warmly. "Yeah I know how it can be. Second year is a bit tougher than first year. First year is mostly taking notes and learning theories with just a bit of spell work thrown in, but second year is where you really start applying those theories and you start having to do a lot of practical spell work. It's tough at first, but it gets better by Christmas. You're pretty powerful though,
and you pick up stuff pretty quickly."

Salazar smiled at Percy. "Thank you, and I hope you're right." He said.

"Well I was just trying to help." He said with a smile. "It's the same thing that I have been trying to
tell Ron, but he just seems so angry and moody all the time. He's been missing meals too, which is
unheard of for Ron to do, and I'm worried about the pressure that he's under from his second year
studies. He yells at me, Fred, and George all the time and tells us to leave him alone and mind our
own business. I'm not sure if he's studying notes or not, but all he does is sit in a corner by himself.
He's been reading and writing in this little black book." Percy said, shaking his head.

"He says it's a diary." A small voice said quietly. "But I don't know where he got it from."

Salazar looked around and noticed that Ginny was half hiding behind her brother, and was staring at
him with wide eyes. He hadn't even noticed she was there at first, but when she realized that Salazar
was looking at her and that she had spoken, she squealed and ran into the library.

Percy sighed and rolled his eyes. "That's Ginny, my little sister. She kind of…"

"Likes me. Yeah I know, Fred and George already told me." Salazar said with a chuckle.

Percy laughed. "Well then you must know about the image she has built up of you."

"Yeah I do. It's a little off putting though. I hope she grows out of it."

"So does my family and I." Percy said with a sigh. "But, I better get in there. I promised Ginny that I
would show her all the best books for first year research."

"All right, and Percy, thank you for telling me it's going to get better. I think I really needed to hear
that."

Percy smiled and patted Salazar's shoulder. "You're welcome Harry."

Salazar smiled as Percy entered the library, then he turned and ran towards the dungeons to collect
his essay, then began his hunt for Fred and George.

As the sun sank into the horizon, darkness fell across all of the U.K. Out in the cold North Sea, there
stood a prison that sat on top of a hidden island. The prisoners screamed as their guards came and
went, and every one of them huddled in the corners of their cells.

On prisoner in particular, a man named Sirius Black, had just returned to his human form, having
been a large black dog not a moment before. His wild and tangled hair hung in greasy clumps, and
his eyes were mad with, grief, pain, and despair. He was muttering things under his breath as he
curled up into a little ball to help keep himself warm. The things he muttered over and over were
heartbreaking, if one knew the truth. He was saying things like 'I killed them', and 'it's all my fault'.

Suddenly, a bright ball of flame entered the man's cell, and a large beautiful phoenix landed lightly
on his shoulder. The man jumped because he was so startled, but a moment later, both the phoenix
and the man were gone in another flash of flames.

Sirius Black appeared in a small comfortable cottage somewhere in Ireland not even a minute later,
and he had to shield his eyes away from the brightness that lit up the room. He quickly noticed the
roaring fire in the fireplace and jumped from the chair that the phoenix had sat him in, and stumbled
his way over towards the fire's warmth.
"Good evening Sirius." A gentle voice said, and Sirius turned quickly towards the sound.

"Who are you? Where am I?" He asked in a dry raspy voice, as his eyes finally adjusted to the brightness.

An old wizard with long white hair and a long white beard was sitting in a simple comfortable looking armchair. He was wearing simple green robes, and his brown eyes held a kindness in them that Sirius hadn't seen in many years. The man held a glass of cold water in his hands, and he offered it to Sirius, who had yet to move away from the fire.

"A-Albus?" Sirius asked, as he squinted at the man and took the water glass from him.

The man laughed warmly, but shook his head. "No my good man. Not every old wizard with long white hair and a beard is Albus Dumbledore." He said with chuckle. "My name is Merlin, and Sirius, I'm here to help you."

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* Sirius is free, and Lockhart is gone! I know Sirius's freedom is something you all have been looking forward too, so i hope i didn't disappoint you! Please remember to comment, so i know what you think! Thanks to you all!
Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 22

It All Comes to a Head

Sirius lay in bed the next morning wondering if it had all been a dream. He remembered being able to take a bath, eat a good meal, and he seemed to have had a goodnight's sleep.

Yes, it's all been a dream. A wizard named Merlin has not rescued me. He thought, as he whimpered and pulled the soft blankets up to his chin. I'm still in my cell. The dementors will come at any...was that a bird singing? We don't have birds at...there is softness under me...wait...soft blankets?

Suddenly Sirius's eyes popped open and he sat up in the bed with his eyes widening in awe. It wasn't a dream! He thought, as a large grin appeared on his face. I'm really in a house!

Sirius slowly stood up and looked around the room, and the colors that met his eyes almost made him cry. All of the blues, greens, yellows, and browns, along with all the other colors was a welcomed sight, and it was quite the contrast to the dark dank gray color that his Azkaban cell had been.

He walked to the window and stared out in wonder. He saw the green grass covered fields and hills that seemed to stretch on for miles, and there were a few trees sprinkled in his line of vision. The little bluebird that had made him realize that this was in fact real, was sitting on the edge of a flowerpot pecking at the dirt that was in it. It was the most beautiful sight that Sirius had seen in almost eleven years, and he sank into a chair that was beside the window and watched the bird until it flew away.

He stood up and wandered around the room he was staying in, and took it all in. It was a small, plain room, but it was comfortable. A mirror that hung above a dresser caught his eye and he went to it. He stared at himself for a bit, and couldn't believe it was actually him that he was looking at. He was thin and gangly looking, but after the years in Azkaban it was to be expected. His hair and beard were clean and trimmed now. He had done that after his bath the night before, but what really made him do a double take were his eyes. He stared at them in the mirror, and it looked like they were haunted and dead, until he remembered the little bluebird. Then there it was, a small spark of life had appeared in his eyes.

I am free. Sirius thought, as he gave himself a small smile and nodded, before he headed for his bedroom door.

He had been too shocked the night before to really pay attention to anything, but he now realized that the cottage was small. It had two bedrooms, but each had their own bath. There was a sitting room, and a very large library that looked slightly out of place for the small cottage, but he suspected that it had been magically enlarged. There was also a reading room and this was the room he recognized from the night before.

He came upon a decent sized kitchen and found two elves humming and singing happily while they
worked. He just stood in the doorway, smiled, and his eyes closed for a few minutes, taking in the sounds and smells of everything the elves were doing and cooking. He opened them again when all the sounds stopped, and found that the two elves were now standing in front of him.

"We didn't want to disturb you Mr. Sirius. You seemed to be lost in thought." One of them said as he smiled up at Sirius.

"I was just listening to you go about your work. It's been awhile since I've heard singing." He said, and realized that his throat was dry because his voice was raspy.

The elf he had been talking to picked up on that, and fetched him a glass of water.

"Thank you." Sirius said after he had drank it, and then he handed the empty glass back to the elf.

"Master says that if you need anything, just ask. We can get it for you. I'm Whimsy, and this is Choppy."

Sirius chuckled. "Choppy?"

"I'm the cook." Choppy said with a large smile. "Master said it was a funny nickname, but my real name is Minny. You can call me either name you want though."

"You two don't talk like normal elves." Sirius said curiously as he looked at them.

"Oh, we have been with Master a long, long, time. We learned to speak properly because Master taught us how too. He is a good Master to us." Whimsy said.

"Where is your Master?" Sirius asked.

"He is outside in the garden. Would you like me to take you to him?" Choppy asked, and Sirius nodded.

They walked out the back door of the cottage and headed towards a large herb garden. There Sirius saw him again, the man who saved him from Azkaban. He was pulling weeds from the garden, but he was dressed in simple red robes with gold trim and Sirius smiled because it reminded him of Gryffindor. From the back though, he could be mistaken for Albus, but when Merlin turned around Sirius realized that he looked nothing like him. His face was different and he looked young, maybe fifty or so, and Merlin's brown eyes held no ulterior motive like Albus's did, all they held was kindness.

"Good afternoon Sirius." Merlin said with a gentle smile. "Forgive me, I like getting my hands dirty every once in a while." He continued, as he pulled his wand out and washed off his hands using the water charm.

"Master, dinner will be ready in two hours, but can I get you some tea and biscuits to hold you over?" Choppy asked.

"Yes Choppy, I think that would be lovely. Thank you." Merlin said and he smiled as the elf apparated away.

"Dinner? Did I really sleep all day?" Sirius asked in astonishment.

Merlin chuckled. "Can you deny that you needed it?" He asked, as they walked towards a patio that held a table and a few chairs.
"No, I suppose I can't." Sirius said with smile as he sat down. They sat in silence for a few minutes as they sipped their tea, but suddenly Sirius shifted uncomfortably and looked at Merlin. "Why did you do it, and are you really Merlin? Forgive me if we talked about it last night, I was somewhat... in shock." Sirius said apologetically.

Merlin smiled at him. "It is understandable, but no, we did not talk about it. To answer your easier question, yes I am Merlin. I'm not just a wizard who fancies the name, so yes, I'm the real one. Some people would call what I have achieved immortality, but I prefer to call it longevity. After all, where would I be if the earth exploded? No can really live forever." Merlin said with a chuckle.

Sirius chuckled also, but he still looked unconvinced. "I'm sorry, but I just can't believe you are really Merlin. I just... I'm sorry."

"It is all right Sirius. I know it will take time for you to believe that. Now, let's move on to why I rescued you from Azkaban. I know some people will not agree with me, but I do not believe in withholding important information from someone, and if we are going to heal your mind, you need to know the truth. Tell me, what do you think about being free? Do you think you deserve it?"

Sirius shook his head sadly. "I like being free, but I don't think I deserve it. I killed my best friend and his wife, and I let my Godson down."

Merlin studied him for a moment. "Sirius, how do you think you killed Lily and James?"

Sirius sighed heavily, and buried his head in his hands. "I convinced them that the rat, our other friend Peter, would be a better secret keeper than me since I was the obvious choice. Peter betrayed us all, and it wasn't until that night that I realized what a mistake it was. I killed them."

"So you went to their house, drew your wand, and killed them?" Merlin asked.

"No, but..."

"Then you didn't kill them." Merlin said gently. "You made a mistake Sirius. Anyone could have done that. I probably would have made the same choice. It was logical, and it, at the time, seemed like a brilliant plan, but you didn't kill them. Peter betrayed you all, and he is the one responsible."

"I still feel like it's my fault." Sirius mumbled.

"All right, we will come back to that. Now tell me, how did you let your Godson down?"

"I wasn't there for Harry. I gave him to Hagrid, who told me Dumbledore wanted to check him over, and I went after Peter. When I confronted him, he blew up the street and killed those muggles. I don't know whether he died in the explosion, or if he escaped. All I know is, that I was chucked into Azkaban without a trial and left there to rot. If I hadn't gone after Peter, I could have been there for Harry. By the way, do you know him? How is he? Is he at Hogwarts yet?" Sirius asked, looking hopefully at him for any news about Harry.

"I have never met Harry personally, but I do know of him." Merlin answered, pulling out a photograph.

It was the picture of Salazar standing beside a snake statue in the Slytherin common room. He was holding up Nora and smiling, though he looked a bit tired and annoyed. Sirius stared at the picture in shock, and took it from Merlin with a shaky hand.

"He's in Slytherin?" Sirius asked in astonishment. "And is he holding a snake?"
Merlin chuckled lightly. "Yes, but tell me Sirius, do you know the people in this picture?" Merlin asked, holding up another picture.

This picture was of a couple with two children. The woman had red hair and green eyes, and the man had unruly black hair that was untamable and he was wearing glasses. The two children looked exactly alike, except one was much smaller than the other. They were wearing muggle clothes, and looked like they had been hiking because they were standing on a hill looking out over the ocean. It also looked like they hadn't known that their picture had been taken.

Sirius stared at the picture in shock, but then his face grew dark and he glared at Merlin.

"Is this some kind of a joke?" He asked, with his voice growing dangerously cold with anger.

"No Sirius, it's not." Merlin said calmly, taking both pictures and laying them on the table side by side. "Do you see this picture here?" He asked, pointing to the picture of Salazar. "This is not Harry Potter. This is one of my dearest friends, and his name is Salazar Slytherin."

Sirius's eyes grew wide with shock, but Merlin continued before he could ask a question.

"In this picture, Salazar is standing here." He said, pointing towards the smaller boy in the family photo. "And yes, Lily, James, and Harry know exactly who he really is. You see Sirius, the day before Voldemort showed up in Godric's Hollow, Salazar went there and told the Potters that Peter had betrayed them and he sent them to another country so that they would be safe. There was no time to tell anyone about the plan because Salazar had only one day to come up with it in the first place, but he also told the Potters not to say anything to their friends." He said with a sigh. "I didn't even know about it until last year when another friend of mine told me that Salazar had made contact."

"But what happened? Why does he look like Harry?" Sirius asked.

Merlin went on to tell him the whole story, and even showed Sirius a few more photographs of this past summer, including some from the real Harry's birthday, though they were taken from far away. He even told Sirius about the 'adventures' of last year, and all that Salazar had endured because of Albus and Voldemort. He would not tell Sirius where the Potters were though, only that Salazar had sent them to a different country. He also told Sirius that no one knew about his situation with the Dursleys until last year, and explained about Peter being at Hogwarts.

By the time Merlin was finished, they had already been served dinner, and Sirius was in another state of shock, but managed to eat his meal. Whimsy was just taking the plates away when Sirius finally looked at Merlin and nodded.

"I still don't think you are the real Merlin, but I can't deny that Lily and James are alive." Sirius said softly, looking at a picture of James, Lily, Harry, and Salazar, as the real Harry blew out his birthday candles. "What do we do now?" He asked.

"First, we need to heal your mind, and I'll be working with you on that. Being in Azkaban is not good for anyone, especially an innocent man. Secondly, we need to keep you safe and hidden until we figure out what to do. I admit, getting you out of Azkaban was spur of the moment. However, I don't want you to think that I broke you out of one prison just to put you in another. You'll need fresh air and room to move around in. That is why living with me is ideal because you'll have plenty of space here, but the wards will bounce you back if you get too close to the edge. I do this for your safety as well as my own. The only people who can get here are only those who know I'm still alive. When you are ready, and the rest of us figure out what to do, we will work on getting you that trial. You are free to roam around and do what you wish, but you cannot leave the property."
"I understand." Sirius said taking a deep breath. "James, Lily, and Harry are alive though, and I know I'll see them again one day when all of this is over, so I can do this. I understand I cannot have contact with them because it would put them in danger, but I can live with that. I think just knowing that they are alive and safe will be a big help. As for trading one prison for another, I do not think that. This is a lot better than Azkaban. I have fresh air, sunshine, and life all around me."

"Then we are off to a good start my friend." Merlin said with a sincere smile.

Sirius nodded and chuckled. "Does the Ministry know I'm gone yet?" He asked.

Merlin laughed loudly. "Yes, and so does Salazar by now, but I have already owled him the details."

"Owl?" Sirius asked. "What about your phoenix?"

"Oh, Nehum is not mine unfortunately. Bonding with a phoenix seems to be the one thing I have never been able to do, but I did borrow him from a friend. This however, was this morning's Daily Prophet." Merlin chuckled, as placed the paper in front of Sirius.

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**SIRIUS BLACK ESCAPES AZKABAN!**

That was the headline that greeted Salazar that morning at breakfast, and all he could do was stare at it opened mouthed, with his fork paused halfway to his mouth. The great hall was abuzz with the news, and up at the Head table several people were concerned.

Minerva and Severus were concerned because one look at Salazar's face told them he had no idea what was going on. Albus was in a near panic because not only did he not have a Defense Professor, but he had to deal with this too.

He had already had strong words with Minerva and Severus over the Lockhart situation, and he had told them he couldn't teach Defense because he had other responsibilities, but they seemed unconcerned and unapologetic. They reminded Albus that he had wanted to expose Lockhart, and they did. Albus had argued that he didn't want that to happen until the end of the year, but they still didn't care because what is done is done.

This morning though, Albus had sat in his place at the head table staring at the Daily Prophet in shock. He could already hear Fudge screaming for advice, and Albus really, really didn't want to have to hear it.

He obviously didn't know why Sirius escaped, but all Albus could think of was, that Sirius had escaped to finish what his Master started eleven years ago, and that meant he was coming after Harry. He also needed to find a new Defense Professor, but now because of Sirius's escape, he had an idea on who that could be.

Salazar had spent all day in a haze. Everyone knew what Sirius had been accused of, and all day he could hear whispers that Sirius had escaped to find him and kill him. He knew this was not true of course, but Salazar's problem was that he didn't know where Sirius was, or how and why he had escaped.

He had already told Fred and George to keep an even closer eye on 'Scabbers' to make sure he didn't run and the boys said they would, and he had even argued with Severus just so he could get detention, so that he would have a chance to sit and talk with him.

Needless to say, it had been an all-around bad day for everyone.
Thankfully the problem was solved at dinner that night when a beautiful eagle owl swooped into the great hall carrying a letter. At first he thought it was Malfoy's owl, so Salazar didn't pay it much attention, but he was startled when it landed in front of him. He took the letter and quickly began to read it.

_I know we haven't spoken in eleven years, but I also realize that it isn't entirely your fault, seeing as you were stuck with the Dursleys and you were very busy this past year. Nicholas told me everything about it._

_I just want you to know that I have him, and will be telling him everything. His mind needs to heal after being in there for so long, so I think it is the best way to get him on the right path. Don't worry my friend, I'll take care of him. Please make sure you tell whomever you need to that things are all right, and come see when you can. You know where I am._

-M.

Salazar breathed a huge sigh of relief, and took out a spare bit of parchment and quill to scribble a quick reply.

_I am relieved to know this! Thank you my friend, and I am so sorry that I have not been by to see you. I will come as soon as I get a chance._

_I have been worried all day about this situation, but I am relieved to know he is with you. Please tell him we know where the rat is, and that we are watching him by using a certain map. I will also let them know as soon as I can, and also please tell him that I may have a way for him to communicate with them through mirrors. He should know what I mean by 'the map' and 'the mirrors'. _

_Take care and I'll see you soon._

-S.

He quickly tied the note to the owl's leg and it flew off, then he laid his head down on the table and breathed another sigh of relief.

"Is everything ok Harry?" Gordy asked, as he looked at Salazar.

"Yes, a great worry has just been lifted off my shoulders." He answered, as he looked at his plate full of food. He suddenly realized that his appetite had returned, and he dived into his dinner with gusto.

Gordy chuckled as he watched him. "Well I'm glad you have received good news." He said, as he looked at Salazar knowingly.

Salazar's smile faltered a bit as he looked at Gordy, but the young lad just chuckled and finished his dinner. Then he stood up and headed for the doors.

"What was that about?" Blaise asked, as Gordy left the great hall.

"I have no idea." Salazar said, as he studied Gordy's retreating form.

"Well, what are you going to do about Sirius Black? Everyone is saying he broke out to kill you." Salazar laughed. "I'm not worried about Black. He can't get to me at Hogwarts. It will be all right, you'll see."
"If you say so Harry. Personally though, I would be scared if he were after me." Blaise said with a shiver.

"Well, as I said, it will be all right. Now, I better get going. I still have detention with Snape."

Blaise laughed. "Ok, I hope to see you later and in one piece." He said, as Salazar grinned at him, and headed for the dungeons.

When he got there, he was surprised to see Minerva and Poppy, but he sighed and plopped down in a chair.

"As you all know I have been out of sorts today, but the letter I received at dinner has helped tremendously. A dear friend of mine contacted me to say that he has Sirius." He said with a happy grin.

"You know how he was rescued?" Poppy asked in shock. "I suspect Sirius will need to see a mind healer."

"I don't know how he rescued him, but Poppy, I assure you the man Sirius is with is able to help him much more than we could."

"What is his name?" Minerva asked.

Salazar sighed and shook his head. "I'm so sorry, but I cannot tell you that. I am under an Unbreakable Vow never to reveal his continued existence to anyone who doesn't already know. The good news is that Sirius is safe, well taken care of, and we don't have to worry about him."

"Lily and James will be happy to know this." Severus said with a nod.

"Yes they will." Salazar said, and pulled the mirror out of his pocket.

For the rest of the 'detention', Salazar filled the Potters in on everything that had happened. James said that he would send a mirror for Salazar to give to Sirius, and Salazar assured him that it would get to him. Lily burst into tears, and told Salazar to tell Sirius that they are so sorry that there was nothing they could do for the last year, and Salazar said he would.

By the time his detention was over, Salazar felt like another weight had been lifted off his shoulders, but there was still something nagging him. How did Merlin know that he had been thinking about an Azkaban breakout? Salazar had been telling Nicholas everything, but he hadn't been able to tell Nicholas about that yet, so how did he find out?

Salazar sighed as he lay in bed that night. It seemed like when one problem was solved, two more took its place, and he didn't like it.

It was late in the afternoon the day before Halloween, and it had been a few days since the news of Sirius's escape. Albus was sitting in his office with his head resting in his hands. He had just got back from a meeting with Fudge, whom he had told his suspicions on why Black had escaped, but he had not thought that Fudge would send the Dementors to Hogwarts. He had told the Minister that the school was well protected, but Fudge had insisted and now Albus was going to be stuck with over a hundred dementors patrolling the grounds.

He was not having a good week.

The castle's warnings were getting stronger by the day, and he was still no closer to figuring out what
was going on. He had cornered Harry at every opportunity to see if he was up to something, but so far the boy hadn't done a thing. Albus knew that a very dark object was inside the castle and he knew it was active, but what it actually was, he didn't know.

Albus knew Harry had to be responsible though. The boy was too much like Tom and that unsettled him. 'Traveling' was what Tom had been doing before he descended deep into the dark arts.

*Could that be what Harry is doing as well?* Albus thought as he sat behind his desk. *Is he looking into the dark arts? The boy knows too much about them as it is, and I can't have him gaining anymore knowledge about them.*

Albus sighed again, but a smile appeared on his face as a knock sounded at his door. His, hopefully, new Defense Professor had just arrived. Albus knew that if he played this meeting right, that it would go his way.

"Come in!" He called out, and smiled his best grandfatherly smile as a man in shabby robes entered his office. "Ah Remus Lupin! So good to see you again!" He said happily.

"Hello Albus." Remus said with a small smile. "I was surprised to get your owl, what is it that you wanted to speak to me about?"

"Well," Albus said with a sigh. "As you know, Sirius has escaped and I'm in need of a new Defense Professor. I was hoping that since you are well skilled in Defense that you would be willing to take the job." He said, deciding to get right to the point.

Remus looked slightly taken aback, and his smile faltered a bit. "What does taking the job have to do with Sirius?" He asked, as he sat down in one of Dumbledore's arm chairs.

"I have come to believe that Sirius broke out of Azkaban to come after Harry." He said gravely, and Remus's face took on a look of shock and fear. "You are well skilled in Defense against the Dark Arts, and you know Sirius. I think if you take this job, that you can help to protect him."

"Does Harry know that Sirius broke out to come after him?" Remus asked with alarm.

Albus shook his head. "No, I have instructed the other Professors to not say a word to him. He is just a boy and needs to concentrate on his studies. He does not need to be weighed down by this burden."

Remus nodded in understanding. "How is Harry? What is he like?" He asked, hoping that the Headmaster will tell him something, anything, about him.

Albus sighed heavily. He knew it was now or never, and he needed Remus to accept the Defense position. "Truth is Remus, I'm worried about him. He is in Slytherin, not Gryffindor like we had all hoped, and I'm afraid that some of the darker families may be influencing him. He knows things about the dark arts that he should not. He also has beliefs and ideals that I feel are not proper, and he has used blood magic."

"What!" Remus shouted in surprise as he leapt out of his seat. "Blood magic! That can't be!"

"I'm afraid it is." Albus said in a solemn tone as he shook his head. "He's a very bright and powerful boy, but he is also a Parselmouth, just like Voldemort was. I do not think he is dark though." Albus said quickly, as Remus's eyes widened in horror. "He just needs to be influenced in the right ways."

"He's…he's not…evil, is he?" Remus asked, slowly sinking back down in his chair.
"No he's not evil." Albus answered with a smile. "The situation is promising. Most of his friends are in Gryffindor and one is even a female muggle-born, but I fear that is not enough. I will be honest Remus, I am hoping that you take this job so that you can be a positive influence on him. I hate to say this…but, you are a link to his parents and I'm hoping that Harry will look up to you because of that." He said gently.

"What about my condition?" Remus asked in a soft voice.

"Severus Snape is our potions Master, and I know he will brew the Wolfsbane Potion for you. The rest of the staff will be alerted to your condition, but many already know about it, seeing as they are your own former Professors. Your condition is really a moot point Remus, but your knowledge about Sirius and defense against the dark arts is vital. If for some reason Sirius comes here, Harry will need you." Albus said in his best grandfatherly voice.

Remus nodded slowly, but then a hard look came into his eyes. "Severus Snape is a Death Eater Albus. Why is he here?"

"I place my full trust in Severus. He came to me before the war ended. Remus, what I'm about to tell you cannot leave this room, but it was Severus that told me that Voldemort had targeted Lily, James, and Harry. I trust him. We need you here at Hogwarts Remus. Harry needs you because you are the best person to help protect him in this situation."

Remus's eyes widened in shock at Albus's mini-speech, but then he nodded slowly. "I understand. I'll do this for Harry." He said softly. "When do you need me to start?"

"As soon as possible." Albus said with a wide smile. "Today is Friday, so you can take the weekend to move your things in, and Monday will be your first day of lessons."

"All right. As long as you are sure that none of the students will find out about my condition."

"They won't." Albus assured him, as they both stood up. "I'll see you to the entrance hall. I have to go speak with Severus, and he will be in the dungeons."

Remus nodded, and they chatted about different things as they made their way down the grand staircase. When they reached the second floor, they heard loud laughter and shouting coming from an empty classroom.

They found 'Harry', Blaise, Neville, Hermione, Gordy, Colin, and the twins sitting around the classroom, and each one of them was either yelling or laughing about something. Nora was slithering back and forth across a desk talking to Neville. 'Harry's' skin had been changed to red while his hair had been changed to gold. 'Harry' and Gordy were also shouting at each other about something.

"…and yet you are a Slytherin who is advocating for Gryffindor colors! This is treachery!" Salazar shouted at Gordy, as the lad started laughing loudly.

Hermione started giggling. "It's not treachery Harry, you and Nora match!"

"But I am a Slytherin!" He wailed. "I can't walk around looking like this!"

"Speaker, I like my new red and gold colored fleece warmer. It's getting colder, so now I will stay warm. The red looks good against my shiny black scales." She said with a firm nod of her head.

"Fred, George, so help me, I will hex you into oblivion if you don't change my skin and hair back." Salazar said, completely ignoring Nora. The twins just shook their heads and laughed even harder. They had used another prank from the Marauder book, and this spell would not wear off for a week
without the counter curse, which of course, only Fred and George knew.

"But red looks good on you and Nora, and you both have gold 'trim'." Neville grinned, as he pointed to Salazar's hair.

Colin laughed and took a picture of 'Harry', who immediately hit the lad with a stinging jinx for doing it.

He just grinned at Salazar. "You'll have to protest this better than that Harry. Gordy said that you secretly like red and gold, so we know you aren't totally against it."

Salazar glared at Gordy, whose eyes were shining brightly with mischief. "Well his information is incorrect." He said firmly. "I personally think the sorting hat made a mistake. Clearly Gordy belongs in Gryffindor, not Slytherin."

"That's not true!" Gordy laughed.

"If you people don't listen to me…I will bite you!" Nora suddenly shouted.

Everyone quieted down and turned to look at her, though some were still snickering. She was now on the floor, and was slithering back and forth in front of them.

"Now that I have your attention," she said, as she glared at Salazar. "This is how it will be. I like my red and gold fleece warmer, so it will stay that way. Speaker, I had green and silver all winter last year, so I don't see the harm in it."

"Nora, we are not talking about your warmer. We are talking about my skin and hair." Salazar answered calmly. "If you want your fleece warmer sock to be red and gold, that is fine, but I cannot walk around looking like this for a full week."

Blaise nodded. "I agree. I vote that Nora's warmer stays red and gold if she likes it, but Fred and George must turn Harry's hair and skin back to normal, or at least to a silver and green combination."

"Thank you Blaise!" Salazar shouted happily.

Remus looked at Albus in shock. He didn't know what was being said in Parseltongue, but he recognized the state in which Harry was in. After all, he helped James and Sirius create the spells. "Albus, what is going on?" He asked in a hushed tone.

"Well, it seems that Nora, the snake, happens to like her new red and gold fleece warmer, but Harry doesn't like his hair and skin color." He whispered.

"Can those children speak Parseltongue?"

Albus shook his head. "No, no. They only understand it like I can because Harry taught them last year. Well, except for the two first years." He answered as the children started laughing again, or in Salazar's case, shouting.

"I vote we leave both the way they are." Gordy grinned, and all the Gryffindors laughed.

"I agree!" They all shouted.

"But I'll be stuck like this for a week!" He protested.

"And we will be laughing for a week!" Neville grinned, as the others snickered.
"All of you, except Blaise, are bloody Gryffindors!" Salazar ranted, which made all the Gryffindors start laughing again.

"Not all of us are Gryffindors though." Gordy said with a grin.

"You seem to be an honorary member of Gryffindor." Salazar grumbled, which only made Gordy laugh even harder. Then Salazar sighed and shook his head. "Well I'm not going to talk to any of you for a full week then." He grumbled.

Gordy laughed. "Spoken like a true twelve year old." He said, eyeing Salazar with a grin.

Salazar cast a sideways glance at him and narrowed his eyes, but chose to ignore him. Then he sighed loudly, threw his hands up in the air, and turned to stomp out the room. That's when he noticed Albus standing in the doorway with someone else standing right behind him.

"Headmaster!" He said in shock, and everyone jumped up to look towards the door.

"Hello Harry." Albus said as his eyes twinkled in amusement. "I see there is a difference in opinion for the choice of colors."

"Yes there is, and I think Fred and George need a month's worth of detention." He said, as Fred and George laughed loudly.

"I agree!" Blaise cried. "Especially since Harry's red skin and green eyes makes him look like he's been decorated for Christmas." He laughed, which caused them all to snort.

"I'm afraid I cannot do that." Albus chuckled. "But I can introduce you all to your new Defense Professor. This is Professor Remus Lupin."

Salazar's eyes widened slightly and he heard Fred and George gasp, but they were able to quickly cover their shock.

"It's nice to meet you Professor." Salazar said politely, holding out his hand. "If I may, what house were you in, and would you be able to help me?"

Remus chuckled and shook 'Harry's' outstretched hand. "I was in Gryffindor, so I actually like the colors."

"GAH!" Salazar shouted, and threw up his hands in frustration as all the others started laughing again. "Well there goes any hope of me getting put back to normal. Hogwarts has way too many Gryffindors in positions of authority." He grumbled.

"Is little Harrykins going to be in a bad mood all week?" Fred laughed.

"Yes he is." Gordy said with a grin, which caused Salazar to glare at him again. "But I think we should all watch our backs. I sense a prank war coming on."

"I don't have to watch my back. I'm perfectly safe from Harry's revenge." Blaise announced.

"Yes you are." Salazar said with a firm nod, as the others laughed. "The rest of you however, not so much. Gordy especially because he is in Slytherin. My revenge on him will be slow and painful."

"I doubt that." Gordy laughed, then he turned towards Albus and Remus. "Forgive us for ignoring your presence Professors."

"It's all right Mr. Roffin. I'm just glad to see that you are all having a splendid afternoon." Albus
chuckled, as Salazar scoffed loudly which caused the children to start laughing again.

"We are doing just fine Dumbly. Although Speaker has thrown some sort of a fit, and I don't understand why. My warmer is very pretty. Bushy made it herself." Nora said, as she wrapped herself around Neville's wrist.

"You are being deliberately thick about this, aren't you?" Salazar asked, turning towards her.

"Of course I am. I know we mean your skin and hair, but Bottom said it would be fun to see you all riled up, and he was right." Nora said with soft hiss.

"Traitor." Salazar mumbled.

"I'm so glad you like your warmer Nora, but she is not a traitor Harry." Hermione giggled.

"Debatable." Salazar said, which caused them all to grin.

Albus chuckled, and even though Remus cringed every time 'Harry' spoke in Parseltongue, he smiled at him. Albus told them all that it was nearly time for dinner, and to head to the great hall because he had an announcement to make. Remus excused himself so he could head home and pack, but Albus headed for the dungeons to talk with Severus first.

When they got to the great hall, the children split up and went to their respective tables, but Nora decided to spend dinner with Hermione and Neville, seeing as the twins never sat with the younger children during meals. Since it was Hermione who gave Nora the new fleece warmer, Nora kept praising and thanking her for it. Salazar knew that Nora just wanted to show it off to all the Gryffindors though, and he couldn't help but laugh.

As for the joke the twins played on him, he wasn't angry about it. In fact, he was a bit relieved that they chose him. He knew they wanted to try out the spells in the Marauder book, and it was better that they single him out, rather than some random student. Besides, it proved to be a good distraction from the ever increasing 'doom' that the castle kept placing on him. He began wishing Godric had been able to make the ward better though, so it would be able to actually lead them to the dark object. Salazar had no knowledge of how the ward worked because it had always been one of Godric's secret family spells, so he couldn't rework it even if he tried.

Albus's dinner announcement turned out to be about the dementors, and at that news, Salazar sighed and shook his head. He knew from Albus's tone that the Headmaster didn't want them here anymore than anyone else did. The students looked frightened, the other Professors looked angry, and Salazar couldn't blame them. How could the Ministry send those nasty things here? These children were defenseless against them, and he didn't even know if they would be able to learn the Patronus Charm at such a young age.

When dinner was over, Salazar left the table with a heavy heart and mind. The day's good natured pranks and laughter were long gone now. Blaise seemed to be lost in thought with a horrified look on his face, and Salazar wished that there was something he could do for him. Gordy kept shooting him glances, but then young lad laid a hand on Salazar's shoulder.

"Are you all right my friend?" He asked softly, looking at Salazar with concern.

Salazar shook his head. "No Gordy, I'm not." He said. "How...how can the Ministry send dementors here? I've read that they are nasty things, and..."

"It will be all right. We just need to stay out of their way, and we need to find a way to protect the children from the dementors on a large scale."
"Protect the children?" Salazar asked suddenly, looking at Gordy with a calculating gaze.

Gordy's eyes widened. "I…I…mean…the other children like us. There has to be some kind of spell right?"

Salazar stared at Gordy for a moment, but then he did something he swore he would never do to a child.

He cast a wandless legilimency spell.

He was met by a strong, massive block that was way beyond the capabilities of a child. Gordy gently pushed him out of his mind though, and looked at Salazar with tears forming in his eyes, but Salazar's wand was instantly in his hand, and he pointed it at Gordy's head.

"Who are you?" He growled, as he roughly shoved Gordy into the wall.

The other students that were around paid them no attention, and Blaise had been swept up into the crowd that was making their way into the entrance hall. Gordy just shook his head, looked around, and then looked back at Salazar, whose face was cold with anger.

"Not here Salazar." Gordy whispered as the tears spilled down his cheeks. "Please, not here. It's too complicated to explain."

Salazar's eyes widened in alarm at the mention of his name, and he was about to say something when suddenly they heard lots of screaming coming from the second floor. Both Salazar and Gordy looked in that direction, then back at each other, before they began pushing their way through the crowd of students.

They finally managed to push their way through and they arrived on the second floor. The students that were milling about look terrified, and it didn't take Salazar long to figure out why. There, right beside the out-of-order girl's restroom were words written in blood on the wall.

*The Chamber of Secrets has been opened.*

*Enemies of the Heir beware.*

Salazar just stared at the wall with his mouth opening and closing like a fish because that wasn't the only thing in the corridor. A first year Ravenclaw with long blond hair, a butterbeer cork necklace, and radish earrings was laying on the floor, stiff as a board.

Salazar's knees buckled underneath him, but Gordy caught him before he hit the floor. A bunch of terrified Professors arrived on the scene and began sending the students to their houses. Albus stood there staring at the wall, then he bent over the girl and started to wave his wand over her.

Gordy began trying to pull Salazar away from the scene, but he wouldn't budge. He just kept staring at the wall, the girl, and then the restroom door.

"Move you old fool!" Gordy growled in his ear. "She's only petrified. Let's get you away from here before that idiot drags you into his office. You are in no condition to answer questions right now!"

Salazar still wouldn't budge. Too much had happened in such a short span of time, and his brain was having a hard time processing it all, so he never saw the stunning spell that hit him.

Chapter End Notes
All right you guys now that this chapter is posted, you are all caught up with 'the other site'. Please, please weigh in with your opinions and suggestions! Also, since you are now getting the chapters as I write them, it won't be an everyday update. I do try and get chapters up every three to four days though, so it doesn't take weeks to update. I hope you all continue to enjoy!
I Told You So

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter 23

I Told You So

Gordy finally managed to get the unconscious Salazar into a near-by unused classroom. He hated
that he had to stun him, but it was the only way to get him to move. He warded the door so that no
one would disturb them, but he didn't wake Salazar up just yet. Gordy waited until the noise outside
the door subsided before he quietly opened the door to peek out of it. He saw Albus, Minerva,
Severus, and Poppy standing above the girl.

Luna Lovegood. Gordy thought, as he peeked out of the cracked opened door. That's her name. I
have Charms with her. Poor child.

"Poppy, you and I need to get Miss Lovegood to the hospital wing. Minerva, Severus, I need you
two to find Harry. When you find him, bring him to my office immediately. I need to question him
thoroughly."

"Albus! You can't possibly think that Mr. Potter had something to do with this!" Minerva whispered
angrily.

"I do Minerva. Hogwarts has been alerting me since the start of term that a very dark, active object
has been brought inside the castle. This just confirms what Hogwarts has been trying to tell me. The
Chamber of Secrets has everything to do with Salazar Slytherin."

"But that means nothing!" Poppy hissed. "How does that have anything to do with Mr. Potter?"

"Everything." Albus said gravely. "He did nothing but travel this summer, or so he told me, but I
think he lied and has been studying more about the dark arts. He found that book written by Salazar
Slytherin himself in the common room last Christmas. It mentioned The Chamber briefly, but aside
from that book and the green potion that allows anyone to walk through a wall, that Severus was
finally able to identify, who knows what else he found."

"Headmaster, while I agree Potter's curiosity tends to get him in trouble, I do not recall the book
mentioning where the entrance for The Chamber is located. I also think that if Potter had found
something else, he would have turned it over." Severus said. "Also, I do not believe Potter would be
able to get his hands on an object so dark that the castle feels the need to warn you. He is too
incompetent to accomplish that."

"I still don't understand how you think that a mere boy could do this Albus." Minerva said hotly.

"Because the Chamber of Secrets has been opened by a mere boy before. It happened fifty years ago
to be exact, and it appears the Heir of Slytherin has returned…somehow." Albus said, motioning to
the words on the wall. "That is why I need to speak to Harry."

"And who is the Heir of Slytherin?" Poppy asked, even though she, Minerva, and Severus already
knew the answer.

"I do not know." Albus said, as he gazed at the wall.
Gordy narrowed his eyes, and Minerva started to speak, but a sharp glare from Severus had her biting her tongue.

"Poppy, let's get Miss Lovegood to the hospital wing. Minerva, Severus, find Harry and please bring him to my office."

Gordy watched and waited until Albus and Poppy moved off, but thankfully Minerva and Severus just watched them leave before starting a hushed conversation of their own. When that happened, Gordy threw open the door and jogged towards them.

"Mr. Roffin, has your parents ever told you that eavesdropping is impolite?" Severus asked, at the same time Minerva asked, "Have you seen Mr. Potter?"

Gordy's eyes bounced between the two, but he decided to ignore Severus and answer Minerva.

"Yes ma'am I have. I had to stun him in order to drag him away from the whole scene because he wouldn't budge. I need one of you to get him a calming draught though. He wasn't doing so well when he saw the wall, and I'm afraid that what I have to say may send his mind reeling again."

Gordy whispered, as he led them back to the classroom. "Don't worry about Luna though, she is only petrified. Salazar placed blinders on Emeralda as a precaution so that no one would accidently be killed by her."

Minerva and Severus stared at Gordy as they all entered the classroom, but they saw Salazar laying there and Severus went to check on him.

"Mr. Roffin, what are you talking about? Who is Emeralda, and what blinders?" Minerva asked.

Gordy looked at the both of them a bit startled. "Oh, he must not have told you about Emeralda. She's a basilisk, and is Salazar's security for the school. Helga's was the badgers, Rowena's locks down the castle, mine is clay lions that spring up out of the ground. We all had our different…"

"Mr. Roffin!" Severus exclaimed. "First off, you're babbling. Secondly, what do you mean…your protections?"

"I'm sorry." Gordy said with a sigh. "I tend to get long winded when I'm nervous. Do you have a calming draught?"

"Yes, I do. I always carry one in my pocket." Severus drawled, pulling a small phial out of his pocket.

"Good, then I'll wake him up." Gordy said, as he cast the reviving spell over Salazar.

It took a moment, but then Salazar started to stir and he finally opened his eyes. He sat up somewhat shakily, but then he saw Gordy hovering in front of him.

"Gordy, what is the meaning…"

"Stop talking you old fool, and take this before I have to stun you again." Gordy said, snatching the phial out of Severus's hands, and forcing Salazar to drink it.

"What did you just feed to me!?" Salazar hissed. "And who are you!? What happened!?"

"A calming draught, straight from Severus's pocket." Gordy said gently. "I tried to get you away from the scene before that idiot, who fancies himself a Headmaster, noticed you were there, but you were rooted to the floor so I stunned you."
"Who are you?" Salazar growled. "That is the last time I will ask you, and if you evade the question again…I will kill you."

Gordy sighed heavily and sat down in a near-by empty chair. Minerva and Severus backed up a few steps, but that was only because Salazar hand his wand in his hand, and it was pointed at Gordy.

"I do suppose you deserve an answer to that question, but Salazar, lower your wand. We don't need a killing curse bouncing between the both of us. It might ricochet and hit Severus or Minerva." Gordy said, as his eyes flickered to the two Professors.

It was then that Salazar realized that he and Gordy weren't the only two in the room. Minerva looked a bit frightened, but Severus was now standing stock still with his wand also pointed at Gordy.

Gordy looked at the three of them, but then he sighed again. "It started off as a prank. I was going to carry on all year acting like an obsessed 'Harry Potter' fan and then reveal myself to you at the end of the year, but then the castle started sending out the warnings. It was affecting me just as much as it was you, and just being near you was a comfort to me, but I still wanted to keep up with my prank so I didn't tell you. I kept listening to your conversations with Nora though, trying to figure out what you knew about the warnings. After they became really intense, I wanted to tell you so badly, but I had let it go on for so long that I thought you'd be angry at me, so I kept it to myself." He said with a sigh as he looked at the three of them.

Salazar stared at Gordy for what seemed like hours, but he finally lowered his wand and stood up. He slowly made his way towards Gordy, and took the red head's face in his hands and really studied him. His eyes widened in shock and he fell to his knees, but he still kept a lock on those dark green eyes. Salazar wondered how he could have overlooked the obvious for so long.

"Godric." He whispered, as his eyes filled with tears. "You're alive? How? I saw you dead. I was there at…"

"…my funeral. Yes I know. I saw you. It's amazing what a bit of Transfiguration can do to a simple rock. All it needed to do was lie in a coffin." Godric said softly.

"But how? You said you didn't want to live forever." Salazar sobbed, as he clutched at him, hoping that this wasn't a dream. Hoping that he might finally hear those words that he had so longed to hear.

"I know what I said, but I changed my mind after Rowena died. I knew you had gone to a mutual friend of ours, that requires an Unbreakable Vow, to gain your immortality, so I sought him out too and gained it for myself. I hated you Salazar. I hated you for leaving us. I called you selfish. I called you a bastard. I called you pathetic, and I wanted you to suffer for all eternity at my hands for it. I didn't really think the whole thing through though, seeing as I would live forever myself. It's one of the drawbacks of being a hot-headed Gryffindor I suppose." Godric said with a small chuckle.

Even though he had tears streaming down his face, Salazar managed a weak smile. "You bloody Gryffindor." He whispered as he chuckled and shook his head. Then he looked up with a bit of fear in his eyes. "Do you still hate me?" He asked.

Godric shook his head. "No my brother, I do not, but I did for centuries. The hate festered and bubbled and it grew. I sank into darkness and the dark arts, just so I could torture you properly. I even lost Nehum because of it all. I swore our mutual friend to secrecy, and told him not to tell you I was alive until I was ready to find you, but because of that and because he knew what I wanted to do to you, he would never tell me where to find you. He finally found me a hundred years ago though. I had hid from him for the longest time because of what I had become, but he helped me, despite all I had done and gotten myself into. He brought me back to the light and he healed my mind and my
soul. You wouldn't have recognized me Salazar. I was not the Godric Gryffindor you knew ten centuries ago.” Godric said quietly, but then he shook his head.

"I trashed your good name. I spread rumors about you. I said you did a bunch of horrible things, and that you were an evil dark wizard. I did this all under a disguise though, because I was a coward. It's my fault that history looks at you the way it does. I'm the reason Slytherin house has become what it has. I'm the reason why our houses hate each other." He said as tears spilled down his cheeks.

"When our mutual friend found me, it took nearly twenty years for my mind and soul to both heal, but when they did, I begged our friend to tell me where you were, so I could seek your forgiveness for cursing your name for so long, but he still wouldn't tell me. He told me that it was my burden to find you. At first I was mad at him, but then I realized that finding you myself was the last thing I needed to do before I was fully ready to face you, and I'm glad he did that. I moved to Hogwarts and for the last eighty years I have lived here. When I came back, Nehum found me again and re-bonded with me. It was then that I knew that my soul was finally healed. I returned here hoping you'd return someday, and you finally did last year."

Salazar stared at his best friend. He couldn't believe all that Godric had said. It just couldn't be true! He wanted to lash out and yell at him, but then Salazar remembered that he himself was not perfect. Over his lifetime he also had done many things he was not proud of, but it was time be adults about this and to forgive one another. They did not need to fight about whose fault it was, and accuse each other of this or that. Godric needed him, just as much as he needed Godric. It was time to put the bad past behind them and look forward to the future, but Salazar still had some lingering questions.

"How did you know I was here though, and how do you look so young? I still don't understand." Salazar said, as he finally picked himself up off the floor and sat in a desk in front of Godric.

"Hogwarts welcomed you back just like she did with me. The bells tolled and the castle sang for me just like she did for you. I knew you had returned, but I didn't know why or what was going on. It wasn't until you showed up that night with Nicholas Flamel that I learned what all was happening. I don't know Nicholas personally, and our mutual friend as never said a word about me to him, but I knew who he was. You see Salazar, I live under a Fidelius Charm in that clearing. It's just a small house, but the ward line starts just behind Helga, Rowena, and mine's graves. As you sat there talking to the graves last year I would come out of my house and listen to you. I knew you wanted my forgiveness, so I came up with this silly prank plan because I also wanted your forgiveness. I knew you would have found it funny, and would have laughed yourself silly over it. I told the sorting hat, who was stunned speechless when Minerva placed him on my head, to put me in Slytherin so I could annoy you as much as possible. This prank is my way of saying I forgive you." Godric said with a small smile, but then he continued.

"Our mutual friend also helped me by asking Nicholas to make me a stone. It's a small yellow stone that is about the size of a green pea, and it de-ages me. I keep it embedded in the crook of my arm behind my elbow, but I can take it out and regain my adult appearance if I need to. I knew you wouldn't recognize me as an eleven year old lad, because you didn't know me when I was young."

Salazar laughed and shook his head. "You bloody Gryffindor. Only you could come up with a prank like that."

Godric chuckled too, but then he looked at Salazar with concern. "I need to know if you forgive me for hating and cursing you for all those centuries. I will understand if you don't, and I will go and leave you in peace, but if you forgive me, please tell me. I need to hear you say it."

Salazar looked his best friend, as hopeful tears started to fall from Godric's eyes. Salazar also started to cry, but he nodded his head. "Yes Godric, I forgive you. You're my brother, my best friend, and
you always will be. You have my forgiveness. I'm so sorry, for leaving you, Helga, and Rowena behind because of my selfishness. If I hadn't done what I did, none of this would have happened. You were right about everything. Immortality is not what I had hoped. Will you be able to forgive me?"

Godric breathed a small sigh of relief, but he looked at Salazar and small smile appeared on his lips. "Salazar, about this immortality thing…I told you so."

Salazar sobbed with relief as he jumped up to pull Godric into a brotherly hug, and the both of them stood there for a long time like that. They didn't care that they were crying, nor did Minerva and Severus, who were also softly weeping tears of joy at the long overdue reunion.

Several minutes passed before the two friends pulled apart with wide smiles, but Salazar looked at Godric curiously.

"Godric, about your name. Gordy whatever Roffin, how did you come up with that?"

Godric laughed. "It was part of the prank. I can't believe that you didn't realize it because I handed it to you on a platter the night at the Start-of-Term feast. Gordy Cigrd Roffin. It's an anagram for Godric Gryffindor. The middle name is just the rest of the letters thrown together to make some sort of sense because I couldn't come up with anything better. The name Gordy has actually grown on me though."

The full weight and realization of all that had just happened suddenly hit Salazar, and he grinned. He now had his best friend back after so many years, and only one thing came to his mind.

"You bloody Gryffindor! I can't believe you tried to prank me!" He laughed, as he swatted Godric around the head. "You just wait. I'm going to get you for this."

"Looking forward to it. By the way, your skin is still red and your hair is still gold."

"I hate you." Salazar mumbled, as Godric burst out laughing, but then he looked at Salazar with a serious expression on his face.

"I need to ask you one last thing, and it's been weighing on my mind all year. Have you gone through all this trouble for me? Was saving the Potters part of your search for forgiveness? I ask because I had a hunch about Voldemort's family line, aside from being descended from you. I found the Potters' family tree during my search. They are my descendants, and the last of my line. Would you really kill off your own family line, just to save mine?"

Salazar looked at his best friend and nodded slowly. "Yes and no. My line needs to die Godric. It is evil, but yours…yours is pure and deserves to live."

"I thought so." Godric whispered. "Thank you Salazar. For all that you have done for my family, but I will not let you carry this burden alone. It's my family, and it's my duty as its head to take care of it. As for your family, it is not my place to tell you what to do with it, but I am here if you want and/or need my help."

"Thank you my friend. Voldemort is evil, and needs to die because of what he has done. He will die by my hand, but I'll need help to do it." Salazar said with a soft smile.

Godric smiled and nodded at his friend, but then he looked towards Severus and Minerva. "You already have good help, and I'm honored to be counted among them. I must say this though, Professor Minerva McGonagall, I have watched you this year and I am proud that Gryffindor House has you for its Head. You are a very brave, kind, and caring woman. It is an honor for me to
officially make your acquaintance." He said, as he bowed at the waist.

Minerva blushed a deep red, but bowed her head. "It is an honor for me to meet you Mr. Gryffindor. Thank you for your kind words." She said, as she smiled softly.

Godric grinned at her, and then turned to Severus. "Professor Severus Snape, I also admire your bravery. You may not be a Gryffindor, but you show true Gryffindor traits. I hope that as a Slytherin you don't take offense to me saying that." He said, and Salazar laughed.

"Not at all sir." Severus said with a smile, as he bowed his head slightly. "I apologize if any of my actions towards you have offended you, and I seek your forgiveness if they have."

"None is needed Professor. What I did to Draco Malfoy was wrong, and your punishment was just. I let my temper get the best of me that night, and I should have been more responsible than I was. He is a child and I'm an adult, and I should have handled it differently. You have had no idea who I am, and I know what you have been doing and why. It is all right. However, I'm guessing that Albus is probably wondering what is taking you so long to find 'Harry Potter'." He said with a grin.

Severus and Minerva chuckled, but Salazar groaned and pinched the bridge of his nose. "I have no idea what to do about him Godric. He is a meddlesome old fool, but he has information about Voldemort that I need."

"I am not too happy with his actions either Salazar, but we will get through it. Let's just take it one step at a time. There are more important things to deal with first."

"Yes, while we have been having a happy reunion, Emeralda is apparently running around petrifying students. This is serious, and I need to go talk to her not Albus." Salazar said with a sigh.

"On the bright side, at least we know what Lucius has been up too." Severus offered. "The wall says, Enemies of the Heir, which by the way, our dear Headmaster is playing dumb about. He says he doesn't know who the Heir is."

"He's a liar." Salazar said with a scowl. "Because he does know. I think this is also what Dobby has been talking about with the history repeating itself clues, but we need more information to be sure."

"It is. Albus confirmed it when he said this happened fifty years ago." Minerva said. "I do want to warn you though, he thinks you are responsible for this."

"Why am I not surprised?" Salazar said, rolling his eyes. "But it still doesn't tell us what the dark active object is, but I'm guessing whatever it is has something to do with my Chamber and Emeralda."

"I'm thinking you may be right, but let us go talk to Albus before he comes looking for us." Severus said, and they all agreed and headed for the Headmaster's office.

Gordy left them at the gargoyle though, and took the shortcut that was near it back down to the first floor. He did say he was going to check on Blaise because the young lad was probably worried that his two friends had disappeared.

Salazar still had a lot of questions to ask Godric, but he supposed those could be asked later. For now, he was just happy to have his best friend back. It also gave him something to look forward too, and he didn't feel so alone and so isolated. He had Merlin, Nicholas, and Perenelle, but they weren't Godric because no one could replace Godric as his best friend.

Before they went into the office though, Salazar asked Minerva to talk to the twins and tell them
about 'Gordy', and also asked her to get Nora for him. Last he knew, she was with Neville and Hermione. Minerva said she would find Nora later, and bring her to him once he was safely back in the Slytherin common room.

It was then that the three of them turned to the gargoyle, sighed with exasperation, and headed up the stairs.

"I finally found him hiding in a classroom Headmaster. He needed a calming draught because of what he witnessed on the second floor." Severus sneered, as they entered Dumbledore's office.

They all took seats, and Salazar tried to act like a slightly shaken up twelve year old.

_Leave it to Severus to state the truth, and still be able to lead someone to the wrong conclusion. He is a true Slytherin._ He thought, and successfully fought the urge to chuckle. Instead, he shivered and looked around nervously.

Albus studied him for a moment, but Salazar turned his gaze toward Fawkes. He knew of the phoenix from his many trips to Albus's office last year, but this was the first time he actually paid attention to him. Fawkes looked a lot like Nehum, or at least what Salazar remembered Nehum to look like.

Fawkes seemed to be watching him too, but then he took flight and landed on Salazar's knee. The phoenix looked him in the eye, as if to study his soul, but then he thrilled happily, took flight, and settled back down on his perch. Salazar briefly wondered what that was about, and was curious if Fawkes knew about Nehum, but he decided he needed to pay attention to Albus and ask Godric about it later.

Salazar looked up to see Albus staring at him somewhat shocked, but then a stern look came over Albus's face.

"Harry, you saw the second floor? I don't recall seeing you there." He stated.

"Yes sir. I was heading out of the great hall when I heard screaming coming from the second floor. I went to see what was wrong, and I saw what was written on the wall and the girl. I'm not sure who she is, but it scared me though. I read about the Chamber in that book I found in the common room last Christmas, but I have no idea what the message meant about an Heir. Is that girl all right? Is she dead?" He asked, with a slight squeak to his voice.

"No Harry, she is not dead. Miss Lovegood has only been petrified. Tell me, what creature do we know of that can petrify people?" Albus asked.

Salazar schooled his features to make Albus think he was thinking about it, but inside we was raging mad. He knew what Dumbledore was getting at.

"When I was reading about my basilisk hide wand, it said…it said…oh my word…a basilisk. A basilisk can petrify people if they don't look it directly in the eye. You think a basilisk did that?"

"Yes Harry, I do. And seeing as you are a Parselmouth, you are the only one that can talk to it."

"Albus! What are you saying!?! Are you saying that Mr. Potter set lose a basilisk!?!" Minerva shrieked.

Salazar stared crying the tears of an accused twelve year old. "I didn't do this! They kill with one look! I would never risk the life of my friends, or even my own. I didn't do this Headmaster! I
swear!" He wailed.

In all honesty, he couldn't blame Albus for jumping to the conclusion that he had. Salazar wasn't exactly secretive about his Parselmouth abilities, but how Albus could accuse a twelve year old for doing this was beyond him.

Fawkes began to squawk angrily and Albus stared at the phoenix again, but then he cleared his throat and glared at Salazar. Before he could speak though, another phoenix appeared in a brilliant ball of flames and landed on Salazar's shoulder.

*Nehum!* Salazar thought, as he gave the phoenix a brilliant smile.

Nehum glared at Fawkes, and suddenly, the two began squawking loudly at each other. The Professors and Salazar stared at what seemed to be a confrontation between the two, but after a few minutes Fawkes quieted down and seemed to study Salazar again, then he started to sing.

Nehum nipped at Salazar's ear and rubbed his head against his cheek before disappearing. All Salazar could do was stare stupidly at Albus, and hope for an explanation.

"Well Harry, Fawkes was telling me that you were hiding something, but it also seems like an unknown phoenix has taken a liking to you. Do you know why?"

"N-no sir." Salazar said, glancing at Fawkes, who was now sitting on his perch preening his feathers.

"What do you know about phoenixes Harry?" Albus asked.

"Not much." He answered honestly. "I know that they don't like dark wizards though."

"That is true, they don't. I asked Fawkes to look into your soul, and that was what he was doing when he landed on your knee earlier. He confirmed for me that you do, in fact, have a light soul, which I am happy to know. However, before the other phoenix arrived he was telling me that you were hiding something. I do not know what the other phoenix said to Fawkes, but he now appears to be unconcerned about what you are hiding." He said, turning and frowning at the phoenix who was still preening his feathers.

Salazar didn't really know what to say so he just kept quiet about it, but it was Minerva that spoke up.

"Albus, what does it mean when an unknown phoenix suddenly appears out of nowhere?"

"In this case I'm not sure, but normally an un-bonded phoenix will only come to the defense of someone whom they know, and only if that someone is a close friend or shows true loyalty to the one whom the phoenix is bonded too." He said, studying Salazar closely. "Harry, is there something you wish to tell me?"

"I don't have anything sir." He said, looking at Albus with what he hoped to be an innocent look.

Albus sighed heavily. "Very well Harry, you may go."

"Thank you sir." He answered.

Salazar nearly ran from Albus's office because he didn't know what to think at this point. All he knew was that Albus now suspected that he was hiding something, which of course he was, but he was not about to tell Albus that. Salazar just hoped that whatever Albus was thinking he would tell Minerva and Severus about it, so that he could act accordingly.
"Mr. Potter, I have Miss Nora for you." Minerva called out, as she entered the Slytherin common room.

Some of the other Slytherins glared at the Gryffindor Head as she scanned the common room, but Salazar jumped up and gratefully ran to her. He had been sitting with Godric and Blaise discussing what happened on the second floor. Blaise was upset to learn that he had been separated from his friends and was worried when he couldn't find them.

Salazar had been telling both Godric and Blaise what happened in Albus's office, and even mentioned the 'unknown' phoenix who came to his defense. Godric's eyes lit up and he grinned, but didn't say anything about it.

"Thank you Professor!" He exclaimed when he reached her. "I know you didn't have to get her for me, but thank you!"

"You're welcome." She said with a smile, but then she leaned towards him and whispered, "Albus still thinks you did it, despite what the phoenixes did."

Salazar narrowed his eyes, but sighed and nodded his head. "I'll figure something out."

She nodded and left the common room, but Nora turned to him.

"Speaker, Kitty told me that Jolly is not who he says he is. Are you in danger? Shall I bite him?" She angrily.

"No my dear. This is a good thing." He said, then he held her close and whispered, "Gordy is Godric."

She turned sharply to look at him, but then she nodded. "This is wonderful news Speaker. I am very happy now."

"As am I my dear."

For the rest of the night, they sat in the common room and talked with Nora. Godric had to pretend that he couldn't understand Parseltongue, so Blaise and Salazar translated. Blaise suggested that 'Gordy' learn it. Godric declined, but Salazar kept insisting that he 'learn' it so Godric finally agreed. To Salazar, it would be a good idea, especially because it would provide an excuse to talk about the problems that were happening.

Nora told them that some of the Gryffindors liked her new fleece warmer, but Carrot didn't appreciate it and threatened to kill her. Ron had been so angry and vocal about Nora being in the common room that Hermione finally had to take Nora to her dorm, until Minerva came and got her.

Salazar really didn't know what to say about Ron's behavior so the subject was dropped. All he knew was that Ron seemed different this year. He was angry and more withdrawn, but Salazar just chalked it up to the changes that all twelve year olds go through.

When he finally got settled into bed that night, Salazar could only think about getting into the Chamber to talk to Emeraldala. He knew that Albus was going to be watching him closely, especially now, but he needed to find out how and why Emeraldala was suddenly moving around the school. She was put down there to protect the school from muggles, not to go around attacking the children.

The only person who could control her was another Parselmouth, but he and Voldemort were the only two who could speak it. Was Voldemort here? Did he possess someone else? It was the only
thing Salazar could think of, but who and how? It was going to drive him crazy until he figured it out.

But at least he had Godric.

Salazar smiled to himself, and rolled over as he lay in his bed. He never would have guessed that would happen. He felt a little ashamed of himself though, because a part of him was glad that Godric had made that mistake. He knew Godric had probably done some really evil things, especially things bad enough to make Nehum leave him, but Salazar was glad that he had. It was selfish, and he knew it, but it was just how he felt. He knew it was awful to think like that, but it was the truth.

He sighed as a mixture of sad and happy tears slid down his cheeks. He didn't care that Godric had trashed his name and reputation. He didn't care that Godric had spread lies about him. Salazar knew in his heart that if he hadn't left his friends in the first place, none of it would have happened. He didn't fault Godric, but that selfish part of him was still glad that Godric had made his own mistakes because he now had his best friend back. He had heard the words that he had so longed to hear, and it was those words that echoed around in his head as he cried himself to sleep.

I told you so.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* Gordy is Godric! LOL So many of my readers on 'the other site' figured it out, so I had to reveal him a bit early because I was afraid they might get mad at me for dragging it out, but now that Gordy's secret is revealed I can answer some of the questions that they had, and maybe some of your own.

No, Helga and Rowena will not be in this story. They are really dead. Godric is the last immortal to appear, so there will be no more of them showing up. He technically wasn't supposed to be revealed until the end of the year. There will be more of Remus and Sirius in the next chapter, so no one worry. I hope you enjoyed this chapter! Please comment and let me know what you think! The next chapter is already in the works, so give me suggestions if you want! Thanks so much to all of you who are keeping up with this story!
Chapter 24

Into the Chamber

Shortly after lunch the next day, every resident of Hogwarts stood at every available window and watched the arrival of the dementors. Older students looked just as terrified as the younger ones as the ghastly beings, along with a deathly chill, descended over the castle and grounds. The dementors were not allowed inside the grounds though, they were only allowed to patrol outside the protective enchantments. However, regardless of where the dementors were not allowed to be, no one would be going outside today.

One particular resident of Hogwarts, Remus Lupin, stared out of his new office window with a forlorn expression on his face. He was confused about a lot of things. Albus had told him about the dementors and why they were coming here, but he just couldn't bring himself to believe that Sirius would come here to harm Harry. Eleven years ago, Sirius supposedly betrayed Lily and James to Voldemort. He was their secret keeper, but Remus couldn't bring himself to believe that Sirius would willingly betray them.

He. Just. Couldn’t.

_We were such good friends._ Remus thought as a tear slid down his cheek. _There is no way that Sirius could have…that Sirius could have…_

He shook his head, and turned away from the window. It was the same inner struggle he had had for the last eleven years, and he could never bring himself to believe it. There was no evidence, and even Remus knew there had been no trial, but given his condition, he couldn't demand a trial for Sirius. He just knew that there had to be more going on here than what it seemed.

During that time, Albus had not been Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, but even after he took the position, Albus didn't see the need for a trial.

"What's done is done," Albus had said, "and there is no sense in drudging up history because the obvious conclusion is that Sirius betrayed them."

Remus shook his head again as he began to sort through his things and get his office in some sort of order. He had never agreed with that reasoning, there had to be more to it than that, and now he was ashamed that he had let Sirius sit in Azkaban all these years, but no one would have believed what a werewolf had to say. Remus just hoped that if Sirius was really on his way to Hogwarts, that he would be able to find him, and hopefully, finally, get the real truth.

Then there was Harry's situation.
Remus couldn't believe that he was in Slytherin. That had come as a complete shock, and Albus had already filled him in on what happened last night and told him what he thought about the Chamber of Secrets. Harry was only twelve years old though, and there was no way he was involved!

Remus had spent the last eleven years away from Harry because Albus had told him that he was well taken care of. Albus also hadn't wanted Harry to learn that he was wizard, because Albus was afraid that the fame to go to the young lad's head. Remus understood that, but he didn't agree that it was the best thing to do, especially because Harry was with the Dursleys. He knew how Petunia and Vernon felt about magic. He had heard Lily talk about her sister a few times, but Albus didn't want another James Potter on his hands. Remus hated that reasoning with a passion, but again, there was nothing he could do about it. Granted, James was an arrogant little piece of work, but in the fifteen months that Remus had known Harry when he was a baby, he always believed that he favored Lily more, but Albus had insisted that his way was the best.

But now…but now Albus was saying that Harry was into the darks arts, and had dark families influencing him, but again, something just wasn't adding up. If that was the case, then why was Harry friends with a bunch of Gryffindors, and a muggle born no less!

He had only seen Harry for a brief moment, but in that brief moment he learned something. He learned that Harry couldn't be dark. He had been pranked by some Gryffindors it seemed, and truthfully, he hadn't seemed all that upset about it. To Remus, a dark evil Slytherin would not have put up with that.

Remus had to admit that the Parseltongue made him uneasy, but he also knew that did not automatically make Harry evil or dark. After all, he himself was a werewolf and people would automatically think that he would rip them to pieces, but he would never do that. Well, in human form anyway, but the way Albus had been going on about Harry though, one would think he was the next dark wizard.

An audible growl could be heard from the new Defense Professor as he put away some books on his bookshelf.

Albus, Albus, Albus. Albus said this, Albus said that. Albus believes this, Albus believes that. Albus, Albus, Albus. Remus thought bitterly, as he snatched up another stack of books to be put away. Something isn't right here. My instincts tell me that there is more here than what there seems, and I will seek out the truth!

Dear Salazar Slytherin,

I know he have never met, but my name is Sirius Black. I never thought I would say this about you, or any Slytherin for that matter, but....

"No, no, that isn't right." Sirius mumbled, as he crumpled up the letter and tossed it aside. He sighed, and reach for a fresh sheet.

He was sitting next to the fireplace in Merlin's large brightly lit library, trying to come up with a way to express his thankfulness for everything that had happened, but he just couldn't seem to find the right words.

Dear Salazar,

My name is Sirius Black, and I never thought I would be writing to the famous Founder of Sly....

"No, that's not right either." He said with another sigh. "That makes me sound like an obsessed fan
girl or something."

"That or an eight year old." Merlin chuckled from the doorway.

Sirius glanced up and sighed once more. "Are you using legilimency on me again?" He asked in a curt tone.

"Yes, and I know it seems like an invasion of your privacy, but it helps me to help you. Your mind is not as far gone as I had feared, but it still needs to heal."

"I think just being away from that place helps a lot." Sirius said with a small smile. "I know I feel better than I have in a long time. I'm sorry I snapped though. I know you're only doing it to help me."

Merlin nodded. "Being away from the dementors is only a start, but good food and a clean stable environment has a lot to do with it too."

"Not to mention, knowing that my friends are alive and well." Sirius said with a chuckle.

Merlin smiled at the young man. "Yes, that too I think, but your nightmares are still happening every night and your eyes are not as...alive, if you will...as they should be. You also seem to be carrying around a large weight of some kind. Maybe some kind of burden?" He asked.

Sirius stared into the fireplace as a faraway, haunted look came into his eyes. "Maybe." He answered quietly.

Merlin studied the young man a moment, but then he reached into his pocket. "Well, I have news, and I thought you might like to hear it. It's a letter from Salazar and he says they are keeping an eye on Pettigrew via some kind of a map, and also that he has spoken to both James and Lily. He says that there is a way for you to talk with them, through mirrors?" He asked questioningly. "Salazar says you may know what that means."

Sirius's eyes lit up and he grinned. "Yes!" He exclaimed. "I know exactly what he means!"

Sirius went on to explain what the map and the mirrors were, and by the time he was done Merlin was watching the excited man with a smile on his face. Sirius was interrupted though, as Nehum suddenly appeared in a ball of flames with a letter in his beak. Merlin took it, and began to read.

~M.

The dementors were sent, by the Ministry, here to Hogwarts because of Sirius's escape. This was done because Albus thinks Sirius is on his way here to finish off 'Harry', but Salazar and I don't think that Albus wants them here anymore than we do. Speaking of Salazar though, he knows. We have forgiven each other, and I have never felt better. Thank you for all that you have done for me. It was well worth the wait, even if my prank didn't work out like I had hoped. (But more about that in another letter.)

Salazar and I are working on a way to rework the ward I set forth all those years ago, so that we can actually find this dark object, but I don't know if we will be successful. We do know what Lucius Malfoy was up to though. Someone has opened Salazar's Chamber and has set Emeralda loose. Salazar has not been able to get down there to speak with her yet, but he hopes to soon.

In other news, Remus Lupin is now the new Defense Professor, and he is an old friend of Sirius and James, so please let Sirius know that. We will be watching him closely to see if it is safe enough tell him about what is really going on, though Salazar doesn't want to. He feels that too many people know as it is, but James, Lily, and Minerva are saying that we should. They say it's not fair for...
Remus not to know. I agree with them, but what are your thoughts on this matter?

Severus is a little uncertain about Remus being here, but that is only because he is a werewolf. Salazar says that it doesn't matter, and I agree with him, as long as he drinks Wolfsbane when the time comes. Severus is willing to play nice though, as long as Remus doesn't hurt anyone. James says it has more to do with Sirius trying to feed Severus to Remus when they were students, so you might want to ask Sirius about that.

Send Nehum back as soon as you can. We need him to fetch the mirrors from James as soon as he has them ready.

~G.

Merlin was both happy and concerned after he read the letter, but then he looked at Sirius with a questioning gaze.

"Did you try to feed one of your classmates to a werewolf when you were a student?" He asked.

Sirius shifted around uncomfortably and that haunted look entered his eyes once more, but he nodded. "Yeah. It was a stupid thing to do, but he should have kept his nose out of other people's business." He said defensively.

"While I agree that is probably true, you should not have done that." Merlin said, as he handed the note to Sirius.

Merlin watched as Sirius read the note. He turned pale and his hands started shaking right away, but his color had somewhat returned as he finished.

"Who is 'G'? He asked.

Merlin smiled and went on to tell Sirius about Godric, and the prank he tried to play on Salazar. Sirius found the whole thing hysterical, but began asking questions about other pranks they had played.

Merlin chuckled as he remembered one particular incident.

"As you know, I attended Hogwarts at the age of six hundred years old and was sorted into Slytherin, and Salazar told me that he had invented a potion that would allow someone to walk through walls. Well, one day Salazar dared Godric to sneak up on Rowena Ravenclaw and scare her. He said with a chuckle.

"Now, you have to keep in mind that Rowena was a formidable witch and she was not easily frightened, but that night, Godric snuck into her personal chambers by using Salazar's newly created potion. He waited, unseen, until she had settled in for the night, then he suddenly leapt into view with a loud cry. Rowena screamed and leapt out of bed and began hexing Godric, who tried to run out the room through the wall. Unfortunately for him though, the potion had mostly worn off by that time, and Godric became stuck in the wall with his backside still in Rowena's living chambers. Rowena took great pleasure in hexing his backside, and began hexing Godric, who tried to run out the room through the wall. Unfortunately for him though, the potion had mostly worn off by that time, and Godric became stuck in the wall with his backside still in Rowena's living chambers. Rowena took great pleasure in hexing his backside, but Salazar, who had been waiting outside of Rowena's chambers, finally went to save him. Salazar drank his potion and walked through the wall until he found Godric, who was by that time in a lot of pain and starting to panic, and had him drink more of the potion. Then Salazar pulled him into the corridor." Merlin said as he laughed loudly.

"Rowena stormed out of her chambers, and found the both of them laying in the corridor laughing themselves silly, but they had to run for it because Rowena was not exactly happy with them. She hexed them all the way down the corridor, until they disappeared into another wall. She didn't speak
to either of them for nearly a week, BUT because of that incident, something remarkable happened. The shortcuts throughout Hogwarts were created." He said with a chuckle. "It's amazing what the result can be when something does not go according to plan."

Sirius laughed loudly and had tears running down his face as Merlin finished his story, but he wiped them away and looked up at the ancient wizard.

"Whose idea was it to use the potion to make the shortcuts?" He asked, as he laughed again.

"Well, that would have been Helga. You see, Helga was always the one to think outside the box, so to speak, and she used that incident to come up with a plan. I do believe that they used mild blasting curses to make the tunnels though, because loud booms and bangs could be heard coming from inside the walls for weeks." Merlin said as he chuckled lightly. "Living at Hogwarts in those days was something else. You never knew what Salazar and Godric were going to do next, or Rowena's reaction to them. She was always yelling at them about something or another, but Helga would always take Salazar and Godric's side and tell Rowena that life would be boring if it weren't for the two of them. In the end, Rowena always had to agree with her. The Founders, all them, loved each other dearly."

"So why did they end up hating each other?" Sirius asked. "Salazar and Godric I mean."

Merlin suddenly looked down at his hands, and shook his head as a frown appeared on his face. "Sirius, I'm afraid that is not my story to tell. Although, I hate to admit that I played a big part in it. Perhaps we should leave that for another day. For now, let's focus on happier times."

Sirius nodded slowly. "I understand." He said quietly, but then he smiled as he caught sight of the letter that he had been trying to write.

Merlin saw him gazing at it, and he also smiled. "Sirius if I may, perhaps it isn't Salazar you should be writing to, but another Slytherin who is risking his life to keep your friends safe."

Sirius slowly looked back towards Merlin and nodded. "You're right." He said quietly. "Admitting my past mistakes is one of the steps to healing my mind, right?"

Merlin nodded. "That is correct. I'll leave you to it then." He said, as he gently patted Sirius on the shoulder and left the room.

Sirius reached for another fresh sheet of parchment and began to write.

Dear Severus…

"Are you sure about that? Because that goes against everything I have read about the man." Hermione said, as she glared at Fred.

Fred sighed and shook his head. "Trust me Hermione, Salazar Slytherin didn't hate muggle borns. He would not create the Chamber of Secrets to kill them all or to scare them away from Hogwarts. I don't care what Draco Malfoy says, but he is wrong."

"But Malfoy said that Muggle borns would be next." Neville whispered.

It was late afternoon on Halloween, and the twins, Neville, Hermione, and Colin were sitting in the Gryffindor common room discussing the number one topic of the day at Hogwarts, The Chamber of Secrets. Rumors were flying all over the school about the Chamber, what it was for, and what kind of dark scary monster lay within it.
Hufflepuff house was convinced that it was a torture chamber, Ravenclaw house was convinced that it held books filled with knowledge of the darkest of the dark arts, and Gryffindor house was convinced that it was a mixture of the two. All three of the houses however, just knew that the monster that lay within it was going to kill them all. Every member of Slytherin house on the other hand, was walking around the school with smug smirks plastered on their faces.

These rumors were currently being fanned by Ron, who was at the moment, loudly advocating that he knew who had opened the chamber, and it was 'that sneaky, slimy, evil, Slytherin Harry Potter'. Thankfully though, no one was paying attention to him at the moment. Unfortunately however, that only seemed to make Ron even angrier.

"I'm telling you he opened the Chamber!" Ron shouted over the hum of conversation in the common room. "It's all Harry Potter's fault! He's a Slytherin and a Parselmouth! He's evil! Don't you see!?"

"Ron, for the last time, Harry is not involved, and you know bloody well that Salazar Slytherin didn't create the Chamber to kill muggle borns!" George yelled at him. "The Bloody Baron is a muggle born! You know that!"

That declaration brought all conversation to a screeching halt, and all eyes landed on George.

"It's true." Percy stood up and said. "During Christmas last year, Harry found a book written by Slytherin himself in the Slytherin common room. Yes, at first he hated muggle borns, until one day he came across a muggle woman trying to drown her three year old son in a river. He killed the muggle woman, and saved that little boy. It turns out that that three year old muggle born was none other than the Bloody Baron. The Baron told us that story last year during Christmas Holiday. It was after that, that Slytherin realized muggle borns were in more danger from the muggles than the half bloods and pure bloods were. After that, he convinced the other founders to allow muggle borns to permanently stay at Hogwarts during all holidays and the summer, so that they were safe from their muggle relatives."

"What book is this?" Hermione asked curiously.

"I don't know, but Harry has the original book, and Professor Dumbledore and Professor Snape both have a copy of it. They are well aware of how Salazar Slytherin had a change of heart about muggle borns." Percy said calmly. "The opening of this Chamber has nothing to do with killing them."

"We have seen the book." Fred said. "And it only mentioned that the Chamber was built to protect the school. It did not say where the entrance is, but it did say that the so called monster was a giant snake. The snake was put there to protect the school from muggles."

George nodded. "Muggles attacked Hogwarts a lot back then because muggle repelling charms hadn't been invented yet. That whole thing with the Hufflepuff badgers last year was another protection. I'm pretty sure that Ravenclaw and Gryffindor had their own protections too. It's just that Salazar's was a giant snake."

"Then if it is a giant snake, then Potter has done something to it to change it or something!" Ron shouted. "He can talk to snakes! Everyone knows that!"

"He has a point there." Seamus stood up and said. "Potter is the only Parselmouth since You-Know-Who."

"So then Potter is responsible!" Lavender Brown shouted.

"No!" Hermione shouted back. "Harry would never do something like this. You people don't
even know him!"

"I don't think Harry had anything to do with it either." Parvati stood and said. "He is really nice and because of his study group last year, I got good grades on my exams. He helped me with potions, and he took his time and explained it all to me. I don't think he would have done this."

"But he is a Parselmouth Parvati!" Lavender shrieked. "If there is a giant snake in the Chamber of Secrets then Potter is controlling it!"

Parvati shook her head. "No, I refuse to believe that."

"Perhaps, we shouldn't have mentioned the giant snake part." Fred whispered nervously to his brother.

"I think you're right George." Fred whispered back, as chaos erupted in the Gryffindor common room.

Shouting could be heard coming from those that supported the idea that Harry was not responsible and those that thought he was. The rest just sat there in silence as the shouting match grew louder. It didn't stop until Minerva came in to tell them all to quiet down and head to the Halloween feast.

The Halloween feast itself was wonderful. The food, as always, was delicious, and Albus took the time to announce that Remus was the new Defense Professor. After that, the Hogwarts choir put on a lovely show and sang songs about different Halloween themes. Some were scary, but some were funny, and a good time was had by all.

The very end of the feast was a nightmare though. Albus stood up with a grave look on his face and loudly cleared his throat. The entire great hall became quiet, and Salazar glanced at Godric, who just shrugged and turned his attention towards the Headmaster.

"It has come to my attention that numerous false rumors about the Chamber of Secrets have surfaced, and I want you all to listen closely to what I have to say." Dumbledore began, and Salazar sighed. "Let's hope he doesn't mess this up." He mumbled, and Godric nodded.

"The Chamber of Secrets was built by Salazar Slytherin himself. We do not know that much about it, however, what we do know says that Slytherin built the Chamber as a defense for the school to keep Hogwarts safe from the muggles. Slytherin DID NOT build the Chamber to rid the school of muggle borns, as some of you have been saying." Albus said, as he looked towards the Slytherin table with a stern gaze. "If you have questions about that, I suggest you ask the Bloody Baron to tell you his story. Now, to address the rumors about a monster…"

"It's a bloody giant snake!" Ron suddenly jumped up on top of the Gryffindor table and shouted. "Fred and George said so in the common room! They said that a book Potter found in the Slytherin Common room said so! It's Potter! Potter is the one who can talk to snakes! He did it! He killed that girl in the hall! It's all Potter's fault!"

"MR. WEASLEY SIT DOWN THIS INSTANT!" Minerva bellowed from her seat at the head table.

But Ron wasn't paying attention to her. He was in a near hysterical state with his accusations and he looked around the room with a panicky expression on his face.

"IT WAS POTTER! HE KILLED HER! HE KILLED THAT GIRL AND HE USED THAT
Ron didn’t get to finish, because Minerva shot a silencing spell at him, at the same time Fred (or George) hit him with a stunning spell. Ron landed in a crumpled heap onto the already cleared off table, but everyone just stared at him, and no one made a move to help him because Albus cleared his throat again.

"Miss Lovegood has not been killed." He said calmly, as he gazed out at the clearly frightened student population. "She has only been frightened into a petrified state, but she will be cured soon. Madam Pomfrey has gone to Diagon Alley to fetch some already matured mandrakes, and Professor Snape and Madam Pomfrey will begin brewing the antidote tomorrow."

"Is the monster really a giant snake?" One Ravenclaw asked, as she nervously glanced towards the Slytherin table.

"Yes Miss Chang. The monster is a giant snake." Albus confirmed. "Now, I suggest you all be careful as you walk through the corridors. Stay in large groups, and if you see anything, please let a Professor know. Thank you. You may all return to your houses now."

Salazar was fuming as they all made for the door. He could hear whispering all around him and people were pointing and staring. Salazar didn't care that Albus had told the truth about the Chamber, and what lay in it. He didn't care that Albus had mentioned Luna Lovegood and her condition, but what he did care about was the fact that Albus did NOTHING to dispel Ron's hysterical accusations about him, and right now all he wanted to do was hex the idiot.

"Well, look on the bright side Salazar, at least he didn't come right out and say she is a basilisk." Godric said. "That would have thrown the whole school into a panic and parents would be showing up tomorrow to yank their children out."

It was late in the evening and Godric, Salazar, Severus, Minerva, and the twins were all piled up in Severus's office trying to make sense of the situation. The twins were sitting silently in a corner and staring at the floor. They had already apologized profusely for telling the entire common room that it was a giant snake that lay in the chamber, but Salazar had told them it was fine. He didn't care about that. He was however, still fuming about Albus's lack of opinion on the whole 'Harry Potter is controlling the giant snake' issue.

Ron had been taken back to the Gryffindor common room after dinner, and according to the twins, he had amassed quite the following already because of Albus not addressing the issue.

Salazar sighed heavily. "I suppose your right Godric, but I just can't believe that he would put this much pressure on a 'child'. The entire school is going to be looking at me thinking I'm going to attack them next. The least he could have done was say 'No, I don't think Harry had anything to do with it'."

"It's going to be bad." George said quietly. "Nearly everyone in the common room has sided with Ron now. Percy, Hermione, Colin, and Neville have taken our side of things, but they are outnumbered. As soon as we got back to the common room, Seamus Finnigan pointed out that Dumbledore hadn't denied Harry's involvement. As soon as he said that, nearly everyone jumped on the 'Potter is evil' bandwagon."

"I'll address the House tomorrow morning before breakfast and set them straight." Minerva said with a firm nod. "I'll also ask Albus why he didn't deny Mr. Weasley's accusations, and I'll let you know what he says tomorrow."
Salazar nodded. "Thank you Minerva. I don't rightly care what the school, as a whole, thinks of me, but it's the fact that Albus would let a 'child' go through this kind of ridicule that bothers me. It's just not right."

"So what now?" Severus asked, as he looked toward his mentor.

"Tonight after everyone is asleep, I will head into the Chamber and find out what is going on. The only one who can give me real answers at the moment is Emeralda, and I plan to get them."

The meeting broke up after that, but Salazar could only shake his head. This whole thing was quickly getting out of hand, and Albus, as usual, wasn't helping matters.

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Salazar disillusioned himself, and quietly made his way out of the Slytherin common room, then he quickly headed for the second floor. He slipped into the out-of-order girl's bathroom, and silently made his way to the sink.

"Open."

He hissed in a barely audible whisper.

He stepped back as the sink began to sink into the floor, and he peered into the blackness below and sighed. When they updated the plumbing for the school, they really did major damage to the entrance for the chamber, and it looked like his stairs were now gone. The opening was now a large slimy pipe, and it looked like he was going to have to rebuild the stairs.

Salazar sighed, then began the long trip to the bottom.

With each step he had to build, he started to grow even angrier. What was Albus thinking? Was this punishment for not listening to the great and wise Albus Dumbledore? If so, it was petty and not something Salazar would expect from the Headmaster.

When he finally reached the bottom, he sighed with relief and looked around. This part of the chamber was still as he remembered it. He walked the few hundred feet to the door, and studied it. It did look like it had been opened recently.

Salazar sighed and shook his head, but then he looked at the snakes on door.

"I am Salazar Slytherin, Founder of Hogwarts and creator of the Chamber of Secrets. The password is 'open'." He said.

The main snake turned its head and nodded slightly, then all the snakes on the door began to move, and the Chamber opened. He breathed deeply and smiled as the old familiar musty smell of the Chamber assaulted his nose. As crazy as it sounds, out of all the things that had changed at Hogwarts, he was glad that that one small thing had not.

He made his way to the front, then stared at his own statue before him, raised his head up, and spoke with authority.

"Emeralda, come forth."

His statue's mouth began to open, and Salazar instinctively turned his back. He heard as Emeralda moved out of the statue, and slithered onto the Chamber floor.

"Who has disturbed me this time? And who dares to call me by the name my Master gave me?" She demanded with a dangerous hiss. "Speak now, or die!"
"Emeralda, it is me." Salazar said softly. "It has been many, many years my dear."

"Master?" She asked, her voice now softer. "You look…smaller."

"I know. It is a long story my sweet, but I need to ask you something. The other night, you woke up and attacked a student. Why did you do this?"

"A student? No Master, a filthy muggle is what she was. The little Master said so."

"Emeralda, she was a student." He said gently. "The girl is of pure blood heritage. Who is the little Master you speak of? I am not aware of such a person."

Salazar heard the great snake coil around herself, but her voice took on a defensive tone. "He is just like the little Master before. Years ago another came and said he was your Heir. He wanted to rid the school of muggle borns. I told him I wouldn't do that, and that I only attack when the filthy muggles are here, so he left. A few nights later he came to me again. He was frightened and in a panic, and said that muggles were attacking the school and told me where they would be. I struck, and petrified the filth over a period of several months. I told him about my blinders, and said that if the filth is that big of a problem that he should take them off. He did, and one died." She hissed triumphantly. "After that he came to me once more, and said they were gone, and that I could rest easy once more. He never told me his name though. I asked many times, but he only said that he was my new Master."

"He is not your new Master Emeralda. He is an evil boy with his own agenda, but did you just say that you don't have blinders?" Salazar asked, as panic welled up inside him at the realization of just who Emeralda had killed. "Is that what you are saying?"

"Yes Master. Why? Is this bad?"

"Yes my dear. I'm afraid you have been tricked."

"Tricked!" Emeralda yelled. "No! That cannot be!"

"I'm afraid so my dear. There have not been muggles at Hogwarts in nearly seven hundred years. He lied to you, and when he took off your blinders, it must have been a student that you killed. "Is that what you are saying?"

"He is not your new Master Emeralda. He is an evil boy with his own agenda, but did you just say that you don't have blinders?" Salazar asked, as panic welled up inside him at the realization of just who Emeralda had killed. "Is that what you are saying?"

"Yes Master. Why? Is this bad?"

"Yes my dear. I'm afraid you have been tricked."

"Tricked!" Emeralda yelled. "No! That cannot be!"

"I'm afraid so my dear. There have not been muggles at Hogwarts in nearly seven hundred years. He lied to you, and when he took off your blinders, it must have been a student that you killed. "He said sadly.

"No. No. Master, I did not know! I am so sorry! What heritage was the little one?" She asked sadly, and Salazar felt the Chamber shake as the full weight of her head hit the floor.

"A muggle born I suspect, given his hatred for them." Salazar said softly.

"Master, I did not know. I killed a little one. How could I have not seen this? Master forgive me!" She pleaded.

"I do not blame you my dear. This is not your fault. Turn your head, so that I may comfort you."

He heard as she turned her head away from him, and he went to her. He softly patted her greenish scales, and laid his forehead on her neck.

"I do not deserve to live. I have killed a little one." She said, as her body trembled. "The little one from the other night, is she…"

"No. She has only been petrified. She will be all right my dear. This is not your fault Emeralda. It is his. Did this new person, the one who also claims to be your Master, give you his name?"
"No, the one from before was a handsome boy with dark hair. This new boy is gangly looking with red hair, but they speak the same and know what to say to me. If they didn’t look different, I would say it’s the same boy."

"I see." Salazar said, as his mind began whirling with this new information. Then he thought fast and came up with a plan. "Here is what we do now Emeralda. I will replace your blinders so that no more die, and then, from now on you only answer to me. If this boy comes back, you come find me and tell me what he is doing, but do not be seen. Stay inside the walls, and use the pipes to get around. There are many here that understand our language and they will be able to talk to you through the walls, but I am the only one that can speak our language. This boy is an imposter, and is no way connected to me. It is very important that you do not attack, no matter what this boy tells you to do. There are NO muggles here, and there never will be. Also, do not hurt this new boy if he comes back. I suspect that whoever he is, he may be in great danger. Just play along with what he says, and do not tell him that I have told you any of this."

"I will answer only to you Master, and I will listen for the ones who know our language, and go where they tell me."

"Thank you my dear. Here, in this time, I go by Harry Potter. I will tell you the whole story another time, but my dear, it is imperative that you call me by that name. Also, if you can't find me, ask for Godric. He goes by the name Gordy now."

"Harry and Gordy." She said, as if testing the new names. "I understand. What should I do if someone asks me why I am looking for you?"

"Tell them the truth, but do not say who I, or Godric, really are because no one will believe you. Tell them that a boy with red hair is trying to trick you into hurting students, and that you only hurt muggles if they are attacking the school. Assure them that you mean them no harm, but tell them you must find me, Harry Potter, so that you can tell me your information. Tell them you know that I am a Parselmouth, and this is why you wish to speak to me. If they insist on you telling them your information, tell them, but come find me anyway." He said, thinking of Albus and the likelihood that he would be one of the ones Emeralda would find.

"This is all very confusing Master, but I understand." She said softly. "Please remember to tell me why you are now called Harry Potter, just so that I know."

"I will my dear, I promise, but right now it is late and I must get to bed. I am pretending to be a student after all, so it will not be good if I'm caught out of bed at this hour."

"Sleep Master. You need your rest. You are very small now."

Salazar chuckled as he patted her large head. "I will Emerald. Now, let me climb on top of your head so that I can replace your blinders."

She nodded, and Salazar climbed on top of her large head, and began working on her eyes so that she wouldn't kill anyone else. Emerald's hide may be resistant and can repel most spells, but just like a dragon, her eyes are vulnerable.

When he said goodbye to her, he got as close to her face as he dared, but still avoided looking directly at her, least he petrify himself.

"My dear, do not feel bad that a student died by your gaze. It is not your fault and it was many years ago. If anyone is at fault, it is me. The last time we spoke I told you to obey all my decedents, and you did. The handsome boy may have been my decendent, but he does not speak the truth and he is
dishonest. Do not feel bad Emeralda."

She nuzzled his cheek lightly, almost knocking him over in the process, but Salazar stayed on his feet as he wrapped his arms around her head.

"All right Master." She said softly. "But I will only obey you from now on."

"Very well. I must go now."

"Get some sleep Master. You look tired."

Salazar smiled softly as he patted her neck. "I will." He said.

He watched as she returned to the statue, then he made his way out of the Chamber and back to the pipe. He sighed as he stared up at it, but then began ascending the stairs to make the long trip back up to the bathroom. He knew that he would have to vanish the stairs as soon as he reached the top, just so that no one would know that he had been down there.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* Another Chapter is up! Second year is starting to really take shape now! I know some of you may still have questions. Like how did Godric evade the twins and the map, and what about that little black diary he is carrying around, but i promise they will be answered when the time comes. Also, i know some of you may be wondering..'Well what about Myrtle?' But she will pop up soon too! Thanks for reading and i hope you guys like the new chapter! Please remember to leave a comment and let me know what you think, and also let me know of any suggestions that you may have! Also, i just want to thank all of you who are keeping up with this story! You guys keep are the ones who keep me writing and i thank you so much!
Chapter 25

Snake Bites, Letters, and Conflicts

It was Sunday morning, and Salazar was still asleep because of his late night visit with Emeralda. He was currently laying sprawled out and face down on his bed, with his curtains closed, and his covers half hanging off the edge. He was sleeping so soundly, that he had overslept and missed breakfast.

And that was not sitting well with the other occupant of his bed.

He was rudely awakened by a sharp sting in the fleshy part of his left forearm, and he rolled over and sat bolt upright in the bed.

"Ouch." He mumbled sleepily, as he rubbed at the spot.

With bleary eyes, he peered closer at it and noticed two tiny, evenly spaced holes with blood dripping out of them. His sleepy, foggy mind couldn't comprehend what had happened until he heard a haughty voice next to him.

"Yes Speaker, I bit you." Nora said, as she slithered to the end of the bed with her head held high in a haughty manner.

"You…you bit me?" He asked, still trying to shake the fogginess from his still half asleep mind.

"Yes I did." She huffed. "You have been ignoring me for the last few days and last night you left me here so you could go and talk to that harridan you call...Emeralda." She said with loathing.

"You bit me?" He asked again, still unable to come to terms with it.

"Yes, and now we have missed breakfast because of your horrible snoring and unwillingness to wake up on time. Pigeon is probably worried that you have been eaten by that evil shrew you call...Emeralda." She spat, with a sharp flick of her forked tongue.

"You bit me!" He exclaimed, as he scrambled to his knees.

"Yes, I thought we already established that."

The bite was already starting to swell, and he knew that he needed to get to Poppy soon or he was going to get sick, dizzy, and possibly pass out from the venom.

"Why are you worrying? I may be the deadliest snake in the world, but it's not like you will die." She said in a silky voice. "Or perhaps I should call for...Emeralda. Maybe she can save you!" She spat loudly.

"NORA! I can't believe you bit me!" He cried as he continued to stare at the wound.

If Salazar had already been awake, and was able to think rationally, he would have remembered that he needed to remain calm, carefully get dressed, and make his way to the hospital wing. After all, this was not the first time he had been bitten by a snake, but because his brain was still half asleep, it screamed 'SNAKE BITE', and he began to panic.

He scrambled out of the bed, but got tangled in the messed up convers and hit the floor with a loud
thump. He finally wrestled himself free, shoved his glasses on his face, threw on a shirt and a pair of pants, and snatched up Nora before making a beeline for the hospital wing.

He didn't care that he was running through the common room barefoot, with his shirt half unbuttoned and his his pants undone. Nor did he care that his glasses were on upside down. All he could think about was quickly getting to Poppy so she could give him the antidote.

He continued to run down the dungeon corridors, ignoring the curious gazes of his fellow Slytherins he passed, and huffed and puffed up the dungeon stairs until he reached the entrance hall.

Students from the other houses were now whispering about why a wide-eyed panicked stricken 'Harry Potter' was running half dressed down the corridors. Salazar didn't care about them at all though, because he had already spotted Godric talking to Blaise in the entrance hall.

Unfortunately, he didn't see Albus talking to Remus outside the great hall's doors.

"Godric! Godric! Help me! Help me! Nora bit me!" He screamed frantically, as he ran over to the stunned 'Gordy'.

Godric glanced at Albus, who was staring at the odd Sunday morning scene in shock, but then he took a good look at Salazar's disheveled, frantic appearance and started laughing.

"Don't laugh at me you bloody Gryffindor! Help me, I've been bitten by a snake!" He yelled as he leaned on Blaise for support.

"Oh so now I'm just a snake!" Nora yelled.

"Nora what did you do!?" Blaise shouted, as he struggled to hold Salazar up.

"I bit him...obviously." She replied with a huff.

"I don't feel so good." Salazar mumbled, as he collapsed onto the floor.

"Harry!" Blaise cried, as both Albus and Remus rushed over.

"Harry! Harry! Are you all right!? Albus is he all right?!" Remus asked frantically as he rolled Salazar over onto his back.

"I think he will be Remus." Albus said as he bent over Salazar to quickly check on him. "Mr. Roffin, why did Harry call you Godric?" He asked curiously.

"Oh uh, well he says I act like a Gryffindor more than a Slytherin, so he nicknamed me Godric. I think he thinks it's an insult, but who knows with Harry." He replied as he picked up the unconscious Salazar and slung him over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. "I'm sure that if he had been awake when Nora bit him, he would have gone about this situation calmly. He knows not to panic when a snake bites you."

"Well, waking up because of a snake bite would make anyone panic." Albus said, as he eyed both Salazar and Godric carefully.

"Nora, why did you bite him!?" Blaise asked, staring at her in disbelief.

"Because he's been ignoring me." She said simply, as she tried to focus on him. It was hard to do though, seeing as she was wrapped around Salazar's right arm, which was swinging back and forth behind Godric's back.
"Where did you bite him?" Blaise asked, just as Hermione and Neville came out of the great hall.

She didn't get to answer though, because Hermione shrieked loudly when she saw a passed out Harry slung over Godric's shoulder, and both she and Neville ran over to them.

"What happened!?" She cried.

"Nora bit him." Godric answered.

"Why?" Neville asked as he began unwrapping Nora from around Salazar's arm.

"Because he's been ignoring me!" She repeated. "With all of this nonsense talk about Speaker setting loose a giant snake, he has been distracted and hasn't spoken a word to me! He overslept this morning and we missed breakfast because of all this stupidity! I am Speaker's only snake, and everyone better remember that!"

"Oh Nora, Harry loves you. You know that." Neville said as he brought her close to his chest. "I'm sure he didn't mean to ignore you, and anyone who thinks that Harry is setting loose a giant snake is an idiot." He said loudly, glaring at Ron and Seamus as they pointed and snickered when they walked by.

"Neville!" Hermione cried. "I do believe the Headmaster thinks that." She said, jerking her head in his direction. "And he's not an idiot!"

"Speaking of which, Headmaster if I may be so bold, why didn't you deny Harry's involvement at the feast last night?" Godric asked, as he raised himself up to his full height and glared at Albus as if the man were a common student.

Everyone quieted down a moment and all eyes landed on Albus. However, Albus took note of Godric's posture, and quickly dismissed it as Slytherin arrogance.

"I believe that is my business Mr. Roffin." He answered curtly.

Godric raised an eyebrow and scoffed, but decided not to push the issue. The two men still glared at each other for a moment though, before Nora diverted their attention.

"I agree with Bottom, Bushy. If Dumbly thinks that Speaker is gallivanting around setting loose giant snakes, then he is an idiot." She said, turning to look right at Albus. "No offense Dumbly, but I can assure you that is not the case because I would not put up with it!" She yelled. Then someone else suddenly caught her attention. "Oh look, it's the overgrown Bat. Quick! Let's run away, before he takes points from Speaker for being unconscious!" She said sarcastically.

"You are in a really bad mood today, aren't you Nora?" Blaise asked as he tried to hide a snicker.

"I missed breakfast so…yes." She hissed loudly.

"No, I do not take offense that you called me an idiot Nora." Albus said gently, as Severus swept over to the group.

He glanced at Godric with raised his eyebrow, but Remus cleared his throat.

"Umm, if I may, perhaps we should continue this, uh…conversation…in the hospital wing." Remus said, glancing pointedly at Salazar, who was still slung over Godric's shoulder. "We don't know where she bit him, or how long ago."
"Oh I can tell you it wasn't that long ago, and I bit him on his left forearm."

Blaise quickly jerked up Salazar's left shirt sleeve, and sure enough, the bite looked swollen, bruised, and it was still bleeding.

Hermione gasped. "Nora, how could you!" She exclaimed, and Nora glared at her for it.

"Oh yes, he does need medical attention." Albus said as he glanced at Remus, and then back at Salazar's arm. "Madam Pomfrey arrived back from Diagon Alley last night, so she should be up and about. Don't worry, she will have Harry sorted out soon."

The group quickly made their way to the hospital wing. Remus asked Godric several times to put him down so that Salazar could be levitated, but Godric refused. Remus didn't like Godric's answer of 'it's no trouble, he's light as a feather', and began wondering how this first year was able to carry Harry so easily.

When they arrived, Godric gently set Salazar down on a bed, as Poppy came rushing over to them.

"What happened?" She asked, as her eyes widened in alarm when she caught sight of the bite.

"I refuse to answer that question again. Bottom, please put me down so I can bask in that patch of bright sunlight by the bed. I wish to contemplate why my stomach is still empty." She said, as she tried to wiggle free of Neville's grasp.

He set her down on the floor, while Albus told Poppy what happened. The Medi-witch couldn't believe what Nora had done, and knew that there was more to it than just Salazar ignoring her.

"It was weird. I've never seen Harry act like that. He's always so calm, but I guess he was still half asleep." Blaise said with a shrug. "He even called Gordy Godric, of all things."

Both Severus and Poppy's eyebrows shot into their hairlines, but neither spoke. Instead, Poppy began cleaning Nora's bite wound, and gave Salazar the same antidote that she had given Ron last year.

"Why did he call you that Gordy?" Hermione asked curiously as she cocked her head to one side.

"It's just a nickname." Godric replied grin. "I think it's funny though. Maybe I should call him Salazar, but that might get on his nerves."

"Yeah because he can talk to snakes just like Slytherin could." Neville said with a grin. "But you do act more like a Gryffindor than a Slytherin."

"Oh that would really fuel the rumors! Harry is supposed to be setting loose Slytherin's giant snake after all. Think about it! Maybe we can prank the school and call him Salazar from now on!" Blaise said with excitement, and Neville and Gordy started grinning.

"That is a prank worthy of the Weasley twins!" Neville cried. "What do you say Hermione?"

Hermione wasn't paying any attention to them though. She was staring off into space, and had a familiar look in her eyes. "Gordy Roffin, Godric…"

Severus immediately knew where that train of thought was going, and quickly decided to put an end to it.

"Miss Granger!" He suddenly shouted, making the girl jump.
"Yes Professor!" She yelped.

"I do believe your name is being called." He said, reverting back to his usual bored tone.

Neville snorted. "There's no telling what was going on in your head, but anyway, we have a prank plan. We'll fill you in later though."

"Oh ok." She said with a nervous smile and glanced at Albus, who was watching them all with thoughtful expression. "Madam Pomfrey, is Harry going to be all right?" She asked.

Poppy had just finished wrapping the bandage around Salazar's arm, then she straightened up and smiled.

"Yes, he will be just fine. He just needs to rest now. If he hadn't panicked, he wouldn't have passed out."

"He was asleep, and we have learned that it takes a little while for him to get going once he wakes up." Blaise said with a chuckle.

"Well, whatever the case may be, he needs rest, so you all need to go." She said gently.

"All right, but can you let him know about the prank we want to play, and also, can you let us know when he wakes up?" Godric asked, giving Poppy a puppy dog look, which made Neville snort loudly.

Poppy sighed, shook her head, then glared at Godric. "I suppose."

"Thank you Madam Pomfrey." Neville said as the children and Godric left.

Once they were gone, Remus turned to Albus in shock. "Albus, you aren't going to allow them to play that prank are you?"

"What's the matter Lupin, are pranks beneath you now?" Severus asked with a sneer.

Remus ignored him, but Severus could see his jaw muscles tighten. "Albus?"

Albus looked at Remus over the top of his half-moon glasses and chuckled lightly. "And how do you suppose we stop them?"

"Well, you could tell them to not do it. What if Harry is against the idea?"

Severus scoffed at the notion. "Oh I assure you Lupin, Potter has inherited some of his father's traits." He said with a loathing glare.

Poppy glared at the two men, cleared her throat, and pointedly glanced at Salazar, before glaring back at them.

They got the hint.

"Well, I think I must be going. I have a meeting with the Minister in half an hour. If we are lucky, perhaps I can convince him to remove the dementors." Albus said, as he smiled and quickly left the hospital wing.

Once Albus was gone, Severus took a seat beside Salazar's bed and Poppy rounded on Nora.

"All right Nora, tell me the real reason you bit him." She huffed, as she glared at the snake still
laying on the floor.

"Just as I said. He's been ignoring me because of that shrew in the Chamber."

Severus outright laughed. "She bit him because of the basilisk in the Chamber."

"Emeralda?" Poppy asked, and Severus nodded.

Just then, the hospital doors flew open and Minerva and Godric came bustling in.

"Which snake bit him?!" Minerva asked frantically. "Was it Nora or the basilisk?"

"Is that why you're running so fast? Merlin woman, I could have told you it was Nora. I assumed you knew that." Godric wheezed as he struggled to keep up with her.

"How did you get away from the others?" Severus asked.

"Fred and George." Godric said, as he sat down heavily on Salazar's bed.

Minerva sighed when she saw Salazar. "I'm sorry. I thought he had been bitten by the basilisk. The rumors were that Potter had been bitten by a snake was in a panic. I didn't think he'd panic if Nora had bit him."

"It's a long story on why he did that." Godric answered.

"Gryffindors." Severus scoffed, which caused Godric to grin.

"What time did he get back to the dorms?" Minerva asked, looking at Nora.

"He came in late. I don't know the time, but he was down there a long while." She said with an unconcerned tone.

"Late." Severus answered simply.

Remus just stood there dumbfounded and his eyes bounced between them all. "What?" He asked in confusion.

"We are under an oath Remus, so we can't tell you anything." Poppy said. "I'm so sorry."

"You all might be, but I'm not." Godric said as he stood up. "Remus Lupin, it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I'm Godric Gryffindor." He continued, and he held out his hand.

Remus looked at him in confusion, and absentmindedly shook his hand. "What? You can't be serious."

"No, that would be your friend." Godric said, which made Severus roll his eyes.

"He is not going to like this." Severus muttered.

Godric chuckled. "Well then Salazar can be mad at me. He'll get over it." He said, with an unconcerned wave of his hand. "Besides, it's not fair for Sirius to know the truth and Remus to not. I've already told him that."

"What?" Remus asked, still staring at Godric in confusion.

"It's a very long story, but I think the easiest way you will believe us is to see for yourself. Peaky!"
"Master called for Peaky?" A young male elf with large blue eyes asked, as he popped into the hospital wing.

"Salazar didn't have his robes on when he was running through the castle this morning, so can you pop down to his dorms and grab his mirror?" Godric asked.

"Certainly sir!" The elf exclaimed happily, and then he disappeared.

"Remus, this boy laying in front of you is not Harry Potter." Godric began. "This boy is actually Salazar Slytherin disguised as Harry because of a Polyjuice incident gone wrong. The real Harry Potter is safe though, so please don't be alarmed. He is with James and Lily, and the whole family now lives in a different country. They have been in hiding for the last eleven years."

Remus narrowed his eyes and glared at Godric. "You're lying."

"No, I'm not. Sirius did not escape from Azkaban, he was rescued by my phoenix. I do believe you may be familiar with a certain map of Hogwarts?" He asked, and Remus's eyes widened instantly. "Well, that map came in handy last year when Fred and George Weasley not only discovered Salazar's secret, but the secret of a traitorous, lying, sneaking rat that goes by the name of Scabbers, or more commonly known as, Peter Pettigrew. Sirius did not betray the Potters. He wasn't their secret keeper. It was Peter. Peter was cornered by Sirius that night, and it was Peter who killed all those muggles and framed Sirius. He transformed into his rat animagus form and escaped just as the Aurors arrived to apprehend Sirius. Sirius took the blame of killing the Potters because he was the one to suggest they change secret keepers. He felt that Peter would be the best choice, seeing as Sirius himself would be the obvious choice. Come to find out though, Peter was a Death Eater."

Remus stared at Godric in shock. "How…how do you know all this?" He asked in a shaky voice as he sank down into a nearby chair.

"Well, half the story came from Sirius, and the other half came from James." Godric replied, just as Peaky returned with the mirror.

"Master, Peaky has returned. He also brought you these two letters that Nehum brought back with him. One is a letter for Mr. Severus, and the other is a letter from him for both you and Mr. Salazar." The elf said, handing over the three objects.

"Thank you Peaky," Godric said, and Peaky bowed and popped away.

"He needs to swear an oath." Came a raspy voice from the bed. "And I hate you."

"We will get to the oath, and you can hate me all you want." Godric replied in an uninterested tone. "You need rest you bloody idiot. I can't believe you flipped out over a bite from Nora."

"I was still half asleep."

"We know." Severus said, taking the letter from Godric.

"You all have my permission to speak freely in front of Remus Lupin." He said with a sigh, slightly opening his eyes and looking at Severus.

"Do you need anything?" The young man asked with concern in his eyes.

"Water." He managed to reply, as Godric told the others that Salazar had given them permission to
tell Remus what they know.

"Speaker, I miss my rock. Can you go get it?" Nora asked sweetly, as she slithered up onto the bed and settled down on his stomach. "After you have recovered from my deadly bite of course."

Salazar rolled his eyes, but took the offered water from Poppy and drank it in one gulp. "Thank you Poppy." He said with a small smile, but then he turned to Nora. "I might consider it Nora, if you apologize to me." He replied in English, knowing that Nora would know just how upset he was with her.

"Speaker, I'm very sorry. I guess my jealously got the best of me. Perhaps that shrew is kind of important right now, considering she almost killed someone." She said begrudgingly.

"I suppose I'll get your rock then, but please give me a few days." He said with a sigh. Godric tried to hide a snort, but Salazar glared at him. "Shut up Godric."

Godric chuckled, but then he turned back to Remus and held up the mirror. "I do believe you know how this works."

"Just ask for James." Poppy said with an encouraging smile.

Remus nodded and took the mirror with shaking hands. Only a small part of him held a shred of hope that James would answer, because he just hadn't come to terms with the notion that they were still alive yet.

"J-James P-Potter." He said in a shaky, quiet voice.

It took a few breathless minutes, but James's face finally appeared in the mirror, and Remus almost dropped it as he slipped off the chair and hit his knees.

"J-James!" He exclaimed with a mixture of shock and disbelief.

"Remus! Lily come quick! It's Remus!" James shouted happily. "I'm so glad to see you. How are you?"

"I-I'm ok." Remus replied, still in shock.

"You look good Remus." Lily said with a bright smile as she too appeared in the mirror. "And I take it they have told you. Salazar didn't want to, because he said too many already knew, but it looks like he did anyway."

"Actually Godric did." Minerva said with a smile.

"Yeah, Salazar was knocked out in a hospital bed." Godric said with a smirk. "He didn't have a say in the matter."

"And I hate you for it." Salazar said with a glare.

James snorted. "What, did Nora finally bite him or something?"

"Yes." Several people said at the same time, which caused James to laugh loudly.

"So Remus, how have you been? You still looked shocked.""I-I just can't believe it." He said as tears welled up in his eyes. "All this time, you've been alive and I..." His voice trailed off as a sob escaped his throat.
"No one knew the truth until last year." James said quietly. "It's a long story so, why don't you sit down and I'll tell you."

It took almost an hour for the full story to be told and by the time it was over, Remus was angry. He was angry at Dumbledore, Voldemort, Peter, and himself.

"I'm so sorry. I should have…"

"Remus there is nothing you could have done." Lily said gently.

"But Sirius was innocent the entire time."

"We didn't know about Sirius's situation until last year." Salazar said quietly. "Nicholas and I thought of every scenario to try and get him a trial, but all of them required tipping off Albus and/or Voldemort, who was here last year firmly planted in the back of Quirrell's head." He said with a sigh. "There was nothing we could do, until Godric and our mutual friend used Nehum to break him out."

"But I tried!" Remus jumped up and shouted angrily. "I tried to get him a trial so many times because I wanted answers! I wanted to know why he did it! When Albus took the Chief Warlock position, he denied him a trial even after I brought it to his attention! I knew he was there without a trial! I knew...I knew...and he was innocent." He said, finally collapsing into the chair again.

Sobs were racking his whole body as he sat there and shook his head, but it was Lily who finally pulled him out of it.

"Remus, the main thing is that you tried. You did something that none of us could do. You tried. That is what you have to remember."

It took a few more minutes for Remus to calm down, but he finally took a deep breath and nodded.

"So what do we do about Peter?"

"He is still here." Salazar said, as he shifted around in the bed so that he could sit up. "But..."

"...but he has sort of escaped." Godric interrupted with a sigh.

"Escaped!" Everyone cried loudly.

Godric nodded. "Sort of." He repeated. "Fred and George told me, before Minerva and I arrived, that Peter has left Gryffindor Tower and Ron is in a panic looking for 'Scabbers'. However, he is still on the grounds, and is hiding out around Hagrid's hut."

"What do we do then?" Minerva asked.

"I suspect that he will not leave the grounds as long as the dementors are here." Severus said. "Not to mention, there is plenty of food and water here. I say we leave him be, until we think of a way to oust him."

"I agree with Severus. I do not think he will leave the grounds." Salazar said with a nod. "The twins can keep an eye on him via the map."

"But what if he does escape?" Minerva asked with concern. "We need him to prove Sirius's innocence."

"He's too much of a coward." James said with a scowl. "He will stay where it's safe. He doesn't
know that we have the map, so he will stay put for now."

"I agree with James," Remus said.

"But why did he run in the first place?" Poppy asked. "I don't understand."

"My guess is because I'm here now." Remus answered. "With Sirius 'on the run' and possibly coming here, and with me already being here, he knows that if one of us spots him in his rat form we will recognize him."

"That right!" James exclaimed. "He knows that Remus is rational enough to put the pieces together, even if Sirius is 'deranged' and 'mad' at this point. Peter also knows that if Sirius finds him first, that Sirius is likely to kill him because as far as Peter knows, Sirius is the only one that knows the truth."

"It's logical." Salazar said with a nod. "But we also need to figure out a way to bring Peter's crimes into the open."

"Why not just give Remus the map, have him track down Peter, and turn him over to Albus?" Godric asked.

"Because that is how a Gryffindor would look at the situation." Salazar said, rolling his eyes. "I swear, the answer does not always have to be…run head long into a situation without thinking about all the consequences."

"Well it gets the job done faster." Godric replied with a smirk.

"And it often gets people killed." Salazar replied with a glare. "No, what we need to do, is make Albus come to the conclusion that Peter is still alive 'on his own'. When that happens, Albus will start digging, and then we can have him do all the work. He will start to realize that things aren't what they seem, and he can start looking at what happened that night. Then he can call for a trial to get the truth. After all, he would want to be seen as 'Harry Potter's' hero. This will give Albus the opportunity to get justice for 'the murders of his parents' and 'look good in 'Harry's' eyes'."

"You're talking about manipulating Albus!" Minerva asked in shock.

Salazar shrugged. "I promised you all last year that I would teach you how to manipulate an old manipulative Gryffindor, didn't I?" He asked with a triumphant smirk. "And now the opportunity has presented itself."

"But how do we do that?" Poppy asked in an excited tone.

"I have no idea." Salazar admitted. "I guess we'll have to think of one."

"I have an idea." Lily suddenly said with an evil grin. "Salazar, remember what you told me you did last year? You told Albus that when you got your letter, Peter was the one who showed you where Diagon Alley was, and you also told Albus that you saw Peter turn into a rat."

Salazar stared at her, and then smacked his forehead. "That's right! I did! I had completely forgotten about that! Lily that is brilliant!"

"And that is our starting point." Severus said with a smirk.

"So what do we do?" Remus asked with a smile, as he saw James give Lily a tight hug because of her quick thinking.
“Well…” Salazar grinned.

Dear Severus,

I know hearing from me is not what you really expected, but there is something that I need to tell you. I know that I do not need to go into what a dementor does, or how it effects people, but I want you to know that I am very sorry for sending you into the Shrieking Shack that night.

I don't expect you to ever forgive me, but I do hope that someday you do. I want you to know that every day I lived the nightmare of what could have happened that night. Sending you into the shack knowing full well that Remus was in werewolf form was the stupidest thing I have ever done, and I am so very, very sorry for it. (Well, second stupidest thing if you count trusting Peter.)

I am thankful that James had the common sense I did not. I am thankful that James is a better man than me. I could come up with a thousand excuses on why I did it, but they are just that, excuses. They mean nothing and they do not justify what I did. Nothing can ever justify what I did.

As I said, I do not expect your forgiveness, but I hope that one day you can find it in your heart to do just that, because I am truly very sorry for sending you into that shack.

Sincerely,

Sirius

Severus glared at the letter, tossed it aside with a scoff, and stalked over to his cupboard to pour himself a drink.

How dare he?! He thought bitterly as he drank the whiskey in one gulp. He tried to feed me to a werewolf, and then he has the audacity to ask for my forgiveness!? NEVER!

Severus paced back and forth across his office in a rage. Black had been the bane of his existence since the age of eleven, and oh how Severus hated the man. The fact that Black was asking him for forgiveness was laughable at best.

Severus had forgiven James for obvious reasons, and his rational mind knew that Remus was not in control of himself that night. The werewolf would have torn anyone apart, and wouldn't have cared who it was that entered the shack. Severus knew that out of all of them, Remus had tried to be the peacemaker, but he didn't try all that hard for fear of losing his friends because he was afraid that no one would ever be his friend again.

On a small scale, Severus could relate to that. He had forgiven the werewolf, but he was still leery of him and he would always be cautious around him. After all, that was just good common sense.

But Black? No. He could never, ever, forgive the man.

He tried to kill me! He thought, as he poured himself another drink and began another round of pacing his office.

But Severus, haven't you ever wanted forgiveness for something you have done?

The thought made him pause in his tracks, but he pushed it away bitterly. He was just too full of hate and loathing right now, and he didn't want to think about it. He glared at the letter once more, crumpled it up, and threw it across the room.
Forgive Black?

Never! He thought, as he slammed his glass down on the desk.

A very shaky and disturbed Albus sighed and reached for a bar of chocolate as he sat down in his office chair. He had just gotten back from a very pointless meeting with the Minister, who was no closer to removing the dementors than he was to catching Sirius.

Albus had spent most of the morning at Azkaban inspecting Sirius's cell, talking to Cornelius Fudge in one of the offices at Azkaban, and trying to make sense of it all. They had no idea how Sirius escaped, what his motives were, and seeing as Albus had previously voiced his concerns for Harry, the Ministry was not willing to call the dementors away from Hogwarts just yet.

The only thing the dementors were able to tell them was that there had been a brief moment of pure happiness coming from Sirius's cell just as he disappeared. Beyond that, they couldn't tell Albus or the Minister anything else. Most of the other prisoners were unwilling to cooperate with them, or they hadn't seen anything. However, there was one prisoner, Bellatrix Lestrange, whose cell was right across from Sirius's. She cackled madly and said that Sirius had disappeared in a bright ball of flames.

But she is mad, isn't she? Albus thought as he called for an elf to bring him a cup of tea.

The only thing Albus knew of that could disappear and reappear in a ball of flames was a phoenix. Surely a phoenix didn't do this. Sirius is a murderer. He thought, but his mind suddenly went back to the mysterious phoenix that had shown up the other night. That couldn't be...no, no. A phoenix wouldn't break a murderer out of Azkaban. That is ludicrous Albus!

He dismissed the disturbing thought and sipped the tea that had been placed on his desk, and his thoughts turned to other pressing matters.

The Chamber of Secrets.

Minerva had stormed into his office late last night and demanded to know why he hadn't denied Harry's involvement in the matter. He told her that he hadn't denied it simply because he wanted to see how Harry would react. She had argued that the whole school would think he had done it, but Albus wasn't worried about it. He still told her he wanted to see how Harry would react to the pressure. Minerva had been livid and stormed out of his office.

His answer had only been part truthful though.

Truth is, he knew Harry was involved somehow. Truth is, he was starting to suspect that Harry was dark. Not necessarily evil...yet...but dark none-the-less, and if Harry was left to his own devices, he would no doubt turn out just like Tom.

Albus sighed as he nibbled on his chocolate bar and sipped his tea. Harry was too much like Tom as it was. He was certain that Harry was manipulating his teachers into thinking he was a 'good boy', just like Tom had done. He was smart, near the top of his class, just like Tom. He talked about some things the way Tom did. He had a small close group of friends, just like Tom. However, where-as Tom's friends were all Slytherins, Harry's friends were a mixture of both Gryffindors and Slytherins.

And that didn't sit well with Albus.

Unlike last year, he was beginning to think Harry being friends with Gryffindors wasn't such a good
idea. He was beginning to fear that Harry's Gryffindor friends would be influenced by Harry, instead of the other way around, and he would not let another Gryffindor slip into darkness the way Sirius had done.

Maybe it's all a ploy. Albus thought with sudden alarm. Maybe it's a trick to make everyone think Harry is a nice boy by being friends with Gryffindors.

The thought made him shudder. Tom was like that too. Tom had 'friends', but Albus knew that they weren't really his friends. They were just tools he used to do his bidding.

Are Harry's friends really his friends? Albus asked himself.

If he was honest, that was where Tom and Harry differed. It seemed like Harry's friends really were his friends. Tom would never help his friends the way Harry did. Tom would have never taught his friends the spells he knew, or patiently taught his friends a difficult language like Parseltongue. Harry and his friends liked to laugh, play pranks on one another, and they all studied together. Tom wasn't like that at all.

Albus rubbed his eyes and leaned back in his chair. He knew his thoughts about Harry were conflicted at the moment. Maybe it was the lingering effects of the dementors, or maybe it was because so much was happening at the moment. He just wasn't sure.

He would be watching Harry extra carefully from now on though, that was for certain. He wanted to see what Harry knew about the Chamber. Albus just knew that Harry was involved somehow, and he was determined to figure it out.
*A/N* I am so sorry for not updating. Life has been hectic, and on top of that, this chapter gave me a lot of problems. I cannot tell you all how many times i had to delete it and start over, but its here now, and i hope you all enjoy it! It's nice and long to make up for the long delay!

Chapter 26

Poor Escape Plans and Giant Snakes

It had been a full two weeks since the chamber had been opened, and the entire school was thoroughly convinced, thanks to Ron and Seamus, that Salazar was behind it all. There were whispers, stares, and people were outright avoiding him in the corridors as if he was going to kill them all. Salazar thought the whole thing was funny though, and took to yelling, 'boogity boo come forth giant snake', while waving his arms over his head every time someone looked at him fearfully. It certainly didn't help that Godric, Blaise, Neville, and the twins loudly called out 'make way for the Heir of Slytherin' everywhere he went, and sarcastically bowed every time he walked into a room they were in. Salazar would always laugh, nod, and say 'thank you my faithful subjects' before taking his seat in an over-exaggerated manner. Hermione rolled her eyes every time they did it, and Colin took pictures every chance he got. Salazar really hammed it up for Colin though, and posed every which way he could think of for him.

It had finally began to sink in with the rest of the school though, and now every time they 'acted out the part' most of the students would grin and giggle before scurrying away. Ravenclaw house began realizing that the whole notion was silly because he would not be acting like this if he really was the Heir of Slytherin. He would be reserved, cold, and uncaring just like every other Slytherin. Not to mention, the Heir would not go around yelling 'boogity boo', and they began to voice their opinions on the matter. Students from Hufflepuff and Gryffindor started listening to their reasoning, they were Ravenclaws after all, and began acting 'fearful' in Salazar's presence just so they could laugh when he did it. This new change did not sit well with Ron Weasley though, and he began threatening Salazar again and claimed that he better watch his back.

The only house that did not find the whole thing funny was Slytherin itself, and Salazar, Godric, and Blaise were really more concerned about them.

Draco was in a bitter mood and was loudly complaining about how Salazar had been getting all the attention lately, but it wasn't just Draco who was angry. The rest of the house wasn't happy with the way Salazar and the others had been acting about the Chamber incident, and began trying to hex them all behind their backs. Godric had already stunned several sixth and seventh years, and Salazar and Blaise had placed a bunch of them in the full-body bind curse.

Slytherin house was also upset because they had lost the Quidditch match to Gryffindor last weekend, thanks to the new brooms donated by Godric. They didn't lose just because of Gryffindor's new brooms though, they lost because Draco was a terrible seeker.

During the game, Draco spent more time running his mouth and insulting the Gryffindor seeker than he did looking for the snitch, and Slytherin lost by 180 points when the Gryffindor seeker caught it. When Godric and Blaise pointed out that both teams had been nearly tied and they only lost because of Draco, no one saw it that way and blamed the brooms. Draco especially took great offence to that and threatened them.
Needless to say, the three 'outcast Slytherins' were watching their backs carefully.

"Luna, are you sure? Because we don't want to make light of what happened if you're not comfortable with it." Godric whispered.

"I think it's rather funny Gordy." She said with a dreamy smile. "I don't mind at all, but I do thank you for asking me first. It really was an unpleasant experience, even if I can't remember what the giant snake looked like."

It was nearing the end of their Charms class, and Godric decided to take the opportunity to ask Luna her thoughts on the final portion of the prank they had planned for tonight. After all, she was the one who was attacked and he really didn't feel comfortable going through with it if she didn't want them too.

"In fact, I think it would be a good way to further show how ridiculous everyone was being when they thought it had been Harry." Luna continued. "And now that I'm back to normal, everyone keeps asking me what it looked like, how scary it was, and if I'm all right. The last part doesn't bother me, but it is getting a little old now. I was only in the hospital wing for four days." She said with a shrug, as she levitated her feather off the desk.

"Would you like to be a part of our prank, so that your friends know that we aren't picking on you?"

"Oh, I don't have any friends because people think I'm strange, but I would love to be a part of your prank, if it's ok with the others."

"Well I don't think you're strange, and I know that the others won't mind you taking part." He whispered.

"That's good to know." She said with a smile. "You and Harry are different than any Slytherin I have ever heard about, did you know that? You two don't act like the rest of them, neither does Blaise, now that I think about it."

"Why do you say that?" Godric asked curiously.

"Because all the other Slytherins are cold and don't show emotion all that much. It takes a lot to get them to show another face, other than the 'I'm bored' look. It makes them unapproachable, and I think that's why they don't have many friends outside their own house."

Godric chuckled and shook his head. "Ah yes, the infamous 'Slytherin Mask'. It's quite the funny concept really. Most people think we are emotionless zombies running around with no feelings because we are 'unreadable'. It's idiotic if you ask me, but most Slytherins think they can get an edge over their enemies if they put on that silly face. Personally, I find it boring and don't care a bit for it, and Harry thinks it's hysterical."

Luna laughed lightly. "I heard that was the type of man Salazar Slytherin really was, and all Slytherins mold themselves after him. I can't imagine what the other three founders must have thought about him."

Godric shifted around in his seat. He knew exactly where that perceived image had come from, but he looked at Luna, gave her a small smile, and quickly changed the subject.

"So anyway, if you want to take part in our prank, just do as I suggested when the time comes. Hopefully people will get a pretty good laugh out of the whole thing."
Luna giggled. "I think they will. After all, a giant pink and purple polka dotted snake does seem pretty funny." She replied, just as the bell rang.

They said goodbye to each other, and since it was the last class of the day, Godric headed down to the dungeons to put his books and things in his dorm. He knew Salazar and Blaise would be there soon, and decided to wait for them in the common room. They were going to meet Hermione, Neville, Colin, and the twins in an unused classroom on the first floor to put the final touches on the prank they planned to play at dinner. Hermione was fully against the idea because she was afraid they would get in trouble, but she had agreed to be there for 'moral support' and to make sure they didn't do anything dumb.

After Godric put his books in the dorms, he sat down by the fireplace, took out his black diary and began studying its pages. He hadn't shown the diary to Salazar yet, but he knew he needed to. He was stuck on an idea and wasn't sure how to work it out, and he was hoping that Salazar would have a few good ideas.

He had only been sitting there for a few minutes, when his diary was suddenly snatched off the table. He jumped up, expecting more sixth and seventh years to be standing around him, but instead he came face to face with a floating and grinning poltergeist.

"Give it back Peeves." He demanded sternly as he glared at the menace.

"You can't hurt Peevsie right now Lord Gryffy." He said with a mad cackle. "Can't banish me, can't banish me! Lord Slytheryness isn't here to help you!" Peeves sang, as he held the diary over Godric's head.

"Peeves I'm warning you." Godric said, holding his hand out. "Give me the book now."

"Why does Lord Gryffy want the book so badly? Peeves thinks that Lord Gryffy is up to something." The poltergeist said with a grin, as he flipped through the diary. "Oh what is this? Dark object detect…"

"PEEVES!" Godric yelled.

He didn't want Peeves to say anything else, seeing as a bunch of his fellow house mates had already entered the common room. They were now standing around smirking at him, and Godric could see some of those sixth and seventh years laughing to themselves. He had a sneaking suspicion that they had put Peeves up to this by bribing him.

Godric would have summoned the book, if he hadn't already placed it under an anti-summoning charm. The best he could hope for now was Salazar arriving, and hope that Peeves didn't take off with the diary before then.

"Why hello Headmaster." Peeves said in a sickly sweet voice.

Godric's whole body tensed up and he whirled around to see Albus making his way into the room. Thankfully though, so was Salazar and Blaise, though Salazar was glaring at Albus behind his back, and Blaise also looked less than pleased. Godric could only guess that Albus was up to his usual prattle and harassment of Salazar.

"It seems Lord Gryffy has a book that he doesn't want anyone to see. Peeves thinks it's full of dark ma-gic." He sang, waving the diary in the air.

"Please give me the book Peeves." Albus said with sudden alarm. "I must take a look at it."
"NO!" Godric shouted, lunging for the diary, but Peeves retreated higher above their heads.

"Why can't Peevsie give this book to the Headmaster? Let's see what else is in here." He said flipping to the next page. "Oh tsk, tsk Lord Gryffy. Are you planning on messing with the protective wards around Hogwarts? One mustn't do that behind the Headmaster's back." He said with glee.

Albus stared at Peeves, then glanced at Godric, who had already whipped out his wand.

"Salazar!" He shouted, as Salazar ran forward.

"Why Lord Slytherness how good to see….NOOOOO! DON'T BANISH PEEVES!" The poltergeist screamed, as Salazar began to loudly chant the banishing spell.

Peeves instantly dropped the diary and fled the room, but Albus tried to summon the book before it hit the floor, to no avail. At the same moment, Godric lunged forward and caught it in mid-air, then he tucked it in his robes and turned to face Albus who was now glaring at the both of them.

"Mr. Roffin, I request that book." He said sternly.

"I'm sorry Headmaster, but that is not going to happen." Godric replied, as Salazar stood firmly next to his friend.

"Harry, get away from him." Albus said. "He could be dangerous."

"He's not dangerous Headmaster." Salazar said rolling his eyes. "And I highly doubt that book has anything to do with the wards. Gordy has been writing in that diary all year. It's mostly about his Mum, who is sick at the moment. Those kinds of ramblings are hardly anything to worry about."

"It's true." Godric said, quickly picking up the lie. "It's just a diary of my thoughts and things. You know how Peeves is Professor. He's always making something up."

"Then you won't mind if I take a quick look." Albus said with a gentle smile.

"Actually I do. I don't mean any disrespect Headmaster, but what is written in my diary doesn't concern you."

Albus's gentle smile immediately turned cold and more forced. "I'm afraid I must disagree." He said pulling out his wand. "Please let me take a look at the diary, for my own peace of mind. Peeves has laid down some serious accusations after all."

Godric eyed Albus's wand closely, and Salazar could feel his friend's body stiffen, as if he was getting ready for a dual. He knew he had to diffuse the tension, or there would likely be spells cast from both wizards.

"Professor, Gordy is only eleven. How in the world could he tamper with the wards around the school? I have read about wands and can only do minor ones, but the ones around Hogwarts are a lot more complicated."

"There seems to be a lot of things the two of you can do Harry. Most of the spells should be above your age and magical capabilities, but they seem to not be a hindrance to either of you. I will not let this school be put in danger. I request the diary." Albus said firmly.

"A fine speech coming from the likes of you Headmaster." Godric spat. "Does a cerberus and a griffin ring any bells? I've heard all about those."
"Shut up Godric." Salazar whispered out of the side of his mouth, but in the dead silent room, everyone heard every word.

Albus glared at the both of them, and tilted his head to the side. "You two seem to call each other Salazar and Godric a lot more than you should. Why is that?" He asked, ignoring Godric's accusation.

"I've already told you. It's a joke." Godric said in a cold tone. "Now, if you will excuse me, I have to go to the library."

"I'm afraid you can't leave this room until I have looked at your diary Mr. Roffin." Albus said, blocking his way.

"Fine, then I'll just have to find a different route." Godric said stubbornly, turning his back on Albus.

Out of the corner of his eye, Salazar saw Godric look around and spot one of the Quidditch players who had just come down from his dorm with his broom. He grinned, then produced a familiar looking green potion out of his pocket and discreetly drank half of it down. He winked at Salazar, and inconspicuously handed the potion to him. Salazar stared at Godric with wide eyes, and briefly wondered why his best friend was walking around with it in his pocket, but then he became distracted because of the mischievous look on Godric's face. He had seen that look before, and it usually didn't bode well...for Salazar that is.

"Mr. Roffin, as you can see there is no other way out of here. Now, give me the diary so I can look through it. If it is what you say it is, then you have nothing to hide." Albus said, glaring at Godric's back.

Godric scowled and turned to face Albus. "I don't want you to see it because it is my personal business. I choose who I share it with, and I don't choose you."

"Then I'm sorry, I'm afraid I must do this." Albus said with a sigh, and suddenly ropes appeared from the end of his wand.

Unfortunately for Albus, Godric knew a thing or two and instantly vanished the ropes, while at the same time Salazar hit him with an impediment jinx. Albus's movements slowed down immediately, and a look of astonishment slowly appeared on his face.

"What did you two do!?!" Blaise cried, but they ignored him.

Knowing that they only had a short minute or two to escape before Albus returned to normal, and not really knowing what Godric was up too, Salazar quickly unraveled Nora from his wrist and gave her to Blaise. Godric turned towards the Quidditch team, who had all gathered to watch the two of them 'face off' with Albus before heading off to practice, and aimed his wand at Draco.

"Accio Draco's broom!" Godric cried, and the broom sailed towards them.

"Oh no! No! No! I'm not getting on that..." Salazar started to yell, but he was cut off when Godric grabbed him under the arms and threw him on the back of the broom.

"Give me back my broom!" Draco screamed, just as Godric kicked off from the ground.

"No Godric! The other way! The other way!" Salazar yelled as they zoomed toward one of the windows.

Now, flying towards a closed window on a broom, after you have you have drank a potion that will
allow you to walk through such things, wouldn't have been a big deal. Unfortunately however, Salazar built the Slytherin common room half under the Black Lake, and the window they were speeding towards led directly into said lake.

"Godric, don't you dare! No!" Salazar screamed in his ear, but Godric only laughed loudly. "Towards the castle! Towards the castle! Not the lake you bloody Gryffindor!"

"Hold your nose!" Godric shouted gleefully.

"AAARRRGGGHHHH!"

The last thing Salazar heard before he, Godric, and the broom zoomed out of the window and into the freezing cold water was, 'Speaker, get off that crazy contraption!' He had really, really wanted to, but that crazy, idiotic, insane, bloody Gryffindor wouldn't let him.

The icy cold water hit Salazar like a thousand needles, but through the pain of it all, he somehow managed to cast a Bubble-Head charm around his head so that he wouldn't drown. Godric swam up next to him, grinning like the fool that he was, and they both watched the broom sink to the bottom of the lake. Then he watched as Godric swam back over to the window, cancel his own bubble-head charm, stick his head back into the window, and yell something at Albus before grabbing Salazar's arm and heading towards the surface.

I AM GOING TO KILL HIM! Salazar thought, as he took one last glance back into the warm common room.

The entire house was staring at them with their mouths hanging open and with dumbfounded expressions on their faces. Blaise had jumped on top of the table that was sitting under the window and was apparently yelling something, but of course, he couldn't hear him. Draco looked angry over the loss of his broom and was yelling at Albus, who was staring wide-eyed at the window in total disbelief. That was the last thing he saw though, before Godric tugged on him again and they began swimming towards the surface.

He could hear Godric's muffled, gleeful laughter as they swam as fast as they could towards the surface, and he glared at his completely insane best friend.

I am going to find a way to murder him. I am going to strangle him. I am going to hex him. I am going to chop him up into little pieces and use his body parts for potions ingredients. I am going to..."YOU BLOODY GRYFFINDOR!" He bellowed, as they broke through the thin ice that covered the surface of the lake. "I AM GOING TO KILL YOU!"

"That was brilliant!" Godric exclaimed, as he laughed and grinned wickedly. "Wow, this cold water really wakes you up, doesn't it?"

"You idiot! What was the point in that!?" Salazar yelled, as he began to strangle a still grinning Godric, but he couldn't quite get his frozen fingers around his friend's neck.

"Well I did say I'd find another way out, didn't I?" Godric chuckled, when Salazar finally gave up and released him. "That's what I said to Albus by the way. Salazar, we have got to do that again!"

Salazar picked up a thin piece of floating ice and whopped him over the head with it, but Godric paid it no mind as he continued his manic grinning.

"Godric, I swear on Merlin's grave that when I thaw out, I'm going to find a way to kill you." He grumbled.
"Merlin doesn't have a grave my friend, and deep down you know that was bloody amazing!"

"I am soaking wet and frozen. No that wasn't 'bloody amazing'." He growled.

"Oh come on! Remember that time Helga turned us both into fish and banished us into this very lake? That was for three days in the middle of December! This is nowhere near as bad as that was."

"She only did that because you talked me into setting loose a bunch of toads in her office!"

"I know, that was funny wasn't it!?" Godric chuckled.

Salazar rolled his eyes, but suddenly stopped and grabbed ahold of Godric's robes. "Shush!" He whispered fiercely.

"What?" Godric asked in alarm as he stopped thrashing around. "Is it the grindylows?"

"No, it's Albus. He's with Minerva, Poppy, Severus, and Remus."

"Oh bloody hell." Godric whispered.

"They had to have come up by now! Spread out, and look along the edges! It's starting to get rather dark out here!" They heard Albus yell. "HARRY! MR. ROFFIN! CAN YOU HEAR ME!?"

"POTTER! ROFFIN! I SWEAR IF YOU TWO DON'T ANSWER ME, YOU WILL HAVE DETENTION FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR!" Severus yelled with a mixture of anger and worry in his voice.

"Severus is quite the character, isn't he?" Godric chuckled.

"You have probably given all of them a near nervous breakdown. You just wait until Poppy gets ahold of us. I'll make sure you take all the blame." Salazar whispered maliciously.

Godric shivered, and stared at him with wide eyes. "You wouldn't?" He asked through chattering teeth, because the cold water was starting to get to him.

"Oh I would." Salazar answered through his own shivers. "I'm near frozen solid. We need to get out of this stupid lake."

Godric sighed with disappointment. "Well, it was fun while it lasted. Let's head towards Minerva, she's the least likely one to kill me."

"Don't bet on it. I'd pick Remus over her." Salazar answered. "WE'RE OVER HERE!" He yelled as loud as he could, seeing as his teeth were also chattering badly.

They swam as fast as they could towards the shore, knocking thin sheets of ice out of their way as they went. Minerva looked ready to kill them both, but it was Poppy who sent two powerful stinging jinxes towards their backsides.

"Ouch! It wasn't my fault! It was his 'brilliant' idea!" Salazar cried, as he pointed towards gleefully chuckling Godric.

"I don't care! You two nearly scared us to death! Now wrap these warm blankets around yourselves this instant!" She hissed, just as Albus, Severus, and Remus reached them.

"Harry, Mr. Roffin, I do hope you have a very good explanation for this." Albus said as he eyed the two shivering 'children' carefully.
"Yes Potter, do delight us with your story." Severus said with a sneer, as Poppy and Minerva began drying them off with hot-air charms.

"Harry, what were you thinking!?” Remus cried, but he looked like he was going to burst out laughing at any minute.

Salazar stared at them all in bewilderment, then he shouted, "It wasn't my fault! I didn't have a choice!” He said, pointing an accusing finger at Godric, who doubled over with laughter.

"We can talk about this later.” Poppy huffed. "We have to get them inside and warmed up before they catch their death."

"It would serve them right." Minerva scowled, but then she smirked at them. "Although I do believe we aren't the only ones they have to worry about, because Miss Granger is in a right state at this point. Mr. Zabini has apparently told her exactly what happened."

"Uh oh." Godric said, as all traces of laughter fled from his face. "She can be worse than a wet angry cat. No offense Professor McGonagall."

Minerva sent a stinging jinx at him, which Godric blocked, but Salazar rolled his eyes. "I swear, Gryffindors never think before they speak, or act apparently."

"For once Potter, I think I agree with you.” Severus said with a nod.

That did it. Remus burst out laughing and they began to make their way towards the warm castle. Albus led the way, and appeared to be lost in deep thought. The others kept grinning, smirking, and snorting, and now that Salazar was dried off and somewhat warm, he finally started to laugh, which only made Godric start snickering again.

"All right, I do admit that it was pretty good." Salazar whispered so that Albus couldn't hear him. "But next time make sure that it is warm outside,"

"Deal.” Godric whispered with shining eyes, just as they reached the front doors of the castle.

"What were you thinking!?” A voice suddenly demanded.

From out of nowhere, Salazar found himself being assaulted by a bushy haired, book wielding Hermione Granger. She began to whack him on the arms and shoulders with it, but thankfully she spared his head because the book was pretty thick.

"Disappearing out of a closed window, on a broom, and into the freezing cold lake! What…were…you…thinking?” She asked, hitting him with each word.

"We're not worthy! We're not worthy!” Fred and George cried in unison, only to have Hermione round on them.

"This…is…not…funny!” She cried, chasing them for several feet and trying to hit them with her ‘weapon'.

Blaise, Neville, and Colin were nearly doubled over with loud, boisterous laughter, and Minerva, Poppy, and Remus just stood and watched the scene with smirks on their faces. Albus looked slightly amused, and Severus looked bored, but his eyes were shining with laughter.

"It wasn't my fault! Blame the Gryffindor in Slytherin robes!” Salazar cried, pointing at Godric as he ducked to get away from another blow.
Hermione seemed to falter a bit and she looked at Godric a bit uncertainly, but then she whopped him once with the book. "Don't ever scare me like that again!" She cried, as Godric snorted loudly. "How did you manage this!?" She demanded with a stomp of her foot, as she glared at Salazar.

"An excellent question Miss Granger." Albus said as he looked at them all with twinkling eyes.

Hermione's eyes widened as she finally took note of just who was actually standing around them. Then her face reddened to a deep blush and she backed away quickly, while muttering an apology.

"How did you both manage this?" Albus asked, turning a stern gaze towards Salazar and Godric. Godric cleared his throat, and managed to stifle a glare before replying. "I looked through the book Harry showed me that was written by Salazar Slytherin. I copied down the recipe for a potion that allows someone to walk through walls. I thought it was funny and could come in handy at some point. Turns out I was right."

Albus glared at him. "Ten points from Slytherin for brewing a dangerous potion unsupervised, and I still need that dairy of yours Mr. Roffin."

Salazar glared at Albus, and noticed that Severus's wand hand flinched a bit. Godric however, sighed and reached into his pocket, then he paled drastically and began to frantically pat down his robes.

"I-I don't have it sir. I think I lost it somewhere in the lake."

Albus studied him closely for a moment, but then he sighed and nodded. "Very well. Let's get you two up to the hospital wing. I do believe you both need a pepper-up potion. However, I must take thirty more points from Slytherin, and you both have detention with me for a full week, starting Monday."

Severus glared at Albus and Godric, but Salazar couldn't tell which of them he wanted to hex the most.

They all began to make their way towards the hospital wing, so that Poppy could give them the attention, and stern talking to, that she had been itching to give them. When they arrived, they were steered towards the two nearest beds and Poppy began her exams. When she was satisfied that they were all right, she proceeded to scold the two Founders, who had the good common sense to look sheepish, gave them the Pepper-Up potion, and glared at them until they had drank every last drop.

"I have half a mind to keep the two of you here until the morning, BUT," she said, throwing up her hand to stop their protests, "I know you have plans for tonight at dinner."

They all sighed with relief, but Albus frowned at them. "What plans?" He asked.

Hermione squeaked and then hissed, "I told you all this wasn't a good idea!"

"Don't worry Headmaster, we have it all under control." Fred said as he bowed low. "We promise not to disappear into the lake, use freezing cold water, or do anything that would otherwise main, harm, or kill anyone."

"Trust us." George said, as he too bowed low. "As Fred said, we have it under control. We have cleared everything with Madam Pomfrey, and she deems it safe."

Albus chuckled and his eyes twinkled. "Then I look forward to being surprised. I shall see you all at dinner then."
Albus was still chuckling as he left the hospital wing, but Godric glared at his retreating form. "If you and I had said that, he would have taken more points and told us not to do it."

"Yes, his bias is appalling. Welcome to Hogwarts circa 1992, were Slytherins are the devil and Gryffindors can do no wrong." Salazar growled sarcastically.

Godric frowned. "And what makes it worse is, he's the Headmaster."

"Indeed."

Severus loudly cleared his throat, which made them realize that they weren't alone, seeing as the children were still present. If Blaise, Neville, and Colin were confused by the short conversation, they didn't let on. Hermione on the other hand, studied them both closely with narrowed eyes, but she remained quiet.

After getting scolded by Poppy one last time, they all left the hospital wing. Dinner was starting soon so the Professors went their separate ways, and the children, Salazar, and Godric headed for the unused classroom on the first floor.

It was a short walk, but Salazar and Godric hung back while the twins distracted the others.

"Did you really lose your diary?" Salazar whispered, keeping an eye on the children ahead of them.

Godric shook his head. "No, I made that up on the spot. It seemed like a valid excuse. Actually, I haven't told you what it is yet and I can't go into detail right now, but suffice to say, it does actually have something to do with the wards. I'm stuck with an idea that I have in mind."

"Are you talking about the dark object detection ward? We were already working on that."

"I know, but this is more in depth. I'm trying to incorporate more family magic into the ward, but I just can't seem to work it out right. I've been stubborn with not telling you about it because of that." He said, looking at Salazar apologetically. "I know you'd never betray me or blabber to others about Gryffindor family magic, but it's just…it's just…"

"Family magic." Salazar said, patting him on the shoulder. "Godric I understand, you don't have to explain, or apologize. I would do the same thing."

Godric gave him a small smile and nodded. "Thank you my friend."

Salazar nodded knowingly as they entered the classroom. The twins, Neville, and Blaise were already getting the giant snake ready as Hermione just shook her head and watched them.

"I can't believe that we are actually going to do this after what the two of them just pulled." She said, looking right at Godric and Salazar.

"You heard what the Headmaster said Hermione." Neville snorted, as he made more purple polka dots on the 'snake'. "He is looking forward to it."

"I know but…"

"Relax." Blaise said in a lazy tone. "We will be fine. By the way Gordy, Draco is very angry at you for stealing his broom, and is…"

"Let me guess," Salazar interrupted in a bored voice, as he rolled his eyes. "Threatening to 'tell his father about this'."
Blaise grinned at him. "Yep!" He said with a nod.

"I figured that was going to happen. Don't worry, I plan on giving him the money to replace it." Godric said with a sigh. "I'll tell him that at dinner."

After that, the conversation turned to the night's upcoming events. Godric told everyone about his conversation with Luna earlier in the day, and everyone stared at each other in horror. Not because of Luna's involvement, but because of their insensitivity over the matter. Hermione started a new round of fretting, and Salazar couldn't believe that he hadn't even thought about her and how she would feel. Godric assured them that Luna was fine with it though, and told them that she was looking forward to be included in their plan. This eased everyone's conscience a little.

However, there was another part of the plan that was unknown by the rest of them, with the exception of Fred and George. This was the part that everyone 'in the know' was hoping would wake Albus up and make him realize that 'Harry' wasn't the bad guy.

At least that's what they all hoped would happen anyway.

The plan was to let the children have enough time to eat, so they decided to wait until dinner was half over, and just so that they would all be together, the Gryffindors decided to eat at the Slytherin table. When they entered the great hall, all of Slytherin house started whispering and staring at Godric and Salazar, but they just shrugged and decided not to pay any attention to them.

The first half of dinner passed peacefully, despite the usual glares and grumbling from the other Slytherins, but as soon as they had scarfed down their dinner, Neville, Blaise, Fred, George, and Godric left. Hermione and Colin left to go sit at the Gryffindor table, and Salazar stayed sitting in his normal spot at the Slytherin table.

Five minutes later, Salazar suddenly jumped up and stood on the bench seat. No one really paid attention to him at first, but he suddenly let out a loud yell, and started waving his hands in the air.

"Attention mere peasants of Hogwarts! I, Harry Potter, now proclaim myself Lord over you all, simply because I'm an evil, no good, slimy Slytherin. Accept me now, or you will perish!"

Remus nearly choked on his dessert, and Minerva just barely managed to hide a snort as Salazar placed his hand on his hips and puffed out his chest. Everyone else though, just stared at him like he'd gone mental. Salazar ignored their looks and continued.

"Due to my evil Slytheryness, and your refusal to do as I say, I shall now summon the giant snake!" He shouted, and this time people began to look slightly afraid.

Salazar started to wave his wand in an over exaggerated, complicated manner, and spoke, "Oh giant snake of Slytherin's, come forth!" He yelled. "Come and claim your muggle-born and half-blood victims! Giant snake! Giant snake, boogity boo, COME FORTH!" He shouted as he waved his arms again.

Despite her earlier protests, Salazar could see Hermione trying to cover her giggles, but Colin jumped up and literally began to run in circles while screaming at the top of his lungs.

"Run! Run! He going to…wait, what's my line again?" He asked with a snicker.

"Kill, Colin. He's going to kill us all." Salazar staged whispered to him, though it was loud enough for the whole great hall to hear.
"Oh yeah! He's going to kill us all! AAARRRGGGHHH!" He screamed, as he ran around in more circles, causing the camera around his neck to bounce around on his chest.

Just then the great hall's doors flew open, and a giant pink and purple polka dotted snake walked… err…slithered?…in. It looked like a few old bed sheets had been sown together and showed signs of horribly done color changing charms. The snake had legs that were clothed in black slacks, (only because Godric, Blaise, and Neville had the sheets draped over their heads), and the snake's 'head' had holes for eyes. Its tongue hung limply out of its mouth, and looked suspiciously like an old frayed shoe string.

By this time the entire great hall was laughing, and even a few of the more stuck-up Slytherins were chuckling. Others however, namely Ron Weasley, didn't seem too impressed.

Salazar snorted, despite trying not to, and continued. "Oh great serpent of Slytherin, get them!"

The 'snake' turned its gaze toward the Ravenclaw table, and Luna giggled, immediately fell over, and laid on the floor in a stiffened positioned. A Ravenclaw prefect by the name of Penelope Clearwater, also started laughing and fell over, as a few others followed their lead.

Colin screamed again, ran over to the snake, took a picture, and also fell over just as the snake turned its gaze towards the Hufflepuff table. Justin Finch-Fletchley, a muggle born, was laughing so hard that he didn't realize that the snake was pointedly starting at him until a friend elbowed him, and he also fell over.

The entire great hall was in an uproar over the whole thing. Most were laughing at the ridiculousness of it, while others were flopping around on the floor and laughing as it turned their way. Some of the Professors were trying to restore order, while others laughed and enjoyed the show. Albus couldn't decide what to do, so he sat at the head table taking it all in with a smile on his face. Severus on the other hand, had already had enough and marched over to the 'snake' and ripped the sheet off of their heads.

"I should have known. Roffin, Zabini, and Longbottom." He drawled, as they grinned at the 'destruction' they had caused, but then Severus turned towards Salazar. "Potter, get down here!"

Salazar tried his best to look sheepish, but failed miserably as he caught sight of Godric sticking his tongue out at Severus, whose back was turned. He started laughing, and half walked, half tripped over his own feet as he made his way over to his friends.

"What is the meaning of this!?” Severus demanded as he shook the sown together sheets in front of his face.

Before he could answer, the great hall's doors flew open again, and Fred and George came charging in. They were waving wooden swords above their heads.

"We will save you students of Hogwarts!" They shouted in unison, but stopped dead when they realized what was going on.

"I think someone beat us to it Fred."

"I think you are right George."

Severus glared at them and summoned the swords. When they sailed to him, he glanced down and sneered. The wooden swords were painted silver, with a painted red ruby on the handle, and the words 'Godric Gryffindor' were burnt into the blade portion.
"What is this nonsense?" He snarled.

"The umm… Sword of Gryffindor." Salazar answered sheepishly, while shuffling his feet. "We remembered what it looked like from last year."

Godric snorted, but remained quiet. The twins grinned and tried to slink away, however Severus glared at them, and they came to stand beside the others.

"CREEVEY!" Severus suddenly shouted. "You get over here as well, and Granger, you too!"

"But she didn't…" Neville started to protest, but he was cut off by another glare from Severus.

The five Gryffindors and three Slytherins stood in front of the angry looking Potions Master, ready for whatever punishment would fall on them, but it was Remus who stood up and spoke.

"Professor Snape, what harm have they done?" He asked as he made his way down to them.

When he got closer, Salazar grinned as he spotted the two shrunken mirrors that resembled buttons, which were attached to his shirt collar. He knew that Sirius, Lily, and James were laughing themselves silly over the whole incident.

"No one has been hurt, and everyone had a good laugh," Remus continued. "That is something that we could all use around here, especially now, seeing as the dementors are doing their best to suck the happiness out of everyone. Don't you agree?"

Severus glared at the werewolf. "No I do not." He answered in a clipped tone. "And Potter has all but admitted that he is the Heir of Slytherin, and I think he needs to be punished." He sneered as he grabbed ahold of Salazar's robes.

"NO! NO!" Salazar cried. "I'm not the Heir of Slytherin! I'm actually the Heir of Gryffindor!"

The entire hall became still and quiet as everyone stared at him, but it was Hermione that broke the silence.

"WHAT!?" She cried. "How do you know that!?"

"A-A book." Salazar answered, as Severus roughly released him and stared at him in 'shock'.

Hermione looked at him curiously. "What book?"

Salazar sighed and turned to face her. "Gordy told me that every ancient wizarding family has a self-updating book that records each birth, death, and marriage. He also said since the Potter Family is old, that we would likely have one. I snuck off the grounds by using the floo in Professor Lupin's office. I went to Gringotts and looked through my family's vault until I found it." He said, and flinched when a hurtful look entered her eyes. He really hated having to lie to the children.

"Why didn't you tell us?" She asked quietly.

"I'm sorry Hermione, but I didn't want people to know. I thought that people would think I was bragging. When I found the book, I began to trace the Potter line back through the centuries. For a while I thought maybe I was the Heir of Slytherin because of the parseltongue, and the fact that I am in Slytherin house. I thought that maybe I was somehow responsible for what happened to Luna, and maybe I didn't know it. I thought I was being controlled somehow, or something…I don't know, but Gordy and I went searching. That's when we found out that I am actually the Heir of Gryffindor." He said quietly. Then he turned to face a shocked looking Albus and continued.
"Godric Gryffindor had two sons. One of them was killed in battle before he had a chance to marry, but the other went on and had a son of his own. From that line, one of Gryffindor's great, great, great, granddaughters married a man named Ignotus Peverell in the mid 1200's, and they also had a son. From there, one of the great-great-however many greats, Peverell granddaughters married a man named Johnathan Harold Potter, and I, Harry Potter, stand before you as the last remaining Heir of Godric Gryffindor. It's the truth, and I would be willing to swear an oath to prove it."

As Salazar finished his mini-speech, everyone in the great hall stared at him. Several Ravenclaws looked intrigued and deep in thought, the Hufflepuffs began whispering amongst themselves, the Gryffindors looked confused, and the Slytherins looked shocked.

Salazar looked up at Remus and sighed again. "I know I was wrong to sneak off school grounds, and I'm sorry I broke into your office Professor Lupin, but I didn't know what else to do. I just…I just wanted to know for sure." He said quietly, as he hung his head and stared at the floor.

"It's all right Harry," Remus said softly as he patted Salazar's shoulders. "I understand why. I just wish you would have told me what you were doing. Perhaps I could have helped."

"I didn't know if you would or not. Adults have never tried to help me before. That's why I have learned to do things myself. It's just easier that way. No one would stick up for me, and until we started this prank, everyone thought it was me. No one believed that I wasn't the Heir, and like I said earlier, I thought I was a horrible person because I thought I was being controlled. I thought that I was somehow doing it. No one would help me. No one would stick up for me, except my friends."

He said with a small smile in their direction. "Even the Headmaster thought it was me. What does that tell you?"

If Remus didn't know the truth, his heart would have broken into a million pieces, but instead he glared up at Albus, who was sitting at the head table staring at Harry in shock. Albus finally stood up though, and cleared his throat as he glanced around the room.

"Harry, I never thought that you were the Heir of Slytherin…"

"LIAR!" Godric shouted. "How dare you sit up there and…"

Godric suddenly found himself ranting silently at Albus, but only because Salazar hit him with a silencing charm.

"I'm sorry Gordy, but I don't want you to get into trouble. This is my fight, not yours." He said, as he glared up at Albus. "But Gordy is right Headmaster. You are a liar. You did think it was me. That's why you have yet to deny my involvement in this mess. I have absolutely no trust in you whatsoever. You can't see past the fact that I'm a Slytherin and not a Gryffindor like you so clearly hoped. Your bias is appalling, and the way you have treated me this year would make my parents roll over in their graves. You sit up there and look down your nose on all Slytherins, just because of the simple fact that they are Slytherins. Not all of us are bad you know. There are good people like Blaise and Gordy for example. It's just that, unlike you, we can see grey. Not all things are black and white, or to put it in terms you are familiar with, not all things are light and dark. You don't like Slytherins because we see grey. We don't conform to your way of thinking, and that bothers you."

"Harry," Albus said with a stern glare. "You are too young to know what…"

"Spare me the 'too young' speech Headmaster. It is you who is too young to know what you are talking about." Salazar said, promptly cutting Albus off.

"I agree." Godric said through gritted teeth.
Obviously the silencing charm had worn off of a clearly irate Godric, who was red faced with anger and near his breaking point.

"Where are you going?" Salazar asked in confusion as Godric stomped away.

"I'm leaving. If I stay here, I'm going to say or do something rash. That man is getting on my last nerve. He is an unworthy Gryffindor. UNWORTHY!" He shouted, as he shook his fist and glared at Albus, but then he turned back to Salazar. "I need to go. I'll be back later."

"All right." Salazar said in bewilderment, as he watched his enraged best friend storm out of the great hall. Salazar knew it was for the best, seeing as Godric had a tendency to speak before thinking about things.

Albus watched him go, but then he sighed. "Harry, Mr. Roffin didn't let me explain." He said, as he leaned against the head table. "I never thought you were the Heir of Slytherin. I just thought you had something to do with the opening of the Chamber."

"So the message left by the Heir of Slytherin, meant...what?" Remus asked.

Albus looked down at them with tired eyes. "I thought that Harry had left the message because the Heir told him to. I thought that Harry was working for him."

Everyone glared at Albus, but Poppy was the one who exploded.

"ALBUS HE'S TWELVE!" She bellowed, as she jumped up and knocked over her chair. "How could you think something like that?!"

"I know. I'm sorry. I was wrong about it all." He said, glancing around the great hall. "Everyone, return to your houses. Professors remain here, and you all as well." He said, pointing to Salazar and the children.

As the great hall slowly emptied out, the students began buzzing about all of this new information, but Salazar didn't mind. He had gotten what he wanted, and Albus had admitted that he was wrong. He didn't know that it was going to go quite this far, or with so many people around, but hopefully now everyone would start opening up their eyes and think for themselves.

Albus sat down heavily and sighed once again. "Harry, I'm sorry for what I have done, but there are things that you don't understand."

"Then explain them to me." Salazar pleaded.

"I can't. You're too young." He said simply. "And I don't think you are ready for it all."

Salazar once again glared at Albus, but he knew full well that the Headmaster wasn't going to say anything in this situation.

Salazar sighed and shook his head. "Then you leave me no choice but to figure things out for myself. Headmaster, I can tell you with full confidence that you will one day regret the decisions that you have made on my behalf. First was sticking me with those magic hating muggles, and secondly was not telling me things I clearly need to know. You and I both know that Voldemort is not dead, and we both know why." He said, leveling his gaze and looking directly into Albus's eyes.

Salazar could have kicked himself. He hadn't meant to say that, and judging by the sudden realization that had sprung up in Albus's eyes, he knew that Albus now knew 'Harry' was more knowledgeable about things than he was letting on about.
The Headmaster studied Salazar for a moment, before looking down his nose at him. "Harry, is there anything you wish to tell me?"

"No." Salazar replied curtly. "If you won't share information with me, then I won't share information with you. You have to give, in order to receive."

"POTTER!" Severus shouted, only to be waved off by Albus.

"No Severus, in a way he is correct, even if he is going about it in a childish manner." Albus said with an amused smile. "As I'm sure you are aware, the young often think they know better than adults. It's a phase that all children go through."

"Indeed it is." Salazar agreed with a smirk. "For once Headmaster, we agree on something. However, there is something I wish to tell you. When the time comes, Voldemort will die by my hand one way or another. As will any Death Eater who stands with him. They will all die."

A true look of concern engulfed Albus and he stared at Salazar in alarm. "Harry, you mustn't kill people. They can change. I've already told you that."

"And I suppose you think Tom Riddle falls into that category." Salazar stated with a chuckle, as Albus reeled back in shock. "He doesn't, I assure you, and he will be dealt with by me, with or without your help. I prefer with your help, seeing as you know more about him than I do, but I guess that's not going to happen. So, I will just have to go it alone."

"You're not alone Harry." Neville suddenly said in a voice that was cold as ice. Salazar had never heard him use it before, and it took him by surprise as he looked at his young friend. "I will be there too. I will fight with you. I don't know who that Tom bloke is, but someone like Bellatrix Lestrange does not deserve to live. Not after what she did to...nevermind that, but she...she is alive...and others...others are barely alive." He said, as his voice cracked and a tear slipped down his cheek. "If war comes again, I'll be there. I'm not...I'm not afraid." He stated firmly, as he drew himself up to his full height.

Neville stood there with a look on his face that dared anyone to tell him otherwise, and Salazar wasn't about to. They were children that had truly been affected by the last war and he knew that they had real grievances against those that had perpetrated it, and for Albus to stand there in front of them pleading for the lives of murders made Salazar absolutely sick.

In all his many years of life, he had seen wars come and go. He knew that only in rare instances did someone truly change their ways. People like Severus did not come along often, and he knew that someone like Malfoy and the Lestranges were not one of them. They craved death and destruction, and would not go down without a real fight.

It hurt Salazar to know that they were only children, but children he knew, could sometimes surprise you. They had a strength that was often times lost to world weary adults, and as Salazar looked into Neville's face, he vowed right then and there to protect and guide not just Neville, but all of them should they choose to fight the war that was surely coming.

He glanced up at Fred and George as they each laid a hand on Neville's shoulders. "Death Eaters killed our Uncles. We know what you are going through Neville, and we will fight too." George said firmly, as Fred nodded in agreement.

Hermione sniffed and wiped the tears from her cheeks. "I don't know a whole lot about the Wizarding War, but my Mum's brother fought in the Gulf War that just ended back in January. I don't know what it means to fight a war, but I will do what I can to help."
"As will I." Colin said quietly. "My great grandfather fought in World War II. He was a photographer. He may not have actually killed anyone, but he still had to carry a gun. He took pictures of things that were horrible, and he saw a lot of things he wished he hadn't. I am proud of my great grandfather though. He passed away before I was born, but my Mum told me stories about him and said I got my love of photography from him. If a war is coming, I will be there, and just like Hermione, I will do what I can."

"Me as well." Blaise said suddenly. "I don't know whether I've been hanging around to many Gryffindors, but I will also do what I can. You can count on me Harry."

Salazar looked at his young friends with tears in his eyes. "I vow to do everything within my power to protect you and your families." He said sincerely, as he gave the twins a knowing look. "You have my word."

"Mine too."

Salazar turned sharply to see that Godric had reentered the great hall at some point, and he nodded at his best friend.

"True Gryffindors." Godric said as he gazed upon them with his arms folded across his chest. "I am proud of you, and you honor Gryffindor with your bravery." He said with a proud smile.

The children looked slightly confused with 'Gordy's' statement, but a strangled sob escaped from Minerva as she dabbed her eyes with a handkerchief. Severus glanced at Salazar, and subtly nodded. Remus and Poppy both looked slightly worried, and they shot a look towards Salazar, but remained quiet. Salazar knew they both had questions, and he was more than willing to answer them later.

Albus on the other hand, looked around at them with an ever increasing look of concern. He cleared his throat, and Salazar stiffened because of what he knew Albus was about to say.

"Harry, while you and your friends' words are admirable, you all have no idea what you are saying. I agree that Voldemort is not dead, and I agree that he may one day return, but we do not know when that day is. However, revenge is a slippery slope, and it will lead you to darkness."

Salazar opened his mouth to retort, but Neville beat him to it. "What do you know about it!?" He shouted. "What have you done to stop him? Tell us, what have you lost to You-Know-Who and his Death Eaters? All my Gram would tell me about you, is that you were 'working on a way to end the war'. Well it seems to me that your way didn't work. If it wasn't for Harry, we'd probably still be dealing with You-Know-Who."

"Voldemort, Neville." Salazar said softly. "Call him Voldemort. He wants people to fear him, and I'm sure he gets a good laugh over the name You-Know-Who. Don't give him what he wants."

Neville fearfully glanced at Salazar, but then a hard look flashed in his eyes. "V-V-Voldemort!" He said defiantly, as Salazar gave him an encouraging smile. Neville turned back towards Albus and glared at him. "So Professor, tell us, what have you lost to Voldemort and the Death Eaters?" He asked again.

Albus sighed and shook his head. "You are only children. You do not understand what you are asking, nor do you understand what you are vowing to do."

"Oh I think we understand a lot more than you think." Godric said. "Your problem is that you can't see past age. Yours, or ours."

"Gordy's right." Salazar said with a chuckle.
"Regardless of who is right or wrong, you are all just children and have no idea what you are talking about. This conversation is now over, and I don't want to hear any more talk about war from any of you." He said sternly as he glared at them. "Now, it is getting late and I suggest you all head to your common rooms."

One would think that Albus's lack of response would make Salazar angry, and normally it would, but in this case Salazar couldn't help but laugh. He knew Albus was only working off preconceived knowledge. Albus truly did think 'Harry' was only twelve, but Albus's problem is that he truly thinks he knows what's best for everyone.

Salazar could throw caution to the wind and tell Albus the truth. Salazar could tell him that he was Salazar Slytherin and that Gordy was Godric Gryffindor, but that would only lead to questions that Salazar didn't want to answer. He didn't want to explain about the Potters, nor did he want to tell Albus about his friendship with Severus, Minerva, Poppy, and Remus. He didn't trust Albus enough to not mess anything up, or to sabotage his plans in some way.

He just couldn't take that chance.

So for now he would bide his time. Albus would eventually confide in someone. Salazar just hoped that the information would be useful and not full of Albus's mindless drivel.

*A/N* Whew! Like i said, it was a long one, and it looks like Godric isn't the only one to open his mouth and insert his foot! Salazar let a few things slip as well, but we shall see if Albus catches on, and Hermione as well. ;) I know it was a bit heavy at the end, but i hope you all enjoyed the laughs! I tried to find a balance, and i think i did ok. Please let me know what you think! Thanks to all of you have have commented, subscribed, and bookmarked. I know i say it all the time, but you guys rock and i am grateful for you all!
"Hermione are you coming?" Neville asked, as he wrapped his red and gold scarf around his neck, at the same time Colin slipped on his heavy winter cloak.

She looked up from her pile of parchment, scrunched up her nose, and shook her head. "No, you guys go on. You know I'm not that interested in Quidditch unless Gryffindor is playing. I'll stay here where it's warm." She said with a laugh.

"You just don't understand Quidditch." Neville said with a teasing grin. "But all right. I know we have a test coming up soon for Potions. We'll let you study, but if you do decide to join us, Harry has made a deal with Hufflepuff to let us all sit with them today, so that's where we will all be."

"All right. Thanks you guys." She said with an appreciative smile.

Neville and Colin were the last to leave the common room, and she watched them go before she shuffled through her stack of parchment. With one more cautious look around to make sure she was alone, she pulled out a single sheet and carefully placed it on the top.

Yesterday, when the boys were preoccupied with getting that silly snake ready, she had finally managed to get the last thing she needed, which was Gordy's middle name. She had asked him what it was, and now she was finally able to, hopefully, solve a puzzle that she had had on her mind for nearly two weeks.

Hermione sighed as she gazed at the random assortment of letters she had written down, but she decided to dismiss what she already had written, and start over.

\[
\text{G-O-R-D-Y} \quad \text{C-I-G-R-D} \quad \text{R-O-F-F-I-N}
\]

"Ok, now I know that Gryffindor just has to be in there." She mumbled. "It's just so obvious."

\[
\text{GRYFFINDOR}
\]

"Gryffindor." She said with a triumphant grin. "But what about the other letters? I know it's an anagram. I just know it!" She exclaimed to the empty room. "Think Hermione, think!"

Now armed with the knowledge of Gordy's middle name, she decided to write the rest of the letters out to make them clearer to her.

\[
\text{C-I-G-R-D-O}
\]

"There is a name there, I just know there is." She mumbled.

Her mind began whisking as she continued to stare at the letters for what seemed like a half an hour, then it suddenly hit her like a stack of books.

"Godric." She breathed, as she stared at the letters with wide eyes. "Godric Gryffindor."
She placed her head down on the table, and shook it from side to side.

"That's not possible. It just can't be. Gordy can't be Godric Gryffindor."

*I am proud of you, you honor Gryffindor with your bravery.*

Gordy's words from the night before floated around in her head, and tears welled up in her eyes as all the signs suddenly came together.

"Harry calls him 'Godric' as a joke, and Gordy calls Harry…Salazar." She said breathlessly.

*I'm the Heir of Gryffindor!*

*Gordy told me about a book.*

*You bloody Gryffindor!*

*The Gryffindor in Slytherin robes.*

*Welcome to Hogwarts circa 1992 where all Slytherins are the devil, and Gryffindors can do no wrong.*

"He knows. Harry knows he's Godric Gryffindor." She said as she paced back and forth across the common room. "And Harry isn't Harry Potter, he's Salazar Slytherin." She gasped, as she stopped dead in her tracks and stared up at the ceiling. "That is a big leap though."

*I read about it in a book.*

*I can teach you a new spell.*

*Do you want to learn a new spell?*

*All right I'll teach you Parseltongue.*

*Spare me the 'too young' speech Headmaster, it is you who is too young to know what you are talking about.*

That last thought made Hermione sink into a nearby chair, and a brief moment of fear pierced her heart.

"He is Salazar Slytherin." She whispered, as her eyes darted around nervously. "What do I do now?"

Hermione glanced around anxiously as she tried to figure out what to do, but then she sighed.

*I'm not going to do anything. She thought. There just isn't enough information for me to act on.*

"I'll watch and wait to see if I need to tell anyone. Maybe someone already knows." She said out loud. "But why, and more importantly how, are two of the four Founders here? Are we in danger? Will Salazar hurt us?"

*No. She thought immediately, as she stood up and started to pace around the room again.*

As she searched her memories, she realized that Harry…err…Salazar…had only ever helped them. Like the time he helped Neville with his wand issues, and all the spells he taught them on the side. He joked with them, played pranks with them, and even let the twins prank him multiple times. He was their friend for sure, but more importantly, he was first and foremost…
A Professor. She thought with a smile.

Her thoughts also strayed to the Chamber and what it all could mean. Salazar supposedly built that Chamber and placed a monster in there to attack muggle borns, but she knew that wasn't true. Salazar was her and Colin's friend, and they both were muggle borns. Even the Headmaster had said that the Chamber and the monster was there to protect the school.

And surely Godric Gryffindor wouldn't go around and let Salazar attack muggle borns. She thought.

There was still a lot of things she didn't understand though. How were they able to be here? They would be over a thousand years old by now. Why were they here? What's the real story with Harry Potter? Being a muggle born, she didn't know much about it. She only knew what she had read. Was there something more to it?

It's possible. She thought. But what about Dumbledore?

She thought back to the confrontation that happened last night and began to fret.

He is an unworthy Gryffindor. UNWORTHY! Gordy…err…Godric Gryffindor had said that.

Harry and Gordy…I might as well keep calling them that…don't seem to like the Headmaster all that much. But why? She asked herself as she walked over to the window and stared out of it.

There was a lot of things she didn't agree with that the Headmaster had done. Like last year, what kind of educator allows dangerous animals to be locked up in a school? None that she could think of really. And what about last night? The Headmaster seems to think low of children just because they are children.

Your problem is that you can't see past age. Yours, or ours.

Gordy had said that too.

"But he is right." Hermione whispered as she looked out over the grounds. "Just because we are children doesn't mean that we can't be useful. We may not know everything, but we can still help in some ways. Especially if someone takes the time to teach us what we need to know. Just because we are children doesn't mean we are stupid. We just need to learn."

In her heart, she knew that Gordy and Harry would never put them in danger, so she wasn't concerned about that. They cared too much about children because, after all, they had started a school.

"I won't do anything. I won't tell anyone what I know." She said firmly.

She walked back to her piece of parchment, wadded it up, and threw it in the fireplace. Then she nodded her head firmly as she watched it burn.

"I will just watch. Someone has to know who they really are, and there must be a really good reason why they are doing what they are doing. There must be a really good reason why Salazar Slytherin is posing as Harry Potter, and it isn't my place to oust them. However, if I feel like someone needs to know or I feel like there is danger, I'll go to Professor McGonagall. She will know what to do." She stated, as she grabbed a poker and poked at the ashes of the parchment so that they would fall to the bottom.

Then she stood up, smiled, and looked toward the window. "Perhaps I'll go watch the game after all."
"Speaker, I can't believe you dragged me out here in this cold freezing weather. Neither Slytherin nor Gryffindor is playing today." Nora said as she coiled around his upper chest in an effort to keep warm. "Why didn't you leave me inside?"

"Because you wanted to come. I tried to tell you that you would be better off in the dorms, laying on your rock."

"Well you shouldn't have listened to me then." She replied with a huff.

"And then you would have done nothing but complain about me leaving you behind." He said, and she hissed loudly in response, but Salazar just laughed. "I do agree with you though my dear. I don't know why they can't play Quidditch in warmer weather."

"Oh shut up Salazar." Godric whispered with chuckle. "I swear, you complain more than an old bitter shrew."

"How dare you compare me with Petunia Dursley!?" He grinned. "I ought to turn you into a pig. That way you'd match Vernon and Dudley."

"Do it speaker!" Nora said gleefully. "That way I can watch Jolly run around squealing!"

Godric wasn't paying attention to them now though, because he was too busy cheering at the fact that Hufflepuff had just scored a goal.

"He completely missed that save! Come on Ravenclaw keeper, get it together!" Blaise yelled.

"I thought we said you all had to cheer for Hufflepuff only?" A grinning sixth year Hufflepuff teased.

"Yeah, that was the requirement in order for you to be able to sit with us." A third year said.

"Well my family did donate the brooms to Ravenclaw." Blaise grinned. "You can't hold it against me."

"All right. I suppose." The sixth year laughed.

"Come on Cedric! Go, go, go! NOOO! UGH!" Colin shouted, at the same time Neville yelled, "That's not right!"

The Hufflepuff stands groaned and booed loudly because the Ravenclaw seeker had just barreled into him and knocked him off course, which made him lose sight of the snitch.

"He had been so close!" Godric shouted, shaking his fist at the Ravenclaw seeker. "I call that dirty!"

"I agree Gordy!" Neville shouted over the noise.

"But it was a nice, legal, play." Blaise laughed, which caused everyone around to lightly swat him with various objects.

Blaise just laughed again, and they once more focused on the game. The entire crowd was bundled up in thick heavy cloaks as they watched the two teams face off, but despite the cold, windy, and cloudy day, everyone was having a good time.

The score was 80 to 90, and Hufflepuff was in the lead. The game had been going on for about forty-five minutes already, and had been highly competitive so far. The brooms did a lot for both
teams, but because of the even advantage, they only had their flying skills and athletic talent to help win the game.

"Hey you lot, what's the score?"

"Hermione!" Neville cried. "You decided to join us after all?"

"Yeah I think I've studied enough about the swelling solution to know it by know."

Salazar turned to look at her. "Are you sure? Because if you don't add enough puffer fish eyes it could explode."

She looked at him and smiled. "You tried to trick me!" She exclaimed. "The recipe calls for three of them, but if you add any more than four to correct any mistakes, then it will explode."

"Very good. Just keep that in mind because knowing Professor Snape, it will be on the test Monday." Salazar said with a wide grin, just as the Hufflepuff stands began booing again.

"Thanks Harry, I will." She said with a thankful smile.

"You're welcome." He said, then he turned to Godric. "What happened? Why are we booing?"

"If you had been paying attention, you would have known that the score is now tied." He replied with a huff.

"I was discussing lessons you idiot!" Salazar shouted.

Godric laughed and grinned. "Oh, well I suppose that is a legitimate reason."

"I should hope so." Salazar said dryly, trying to unsuccessfully kick Godric in the small space.

Hermione giggled as she watched them bicker back and forth. Their attitudes, conversations, and the things they said made a lot more sense now that she had figured out the truth. She knew it was going to be fun to watch the two of them from now on.

Suddenly both the Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw stands were screaming loudly as both team's seekers shot up into the grey sky. Everyone knew they had spotted the snitch, and everyone cheered their hardest for their seeker to get to it first.

But it was not to be.

The excited screams soon turned into terrified ones as a hundred black cloaked figures swooped down from the sky and into the pitch and the stands. Most of the players landed immediately and began running for shelter, but a few of them began to fall.

"Godric the players! Some of them fell off their brooms!" Salazar shouted.

"I'm on it!"

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!"

A ten foot python emerged from the end of his wand and joined the sudden appearance of a cat, a wolf, a doe, a phoenix, and several non-corporal patronuses. Across the pitch, they saw Albus helping Godric with the falling players, and Godric's large hawk patronus joined the fray as soon as those players were safely on the ground.
Spells were flying every which way as the students tried in vain to keep the dementors at bay, but most kept their heads down and covered, as the effects of the dementors began to take hold.

"Harry! The seekers! The seekers!" Hermione cried, grabbing a hold of his robes in panic as she pointed towards the sky.

With one hand on his basilisk hide wand directing his patronus to attack the overwhelming swarm of dementors, he plunged his other hand into his robes and brought out the holly and phoenix feather wand, and managed to slow Cedric's fall with it. He may not have cared about the holly wand before now, but he did have to agree with what Albus had said last year about having a backup.

Unfortunately though, he couldn't save them both.

He watched in horror as Cho Chang, the Ravenclaw seeker, continued to fall. There was nothing more Salazar could do, but Godric saw what was happening.

"NEHUM!"

A bright ball of flames appeared over the Hufflepuff stands, and Godric quickly pointed towards the falling girl. Nehum immediately vanished and reappeared above her. He caught her just in time, and they breathed a sigh of relief as he gently set Cho down. Cedric grabbed her hand and they immediately began running for shelter.

Another bright ball of flames suddenly appeared in the middle of the pitch as Fawkes arrived. He joined Nehum, and the two phoenixes began circling the pitch and started to sing. This seemed to give the ones who had cast the patronuses a recharge, and several more cats, wolves, does, and phoenix patronuses filled the sky. Now that they didn't have any more falling players to worry about, Godric cast several more hawk patronuses, and Salazar was able to cast a few more pythons.

"What can we do!" Neville cried as he stood up and began trying to fight off the dementors.

"Just keep your head down!" Salazar shouted, as he sent a python flying into a dementor that dared to get close to the boy. "There is nothing more that can be done at the moment."

"Will you teach us that spell?" Hermione asked as she pulled Neville back down.

Salazar looked at the two Gryffindors and nodded slightly. "I can try." He answered.

It continued on this way for several more minutes before the dementors fled from the attacking patronuses, but finally the sky was clear of the nasty beings and one by one the patronuses began to disappear.

All around them students were crying, and several were bleeding from the minor cuts and scrapes they had received from falling and hitting their heads. Salazar looked around and took a deep breath.

"Ok you lot, listen up!" He shouted, while clapping his hands to get everyone's attention. "Those of you that require medical attention, over there!" He said, pointing towards one side of the stands. "Those of you who do not, please make your way back to your common room in an orderly fashion. If you have chocolate, eat some because it will help you feel better. If you have enough to share with your house mates, please do so. Now is not the time to be selfish with your candy stashes."

Nearly all of them nodded numbly and began doing what Salazar had told them too, but one second year Hufflepuff by the name of Zacharias Smith stood up and glared at him.

"And who are you to tell us what to do?" He said defiantly. "You're just a stupid Slytherin and you
don't belong over here anyway."

"Shut up Smith!" Susan Bones snapped. "You're nothing but a bleeding coward! I saw you hiding *under several first* years! He saved your unworthy bum, and all that he said makes sense and is correct!"

"Don't talk to me that way Bones!" He shouted. Then he turned, and stomped away.

Susan rolled her eyes and turned to face Salazar and the others, who were glaring at Smith's retreating form.

"Sorry about him. He is full of himself because he claims to be a descendent of Helga Hufflepuff, and he believes we should all fall down and worship at his feet. Most of us think he's lying or mental."

Godric shot Salazar a look and snorted. "He certainly doesn't act the way Helga did. I vote both, lying *and* mental."

Salazar just shook his head. "Possibly, but let's get you all sorted out." He said, looking Susan over with a sharp eye. "Are you all right?"

She smiled at him and nodded. "Yes, I think so. I just have a small scrape on my arm, but I'll be all right. I'm going to head to my dorm. I have chocolate, and I'll be sharing it with my dorm mates."

"Very good. Thank you. I'm sure Professor Sprout will be along soon, so if you need anything, make sure you speak up."

"I will, thanks Harry. I saw what you and…Gordy…right?" She asked, and Godric nodded. "I saw what you all did, and I thank you for helping us."

"It was no trouble." Godric said with a smile. "But run along now, we need to attend to those who are hurt."

"You're right. Thank you again." Susan replied with a grateful smile. Then she headed off to find her friends.

Salazar and Godric glanced around. The Hufflepuff stands were nearly empty now, and there was only the ones needing medical attention left. Godric went over to them, called for Nehum, and told them to grab a hold of his tail so that he could transport them to the hospital wing.

Most of them stared in awe at the phoenix, and were probably wondering why a Slytherin, of all people, would have one, but they complied and Godric watched as they left.

Meanwhile, Salazar turned to look over Hermione, Blaise, Colin, and Neville to make sure they weren't hurt. He sighed with relief when he realized they were all right.

"Hermione, Colin, and Neville you all need to find the rest of Gryffindor house and go with them. Professor McGonagall is likely taking a head count, and will no doubt worry about you if she can't find you. Blaise, head down with them and find Slytherin house. Professor Snape is likely doing the same. We will be right behind you."

They all nodded and began heading off in that direction. Salazar watched them go, and took the time to look around again. The pitch was nearly empty, but there were a few stragglers that checking up on friends from other houses. However, they soon moved off and the pitch as finally empty. He turned to Godric, who was also watching the stragglers.
"We need to go. We may be needed elsewhere."

"This should not have happened Salazar." He answered gravely as he stared out over the pitch. "The Ministry should be held accountable for this. Hogwarts is plenty safe, and there is no need for those things to be here."

"I know, but let's get going." Salazar whispered as they began to head down the stairs. "I don't know about you, but I could use some chocolate. I don't have any though."

"I don't have any either, but I can sneak off the grounds, return to my adult form, and get some from Honeydukes."

"Use my personal tunnel. I'll also give you some galleons when we get back to the common room. Try to get as much chocolate as you can. Slytherin house isn't likely to share."

"I know." Godric whispered sadly.

They were halfway down the stairs when they ran into Professor Sprout breathlessly making her way up.

"Mr. Potter, Mr. Roffin!" She exclaimed. "Are you two all right?"

"Yes ma'am." Salazar answered. "We are the last ones down. I have sent most of the students to the Hufflepuff common room, but those that needed medical attention have already been sent to the hospital wing. I hope you will forgive me for taking charge, but I told your house to remain there until you arrived. I also told them to eat some chocolate, and to share with those that don't have any."

She stared at him for a few moments, but then she slowly nodded. "How many were hurt?"

"Ten were hurt badly enough to go to Madam Pomfrey." Godric answered. "Most just had a few scrapes, but those with head wounds and more serious cuts were transported by Nehum, my phoenix, to the hospital wing."

Her eyes widened at his words. "That was your phoenix alongside Fawkes?"

"Yes ma'am." He answered simply as they reached the bottom.

"I-I saw a large snakes and hawks defending the Hufflepuff stands. Was...was that...you two?"

"Yes." Salazar replied quietly.

She stared at them again with wide eyes, but before she could speak, they heard someone approaching from behind.

"POTTER! ROFFIN!"

The three of them turned sharply to find Severus quickly making his way towards them. He looked shaken up, but otherwise seemed to be all right.

"Severus," Professor Sprout began, stepping in front of the two Founders. "Please don't be hard on them. They helped so much. It was them. The snake and the hawk. I don't know how they were able to cast those patronuses, but they defended my Hufflepuffs and helped them afterwards. Please Severus, I beg you. Don't be hard on them." She asked, giving him a pleading look.

Severus glanced from Professor Sprout to Salazar and Godric and nodded curtly.
"Very well." He answered.

"Thank you." She said with a breathless sigh. Then she turned to the 'children'. "I'll take my leave now. Mr. Potter, Mr. Roffin, I know it's not much, but it's all I can do to show my gratitude. Thirty points to the both of you."

They both smiled kindly at her and nodded. "It was no trouble at all, but thank you." Godric said. She nodded her head in acknowledgement, then hurried towards the castle. When she was out of earshot, Severus spoke.

"Sir, have you seen Mr. Zabini?"

"Yes, Blaise was with us and he is fine. We sent him to the common room. If she hasn't found them already, let Minerva know that Hermione, Colin, and Neville were with us, and they were also all right. I sent them on ahead to Gryffindor tower." Salazar answered, and Severus nodded.

"What is going to be done about this situation?" Godric asked curiously.

"I don't know for sure, but to be honest, I've never seen Albus so angry. As soon as the danger passed, he made sure the rest of us in the staff stands were all right, then he stormed off down the stairs. My guess is, he is going to the Ministry."

"I don't doubt it." Salazar replied. "I know he didn't want those nasty things here anymore than the rest of us did."

"I agree. I'm heading to Honeydukes to get some chocolate. The Fidelius Charm on my house negates the anti-apparition and disapparition jinxes on the grounds. I'll just apparate from there. I don't want to get near those dementors, and your personal tunnel runs right into them at the front gate."

"What about the galleons I need to give you?"

"Salazar, don't worry about that. I have the money. It's fine." Godric replied, as he began heading into the forest. They watched him go, but then Salazar sighed heavily and turned to Severus. "How many were hurt?"

"Several from Ravenclaw and two from Slytherin were almost kissed, but they will be fine. Over twenty students were hurt badly and were sent to Poppy."

"All right, she may need some help. I'll keep an eye on Slytherin house, but I need you to go and see what you can do to help her. In fact, do you know the potion that we were working on over the summer?"

"The one that is the equivalent to phoenix tears?" Severus asked with a hint of excitement in his voice.

"Yes. Please go to my flat and get it. It could be of use here, if Nehum and Fawkes aren't already helping. Use Godric's home to get off the grounds. I know he won't mind if you do."

"Yes sir. What of letting Minerva know about Granger, Longbottom, and Creevey?" Severus asked.

"I'll let her know, if she doesn't already." Salazar answered.
Severus nodded, and then he too headed into the forest towards Godric's house. Salazar sighed, bowed his head against the cold, bitter wind, and began heading up the long path towards the castle.

He did see Minerva at the front doors when he got there, but thankfully Hermione had already found her. When Salazar finally arrived in the Slytherin common room though, he was thoroughly disgusted by what he saw.

Several of the older students were hogging their own chocolate, and not sharing with the younger children who didn't have any. Draco and company were downing chocolate frog after chocolate frog, and were barely taking a break to breathe. Salazar knew the effects of the dementors were bad, he was feeling them himself, but this was downright shameful.

"Harry, there you are." Blaise said quietly, coming up behind him.

"Are you all right?"

"Physically yes, but…” Blaise trailed off and shook his head.

"I know. Just sit down." Salazar whispered. "Gordy has snuck off the grounds and has gone to Honeydukes in Hogsmeade for some chocolate. He will…"

"Give it back Flint!" Someone suddenly shouted.

Salazar looked up to see Marcus Flint snatching a few bars of chocolate out of the hands of some of the known neutral Slytherins. He drew his wand, and nearly stomped over to the boy.

"You heard them Flint. Give it back." He said in a low dangerous voice. He was not in the mood to play nice right now.

Marcus turned to look at him and started laughing. "Potter, your little guard dog isn't here to save your skin. What did he do, fall prey to the dementors? I suggest you mind your own business."

"That is theirs, you need to back off!"

"You know Potter," Flint said tossing the chocolate bars back at the neutral Slytherins. "I don't know how you ended up in Slytherin. You don't even act like one. Your emotions show plainly on your face, and it is perfectly clear where you stand. You should try a little more subtlety."

"And you and your little buddy Montague, who I know is standing behind me, need to try a little more common sense. You do not want to irritate me right now."

Flint narrowed his eyes. "You're not a Slytherin Potter, and you are fixing to be very sorry for getting sorted into this house." He said dangerously. "NOW!"

Salazar instantly dropped to the floor, which caused whatever spell Flint and Montague had cast to hit each other. They cried out in pain and fell on their bums, but Salazar rolled over onto his knees, stood up, and immediately transfigured both boys into very ornate looking dark wooden chairs, with red and gold color padding for the seats and back.

Blaise started laughing and levitated one of the chairs over to the fireplace and sat down in it. Salazar glared at the two chairs and also levitated the other one to the fireplace, but he didn't sit down. Instead, he looked around with a scowl on his face.

"Pigs, the lot of you. Oh how Slytherin house has fallen. Most of you are a disgrace." He spat. "To
those who are sharing, I thank you. To those who are not, shame on you and your selfishness."

"Are we redecorating?" An amused voice asked from the common room door.

Salazar didn't need to turn around to know who it belonged to, he just continued to glare at the pigs that were clearly on display. "I'm thinking about it. Did you get enough?"

"Yeah, after I explained what happened to the owners, I bought all of what Honeydukes had. They even threw some chocolate in for free. I've already been by the hospital wing to drop some off in case Madam Pomfrey needed it. She said Ravenclaw was bad off, and that she and Flitwick would be passing it all out to them soon."

"All right." Salazar said. "How many Slytherins are in the hospital wing?"

"Only the two who were almost kissed. Adrian Pucey and Pansy Parkinson, though they were being nasty to Madam Pomfrey and were trying to demand her full attention. I did her a favor and stunned them before I left."

"Godric how could you do that! They were almost kissed!" He shouted.

"I don't care!" He shot back. "Those nasty, arrogant, pompous arses weren't even displaying signs of it like the others! It looked to me like they just said that to get some attention! You and I both know the signs, and they were not showing any!"

Salazar sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "I'm sorry. Perhaps you're right, and honestly, I wouldn't put it past those two to do something like that."

"I know I'm hot-headed Salazar, but I'd hope you'd give me a little more credit than that." Godric replied gruffly.

He looked at his friend apologetically and nodded. "I'm sorry. It's just…"

"The dementor's effects are getting to us both right now, don't apologize. It's fine." Godric said, taking a deep breath as he leaned against a table. "Here, eat this." He continued, placing a chocolate frog into Salazar's hand. "Nice chairs by the way."

Salazar passed the chocolate frog off to a nearby first year who still looked shaken up, and chuckled a bit. "Yeah, I call them Flint and Montague."

"And they are very comfortable." Blaise added, as he began to help the two Founders pass out chocolate frogs and bars to those who needed it.

Some in the house, including Blaise, watched them carefully though. Blaise knew that they called each other Salazar and Godric as a joke, but this time didn't seem like a joke and he began to wonder if there was more to everything than what meets the eye.

Draco and company narrowed their eyes at Blaise, Salazar, and Godric, and Salazar didn't need to use legilimency to know what they were thinking. They eyed all the chocolate that Godric had dumped out on the table, and he knew that Severus would be hearing about Godric's little foray off of the grounds. He just couldn't help but chuckle.

When they made sure everyone that needed the chocolate had it, they sat down in the new chairs. Salazar had no intentions of leaving the two fifth years that way for very long, just long enough to give pause to those who dared to cross him. He was tired of the abuse that was constantly being thrown his way, and he was not going to put up with it anymore. Flint and Montague were not in
any pain, but as he and Blaise took their new 'seats', those that were in the common room glanced in their direction with a mixture of fear and loathing from those who were not so friendly, and gratitude from those that were.

Blaise continued to watch Salazar and Godric closely though, and the tension that was between them moments ago started to vanish as they sat and ate their chocolate frogs. It completely broke however, when Blaise looked down at the recent frog he had just opened.

"Here Gordy. I think you should have this card. He does seem to be your hero after all."

Godric gave him a quizzical look and took it from him, then he began to laugh loudly. "Godric Gryffindor." He said simply.

"Really!?" Salazar asked with excitement, and Godric passed the card off to him. "Hmm, you know, it is my duty as a true Slytherin to give this card the treatment it deserves." He said with a playful grin as he took a quill out of his pocket.

They watched as he made a few scribble marks, and then he held it up with a snort. Godric's image was now scowling at them because of the defacement, and the fact that Salazar had drawn devil's horns above him.

Godric began laughing loudly again and took the card and quill from him. He made a few scribble marks of his own, then held it up to reveal the pitchfork that he had drawn. Blaise took it from with a grin, made his own scribble marks, and placed it on the table to reveal the tail he had drawn.

Godric's image was scowling worse than ever now, and he shook his tiny little fist at them. This only made the three of them laugh even more, but Blaise caught something in the image that made him pause, and he stared at it.

"What is it Blaise?" Godric asked, as he caught the look on the young lad's face.

"What? Oh nothing." He replied glancing at Godric. "It just looked like he laughed for a moment. It was rather odd, but I think it's my mind playing tricks on me."

"You're tired." Salazar commented.

Blaise sighed and rubbed his head. "Yeah I think so. Do you think I could take an hours nap without waking up to find the common room in shambles because of the two of you?" He asked with a small chuckle.

"I think so." Salazar answered with an amused twinkle in his eye. "You go on and get some sleep. We will be fine."

Blaise nodded, picked up the card with a grin, and headed for the dorms. When he got to his bed, he laid down with a tired sigh and looked at the still scowling image. He lied about it laughing of course, but there was something in the image's eyes that had made him pause. If he pictured the image without the red beard and long hair, the image would look just like an older version of Gordy. He had seen the same exact scowl on Gordy's face before. In fact, he had seen it just last night, and the day that Draco called Hermione a mudblood and was bragging about his broom.

Blaise didn't know what to think about this new situation, and as he fell asleep, he decided that he would take his thoughts to Hermione and get her opinion on them.

Despite what had happened that morning, Neville didn't feel like sitting still in the common room and
decided to wander about the castle in order to clear his head. Colin had decided to take his mind off things by developing rolls of film from the last few weeks. Hermione was currently curled up in an armchair by the fireplace reading, and Fred and George were busy trying to lighten the mood of everyone in Gryffindor Tower by playing pranks on each other.

Neville just didn't feel like sharing in their laughter at the moment. He had a lot of things on his mind, and most notably, the confrontation with Dumbledore the night before.

He was angry with the Headmaster for his remarks last night. How could the man stand in front of him and plead for the life of someone like Bellatrix Lestrange? He didn't have the answer to that question, but he liked what Harry had to say on the matter. Neville didn't know if he had it in his heart to take a life, he was only twelve after all, but he knew that if he ever came face to face with Bellatrix that he would have a few things to say.

He also knew that he'd probably find himself at the end of her wand for doing it.

Neville didn't care though. His Gram had been straightforward when he had asked for the details about what had happened to his parents. He had only been seven at the time, but even as shy as he was back then, he made a vow to at least look Bellatrix in the eyes and tell her exactly what he thought of her.

That's all he wanted really.

Harry was a fighter, and Neville desperately wanted to be a fighter too. He knew that if he stuck with Harry that he may possibly get the chance he was hoping for, and if he listened to Albus Dumbledore he would not.

Neville knew, even if she didn't speak it out loud, that his Gram blamed the Headmaster for his parent's condition, and it was for that reason his Gram had a very low opinion of the man. Neville himself had always held off judging him, but after last night, he agreed with his Gram and decided to write her and let her know exactly what had taken place the night before. With that decision firmly in his mind, he changed directions and began the long trek back to the common room.

Albus sighed wearily as he looked around at the staff that had gathered in the staff lounge. It was late in the evening, just before curfew, and he had called this meeting to discuss his conversation with the Minister earlier that day.

Which, unfortunately, wasn't much.

"Before we get started on the real reason we are here, Poppy, may I inquire about those still in the hospital wing?"

"Of course Albus." She replied with a nod. "Severus has been a major help for me today. Calming draughts were flying off the self and chocolate was being devoured at a steady rate. Severus was able to help me by attending to those needs, while I concentrated on the more serious things. Those who were nearly kissed are recovering at an excellent rate, and should be released tomorrow. Other than them, no one else warranted a stay in the wing."

"Very good. I'm glad to hear that. Severus, thank you for helping." Albus said tiredly, and Severus nodded in acknowledgement. "Also, during the attack there were two patronuses that I didn't recognize. A snake and a hawk. Does anyone have any idea where they came from?"

Severus, Remus, Poppy, and Minerva glanced nervously at one another, while everyone else shook their head. However, Professor Sprout looked at Albus and nodded.
"I do Headmaster." She stated softly. "It was Mr. Potter and Mr. Roffin. From my vantage point I could see those patronuses were protecting my Hufflepuffs. When the attack was over, I quickly made my way over to the stands and came upon Mr. Potter and Mr. Roffin making their way down. They told me it was them, and I also learned that the other phoenix that showed up belongs to Mr. Roffin. His name is Nehum. Mr. Roffin used his phoenix to transport the Hufflepuffs that were hurt to Poppy."

"Ten students did arrive by phoenix. That phoenix also willingly gave up tears to help with the more serious that were wounded." Poppy added. "Severus did help with that as well. He provided a potion that is the equivalent to phoenix tears. That is why no one but those who were almost kissed are still under observation."

"Interesting." Albus mumbled with a nod in Severus's direction, but then his gaze traveled to the ceiling as he got lost in his own thoughts.

"Albus, how can two second years produce full corporal patronuses, and multiple ones at that?" Flitwick asked in surprise.

"I don't know Filius." Albus said shaking his head, but then he turned to Professor Sprout. "Pomona, did you think get any inclination that Harry and Mr. Roffin were lying?"

Minerva's eyes became hard and cold, and Severus's jaw stiffened. Remus had to catch himself and force the growl that he was about to let out, and Poppy took several deep breaths and clinched her fists together.

"No Albus. In fact, I verified the story with my Hufflepuffs. It was all the same. Mr. Potter and Mr. Roffin cast the charm. It was them. My Hufflepuffs that were hurt confirmed that Mr. Roffin called for his phoenix. They weren't lying." She said, and told the story about what Salazar did in the aftermath of the attack.

"What's the matter Albus?" Minerva began in a snippy tone. "Are you upset that a Slytherin has a phoenix bonded to him, or are you upset because Mr. Potter acted like an adult?"

Remus covered a snort with a cough, Poppy smirked, Severus bowed his head and hid a grin behind his coffee cup, but Albus glared at her. Minerva didn't care and glared back at him. She was tired, and all she wanted to do right now was to go to bed and forget this day had happened. She did not have the patience to listen to yet another 'Harry bashing' session.

"Is the phoenix truly bonded to Mr. Roffin, or is the phoenix under some kind of spell?" He asked in a simple matter-of-fact tone.

"Now you're grasping at straws Albus." Minerva said hotly as she stood up to leave. "You know, as well as anyone, that phoenixes can't be tricked in anyway what-so-ever. I'm leaving. Poppy will you be a dear and fill me in tomorrow?"

"Of course Minerva." Poppy said, even though the Medi-witch looked like she wanted to follow the Deputy Headmistress out the door.

Albus watched her stomp out of the room and slam the door, then he sighed and looked at the remaining staff and shook his head.

"Cornelius has once again shut down my proposal to have the dementors removed, even after today's attack. I felt sure that this would have made him bow to the pressure, but it has not. Now we must take drastic measures."
"What are you proposing?" Remus asked, as he leaned back in his chair.

"I'm afraid we may have to go about this…the Slytherin way." Albus said with a sigh.

That caught Severus's attention and he looked at Albus with a raised eyebrow.

"Severus, I need you to begin encouraging your Slytherins to write home to their parents. Mention to them that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one. The one in this case being, Harry. There is no reason for the dementors to be here just because one boy might be in danger."

"I understand Headmaster. Once I get the pure-bloods stirred up over this, the Ministry will back down from the pressure. I can't see The Minister saying no to the Malfoys."

"Neither can I. Now, this does not mean that I don't care about Harry. I do, but Hogwarts is plenty safe enough, and I don't think we have to worry about Sirius Black coming here to kill anyone." Albus said.

"I agree with you Albus." Remus added. "If Sirius were to come here, I'm sure that we all can capture him quickly. He is just one man."

"Indeed." Albus said with a nod. "Filius, Pomona, I'd also like you to encourage your houses to do the same. Have them write home. These things can't be allowed to stay here."

After what happened today, no one wanted to argue that point. The dementors were an added security measure, but the risk of having them here was just too great.

Severus and Remus both glanced at each other. They knew this would be good news to Salazar and Godric. However, this did prove to be a slight problem, considering that there was a certain rat that was just waiting for the opportunity to run.

Time was growing short for Peter Pettigrew.

Chapter End Notes

That's it for this chapter! I know some of you are asking why Godric's patronus is a hawk and not a lion. Simple answer, because it's ALWAYS a lion in fanfic! I wanted something different, but just to let you know, his animagus form is also a hawk. Salazar's is a snake, just like the house animal, so i figured i'd change Godric's up a little. Anyway hope you enjoyed, and please remember to leave me a comment to let me know what you think! ❤❤❤'s to you all!
Boggarts and Horcruxes

*A/N* You guys, I just want to warn you that this chapter is packed full with a lot of info!
"*grins*

Chapter 28

Boggarts and Horcruxes

When Severus left the staff meeting that night, he wasted no time in telling both the Founders about Albus's 'drastic measures'. Salazar nearly laughed himself silly over the fact that Albus considered acting like a Slytherin to be 'drastic measures', but in truth, he really wasn't surprised. Godric on the other hand, laughed and said he was astonished that Albus would 'stoop so low' that he would even consider acting in a 'Slytherin manner'.

It was typical Albus overreacting to the silliest things, but at least everyone had a good laugh over it. However, despite their feelings for the Headmaster, they did agree that this was a very good decision and they certainly weren't going to stand in the way of it.

One thing they didn't laugh about was the fact that this meant they needed to implement the plan they had come up with for capturing Pettigrew. It wasn't a perfect plan as it was, and with time running out, Salazar was beating himself up over the fact that he had not started it sooner.

It had already been three days since the attack, and owls had been coming and going ever since. After Poppy had filled her in about what was said that night, Minerva also encouraged Gryffindor to write letters to their parents as well. Rumor had it that the twins laid it on pretty thick in their letter, and Fudge was now walking around with his ears still ringing from the howler Molly Weasley had sent him.

'Harry Potter' himself had added to the pressure of it all by sending Hedwig off with a letter of his own addressed to Fudge, and it was that letter that had been printed in Tuesday's morning addition of*The Daily Prophet*, much to Salazar's shock.

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*Harry Potter Speaks Out About Dementor Attack At Hogwarts!*

The following letter was addressed to Minister Fudge, and what The-Boy-Who-Lived has to say may shock and surprise you!

*Dear Minister Fudge,*

*My name is Harry Potter, and I am a second year Slytherin at Hogwarts. Rumors have been swirling for weeks that the dementors have been put here to keep Sirius Black from murdering me in my sleep. Please pardon my unwavering opinion, but Minister, I find this absolutely appalling.*

*As I'm sure you're aware, the dementors came into the grounds Saturday afternoon and attacked the entire student body during a Quidditch match. Several students were nearly kissed, and I find myself shaking my head in shame that it even happened in the first place.*

*If the rumors are true and it's because of your concern for my safety that these unrelenting beings*
are here, then I say they need to be removed from Hogwarts immediately. My safety is simply not worth putting the rest of the students in danger.

Hogwarts is plenty safe enough without the added 'protection' of the dementors. Between the wards, enchantments, competent Professors, magical children that can be found everywhere, and the Headmaster, one raving lunatic doesn't stand a chance of even getting near me.

Especially since we have Helga Hufflepuff's badgers to protect us all.

Let me explain. You see, last year during the Halloween feast, someone let a troll into the castle as a joke. Word got out that it was here, and all students were sent to their houses as a precaution. Unfortunately, the troll was in the dungeon and when Slytherin house was sent to our common room, we ran right into the fully grown beast.

The protective magic of Helga Hufflepuff was activated, and every stone that the castle is made of turned solid black. The troll became stuck to the wall, as if pushed there by an unseen hand, and small yellow badgers appeared on every wall of the castle as they raced from every direction to annihilate the threat.

And I do mean annihilate.

I do not need to explain what a badger does to its prey. I'm sure you can imagine the scene that followed as the badgers attacked the troll, so I think it's safe to say that Sirius Black does not stand a chance against the Hufflepuff badgers.

With that said, please take into consideration the removal of the dementors. We really don't want to take the chance that they will attack the student population again.

Sincerely,

Harry James Potter

Readers, seeing as there have been many cries from concerned parents, and now with this letter from Harry Potter himself, we at The Daily Prophet are pleased to inform you that Minister Fudge has decided to remove the dementors from Hogwarts. The Minister had this to say about the situation.

"I have looked at all the evidence and spoken with Dumbledore on many occasions. I feel confident that the school is safe without the added presence of the dementors. Especially after the attack and having received the letter from Mr. Potter. The dementors will be removed this coming Friday afternoon."

What the Minister had to say is reassuring and we are happy that this situation has finally been resolved, but we at The Daily Prophet are now more interested in these Hufflepuff badgers. If anyone has any information, please stop by our offices located in Diagon Alley.

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"Well you have certainly opened up a can of worms with that Harry." Blaise said with a snicker as he took a sip of his morning pumpkin juice. "Dumbledore doesn't look very happy with you at the moment."

The three of them looked up from their usual places at the Slytherin table, and noticed that Albus was giving Salazar a very stern gaze. Salazar honestly couldn't understand why. He had not expected the Minister to turn over his letter to the paper, but at least the combined efforts of all the students, parents, Professors, and yes, even 'Harry Potter', had gotten the job done.
"Maybe he's upset because you didn't list him as a competent Professor." Godric snorted, while trying to hide a smirk. "Or maybe he's upset that you mentioned the troll incident."

"Perhaps, but you know what this means, don't you?" Salazar asked, looking at Godric with a sigh. "It means we will probably have to sit through another hour long lecture tonight about 'how we are too young to get involved with such things', even though it was his idea to get the students involved in the first place."

"I know. It seems that our detentions with the Headmaster are going to consist of nothing but lectures. I'd much prefer scrubbing the corridors with toothbrushes and being overseen by Mr. Filch."

Blaise burst out laughing. "You guys are weird. I'd much rather prefer the lectures."

"Not when someone is talking at you." Salazar replied. "There is a difference between someone talking to you verses at you. To you is a conversation, at you can quickly turn into something with a condescending tone, for lack of a better explanation."

"Do I talk at you Speaker?" Nora asked, as she and Hedwig shared her bowl of mice.

Hedwig hooted softly and bobbed her head as Salazar grinned at her. "All the time my dear."

The three of them began laughing as she hissed loudly. "I wasn't talking to you Pigeon, but I suppose someone has to keep Speaker in line."

Godric chuckled, but Blaise looked at him curiously. "Gordy, did you understand her?"

Both Salazar and Godric looked at each other quickly, but then back at Blaise. "Enough to know what she said." Godric said as he shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

"He is coming along really well with his lessons. He doesn't have Fred and George in his class." Salazar answered with a snicker.

Blaise eyed the two of them suspiciously, but then he smiled. "I suppose your right. Nora, how many times did you threaten to bite them if they didn't pay attention?"

"Too many to count Zabby." She said offhandedly as she ate.

"My dear, don't talk with your mouth full, it's unbecoming."

She mumbled something that they didn't catch, but Salazar rolled his eyes and turned to Hedwig.

"Hedwig, I have a letter for you. You'll know who to take it to."

She hooted knowingly, finished the last bit of her mouse, took the letter, and they watched as she flew away.

"Harry, I think it's time to get to class." Blaise said as he drained the last little bit of his pumpkin juice and stood up.

Salazar sighed. "Yeah I think so. We have Defense, and rumor has it Professor Lupin has a boggart."

"Interesting." Godric said with an intrigued expression. "Any idea what you're afraid of?"

Salazar looked at Godric with a small smile. "I used to my friend." He said, as he patted Godric's shoulder meaningfully. "Now though, I really can't say for sure. It should be interesting."
"Let me know." Godric replied with a knowing smile.

Salazar nodded, and both he and Blaise left the great hall and began heading towards the Defense classroom. As they walked along in silence, Blaise studied him out of the corner of his eye and wondered when Harry had ever come into contact with a boggart.

"Who can tell me what a boggart is and what it does?" Remus asked, looking out over the seated class.

Salazar smiled when, as usual, Hermione's hand sprang into the air.

"Miss Granger?"

She gave Remus a bright smile before launching into her answer. "Boggarts turn into whatever you fear the most. No one knows what a boggart really looks like."

"Every good Miss Granger. Five points to Gryffindor." Remus said with a nod. "Now, I have managed to bring this wardrobe, which contains a boggart, into the classroom. I want all of you to stand up and move to the back of the class."

They did, and Remus waved his wand at the desks, which made them scoot along towards the edges of the classroom.

"Now," Remus continued as he paced the front of the room. "The best way to finish off a boggart is to turn it into something funny because laughter is the only way to finish them off. The way to do this is to point your wand at it and say the incantation of 'riddikulus'. Let's practice that a bit. Repeat after me…riddikulus."

Salazar secretly watched as they all repeated the wand movement and incantation. He was pleased to see that most of the students were doing it correctly, however Crabbe and Goyle kept wanting to use their wands as swords.

Neville on the other hand, had a determined look on his face, and Salazar was happy to note that he was doing everything correctly.

When they were done, Remus called for their attention and asked, "All right, who would like to go first?"

It was no surprise that no one volunteered, so Remus took it upon himself to choose.

"Ok Miss Granger, since you answered my question correctly, why don't you take a stab at it?" he asked with a gentle smile.

Hermione took a deep breath, muttered something to herself, and stepped forward. Remus opened up the wardrobe with a flick of his wand, and to Salazar's surprise, Minerva stepped out.

"Miss Granger, I had such high hopes for you, but you have greatly disappointed me. You have failed everything!"

Hermione yelped and then halfheartedly squeaked, "Riddikulus."

Nothing happened, and the Boggart Minerva smirked. "You're no good. You can't even…"

"Riddikulus!" Hermione shouted with more force, and Boggart Minerva stumbled backwards and landed hard on her bum.
"Every good!" Remus cried with a loud laugh. "Mr. Malfoy! Your next!"

"I can do better than the mudblood." He whispered to Pansy, who snorted.

Salazar gave him a disapproving glare and had to restrain himself from hexing the brat.

Draco stepped up to the boggart, which instantly turned into his father. Boggart Lucius was dressed in rags and he looked highly dirty and frumpled.

"Son, we have no more money." He said in a raspy voice. "We have no more influence. It's gone. All gone."

Draco stared at Boggart Lucius with wide eyes and paled drastically, but then he raised his wand.

"Riddikulus!" He cried, and suddenly Boggart Lucius was standing there in gaudy, rich looking robes. Draco laughed, along with several others, but most of the students rolled their eyes.

"That was too easy." He said with a smirk.

Several more people went next, and Salazar saw everything from banshees, which Nora thought was Molly Weasley's sister, to mummies, spiders, and snakes, which greatly amused her.

When Neville's turn came, Salazar became alarmed when a sneering Bellatrix Lestrange suddenly appeared. Neville started shaking badly when she spoke.

"Longbottom, want to end up like Mummy and Daddy?" She taunted in a little girlish voice. "Worthless blood traitor! You deserve it!" She shouted.

Salazar was ready to intervene, but at the last second he stopped when Neville drew himself up to his full height.

"You'll NEVER lay a hand on me or my family again!" He yelled with confidence. "Riddikulus!"

Bellatrix suddenly stood there clad head to toe in red and gold robes, and she shrieked and began tap dancing around as if you get away from the offending colors.

A triumphant smile appeared on his lips as the class roared with laughter, then it continued on.

Crabbe, Goyle, Pansy, and several Gryffindors found out that their greatest fear was Voldemort. To Salazar, the man looked just like he did at the end of the war. He was human, with dark greyish hair and red eyes, but he looked slightly disfigured because of the toll all the dark magic he performed had taken out on his body. With all of those that had Voldemort as a boggart though, Remus had to intervene because the children were reduced to tears.

Blaise found out that his boggart was also Voldemort, and Remus made a move to intervene, but Blaise waved him off.

"It's ok Professor." He said with a shaky voice. "Let me try."

Remus nodded and retreated back, and Salazar watched as Boggart Voldemort sneered at the young boy.

"Worthless. How did you even get into Slytherin?"

"Riddikulus." Blaise said, but the boggart continued teasing him.
"Can't even get rid of me!" It laughed loudly. "Pathetic!"

"Yeah well, Harry defeated you when he was a baby! You're nothing but a looser! Riddikulus!" Blaise shouted, and instantly Boggart Voldemort turned into a ballerina. The whole class once again burst out laughing.

Finally there were two people left, Ron and Salazar himself. Salazar was just stepping up to the boggart when Ron shoved him from behind.

"Move Potter." He sneered. "It's my turn."

Salazar rolled his eyes and let the boy have his turn. When the boggart shifted, everyone was confused by it. It turned into a young, handsome boy with dark hair and dark cold eyes, but he was dressed in Ravenclaw robes.

"They will find out. I will tell them it was you." The Boggart Ravenclaw said in a low threatening tone. "Do as I say, or else."

Salazar watched this confrontation with confusion, but Ron yelped and cried, "Riddikulus!"

The boggart was suddenly loaded down with heavy books and began to struggle under their weight, which caused many in the class to snort and giggle.

Finally Salazar stepped up to it. A year ago, his boggart would have turned into a very angry Godric, who would have shouted that he would never forgive Salazar no matter what. Now however, he knew that wouldn't happen, and he was genuinely curious to find out what his greatest fear was.

The boggart instantly turned into a dead Lily Potter, and Salazar stumbled backwards a bit in shock.

"Riddikulus!" He shouted halfheartedly, and the boggart turned into a dead James.

Remus's breath hitched in his throat, but Salazar quickly repeated the incantation, and this time the boggart turned into a dead Harry.

Salazar was getting frustrated with himself, and once more shouted the spell only for the boggart to turn into a smirking Voldemort.

"You're too over confidant." He said with a sneer. "Perhaps you're afraid that all your plans will fail, and I will find out your secret."

"Never." Salazar hissed in a tone laced with venom.

"We shall see." Boggart Voldemort hissed back.

"You're an insolent little whelp, and I cannot wait for the day when I can tell you that face to face. Who has been playing with whom today?" Salazar asked with a smirk. "I'm not afraid of you, so why are you here? Are you sure you're in control?"

Boggart Voldemort stumbled backwards and his face took on one of shock. Salazar waved his wand at a few thick piles of dust, and a laughing James, Lily, and Harry appeared.

"Riddikulus!" Salazar shouted again, and suddenly Boggart Voldemort was on the floor covering his ears and cowering in fear.

The class stood there stunned, but Remus joined in with the laughing dust Potters, and Hermione, Neville and Blaise quickly followed suit.
After that, Remus banished the boggart back into the wardrobe so he could use it for his other classes.

Salazar vanished the dust Potters even though he was slightly shaken up. He had been bluffing, but the Boggart Voldemort had a point. He was afraid that the real Voldemort would discover that he had hidden the Potters, and he didn't know what he would do if that ever happened.

"Did you see him with that boggart?" Blaise asked quietly as he looked at Hermione and Neville.

It was later that evening after dinner, and they were sitting in the library going over notes on boggarts so they could get started on the essay Remus set. Salazar and Godric were in detention with Albus, and Colin was doing his own homework with a few of his friends in Gryffindor Tower.

"I saw him." Neville said with a nod. "But I wonder what V-V…" He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. "Voldemort meant by a secret."

"I don't know." Blaise said as he shook his head. "But it's curious isn't it?"

Hermione kept her head down, but she nodded slightly. She had been thinking a lot about what she saw today, and she had an idea on what it could be. She knew that the man had to be his, or well, the real Harry's dad because they looked just alike. The Boggart Harry might have been the real Harry because she noticed that he didn't have a scar, and the woman must have been his Mum.

If all that was true, then could Salazar's secret be that the real Harry Potter and his parents were alive and safe? She wasn't sure, but she was suddenly pulled out of her thoughts when Neville nudged her.

"…and I think they may be hiding something."

"What?" Hermione asked, suddenly startled.

"Look at this chocolate frog card. Gordy, Harry, and I had a little fun with it, but it's Godric Gryffindor's. Take away the beard and long hair, and tell me what you see." Blaise said, sliding it across the table towards them.

Hermione and Neville glanced at it, but it was Neville whose eyes widened in shock.

"He looks like an older version of Gordy!" He exclaimed in a breathless whisper.

Blaise nodded and sighed deeply. "I know. I have a crazy and outlandish theory. I think Gordy is Godric Gryffindor. I mean, how many eleven year olds have a phoenix that is bonded to them?"

Hermione was not shocked by this declaration, but Neville's eyes widened even further.

"But how is that possible?" Neville asked.

"I don't know. Hermione, what do you think?" Blaise asked, looking at her curiously.

She sighed heavily, looked around cautiously, and then nodded. "I guess since you have figured it out, I might as well share what I know. I don't just think that Gordy is Godric Gryffindor. I also think that Harry is Salazar Slytherin himself."

Blaise and Neville stared at her with blank expressions, but Blaise finally leaned back in his chair and nodded.
"Now that you mention it, it doesn't seem so far-fetched, and it would explain a lot of things." He said thoughtfully as Hermione nodded.

She went on to explain about the anagram she figured out, and all her thoughts on the subject. When she was done, Blaise let out a long breath it seemed he had been holding, but Neville just sat there in shock.

"But how is that possible?" Neville asked again, still in a stupor of disbelief.

"I don't know." Hermione said. "But I don't think we should let on that we know. They are hiding this for a reason, and it may cause them a lot of undue worry."

"I agree with Hermione." Neville said, finally coming to his senses.

"I do as well." Blaise replied with a nod. "Whatever this is for, we don't need to go blabbing, least Sal…err…Harry turns us into frogs or something."

Neville and Hermione chuckled, but Neville said, "I just can't believe two of my friends are Founders. Its….its…"

"…mind boggling." Hermione finished with a nod. "I know. It's taken me this long to get my head around that fact. I'm sure someone must know who they are though."

"Not Dumbledore that's for sure." Neville said with a shake of his head. "I get the feeling that they don't like him very much."

"I think you're right." Hermione agreed, and Blaise nodded.

"I think Snape knows." He said with a knowing look. "You guys don't see them interact with him like do, but I think he knows."

"How so?" Hermione asked, tilting her head to one side.

"I don't know." He said with a shake of his head. "I can't explain it, but you would think that Salazar Slytherin of all people would let the Head of Slytherin know he's here. Same goes for McGonagall and Godric Gryffindor."

"Maybe." Hermione said unsurely. "But it's not a lot to go on. I mean, Dumbledore is the Headmaster, and I don't think he knows."

"We may never know who knows." Neville replied. "But you have to look at the fact that there is/was all the rumors about how Snape hates Gryffindors and stuff. He's bad about bad mouthing Gryffindors and insulting them, but he's not that bad. Even some of the older students say he's changed a bit. Do you think we should tell Colin?" He asked suddenly.

Hermione immediately shook her head. "Colin is like a little brother to me, but I don't think we should. You know how hyper he gets, and he likes to talk a mile-a-minute about anything and everything. My Mum would say that he doesn't have a filter on his mouth."

"Hermione is right." Blaise said with a sigh. "I like Colin, but we can't risk him slipping up and saying something."

"True." Neville agreed.

Madam Pince, the librarian, suddenly swooped down on them from out of nowhere, and they
cringed like mice caught in an owl's shadow.

"You three have been whispering and talking the moment you set foot in here!" She hissed as she glared at them with narrowed eyes. "Out! Out, out, out! You clearly don't want to study." She said, immediately hushing their protests. "This is the library, not the great hall!"

With a lot of grumbling from Neville and Blaise, and with an apologetic, sheepish look from Hermione, they quickly gathered up their stuff and scurried out of the library.

When they reached the corridor, Blaise scowled at the doors as Madam Pince slammed them shut in their faces.

"Well that could have gone better." Neville said with a sigh. "Do you all want to find a nearby empty classroom?"

"I guess so. Harry and Gordy said they would meet us here after their detention." Blaise answered, still scowling at the doors.

"Oh come on. We all know how Madam Pince is." Hermione said, grabbing his arm and dragging him away.

They were only halfway down the corridor when Neville heard a voice that made him stop in his tracks.

*What was that?* He thought, as he looked around in confusion.

*I must find him. The one who speaks. Where is he? Where is he?*

Neville turned sharply to face the wall and came face to face with a portrait of some bloodhounds carrying on with a fox hunt.

"Hello?" Neville called out.

Blaise and Hermione stopped and turned around. "Neville?" Hermione asked curiously. "What is it?"

"I thought I heard something." He said in a confused voice as he stood there staring at the wall. "But I guess I must have imagined…"

"The Speaker, I must find him."

This time all three of them stood stock still and stared at the wall.

"Hello?" Neville called out again. "A Speaker? Nora are you in the wall playing tricks on us? We can hear you, you know."

"You can hear me? You can understand me?"

Neville chuckled a bit. "Of course we can hear and understand you Nora. You are playing a joke, aren't you?"

"My name is not Nora. I am Emeralda, Keeper of the Chamber of Secrets and protector of Hogwarts. Who are you?"

All three of their mouths dropped open at once, and they all glanced at each other nervously. There was no doubt in their minds as to whom they were hearing.
"I-I am Neville Longbottom, and I'm here with my friends Hermione Granger and Blaise Zabini. Can we help you?" He asked tentatively.

"Are you little ones?"

"Little ones? I'm afraid we don't understand." Hermione asked with a shaky voice, as Blaise backed up a few steps.

"Yes, little ones. Students?"

"Oh-oh yes." Neville replied with a squeak. "We are second years. Hermione and I are Gryffindors to be exact, and Blaise is a Slytherin."

"You all sound afraid little Neville Longbottom. I can hear it in your voices. Please don't be. You have nothing to fear from me. Can you tell me where the Speaker is? His name is Harry Potter. I have heard he speaks my language. I have something important to tell him."

"Uh-uh, Ok E-Emeralda. Um…we are friends of Harry's. He taught us how to understand Parseltongue, though we can't speak it. Um, Harry is up in the Headmaster's Tower serving detention." Neville said replied.

"I cannot get to the Headmaster's Tower from my position. You must lead the way little one, and get this Harry Potter to a place where I can talk to him. I will follow you."

The three of them glanced nervously at one another again.

"What do we do?" Neville asked in a barely audible whisper.

"I-I-I…" Hermione stammered, but Blaise spoke up.

"We should take the giant snake to him. It is his snake after all." He said with wide eyes, as he stared at the wall.

"But what could all this mean?" Hermione asked fretfully.

"Hello? Little ones? Have you gone off without me?"

"No…no." Neville replied. "We are still here."

Blaise shrugged as if to say 'I don't know what to do', but Neville took a deep breath.

"Just follow our voices. We will lead you to just outside the gargoyle that guards the tower."

"I cannot get there as easily as you can, but I know where it is. I will meet up with you there."

"Ok." Neville said slowly, still not knowing if this was the right thing to do.

It took them a good ten minutes to get to the gargoyle from the library, and when they arrived Neville began checking to see if Emerald had made it there yet, while Hermione and Blaise figured out what to do next.

"I think we need to get to Harry right away." Hermione said as she looked at Blaise.

"I agree, but I don't know about barging into the Headmaster's office. Maybe we should wait until they come down."
"But this is important! He needs to know now!" Hermione cried in a loud whisper. "Do you know the password?"

"No." Blaise replied, shaking his head. "But rumor has it that Dumbledore likes candy, and that his password is always some type of candy."

Hermione's eyes lit up and she turned to face the gargoyle. "Skittles." She blurted out, but the gargoyle just stared at her. "M&Ms? Chocolate covered cherries? Milk Duds? Gobstoppers? Fruit roll ups?"

"What are you…what are those?" Blaise asked, utterly confused.

"You said candy." She said defensively. "That's candy."


"May I ask why you all are so desperate to gain entry into Headmaster's Tower?" A deep, seemingly bored, voice asked from behind them.

They all yelped in surprise, and whipped around to find Severus smirking at them.

"What's the matter? Can Potter not function without you all stuck to him? It's bad enough that Roffin…"

"The giant snake is on her way here." Blaise blurted out desperately. "We need to find Harry. She's asking for him because he speaks Parseltongue."

Severus's jaw stiffened as his dark eyes studied the young boy, but then he turned to the gargoyle.

"Sugar Quills." He said, then he turned to the children. "Stay put!" He ordered, as the gargoyle moved aside.

Severus quickly made his way up the stairs, but when he reached the door to Albus's office he took a deep breath and knocked.

"Come in." Albus called out.

Severus entered and quickly scanned the room. Salazar and Godric were glaring daggers at the Headmaster, but Albus was sitting there with a gentle smile on his face.

"Severus? Can I help you?"

"Yes Headmaster. It seems that we have an…issue." He said slowly. "Longbottom, Granger, and Zabini are in the corridor, and they say that the giant snake is waiting for Potter." He sneered.

Albus's gentle smile instantly vanished, but both Salazar and Godric bolted from their chairs, rushed past Severus, and ran down the stairs. They were halfway down when they heard Albus's yelling something, but they paid no attention.

When they got into the corridor, Blaise, Hermione, and Neville turned around quickly and pointed toward the wall.

"She's just behind the wall." Neville said, backing away as Salazar glanced over them.
"Are you all ok?" He asked, just as Albus and Severus exited the gargoyle.

Blaise took a deep breath and nodded. "Yeah Harry we are. Her name is Emeralda, and she actually seems pretty nice. I don't know why she wants to talk to you though."

"I didn't even think to ask." Hermione said, leaning against the wall and shaking her head. "I was just so...so..."

"Shocked." Neville finished, and she nodded.

Salazar started to smile, but caught himself and nodded instead. He wasn't surprised about that, and he wished he could have warned them about possibly encountering Emeralda. He had already gone back down into the chamber and explained everything in detail to her. She knew who the children, Severus, and Albus were, and why Salazar was in the position he was in.

However, if she was looking for him, that meant the boy had shown up again.

"Um, Emeralda?" He asked tentatively.

"Young Speaker, at last. I called for you because I know you speak my language, and I am more comfortable talking to you because of that. As the other little one said, my name is Emeralda. Please don't be afraid, I won't hurt you."

"All right. What do you wish to tell me?" Salazar asked, hoping that she had some new information for him.

"A little red-headed boy came to see me just a little while ago. He woke me up from my slumber. He told me things about you, and that is how I know you can speak. He wanted me to hunt down muggles, but then told me to find you and kill you. Rest assured, I will not do this. I also don't think there are any muggles here. I think I'm being tricked. I hear no shouts or yelling, nor do I smell fear."

Emeralda said angrily.

"You are being tricked. There are no muggles here. Can you tell me anything more about this red-headed boy?" Salazar asked.

"He's gangly looking. Very thin and very angry. He's just like the one before him, but there is evil about him. He doesn't seem himself."

"How do you mean?" Salazar asked with a puzzled expression.

"He can only speak my language if he is holding a book in his hands. It's a black book, and he says he is just doing what another boy tells him too. His eyes though, look haunted and dark. Almost as if he is not in control of his actions."

"What is the other boy's name? Salazar asked.

He knew this was new information that Emeralda didn't have last time, and he was once again glad that he had told her to closely pay attention the next time this mystery red-head came to her.

"The red-headed boy calls this other boy his friend, and his name is Tom Riddle."

Salazar's blood ran cold as all his fears were confirmed. Voldemort, through the actions of Lucius Malfoy, was somehow involved, but he still did not know how.

Albus on the other hand, began staring up at the ceiling in thought, and Salazar knew him well
enough by now to know exactly what Albus was thinking. Red-head, black book, and involved with Voldemort. It could only be a Slytherin (in Albus's mind) and that meant…Godric. He just rolled his eyes and turned back to the wall.

"Emeralda, is there anything else at all you can tell me? Did he say anything else about Tom Riddle?" Salazar asked, and he noticed that Albus looked at him with a sharp calculating gaze.

"Many years ago, another boy came to me and told me there were muggles attacking the school. This new red-headed boy said that this Tom Riddle, whoever he is, was the same boy."

"Did he say this in Parseltongue or English?"

"English." She replied.

"What more can you say about this black book?" Albus asked curiously.

There was a long pause, but Salazar broke it by saying, "Emeralda, the Headmaster asked the question and it is a valid one. Can you tell us anything about it?"

"Only that it sometimes glows. The glow enters the red-headed boy and suddenly he changes. He can speak our language then. That is when he acts like the other boy."

"How does he act when this glow leaves him?" Albus asked.

"Like an angry boy. Always angry, always talking bad about the young speaker. He told me about a joke that was played a few nights ago. He told me you were making fun of me." She said in a hurt tone.

"No my dear, we were not making fun of you. We were making light of the fact that the whole school though it was me who was setting you free and having you attack people. We did it to make people laugh at that fact only."

"A prank then." Emeralda said with an amused hiss. "Just like my Master Salazar and his best friend Godric long ago. I do not take offense then."

Salazar, nor the other adults, saw the children exchange amused glances and smiles, but Salazar chuckled and placed a hand on the wall.

"Never would we insult you Emeralda."

"I should not have thought otherwise little one. It was my mistake." She said kindly.

"Is there anymore that you can tell us? What exactly does this red-headed boy say about me?"

"He always calls you a stupid Slytherin, attention seeking, and something called a prat."

"Sounds just like Ron Wesley." Neville said chuckling lightly.

Hermione gasped and her hand flew to her mouth as Salazar whipped around to face them.

"Neville, will you find Fred and George and bring them here. Quickly, please." He asked with an urgent pleading glance.

Neville nodded and quickly took off down the corridor before Albus could stop him.

"Harry, do you really think it could be Ron?" Blaise asked breathlessly as he nervously searched
Salazar's face.

"I don't know." He answered, as he began pacing the corridor.

A tentative plan began to form in his mind as they all stood in the corridor outside the gargoyle, but this had to be played out very carefully. He knew Albus had a slew of questions, so he decided to answer some of them.

Even if all the answers were a lie.

"Gordy, we need Nehum. Can you call for him?"

Severus and Godric stared at him with wide eyes as they both began trying to figure out what he was up to, but Godric did call for him. Meanwhile, Severus cast several privacy wards around the area.

When Nehum appeared and landed on Godric's shoulder, Albus's drew himself up to his full height and seemed to study the bird closely.

Salazar took a spare bit of parchment and a quill out of his pocket, scribbled a note, and handed it to Nehum.

"Gordy, can a phoenix deliver a letter to someone even though they may not know the person or where that person lives?"

"Yes." Godric answered simply, still trying to figure out where Salazar was going with this.

"Good. Nehum, will you please take this letter to Nicholas Flamel?"

Severus's mouth nearly hit the floor, but he was able to retain his usual bored look, while Albus stared at Salazar in shock. Nehum disappeared, and once again, Salazar resumed his pacing. His mind was in overdrive and he needed to think, but this was difficult to do seeing as Albus began asking questions.

"Mr. Roffin, where did you acquire your phoenix?"

"On a hiking trip with my family. I had slipped and fell several feet down a mountain side when he appeared and helped me. He has stayed with me ever since." Godric lied.

Albus seemed to study him for a moment, but then his attention turned towards Blaise and Hermione, who were still standing there listening to every word.

"Perhaps you all should head to your common rooms. There is no need for you to stay here."

"I insist they stay." Emeraldia suddenly replied. "They are the young speaker's friends, and they may make him more comfortable. I get the feeling you don't like the young speaker very much."

"That is not true gentle great snake. I care for Harry very much." Albus replied kindly.

Salazar and Godric snorted loudly, which made Albus glare at them. Hermione and Blaise however, exchanged smiles as they tried to make themselves less visible. They really wanted to stick around for whatever was about to come.

Albus sighed heavily, but turned his attention to Salazar. "Harry, how do you know Nicholas Flamel?"

Salazar pretended not to hear him, so Albus repeated his question, but this time he was interrupted by
the arrival of Nicholas and Nehum.

Salazar didn't waste any time.

"Mr. Flamel, thank you for coming so quickly." Salazar said breathlessly and as innocently as he could. "I know that we just met this past summer, and I thank you and Mrs. Flamel so much for taking me into your home, but I have a problem and need your assistance. I was hoping you could help."

Nicholas smiled with amusement and shot a glance at a completely gob smacked Albus before speaking. "Harry, Perenelle and I told you before you left, that if at any time you needed us, especially here," he added dryly, "that one of us would come. What is it that you need my help with?"

Salazar smirked slightly at Nicholas's jab at Albus, but he tried to keep his voice even and calm.

"I believe Tom Riddle is here, but I don't know how and I don't know why. I know I have written and told you all about this Chamber nonsense, but it seems as if he's behind it. The giant snake is here, just beyond the wall, and has given us some clues as to why this is happening."

"What clues?" Nicholas asked with a frown.

Salazar began to explain what Emeralda had told them, some of this Nicholas knew from the letters, but the information about the black book left him stumped.

"Without this book to study Harry, I cannot say for sure." He answered gravely. "I would need to see it."

"Do-do you think it could be one of…those things…you mentioned to me." Salazar asked with wide innocent eyes.

He didn't know for sure if this black book was a horcrux, but from what Emeralda described, it could be. He knew Voldemort wasn't outright possessing Ron, seeing as Ron wasn't sporting a turban this year, but he decided to take a stab in the dark and see what would come of this. Not to mention, he wanted to see what Albus would do.

Both Nicholas and Albus paled drastically, though for very different reasons. However, for his part, Nicholas knew exactly what Salazar was doing, and was more than happy to play along.

"Nicholas, you told him!?” Albus shouted. "How could you?"

"The boy needed to know." Nicholas replied with a calm smile. "And I have yet to hear of you getting off your bum and doing anything about them. He knows exactly who Tom Riddle is, and that he could possibly have made horcruxes."

"Why!?" Albus asked, growing red in the face as he glared at his former friend.

"Because, as I said, Harry needed to know. He needs to know what he's up against Albus." Nicholas replied calmly. "You keep insisting on keeping him in the dark, but I would think after last year, you'd be happy about this news."

Albus gritted his teeth and tried to calm himself down, but everyone present knew that it was getting harder for him to do that.

"Please tell me you haven't told him about…it."
"If by 'it' you mean the prophecy, no I haven't, and I'd be willing to swear you an oath to prove it."
Nicholas said truthfully, with a slight smirk.

"What prophecy?" Salazar asked immediately, with his eyes bouncing back and forth between the two of them.

Godric, who was standing a few feet behind Albus, was grinning and desperately trying not to laugh. Severus was watching the whole thing with his usual blank expression. Albus on the other hand, glared at Nicholas.

"Don't worry about that Harry. You're too young to be involved as it is."

Nicholas chuckled. "You think to lowly of him Albus. He is a very bright boy."

"Will you tell me Mr. Flamel?" Salazar asked, but then shook his head 'no' ever so slightly.

Albus didn't catch the movement because he was too busy glaring daggers at Nicholas, but Nicholas did, and he smiled at Salazar.

"One thing at a time Harry. I hope you trust me enough to know when it is the right time to tell you."

"I do trust you sir, and I understand." Salazar said with an air of disappointment, as Albus sighed in visible relief.

Just then, they heard breathless panting coming from the end of the corridor as Neville, Fred, and George arrived. Both Fred and George looked so frantic as they came to a stop in front of Salazar, that they didn't even notice Nicholas was there.

"Harry, Neville filled us in. You can't be serious about Ron and the black book." Fred gasped as he doubled over in pain from running.

"We aren't sure." Salazar said with a heavy sigh, then he looked apologetically at all the children. "I'm so sorry, but what I'm about to say may come as a shock to you. The only reason Fred and George do is because they caught me."

Everyone looked confused by that, but Albus raised a critical eyebrow and glared at him.

"Fred, George, do you remember the night that you two caught me wandering around close to curfew talking to a house elf?"

"Yes." They both said together, trying to figure out where this was going.

"Remember what that house elf said about who we later figured out was Lucius Malfoy? Think, has your family recently come in contact with Lucius Malfoy?"

"Yes." Fred said, as George's eyes widened in alarm.

"Oh no." George said, as his eyes nearly filled with genuine tears. "Harry, I don't know why I didn't think of this before! We should have remembered this Fred!" He cried as he slid down the wall and onto the floor. Then he looked up at Salazar with a face full of desperation.

"Listen Harry, over the summer during our school shopping trip to Diagon Alley, we were waiting in Flourish and Blotts for Mum to get an autograph from Lockhart the Fraud. We, meaning Fred, Ron, Ginny, and I were coming out of the shop when we ran into Lucius and Draco Malfoy. Ron started his usual prattle of 'Slytherins are the Devil' and Draco went on about how poor we are. Ron threw
down his cauldron, which was full of books, and went after Draco, but was stopped when Lucius poked the end of his walking cane in Ron's face. Then Lucius bent down and began helping Ron put his books back into the cauldron. That's when Dad showed up. More words were exchanged and Dad and Lucius actually got into a fist fight which caused the manager to throw us all out." He said, running his fingers through his hair.

"What about the black book? Did you see it?" Nicholas asked in alarm. "Lucius Malfoy does not bend down for anything."

Fred nodded in agreement, but then looked at Nicholas. "Now that I'm thinking about it, I do recall Ron saying something about an extra book in his cauldron when we got home, but I didn't…I didn't pay any attention though." He said with a sigh.

"I didn't see Lucius put anything in Ron's cauldron, but then again, this is Lucius we are talking about." George said. "Harry, do you remember what the elf said about Lucius saying 'he will get what's coming to him'?"

Salazar stared at him curiously and nodded.

"What if he didn't mean Professor Dumbledore like we thought, what if the elf meant my Dad?" George continued.

"I don't understand. What would…" Salazar began, but he was cut off.

"Arthur Weasley's Muggle Protection Act." Nicholas said suddenly, as Fred and George nodded and pointed at him.

Salazar looked at him oddly. "What…?"

Nicholas shook his head. "I'll explain what it is later, but suffice to say, if this black book is what we think it is, then placing a very dark object such as a horcrux into the hands of Arthur Weasley's son would give Lucius the political upper hand. Especially if his son is setting loose a giant snake in the hopes that it will kill muggle borns. It would send a signal that Arthur wasn't all that friendly towards them, and his Muggle Protection Act would fail."

"Remind me to pay closer attention to politics. I've always hated them." Salazar said rolling his eyes.

"Yes, I know." Nicholas replied with a grin.

Salazar chuckled, but began pacing the corridor again as his brain processed this new information. Every eye was glued to him, except Albus who looked lost in thoughts of his own. All that Nicholas said made perfect sense though. It would explain why the castle was sending out warnings, and a horcrux is certainly dark enough to be picked up by Godric's detection ward.

"Young Harry, what have I taught you? Think out loud so that I can try to help."

Salazar smiled because Nicholas was really getting into this role. He knew Nicholas could be a bit petty at times, and right now Salazar knew he was enjoying having the upper hand on Albus.

"Percy told me that Ron has been acting strange this year. He seems more angry than usual, and has basically cut himself off from the rest of his family because of the way they have embraced me."

"Ron would never do that willingly though." Fred interjected.

Salazar nodded and continued. "Percy thought it was the pressures of second year getting to him, and
said that he has been writing in a black book. Ginny said it was actually a diary he keeps. Who here has ever known Ron Weasley to actually write when not told to do so?

"That's right!" Hermione suddenly exclaimed, but then she clamped her hands over her mouth.

"That's all he does." Neville confirmed. "He sits in the corner of the common room and scribbles in a black book. He's always scowling and muttering to himself about how he hates Harry. Hermione and I have tried to talk to him, but he brushes us off."

"He says he doesn't want to talk to 'Slytherin lovers'." Hermione added quietly.

"Fred, we are horrible brothers. We haven't paid any attention to him." George said as tears began to spill down his cheeks. "I didn't even notice."

"No George, don't blame yourself for this. It's not your fault." Salazar said, kneeling in front of him. "Look at me, we had no way of knowing about this until now."

"We should have thought of this earlier." Fred said, sitting beside his brother, who was still on the floor.

"What do we do Harry?" George asked desperately, looking into Salazar's eyes.

"This is a big leap filled with many circumstances." Albus scoffed. "We have no way of knowing if any of this is true."

"Don't you dare doubt the young speaker!" Emeralda shouted, and everyone jumped a bit when the wall she was behind shook slightly.

Salazar knew she must have thrown her head against it and he chuckled. She was always a bit overprotective of him. He collected himself though, and glared at Albus.

"Why, because Ron is a Gryffindor?" Salazar asked. "I saw the look on your face earlier. Red hair, black book, working with Voldemort. You're mind automatically went to Gordy because he's a Slytherin, but tell me Headmaster, how badly did that come crashing down when you learned he has a phoenix?" He spat.

Albus glared at him. "You have no idea..."

"Voldemort!?" Blaise, Neville, and Hermione cried together.

"...what I'm talking about because I'm too young, too innocent, blah, blah, blah." Salazar said, ignoring the children and finishing Albus's sentence. "Yes we know that all ready." He added sarcastically.

Nicholas chuckled lightly. "I told you not to underestimate him Albus, and it seems that his friends are just as quick as he is." He said, then he turned to the children. "Yes, Tom Riddle and Voldemort are one in the same. Tom Riddle is the Heir of Slytherin, which is something I have been able to uncover with simple research."

"This is still all just hearsay and we are jumping to conclusions." Albus said angrily. "We have no way of knowing if Mr. Weasley is carrying around a horcrux."

"Why don't you storm Gryffindor Tower and demand to see Ron's diary then? We all know you have a habit of doing that." Godric said dryly.
"Yes, thank you for your insightful input Godric." Salazar said sarcastically, trying to keep himself from laughing, but Godric grinned that foolish grin of his and Salazar couldn't help but snort.

"All right this stops now!" Albus cried. "No more Salazar this and Godric that! Neither of you are anything like the Founders!"

"How would you know? Did you know Godric Gryffindor?" Godric asked with his eyes shining with laughter. "Because you could be wrong."

Albus glared at him, but Salazar laughed. "And I thought Salazar was an evil, bitter old man." Salazar snorted. "Hey, according to some people, that's right up my alley!"

"Except for the bitter and old part." Godric added. "He was evil, well according to history anyway."

"And whose fault is that?" Salazar asked, looking pointedly at Godric.

"I can't remember. I must have amnesia." Godric replied with a grin.

"Merlin help us." Nicholas said with a chuckle, as he shook his head and stared at the ceiling.

"Headmaster if I may," Severus began, trying to steer the conversation back to the topic at hand. He was well aware of how Salazar and Godric could be if the two of them got going. "Perhaps there is some merit to what has been said here tonight."

That stopped all the laughter immediately, and every eye landed on him.

"You know something?" Albus asked in alarm.

"Perhaps." He replied, glancing sharply at everyone as if to dare them to ask what he might know.

Salazar certainly wanted to, but not here. He knew Severus would tell him later. He sighed heavily and looked over at the twins. They were smiling, but they didn't look like their usual selves when he and Godric started their playful bickering.

Salazar could have kicked himself though. Now was not the time to be cracking jokes.

He walked over to the wall and gently laid his hand upon it. "Emeralda, are you still here?"

"Yes young speaker, and I have been listening closely. What is it that you need?"

"If this boy returns to you, will you let me know?"

"Of course. Do you wish me to return to my sleep now?"

"Yes, if that is where you came from." Salazar answered simply.

"Very well. I will seek you out if he returns. Goodnight young speaker, and young speaker's friends."

They all mumbled a goodnight to her, but then Salazar took a moment to glance at the children. Blaise, Neville, and Hermione were leaning against the wall. Blaise was studying Salazar, but Neville and Hermione appeared to be lost in thought. Fred and George were still sitting on the floor, leaning against one another.

"What about Ron?" Fred asked, after a few moments of silence.

Salazar turned around to face him, but shook his head sadly. "I honestly don't know Fred." He said,
shifting his gaze to Nicholas in a silent plea for help. He knew what needed to be said, but under these circumstances, he shouldn't be the one saying them.

"Horcruxes are very dangerous dark magical objects." Nicholas said seriously, coming to his rescue. "I will not go into details about what they are or what they are used for, but I will tell you to be careful. Now is not a time for pranks, jokes, or anything of the like. If any of you Gryffindors see Ron with this book in the common room, do not approach him on your own. Do not ask him questions, do ask to see it, and under no circumstances are you to try and touch it."

"I know what a horcrux is," George said. "Harry mentioned them last Christmas after he found that book. It has something to do with a soul and killing someone, but I can't really remember." He said, rubbing his forehead tiredly.

"Oh yeah I did. I had forgotten about that." Salazar said, remembering the scene last year when he basically told his Heir that he was an idiot.

"Well regardless of whether you know what a horcrux is or not, I agree with Nicholas." Albus said, glancing around at them. "If this truly is a horcrux, then Mr. Weasley may be in serious danger and the situation will need to be looked at very closely. Messrs. Weasley, I know he is your brother, but you must hold yourselves back from doing anything."

"What about our Mum and Dad? Shouldn't they know about this?" George asked.

"I will speak to them." Albus answered.

They nodded, but Godric looked confused and he spoke up.

"I have a question. If Ron is so anti-anything Slytherin, then why is he helping Voldemort to do this? I truly don't understand the logic here. Wouldn't he suspect something?"

Fred sighed and shook his head. "No offense to our baby brother, but Ron is somewhat thick. He may not know…"

"His boggart!" Hermione suddenly blurted out.

"Hermione?" Salazar asked curiously. "What does that have to do with…?"

"His boggart was dressed in Ravenclaw robes. Don't you remember? His boggart said 'I will tell them it was you. Do as I say, or else'. I think he's being tricked."

The odd scene replayed itself in Salazar's head, and suddenly it all made sense to him.

"Only you could put that together Hermione." Neville said, shaking his head.

"It didn't occur to me either." Blaise agreed with a nod. "That was brilliant Hermione. It truly was, but this answers something that has honestly been bugging me for a while. Do you all remember the Halloween Feast? Remember how Ron jumped up and began screaming hysterically and accusing Harry of setting loose the giant snake?"

"Yes." They all chorused.

"I think that's why he did it." Blaise continued. "I think he knows it was him, and he was afraid that he would get into trouble. We didn't know Luna's condition at the time, and the whole school thought she was dead. I think Ron thought that too. That's why he put all the blame on Harry."
"I agree. This all is starting to make perfect sense." Salazar said, which caused Hermione to blush and Blaise to smile softly. Then he looked at Severus, Albus, and Nicholas. "I think they are right." He added gravely.

"Well he wouldn't be the first person to be tricked by Voldemort, that's for sure." Nicholas said.

"So what are you all going to do about Ron? What's the plan?" George asked, looking to Nicholas and Salazar for answers.

"I know this is not something you want to hear Mr. Weasley, but we don't know." Nicholas said with a sigh, and Salazar confirmed it with a slight nod. "Each horcrux is different because most have very dark charms and enchantments that have been placed on them. Some could outright possess a person, some could kill a person if they touch it, and others could influence a person, which I think may be the case here. It will take a bit of time to work out a plan, and we have to make sure that we know exactly what we are dealing with. For instance, if we were to simply steal this book away from your brother, it may drive him insane, it could kill him, or any number of nasty things. This situation needs to be handled with extreme caution."

"In other words, now is not the time to be a typical Gryffindor." Godric said seriously, as he folded his arms across his chest.

Normally that would make the twins giggle and laugh, but knowing that this was a serious issue they just nodded and looked at Godric sadly.

"I actually happen to agree with you Roffin." Severus said, though there was no underlying amusement to his statement. "Now is not the time to go rushing in without using your heads. As a matter of fact, you are to do nothing and say nothing about this situation at all. If Mr. Weasley gets any idea that we know what we know, this could put him in danger or he may simply get rid of the book, which would make it nearly impossible to track down."

"What about watching him?" Fred asked. "And should we let Percy know?"

"No." Salazar, Severus, Nicholas, and Godric said together, which seemed to startle Albus a bit. Blaise, Hermione, and Neville on the other hand, glanced at one another and Blaise slightly jerked his head in Severus's direction as if to say, 'I told you he knows'. No one but the three of them noticed it though.

"Watching him may be a good idea." Severus added. "But do not be obvious about it. You are to let us know if his behavior changes at all. Whether that change is for better or worse, we must know about it."

"Yes sir." Fred and George mumbled.

"Albus, despite our falling out last year, I'm willing to work with you on this. A young man's life is at stake here." Nicholas said, looking right at Albus.

Albus glared at him and his jaw muscles stiffened as he gritted his teeth. "Very well." He said in a curt tone.

Salazar rolled his eyes. He knew Albus didn't like the fact that Nicholas was involved at all, but that was one of the reasons he brought Nicholas in. Albus wanted to be in charge of this situation, and while Albus would tell Severus everything he knew, Severus, given his position, wouldn't be able to keep Albus in line. Nicholas however, could and would do just that. The last thing they needed is for Albus to somehow twist this into a situation for 'The Greater Good'.
The meeting broke up shortly after that, and Albus sent them all to their common rooms. Nicholas left via Nehum, and Albus retreated up the stairs and back into his office with Severus following behind him.

Salazar however, was tired and ready for bed. All of this new information had set his mind reeling, and he needed time to process it all. His plate was quickly getting full. Between this situation with the horcrux and dealing with Pettigrew, he was quickly becoming overwhelmed, and he knew that both situations needed to be handled very carefully, yet quickly.

*A/N* I told you it was packed with information! Now we know why Ron has been acting the way he's been acting, and *why* he's been doing it all. It also seems that Salazar needs to 'get on the ball' so to speak and get his bum moving! Here's to hoping Nicholas can keep Albus in line! **CHEERS**
"Albus, we need to talk." Minerva said briskly as she entered his office without so much as a knock.

It was Wednesday morning, and she hadn't spoken to him since the staff meeting the night after the dementor attack because she was still angry at him. However, now with the dementors leaving on Friday, it was her job to get the 'Pettigrew Situation' under way.

Severus, Godric, and Salazar had already filled her in on Ron Weasley's situation, and needless to say, she had been shocked and horrified to learn about it. A part of her however, was sorry that she hadn't been there. She would have loved to see Albus frothing at the mouth over Nicholas's involvement.

Albus had been sitting at his desk all morning, going over everything that had been said the night before. Severus told him that Voldemort had entrusted some of his Death Eaters with some of his possessions, but what those possessions were, he didn't exactly know. However, he knew Lucius was one of them.

This information had not set well with Albus because it proved that Harry had been innocent all along, and that he himself had been wrong about the boy.

He also hated the fact that Harry was in the hands of Nicholas, but it did explain how he was so knowledgeable about things he shouldn't be. Albus also now realized what Harry had meant by 'traveling' when he described his summer holidays, and suspected that Nicholas had groomed the boy to say such cryptic things.

He absolutely hated his former friend right now, and he did not want Harry anywhere near Nicholas and his spiteful shrew of a wife. They could do some serious damage to his plans, and he knew that a 'raised-by-the-Flamels Harry' wouldn't just blindly follow Albus's every word.

Especially after what he tried to pull last year.

He knew something needed to be done, and quickly. Even if it meant obliviating the boy.

"Albus did you hear me?" Minerva asked as she sat in a chair that was seated on the other side of his desk.

"Yes Minerva, I heard you." He said with a tired sigh. "I have something important to speak with you about as well. It involves a certain member of your house."

"Is that so?" She asked raising and eyebrow. "Is someone in trouble?"

"Not the way you may be thinking."

Albus went on to explain the dangerous situation that Ron was in, and for once, he actually told the truth about something, which Minerva was happy to note.
"I will watch over him carefully." She said gravely. "And I will alert you to his comings and goings, as well as any change in behavior. His grades this year have suffered somewhat, and are slightly worse than last year, but given his circumstances, I'll see what can be done. As I said though, I'll keep a close watch on him."

Albus nodded in acknowledgement of her words, but then he looked at her curiously. "What is it that you wanted to speak to me about?"

"Young Mr. Potter." She said simply, and Albus seemed to slump in his chair a bit. "Albus, I found him in the great hall very early this morning, pouring over backdated issues of *The Daily Prophet*. When I asked what he was doing, he said 'looking for evidence'. When I pressed the matter, he finally admitted to me that he was rereading all the issues that were published three months after the attack at Godric's Hollow. He told me that there is no possible way that Sirius Black could have killed Peter Pettigrew."

Albus gave her a puzzled glance and asked, "How is that so?"

"Because Albus, he says he met Peter Pettigrew last year. He said that Peter Pettigrew was the one who showed him where Diagon Alley was. He told me that Pettigrew told him all about who he was and what happened to his parents. He said that Pettigrew also said 'my Master will be happy to know you're alive. I must find him and tell him'. At first he didn't know what that meant. The poor boy thought that the wizarding world had slaves like the muggles, but now he realizes that Pettigrew's 'master' is You-Know-Who!" She exclaimed breathlessly.

Albus took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes tiredly. "What else did he say?"

"He told me that when Pettigrew left him that he turned into a rat! Mr. Potter didn't know what that meant either, but I told him about animagi. Pettigrew is a rat animagus!" She cried, but then her voice lowered and she glared at him. "Then he said the most curious thing Albus." She said with a tilt of her head. "He told me that he told you all of this last year."

Albus glanced at her sharply. "Yes, he mentioned it."

"And you did nothing." She said with a hint of anger. "As usual."

"Be careful Minerva." Albus said in a threatening tone. "You may be my Deputy Headmistress, Professor, and a Head of House, but you are replaceable."

Minerva continued to glare at him, but her lips pressed into such a thin line that they almost appeared to vanish.

"Mr. Potter also says that he has found no evidence of a trial for Sirius Black." She continued curtly. "It appears that an innocent man has somehow managed to take it upon himself to 'escape' from a place he wasn't supposed to be in in the first place."

"Minerva, Sirius might be innocent of betraying the Potters, but he killed twelve muggles." He said simply.

"I doubt that." She said through gritted teeth. "Black went out of his way to prove that he was different from that evil wretched family of his, and I know for a fact that he often had muggle gadgets and such. He made friends with muggle borns, Lily in particular, and was often questioning them about their ways. I also seem to recall a certain flying motorbike." She said pointedly.

Albus sighed heavily and leaned back in his chair. "I'll look into it."
She nodded curtly, stood up, and began making her way to the door, but she paused with her hand on the knob and turned back to face him.

"You know Albus, I am well aware of Mr. Potter's feelings for you, and I know he doesn't have a high opinion of you, but think about this. If you were to seek justice for his parent's murder, that opinion may change."

And with that, she jerked open the door and headed down the stairs, leaving a gob smacked Albus staring after her.

"So that is the situation and that is where we stand now." Godric said, glancing at Merlin who was pacing around his sitting room.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and they were talking via the mirror that James had made for Sirius and Remus so that they would be able to talk to each other. Hedwig had already delivered the letter Salazar had sent her off with, so Merlin was aware of what really happened with the dementor attack (verses just reading The Daily Prophet's version), but this serious situation with Ron Weasley was not something he had been aware of.

"Tell Salazar that if he wants to just drop this whole thing with the rat, I will understand." Sirius said, looking at Godric. "A young boy's life is in danger and a trial for me is not that important right now."

"I'll tell him, but Salazar won't drop it. We have been side-stepping this issue for weeks, and Salazar says he doesn't want to let you down. He made you a promise, and he intends to keep it." Godric replied. "We only have two more days before the dementors leave and Peter is likely to run the minute they are gone, but we have a plan. Minerva has already done her part, now it's up to Remus to do his."

"What's the plan?" Merlin asked.

"Pretty much what I suggested in the first place, but slightly different. Remus is going to track down Peter using the map, and then Salazar is going to place false memories into his head before Remus turns him over to Albus. Salazar's been saying that he met Peter last year, and that it was Peter who showed him where to go and what to do and such."

"It's underhanded, but if that is what needs to be done, then so be it." Merlin said with an approving nod. "However, it's not Salazar's plans that have me worried, its Albus. I'm afraid he will dismiss this situation in favor of Ron's. I don't know how he will react under this much pressure."

"Well he's not happy, that's for sure. Minerva mentioned that Albus acknowledged the fact that you are innocent of betrayal, but he's convinced that you still killed the muggles." Godric said looking at Sirius, who scowled.

"He knows full well that I would never have done that."

"That's what Minerva told him." Godric said with a sigh.

"I don't think you all should turn Peter over to Albus. I think you should turn him over to the Ministry." Merlin suggested.

"But we just can't leave the grounds and hand him over with no explanation."

"No Godric, you misunderstand. The Minister and the DMLE will be at Hogwarts on Friday to give the official word to the dementors to leave."
Godric's eyes widened and he stared at Merlin. "You're right. I'll tell Salazar because I know he hasn't thought about that."

"It will have to be timed just right, and there won't be any room for mistakes so you all must plan carefully." Merlin warned.

Godric nodded, and from somewhere in the background they heard a bell ring.

"Third period just ended. I skipped out of Transfiguration today, but Minerva knows why… obviously. Lunch is about to begin though."

"All right." Merlin said with a nod. "Tell Salazar what I said."

"Will do." Godric replied, and then he cut the connection.

Sirius sighed and looked over at Merlin, who was still pacing around the sitting room.

"I hate this part." He said, rubbing his face with his hands. "The waiting, the anticipation, and not being able to do anything about it."

Merlin smiled at him and chuckled a bit. "I know, but that is your personality and dare I say… Gryffindor trait." He laughed. "But you've come a long way Sirius. You really have and I am proud of you. If you were to stand trial today, I am fully confident that you would do just fine."

"So you think I'm healed?"

"Not completely, but the rest will take time. Your mind is right, but in order for your heart and soul to fully heal you will need to get back out into the world. You'll need to interact with your friends. You need to touch them and know that they are truly still part of this world."

Sirius looked at him in confusion. "But I do know they are still alive."

"Your mind does, but your heart still has its reservations. There is a difference between knowing and knowing. You can see and talk to James and Lily all day everyday via the mirrors, but until they are standing in front of you and you are able to touch them, your heart will never be able to accept what your brain already knows."

"But that is a long time from now." Sirius mumbled.

"Oh, I think it may come sooner than you think." Merlin said with a mischievous glint in his eye.

It was Friday evening, dinner had just finished, and everyone was in their proper places. Severus was waiting in the shortcut just outside the Headmaster's office, Godric was circling the grounds in his hawk animagus form, Salazar and Remus were 'taking a walk' around the grounds, Fred and George were in a warded unused classroom overseeing everything on the map, and Minerva was waiting anxiously in her office for Godric's signal.

Salazar had come up with a way for Sirius, James, and Lily to be involved as well, thanks to James's mirrors. There was a total of four sets of mirrors that James had made at some point or another, and all eight of the individual mirrors were currently activated.

Fred and George had the original mirror that James made for Salazar last Christmas, and James had the other half.

Severus had Remus's mirror that that was keyed to James, but Lily had it.
Remus and Salazar had Remus's other mirror that was keyed to Sirius, and Sirius had the other half. Sirius also had his other mirror that was keyed to James, which James had.

"Prongs, this is The Minions, can you hear me?"

"Loud and clear Minions." James answered.

"Fudge and Bones have just flooed into the Headmaster's office. Operation Catch the Rat is a go! I repeat, it's a go!" Fred said with a grin.

"Sev, we are a go!" Lily cried.

"Padfoot, alert the ground troops!" James shouted.

"Moony you're up!" Sirius shouted with glee, as Merlin chuckled in the background.

Severus cautiously stepped out of the shortcut, headed towards the gargoyle, and made his way up to Albus's office. It was his job to make sure Fudge and Madam Bones didn't leave the office until the time was right.

Meanwhile, Salazar and Remus moved in on Peter's position beside Hagrid's hut. Salazar was now in his animagus form, so he could spot the rat's heat signature if he ran, and Remus had placed himself under a disillusionment charm and was telling Salazar where to go.

"Padfoot, we are at Hagrid's hut. Where exactly is the rat?" He whispered.

"Prongs, alert The Minions, we need a location."

"Minions, this is Prongs, we need exact location, over." James said with a grin, as Lily snorted.

"You've been watching too many action movies at the local muggle theater." She laughed, but James just grinned at her.

"Prongs, this is The Minions, he's in the pumpkin patch."

"Roger that." James said, and repeated the location to Remus.

Peter Pettigrew hated his life right now. Ever since Remus arrived a month ago, he had been forced out of his cozy and pampered life with Ron Weasley and had been forced to forage for his own food and shelter. He was currently living inside a small old abandoned shed that Hagrid had stashed in the back of his pumpkin patch.

He was starving because he hadn't had a decent meal since he left the castle, but he couldn't take the chance that Remus would spot him and recognize him. Winter was here, so it was cold and dark outside, and with the dementors being so near, it didn't help matters.

Needless to say, Peter Pettigrew was miserable.

But in his mind, he was safe. Peter knew that no one would find him in this old shed. He didn't want to leave because at least there was food, water, and shelter on the grounds, but he knew he couldn't stay at Hogwarts forever.

He was just waiting for the chance to run. The Dark Lord was his only hope now that Remus was here and Sirius had escaped. He knew full well that the first place Sirius would go is to find Remus
and tell him everything that happened that night.

He would be safe with the Dark Lord. Well, safer than he would be in the hands of his friends. He knew Sirius wouldn't hesitate to kill him, and Remus would probably help.

Peter sighed, closed his black beady eyes, and was starting to drift off to sleep in a bed he had made out of old rags, when suddenly, the door to the shed was ripped off its hinges.

He squeaked loudly and tried to scurry away, but he was roughly grabbed by the scruff of his neck and came face to face with the one person he had been trying to avoid.

"Hello Peter." Remus snarled, as he held the squealing and squirming Peter at eye level.

"You traitorous rat bastard! Just wait until I get my hands on you!" Sirius shouted.

Peter's little beady eyes widened in shock at hearing and seeing Sirius in the mirror that Remus was holding up.

"Sev, they got him." Lily whispered into her mirror, as James heard Sirius's shouts over his mirror.

Severus was standing in his usual dark corner of the Headmaster's office listening and trying to stall them from leaving as best he could, so he sighed with relief when he heard Lily's whisper.

"Forgive me for taking up some of your time Minister. I just wanted to inquire about the search for Black. Please pardon me for being curious."

"No harm done." Fudge said with a good natured smile. "Personally I don't relish having to deal with those creatures, so any distraction is welcome!"

"Well, I'll take my leave then." Severus said with a polite nod, before hurrying out the room.

Meanwhile, Salazar had firmly planted false memories into the mind of a stunned Peter, whom he and Remus had dragged into the forest. Godric was keeping watch on them from a tree branch above their heads, but swooped down when Salazar backed away from the rat.

"I'm done. If they question him about his interaction with me, then he won't realize they are fake, even if they question him under veritaserum. I've also obliviated this little meeting from his mind, so he won't remember this encounter." He said, looking at Remus and Godric.

"He's all yours now." Remus said with a grin, as he looked at the hawk.

"Just don't drop him Godric! We need him alive!" Sirius laughed and shouted.

Godric grabbed a still stunned Peter and took flight. He headed towards the castle, and as he swooped by Minerva's office window, he let out a loud screeching cry. She was standing at her window and smiled and nodded at him, before hurrying towards the second floor.

"I tell you Albus, between the dementor attack, and Black's escape, it has left me in quite a state." Fudge said with a sigh.

"My office has been a whirlwind of activity dealing with Black, but we can handle...GOOD MERLIN!" Madam Bones yelped, as they rounded the corner to the second floor.

"SHOO! SCAT!" Minerva cried, waving her arms frantically at a hawk and rat.
"Minerva!?" Albus asked in a shocked tone. "What is going on here?"

"Sorry Albus. One of the students must have left the window open and this hawk flew in with its apparent dinner. However, I recognize this rat as Ron Weasley’s pet that has been missing for several weeks! SHOO I SAID!" She waving her arms again.

If Godric had been in human form, he would be laughing hysterically, but at the moment he was flapping his wings in a chaotic fashion in order to 'defend' his 'dinner'.

Just then, Remus, and a disillusioned Salazar, came around the corner from the other direction. Remus seemed to take a moment to glance over the scene, but suddenly he shot a stunning spell at the hawk.

Salazar snorted as Godric fell over with a thump, but Remus moved in quickly and stared at the rat in shock.

"Don't touch him!" He cried, as Minerva moved to pick up the rat.

She backed off quickly, but Remus continued to stare at the rat in shock and bewilderment.

"Peter!?" He suddenly cried disbelief, as he waved his wand.

A blue light flew from the tip as the reversing spell forced Peter from his animagus form, and nearly everyone's jaw dropped as the rat turned into a man that was supposed to be dead.

"Is that…is that…" Madam Bones stuttered in shock.

"Peter Pettigrew!" Minerva shrieked.

Albus quickly came to his senses and made a move towards Peter, but Remus nearly growled at him.

"Don't. I want to check something." He said through gritted teeth.

Remus reached down and jerked up Peter's left shirt sleeve to reveal the faded Dark Mark that had been branded on his arm, but then he whirled around and glared at Albus.

"Eleven years Albus!" He shouted, as he shook with rage. "Eleven years I have tried to tell you that Sirius couldn't have done it! Eleven years he spent in that prison without a trail. Eleven years you said Sirius betrayed James and Lily! Eleven years an innocent man has sat in Azkaban because you kept saying what's done is done! I TRIED TO TELL YOU!" He screamed loudly.

"Remus please…"

"DON'T!" Remus shouted. "Don't even try to apologize. Don't even say a word. You left Sirius to rot in Azkaban simply because you didn't want to deal with it."

"I did…"

"Excuse me?" Madam Bones said suddenly, adjusting her monocle, and looking at both Remus and Albus sternly. "Did I just hear correctly? Has Sirius Black never had a trail?"

"Yes ma'am." Remus said, glaring at Albus. "The Chief Warlock has known this for ELEVEN YEARS!" He shouted, but then he took a deep breath and looked at her apologetically. "Please forgive me for shouting."

"None needed." She replied. "Albus, I think we need to head back up to your office and have a chat."
Your professors will need to accompany us, and I'll need to call in some Aurors. Minister, will you also stay for a while? You might want to witness this questioning."

"The dementors can wait. I am pretty happy to postpone that unpleasantness." He said gratefully.

"Very well." She answered, levitating a still unconscious Peter in front of her.

"You have made me look like a laughing stock Albus!" The Minister cried.

They had just finished questioning Remus and Peter, who had tried everything in his power to worm his way out of being arrested, but to no avail. Under the influence of veritaserum, Peter had told everyone what his involvement had been that night in Godric's Hollow, and how and why he had betrayed Lily and James and killed the muggles, as well as several other pieces of information that no one had any clue about.

Remus was barely able to keep himself from leaping across the room and strangling both Peter and Albus, who was suddenly looking his age, but he managed to keep himself in check. The subject of Salazar meeting Peter last year was brought up, and Remus gladly took a break from it all to go and find Salazar so Madam Bones could get his account.

The downside of it all was the exposure of the animagus forms, but Sirius and James had already agreed that if that's what it took to bring Peter down, then so be it. Madam Bones was furious at Albus for not bringing the encounter between Peter and Salazar to her attention, and Albus's answer of 'I didn't have time' had not set well with her.

"How have I made you a laughing stock Cornelius?" Albus asked, giving the blustering Minister a tired sigh.

"Well clearly it wasn't Sirius Black that we needed to worry about, it's obviously Pettigrew!" He shouted, pointing to the man who was cowering under everyone's gaze. "You have known about this for a year and a half! You could have told me this before now, but instead, you have kept me ignorant of everything!"

"I will issue a formal apology to Sirius Black and announce that he has been officially cleared of all charges." Madam Bones said. "It will be in the paper first thing in the morning, and the true account of what happened all those years ago will be told. Hopefully Black will read it and come out of hiding. I'll need him to come to my offices though and tell us exactly how and why he escaped Azkaban, so we can close that breach in security."

"The pure-bloods are not going to like this." Fudge moaned, as he sank down into a nearby chair. "Black is the last remaining Heir of an Ancient and Noble House, and when it gets out that he didn't have a trail, was innocent, and has remained locked up they will be clamoring for my head."

"You won't have Sirius stand trial?" Remus asked in shock, ignoring Fudge's self-pitying moaning.

Madam Bones shook her head. "There is no need. I have heard all that I need to hear. I will, of course, need to verify that he is not a Death Eater, and the lack of a Dark Mark on his arm will prove that."

Somewhere in Ireland, Merlin had to cast a silencing charm on a very enthusiastic Sirius, who let out a loud whoop and began dancing around the library, and in Rio, a grinning Lily had to do the same for James.

Salazar was glad to hear this news as well, because that meant their secrets would be safe and he
wouldn't have to plant false memories into Sirius's mind in case The Ministry decided to use
veritaserum on him at a trial.

"All of this is agreeable to me." Fudge said despondently, as he continued visualize the imagined
lynch mob that would be after him. "I leave it up to you to best handle this situation Amelia."

She nodded her head, and shortly thereafter, the meeting broke up. Fudge and Bones left to deal with
the dementors, and Salazar headed for his dorm room so that for the first time in months, he could get
a restful night's sleep.

Sirius Black Innocent!

Peter Pettigrew Escapes from Auror Custody!

The first headline made Salazar smile, the second one caused his 'accidental magic' to blow up the
Slytherin house table at breakfast Saturday morning. Well, not exactly blow it up, more like reduce it
to saw dust.

The Slytherins sat and stared at where their table and food had once been, and everyone else in the
great hall stared in their direction with open mouths. Up at the head table, Remus looked to be on the
verge of blowing up something as well, but Minerva and Poppy were quickly able to calm him
down. Albus looked startled over the whole incident, but Severus stood up and glared at him.

"POTTER!" He yelled, but Salazar ignored him as he sat staring at the paper that was clenched in
his furiously shaking hands. "POTTER!" He shouted again.

Godric nudged him, but Blaise jumped up and backed away in fear as the windows in the great hall
began vibrating violently. Before they could explode though, Godric stunned him, returned the table
and food to normal, and slung Salazar over his shoulder before making his way out of the stunned
and silent great hall.

Godric made his way through a few shortcuts, and quickly found himself on the seventh floor. He
sighed and began pacing in front of a blank wall, and shortly after, he was standing in a completely
empty room. He revived Salazar and watched as his best friend shakily got to his feet.

"We are now in the Room of Requirement and you can blow things up until your heart is content."
Godric said with a chuckle, as the room gave him a chair to sit in.

Immediately the room became a replica of Albus's office, and Salazar took great pleasure in blowing
up just about everything in it.

"Feel better?" Godric asked, with a somewhat amused expression on his face as he watched over his
seething friend.

"We planned so carefully!" Salazar shouted, as he blew up another replica of Albus's desk chair.

"And our plan worked." He replied calmly, as he watched several more things explode. "Salazar, the
important thing is that Sirius is free now. That was the goal, and we achieved it."

"That's not the point Godric." Salazar answered as he sat down heavily in a chair. "Peter didn't just
betray Lily and James, he betrayed the entire Order of the Phoenix. Now, I don't have a high opinion
of The Order itself, but people died because Peter passed information to Voldemort. Marlene
McKinnon, a friend of Lily's, dead because of Peter. Edgar Bones, brother to Amelia Bones, and his
entire family, dead because of Peter. Gideon and Fabian Prewitt, Uncles to the Weasley children,
dead because of Peter. Frank and Alice Longbottom, parents of Neville, tortured into insanity because of Peter."

"I know what happened Neville's parents, but I did not know any of the rest." Godric said sadly as he stood up to gaze out of one of the windows the room had made.

"I didn't have time to tell you everything last night because of Blaise hanging around, but Peter's betrayals run much deeper than anyone, even Dumbledore, realized. It was because of Peter that made Voldemort target Lily and James to begin with."

"Wait, I thought Severus…"

"Severus was only responsible for telling Voldemort the first part of the prophecy." Salazar interrupted. "Peter was the one to bring Harry's upcoming birth to Voldemort's attention. Peter is the one responsible for also bringing Neville's upcoming birth to Voldemort's attention. Voldemort knew that both boys could be candidates for it because of Peter. Did you really think that he just 'poofed' to the Weasley's home after he escaped from and framed Sirius?" He asked.

"I don't know what to think about that." Godric said, as he shook his head and sighed.

"Well he didn't." Salazar replied, getting up to pace around the room. "This all came out in his confession last night. After he escaped from Sirius, Peter apparated back to Godric's Hollow, looked for Voldemort's body, but instead, only found his wand. Then he proceeded to where all the Death Eaters had congregated, which was a seaside cave, to tell them the news that Voldemort had been defeated. Already knowing that the Longbottoms were other potential candidates for the prophecy, Bellatrix, her husband Rodolphus, and his brother Rabastan infiltrated Longbottom Manor, thanks to information given by Peter, and tortured Frank and Alice to try and figure out what happened to 'their Lord'."

"Does Sirius know all this?" Godric asked.

"Yes, as does Lily and James, thanks to the mirrors Remus had stuck to his collar last night. Trust me, Peter escaping is not good news. He could be anywhere by now. Did the paper say how he escaped? Because honestly, I didn't get past the headline."

"Apparently there was two guards watching over him late last night. He slipped out of the cell in his animagus form, unnoticed, grabbed one Auror's wand and killed him, and stunned the other. I think the one killed was named Kingsley Shacklebolt." Godric said, scanning the article. "And the one that was stunned was named John Dawlish."

Salazar sighed and shook his head. "This why someone needs to invent some kind of anti-animagus ward or something."

"Perhaps we should look into that." Godric replied thoughtfully.

"Merlin would be the better choice, seeing as we have our plate full as it is. This is bad news though. Peter, despite his reputation for idiocy, is very smart indeed and can be very dangerous."

"I agree, but catching a rat animagus is next to impossible, and there isn't much we can do about it."

"I know." Salazar replied, with a shake of his head.

Just then, Nehum appeared in a flash of flame and landed on Godric's shoulder, with a letter clutched in his beak. Salazar looked at him curiously, but Godric took the letter and began to read it aloud.
Sirius and I have decided to wait until Monday before he shows up at the Ministry because we don’t want him to appear too eager. He is a 'convict on the run' after all, and should be 'suspicious' about this new development to make sure it isn’t a trap.

I will be accompanying him disguised as a Norwegian wizard who, 'helped a poor lost soul who was washed ashore from a shipwreck, only to discover later that he was a wizard who escaped Azkaban'. I will be a 'character witness' of sorts and explain how Sirius acted and the stories that he told me 'after I learned the truth'.

Anyway, you get the idea, but we are going to tell the Ministry that Sirius broke out by using his animagus form, and then swam to shore.

After we are done at the Ministry on Monday, Sirius wants to go to Hogwarts. He is very eager to reunite with at least one of his best friends, and I think it will be good for him to do this. I will be with him then as well.

Tell who you must about our plan, but as always, please don’t reveal who I am. I must talk to you and Salazar though, there is much I want to discuss with you and this can only be done face to face.

Godric looked up at Salazar with raised eyebrows, but Salazar stared at the letter in Godric's hands in shock.

"Merlin is coming to Hogwarts." He whispered in disbelief.

"Merlin is coming to Hogwarts." Godric repeated with a grin.

"Merlin is coming to Hogwarts." Salazar said again, only this time he had a gleeful look about him and he began to laugh.

"Oh, I hope Albus ticks him off." Godric said, jumping up and down like a giddy school boy.

Both Founders continued to laugh loudly, and Salazar happily blew up the rest of the replicated Headmaster's office, before they headed out of the room.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* Don't worry, even if Albus ticks Merlin off, he wont reveal anything important. However, it will still be funny to watch the encounter if Albus does make him mad. Tee Hee Hee *grins evilly, and rubs hands together*
Chapter 30

Confrontations and Revelations

The weekend and all day Monday seemed to crawl by for everyone, Remus, Salazar, and Godric in particular. When Salazar and Godric had told everyone that Sirius and 'their friend' was set to arrive, nearly everyone tried to get the two Founders to tell them who this mysterious friend was, but they declined to offer any information.

Fred pointed out that an Unbreakable Vow wouldn't kill them, but Salazar told them that, while it wouldn't kill them, the Vow would make living nearly unbearable, seeing as it would leave them in excruciating pain for the rest of...well...forever. George hinted that they could just find out by using the map, but Godric chuckled and told him that 'their friend' was aware of the map, and would make himself unplottable so that no one would know who he really was, just like Godric himself had done at the beginning of the year. The twins were undeterred by this though, and vowed to find out who this mysterious friend was, which only made the two Founders chuckle and shake their heads at them.

The weekend was not without its troubles though. The Wizarding World was in an uproar, and Salazar wondered if there wasn't some merit to Fudge's moaning and complaining. Pure bloods were upset that one of their own had been incarcerated without a trial and were out for someone's head. However, in true political fashion, Fudge defected the blame onto the former Minister from eleven years ago, and smugly responded that it was he that was doing everything in his power to make things right.

Peter was another topic that was thoroughly discussed, and Madam Bones was taking some serious heat over his escape. The public was made aware that his animagus form was a rat with one missing toe, and that anyone with any information to his whereabouts was encouraged to come forward.

Back at Hogwarts, Albus was being his usual self and decided to take 'following Harry around' to a new level. He kept wanting to know how Salazar felt about the whole situation with Sirius and Peter, which was understandable, but there was only so many things Salazar could say about it, seeing as he wasn't supposed to know much about anything. It became so bad that Salazar had to contact Nicholas in order to distract the Headmaster.

Ron was in a worse mood than ever before, due to learning that his pet rat was a murdering lunatic, and a Gryffindor to boot. He blamed the whole thing on Salazar, and accused him of ruining his life. Salazar tried to reason with the lad, and suggested that maybe Ron wasn't feeling like his normal self. He asked Ron several questions about his sudden behavioral changes, but Ron brushed him off and told Salazar to mind his own business.

Speaking of Ron...Fred, George, Hermione, and Neville became their eyes in Gryffindor Tower, and gave them regular updates to Ron's comings and goings. Hermione and Neville were able to keep a closer eye on him, seeing as they were in classes with Ron all day.

Molly and Arthur had finally been contacted by Albus, who explained the whole situation to them. Minerva reported back to those 'in the know' saying that Molly became so hysterical that Albus
finally had to obliterate her of everything. Arthur however, took it all in stride and agreed to let the Headmaster handle it in the best way he knew how.

"Where is Colin?" Blaise asked, as Hermione and Neville sat down at the Slytherin table Monday evening.

Seeing as everyone had classes that day, and the fact that Sirius was likely going to be at the Ministry for most of the morning and afternoon, Merlin had told them that they would show up around dinner. Salazar had been distracted for most of the day, and the imminent arrival of Sirius and Merlin was making him antsy.

Neville snorted and Hermione giggled at Blaise's question however, and they shared glance before Neville answered.

"He's over at the Ravenclaw table." He said with a grin.

"What? Why?" Blaise asked as he began helping himself to the food that had just appeared.

"Well, it seems that he has taken a fancy to Luna." Godric replied with a small grin, filling his plate with dinner.

"How do you know?" Salazar asked in an amused tone.

"He told me, and I quote, 'she's so pretty and wicked smart'." Godric replied, as Hermione and Neville's eyes shone brightly.

"Well I think it's sweet." Hermione said with another giggle. "She so…odd, and he's so…"

"Hyper." Nora finished with an amused hiss.

"Exactly Nora." Hermione said patting her head.

"He talks about her a lot, and during charms I caught him flipping through a few pictures of her." Godric said.

"What?" Salazar asked, somewhat startled and nearly dropping his fork.

"It's not what you're thinking." Godric said quickly, trying not to laugh. "Luna is always smiling and waving at the camera, and in one picture she was holding up a drawing of something she calls a nargle."

"What did you think he was doing Harry, stalking her?" Hermione giggled.

"How do you even know what stalking is, you're twelve!" He exclaimed, but Hermione burst out laughing.

"So are you." Neville replied taking a bite of his stew.

"Neville has a point." Blaise added with an amused smirk.

"Yes well…that's not the point. Can we change the subject please?" Salazar asked, as Godric grinned and snorted at his flustered best friend.

Neville, Hermione, and Blaise exchanged amused and knowing grins, but talking about children's puppy love wasn't exactly Salazar's forte and he wanted to avoid that kind of talk all together.
"Well, I actually do have something to tell you Harry." Hermione said, in a sudden serious voice as she placed her fork down onto her plate. "I saw Ron in the common room yesterday, and it looked like he was writing in that diary and then he would start working on his Potions homework. He often switched back and forth from one to the other, so I went over and asked him if he would like my help with his homework, but like always, he told me to bugger off. However, I got a good look at the diary, and Harry, it was writing back to him. I think it was giving him the answers to his homework."

Salazar exchanged a worried glance with Godric, but Neville began to nod and snap his fingers.

"Yes, I've seen him do that too." He said, after swallowing his food. "In fact, it happened today in Herbology. I wanted to ask him what he was doing, but Professor Snape said not to ask him anything regarding the diary. Ron was doing it during the test we took. Should I have told Professor Sprout?"

"No." Both Salazar and Godric said quickly, causing Blaise to raise an eyebrow at them.

"Hermione, did you tell Professor McGonagall about what you saw?" Godric asked.

She shook her head. "No. I didn't. She wasn't in the corridor that night we found out about it all. Was I supposed too?"

"Yes, tell her the very first chance you get, and Neville, also tell her about the Herbology incident." Salazar replied.

"Should we also tell Snape about Ron cheating? Hermione said it was Potions homework he was working on." Blaise asked.

Salazar seemed to pause and think about it a moment, but then he nodded. "You can if you want, but if you don't want to go to him, then I'm sure Professor McGonagall will let him know. I know talking to Snape won't be exactly…"

"Comfortable, seeing how he treats us." Godric finished.

"Exactly." Salazar replied with a nod.

"Who do you think we should talk to regarding this?" Neville asked curiously, after taking a sip of water. "In case something like this happens again in another class."

Blaise cast a sideways glance towards Neville, and hid his smirk behind a napkin, but Godric shrugged and answered.

"I think Professors McGonagall, Lupin, and Snape should know, but if they aren't available, then you should find Madam Pomfrey, especially if you think Ron his being hurt by this thing."

"Let one of us know too, so I can pass what you know to Mr. Flamel." Salazar said with a nod. "He really does seem to know what he is talking about when it comes to this…problem."

The children nodded, but the doors to the great hall opened and lots of whispering and murmuring suddenly broke out, as a grinning Sirius Black entered the room, with Merlin close behind him. Up at the head table, a fork clattered onto a plate as it was dropped, and there was the immediate sound of a chair scraping against the floor as Remus jumped and stared at him in 'shock'.

"Sirius!" He shouted happily, and bolted around the table in order to greet his longtime friend. "I knew it. I knew it. A part of me always knew you were innocent! I'm so sorry I couldn't do more!"
"I know Remus, I know, but mate, you've got to let me breathe." He said with a grin.

Remus let him go, but Salazar couldn't help but chuckle at their antics.

"What are you doing here?" Remus asked. "I thought for sure here would be the last place you'd go."

Sirius shook his head and smiled. "I knew you were here because Amelia Bones mentioned that she questioned you about Peter's capture, and said you were a Professor now. I wanted to see you, but also...Remus, is he here?" Sirius asked, looking at Remus with a nervous expression as he scanned the Gryffindor table.

"He is Sirius." Remus said with a grin. "But," He added, as he steered Sirius towards the Slytherin table, "He's not where you'd think." He finished, pointing at Salazar.

"A Slytherin!" Sirius asked breathlessly as he realized where they were going. "But how?"

"Long story." Remus answered with a grin, but then he turned to Salazar. "Harry, this is Sirius Black."

"My Godfather." Salazar said, with wide, shining eyes as he grinned at the two of them. "Professor Lupin has told me all about you. He said that you, he, and my Dad were best friends. I'm glad to meet you sir."

Sirius cringed, but laughed. "Please don't call me 'sir' Harry, there is no need for that. It's Sirius or Padfoot, but more about that later I suppose." He said with a wide grin.

"Oh, I know about that." Salazar said with a knowing smirk, while casting a glance at Remus. "These are my friends." He said, pointing to Godric and the children as he introduced them.

"Gryffindors!" Sirius grinned as he caught sight of their uniforms. "I'm happy to know that. It gives me hope that you aren't an evil git."

"I know." Salazar said with a snort. "But who says I'm not an evil git still? According to some people, I'm dark because I use blood magic, set loose giant snakes, and talk about defending myself. It's all common sense really, but..."

"Now Harry, there is no need for saying such things." Albus interrupted as he come up behind them. "Sirius, I'm glad you came by."

Sirius stiffened immediately, but forced a smile on his face and shook Albus's hand. "Albus, it's good to see you."

"Likewise. May I ask who you brought with you?" He asked, studying Merlin as if to see if he knew the man.

"OH! I'm so sorry. I got caught up in...everything. Everyone, this is Nilrem. It's a long story, but he has helped me a lot."

"Good to meet you all." Merlin said with a nod, and Salazar and Godric both had to force themselves to keep a straight face.

Nilrem? Really? Salazar thought, and suppressed the urge to outright laugh.

Godric must have caught it too, because Salazar noticed that his jaw stiffened as he also tried not to
laugh.

The little gasp from Hermione went unnoticed because everyone was focused on Sirius and his friend, but she elbowed Blaise in the ribs and thumped Neville on the leg.

"Harry, we are going to go." She said, standing up and giving him a small smile. "I know you want to catch up with your Godfather, and we don't want to be a distraction."

"Hermione is right Harry." Blaise said, taking Hermione's cue. "We will let you talk and get to know him. If you need anything though, let us know. We will be in our usual gathering spot on the second floor."

"Gordy, are you coming?" Neville asked, looking at him with a grin.

"No I think I'll stay attached to Harry's hip." Godric said with a chuckle.

They all laughed, but Salazar smiled at each of his friends and nodded.

"Thank you." Salazar said with a sincere smile. "I'll find you all later."

They nodded and began to make their way out of the great hall. Sirius, Remus, and Merlin took their vacated places at the Slytherin table, but as they sat down, Salazar heard a scoff.

"Blood traitor scum." Draco growled, standing up. "I'm sick of this table hosting those who aren't worthy."

Godric gritted his teeth and nearly had to grab Salazar's wand hand to keep him from hexing the brat, Sirius however glared at the blond.

"By the looks of you, you are a Malfoy." Sirius said with a smirk.

"That's right." Draco said, glaring at him. "Draco Lucius Malfoy to be exact. My father is Lucius Malfoy."

"Is that so?" Sirius asked, leaning backwards slightly and smirking at him. "Then your mother is Narcissa, my cousin. Tell your mother that I have been to Gringotts today, and I have made some changes to the Black family tree. As the last remaining male Black, I am now head of the Black family. Do let your Mother know that I have disinherited her sister Bellatrix, and Narcissa will surely follow if she puts a toe out of line. That will not bode well for the Malfoys if that happens." He said in a deadly whisper.

Draco scoffed. "We don't need your money." He spat. "We are Malfoy's."

"That is true, but because of years of living an extravagant lifestyle and over spending on…Death Eater activities…" Sirius said with an evil smirk, "the actual Malfoy wealth is very low indeed. You see, during the last war, the Malfoy wealth took a hard hit, and without the Black wealth, there is no Malfoy wealth, and I am sure that is something your mother knows quite well." Sirius said, and Draco's eyes grew wide with fear. "I may be a 'blood traitor Gryffindor' as your family so aptly calls me, but I was raised by Slytherins." He hissed. "Sadistic, hateful, and vengeful ones at that. I know how to play this game. Do remind your mother of that." Sirius said in a clear false friendly tone.

Salazar couldn't stop the smirk from creeping onto his face, as Draco sank back down in his seat with a stunned look on his face. Merlin was chuckling, Godric was grinning and trying to not outright laugh, and Remus looked to be trying to hold back a snort as well. Albus though, frowned and
opened his mouth to speak, but Salazar beat him to it.

"The Potter wealth is vast as well. I wonder what would happen if we put our fortunes together?"
Salazar asked offhandedly.

"A whole lot I would think." Godric said with a smirk. "Technically, as the last remaining Heir of
Godric Gryffindor, if you were to claim that status you'd get what was left of the Gryffindor family
fortune. Unless, of course, Godric Gryffindor was somehow still alive."

"Which I would say is highly unlikely." Salazar added.

"Indeed." Godric said with a chuckle. "But then again, that book you found in the common room last
Christmas stated that Salazar Slytherin was looking for a way to live forever and we know Godric
was his best friend. Perhaps…"

"It is impossible to live forever." Albus interjected with an authoritative tone. "Immortality is a feeble
attempt and oftentimes leads to the dark arts. I suggest you leave that bit alone Mr. Roffin."

"And yet your former friend Nicholas Flamel is over six-hundred years old." Salazar said
offhandedly. "He's not a dark wizard."

"Merlin lived for over seven-hundred years before Hogwarts was founded, and he was sorted into
Slytherin." Merlin said with a slight smirk.

"That is true. Merlin was a Slytherin." Salazar admitted with a nod, as all the food disappeared.

The great hall started to empty out when that happened, but Remus's eyes went wide and he shot a
sideways glance at Merlin, who was gazing at him with a somewhat amused expression on his face.
Sirius started laughing, and Albus gave all of them a disapproving frown.

However, seeing as most of the students had left the great hall, including Draco who had practically
ran from the room, Minerva, Poppy, and Severus came down from the head table to meet with Sirius.
Severus hung back to study the situation, but Salazar did notice that he frowned at Sirius and seemed
to inch away from the man. Minerva and Poppy gave Sirius hugs and they also took a seat at the
Slytherin table, while Fred and George came over and began outright studying Sirius, as if to size
him up.

Salazar started laughing. "Sirius, these are two more of my friends, Fred and George Weasley. They
like to play pranks, so I would watch your back."

Sirius laughed loudly and stuck his hand out to shake the twins' hands, and they grinned at him.

"We just wanted to make sure you weren't an evil git and out to get Harry." Fred said.

"And we just want to warn you that if you try anything, you will be dealing with us." George added.

"So don't try anything." They warned, as they gave Sirius a mock warning glare, and Sirius grinned.

"I like you two, and you're Gryffindors at that. It gives me more hope that Harry isn't an evil
Slytherin git." He laughed, as Salazar and Godric snorted. "This is my friend Nilrem." He added,
introducing Merlin to the twins.

"A pleasure." Merlin said, shaking their hands. "We were just discussing the notion of immortality I
believe, and how funny it would be if Salazar Slytherin, Godric Gryffindor, and Merlin were still
alive, but others weren't so keen to the idea."
Minerva, Poppy, and Severus's eyes widened and they stared at Merlin, just as Remus had done, but the twins got a wicked grin on their face.

"Imagine Fred," George said taking a seat beside Salazar. "What that would be like."

"Indeed my evil counterpart. Old Snaky Sal would probably join Lord Voldypants because, you know, he's evil and stuff, and Godric the Lionheart would help us defend our lives!" Fred replied, while using his wand as a mock sword.

"But what about Merlin? Where would his allegiances fall?" George asked curiously.

"Hmm, I don't know. He was an evil slimy Slytherin, but then again, he was the greatest wizard who ever lived and we have all of the Order of Merlins because of him. He might help us beat Old Sal and Lord Voldypants."

Merlin burst out laughing. "Children and their imaginations."

Salazar grinned at Godric. "Old Snaky Sal and Godric the Lionheart, eh?"

"I wonder who would win in a duel." Godric asked with a grin of his own.

"With Merlin as the dueling referee!" The twins cried, and all four of them burst out laughing.

"Well personally, my money is on Godric the Lionheart, but that's just me." Merlin said, with a wink in the twins' direction.

Salazar scoffed loudly. "Not hardly. I'm sure Old Snaky Sal would mop the floor with that bloody Gryffindor."

"And what makes you say that Harry?" Sirius asked with a grin.

"Because I'm a proper Slytherin, and I must take sides with the Founder of my house." He said, folding his arms across his chest.

"And Gordy isn't a proper Slytherin?" Remus teased.

"Not in the slightest." Salazar answered with a grin, as Godric burst out laughing.

"I agree Speaker." Nora said as she emerged from his robe sleeve. "Perhaps Jolly could learn lessons from you."

"I agree my dear." Salazar replied with an even bigger grin.

"Speaker, tell Shaggy what I am about to say." She said suddenly, turning towards Sirius. "I like you Shaggy, that is your new name, but if you try to hurt Speaker, I will bite you. I am the deadliest snake in the world you know."

Salazar snorted a bit, and repeated what Nora said. Sirius cringed a bit when the Parseltongue was spoken, but he managed to smile at Salazar.

"You can talk to snakes Harry?" He asked with a voice tinged with nervousness.

"Yeah, though I can't explain why."

"That is a subject we can discuss later Sirius, but for now, I'd like to know how you managed to escape." Albus said, taking a seat on the other side of Minerva.
Sirius explained how he had turned into his animagus form and swam to shore, but he admitted that
he got disoriented and ended up in Norway instead of the U.K, which was where Nilrem found him.
He told everyone that he was scared at first, but Nilrem assured him that he was going to be all right
and took him into his house and helped him a lot.

Albus asked a ton of questions, but Sirius answered them all. Apparently Sirius 'broke out of
Azkaban to keep Harry safe'. He had endured the prison all the years because he didn't know what to
do, but he knew that Harry had to have started Hogwarts by now and he wanted to keep him safe
from Peter.

"So you are telling me, that all of this with Peter and you breaking out is just a coincidence?" Albus
asked, eyeing Sirius carefully. "I find it strange that all this talk about Harry looking into things,
Sirius breaking out, and Peter all of a sudden being found is just that, a coincidence. I think there is
more to it."

"Oh, there is." Merlin said, looking at Albus with sudden disdain. "You see Mr. Dumbledore, what
Sirius told you is what we told the Ministry, but none of it is a coincidence nor is any of it true. It was
a perfectly timed, well-orchestrated plan."

"How do you mean?" Albus asked, suddenly standing up and glaring at Merlin.

Merlin stared him down, but kept his voice even and calm. "This was all a plan to make sure young
Harry here was safe and had someone to look out for him. Do you really think Harry spending the
summer with Nicholas Flamel was a fluke? No, it was planned. Planned since the middle of last year.
Breaking Sirius out of Azkaban was to ensure the plan worked because he is Harry's Godfather and
rightful guardian. Nicholas and I wanted to keep Harry away from you."

"You!" Albus shouted, drawing his wand. "You are the spy Nicholas has put here to keep a watch
on me!"

"I suggest you put that wand away young man, before you get hurt." Merlin warned with a deadly
tone. "Being a graduate of Durmstrang, I have no aversions to using dark magic."

Albus took a few steps back, but Salazar and the others watched in awe as the two of them glared at
each other. Salazar had no idea any of this was going to happen, and judging by the look on Sirius's
face, neither did he, but they were both willing to play along.

"You see Mr. Dumbledore," Merlin continued. "I have been observing young Harry here for the
better part of a year to ensure his safety. Your little stunt with Voldemort, Nicholas's stone, and the
cerberus and griffin were all made known to Nicholas because of me. It started out because you had
refused to give Nicholas any information to the safety of his stone, so he asked me for a favor and I
came to investigate. What I stumbled upon was much bigger than either of us had anticipated. You
dared to place a young boy, who had just weeks before learned that he was a wizard, in the path of
the darkest and most cruel wizard of our day. It simply did not set well with us. I have been here the
whole time. It was me who warded the door last year, it was me who discovered Voldemort was
here, and it was me who found out about your so called traps to protect the stone. I followed Harry to
the Dursleys last summer and it was me that got him to Nicholas safe and sound, though I had to use
the imperius curse on him to do it, and have him travel by muggle means." Merlin said, turning to
Salazar. "I do hope you will one day forgive me for that Mr. Potter, but seeing as you don't know
occlumency, I had to make you believe that you did it on your own."

"What is occlumency?" Salazar asked, feigning curiosity.

"It is something that you will never need to worry about. Nicholas and Perenelle have their ways."
He said with a mysterious smile. "However, what they can do doesn't include what you already
know, so if the Headmaster chose to dive into your thoughts and mind, me leading you to Nicholas
would be something he would have discovered." Merlin added, though it was hardly the truth, seeing
as Nicholas and Perenelle were able to shield the twins' mind just fine last year.

"I understand." Salazar said with a nod. "I trust Mr. and Mrs. Flamel completely, so if they trust you,
I have no…what's the word…qualms…to you using that particular Unforgivable on me."

Merlin smiled a bit. "I see Perenelle's speech lessons were not for naught."

Salazar grinned at him. "No sir. One of the things they wanted to teach me was how to carry myself
like a pure-blood, even though I'm not one myself. Acting, talking, and my mannerisms were part of
Mrs. Flamel's daily teachings."

"Your name carries a lot of weight in our society young Mr. Potter, and not just because of your
'fame'. The Potter family is very old, and very much respected in…shall we say…respectable pure-
blood circles." Merlin said with a slight smile. "It is good for you to learn these teachings."

Albus looked to be on the verge of exploding in a way that would make Vernon Dursley proud. The
others were trying not to burst out laughing at Albus's facial expressions as he tried to maintain
control, but Severus on the other hand, kept glancing at Salazar and Merlin in awe as he watched the
underhandedness of the whole situation take place. Sirius however, glared at Albus.

"Do not think for one second that I like how much you have put my Godson in danger Albus. If not
for the Flamels and Nilrem, I shudder to think how cowed and susceptible Harry would be when it
comes to you and your manipulations. Thankfully, he has a strong character and a sense of self like
Lily did."

"Someone will need to explain things to me." Remus said, glaring at Albus. "Because apparently,
I'm lost." He lied.

"Later Moony. I promise." Sirius responded.

"So how did you really escape from Azkaban?" Albus asked through gritted teeth.

"Oh, that was me." Merlin responded. "Luckily my animagus form is a phoenix." He lied. "And as
soon as I delivered Sirius to Nicholas and Perenelle, I came back here and heard about the sudden
disappearance of a rat named Scabbers when the news of Sirius escaping and Mr. Lupin arriving was
announced. The more I learned, the more I reported back to Nicholas and Sirius. Sirius told me that it
was probably Peter, and all I needed to do was get Peter in front of Mr. Lupin so that he could
recognize him for who he was."

"That all makes sense now." Salazar said suddenly. "You knew I was looking into Sirius Black and
his lack of trial and I was beginning to ask Mr. Flamel questions."

"Exactly." Merlin said, turning to him and nodding. "It didn't take us long to realize that an innocent
man was locked up in there."

"Well I, for one, am grateful." Sirius said sincerely.

"And what would you all do if I told the Ministry the truth?" Albus asked self-righteously.

"Then I will tell the Ministry all about the events of last year. I can't begin to imagine what Madam
Bones would do with that information. Oh, and Mr. Dumbledore, if you even entertain the notion of
obliviating your staff, these students, Sirius, or myself, you will not like the consequences, nor will
you enjoy the prison time that would surely follow."

"How dare you come into my school and threaten me!" Albus shouted with rage. "I don't take…"

"You will keep your mouth shut Mr. Dumbledore, or I promise you that I will turn you into a teacup and banish you to the deepest parts of the ocean." Merlin said in a deadly tone. "Now, if you will excuse me, I have clearly overstayed my welcome. Sirius, you know where to find me, and I trust you can make your way back there. Mr. Potter, I would like to extend an invitation to you and your friends to come and visit me for Christmas, if that is all right with your Godfather."

"It seems like a fine plan. I will get with you on the details." Sirius said with an excited grin.

"Very well. I'll take my leave, but remember, I will not be far. Goodnight everyone."

Silence reigned as everyone watched Merlin leave. Salazar was on the verge of losing it and fought hard to not laugh. Godric was grinning like a fool, Sirius, Poppy, Remus, and Minerva had smug looks on their faces, but Severus, ever the spy, glared scornfully around at them.

"Well Potter, it seems your fame does come in handy." He said with a scathing tone. "I suspect that you like having your own bodyguard and that…"

"Severus." Albus said, glaring at the great hall's doors that Merlin had already exited out of. "Come to my office. I need to speak with you. To the rest of you, goodnight." He said with a snarl.

They all watched Albus and Severus leave, but as soon as they were alone, Salazar finally let loose with loud laughter.

"I swear the man is a genius."

"Indeed." Godric replied, as he wiped tears from his cheeks because he was also laughing hard. "I think this negates the Unbreakable Vow."

"It does." Salazar snorted.

"Merlin! I never would have guessed!" Poppy cried happily. "It's just…"

"Unreal." Minerva finished with awe.

"He never made me take the Vow, but he did ask me not to say who I was staying with. I hope you can forgive me Moony."

"Of course."

"We can too! By the way, that was brilliant!" James yelled, though his voice sounded high and squeaky.

"Oh that's right!" Sirius exclaimed with a laugh. "I had forgotten about you two!"

They all watched as he unstuck a small mirror from his robes and returned it to its normal size. James was grinning, but Lily was scowling.

"I swear that man is going to get it one day. Putting my supposed son in danger. It's just…I hate him!" She yelled, banging her hand on the sofa she was sitting on.

"Hang in there Lily. You'll get the chance one day." Salazar said with a chuckle. "But yes, in case there is still any lingering doubt, 'Nilrem' is in fact Merlin. He was the one I went to, to gain
immortality after I had exhausted every other option."

"He is very old, nearly seventeen hundred years to be exact, so you can believe that if Salazar and I have a problem and can't solve something, he is the one we go to." Godric added.

"So where has he been? I mean, after all this time you'd think…" Remus asked, letting his voice trail off.

"Well, about five hundred years ago, Merlin became displeased with the way the Wizarding World was heading so he went into hiding. He grew tired of trying to keep order in our world and decided to live a peaceful life from then on. His existence eventually faded from everyone's mind as time went on, but seeing as Godric, Nicholas, Perenelle, and I are the last ones alive who remember him, we just kind of know." Salazar said with a shrug.

"So you are like a top secret super wizarding elite spy thingy!" James exclaimed, to the confusion of everyone present.

"You have got to stop watching muggle movies." Lily said, rolling her eyes.

Salazar chuckled. "The big thing is that we have manipulated Albus to the point that he is now running in circles. A lot of his unspoken questions have been answered, even if all the answers are lies, but the important thing is that we have diverted his attention away from the suspicious Peter and Sirius 'coincidence' that took place. Granted, most of that was my fault. I switched directions halfway through the plan and took Merlin's advice to hand Peter directly over to the Ministry, verses letting Albus handle it all, but like Merlin, I was afraid Albus would ignore it in favor of Ron's situation."

"But suspicion has now been thrown off all of us." Remus remarked.

"Correct." Salazar said with a nod. "Albus will blame 'Nicholas's Spy' for everything that has happened, which leaves us free and clear to completely focus on Ron. Speaking of…"

Salazar went on to explain to them what Hermione had said earlier that evening, and warned Minerva to be ready for it. In light of what Hermione told him about the diary, Salazar came to a tentative conclusion that the diary was simply influencing Ron, and that he didn't think the diary would harm Ron if it was simply taken away. He would, of course, talk to Nicholas and Merlin to see what they thought about it all.

"After you talk to them, do you want Fred and I to sneak into his dorm to steal it?" George asked.

"No." Salazar said sharply. "What Severus said that night still holds, under no circumstances are you to try and touch it. It may start influencing you, and I don't want to take that chance. Better it try to influence us, than one of you."

"So how do we go about getting it?" Minerva asked a bit nervously. "Would you like me to get it?"

Salazar shook his head. "No. The Christmas Holidays start next week, and this matter must be dealt with extreme caution. I will speak to Merlin and Nicholas over the Holiday, and we will proceed from there. Fred and George, just watch over your brother during the Holidays, and if Remus is willing, use his mirror that is keyed to Sirius to let us know right away if anything happens."

Remus and the twins nodded, but Poppy asked, "And when we get back, how do we get it?"

Salazar cast a sideways glance at Godric and smirked. "Will your mother let you into Gryffindor tower, even if you are dressed in Slytherin robes?" He asked with a chuckle.
"She better, or I'll remove her portrait and threaten her with no wine for the rest of eternity." Godric laughed.

"Wait, WHAT!?!" Fred cried as he looked at Godric with bright eyes full of laughter. "Are you saying that The Fat Lady is…?"

"My mother?" Godric chuckled. "Yes, and her name is Margret. Call her that when you head up to the tower later. I guarantee that will silence her terrible singing long enough for you to actually gain entrance in under five minutes."

"That would be a record!" Sirius cried, laughing loudly. "No offence Godric, but your mother really is a terrible singer."

"We know." Salazar said with a grin. "And if any of you ever have the misfortune of hearing Godric sing, you'll know where he gets it from."

Godric began grumbling, but then he looked at Salazar with a smirk. "You're not much better you know. I heard you singing at my funeral, and everyone was nearly covering their ears!" He cried, and then he stood up as if to mimic Salazar on that day.

"Farewell oh great Gryffindor,
Farewell oh great Gryffindor,
Farewell oh great Gryffindor,
In our hearts,
You'll for-e-ver beeeeee!
"

He finished the last part with a great flourish, but everyone was laughing and shouting at him to hush, while they covered their ears.

Salazar laughed, but feigned a hurt look. "Well, for your information, I thought it was a lovely song." He said with a huff.

"Yes, my mother would have enjoyed it very much." Godric replied as he sat back down with a grin. Salazar snorted. "Shut up Godric." He said, swatting him around the head.

Minerva and Poppy started giggling, and Sirius, Remus, Fred, and George started laughing loudly as the two best friends continued to poke fun at each other. They all spent the rest of the night laughing and joking with one another, and Fred and George took the opportunity to talk 'pranks' in depth with Remus, Sirius, and James, much to Minerva's dismay.

However, despite the lighthearted laughter and conversation going on around them, none of them had forgotten about the seriousness of Ron's situation.

Meanwhile, in an unused classroom on the second floor, Hermione, Neville, and Blaise were having a conversation of their own.

"I'm telling you guys, 'Nilrem' spelled backwards is Merlin!" Hermione exclaimed.

"That might be true Hermione," Neville said. "But it's a big leap saying that this Nilrem guy is the Merlin. I mean, if that was true then he'd be..."
"Roughly seventeen hundred years old." She said, deflating slightly as she realized just how old the wizard had to be.

"Do muggles know of Merlin?" Blaise asked, looking at her curiously.

"They do because of King Arthur, but muggles think that it's just a story and that there is no truth in it, BUT you guys say that Merlin was a Slytherin, right?" She asked, and both boys nodded. "Well, then he had to be roughly five to six hundred years old when he came to Hogwarts. That means Harry would have known him. We know that Harry and Gordy are at least a thousand years old, and that Nicholas Flamel is six hundred years old, based upon our research of him. It is possible that this Nilrem guy is the Merlin."

Neville and Blaise glanced at each other. "Merlin was the greatest wizard who ever lived Blaise. It's possible that he would find a way to live forever." Neville said, though he still seemed unsure of the notion himself.

"It might be possible, but I just don't know…" Blaise said, still looking unconvinced.

"Let's just say that he is." Hermione said, getting up and pacing around the classroom. "That means that Harry, Gordy, 'Nilrem', and Nicholas Flamel are all in this together. We also know, from Neville's sneaky question, that Professors McGonagall, Snape, and Lupin, along with Madam Pomfrey know who they are."

"Right, but why are they doing this. It doesn't make much sense to me." Blaise said. "Why are they here, and why in the world is Salazar Slytherin posing as Harry Potter?"

"Harry's boggart." Hermione said with a sigh. "I've thought about it, and even though it's completely mad, I think I know why."

"Why?" The boys asked in unison.

"Ok, I've already told you who I think his boggart turned into, but what I didn't tell you at the time was…I think that Harry is protecting the real Harry and his parents. I don't think that Lily and James Potter are dead. I think that they are all alive and hidden somewhere safe. Maybe in a different country or something."

"But why does Salazar look like Harry?" Neville asked. "And how has he managed to pull off this ruse for so long?"

"I don't know." Hermione admitted, furrowing her brow in thought.

"He could be using Polyjuice Potion." Blaise offered. "That would explain why he looks like Harry, but Polyjuice wears off after an hour or so, depending on how well it's brewed."

"Yeah, but that still doesn't make sense. Harry has lived with his muggle relatives for ten years before coming to Hogwarts and we know that he was abused by them. I can't see Salazar Slytherin putting up with that for ten years." Neville said.

"True." Blaise admitted, sitting down heavily in a chair.

"The only way we will know for sure is if we ask him, but I don't think that is a good idea." Hermione said quietly. "They have a reason for being so secretive about this and I don't want to worry them."

"I agree with that, but that still doesn't mean that I don't want to know." Blaise said.
"I agree." Neville said with a nod. "I also want to know why they hate Dumbledore so much. Nicholas Flamel and he were good friends, according to our research, but apparently last year they had a falling out."

Blaise shrugged, while Hermione threw her hands up in the air. "I don't know." She admitted with an exasperated sigh.

"Well one thing is for certain, if Harry, Gordy, Nilrem, and Nicholas Flamel are looking into Ron's situation, then it makes me feel better for Ron." Neville said. "I don't like Ron, and I know he's a prat, but that doesn't mean I want to see him dead, or hurt badly by this horcrux thing."

"Me too." Blaise said, nodding his head. "I don't think these guys like Dumbledore too much because of how he handled the last war though. If Harry hadn't stopped V-V-" , Blaise took a deep breath, "Voldemort then we would still be dealing with him today."

"Given what Fred and George told us about horcruxes, I think we still are in a way." Hermione said, but then her eyes widened. "Holy crap! Fred and George know too!"

"What!?" Blaise and Neville cried.

"How did you jump to that conclusion?" Blaise asked.

"Think about it. That night when we learned about the horcrux, they practically ignored Professor Dumbledore and looked to Harry, Nicholas Flamel, and Snape for answers." She said with a big grin. "The twins know."

"That would explain why they prank Harry so much. I don't think Salazar cares that they target him all the time. I mean, they are constantly teasing him about one thing or another, and Gordy eggs them on most of the time." Blaise said with a chuckle.

"I don't think we should let the twins know that we know though." Neville said quietly. "They might tell Harry."

"I agree." Hermione and Blaise replied.

"But going back to what you said about them not liking Dumbledore, what did you mean?" Hermione asked, looking at Blaise.

"Well, during the first war Dumbledore was pretty lax in how he handled the Death Eaters."

"Blaise is right." Neville added. "My Gram supported him, but she didn't really care for his methods. Dumbledore believed that we shouldn't hurt them, because he thought he could 'save' them and bring them back to the light side, but with Death Eaters, you can't do that."

"Except for Snape." Blaise said. "Every Slytherin knows that Snape was a Death Eater, but everyone knows that Dumbledore got him off."

"Right." Neville said, nodding his head. "Dumbledore wouldn't allow anyone to kill or hurt them in any way. He just believed in letting the Ministry handle everything, but when all was said and done, a lot of Death Eaters went free. They claimed to be under the imperius curse."

"Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, Montague, Flint, and the Carrows, and even a few that ratted out other Death Eaters went free. The Death Eaters who are not locked in Azkaban would surely rejoin Voldemort if he ever returned to power." Blaise said, and Hermione's eyes widened in fear.
"A lot of witches and wizards who went through the first war and actively fought against Voldemort, don't think he's dead and gone. A lot think he's still out there, and could return to power one day." Neville added. "And that might be why Harry and the others don't like Dumbledore all that much."

"You have to understand Hermione, that Salazar, Godric, Merlin, and even Nicholas Flamel lived in a time where it was killed or be killed. They have fought in many wars, and with Dumbledore so lax about one of the most dangerous wizards to come along in our time, they probably don't think that's how it should be done, and quite frankly, I agree with them."

"It's sickening how Dumbledore pleads for the lives of murderers and lunatics." Neville said with a sigh. "I know I don't talk about my parents, but if Dumbledore's 'no kill, no harm' policy hadn't happened, then my parents wouldn't be in the condition they are in."

"I was wondering if you would ever mention them." Blaise said quietly. "I'm sorry mate. For what happened to them."

"I figured you'd know, being in Slytherin and all." Neville said with a sigh.

"What happened to them?" Hermione asked, looking at Neville with a mixture of sympathy and curiosity.

Neville sighed and explained what happened to them, and who was responsible for torturing them. When he was finished, Hermione had tears in her eyes and gave him a light hug.

"I'm so sorry." She whispered. "I had no idea."

"It's ok. I didn't expect you too, but it goes without saying, if Bellatrix and her kind had been killed, my parents, who were good and decent people, wouldn't be where they are now."

"Neville is right." Blaise said quietly, patting Neville lightly on the shoulder. "A lot of decent old pure-blood families, along with countless half-bloods and muggle borns, were wiped out because of the war, and because Dumbledore didn't believe in killing or harming the Death Eaters. You'd be surprised at how many orphans are at this school because of him."

"Then why do people still look up to him?" Hermione asked, completely flabbergasted. "I don't understand."

"Because a lot of them don't know." Neville said. "I only know because my family was directly involved with the war, and because my Gram made sure I knew."

"And I know because I'm a Slytherin." Blaise added. "It's talked about a great deal in the common room. Most Slytherins are good people and are like me when it comes to the whole 'kill or be killed' thing, but it's the bad ones like Malfoy and his ilk that gives us a bad name."

Hermione sighed heavily and shook her head. "It all makes sense when you look at it that way, and it explains why Harry and the others don't like Dumbledore. They probably don't trust him to do the right thing when the time comes, but what about Snape? If he is a Death Eater turned good, why did he do it?"

"I don't know." Blaise said with a chuckle. "But I can tell you that the way he treats Harry is all an act. If he knows who Harry really is, then I can't see him really hating Harry."

"True." Neville laughed. "But it almost seems like he is a spy. Dumbledore trusts Snape, but I think that Snape turns around and tells Harry everything."
"It's like watching a master of mind games. Harry has Dumbledore thinking and doing one thing, but in reality, the Headmaster is playing a game that he doesn't even realize. I think this whole thing with Sirius Black is part of that as well." Blaise laughed. "I think that Harry knew all along that he was innocent, and that's why he wasn't afraid of the notion of Black coming after him. Nicholas Flamel, Harry, Gordy, and Nilrem were all in on it, and I bet they were the ones who broke him out somehow. It's brilliant really."

Hermione giggled. "Well, he is the original Slytherin."

"So true Hermione, so true." Blaise said with a grin. "And I plan to learn all I can from watching the man."

"Me too." Neville said with a grin. "Imagine the look on Malfoy's face if he ever found out who Harry really was. It would be…"

"Priceless." Hermione said, and they all burst out laughing.

Severus silently sighed with exasperation and rolled his eyes as he continued to listen to Albus's ranting. The man was almost frothing at the mouth because of what happened in the great hall, and according to the Headmaster, we wasn't going to put up with all of this going on inside 'his castle'.

If only Severus could tell him the truth, and then he could gleefully watch the shock, fear, and rage fly across Albus's face. Severus would never do that though because he was having too much fun at Albus's expense, even if the man could be trying at times.

"I want to know who that Nilrem man is, and I want Harry away from the Flamels and Sirius!" Albus shouted, while banging his hand on his desk. "Severus, you know that if Harry begins living with Sirius that he will end up just like James."

Severus scowled, but not because of what Albus said. It was because he hated when the man tried to manipulate him. Thankfully, Albus thought his scowl was because of his comment.

"Potter already acts like his Father Headmaster, so what difference would it make?" Severus asked dryly.

"I some ways, yes I agree. Harry is a bit arrogant, but he is also caring, just like Lily was. However, if left solely up to Sirius to raise him, I'm afraid that trait would be left behind. Sirius is immature, and I certainly don't want Nicholas and his hateful wife having anything to do with Harry."

"What do you propose?" Severus asked.

Albus sighed and sat down heavily. "I don't know yet, but Harry can't be allowed to live with Sirius and be influenced by the Flamels. I've been doing a lot of thinking about the prophecy, the horcruxes, and everything in general. I have come to the conclusion that Harry is in fact a horcrux. That would explain why he can speak to snakes, and is very powerful, smart, and in some ways, acts like Voldemort. I think the horcrux lies within Harry's scar, and is influencing the boy on a small level."

"Are you for certain?" Severus asked, sitting up and feigning disbelief.

"I am." Albus said with a nod. "And they won't know how to handle Harry when the time comes for the horcrux to be destroyed. I don't know exactly how to destroy it myself…yet, but if it comes down to having to kill Harry, they won't do it. Harry may even need to let Voldemort kill him, in order for Voldemort to finally be destroyed for good."
"And you think that Black and the others won't let Potter sacrifice himself if need be." Severus stated.

"Correct." Albus said firmly. "Harry is too independent for my liking. He is only twelve, and he already acts like a grown man at times, but he is very young and doesn't know what's best for him. I do though. I know what needs to be done, but I need Harry to trust me and follow my advice when the time comes, but he won't, if left to Sirius and the Flamels."

"I see." Severus said simply, leaning back in his chair. "Should Nicholas be made aware of the horcrux in Potter's head?"

"No." Albus said sharply. "Not at all. I don't want Nicholas to even get a hint about it. I will handle this, just as I will handle the diary and Mr. Weasley's situation by myself."

Severus glanced at Albus, but managed to keep his face devoid of any emotion. "And what do you plan to do, and do you need my help?"

"I thank you for offering to help, but no, I don't need it. I have come up with a basic plan, but not all of the details have been worked out yet. I will let you know when the time comes though."

"I understand." Severus said with a nod.

He knew that Salazar would find this new development very interesting, and fully intended to tell him about it all. Severus just hoped that Albus would tell him what the plan was, before the man actually did anything.

*A/N* Hmm, so Albus isn't as stupid as we all hoped, and he was catching on to some things. Thankfully, he was put in his place though, and it's a bit funny to see that! The Christmas Holidays are coming up, and just to let you know, I will probably make it two chapters. Things are going to start heating up now that everything but the horcrux has been taken care of, so hold on to your seats! It's fixing to get dicey!

Chapter End Notes

Hmm, so Albus isn't as stupid as we all hoped, and he was catching on to some things. Thankfully, he was put in his place though, and it's a bit funny to see that! The Christmas Holidays are coming up, and just to let you know, I will probably make it two chapters. Things are going to start heating up now that everything but the horcrux has been taken care of, so hold on to your seats! It's fixing to get dicey!
Hey guys! I feel like such an idiot right now! One of my guest reviewers on 'the other site' pointed out my mistake with Neville calling his Grandmother 'Gram'. I could have sworn that, that is what he called her. In the movies I kept hearing 'Gram' instead of 'Gran' and I think that is because I call my own Grandmother 'Grammy', and I think 'Gram' is simply what I wanted to hear so it kind of stuck with me. I went back and doubled checked the books though, and he does in fact call her 'Gran'. I know I have done that in several places where Neville mentions his Grandmother, so from now on I will make sure I don't make that mistake again.

With that said, I want to warn you that this chapter has a large bit of fluff in it, but it's Christmas and I like to try and keep everyone happy. HOWEVER, there is very important information buried within the fluff, so pay attention closely. *winks*

Now, onward my dear readers!

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**Chapter 31**

**A Christmas Gift**

The week before Christmas Holidays flew by for Salazar, and before he knew it, he was on the train heading towards Kings Cross. Severus told him what Albus had ranted about when they were in his office, but that only made Salazar laugh. He was not concerned about Albus trying to keep him away from Nicholas and Perenelle or Sirius. In fact, he was looking forward to it, seeing as Albus would never succeed in that endeavor. Severus did say though, that Albus would 'allow' Salazar to spend time with the man for Christmas. Salazar was also not concerned with Albus's thoughts on the horcrux in his head, or Albus's plans to have him possibly sacrifice himself for 'The Greater Good'.

Albus was just going to have to be disappointed in that regard.

What did concern him however, was the fact that Albus was planning to do something about the diary. Severus told him that as soon as he knew anything, he would let Salazar know as soon as he could. Salazar also mentioned it to Fred and George, and told them to let him know if anything seemed amiss with Ron.

"Harry, we are here." Hermione said, gently shaking Salazar out of his thoughts.

He jerked a bit, but smiled softly at her. "Oh, thank you Hermione. I'm sorry, I was lost in thought."

"It's ok. I understand. I know it must be hard spending Christmas with someone you hardly know, but listen, if you need anything, just let me know."

"I will, and thank you." He said sincerely as they got ready exit the train.

"Oh, and Nora, I will make you another fleece warmer this year and send it as a present. Just so I
know, what colors do you want?” She asked with a big grin.

"I'm unsure Bushy, but I do know Speaker still has the costumes from last year, so I will be wearing that on Christmas day. He can change the colors back to red and white I think. I don't know though, maybe a festive red and green for Slytherin and Gryffindor, or green and gold. I'm undecided."

"I'll surprise you then." She laughed.

"I look forward to it, and maybe you could send a hat for Pigeon."

"Hmm, that's doable. All right, I'll think of something. I'll see you all in a few weeks!" She cried, running off to greet her parents.

Salazar and Nora said their goodbyes to Blaise, Neville, and Colin, and watched as they left with their families. He chuckled when Colin greeted his family because apparently, the boy had a younger brother, and Colin was already pulling out pictures to show off to him.

"They look like decent muggles Speaker." Nora commented, as she caught where his attention was at.

"That they do my dear. It's quite the change from my day when they couldn't go home after attending Hogwarts. I'm glad times have changed."

"Me too." Godric said softly, coming up behind them. "Have you seen Sirius yet?"

"Not yet, but he will be here. You can head to my flat if you want, and we will catch up with you there."

"Nah, I'll wait until the platform clears out a bit, then I'll call for Nehum and head home for a rest. I'll catch up with you at your flat tomorrow afternoon."

Salazar nodded, but his attention was diverted when Molly Weasley came bustling over.

"Oh Harry!" She exclaimed, giving him a tight hug. "Dumbledore told us that you'd be spending Christmas with Sirius. I was hoping you'd be able to come to The Burrow, but I understand the situation. If you still want to come and visit, just give us a floo call and come on over. Sirius knows where we live, and I know Fred, George, and Percy would love for you to visit for a few hours if you want."

Salazar returned her hug somewhat awkwardly, but he smiled. He knew the woman was trying to make up for her past actions, and he was more than willing to allow that to happen, especially for the twins and Percy's sake.

"I will talk to Sirius, and see what he says, but I think it's doable. Thank you Mrs. Weasley." He said, as the twins and Percy grinned broadly.

"Gordy can come too!" Fred shouted, and Godric started laughing.

"One slimy, sneaky, evil Slytherin at a time Fred!"

"I'm not Fred, I'm George!" Fred exclaimed with a grin.

"No you're not." Salazar and Godric said together, and Fred began laughing loudly.

Molly though, looked at Godric closely and seemed a little unsure of him coming over for a visit. Well, that is until a certain hyper muggle born came rushing over.
"Gordy, Harry! You're still here! Good! Hey uh…is it ok for my brother to see Nehum? I just showed him a picture of him and told him what a phoenix was! Is it ok? Please! Oh, Mum and Dad, these are my friends Gordy and Harry! They are both Slytherins, and this is Fred, George, and Percy. They are all Gryffindors like me. I told you all about them in my letters! Please Gordy!" Colin said in a great rush that sent Salazar's head spinning.

"I thought you had left already Colin." Godric said with an amused smile.

"Oh no." Mrs. Creevey said with a chuckle. "We had to stop and look at pictures. I couldn't believe half of what Colin said was true, so I'm afraid all the picture taking was because of me."

"It's all right. Colin has been keeping us guessing at how many pictures he has actually taken." Godric laughed.

"Can they see Nehum? Please, please! They don't believe that a phoenix is real!"

Godric chuckled and nodded. "I suppose. Nehum!" He called out loudly, and the phoenix appeared in a brilliant burst of flames that startled the three other Creeveys.

"WICKED!" Dennis, Colin's little brother, cried.

"See Mum! I told you! Can I get a picture Gordy?"

Salazar, Fred, George, and Percy burst out laughing, and sure enough, Colin whipped out his camera and snapped a picture before anyone realized it. Godric didn't care though, he always found joy in the over excited lad, and was always amused by his actions.

Godric whispered something to Nehum though, and Salazar looked at him oddly when the phoenix landed lightly on Colin's shoulder and began lifting him up in the air. The Creeveys eyes widened, but his little brother stood there open mouthed, while Colin laughed loudly.

"He's really strong Mum!" Colin cried, as Nehum set the boy back down.

"Well I do think we stand corrected on the existence of phoenixes." Mr. Creevey said with a smile. "But boys, I think it's time we head home. I hope you don't think we were being to forward."

"Not at all." Salazar said with a smile.

The Creeveys left then, but not before Colin promised to send Fred and George muggle fireworks, which got the twins grinning from ear to ear.

"They are muggles?" Arthur said, watching them go with excitement in his eyes.

"Yes, Colin is a muggle born Dad, and we are surprised you didn't ask them every question you could think of." Percy said, patting Nehum on the head. "This is the first time I've seen him up close. The only other time was when I saw him at the Quidditch match when the dementors attacked."

"Oh those nasty things." Molly said with a shiver, but then she turned to Godric and smiled. "I suppose, if it's all right with your parents, that you could also join us sometime this Holiday Gordy. The twins have mentioned you in their letters as well."

"I look forward to it Mrs. Weasley." Godric said with a grin. "But I must be going. Nehum is my way home. I'll get in touch with Harry, and if it's ok with Sirius, we will hopefully see you all soon."

"All right." Molly said with a smile, as she watched Godric and Nehum disappear.
"Can we go now?" Ron asked irritably, as he stood off to the side and glared at everyone. "Or are we going to stand around all day fawning over Slytherins?" He spat.

Salazar resisted the urge to roll his eyes, but at that moment, Sirius arrived and ran over to them.

"Sorry I'm late." He said somewhat breathlessly.

"It's all right Sirius." George said with a grin. "We were having fun discussing plans for Christmas. Will you let Harry come over and visit?"

Salazar grinned at him. "It would be fun."

"I suppose we can work something out. Molly, it's good to see you again, and we will let you know."

She beamed at him. "Very good, very good. Well, we best be off and we will see you soon."

Salazar and Sirius nodded, and watched as the Weasleys left. Salazar whispered the location of his flat to Sirius, and then they both apparated to Diagon Alley.

"Have you obtained a proper wand yet?" Salazar asked, as Sirius stared out of the windows and into the snow covered alley below.

"No, not yet." Sirius replied quietly, as Salazar poured them both some tea. "I lied when I told Malfoy about going to Gringotts that day. In truth, Merlin and I spent every moment at the Ministry, then we headed back to his house for an hour or so. I didn't realize that I would be so tired after all of that, but Amelia asked me every question and grilled me about every detail she could think of."

"It's to be expected my friend. How have you been handling your new freedom?" Salazar asked, as Sirius made his way to a chair and sat down.

He took his tea and sipped it slowly, but then he sighed. He explained to Salazar that things were a lot different than before he went to Azkaban. Salazar told him lot of that had to with him growing up in a time of war, because in reality, that's what it was. Then he went right to Azkaban after it was all over.

Sirius seemed to except that, but he still didn't understand the overall calmness everyone displayed, versus the panicked and hurried attitudes of everyone before he was sent away. Salazar told him that was because he knew Voldemort wasn't dead and gone yet, but everyone else thought he was. He also told Sirius it would take time to readjust to everyday life and that in order to do that, he needed to get out and about more and that he couldn't hide at Merlin's forever.

"I know." Sirius sighed, as he finished his tea. "But it's hard to do. Remus is at Hogwarts now, and James and Lily are wherever they are. All my friends that I had before are dead." "What about family?" Salazar asked.

Sirius seemed to pause a moment, and then he smiled. "I do have a cousin, Andromeda, who was always kind to me. She was disowned from the family because she married a muggle born."

"Then perhaps family is what you need at this time, as well as friends. Severus told me that no child stayed at Hogwarts for Christmas this year, so the Professors will be able to come and go. I'm sure Remus will join us for Christmas Day at Merlin's."
"Well that is good news!" Sirius exclaimed, brightening up a bit. "Merlin does seem to enjoy his privacy, and I'm surprised that he let himself be known to Minnie, Remus, Poppy, and Severus."

"I am too as a matter of fact, but I think he enjoyed stating the obvious in front of Albus, and have the truth fly right over his head. Albus is a brilliant man, but he oftentimes misses the small details when the truth is right in front of his nose. Merlin is a master mind when it comes to head games and loves to play with people's heads, but only those whom he dislikes." Salazar said with a grin. "He was a Slytherin after all."

Sirius laughed. "Tell me about it." He said rolling his eyes. "But he has helped me so much. I can't imagine what state I'd be in if it wasn't for him."

"I'm just glad he was able to help." Salazar said with a nod.

"You as well." Sirius said, suddenly growing quiet. "I haven't thanked you properly yet Salazar, so I will do it now. Thank you. For everything, and I don't just mean all that you have done for me, but James, Lily, and Harry as well. Merlin told me everything, and I understand why it had to be kept a secret. Not to mention, because of the time frame it all happened in."

"Well, things would have been different if I hadn't lost my memories that night." Salazar said with a sigh. "I certainly wouldn't have let you go to Azkaban though. Peter's betrayal would have been well known. I just wish you hadn't endured that prison for all those years."

"I blame Albus." Sirius said with a scowl. "Remus knew. He told me. He knew that something wasn't right with it all, and Remus said he told Albus many times to get me a trial, but he wouldn't."

"Albus has a lot to answer for one day, and he will, but for now we need him around. No one knows more about Voldemort than he does, and we will need his help before it's all over."

"And in the meantime?" Sirius asked.

Salazar gave him an evil smug smirk. "We keep him in line."

Sirius grinned. "I like the sound of that."

The rest of the evening was spent quietly talking about different things. Salazar told Sirius that even though he hadn't really done it, he should look into getting Bellatrix removed from the family, seeing as that would cut her off from the Black fortune. It would take more than just blasting someone off the family tree to truly disown them. A trip to Gringotts was planned for the next day, as well as a trip to Ollivander's so that Sirius could finally purchase a wand.

Despite its lavish décor and many lit fireplaces, Malfoy Manor was a cold place. One could argue that this was because of its pristine condition and because the house radiated a 'don't touch that' atmosphere, but another could argue its coldness radiated from the occupants themselves.

As the family sat down to dinner in their dining room and waited to be served, one little elf whimpered nervously as he kept listening in on the family's conversation.

"Draco, are you sure Sirius said that?" Narcissa asked nervously as her eyes darted towards her scowling husband.

"I am Mother." Draco replied. "The blood-traitor threatened our very way of life, and in front of Potter too!"
That seemed to get Lucius's attention, and a look of amusement flickered across his face.

"Is that so?" He asked, and Draco nodded.

"I should have hexed him." The boy whined.

"Well, I suspect Black is in for a rude shock one day where Potter is concerned, but if he tries to do what he threatened, I'll kill him." Lucius smirked, as he shot Narcissa a knowing glance. "But tell me Draco, how have things been at school? You haven't written many letters home this year, even though your Mother has instructed you to."

"I know, and I'm sorry about that Father, but the Professors keep us really busy. The work is harder this year, and I spend most of my time trying to best the mudblood in all my classes."

"Yes, it's a shame that they let that trash attend Hogwarts." Narcissa said wrinkling her nose. "But I do want you to outdo her Draco. It's unbecoming having someone of your status fall behind such filth."

Draco glared at her. "I will Mother."

"See that you do." Lucius replied, looking at his son sharply. "But tell me Draco, has anything out of the ordinary been happening? Anything at all?"

Draco thought for a moment. "Well, there was this one time around Halloween when someone let loose a giant snake. One girl, a pure-blood Ravenclaw, got petrified, but she's all right now. The whole school thought Potter had opened The Chamber of Secrets. Apparently Salazar Slytherin himself built it and placed a giant snake in there to rid the school of muggle borns, but that turned out not to be true."

Lucius furrowed his brow. "How do you mean?"

"Last year Potter found a book in the common room written by Salazar Slytherin himself, and it said that Slytherin placed the giant snake down there to protect the school from attacking muggles. Everyone thought Potter did it because he's a Parselmouth."

"Do people still think that way?" Narcissa asked, as the food was served and they began to eat.

"No," Draco said with a scowl. "Potter and his friends pranked the entire school. He made fun of the fact that everyone thought he was Slytherin's Heir, and all his mudblood and blood traitor friends called him Salazar for nearly three weeks. Then they pulled another prank and brought the giant snake into the great hall during dinner. It turned out to be a pink and polka dotted bed sheet draped over Longbottom, Roffin, and Zabini's head. He said with a scowl, but then he smirked. "Professor Snape took care of them though."

"Potter played a prank?" Lucius asked with a raised eyebrow. "And he is still friends with the mudblood and all of those blood traitors?"

"Yes sir, I thought you knew that." Draco asked, giving his father a confused look.

"Eat your dinner Draco." Narcissa said, casting a glance at her husband. "And thank you for telling us this."

"You're welcome Mother." He said with a smile.

Dobby continued to whimper and watch the family as they ate. Nothing else was said at dinner, but
that didn't mean that the little elf wasn't still listening. As Narcissa and Lucius settled into bed that evening, the conversation began again, only this time, more was said.

"I think we have been wrong Narcissa." Lucius said, nearly growling at the very thought of him being wrong about something.

"It seems we have. I cannot see The Dark Lord putting up with such filth for very long, and playing *pranks* of all things."

"You're right my dear, and I am so glad that I followed your advice last year. I'm so glad we didn't babble about Potter being The Dark Lord. We must inform Severus of this though."

"What about the diary?" She asked nervously. "If Dumbledore…"

"If Dumbledore finds it, there is no way he can trace it back to us. However, this does pose a problem. If The Dark Lord ever finds out that it is gone, and possibly destroyed, it could mean my death."

"I told you, you shouldn't have done it." She hissed.

"I know my dear." He said nervously. "But I did it to not only help us politically, but to also get The Dark Lord's attention. I had hoped that he would see that there were still those of us that support him. I figured he would know what was going on and praise me for it. I also thought that he would get the diary back from the blood traitor Weasley's son before anything could happen to it."

"What do we do?" Narcissa asked anxiously.

"We wash our hands of it. With no attacks up at the school, we have nothing. We can't get Dumbledore removed, and the diary will likely be discovered and destroyed. No one can know about our involvement in it. I didn't even tell Severus about it."

"But why did only one attack happen? That's what I don't understand."

"I don't know my dear. It's possible that the Weasley boy became afraid, or Potter was somehow able to talk to this giant snake. I admit that not even I knew what lay in the Chamber, but a giant snake makes sense, and since Potter is a Parselmouth, he likely talked to it."

"And if The Dark Lord ever asks for the diary back?" She asked with a lump in her throat.

"I don't know my dear." Lucius said as he looked at his wife with fear in his eyes. "I simply don't know."

Dobby grinned at that point and silently did a little dance. He now had more information that he could give to Salazar.

The next morning, Dobby arrived at Salazar's flat and began telling him all that he heard the night before. Salazar had to work at finding loopholes, but that didn't bother him. Dobby seemed so relieved that Salazar understood his position and was patient with him, that the little elf hugged the wizard's legs before leaving. Salazar found the whole situation amusing, but was slightly disappointed that he had lost that advantage with the Malfoys. However, he was pleased to know that they were on the right track with the diary, and that Nicholas had been right about why it ended up in the hands of Ron Weasley to begin with.

A returned to adult size Godric showed up shortly after lunch, and Sirius stared at him in awe. To
Salazar, the man looked just as he did the last time he saw him, just slightly older. Godric's red bushy beard hung down a little ways past his chain, and his long shoulder length red hair was just as untamable as Salazar remembered.

"Wow, you are a very large man." Sirius said with wide eyes, which made Salazar sputter his afternoon tea back into the teacup.

Godric scowled at Salazar, but then grinned at Sirius. "I've always been a strong lad because I took up sword fighting at a young age, but thankfully, immortality stops the aging process when you obtain it. If it didn't, I'd look like Salazar."

Salazar scoffed. "I don't look that bad, I only look fifty. Perenelle calls me handsome, and I've caught the attention of several older witches over the years. Unfortunately though, immortality causes you to become infertile, or else I would have fathered…"

"All right, all right, nobody wants to hear about your women!" Godric exclaimed, rolling his eyes and covering his ears like a child.

Sirius burst out laughing. "So Salazar is a bit of a playboy." He commented with a sly grin.

"Sometimes." Salazar said with a smirk. "Godric is just jealous because he looks older than I do."

"I only look eighty. That's not that bad." Godric grumbled.

Sirius snorted, but grinned and changed the subject. "So you know how to sword fight?" He asked, looking at Godric curiously.

Godric nodded. "We both do actually. Back in our day, apparition hadn't been invented yet and we actually had to run and hide if need be, as well as fight. We may have had magic, but the muggles had swords, bows and arrows, and long spears that they fought with. Shield charms were useless against those things."

"We had portkeys, but the spell to make them was pretty complicated, and unless you planned ahead and already had one, you couldn't make a portkey in the heat of battle." Salazar added.

"We had brooms too, but they were poorly made and very slow. They were not like the brooms of today, and muggles could still shoot you off of them with their arrows and hit you with their spears." Godric said.

"Wizard kind and muggles have come a long way since then though, but honestly, nowadays we could actually learn a thing or two from muggles." Salazar with a sigh. "But wizards seem oblivious to how muggles do things. I actually found the telly quite intriguing when I was with the Dursleys, even though I didn't get to watch it a whole lot. Also, we could learn a thing or two from their medical experts."

"Now that I agree with." Godric said with a nod as he sat down in a chair. "So, what's the plan for today?"

They got Godric caught up on what Dobby came and told them, then they outlined their plans for the day. Sirius told them both that he wanted to go visit his cousin and her family, to which Salazar agreed was a good idea. Godric was a little shocked that Sirius wanted him to come too, but Sirius admitted that he was nervous about the visit, and would feel better if they were both there. He did say that it was up to them to tell Andy and her family who they really were. Salazar said that he would play it by ear, and if he felt that they could be trusted, then he would.
The day passed quickly and they were able to take care of their business at Gringotts, as well as pick up a wand for Sirius. Bellatrix was officially no longer part of the Black family, and therefore had no access to the wealth. That didn't mean that the Lestranges were broke, but in the unlikely event that they were somehow able to break out of Azkaban, at least they wouldn't have access to the Black family fortune. Sirius also took it upon himself to reinstate Andy back into the family, and decided to tell her when they went to see her.

The visit to the Tonks's house was a joyful one, though Sirius had warned Salazar and Godric that Andy looked like Bellatrix, but he also said that she was in no way like her insane sister.

They found out that Nymphadora was currently studying to become an Auror, but she liked to be called Tonks instead. Salazar was pleased to find out that Andy was a Slytherin, and commented that her, and people like her, gave him hope for the future of his house.

He didn't realize his slip-up until Tonks questioned him immediately after he said it, which made Godric snicker and point out that he's getting lax in his old age.

Salazar hexed him for saying it though.

After that, the truth about who they were came out, and Godric, who had disguised himself, returned to his normal appearance.

To say that the Tonks family was shocked is an understatement. After hearing their story, and learning what really happened that night in Godric's Hollow, Ted, Andy's husband, couldn't speak for nearly ten minutes. Andy started crying and apologized for things she had said about Salazar during her time in Slytherin house, and Tonks asked Godric every question she could think of about all kinds of things. Salazar asked them all politely to take oaths about what they had learned, and thankfully they all agreed to do so.

Sirius was beside himself with happiness though, and asked Salazar to ask 'their friend' if the Tonks could join them for Christmas, if they wanted too. Salazar said that he would contact 'their friend' later that night and try to arrange it.

When it was time for them to leave, Sirius had decided to visit with his family for a few days which Salazar thought would be good for him. Sirius really needed it, and Salazar thought it was best for Sirius to enjoy his time getting back into the world.

The next few days were spent Christmas shopping and getting the presents sent off. Hedwig was pretty busy, but she didn’t seem to mind. He had received presents from the children, and Nora was excited to find a new 'Father Christmas' costume from Hermione. This one was the requested red and green fleece warmer, and Hermione had even thrown in a different 'hat' this time. It wasn't the regular red and white hat, instead it was a very small wreath made of fake holly leaves and berries.

Nora refused to take it off for any reason.

Hedwig had gotten her hat as well and it was one that matched Nora's, and Hedwig insisted that Salazar stick to her head so that she could wear it for her present deliveries. The letters Salazar received from the Weasleys and the Creeveys when Hedwig returned with their gifts gushed about how 'cute' she looked.

That made Hedwig proud.

When Christmas morning finally arrived, Remus, Sirius, the Tonks, Minerva, Poppy, and Severus
arrived at Salazar's flat. Godric was already at Merlin's so they didn't have to wait for him. Severus smirked at him, and Minerva and Poppy giggled when they saw that Salazar was wearing the hat Hermione had gotten him last year. His answer of 'Nora insisted' just made them laugh even harder.

When they all arrived at Merlin's via portkey, Salazar's jaw nearly fell open when a messy black haired, very excited boy with glasses nearly bowled him over with a large hug.

"Salazar! You're finally here!" Harry cried with a large grin. "Surprise! And Happy Christmas!" He said, throwing his arms wide open as Lily, James, Godric, Nicholas, Perenelle, and Merlin came out of the house. "Miss Minnie, Miss Poppy, and Mr. Severus, I'm so glad to see you all too!" He added, giving each one a large hug as well, though Severus looked completely floored that he had gotten one.

"Prongs." Sirius whispered as tears welled up in his eyes, and he slowly made his way over to James. "It's really you. You're really here."

"Happy Christmas Padfoot." James grinned, as tears also sprang into his eyes. "Moony, how are you?"

"James." Remus said, as his knees buckled and he sat down hard on the snow covered ground. "James." He repeated.

James and Sirius helped Remus to stand, but the three of them stood there hugging each other and crying as reality set in that everyone was alive and well. Salazar smiled as he watched them, and Godric came to stand beside him and patted his shoulder. Poppy and Minerva stood off to the side, silently wiping tears out of their own eyes, but Severus hung back, looking unsure as if he should be there.

"Severus." Lily said, making her way over to him. "I'm glad you came, despite your feelings for Sirius."

"Lily." He whispered, as he struggled to hold back tears when she hugged him tightly. "Lily, I'm so sorry."

She didn't let go of him for a long time, but she planted a small kiss on his cheek when she let go.

"It's all right." She said, giving him a soft smile. "I have already forgiven you, you know that, and it wasn't your fault. Peter is the one who told Voldemort I was pregnant. It is his fault, not yours."

"I know, I just…"

"It's all right." She whispered again.

Severus smiled at her and nodded as he quickly wiped the tears off his face, and tried to regain control of himself. James, Sirius, and Remus were still caught up in their own reunion, but with Harry running around wanting to know who everyone else was, they all laughed and broke apart.

Sirius introduced Andy, Ted, and Tonks to everyone, though Tonks of course, knew the Professors and Poppy.

Meanwhile, Salazar walked over to Merlin and Godric, and shook his head.

"How did you do this without me knowing about it?" He asked, looking at Merlin and shaking his head again.
Merlin laughed. "It wasn't that hard to do. I asked Godric if Nehum would be willing to deliver them portkeys so that they could be here, and he said yes. It's safe here Salazar, you know that."

"I know. I'm glad you did it." He replied.

"I did it for Sirius." Merlin said, nodding towards the man. "His heart needed to know what his brain already did. It will be good for him."

"I agree." Salazar said, as the three of them stood there and watched everyone get reacquainted. "I just hope Severus will be all right. He hasn't been willing to forgive Sirius just yet. James and Remus he is fine with, but Sirius is another matter."

"Give it time." Merlin said, as they watched Severus very briefly shake Sirius's hand. "It will come."

"I hope so." Salazar replied as he gave Severus an encouraging smile.

"What's with your hat?" Godric asked suddenly, poking at the fake reindeer antlers, which made the bells jingle.

"Bushy gave it to him last year for Christmas." Nora said, sticking her head out of his robe sleeve. "And I made him wear it. Do you like my Father Christmas costume? Bushy made it, and even Pigeon has a matching hat." She continued, as Hedwig, who was perched on Salazar's shoulder, hooted loudly and nodded.

"I think it makes you look lovely Nora." Perenelle smiled, as she patted Nora on the head.

"I like this woman Speaker. Her name shall be Lovely." She said, which made everyone around them laugh.

They all went inside and Salazar noticed that some of the rooms had been expanded in order to accommodate everyone. When they had made their way into the sitting room, Harry stood beside a large Christmas tree and grinned.

"Salazar, I'm afraid I have to demote you from being Father Christmas this year because Merlin is older than you. I'm so sorry."

Everyone grinned, but Salazar began fake pouting. "I suppose I can live with this Harry, but just remember that I look like you, I'm a Slytherin, and I can make you disappear." He hissed, but then he winked at Harry.

"My newly found, long lost Grandpa, who is an excellent dueler from what he told me, won't let you make me disappear." Harry said with a smirk, as he folded his arms across his chest and grinned at Godric.

Everyone began laughing and snorting, but Salazar mock glared at Godric. "I can make him disappear too."

"I'd like to see you try my friend." Godric said as his eyes took on a mischievous glint.

"Well, before these two get going, I think we need to open presents." Merlin chuckled, as everyone continued to grin and laugh.

"Yes, yes! Presents!" Harry exclaimed excitedly. "And Miss Minnie, I can assure you that Mum wouldn't allow Dad to put cat toys in your gift box this year." He added, which made everyone burst out laughing again.
The better part of the morning was spent with everyone opening their gifts and carrying on long overdue face to face conversations. There was no tension in the air at all, and even though he didn't like the man, Severus was cordial towards Sirius.

Salazar couldn't have been more proud of him.

When it was time for them to have their Christmas feast, Salazar eyed the large round table as they sat down to eat in the kitchen. He lifted the table cloth and saw the polished mahogany table underneath and raised an eyebrow at a smirking Merlin and Godric.

"The Round Table?" He asked, leaning over and whispering to Merlin. "*The Round Table.*"

Merlin smiled innocently. "What did you expect? My kitchen table simply wasn't big enough. I could have enlarged it, but I think this one suits us better."

Salazar chuckled. "Do you still visit that...place...often?" Salazar asked, glancing at him.

"On occasion." Merlin said with a smile, as they began to eat. "That...place...holds a lot of good memories for me. Arthur was a good man Salazar. He may have been a muggle, but I miss him and our adventures dearly."

"You fought wars with him, and you were his advisor." Godric pointed out.

"This is true." Merlin replied, as the other's conversations flowed around them. "And I will find myself taking up that role once more, but this time it will be for you all."

"You have seen something?" Godric asked, looking at him sharply.

"Perhaps, but you must trust me when I say that I cannot tell you. To do so would be detrimental to the outcome." He said quietly.

"Will people die?" Godric asked.

"I'm afraid so." Merlin said, giving them both a painful glance. "And there is nothing we can do to stop it, but we will do our best to save as many lives as possible."

"You know how much I hate divination." Salazar grumbled.

"You may hate it Salazar, and while the prophecy that concerns you may be a load of bunk, do not dismiss what I have seen. You know that I am no fraud." Merlin replied.

Salazar sighed. "I know." He said, nodding his head.

"Let's not talk about this right now though. For now, let's enjoy this beautiful Christmas Day."

Godric and Salazar both knew from personal experience that Merlin wasn't going to say anything more about the topic, and as the day moved on, they both tried to put away this information.

It did give Salazar a lot of joy to see Harry, Lily, and James, though, and he knew that because of them being here, Sirius would feel better and be much more at ease with how is life would turn out as he forward.

Despite Merlin's cryptic warning, the day ended on a happy note when all of the animagi got together to show off their 'animal' sides. They chased Harry around for the better part of the evening and when the sun set that night, they all sat around in the sitting room, sipping hot chocolate, and listening to stories of Hogwarts and other tales of days long gone...but certainly not forgotten.
It was a few days after Christmas, and it was late in the evening when a soft knock was heard echoing throughout the silent Burrow. Arthur nervously wrung his hands together and hurried over to open it.

"Good evening Arthur."

"Hello Albus. I did as you requested and put the dreamless sleep potion that you gave me in their after dinner pumpkin juice. Everyone is now in a deep sleep."

"Very good, very good. Thank you. It's best that I get in and out with no one knowing I was here." Albus said, nodding his head.

"I'm worried how Ron will react to this Albus. What if it drives him crazy?" Arthur said, casting a worrying glance up the stairs, towards Ron's room.

"It won't, I assure you. However, like I mentioned before, he will likely get very angry, and that is why I wanted to wait until after Christmas to this."

Arthur sighed and nodded his head. "I understand. Follow me, I'll lead you to his room."

Albus nodded, and the two wizards made their way silently up the stairs to Ron's room. Albus checked on Ron to make sure he was truly asleep before he began searching the lad's room. Arthur stood in the doorway watching over the process for the better part of ten minutes, before he heard Albus chuckling lightly.

He watched as Albus gently levitated Ron, and reached under the boy's pillow to pull out the diary from underneath it.

"That should have been the first place I looked." Albus said with a smile, as he looked over the book.

"Is that it?" Arthur asked, eyeing it suspiciously.

"It is." Albus replied, after turning the diary over and pointing to the initials 'T. M. Riddle' that were engraved on the back.

"Please keep it out of my son's hands Albus."

"I will Arthur. Now, I advise you to get some sleep. Young Ron will likely be in an angry mood upon awaking in the morning." He said, as they made their way down the stairs and back towards the door.

"I will, and thank you Albus."

The old wizard smiled and nodded, and Arthur Weasley sighed with relief as he watched Albus disappear into the night, with the diary tucked away in his robes.

*A/N* GAH! Albus swooped in and took it right out from under their noses! Salazar is NOT going to be happy about this! Looks like he is going to have to do some major planning, and get the diary back into proper hands. We shall see how it all unfolds!

Also, we get a sense of what Merlin has been, and will be, up to as the story unfolds. One person who commented asked me if/when Morgana will show up, but in case anyone else is
wondering about it, she wont be. There are too many immortals running around as it is, and a Morgana that cant be killed is not going to bode well for anyone, except Voldy, and we really dont want him to learn how to live forever, do we?

Didn't think so.

LOL! Anyway, thank you to everyone who has bookmarked, subscribed, and commented! I love you guys so much! Please remember to leave a comment and let me know what you think.
The next morning, Fred and George were sleeping peacefully in their room when all of a sudden, the bedroom door flew open. The twins sat bolt upright in their beds and watched through bleary eyes as Ron stormed in and began to tear the room apart.

"Ron? What…" George began, but he was cut off sharply as Ron whirled around and snarled at them.

"Give it back you tosspots!" He shouted. "I know you have it!"

"Have what?" Fred asked, casting his little brother a confused glance, as Ron stomped over and snatched the pillows off their beds.

Ron ignored them as he checked all around their beds, but when he didn't find what he was looking for, he glared at them.

"You know fully well 'what'!" He yelled. "My diary is missing, and I know you two took it! So where is it!?"

Upon hearing that, the twins scrambled to untangle themselves from their covers and jumped out of their beds with wide eyes.

"Gone!?" They both asked together.

"Yes, gone." Ron snapped. "I always leave it under my pillow at night, and this morning I woke up and it was gone. I searched my room but it wasn't there, so that only leaves you two! NOW WHERE IS IT!?" He bellowed.

At that moment, Molly and Arthur appeared in the doorway, looking slightly disheveled from being woken up by all the shouting. Molly gave her son's a disapproving glare, but Arthur cast a nervous glance at his youngest son.

"What is all this shouting?" Molly demanded.

"Those two stole my diary!" Ron shouted.

"No we didn't! We don't care about some diary of his!" Fred shouted back, although internally he was starting to panic.

"Did you two take his diary?" Molly questioned, giving the twins a stern glare.

"No Mum, honest! We didn't!" George exclaimed, shaking his head as he stood beside his bed and tried to refrain from letting his own worrying be known.

"What's going on?" A sleepy, quiet female voice asked from behind the two parents.
They all looked over to see Ginny and Percy standing there looking at the scene in confusion.

"Someone has stolen my diary." An agitated Ron said, banging his fist into his other hand. "And I want it back. Now. I don't know who took it, but if they don't give it to me NOW, I will RIP THIS HOUSE APART!" He screamed, glaring at his family.

"Now you listen to me young man!" Molly shouted. "I will not tolerate you taking that tone of voice with me! You will calm down, and go to your room this minute!"

"Fine, but if I don't get it back TODAY, you will all be SORRY!" He yelled, as he stormed up the stairs and slammed his bedroom door.

Everyone present let out a breath that they had seemingly been holding. Arthur nervously looked around at his completely confused children and fuming wife, and shook his head. He knew Albus said it would be bad, but he didn't expect this bad.

The first thing the twins wanted to do was contact Salazar, but their mother ushered them all downstairs so that she could make sure that they ate breakfast. The topic of conversation though, was Ron.

Molly once again asked them if they had taken Ron's diary, but everyone denied it. Ginny said it was probably somewhere in that 'pigsty of a room' and he just hadn't found it yet. The twins were careful of their actions and glances, least their Mother get suspicious and think that they had anything to do with the missing book.

After breakfast, they had to do their chores, and the twins did them as fast as they could before retreating to their room again. Ginny wanted to come in and talk to them about Ron, but they tried to get rid of her as quickly and quietly as they could without arousing anyone's suspicion.

Ron had only come down from his own room long enough to eat whatever was leftover from breakfast, glare at his family, and make more threats about ripping the house apart, before stalking back upstairs and slamming his door again.

When the twins finally had a moment to themselves, Fred quickly reached into the bag that he had brought home for the holidays and pulled out the mirror.

"Sirius Black!" He whispered frantically.

It took a few minutes, but Salazar finally appeared in the mirror. He took one look at their faces and quickly became concerned.

"What's wrong?" He asked, scanning their faces for any hint of what may have happened.

"The diary is gone, and Ron is in a very bad mood. He is threatening to rip the house apart in order to find it. He said that he always puts it under his pillow, but he woke up this morning and found it missing. He accused us of taking it, but we didn't." Fred said, glancing nervously at their bedroom door as Ron began another round of screaming threats at his family.

"And before you ask, no, no one else took it. Not us, not Ginny, and not Percy. Ron has already searched our room, and his room, but he can't find it. It...is...gone." George stressed, as Molly began screaming back at her youngest son.

"All right. I coming over, but I realize this may not be the best time for an official visit, so I will remain invisible. I'm at home with the mirror, but Sirius is at Merlin's because Merlin portkeyed the Potters in for Christmas. I will go there and get him to apparate me to your house. Is there anywhere
outside that we can meet?"

"Yes, our Dad has a shed that we can meet at. You can't miss it." Fred replied, and winced as a loud crash happened from somewhere above their heads.

A loud female scream sounded throughout The Burrow, followed by more screaming from Ron. George jumped up and ran to the bedroom door and threw it open.

"Do you have it!?!" He heard Ron shout. "You better tell me Ginny! TELL ME RIGHT NOW!"

"I don't have it Ron!" A terrified Ginny exclaimed.

George looked up the stairs in time to see Ron come charging out of her bedroom, and bare down on a trembling Ginny who was cowering in fear on the landing outside her door.

"TELL ME THE TRUTH!" Ron bellowed, as he reached for her.

George's eyes widened as Ron began choking his sister, but he raised his wand.

"Relashio!" He yelled frantically, and a purple light erupted from the end of his wand and hit his brother in the side.

Ron screamed and released her, but a split second later, another voice cried, "Stupefy!"

Ron dropped like a stone and George looked up to see Percy standing on the landing above them. Ginny scurried away from her brother and curled up in a ball on the floor and began to cry. George hurried up the stairs, as Percy made his way down.

"Ginny, Ginny, it's all right." George said, reaching for her. "You're ok now. Shhh, shhh. It's all right." He continued, as he gathered his sister in his arms. "Nice work Percy." He said, looking at his brother, who was looking over the scene in shock.

"You too George." Percy replied somewhat despondently.

"What happened here!?!" Molly cried as she hustled up the stairs.

"I'm sorry Mum." Percy said, looking on the verge of tears. "Ron was choking her. George got him with the revulsion jinx, but I stunned him."

Normally they would have been scolded for underage magic, but considering the circumstances, Molly just nodded as she stared wide-eyed over the scene.

"All right. Ginny, come with me dear. It's all right now."

George released her, and she shakily followed her Mother down the stairs. Fred appeared at George's side, just as their Father came running up the stairs towards them.

"I'll take Ron up to his room and leave him there. You boys did well in protecting your sister. Thank you." Arthur said.

"What's wrong with him Dad?" Percy said, as tears spilled down his cheeks.

Arthur looked at him with pain in his eyes. He opened and closed his mouth several times, but nothing came out, and he just shook his head.

"I don't kno…"
"Don't even Dad." Fred said, cutting him off in a cold voice. "You know, as well as George and I do, that it is the horcrux."

Arthur's eyes widened as he stared at him. "How did..?"

"Who do you think it was that tipped Dumbledore off about the horcrux? What did Dumbledore tell you? That he just figured this out all on his own? No. It was me, George, Harry, Professor Snape, Nicholas Flamel, Gordy, and the giant snake. You know something, don't you Dad?" Fred said, scowling at his Father.

"I-I-I…"

"You have to tell us. What do you know?" George asked in a pleading tone.

Arthur sighed. "Dumbledore came last night and took the diary. He told me to slip a dreamless sleep potion into everyone's after dinner pumpkin juice so that you would all fall asleep quickly. He searched Ron's room last night, found it, and took it away. Dumbledore said that Ron would likely be angry, but this…this I did not foresee."

Fred swore under his breath and George glared at his father. "And where is Dumbledore now? Leaving us to deal with Ron, that's where. You should not have allowed him to take the horcrux away like that!"

"I wanted it out of your brother's hands!" Arthur exclaimed hoarsely.

"It was being handled!" Fred hissed.

"What is…?" Percy asked.

"Percy, it's hard to explain. Please just trust us. We can't say a whole lot about it, but please…" George said, but Percy cut him off.

"Wait, Harry said something last year about horcruxes. I remember. In the great hall during Christmas Holidays. Horcruxes are dark magic, and are created by murdering someone. How did Ron…"

"It's Voldemort's." Arthur said with a sigh. "And the diary has been influencing him all year, but I did what I thought was best for your brother!"

"Trusting Dumbledore is the last thing you should have done!" Fred whispered, scowling at his father.

"How did Ron get something like that?" Percy asked in disbelief, and Fred, George, and Arthur sighed heavily.

"Lucius Malfoy gave it to him during our school shopping trip to Diagon Alley." Fred said, looking at his brother. "Harry talked to the giant snake, with Dumbledore present, and Nicholas Flamel got involved when Harry asked Gordy to ask Nehum to go get him."

"What?" Percy asked, utterly confused. "Harry talked to the giant snake?"

"Emeralda is her name, but Percy, you can't say a word about this at school. If other people found out that it was Ron who opened the Chamber of Secrets, Dad could be fired from the Ministry. Imagine if someone like Malfoy were to find out about this." George said.
"Harry said this could happen." Fred said shaking his head. "It should have waited until we got back to school. They were coming up with a plan to get the diary safely," he stressed, "away from Ron. Taking it away like Dumbledore did is only going to cause more problems."

"Ron needed to give the diary up willingly." A strange voice behind them said.

They all whipped around, but no one appeared to be there, until Salazar dropped the disillusionment charm.

"Please forgive us for coming inside. We were waiting by the shed, but you never showed."

"Is Sirius here?"

"No, it's just us." Nicholas replied, also dropping his disillusionment charm. "What happened?"

"Mr. Flamel, he tried to choke Ginny. He's out of control. What do we do? Percy had to stun him!" Fred exclaimed, pointing to the still unconscious Ron laying on the floor.

"I'm afraid there is nothing that we can do now." Nicholas said with a sigh. "As I said, young Ron needed to give up the horcrux willingly, thereby breaking the hold it has on him. However, this needs to be discussed in another location. Please take care of your son Mr. Weasley, and meet us out by your shed as soon as you can so that we can talk."

Arthur nodded numbly, and levitated Ron up the stairs. Nicholas and Salazar once again disillusioned themselves and followed the twins and Percy down the stairs, and out the door. Molly was in the kitchen, busy making a still shaken up Ginny a cup of lemon tea to help her throat, but they all passed by silently and headed out the door towards the shed.

A few minutes later, Arthur came out the back door, and ushered them all into the little shed.

"Ok, we can talk in here. Molly knows I come in here to tinker with my muggle things, and she never comes out here."

"Mom doesn't know about all this?" Percy asked

Fred, George, Salazar, and Nicholas all looked at Arthur, who shook his head. "No son, your Mother had a fit when Dumbledore told us, so he had to obliterate her."

"Oh." Percy said, as his eyes widened in shock. "How come you all don't look surprised, and what are you two doing here? Harry, who is this man?"

"My name is Nicholas Flamel and I am a friend of Harry's and Sirius Black." Nicholas replied with a smile. "And as I was saying earlier, Ron needed to give up the diary willingly. The horcrux has a strong hold over him, and is bringing out the worst in your brother. Anger, in this case. The horcrux has magnified Ron's anger to the point where it has taken a hold of him."

"Where is the dairy?" Salazar asked curiously.

"Dumbledore took it last night."

Salazar resisted the urge to blow up the little shed, but Nicholas cursed loudly. "That meddlesome man."

"My guess is he didn't tell you we was planning this, or we could have prevented it." Salazar said with a scowl.
"Obviously." Nicholas said through gritted teeth.

"I-I thought I was doing what was best for Ron. Dumbledore said everything would be fine after Ron calmed down." Arthur said nervously.

"No one blames you for that Mr. Weasley, but I'm afraid it was the wrong choice to make. We were going to take it out of his hands when we returned to school. Ron needed to be made aware of who it was inside the diary, and we were hoping that when that happened, he would willingly give it up, seeing as he would be scared of it by that point." Salazar said. "Voldemort's soul is using Ron's anger to influence him and gain a hold over Ron, and its working. Ron has been writing in the diary for well over three months, but what we didn't know until a week before the holidays, was that the diary has been writing back to him. It's giving him answers to his tests, homework, and schoolwork, and because of that, it keeps Ron coming back to it. Ron has poured all his anger, all his woes...if you will...into this diary, and that piece of Voldemort's soul has taken a hold of your son. Anger is one of the strongest negative forms of emotion, second only to hate, and I'm sure that he has poured his hatred for me into it as well, which has only made the hold Voldemort has on him even stronger."

"The diary is not simply influencing your son Mr. Weasley, it's also absorbing Ron's soul to make the horcrux itself stronger. If this situation had not been discovered, we believe that Voldemort would have returned to full form." Nicholas added.

"In other words, the diary was slowly preforming a dementor's kiss on him, for lack of a better explanation." Salazar said, and Arthur's eyes, along with Percy's, widened in shock.

"Ron thinks he has a friend Dad." Fred said. "Voldemort tricked him into believing that he is a Ravenclaw."

"But why?" Arthur asked. "And why didn't Dumbledore didn't tell me any of this?"

"Well, for one, because I haven't had a chance to tell him yet." Nicholas replied. "My other friends and I have sat down and talked about this for the last few days, and those are the conclusions that we have come too. Also, even if Dumbledore knew all this, he likely wouldn't have told you because he only would have told you what he wants you to know."

"But to answer your other question Dad, Voldemort told Ron he is a Ravenclaw because if he admitted that he was a Slytherin, Ron wouldn't have had anything to with him." George said.

"Well that makes sense." Arthur said, sighing heavily. "So what do we do now, and is Ron going to be alright?"

"What we need to do now is destroy the diary. After that your son will be fine and back to normal." Nicholas replied. "In the meantime, we can try to explain to him that it was Voldemort's old diary from when he was in school, but in light of all that has happened today, he probably won't believe us. Unfortunately, Dumbledore has harmed the situation, more than he has helped." He finished with a sigh.

"Mr. Weasley, we need you to understand that none of this is your fault. If the Headmaster had just waited a bit longer, this could have been handled at school, with all of the other Professors present and advised of the situation. As it is, Dumbledore has left it on your family's shoulders to deal with something you have no clue how to handle."

"How do you know how to handle it Harry?" Percy asked, finally finding his voice, but looking at Salazar quizzically.
Salazar just shrugged and pointed to Nicholas, who chuckled. "Harry is very studious, and he knows all about the situation. He speaks the truth young Mr. Weasley. I can assure you."

"What happens if Ron doesn't believe us?" Arthur asked.

Nicholas took a deep breath and sighed. "Then I'm afraid Ron will continue acting like this until the diary is destroyed. Hopefully though, as time goes on and he remains separated from it, the effects will subside, but this won't go away completely until Ron is willing to let it go, or as I have already stated, the diary is destroyed."

Just then they all heard a loud crash from inside the house, followed by screams and crackles of spell fire.

"My stunning spell must have worn off!" Percy cried as they all rushed out of the shed.

They saw a terrified Ginny running out of the house, as shouting and spell fire echoed around them when a fiercely fighting Molly and Ron burst out of the door.

"Dad, he's trying to hurt Mum!" Ginny screamed, as she flung herself in her father's arms.

"Nicholas, go get help! I'll hold him off!" Salazar shouted.

Nicholas apparated immediately as Salazar charged forward, shouting at the others to stay back. Arthur tried to hold 'Harry' back, but Fred and George grabbed their father's arms and dragged him backwards, as Percy retreated further away from the battle with Ginny in his arms.

"Molly!" Arthur cried hysterically, just as Ron hit her with the Cruciatus curse.

Molly fell to the ground and began screaming and pleading with Ron to stop, but he wasn't paying any attention to her.

"DID YOU TAKE IT? GIVE IT BACK TO ME!" Ron bellowed. "I'm so sick of everyone in this family sticking their noses in my business! Avada Kedavra!"

"No!" Salazar shouted, as he transfigured the deep snow laying on the ground into a thick wall in order to protect her.

The wall of snow exploded when the spell connected with it, but in that same moment, Salazar cast the disarming charm and a stunning charm, and Ron fell to the ground in a crumpled heap.

"Mrs. Weasley, Mrs. Weasley!" He exclaimed, as he rushed over to her. "Are you all right?"

"M-my s-s-son tried to…tried to…" She began to say, but then she fainted.

Just then, the sound of several small pops were heard as Merlin, Nicholas, Sirius, and Godric apparated in. Arthur, the twins, Percy, and Ginny rushed over to Molly and helped get her into the house, while Godric conjured up ropes to tie up Ron, then he levitated him into the house and sat him down on the sofa.

"He used the Cruciatus on her and he tried to kill her. Is there anything you can do for her?" Salazar asked, looking at Merlin.

Merlin nodded and began examining her, then called for Whimsy.
"Master you called for me?" The little elf asked, popping into view.

"Yes, please get my medicinal potions kit and bring it back with you. I'm going to need it."

"Of course Master." She said, casting a solemn glance over the scene, before popping away.

"Mr. Weasley, this is my friend Nilrem." Salazar said, pointing towards Merlin. "And this man here is the father of a friend of mine and the twins, Mr. Roffin." He added, pointing towards Godric.

Arthur nodded numbly to each of them, as he sat in a nearby chair with Ginny curled up in his lap. The twins and Percy stood behind them, looking at everyone with worried expressions written all over their faces.

Whimsy appeared, and began handing Merlin the things he would need out of the potions bag.

"Mr. Weasley, may I use your floo? I need to contact Albus." Nicholas said.

Arthur nodded again and Nicholas walked over to the fireplace, grabbed the floo powder, and stuck his head in the fireplace. He spoke with Albus for a minute before backing away, then a moment later, Albus and a very concerned looking Minerva stepped out.

"Oh my goodness! Molly!" Minerva cried, rushing over to her. "Will she be all right?" She asked, looking at Merlin with concern in her eyes.

Albus looked at Merlin with disdain, and cleared his throat. "Perhaps we should call for Poppy. I'm sure that…"

"I am an adequate Healer Mr. Dumbledore. I assure you." Merlin said in a cold tone, but then he turned to Minerva and spoke in a softer voice. "She will be all right. I'm fixing to bring her around in a few minutes when I'm done looking her over. She will need rest and a calming draught I imagine."

He said with a small sigh.

"What exactly happened?" Albus asked, looking over the scene with curious glances.

"What happened was that you jumped in blindly and decided to take care of this problem on your own." Nicholas growled. "How could you do this? Why didn't you tell me what you were planning to do? I would have told you it was a bad idea! The diary is not simply influencing Ron, it is sucking out his soul little by little, thereby making the horcrux stronger! It has a very strong hold over the boy! You should not have taken it in the manner you did!"

"By taking the horcrux away like you did, Mr. Dumbledore, you have made the situation far worse than what it was." Merlin added. "You should have conferred with Nicholas about this."

Albus glared at them. "I did what I thought was best." He said with a snarl.

"You do not always know what is best." Salazar snapped.

"Harry, I advise you stay out of this." Albus said, giving him a stern glare. "You do not know what is happening here."

"I know more than you think. Ron needed to give the dairy up willingly, instead, you have ripped it away without a thought or care for the consequences or this family. They do not know how to deal with a situation like this, and you have left them to deal with your mess!" Salazar shouted.

"Do not take that tone with me Harry." Albus said. "You are just a boy who…"
"Saved Molly's life." Arthur said sharply, cutting off Albus as he glared at the man. "Ron placed Molly under the *Cruciatus* and then cast the *Killing Curse* at her Albus. If not for Harry, she'd be dead right now."

"I need to know exactly what happened." Merlin said, looking around the room. "Start at the beginning please."

Between Fred, George, Arthur, and Salazar the whole morning was retold with no details left out. When they were done, Ginny had started crying again and Arthur was glaring at Albus even more so than before.

"You told me that he would be a little angry, but then he would be fine. I trusted you!" Arthur shouted, as Albus sighed heavily at learning what had fully transpired.

"Will Ron go to Azkaban?" Ginny asked quietly. "He used two Unforgivables on Mum."

"No Ginny. We won't let that happen." Arthur said in a reassuring tone. "Your brother is not in control of himself at the moment. You know Ron would never do that if he was in his right mind."

"He's right Miss. Weasley." Albus said kindly. "Nothing is going to happen to your brother."

"Where is the diary Mr. Dumbledore?" Merlin asked. "I suggest we destroy it right here, right now. We can use Fiendfyre. There are plenty of us around who can wield it safely."

"I'm in agreement." Godric said, speaking up for the first time since he arrived.

"As am I." Nicholas said with a nod, as Salazar also nodded in agreement.

"That is dark magic and I will not tolerate…"

"A horcrux is even darker magic." Nicholas growled. "Don't even start with your self-righteous attitude. It needs to be destroyed Albus."

Albus glared at him. "The diary needs to be *studied* Nicholas. Perhaps we can find clues about where and what the other horcruxes are."

"I would agree with that under normal circumstances Headmaster, but this family cannot afford to take the chance of something like this happening again." Salazar said sternly as Albus glanced at him sharply.

Merlin sat lost in thought for a moment, but then he glanced around at everyone. "Maybe we can come to a compromise. Mr. Weasley, what do you think about bringing your whole family to Hogwarts? The children can stay in their dorms, while your wife is properly cared for in the hospital wing. That way, Ron can be monitored by the entire staff."

"With an exception." Godric said. "Ron stays in Gryffindor Tower while the others stay in Slytherin House. I say this because Ron may attack them in the Tower. I would suggest the reverse option, but my son tells me that Ron doesn't like anything to do with Slytherin, and being in the dungeon may set him off again. However, I'm sure if he stays in the tower The Fat Lady can let us know of Ron's comings and goings." He said, casting a knowing glance at Salazar.

"I say we do that." Fred said. "It's just for a few more days until the rest get back from Holiday. I don't have a problem staying in Slytherin house until then. Mr. Roffin, will you let Gordy come back early?"
"I think that can be arranged." Godric said with a grin.

"Harry, do you want to go back to school to be with your friends?" Sirius asked, speaking for the first time.

"If you don't mind Sirius." Salazar answered with a smile.

"Of course I don't." He said with a nod.

"It would make me feel better if we did that." Ginny said quietly, as she cast a nervous glance in Ron's direction. "He might try to attack us in our sleep if we stay in Gryffindor Tower, but will we be safe in Slytherin House?"

"Slytherin House will be the safest place in the castle Ginny." George said, smiling at his sister. "Trust me."

"And staying at Hogwarts would allow us to properly defend ourselves, if we need to." Percy added, patting her on the shoulder.

"Albus, I think we should allow this. I can inform the staff of what is happening with Mr. Weasley, while you, Mr. Flamel, and Nilrem began studying the horcrux." Minerva said, covering Molly with a blanket in order to warm her up.

"If you children are in agreement with this, then I think it's for the best." Arthur said. "You boys look after your sister while she stays in the dungeons."

"We will Dad." They all said in unison.

"Albus?" Minerva asked, looking at him expectantly.

"Very well." Albus said with a sigh. "I will inform Severus of the temporary arrangement."

With that said, the children headed up the stairs to collect their belongings, while Merlin brought Molly around. Her eyes fluttered open, but due to the still lingering after effects of the Cruciatus, she continued to tremble.

"Is Ron all right?" She asked in a horse whisper.

"For now he is stunned Molly." Minerva said softly, as she helped her to stand. "Come with me, we are going to Hogwarts's hospital wing where Poppy will look after you. You need rest."

"Oh ok." She said weakly, looking over at Ron with tears in her eyes. "Why? Why?"

"Later Molly. I promise." Minerva answered.

Molly nodded absentmindedly as Minerva steered her over to the floo, and flooed her to Hogwarts.

Meanwhile, Arthur went upstairs to Ron's room to gather all his things together, while Nicholas and Albus escorted a still unconscious Ron through the floo. Salazar, Godric, Merlin, and Sirius waited for the children to come back down.

"We will meet you all in the hospital wing a little later." Salazar said. "For now, we must head back to Mr. Nilrem's house."

Fred nodded. "Ok Harry, we will see you later, and thank you. I really mean that. Mum would be dead if...if..." He stuttered as his eyes filled with tears.
"It's all right Fred. We will get this sorted out. Hopefully Ron being separated from the diary will help."

Fred and George nodded, as Percy thanked him again. Ginny just stared at him, but Salazar gave her a smile before they headed out the door.

"That is unbelievable!" Lily exclaimed when they got back to Merlin's and explained what all happened. "Oh my goodness, I can't imagine what Molly is going through right now. Her own son torturing and trying to kill her. I just… I just…"

Her voice trailed off as she pulled a wide-eyed Harry close to her.

"I would never do that Mum. Never." He said quietly as he shook his head and hugged his mother tightly.

"I better get to Hogwarts. Minerva and Severus may need me." Remus said gravely, standing up to leave. "I'll see you there when you arrive."

"We will be there shortly Remus." Salazar assured him, and Remus nodded and said goodbye to everyone before leaving.

"They didn't recognize you, did they Godric?" James asked when Remus had gone.

"Thankfully no. I managed to keep quiet for the most part and kept my head down. If there had been time to disguise myself, I would have." He answered.

"We did pass him off as 'Gordy's' father though." Salazar added. "But I'm afraid we must go as well. Harry, I'm so sorry. I know I promised you more stories about Hogwarts, but I'm afraid I must break that promise." Salazar said sadly, as he looked at him.

"It's ok Salazar. I understand that you and Godric have to go. Do you promise me that you will come for my birthday in the summer though?" He asked with hope.

"Yes. I'm am sure we can be there Harry." Godric said with a smile, and Harry jumped up to hug them both.

"I'll hold you to it." Harry grinned, as he looked up at Godric.

Merlin smiled at them all. "You are free to stay here while I'm gone, but I'm sure I'll be back sometime later tonight. Choppy and Whimsy will see to whatever you need in the meantime."

"I'll stay here. I don't really see the need for me to go. What could I do, other than annoy Remus?" Sirius said with a chuckle.

Salazar smiled. "Possibly help Godric and the twins turn the Slytherin common room red and gold."

"Oh there's an idea. I'll run that by Fred and George." Godric grinned, as Harry, James, and Sirius burst out laughing.

"You would." Salazar said, rolling his eyes. "All right. We need to go. Harry, Lily, James, I'm so glad you came." He said, giving each one of them a hug. "And I will see you this summer."

"Bye Salazar, we love you!" Harry cried, giving him one last hug. "And we love you too Grandpa." He grinned, also giving Godric a hug.
Godric snorted. "Better Grandpa than Old Man or something else."

"Well it is true you know." Harry said, looking up at him and laughing. "You may be a lot of
Grandpas in the past, but you're still my Grandpa, and at least we know where the Potter's untamable
hair comes from now."

Godric and James burst out laughing. "Indeed." Godric said with his eyes shining brightly. "I love
you Harry, and if you wish to call me Grandpa, you can." He said softly, giving the lad another hug.
"But I must go now."

"All right. Bye you guys, I'll see you both this summer." Harry said, as Salazar and Godric grinned
at him.

They said goodbye to Lily, James, and Sirius, then apparated to Godric's home at Hogwarts.

When they arrived at Hogwarts, Salazar, Godric, and Merlin got caught up on what was going on.
Poppy had given Molly a dreamless sleep potion to help her rest, seeing as Merlin had already given
her the proper potions she needed. She wasn't under the curse for very long, but that didn't mean she
wasn't still having lingering effects.

Minerva had spoken to the entire staff about everything, and everyone agreed that they would keep a
close eye on him until the situation was handled and the diary had been destroyed.

Ron had been revived by Poppy in hospital wing, along with everyone present in order to subdue
him if need be, but he claimed to have no recollection of attacking his family that morning. This
caused everyone to start worrying, and later, talk of Ron possibly being possessed was put forth, but
no definite conclusion was made.

Ron wasn't happy about staying in Gryffindor Tower by himself, and even less happy to know his
siblings were staying in the dungeons. Albus, Nicholas, and Merlin had sat Ron down and explained
what was happening and told him what the diary was. Unfortunately, Ron didn't believe a word they
said, and he glared at Albus throughout the entire meeting when he learned that the Headmaster was
the one who took it.

Later that evening in the Slytherin common room, Nicholas and Merlin told Salazar, Godric, and the
Weasley children that they believed Ron may have been lying about not remembering the attack that
morning. This greatly disturbed everyone and they were now at a loss on what to think.

"Do you think he will try to attack us again?" Percy asked, looking at Nicholas with concern. "Even
when the other students come back?"

Nicholas sighed heavily and looked back and forth between Salazar, Merlin, and Godric. "I don't
know." He answered truthfully, giving Percy an apologetic look.

"I don't think he will." Godric answered.

"How do you figure?" Merlin asked, looking at Godric curiously.

"What we need to do is assume that he is being possessed on a minor level." Godric replied. "The
diary has a hold on Ron, that much we do know, but Ron claims to have no memory of what
happened this morning. However, based on what you two have said, his attitude suggested otherwise
when you all sat him down and told him what was going on. If he is being possessed by Voldemort,
otherwise known as a fifteen year old Tom Riddle in this case, he is not likely to outright attack
anyone because he knows he's being watched."

"But why Gordy?" Fred asked. "He dangerous. It's Voldemort for crying out loud."

"Because of Albus," Salazar said suddenly. "Albus is the only one Voldemort is afraid of. He knows Albus has the horcrux."

"And his next move is going to be trying to get it back." Merlin said.

"Exactly." Salazar said.

"But what about my brother?" Percy asked with a hint of anger in his voice.

"Percy, Ron is going to be all right." Salazar assured him. "If he truly is being possessed, I think it may come and go. In other words, sometimes he is Ron, and other times he is a fifteen year old Tom Riddle. Ron won't be acting like this all the time. It's just right now, he is angry, and because of that, the influence that the diary has on him is strong right now. I think once he calms down and gets back into his everyday schedule, he will return to being his normal self."

"But how is that possible?" Merlin asked.

"Emeralda talked about a glowing light that enters Ron and allows him to do things he can't normally do." Godric said thoughtfully. "What if that has something to do with it?"

Fred gasped. "Do you think the glowing light is Voldemort's actual soul piece?"

"No," Salazar said, shaking his head. "A horcrux doesn't flip flop back and forth between to containers like that, but Godric, you may be right. I do think that the glowing light is what is giving Ron the power to do the things he is doing. Emeralda said that he could only speak Parseltongue when the glowing light entered his body. Ron would not have been able to cast the Killing or Crucciatus curses if that light wasn't in his body this morning."

"Yeah but Emeralda said that the light only went into him when he was holding the diary." George said.

"But what if he doesn't need to hold the dairy anymore?" Salazar asked pointedly. "There are all different kinds of ways a horcrux can influence someone. Voldemort's soul is in the diary, Ron has been writing his angry thoughts and pouring his hatred of me into this thing for the better part of three months. Whatever spell Voldemort put on the diary has made it to where its influence could tether itself to Ron."

"But Speaker, it sounds to me that Carrot being separated from the diary won't work then." Nora said, looking at down at him from the statue she was currently slithering around on.

"You may be right my dear," Salazar said with a sigh. "We have been going about this all wrong. At this point, I don't even think Ron letting go of the diary willingly would have worked."

"So it needs to be destroyed then." George said, glancing at them both.

Merlin sighed heavily. "Yes, I seems so, but getting it back from Albus isn't going to be easy, and we know Voldemort is going to try for it as well."

"Nicholas, is there any chance that Albus will give you the diary?" Godric asked.

Nicholas scoffed. "Not a chance."
"Then we need to steal it." George said firmly.

"Wait, wait, wait. I don't think any of you, except Mr. Flamel and Mr. Nilrem, should be playing around and trying to steal this thing from the Headmaster." Percy pointed out. "Who knows where he will be keeping it. The best choice is Mr. Flamel or Mr. Nilrem to get it."

"It's probably in his office. Which means Gordy and I can get to it much easier than anyone else." Salazar replied.

"No, Harry you are only twelve years old, and Gordy is eleven. I don't want to take the chance of either of you being caught or influenced by this thing. You two should not be playing around with it. Let Mr. Nilrem and Mr. Flamel handle it." Percy said firmly.

"Salazar, tell them." Merlin said gently, motioning towards Ginny and Percy.

"I'll do to them what Perenelle and I did to Fred and George last year. Perenelle won't mind." Nicholas added.

"Tell us what?" Percy asked curiously.

Salazar sighed heavily, pinched the bridge of his nose, and shook his head, while Godric chuckled.

"It will be all right." He said, patting Salazar on the back. "They need to know."

"Explaining it all is going to take a long time, and…"

"Sir, we have a situation." The Baron interrupted suddenly, gliding into the common room. "Young Mr. Weasley was seen by The Fat Friar entering the second floor girl's restroom."

"He's going into the Chamber of Secrets." Salazar said, jumping up out of his chair. "Baron, alert Severus and tell him to wait for Ron outside the restroom, and when Ron exit's the restroom, to apprehend him and take him to Albus. Nicholas, I need you to be in there when Severus brings him in. Try and persuade Albus as best you can to give you the diary. Studying the thing be dammed, it needs to be destroyed." He said, and Nicholas nodded.

"I'll go and speak to my Mother and see what Ron was up to prior to leaving the Tower." Godric said, also standing up. "What are you going to do?"

"I'll be waiting in the shortcut that leads from the dungeons to the second floor. Emeralda will need to pass by there in order to access the rest of the pipes in the school." Salazar answered.

"Fred, George, where is Albus, Poppy, Minerva, and Remus now?" Merlin asked.

Fred quickly reached into his pocket and pulled out the map, and began studying it.

"Dumbledore is making his way up the main staircase and it looks like he is heading to his office, Baron is talking to Snape, Ron is in the Chamber right now, and Madam Pomfrey, McGonagall, and Lupin are in the hospital wing with Mum and Dad."

"All right. I'll go alert Minerva, Poppy, and Remus to the situation." Merlin said. "Salazar, as soon as Emeralda tells you what Ron wanted, come and find me and we will go to Albus together. Nicholas, keep Ron and Albus in Albus's office as long as you can, so that when we get there, Salazar can let him know Emeralda has been set loose. Godric, as soon as your mother tells you what you need to know, let Minerva know what she said, then come back here and explain everything to these two poor confused children." He said, pointing at Percy and Ginny, who did indeed look very confused.
"Yes sir." Godric said, smiling at Percy and Ginny.

Everyone headed out the common room at that point, and Percy glared at Fred and George.

"What is going on here?" He demanded.

"I'm sorry Percy, but we can't say a thing about what just happened." Fred said glancing at his older brother.

"Gordy will let you know everything." George added. "I promise."

"Why was Mr. Nilrem calling Harry and Gordy, Salazar and Godric? Harry and Gordy only do that as a joke." Percy said.

"That is part of what Gordy will be explaining." Fred said with a sigh.

Just then they heard an angry hiss above their heads and they all looked up to see Nora glaring at the common room door.

"This is the second time Speaker has left me behind to go talk to that shrew from the Chamber. Perhaps I should bite him again to remind him of who I am."

All Fred and George could do was try not to laugh.

Chapter End Notes

WOW! So they were wrong about some things, and have come to a different conclusion. Let's just hope Albus wont be a pain and that he will hand the diary over once he realizes what is exactly going on here.

Poor Ron, he's likely possessed and doesn't know which way is up. I kind of feel sorry for him at the moment.

To those of you who may be wondering why the horcrux is effecting Ron differently than it did Ginny in canon, it's because the two situations aren't the same. Ginny was writing about eleven year old girly things like her crush on Harry and all the wonderful things he did. The horcrux was being fed 'good things' if you will. Ron on the other hand, has 'fed' it nothing but anger and hate, so it's effecting him on a much more violent level. Remember how the locket effect him in the 7th book? I'm kind of going off that, as well as what happened with Ginny in canon.

I hope that makes sense.

Anyway, it feels like second year is coming to an end soon, but there is still a lot more to come. Please let me know what you think about this chapter!
Chapter 33

A Stubborn Fool

"Emeralda my dear, I'm here and I'm alone. I know he came to you. What did he want?" Salazar asked, as he heard her slithering up the pipe.

He heard her stop and breathe a sigh of relief.

"Master, he wants me to kill everyone inside the castle. You and the Headmaster especially. He said that you and the Headmaster are traitors and set muggles loose inside the school. I know this is not true though." She replied. "There is something wrong with the boy Master. He had no black book this time, I saw no glow, and he spoke in our language."

"I know my dear." He said with a heavy sigh.

He explained to her everything that they had found out in the last few weeks, and when he was done, Emeralda sighed loudly.

"This is a grave situation Master. Is there anything I can do?"

"No Emeralda, I'm afraid not. For now I want you to return to the Chamber. I will tell the Headmaster that I heard you in the walls, and that you were threatening all our lives. He will know that is a ruse. Ron will be in attendance and I don't want him to know that you are on our side. It may put you in danger and I don't want to see you hurt. We need him to think you are his friend."

"It won't last long though Master. He will suspect something if nothing happens." She replied.

"I know my dear, but it will buy us time. Actually, I changed my mind. Instead of going to the Chamber, head to the Slytherin common room and wait for my return. That way I can let you know of the situation and warn you if I feel you are in danger. Fred and George are in there, so alert them to your presence."

"Very well Master. I will wait for you in the pipes."

Salazar nodded and told her that he would be there later, and he heard her slither off in that direction. Then he sighed again and headed for the hospital wing.

"Well I guess what Emeralda told you isn't a surprise." Merlin said, after Salazar rushed into the hospital wing and told them what Emeralda had said. "I'm just glad we haven't given Ron his wand back yet. Unleashing Emeralda is his way of saying 'you can't beat me'."

"Indeed." Salazar replied.
"Mr. Weasley, it may be beneficial if you were to attend this meeting. He is your son after all, and you have every right to be there." Merlin said, turning towards him.

Arthur looked back at Molly, who was still sleeping, then looked around in an unsure manner.

"Why don't you all go." Poppy suggested gently. "Arthur, she's sleeping peacefully right now, and there is nothing more that can be done at this point."

He sighed tiredly and nodded. "Very well. Poppy, if she does wake up for some reason. Let her know I'll be back as soon as I can."

"I will." She assured him.

They all left the hospital wing and began making their way towards the Headmaster's Tower. When they were halfway there, they met Godric breathlessly making his way down the stairs.

"You know, someone once told me that some students take to jogging around the lake in order to get into, and stay, in shape. Perhaps you should look into that." Salazar said with a sly grin.

Godric glared at him for a moment, but then he smirked. "Oh shut up."

Salazar snorted. "What did she tell you?"

"Uh…umm…" Godric said, glancing at Arthur questioningly.

"We are going to tell Percy and Ginny, he might as well know too." Salazar said, waving his hand around.

"Tell them what?" Arthur asked, looking at both 'boys' curiously.

Salazar sighed and looked at him. "It would take too long to explain here Mr. Weasley, but there are things that Percy, especially, needs to know. Ginny just kind of happened to be there when things were said, so we were going to tell her too."

"Harry, I don't what is going on here, but whatever it is, I want to know. I must ask you though," he said, narrowing his eyes. "Is it dangerous? They are my children, and I don't want them involved if it is."

"Arthur, I can assure you that it is not dangerous." Minerva said gently. "In fact, it will leave you in a better state I think. Fred and George already know, but Percy and Ginny do not. Please, I ask you to trust us."

Arthur looked at Minerva uncertainly, but he nodded. "Very well. I suspect whatever it is, is very large."

"It is, but Albus does not know, and he can't know." She stressed. "You will understand why when it is explained."

"All right." He said with a bit of reservation. "But I want to know all of it."

Salazar nodded. "I understand." He said, then he turned to Godric.

Godric sighed and shook his head. "Mother told me that Ron was in a right angry state. He was yelling and throwing things in the common room, and apparently he didn't like being left without his wand. He kept shouting that everyone had turned against him, and he swore revenge, then he stormed out of the Tower."
"All right." Salazar said with a sigh. "Let's go and try to talk some sense into Albus."

Everyone groaned slightly and Arthur looked at them all curiously, but he didn't ask any questions. They made their way silently towards the gargoyle and when they arrived, Salazar took several deep breaths, then he turned to Godric.

"Do I look like a panic stricken twelve year old?" He asked with a grin.

"Not while grinning." Godric chuckled.

"Oh shut up." He said, which made everyone snort.

"Arthur, no matter what happens, and no matter what is said, you must remain quiet and not say anything." Minerva said desperately. "It will all be explained soon. Please, I beg you, trust us."

He narrowed his eyes a bit, but he nodded. "All right."

Salazar turned to the gargoyle and nodded. "Let us pass."

"As you wish sir." It replied, then it stepped aside.

Arthur's eyes widened. "I thought you needed a password to gain entry."

"We do, but they don't." Minerva said, pointing to Salazar and Godric. "Just remember what I said."

He nodded again and they all made their way up the stairs. Salazar took several more deep breaths, and without knocking, burst frantically into the room and started shouting.

"Professor, Professor!" He cried. "I heard the giant snake in the walls! It's saying it's going to kill everyone inside the castle!"

"POTTER!" Severus yelled. "Don't you know how to knock?! We were in a meeting discussing…"

"Severus please." Albus said calmly, waving his hand in the Potion Master's direction. "Harry, slow down and tell me what you know."

Salazar took another deep breath, and positioned himself so that Ron, who was smirking broadly, couldn't see his face.

"I heard the giant snake in the walls and it was saying that it was going to kill us." He said a bit more calmly, but then he rapidly glanced back and forth between Ron and Albus.

Albus seemed to understand what Salazar was trying to do, and he nodded slightly. "I understand Harry. Was the giant snake saying anything else when you heard it, and did you try to talk to it?"

"I did sir, but it didn't want to talk to me. It said something about only obeying the young Master, or something…I'm not sure. I couldn't hear it all that well. It also was saying that it was on a mission to kill you and me specifically, and was mumbling about muggles."

"I thought it was best if he came to let you know Albus." Minerva stated in a concerned tone. "If the giant snake is on the loose again, then we may need to close the school and not let anyone come back until it's taken care of."

Salazar tried to hide a smirk, and he seriously thought about kissing the witch.

"NO!" Ron stood up and shouted. "You can't close Hogwarts!"
"Well Mr. Weasley, what are we to do? The giant snake poses a danger to everyone." Albus said. "And you still haven't told us why you were seen coming out of a girl's out-of-order lavatory."

"Ron?" Arthur asked curiously, even though he already knew that part.

"I'm not telling you all anything." He said stubbornly as he sat back down.

"It seems suspicious to me Headmaster." Severus drawled. "I catch the boy coming out of the restroom, and Potter hears the giant snake in walls shortly after."

"Ron, did you open the Chamber of Secrets and set loose the giant snake again?" Harry asked in a sarcastic manner, even though he already knew what was going to be said.

"Don't be ridiculous Potter." He spat. "That seems more up your alley. You can talk to it after all."

"Some would claim that you can too…Tom." Salazar said, glaring at him.

Albus's eyes widened, and Severus's hand inched towards his wand. Nicholas cast a sideways glance at Salazar, as did Merlin and Godric, in an effort to figure out what he was up too.

Ron smirked at him. "Sorry I didn't catch that? Could you speak English?"

"No, because I know you can understand me just fine. We both know who it is that is opening the Chamber of Secrets, and it isn't Ron Weasley, nor is it me. Isn't that right Tom Riddle, or should I call you, Lord Voldemort? Speak freely please. I'm the only one that can understand you." Salazar said calmly.

Ron's smirk turned into a glare. "Sorry?"

"Oh, don't play dumb Tom. We are two somewhat like minded individuals, though your thirst for blood and trying to rule the world is a bit cliché and leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. You are young, and so very, very stupid."

"I'm not stupid!" Ron shouted, causing Salazar to smirk. "And don't call me that filthy muggle name!"

"Is that so?" Salazar asked coyly. "So you HAVE come out to play Tom Riddle. I must say that your diary is a work of art, but I know things about horcruxes that you don't. I've seen what you look like now, as an adult, and the result is not pretty. I'm sure that Ron has told you some things about me, and I just want you to know that I take great pleasure in the fact that I destroyed you as a one year old child. Some Dark Lord you turned out to be."

"You know nothing!" Ron stood up and shouted. "I will make you pay Potter! I will make you pay!" He screamed.

Suddenly a bright glow began emanating out of Ron, and it flew up and out of him, before shooting off towards Albus's desk where it disappeared with a bright flash. Albus jumped up and backed away from his desk, but Ron sank to the ground, landing on his hands and knees.

"Mum! Mum! Is Mum all right!? Mum!" He cried, looking up at everyone.

Arthur took one look at his son's terrified, tear streaked face and ran to him.

"I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry! I couldn't help it! He made me do it! He made me do it! Where is Mum? Where is Mum?" He asked frantically.
"Shhh, shhh son, it's all right. She's fine, and she is in the hospital wing." Arthur said, trying to comfort his son.

"Arthur, take him to Poppy. Minerva go with them." Albus said shakily, as he glanced at Salazar, who was glaring at Albus's desk with a look of contempt and hatred written all over his face. "Harry, remain here."

"I want Mr. Flamel and Mr. Nilrem here as well." Salazar stated, still not taking his eyes off the desk.

Albus narrowed his eyes, but he nodded his head. "Very well. Remus, please escort Mr. Roffin out. Severus, remain here please."

They waited for everyone else to leave, but when they were gone, Albus looked at Salazar sharply.

"Harry, what was that about?" He asked curtly, motioning for them to sit.

"A gamble." He stated honestly, taking a seat in front of the desk. "I figured that if I made Riddle angry enough that he would go off and start pouting." He added, waggling his fingers in the direction the glow disappeared to.

"It was risky." Albus said simply. "He could have hurt you.

"He was unarmed and there were plenty of adults around to subdue him if needed."

"You are arrogant Potter." Severus spat. "Admit it, you had no idea what you were doing, and you just wanted to play hero. What of Mr. Weasley? What if he could have been hurt?"

"Riddle wouldn't have hurt him because he needs Ron right now. I suspect this isn't over though. He will pout for now, but he will be back." Salazar said, causing Severus to sneer at him.

"Harry, you know too much about this for my liking." Albus said, glaring at Nicholas and Merlin. "I suggest you forget what you know, least you get caught up in something you don't know how to handle."

"Again, you think to lowly of him Albus." Nicholas said with a chuckle. "And I for one, agree with Harry. This isn't over. We need to destroy the diary."

"I told you already, it needs to be studied." Albus stated firmly. "If there is even a chance that we can learn about his other horcruxes, we need to take it."

"Albus, there are things you need to know that we have figured out." Nicholas said with a sigh.

It took a little while, but Nicholas told Albus the conclusions that they all came up with earlier in the Slytherin common room. Albus seemed to listen thoughtfully, and asked a lot of questions, but when Nicholas was through explaining it all, Albus's sighed and shook his head.

"I'm sorry Nicholas. I understand where you are coming from, and I understand the Weasley's situation, but it can't be destroyed, not right now anyway."

"It's not worth the risk to young Mr. Weasley, or his family." Merlin said.

Albus glared at him. "I stand by my decision."

"For the 'Greater Good' I imagine." Merlin replied distastefully.

Albus's glare deepened. "I do not appreciate being talked to like that from a guest in my castle,
especially one who never graduated from here. I wish you all to leave."

"This isn't over Albus." Nicholas said, with a curt tone. "Harry, let's go."

"Yes sir." Salazar said, scowling at Albus as they left.

Albus glared as they left, but as soon as they were gone he looked at Severus and sighed.

"Severus, now more than ever I need you to keep an eye on Harry. He said some disturbing things while he was speaking Parseltongue."

"What kind of things Headmaster?" Severus asked curiously.

"Harry said he wanted to be like Voldemort and that he admired him." Albus said gravely.

Severus narrowed his eyes slightly, but kept his face blank. "Very well Headmaster." He replied, standing up to leave.

Severus was angry. He knew Salazar had said no such thing, and he didn't appreciate Albus trying to manipulate him like that, but he wondered what the old man was up to by saying it.

Salazar was fuming as he, Merlin, Nicholas, Godric, Remus, and Arthur made their way towards the Slytherin common room. They had met up with Godric and Remus in the hospital wing to check on Ron, and found that Poppy had given the clearly distraught boy a calming draught. He wouldn't stop talking about all the things Riddle had made him do, especially over the last month and a half, and Poppy finally had to give him a dreamless sleep potion in order to help him rest. It wasn't until Salazar and the others showed up that Arthur had finally left Ron and Molly's sides and headed down to the dungeons so they could talk.

However, when they reached the first floor to access one of the shortcuts that led to the dungeons, Salazar stopped in front of a suit of armor and sighed loudly.

"Will you please change this stupid password?" Salazar asked, rolling his eyes and looking at Godric.

Merlin chuckled lightly as Godric grinned at him.

"Nope." He said, folding his arms across his chest.

"You are a stubborn fool. Did you know that?" Salazar asked rhetorically.

"Yes, I am quite aware of that, but the fact that you are complaining about it proves the point it's trying to make." Godric said with a chuckle.

"I hate you." Salazar grumbled.

"I love you too my friend." He answered as he turned towards the suit of armor. "Salazar acts like a baby."

Nicholas and Remus burst out laughing, while Merlin grinned, but Arthur's eye's widened as the suit of armor stepped aside to allow then to access the shortcut.

"How did you kids know that?" He asked.

"It's a long story Mr. Weasley, but you will understand when we explain it all." Godric answered, as
Salazar continued his grumbling.

When they finally entered the common room, Salazar stopped in his tracks when he heard extremely loud, angry hissing.

"No, you listen to me you big fat shrew! I don't care how big you think you are, but Speaker is mine, not yours!"

"Master created me you tiny little worm, and I refuse to listen to your babbling. Shut up before I come through this wall and eat you!"

"How DARE you talk to me like that! I am the deadliest snake in the world! You are lucky that there IS a wall between us, or else…I would bite you!"

"I am not afraid of you, or your insane delusions you piece of fish bait!"

"I have NEVER been this insulted in my life! I demand you apologize to me this instant!" Nora yelled.

"NO!"

The common room wall that Emeralda was behind shook violently as she threw her head against it. Nora, who had been angrily slithering back and forth in front of the wall, slithered backwards quickly, and Percy, who was leaning against it, shrieked and jumped away.

"What was that?" Arthur gasped, staring at the wall with wide-eyes.

Fred and George had apparently cast silencing charms on themselves and were doubled over with laughter, but Ginny was nowhere to be seen.

"I'm not afraid of you!" Nora yelled. "You...you...you are just a big fat shrew!"

Merlin, Godric, and Nicholas began chuckling.

"Well Salazar," Merlin whispered. "It looks like you have some females fighting over you."

Salazar rolled his eyes, and fully stepped into the common room. "Ladies please!"

"Speaker!"

"Master!"

"Speaker," Nora said in a soft silky voice as she slithered over towards him. "The Shrew is here, and is saying some very horrible things to me. I say you let me bite her."

"Master, Fish Bait is delusional and needs to be put out of her misery. Please let me eat her. I could use a snack."

Nora glared at the wall behind her and raised her head up in a haughty manner. "Speaker, The Shrew seems to think she is in charge of you. Please set her right."

Merlin and Nicholas snorted, while Fred, George, and Godric, who had also cast a silencing charm on himself, laughed silently. Salazar sighed, and stared at the ceiling as he shook his head.

"My dears, I belong to the both of you, and I love each of you equally. We need to stop this, and work together. Please, can we stop fighting?"
"If that is what you request Master, then I will do so, but that squirming little worm needs to learn her place."

"Learn my place!? I'll have you know…"

"Please, please!" Salazar cried, holding up his hands. "No more fighting. We have business to attend to. Nora, I love you my dear, but please stop calling Emeraldalda names. Emeraldalda, I love you from the bottom of my heart, and I am asking you to also stop calling Nora names. We need to work together. Now, both of you apologize to the other."

With a lot of grumbling from both snakes, they finally apologized to each other, but giving the fact that they called each other 'Shrew' and 'Fish Bait', Salazar knew it wasn't over between them.

"Where is Ginny?" Arthur asked, looking at his sons as they all sat down at a large table in front of the fireplace.

"Oh, she's asleep in her room." George said. "She fell asleep on the sofa while we were waiting for Gordy to come back, but we moved her."

"Maybe it's for the best." Arthur said, nodding his head. "She has had a very long day, as have the rest of us. There is more things about Ron we need to discuss, and I don't want her learning about it just yet. I also understand that Harry and Gordy have something they need to tell us." He added, looking at the two 'boys'.

They nodded, but Fred and George's eyes widened. "You're going to tell Dad?" They asked together.

"Yes, he should know." Godric said, giving him a small smile.

"What happened in Professor Dumbledore's office?" Fred asked. "Are we going to have to steal the diary?"

"Fred!" Arthur and Percy said together as they glared at him.

"I've already told you that is not a good idea." Percy said, at the same time Arthur exclaimed, "How could you suggest such a thing!?"

Salazar sighed. "Yes, we are going to have to steal it. Right now it is in Albus's desk, but he is likely to move it."

"Harry!" Arthur exclaimed as he looked at him in shock. "You can't steal from Dumbledore!"

"Yes we can, and we will." Godric said. "Mr. Weasley, Percy, there is something you need to know about Harry and I, but first, let me put wards up in case Ginny wakes up and overhears us."

Godric began warding the area where they all sitting, and Arthur's eyes widened as he recognized what the difficult wards were.

"How can you…" Arthur began, but Godric smiled at him.

"Mr. Weasley, I'm a lot older than I look."

"A little over a thousand years old to be exact." Salazar added, and then…he started at the beginning.

Arthur and Percy sat through and listened to the whole story with stunned looks. After Salazar was
finished, they were speechless for nearly fifteen minutes. Not to mention the fact that Merlin decided to tell them who he really was, only added to their shock.

Arthur finally stood up and began pacing back and forth, but then he looked at Godric with wide eyes.

"You're really Godric Gryffindor?"

Godric nodded and smiled. "Yes Mr. Weasley. You saw my adult appearance this morning while I was at your house."

"Godric Gryffindor was in our house." Percy said with a slight squeak in his voice.

"Yes." Godric answered with an amused chuckle.

"And you're the reason why Salazar Slytherin's reputation is so bad?" Arthur asked, still staring at the two Founders in shock.

"Yes." Godric answered with a sigh. "I was an angry coward for doing what I did. Salazar is not the man I painted him to be."

"I can attest to that." Merlin with a smile. "These boys are best friends, and it is because of me that their friendship turned sour. I found a way to achieve immortality, or longevity as I like to call it, and Salazar wanted it too."

"Godric tried to talk me out of it and we fought about it. I had tried to find my own way to achieve immortality, and it took me down some really dark paths, but in the end I gave up and went to Merlin."

"It was during Salazar's trip down those very dark paths that I grew fed up. We got into a major fight, and that night Salazar left the school." Godric said quietly. "After that I became angry, and then I did what I did."

Arthur stared at the two Founders with a sad expression on his face, but Percy looked at Merlin curiously.

"Why at the age of six hundred and fifty, did you want to attend school?"

Merlin chuckled and looked at the lad with a smile. "Hogwarts had been in session for about five or six years before I came. It was rumored to be the finest school for witchcraft and wizardry in the world. There were other, smaller schools, but nothing like this had ever been achieved. It was also rumored to be founded by the four greatest witches and wizards of the age. Salazar, Godric, Helga, and Rowena. Me, being me, I wanted to learn. Just because one is old, doesn't mean that one stops learning. I was curious, so I enrolled."

"It was Merlin. We weren't about to say no." Salazar chuckled.

"Something I was secretly hoping for." Merlin said with a grin. "I was sorted into Slytherin, and I mostly studied under Salazar, but all the Founders taught all the students. Rowena was in charge of Charms, Runes, and Arithmacy, Helga was Herbology, Potions, and Healing, Godric was Physical Combat, Transfiguration, and Dueling, and Salazar was Defense Against the Dark Arts, The Dark Arts, and Blood Magic."

"The Dark Arts and Blood Magic?" Arthur asked looking at Salazar in horror.
Salazar laughed and nodded. "The Dark Arts back then were a lot different than they are today. While some would use them for very bad reasons, most used their head when it came to them. Some of the really bad ones such as Fiendfyre, Bludgeoning Hex, and others like them were mostly theory based. The 'Dark Arts' that I taught were things like the knockback jinx, revulsion jinx, tripping jinx, confundus charm, and other various hexes, jinxes, and curses. Some were nasty, but most weren't. Basically things that you would find in books like 101 Hexes for the Vexed, and other such titles."

"What about the Unforgivables?" Percy asked.

"I taught those too." Salazar admitted. "The Killing Curse was used to humanely put down cows, sheep, chickens, and other livestock for food, so in a sense, it was a necessary part of everyday life back then. It was also used to ease the suffering of witches and wizards who were extremely old in age and wanted to die peacefully, as well as those who were suffering from severe pain and ailments that no muggle or wizarding cure was available for. You have to understand that we also lived in a time where it was kill or be killed. Muggles were actively hunting us, and since muggle repelling charms hadn't been invented yet, it was pretty easy to find us. Magic was mostly all we had. The Imperius Curse was helpful in many of those situations, because we could use it to make the muggles go away, and while it is nasty, the Torture Curse was handy as well."

"As for Blood Magic, I still don't understand why that is considered dark." Godric chuckled. "It's mostly used in wards for protections of residences, buildings, personal property items, and to hide secrets."

"Exactly." Salazar said with a nod. "Case in point, while Albus uses a fancy name for the blood wards that he put around Privet Drive, he still used a type of blood magic. A bit hypercritical if you ask me. The Founders enchantments for the school are also based on blood."

"It was you who summoned the badgers last year!" Percy exclaimed, pointing to Salazar, who just grinned and nodded.

"Magic is magic Mr. Weasley. It's neither light nor dark. It depends on the caster's intentions which makes light or dark." Merlin said with a smile.

Arthur furrowed his brow and nodded slightly. "I suppose I can understand that." He said, then he looked sheepishly at his children. "I often use the killing curse myself to kill our chickens or other livestock when we eat them. I try not to let you all see it though."

Percy, Fred, and George's eyes widened in shock, but they didn't say anything.

Arthur sighed heavily, but then he smiled at them. "Well, I must say this has thrown me for loop. I never would have guessed this in a million years, and never would I have guessed you rescued James and Lily. They were so young, and Molly and I felt so bad for them when they went into hiding. We were so very heartbroken when we learned what happened that night, but I am thankful for what you have done Salazar."

"I isn't me who you should thank Mr. Weasley. Mitzy and Fripsy were the brave ones. If not for them, it wouldn't have been possible." He said.

Arthur nodded his head, then looked around at his sons. "It makes me feel better about Ron's situation too knowing you all are working on it, and Salazar you saved my wife today. I want you to know that our Family owes you a life debt."

Salazar shook his head and smiled at Arthur. "It's not need Mr. Weasley…"

Salazar smiled. "Arthur, it's not needed. I can't die, therefore you owing me a life debt is not necessary."

"Well, whatever my family can do for you, let us know, and we will be there to help."

"I will keep that in mind." Salazar said, as he shook Arthur's outstretched hand.

"Does this mean we aren't in trouble?" George asked with a grin, which caused everyone to laugh.

"I suppose so." Arthur chuckled. "But I don't want Ginny to know this. Not until she is older anyway."

"I understand." Salazar said. "But let me ask you Arthur, are you trained in Occlumency?"

"Very basic Occlumency." He admitted with a sigh.

"Well I think I can help with that." Nicholas said with a smile. "It's not exactly Occlumency, but it's somewhat similar. Just ask your sons."

Fred and George laughed. "It was a really wicked feeling."

Since it dealt with family magic, Nicholas wouldn't say much about it, but the twins told Arthur and Percy that it wouldn't hurt. Nicholas preformed the spell that he had used on the twins last year, and seeing as the truth was now sealed in Arthur and Percy's mind and they couldn't talk about it, Salazar didn't ask the elder Weasley for an oath.

They sat there talking and joking about different things, but the main thing they focused on was Ron and the diary. Salazar had no other plan other than sneak into Albus's office and steal the diary, and Emerald offered to let them use some of her venom in order to destroy it.

This went over better with Arthur, seeing as he was a little leery about using Fiendfyre.

Percy asked if they were going to tell Molly any of this, but Arthur shook his head. He explained that it had been her own idea to be obliviated by Albus, simply because she didn't feel she could handle knowing about the situation and not being able to protect her son. Arthur told him that when Molly was better, he was going to talk to her and see if Poppy was willing to obliviate her again in order to erase the memory of what happened that morning. Percy and the twins agreed with their Dad that it was the best course of action.

Ginny was also discussed, and while no one condoned obliviating her because she was so young and still mentally developing, Arthur did say that he would sit her down and explain the situation and tell her only what she needed to know. He said he was not going to give her any details, but he would impress on her that this situation was a onetime thing, and that he would explain to her that their mother would not remember what happened. He was going to tell her to never talk about it with her mother, but to talk to himself, Percy, and the twins if she needed to.

Merlin offered his help in healing both her and Ron's mind, and explained to Arthur that the children were young and may be slightly more traumatized than anyone realized. Arthur seemed to think about it for a moment before agreeing with him, and he said that he would arrange for Merlin to take a look at Ron and Ginny over the summer, or before the end of school if needed.

Several more things were discussed and Albus was one of them. Arthur said that after what happened that morning, his trust in Albus was now at an all-time low. He asked Nicholas, Merlin,
Salazar, and Godric to keep him updated on what was happening with Ron and the diary, seeing as he no longer would believe half of what came out of Albus's mouth.

Needless to say, Salazar found that rather funny.

It wasn't until Minerva came in to tell the Weasleys that Molly was awake that they left. Salazar and the others told them that they would remain in the common room to give the family some space, which Arthur thanked them for.

When they had left, Merlin turned to Salazar and smiled.

"I actually have something rather important to discuss with you Salazar, and it refers to the horcrux in your head. Between Nicholas and I, we have discovered a way for you to remove it, but one that also allows you to remain as Harry Potter."

"Really?" Salazar asked in surprise.

"For the last year and a half, I have been working with different stones in order to find the right one. I found what I was looking for in obsidian, which is more glass than stone really. In a sense, it works similar to Godric's stone. It will allow to resume your normal adult form when you take it out, but will allow you to look like Harry Potter when it is placed under your skin. I call it the Polyjuice Rock." He said with a grin.

"At first we thought about using hair from your own head, but when we tested it on me by having Sirius drink Polyjuice to look like Nicholas, it wouldn't work right. It wasn't until we used Nicholas's actual hair that we were able to somewhat achieve what we were after." Merlin said. "We explained the situation to Lily, James, and Harry, and the lad was more than happy to donate quite a number of hairs."

"I have broken down the obsidian and remade it with Polyjuice, containing Harry's hair, infused throughout it. I have not perfected all the details yet, but I am very close, and I am confident that I will have this done in a few months." Nicholas added.

"That is excellent news. I must admit, I really miss my adult form." Salazar said with a bright happy smile, which caused them all to laugh.

"There is a catch though. It won't allow you grow up as you have been doing." Nicholas continued. "It will need to be remade every summer from Harry's hair, so that it will appear you are growing."

"I understand." Salazar said with a nod. "But how do you propose that we get the bloody thing out of my head in the first place?"

Merlin pointed to the wall and chuckled. "Emeralda, would you be kind enough to donate some of your venom for this?"

"Of course I would! Anything to help Master!"

"Brown noser!" Nora yelled.

"Shut up you intolerable little worm!" Emeralda yelled back. "You are just jealous because I am actually good for something!"

"I keep Speaker company while you hide in the walls and in your stupid little Chamber!" Nora shouted.
"Enough!" Salazar cried, silencing the two snakes immediately. Then he turned to Merlin. "Are you sure that basilisk venom will work on me?"

"I am. The best course of action is to inject it right into the scar itself, that way we know we got it." Merlin answered with a nod.

"Sounds painful." Godric winced.

"It will be." Salazar said with a sigh and a slight shudder. "But in the end, it will be worth it." He grinned.

They all chuckled, and since it was very late in the evening, Merlin and Nicholas decided to head home. They agreed to take a day to rest, seeing as this one had been very tiring to all involved, but tomorrow they would start anew, and would start planning the best way to steal the diary from Albus.

The next day dawned with a few surprises for all involved. Molly, who had been told everything by Merlin, including who Salazar and Godric really were, decided that she didn't want to be obliviated. She admitted that she had made a mistake in letting Albus do it, and said she wanted to remember what happened so that if anything like this happened again, she would be prepared for it.

Like Arthur, Molly felt better knowing that the two Founders, Merlin, and Nicholas were handling it, and while she was a bit leery of Salazar, she wasn't outright hostile towards him. Salazar understood, and told her that trust would come in time. Molly did smile at Godric though, and told him that it made more sense that Godric Gryffindor would have a phoenix, instead of an eleven year old Slytherin boy.

Molly also spoke her mind and gave Albus an earful. She demanded that the diary be destroyed, but he still held firm and told her it needed to be studied. Molly argued that it wasn't worth Ron's well-being, and after Albus, yet again, told her otherwise, she slapped him hard across the face and told him never to come near her family again.

After Salazar learned that, he didn't stop laughing for nearly ten minutes. Albus was quickly digging his own grave with his supporters, and the stubborn fool was too blind to even realize it.

Ginny wasn't happy that she wasn't going to know the big secret and nearly threw a fit because of it. Arthur and Molly put their foot down and told her that she was just too young to understand, but that perhaps in the future they would tell her. However, they did tell her that Ron was going to be all right, and explained that he had accidentally stumbled across a very dark object that messed with his mind. They assured her that everything was being handled, and warned her not to say anything to anyone because if the wrong person, such as Malfoy, got wind of this, then Arthur could lose his job. That seemed to quiet her a bit and she finally calmed down and agreed with her parents.

After Ron woke up in the hospital wing, he immediately wanted his Mum, which Molly was happy to note. She assured him that she wasn't mad, and that she understood that he wasn't himself at the time. Ron told everyone that he felt better than he had in a few months. He understood mostly what was happening because of the talk in Dumbledore's office. He knew that the diary was Voldemort's and said he didn't want anything to do with it.

Nicholas explained to him that he needed to stay calm and try to hold back his temper and anger, or else there could be a repeat of what happened. Nicholas told Ron that the diary still had a hold on him, and that its influence could possess him again because Ron had put a lot of himself in the diary.
Ron understood that, and told his parents, Nicholas, and Merlin that he would try his hardest.

Salazar and Godric wasn't around for that talk though. Everyone thought it was best if they kept their distance, least it set Ron off again. He truly didn't like the two 'Slytherin gits' and didn't want them to be anywhere near him. Salazar and Godric had rolled their eyes when they learned that, but agreed it was for the best.

Later that day, Percy and Ginny moved back into Gryffindor Tower at the request of their parents. The twins didn't want to leave Slytherin house at first, but Godric and Salazar told them it was for the best. Ron needed the support of his family right now, and that included them. The twins finally agreed, and Salazar felt a little better about his common room not being destroyed by 'all the bloody Gryffindors'. That however, only made Godric chuckle and caused a mischievous glint to appear in his eye, which set Salazar on edge.

It was only later that evening that Severus finally got the chance to tell Salazar what Albus had said about him 'admiring and wanting to be like Voldemort'. This greatly confused Salazar and he also wondered why Albus had said that. Did the old fool misunderstand what he said, or was Albus planning something?

Chapter End Notes

Dont worry, Salazar is not done with Riddle just yet. There is one, maybe two more chapters left in second year, and the chapter coming up is going to have the showdown between the two. I promise! :)
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*A/N* Here it is my friends! The end of Second Year! You all know what is coming up, so i just want to let you know that i handled things a bit differently, so i hope you all find it entertaining!

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Chapter 34

The End of Second Year

"Four months Albus! Four months, and you have gotten nowhere! It's nearly the middle of April for crying out loud!" Nicholas shouted, as Albus glared at him. "Every weekend I come up here to see if you have made some sort of miraculous breakthrough in finding the other horcruxes, but you haven't! You have found nothing!"

"I have found that Tom Riddle framed Hagrid for the attacks fifty years ago, and I have righted that wrong with the Ministry! Hagrid can now have a wand, and I have been teaching him spells!" Albus shouted angrily.

"Well I am very happy for Hagrid, I really am, but a child's life is at stake here! Ron Weasley is a powder keg waiting to explode at any moment!" Nicholas cried, pounding a fist on the Headmaster's desk.

It had been a very irritating four months. Salazar and Godric had broken into Albus's office every single night for a month in order to search for the diary, but they had no luck.

Dobby came to Salazar and offered to secretly watch the Headmaster and see where he hid it, but he could only watch for so long before he was called back to the Malfoy's home. After Dobby's wonderful idea, Godric's elf Peaky had a little more luck and actually saw Albus studying the diary, but as soon as Albus put it away, Peaky immediately forgot where it was hidden.

That meant Albus was hiding the blasted thing under a Fidelius Charm!

Nicholas kicked himself and said that it was probably he that gave the idiot Headmaster the idea, when last year he told Albus that hiding the stone under a Fidelius in his office would have been smarter. Merlin set to work trying to figure out a way to break the Fidelius, but the charm was designed the way it was for a reason, and he had no such luck.

They had even went as far as to have Peaky let them know when Albus was studying it, and then Godric would sip Polyjuice Potion and turn into random students in order to gain entrance into his office, but that didn't work either. Every time Godric would knock on the door or suddenly burst through it, Albus would put the diary away quickly before Godric could even get a stunning spell off.

And that was saying something, seeing as Godric was as fast as he was.

They tried hiding under a disillusionment charm so that they could out right stun him when he brought the diary out, but the old Headmaster's portraits alerted Albus that something was off in the
room. They tried that same trick again, thinking maybe it was a fluke, only for the same results to happen.

They would have had Peaky stun him, but they didn't want Albus to get mad and press charges against the elf, who would have been killed for attacking the wizard. It wouldn't have been hard for Albus to guess that an elf was somehow involved, or whose elf it was that attacked him after an investigation was carried out, seeing as there was only four people actively trying to get it.

They even tried a confundus charm, to no avail. Albus was just too strong a wizard and a confundus wouldn't work on him. They knew obliterating the old fool wouldn't work either, because then the knowledge of where the diary was hidden would be lost forever.

Short of them killing Albus and blowing up his office until the diary flew out of its hiding spot, they were stuck.

Needless to say, Albus had outsmarted them all, which was why Nicholas was in a very bad mood at the moment.

"Mr. Weasley has been fine. I check up on him regularly, and he has had no relapses." Albus said calmly, looking at Nicholas with an amused expression.

Nicholas gritted his teeth. "Albus," He said calmly, trying to regain his composure. "The diary needs to be destroyed. Let it go."

"No Nicholas, I won't. I'm not done combing through it yet. I've seen some his memories in the diary, and I have picked up some clues."

"What clues?" Nicholas asked with mild curiosity.

"Ones I'm not comfortable sharing with you at this time." Albus replied.

"Why?"

"Because I know that what you learn you will share with Harry. I told you months ago what he said about Voldemort. I don't trust Harry, and I have already told Arthur and Molly what I suspect."

Nicholas burst out laughing. "Oh yes, now I remember. You tried to tell us that Harry admired Voldemort and that he wanted to be like him. You forgot one important detail though, Nilrem can understand Parseltongue too, and he was in here at that moment. Both Harry and Nilrem had a good laugh over the fact you are trying to turn us and the Weasleys against him. Haven't you noticed that it hasn't worked?"

Albus furrowed his brow for a moment, and it seemed to Nicholas that the Headmaster had actually forgotten that bit of information, but then Albus scowled.

"I don't trust that man. I think he and Harry are both dark wizards. He graduated from Durmstrang."

Nicholas rolled his eyes. "Your paranoia is growing worse Albus. Not everyone who disagrees with you is a dark wizard."

"I still don't trust Harry or that man." Albus declared as he leaned back in his chair. "I fully believe that Harry has been heavily influenced by the dark families in Slytherin, and I fully believe what I heard him say that day."

Nicholas started at him in stunned disbelief and slowly shook his head. "You really have lost it." He
said with a half chuckle, half sigh. "Well I can see that trying to talk to you is going to go nowhere. Good luck in dealing with Ron Weasley when Riddle has figured out what he wants to do. I hope no one gets hurt or dies in the process, and if they do, remember that we all tried to warn you."

Nicholas stood up and left at that point. There was no point in arguing with the man any more, but what worried him the most was, did Albus really believe what he was spouting about Salazar, or was this all intentional in order to ruin his reputation as 'The-Boy-Who-Lived'?

It was lunch time on Wednesday, two weeks after Nicholas had spoken with Albus, and Salazar and Blaise had just sat down in their normal seats at the Slytherin table. They looked up when Hermione and Neville came bustling over towards them.

"What's wrong?" Salazar asked, looking at them with concern.

"What?" Hermione asked, somewhat distracted. "Oh, nothing. Nothing." She continued, then she began staring off into space.

Salazar and Blaise looked at Neville curiously, but the lad started chuckling.

"We just came from Transfiguration and Professor McGonagall told us that we need to start thinking about what electives we want to take for next year. We can take two or more classes and they are, Ancient Runes, Care of Magical Creatures, Divination, Muggle Studies, and Arithmancy." Neville answered as he began to make a sandwich for himself.

"Oh, well that explains Hermione's spacey look." Blaise said with a wave of his hand, and Salazar began chuckling.

"I want to take them all." She announced suddenly.

Salazar raised a single eyebrow and cast a glance in her direction. "May I make a suggestion?"

Hermione seemed to snap out of her daze, and finally looked at him properly. "Of course Harry."

"Don't do that."

"Don't do what?" She asked.

"Don't take them all." He answered, looking up from his plate. "The work load will overwhelm you tremendously. I have no doubt that you could pull it off, but trust me Hermione. You won't get a lot of sleep, you will be tired, stressed, and worried about failing because you won't be able to properly pay attention. My advice is to think about which classes are the most important to you and take those."

She seemed a little taken back by the suggestion, but she nodded. "Which classes do you suggest?"

That question seemed to cause Neville and Blaise to sit up and pay closer attention to the conversation.

"I would personally take Runes, Care of Magical Creatures, and maybe Arithmancy, but that's just me. The rest, in my opinion, are a waste of time."

"Why do you say that?" Hermione asked, looking at him and furrowing her brow.

"Well think about, Muggle Studies is a waste of time for you because you are a muggle born, therefore it's not needed. Divination is a load of crap because it deals with predicting the future, and
very few people in the world are true seers. Divination is kind of like Parseltongue in that aspect. If you're not born with a seer's gift then you won't be able to predict the future no matter how hard you try." He answered, taking a sip of his pumpkin juice.

"Ok." She said slowly. "I understand about Divination, but I think studying muggles from a wizarding perspective would be fascinating."

"Then I would suggest reading wizarding books about muggles." He said simply, which caused her to give him an exasperated look.

"I wouldn't take Runes." Neville said, scrunching up his face. "It's just memorizing a bunch of symbols and translating them into words."

"It is." Salazar admitted with a slight nod. "But Runes are fascinating because you can use them to cast spells and create wards. It's how the ancient witches and wizards did their magic before wands came along."

"Really." The children said together.

Salazar nodded, reached into his bag, and pulled out a blank sheet of parchment and a quill.

"Now normally," he said, as he began to draw symbols on the parchment. "You would carve runes on a piece of wood or stone, but for this purpose, I can use the parchment."

He continued to carefully draw the symbols one on top of the other until all the lines blended together and you couldn't really tell them apart. Then he stood up walked away from the table a little ways, bent down, and placed his hand on top of it. He muttered an incantation, then backed away quickly.

Suddenly, the parchment began to glow a bright golden yellow color, and almost instantly, a green and silver column of flame burst straight up. It was about waist high, and everyone in the great hall turned to stare at it with wide eyes.

"POTTER!" Severus yelled, as he stood up at the head table and made his way towards Salazar.

Salazar intercepted him and pushed Severus backwards in the same moment the top of the column of fire burst open. It began emitting tiny sparks that grew into small green and silver fiery butterflies.

Salazar summoned two empty potion phials from his bag, and enlarged them until they were the size of large jars, then he waited patiently for the flame to die down. The butterflies hovered over the spot where the flame and parchment used to be and Salazar began handpicking butterflies out of the air. He let them flutter through his fingers and around his hair, before placing a few in the two jars.

Salazar turned to face Severus, who was glaring at him.

"I'm sorry I had to push you away Professor. I just didn't want you to end up with a face full of butterflies."

Several people at the Hufflepuff table started laughing, but Severus silenced them all with a glare. Then he sneered at Salazar, before making his way back up to the head table.

Salazar chuckled lightly before turning his attention to Hermione.

"Please, forgive me for the color combination." He said, as he bowed low at the waist and handed her one of the jars. "I tend to favor green and silver colors." He added with a grin.
She giggled as she took hold of the jar. "They are beautiful Harry. Thank you. Who's the other for?"

"Luna." He said simply, motioning towards the blond Ravenclaw who was staring at the other butterflies in fascination.

He presented the other jar to Luna in the same manner, and she smiled brightly at him as she took it.

"Thank you Harry." She said in a dreamy voice.

"Perhaps they can help keep your wackspurts away." He said with a wink.

She giggled lightly. "Perhaps, but I will let you know if they do or not." She said, then she gave him a light hug before sitting back down at the Ravenclaw table.

She showed them to Colin, who began mock glaring at Salazar, but then the lad laughed and took a picture of Luna holding up her jar full of green and silver butterflies.

Salazar chuckled, sat back down in his seat at the Slytherin table, and grinned at his friends.

"And that," he said, gesturing to Hermione's jar. "Is an example of what you can do with runes."

"I'm definitely taking runes." Blaise said as he grinned at Salazar.

"So am I." Neville and Hermione echoed.

"What are you going to do with the rest of the butterflies?" Godric asked, as he made his way towards them.

He looked a little angry and Salazar looked at him curiously because of it, but Godric waved him off. Salazar got the hint knowing Godric would tell him later, but then he grinned wickedly.

He vanished all but one of the butterflies, and sent it over towards the Gryffindor table. Everyone watched as it innocently fluttered down the length of the table and came to a stop in front of Fred and George, who looked at it rather oddly.

"Harry, Fred and I appreciate the gesture, but I don't think we are all that into butterflies. Maybe you should…"

"AAARRRGGHHH!"

Several people at the Gryffindor table screamed loudly when the butterfly exploded and morphed into an ugly snake faced creature.

Fred, George, and their friend Lee Jordan, slipped out of their seats and landed hard on the floor on their bums. Godric, along with others in the great hall, burst out laughing as Salazar jumped up from his seat and began dancing a little jig around the end of his table.

Fred, George, and Lee stood up, brushed themselves off, and grinned in Salazar's direction.

"This isn't over Potter!" George exclaimed with a grin, as Fred and Lee began snickering.

"That was just payback for turning our common room red and gold!" Salazar shouted. "And I know you had help from a certain Gryffindor in Slytherin robes!"

Godric burst out laughing, but Blaise looked at Godric and starting whopping him over the head with his napkin.
"That was you!" He cried, as Godric halfheartedly tried to wave him off.

"WEASLEY!" Severus shouted. "Ten points from Gryffindor for defacing the Slytherin common room! Roffin and Potter, see me after lunch!"

No one paid any attention to him though. Everyone, including some Professors, was too busy giggleing, laughing, snorting, or a combination of the three.

Remus finally got himself under control and stood up, while still trying to hold back a few snickers.

"Messrs. Weasley, ten points to Gryffindor for an excellent display of color changing charms."

His announcement made all of the Gryffindors in the great hall began cheering, but Severus glared at him and stalked out of the great hall.

Salazar chuckled as he watched Severus go, and knew the man was trying to escape so that he could laugh properly at the situation.

Salazar glanced up at the head table and noticed that Minerva and Poppy, along with Professors Sprout and Flitwick were laughing merrily. The others were also giggleing and talking among themselves, but Albus looked torn. On one hand, it looked like he wanted to laugh, but on the other, he wanted to frown at Harry.

Salazar just shook his head, and turned his attention towards Godric and the children.

"Anyway, as I was saying before I got a little side tracked, I think I'm going to take Runes and Care of Magical Creatures."

"Why not Arithmancy?" Hermione asked.

"Well in a sense, it is another form of Divination, except you use numbers and patterns instead of 'the inner eye'. It's also a lot more accurate than Divination." He explained. "I personally don't care for it though, but don't let that cloud your own judgment."

"Hmm," Hermione mumbled, as she swallowed her food. "In that case, I think I will do Care of Magical Creatures, Runes, and Arithmancy. I think you're right about Muggle Studies. I can look into that at my own pace, and now that I think about it, I don't think I will like Divination all that much."

"You're a logical person Hermione." Godric said with a nod. "Divination involves a lot of interpretations, guessing, and in some cases, making stuff up."

"Yeah." She said scrunching up her face. "I don't think I would like that. I like facts and absolutes, which is why Arithmancy sounds more for me because it deals with numbers and patterns. I'll give it a try, and if I don't like it, I can drop the class before next year is over."

"A wise choice." Salazar said with a nod. "What about you two?" He asked, looking at Blaise and Neville.

"I'm with Hermione on this one," Blaise said, clearing his throat. "Care of Magical Creatures, Runes, and Arithmancy."

"As for me, I think I'll go with Muggle Studies, Runes, and Care of Magical Creatures." Neville said. "Though I think I'll be terrified of Creatures." He laughed.
"Why Muggle Studies?" Godric asked curiously.

"I don't know really." Neville said with a shrug. "I want to know about them, and how they go about doing things. All I know about muggles is what you two say about them." He continued, as he pointed towards Salazar and Hermione. "They just sound interesting."

"Well I think those are great choices personally." Godric said with a grin. "But I think Harry and I should head off to see what Snape wanted. He may get angry if we keep him waiting."

"I agree." Salazar said, standing up. "I'll see you all later."

The children nodded, but Godric and Salazar missed the knowing grins that they all shared. However, when Salazar and Godric disappeared out of the great hall, Albus stood up and made his way down to Hermione, Blaise and Neville.

"Albus is at it again." Severus said, once Salazar had closed the door to his office. "He has convinced all, except Sprout and Flitwick, that you are some kind of Dark Lord waiting to be set free. Minerva, Poppy, and Lupin are doing their best to convince the other Professors otherwise, but they are losing."

Salazar chuckled and shook his head. "I don't care really. You, Poppy, Minerva, and Remus are the important ones. Everyone else can follow Albus blindly, but eventually they will realize that he is lying. He can try and trash me all he wants. In the end, I'll prove him wrong."

"I got to say, Sprout and Flitwick are smart." Godric said. "Perhaps they are on our side because of what Albus tried to do last year."

"That's exactly it." Severus said, pointing at him. "They told Minerva they won't believe it until they see it for themselves. They also told her that what they see is a nice young man who helps his peers and is friendly towards everyone. Albus told them all you are deceiving them, just like The Dark Lord did when he was at school, and he told them to be careful."

"Well, I'll just have to prove to everyone that Albus is a barmy old fool. It shouldn't be too hard." Godric snorted. "Indeed, but we have another, more pressing matter to attend to."

"Does it deal with why you were angry when you came to lunch late?" Salazar asked curiously.

"It does." Godric nodded. "And it involves Ron. I was coming out of History when I was basically assaulted by some older Gryffindors." He said with a scowl. "They were calling me names, ruffling me up a bit, and knocked my books and things out of my hands and spread them all over the corridor. Ron and his friends, Seamus and Dean, came around the corner at that moment, and Ron saw me picking up my diary." He said, taking the diary out of his pocket and laying on Severus's desk. "I saw it happen Salazar. In that moment, he saw my diary and I knew what he was thinking. His face got all red, and it was like watching a slow motion transformation take over him, but the only thing is, there was no glow. I think it has happened though." He said gravely, and Severus and Salazar's eyes widened knowingly.

"He thinks your diary is his, or rather, Riddle's." Severus whispered, as he stared at Godric's.

"I think so." Godric said, casting a worried glance at both men. "We knew this could happen. I've been trying to remain clam because I didn't want to worry the children, but I honestly don't know what to do."
"What did Ron do?" Salazar asked.

"He left without a word, but he was scowling and muttering under his breath. I tried to pick up my things as quickly as I could, but by the time I could go after him, he had disappeared." Godric answered, running a hand through his hair.

"Alright." Salazar said with a sigh. "Severus, alert Minerva, Poppy, and Remus. Tell Remus to contact Sirius so he can tell Nicholas and Merlin. Godric, alert the twins and Percy, and tell the twins to watch his every move on the map. Severus, the twins have potions for their last class, correct?"

"Yes." He answered with a nod.

"Ok Godric, tell the twins to fake sick during Potions, and to go to the hospital wing. That way they can keep a closer eye on Ron. I'll warn Blaise, Hermione, and Neville in Defense, which we have next so Ron should be in there, to keep a watch on him in their other classes for the rest of the day. I'll say he is starting to look off again or something."

Godric and Severus nodded, then they all headed out the door.

During Defense, Hermione, Blaise, and Neville had told Salazar that the Headmaster had approached them after he and Godric left the great hall. Apparently Albus tried to convince them that he was a dark wizard, and they should pick their friends more carefully, while also telling them to stay away from 'Harry'.

Hermione assured Salazar that they didn't believe a word the Headmaster said. Neville said that Albus had 'gone mad', Blaise said he had no business trying to run their lives, but Salazar smirked when Hermione said that Albus needed mind his own business.

With eyes on Ron in one form or another, the rest of the day passed smoothly, even though everyone was on pins and needles waiting for the other shoe to drop. Nicholas showed up again around dinner, and after letting everyone know that Molly and Arthur had been contacted, proceeded to try and encourage Albus to hand him the diary.

With no luck.

Not only did Albus not believe Nicholas, but he blatantly told Nicholas that he didn't trust him to handle the situation properly. Nicholas called Albus an idiot to his face and once again told the Headmaster that he was going to get someone killed. Albus all but threw Nicholas out of his office after that.

It was Thursday morning when Ron set Emeralda lose again. She found Severus, and Severus had to go get Salazar out of Herbology. Emeralda told them that she was supposed to kill 'Gordy Roffin for stealing the diary'.

It was then they knew Ron was truly possessed again.

Salazar told Severus to tell Minerva what happened, so that she could alert the Headmaster. They figured this was the better thing to do, seeing as 'Harry' would never go to Severus with a problem.

Later that night at dinner, the twins and Percy tried to talk to, and reason with Ron, but the boy cursed them in the middle of the great hall. He didn't use any Unforgivables, but Percy's arm broke when Ron hit him with a bone breaking curse, and then he somehow vanished both Fred and George's leg bones.
Albus put a stop to it by letting off several loud blasts from his wand, and Ron ran out of the great hall. Albus sent all the students to their common rooms, and told them to stay there. Percy, Fred, and George were taken by Minerva and Poppy to the hospital wing, and Ginny went along with them as a precaution.

"You need to sit down before you wear a hole in the floor." Godric said, eyeing Salazar as he paced back and forth across the dorm room.

"Quiet, I'm trying to think." Salazar snapped, causing Godric to roll his eyes.

It had been fifteen minutes since the events in the great hall. Albus had locked down the castle and sealed off all the common rooms so no one could get out of them, but Salazar and Godric could easily bypass that with Nehum. They had sent a quick message, via Nehum, to Merlin and Nicholas, and the two wizards were now waiting in Godric's house.

Blaise was sitting in the dorm room with them and he was watching both the Founders carefully, while Nehum sat on the end of Salazar's bed.

"What are we going to do?" Godric asked.

Salazar looked from Godric to Blaise, but shook his head.

"I'm not sure." Salazar answered.

Blaise sighed loudly and shook his head. "Just out with it. Are you waiting for Snape or McGonagall to send you a sign?"

"Why would we do that?" Godric asked, looking a bit startled.

Blaise rolled his eyes. "Look, this probably isn't the best time in the world to tell you both this, but we, meaning Hermione, Neville, and I, already know."

"Know what?" Salazar asked, narrowing his eyes at the lad.

"Know who you really are." Blaise answered somewhat nervously. "We didn't want to say anything because we didn't want you to worry. We know you are Salazar Slytherin and Godric Gryffindor, but we don't know much beyond that. Because of your boggart, Hermione thinks that you are protecting the real Harry Potter and his parents." He said looking at Salazar. "We don't how or why you have lived this long, nor do we know how or why you are protecting them, if that is what you are doing. Like I said, we don't know much beyond who you really are. We also know that Fred, George, McGonagall, Snape, Lupin, and Madam Pomfrey know who you are as well. Oh, we also know that 'Nilrem' spelled backwards is 'Merlin', but we don't know if that means that man is really the Merlin. Neville and I are a bit iffy on that. Please don't worry though, we haven't told anyone what we suspect."

Godric and Salazar stared at Blaise in shock for several long seconds, until Godric suddenly burst out laughing.

"Hermione really is the brightest witch of her age." He said with a snort.

"Professors Dumbledore, Snape, and Lupin please report to the second floor corridor NOW!!"

Minerva's slightly panicked voice rang out through the castle, and all three of them looked up towards the ceiling.
"I guess that is your cue." Blaise said with a grin.

"We will talk about this later." Salazar said sternly, causing Blaise's grin to vanish.

"All right." He said, giving them both a worrying glance.

Nehum took flight and Godric and Salazar grabbed ahold of his tail so that he could transport them to the second floor.

Albus glared at them as Nehum dropped them off and disappeared again, only to reappear a few moments later with Nicholas and Merlin in tow.

"I locked down this castle for a reason!" He shouted, turning red in the face. "Harry, Mr. Roffin, I demand you go back to the Slytherin common room this instant!"

None of them were listening to him though, because they were too busy staring at the wall.

"As you can all see, Mr. Weasley has left another message." Minerva said, pointing to the words hastily written in blue paint.

**Give me back what is mine, or they will die!**

"Who will die?" Merlin asked.

Minerva took a deep breath. "Apparently Miss Granger and Mr. Longbottom never made it to Gryffindor Tower along with everyone else. I found their wands laying in the forth floor corridor." She said, holding them up. "I believe Mr. Weasley attacked them somehow and took them into the Chamber." She added, casting a glance at Salazar. "Mr. Potter, I do hope you know where that is."

"I do. Emeralda told me." He answered, causing Albus to glare at him.

"Albus, the diary!" Nicholas shouted, glaring at the Headmaster. "I TOLD you this could happen! You didn't listen!"

"If those children, including Mr. Weasley, are hurt Mr. Dumbledore, I assure you whatever their injuries are, yours will be tenfold. Give us the diary so it can be destroyed. If you don't, I will kill you where you stand, thereby negating the Fidelius you have placed it under." Merlin said with controlled rage, as a fierce wind suddenly sprang up in the corridor.

Albus paled drastically, but sighed and nodded before pulling the diary from his pocket.

"Here." He said with a glare, tossing it to Nicholas.

As soon as Nicholas had it in his hands, Godric stunned Albus. No one saw the spell, but they knew he had been hit when Albus crumpled to the ground.

"That way he can't follow us." Godric said gruffly. "We don't need him mucking up anything down there."

"I agree." Salazar said with a nod. "Minerva, I must ask you all to stay here. Say we stunned you as well, but give us five minutes before you revive him. I'm not worried about the children being hurt by Emeralda, but they don't know she is a basilisk and they won't know to NOT look into her eyes. Tell Poppy to have the mandrake draught ready just in case."

"All right." She said with a nod. "But you need to know that I checked with the twins in the hospital
wing to confirm what I said. Something is off when they looked at the map. All three of the children are laying in the middle of the Chamber, and they appear to not be moving. However, the name Tom Riddle has suddenly appeared down there."

Salazar sighed heavily and nodded. "Very well. I don't want to startle him by suddenly appearing with Nehum, so we will go down there the traditional way. Remember, give us five minutes."

They all nodded and watched as Salazar and the others disappeared into the girl's restroom.

Rebuilding the stairs in the pipe took a lot less time with the four of them working together, so in no time at all, they found themselves standing outside the door to the Chamber.

"You all should disillusion yourselves. That way he thinks I'm alone and not a threat." Salazar whispered.

"A wise suggestion." Merlin said, as they all disappeared from view.

Salazar opened the Chamber door, and they all quickly made their way towards the front. Emeralda was nowhere to be seen, but Hermione and Neville were tied up and sitting in front of the statue, and Ron was laying on the floor and he appeared to be knocked out. Riddle was standing a few feet from them, and he glared at Salazar as he approached.

Relief beyond measure filled Salazar when Hermione turned her head towards the sound of his approaching footsteps.

"Harry!" She cried, and she and Neville began struggling against their binds.

"I told you he would find us!" Neville shouted, as he glared at the semi-solid form of Riddle. "You didn't believe me, and said that Harry didn't know where the Chamber was. Looks like you've been outsmarted again!"

Riddle glared at Neville before turning his attention to Salazar, who was checking on Ron.

"What did you do to him? He's ice cold." Salazar said, trying to appear meek and unthreatening.

"Ron Weasley is dying Potter. I am a memory and have embedded myself into him. This pathetic little boy has given my diary so much of his soul because of his hate and anger, that I was able to overtake him very easily. So much so, that I could actively use his own magic to make him attack his family and friends. That is why he remembered everything I made him do. I couldn't have asked for a better tool." Riddle said smugly. "He will be dead soon, and I will return, very...much...alive." He said coldly.

Hermione, surprisingly, burst out laughing. "You have no idea who you are dealing with Voldemort." She sneered. "No idea at all."

_That sneer would have made Severus proud!_ Salazar thought as he tried to hold back an amused smirk. _Bloody Gryffindors._

"Shut up you filthy little mudblood!" Riddle shouted. "I know exactly who I'm dealing with, and this time he is standing in my territory! Salazar Slytherin built this Chamber, and I, Lord Voldemort, am a direct descendant of Slytherin himself! This puny little boy, who claims to be the Heir of that filthy muggle loving Godric Gryffindor, has no chance of defeating me here!"

Riddle's rant only caused Neville and Hermione to burst out laughing again, and Salazar watched in
amusement as Riddle grew more and more angry. He almost burst out laughing himself when Godric snorted behind him.

Riddle didn't seem to hear it though and kept on glaring at Hermione and Neville, who were still chuckling.

"What say you Potter? Think you can defeat me here? Where is my diary? Tell me, or I will kill them!" Riddle shouted, pulling out a wand that looked like Ron's.

The wand suddenly flew out of Riddle's hand and skittered across the floor. Upon seeing that, Hermione and Neville once again started laughing. Riddle stared at his hand in shock and looked around trying to see if anyone else was around.

"I should have known." Hermione said with a giggle.

"Yeah, Harry never goes anywhere without the Gryffindor in Slytherin robes." Neville said with a happy grin.

"Indeed I don't." Salazar admitted with a chuckle. "Though in my defense he seems to follow me around, not the other way around. OUCH! Why did you hit me with a stinging jinx?!" Salazar suddenly cried, causing Hermione and Neville to laugh loudly.

"What are you talking about?" Riddle asked, suddenly becoming alarmed. "What do you mean 'Gryffindor in Slytherin robes'?"


Her eyes became wider than galleons, and she and Neville stared at him.

"How...how did you..."

"Blaise told us." Salazar said with a smile. "Tell him."

"Harry's friend Gordy Roffin isn't who he says he is." She said, glaring at Riddle. "Gordy Cigrd Roffin is an anagram for Godric Gryffindor."

Riddle seem to think about that for a moment, but then he glared at her and Salazar.

"The anagram maybe true, but I don't believe you." He snarled, then he turned to Salazar. "Where is my diary Potter?!"

"Oh, I have your diary right here Tom." Salazar said with a chuckle, as he took it out of his pocket.

"Don't call me that, and give it to me now!" He demanded, glaring at Salazar in a way that reminded the old wizard of Draco's tantrums.

Salazar just chuckled again and shook his head. "No, I don't think I will." He said, standing there facing Riddle with an amused smirk on his face.

Riddle glared at him with cold dark eyes.

"Do you know who I am Potter?" Riddle asked coldly. "Because I don't think you do. I am not a common ordinary Slytherin. I am Lord Voldemort!"

"I heard you the first time." Salazar said with a sigh. "You may be 'Lord Voldemort', but to me you
are nothing more than a child throwing a temper tantrum. I am stronger, faster, and a whole lot more knowledgeable in the dark arts than you ever will be. Your actions thus far have actually been quite comical, and I do not find you threatening at all."

"I have your mudblood and blood traitor friend tied up, and this pathetic little boy is almost dead." Riddle said, as he paced back and forth like a caged cat. "And as for your knowledge, I have been able to create a horcrux, the darkest form of magic, at the age of fifteen. You are no match for me Potter!" He spat.

"It doesn't matter what you say Riddle, or Voldemort, or whatever your name happens to be. Point is, you're a non-issue, because not only is Gordy Godric Gryffindor, but Harry is Salazar Slytherin himself." Hermione stated in a matter-fact-tone.

"A very true statement Hermione." Salazar said with a nod.

Riddle screamed with rage at being treated so nonchalantly, and he glared at everyone.

"LIES! ALL LIES!" He bellowed. "Have it your way Potter. Let's see if Gryffindor's Heir can out match Slytherin's basilisk!" Riddle cried, then he turned to the statue. "Speak to me Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts four!"

As the statue began opening its mouth, Salazar looked over at Hermione and Neville, who looked slightly amused by Riddle last 'trump card' being played, but Salazar blinked, and suddenly they were blind folded. They tensed up for several seconds, but then they relaxed and he saw them smile. He knew one of the others had warned and blind folded them as a precaution.

Riddle turned back towards Salazar with a smug look on his face, but Salazar just stood there shaking his head.

"Shake your head all you want Potter!" Riddle yelled gleefully. "Parseltongue won't save you now, it only obeys me! Now get on your knees and tremble in fear!"

Salazar sighed loudly and chuckled as Hermione and Neville burst out laughing… again. He closed his eyes when Emeralda's nose appeared. He heard her slither out of the statue, and the Chamber trembled slightly when the full weight of her body hit the floor.

"Is that...is that The Shrew!?" Nora suddenly yelled.

"Fish Bait!"Emeralda hissed loudly. "Come here you squirmy little worm, so I can devour you properly!"

"Speaker don't let her eat me!" Nora shouted frantically.

"Nora come to me if you want. I won't let her eat you." Neville said with a chuckle.

"No thanks Bottom. I'll just stay here with Speaker." She answered, tightening her grip around Salazar's forearm.

"All right, all right. Enough of this." Salazar chuckled.

"I swear Salazar, it's like watching a muggle comedy program." Godric laughed, suddenly appearing beside the children. "That boy is truly pathetic."

"Indeed." Merlin said, as he and Nicholas both appeared. "But we need to hurry up and stop playing games Salazar. Mr. Weasley is fading fast." He added, as he untied Hermione and Neville, who
stood up with help from Nicholas.

Salazar nodded, and turned to Emeralda, who had her head turned away from them. "Emeralda, would you be so kind as to bite this blasted book? We really need to get rid of it."

"Of course Master, but what of the arrogant little boy?"

"He will die when you bite the book. He is tied to it, and when he dies, Ron will be just fine."

"I understand Master. Let me know when you are ready."

"What is happening here!?" Riddle shouted angrily. "This is not how this is supposed to go!"

"We told you already. He is Salazar Slytherin, and you are hardly a threat to anyone at this point. We are not scared of you, no matter how much you want us to be." Neville said gleefully.

"Shut up you filthy blood-traitor! It is LIES! ALL LIES!"

"I am Salazar Slytherin, but I am Polyjuiced to look like Harry Potter." He said, and watched with amusement as Riddle stared at him in shocked disbelief as reality over the situation finally began to sink in.

Riddle seemed to finally take a good look around and noticed that Godric, Nicholas, and Merlin was standing there glaring back at him.

"I knew it had to be Polyjuice!" Neville cried.

"I'll tell you children the whole story later, but for now, let's just get you out of this chamber. Nicholas, you will have to secure their minds, if you don't mind."

"Of course Salazar, I'd be happy too." He replied.

"Are you going to erase our memories?" Hermione asked with a little whimper.

"No Miss Granger I won't." Nicholas said. "What I will do will cause you no pain, and you will remember everything."

"Oh good." Neville said with a sigh of relief. "Hey can I ask a question? Mr. Nilrem, are you really the actual Merlin?" He asked, curiously.

"You are a very smart wizard Mr. Longbottom." Merlin said with a chuckle. "Yes, I am the Merlin."

"Hermione figured it out." Neville said with a grin.


"Horcruxes are not the only way to live forever Tom." Salazar said with a sigh. "But you are too young and too arrogant to realize that."

"Nilrem is Merlin spelled backwards." Hermione admitted with a blush.

"We will talk about it later, let's just get this book destroyed." Salazar said with a chuckle, then he turned to Emeraldal. "My dear, open your mouth and I will place this book on one of your teeth. When I tell you too, bite down hard."

"Of course Master." She replied, and opened her mouth wide.
"No! No don't! Please! I can learn from you! Please! Please!" Riddle shouted, as he tried to run towards Salazar.

"I will not sacrifice Ron to save you Tom, so forget it. You are evil and need to be destroyed." Salazar said coldly, as he placed the diary on top of Emeralda's tooth. "Now my dear!"

She bit down hard and an unearthly scream filled the Chamber as the memory of Tom Riddle exploded and disappeared. Ron yelped slightly as the last shards of the memory faded from view, and he sat up abruptly.

"What is going…?"

"Aaarrrgghh!" Salazar suddenly shouted, and drew his bleeding hand towards his chest.

"Master!"

"Speaker!"

"Harry!"

"Get them out! Get them out!" Salazar shouted, as he stumbled towards Godric. "I nicked my hand on her tooth! Get them out!"

He threw the blackened diary towards Nicholas, and told him to give it to Albus as Nicholas began ushering the now frightened children out of the Chamber. Godric laid the sweating and bleeding Salazar on the Chamber floor, but gripped his non-wounded hand tightly.

"Hold on my friend, I'll call for Nehum. We will get you sorted out with his tears."

"No." Merlin said gently, kneeling down beside him. "Salazar, the Polyjuice Rock has been ready for the past month. Just let the venom work through your system. When it reaches your head, it will destroy the horcrux."

"Two birds, one stone." Salazar whispered, then he screamed again and began convulsing violently. Godric firmly held his hand, and tears flowed down his face as he helplessly watched Salazar scream, writhe, and convulse with great waves of pain. To him, it seemed like hours, but in reality it was only a few minutes.

When the venom had circulated throughout his system and reached his head, Salazar let off one more scream of pain before a smoky black mass erupted out of his head. The unearthly wail of the soul piece filled the room alongside Salazar's screams, but it faded quickly away.

Right before their eyes Salazar began to change. Godric's breath hitched in his throat when Salazar's true form lay in front of him, and he smiled as he finally looked into the face of his best friend.

Salazar was bald, but he had a white mustache, which connected with a goatee that came to a sharp point just below his chin. His grey eyes were open, but he stared unblinking at the ceiling above them. The now red and swollen lightning bolt scar on his forehead was the only thing that remained the same in his appearance.

"Welcome back Salazar." He whispered as Salazar lay still and quiet on the floor.

"Godric, call for Nehum." Merlin said softly. "Ask him for some tears, then ask him if he would be willing to transport me home so I can get the Polyjuice Rock and come back."
Godric did and when Nehum arrived, he gladly gave up a few tears, which were dropped right into Salazar's mouth, then he took Merlin home.

Godric waited with baited breath in the silent Chamber, with the only sound being Nora and Emeralda's heavy breathing. When Salazar began to stir, Godric grinned broadly at his longtime friend.

"You do realize you're bald, right? When I last saw you at my funeral, you had hair."

Salazar blinked a few times, and seemed to look around to get his bearings, but then he grinned at Godric.

"Witches seem to like it. Please tell me it worked and that I don't have to do that again."

"It did you baldheaded fool." Godric said, wiping tears off his cheeks.

"Godric, are you crying?"

"Of course not." He scoffed, helping Salazar to his feet. "It is rather dusty down here you know. Keep this blanket wrapped around you. We had to vanish your clothes when you changed. Peaky!"

"Master called for Peaky?" The little elf said, appearing with a small crack.

The elf's eyes widened as he looked around the Chamber and spotted Emeralda, but Godric chuckled.

"Everything's all right, so don't be alarmed. Will you please pop into Salazar's dorm and fetch him some clothes. He will need them when he changes back. Also, tell Blaise, if he is alone, that everything is all right and we will talk to him later."

"Of course Master." He said with a slight bow, and popped away.

"Oh my joints are stiff, and it feels funny to walk around." Salazar said, sitting down on a nearby large rock. "Emeralda, are you all right? Nora, where are you?"

"Master, I thought I killed you. Are you sure you're all right?"

"Speaker, don't ever do that again! You scared me silly! I had to leave you because you changed so suddenly!"

Salazar chuckled. "I am all right my dears. I assure you." He said, getting up and trying to walk around a bit more.

A few minutes later Merlin appeared, as Peaky popped back in. Peaky said Blaise felt better knowing everything was all right, and handed Godric Salazar's clothes before popping away again. Merlin asked how he was feeling and Salazar said he felt fine, other than his stiff joints.

"And your head?" Merlin asked, peering at the scar.

"It feels fine. Better actually." He said with a sigh. "Is the scar still there?"

"It is, and it will be there forever. It's a dark scar Salazar. You know they can't be gotten rid of, or covered up by using magic."

"True." He answered with a nod.
"We must get back to the main part of the castle. No doubt Minerva is in a right state, along with everyone else." Merlin said, handing him the tiny black Polyjuice Rock.

"I find it best if you place it in the crook of your arm, behind your elbow. It hurts the least there, and it's easily accessible." Godric advised.

Salazar nodded and cut his arm using his wand. He placed the rock in the crook of his arm, and they watched as he turned into a much bigger copy of his former 'Harry Potter' self.

"I had hoped we could do this over the summer, so we could use the excuse of eating right and a growth spurt." Merlin said with a frown. "But I guess using phoenix tears as a scape goat will work just fine."

Salazar and Godric laughed as Salazar quickly changed into his clothes, though he had to enlarge them so that they would fit somewhat properly. Then they said good bye to Emeralda, who went back to the statue, and scooped up Nora before heading up to the main part of the castle.

When they reached the hospital wing, Salazar found himself engulfed in the arms of a very thankful Molly Weasley. As soon as she let him go, Poppy scolded him about playing with giant dangerous snakes and made Salazar climb into a bed, much to the amusement of Merlin and Nicholas.

Albus was sitting in a chair with the blackened diary in his lap, and glaring at everyone. He eyed Salazar curiously and took in his bigger frame, then stood to make his way over to them.

"Harry, what happened down in the Chamber?" He asked in his best grandfatherly tone. "I've only been told bits and pieces." He added as he glared at Nicholas.

Everyone in the room suddenly became quiet and glanced at Salazar, who looked up and smiled at Albus, which seemed to shock the Headmaster.

"Well, I'll tell you." He said happily, and Minerva snorted.

"Hush Minerva, this ought to be good." Poppy scolded, leaning in towards Salazar with a grin.

Salazar really wanted to kiss the two witches, and vowed to do so sometime during the summer now that he had his normal form back.

"When Mr. Nilrem, Mr. Flamel, Gordy, and I entered the Chamber, we found Ron out cold, and Hermione and Neville tied up with ropes Voldemort had conjured using Ron's wand. After I summoned an elf, Voldemort and I had some tea and biscuits and talked about taking over the world." He said nonchalantly, while taking a sip of water from a glass Poppy had handed him. Then he continued.

"It was agreeable to both of us, but unfortunately I'm a Dark Lord that works alone, so I killed him when his back was turned. He was an awfully nice fellow though." He said with a large grin, then he glared at the Albus. "This could have been prevented if you had just given us the diary in the first place!" He shouted suddenly.

Albus glared at him and Ron looked at him with a horrified expression, but everyone else started laughing…except Severus.

"POTTER! You will speak to the Headmaster in a proper manner!" He exclaimed.

"Harry, I don't appreciate your tone. Now tell me what really happened." Albus said sharply.
Salazar went on to tell him what happened, though he altered the events a great deal, but Albus seemed satisfied with what he had been told. Salazar learned how Hermione and Neville ended up in the Chamber. Apparently Ron had attacked them in one of the corridors, stunned them, and dragged them into the chamber. Ron kept apologizing over and over and asked if he was in trouble, but Albus and his parents assured him he wasn't.

Albus looked Salazar over and commented on his new appearance. He asked Salazar how it happened, but Salazar just shrugged his shoulders and said the change happened after he ingested the phoenix tears offered by Nehum. Merlin spoke up and said the phoenix tears likely reversed the effects of the abuse Salazar had suffered from the Dursleys for ten years. This caused Albus to glare mutinously at Merlin, and then the Headmaster stomped out of the room.

Poppy began her second round of examinations after that. She gave Ron a dreamless sleep potion, and Severus left to go get Blaise so that Nicholas could secure the children's minds. Salazar told the children that he was slightly angry with them for not telling him that they knew, but in all honesty, he couldn't fault them. He and Godric hadn't exactly been careful with some of the things they said and did, and he was actually surprised that they hadn't figured it out long before they had.

He was more angry with himself than he was with them.

Salazar did let everyone know that the basilisk venom had worked, and said now that he had his normal form back, and the horcrux out of his head, he felt loads better than he had in a long time. This eased Poppy's mind greatly and she insisted that he allow her to preform detailed scans and diagnostics tests to be sure.

He allowed her to without much fuss.

It was late when they all finally fell asleep in the hospital wing. Molly and Arthur stayed, since all of their children, except Ginny who had been sent back to her dorm when Ron was brought in, were in the hospital wing.

Neville, Hermione, Blaise, and Godric were sent back to their houses, but promised to return first thing the next morning.

Salazar fell asleep that night with a satisfied smile on his face.

Sirius showed up the next morning because he had heard what happened and was 'concerned about his Godson'. He let Albus have an earful about not giving the diary up sooner and thought about pressing charges against Albus for neglect, until Remus 'talked some sense into him' at Albus's request.

Albus wasn't seen much that day, but everyone guessed he was avoiding Molly, who had been so distraught the night before that she couldn't think straight. That morning however, she was rearing to go. Poppy offered her some howler paper, and Molly finally got to vent her frustrations.

The howler could be heard all throughout Hogwarts.

Dobby showed up to check in and see if everyone was alright, though the little elf had bandages wrapped around his hands and feet, and it looked like he had been kicked into a wall several times. When Salazar asked him what happened, Dobby told him that he got caught listening to his family's conversations and was punished for it. Merlin got very angry at that, and talked Dobby into taking him to Malfoy Manor.

When they got back, Dobby flung himself at Salazar's feet and pledged to serve only 'Mr. Harry
Salazar Potter Slytherin sir'. Merlin told everyone that he had obliviated Dobby's existence from Lucius and Narcissa's minds, thereby keeping Dobby alive seeing as the bond between the Malfoy's and Dobby had not been officially broken.

Salazar said he would 'take care' of Draco later with a confundus charm, and asked Nicholas not to mention anything about it to Perenelle.

Nicholas just laughed.

The rest of the year passed somewhat smoothly after that. Albus avoided Salazar, but tried his hardest to convince Hermione, Neville, and Blaise that there was something wrong with Harry and they needed to avoid him.

They brushed him off, much to Albus's displeasure.

Albus didn't really know what to do with 'Gordy Roffin' though. He wanted to believe the young Slytherin lad was dark, but the boy was bonded to a phoenix.

Albus was at a total loss about that, and decided to keep a close eye on him.

Ron was soon back to his old self, though Arthur asked Merlin to come by The Burrow in order to check on him and Ginny at the start of the summer, to which Merlin agreed. Ron still didn't like the two 'slimy Slytherins', but he did say that maybe 'Potter' wasn't so bad after all, seeing as he had saved him from 'You-Know-Who'.

This gave Salazar a small glimmer of hope for the boy.

Exams came and went and everyone once again received at least an 'A' or above, thanks to Salazar and Godric's study groups for both years. Colin and Luna had joined Godric's, along with several other first years, and both Founders were proud that all of the children had done so well.

On the last day of school, Salazar was called to Albus's office an hour before the train was to depart. He sighed as he glared at the door in front of him, and knocked.

"Come in." Albus called out loudly.

Salazar walked in and sat in one of the chairs Albus motioned towards. He was immediately on his guard when he realized that on one but the two of them were in the room.

"You wanted to see me Headmaster?" Salazar asked innocently.

"Yes Harry. I called you in here to inquire about your living arrangements this summer." Albus said, leaning back in his chair.

Salazar raised an eyebrow and gave the Headmaster a calculating gaze. "Well sir, as you know I'll be living with Sirius this summer. He has bought a house, though he won't tell me where it is yet. He says it is a surprise."

"Yes, about that. I don't think you should live with Sirius. I believe that he is not the best person to raise a child right now, seeing he has only been out of Azkaban a short while."

Salazar refrained from rolling his eyes, but he did chuckle a bit. "Sirius knows that, which is why Mr. and Mrs. Flamel have agreed to help him and me to adjust, so it won't only be the two of us."
"I see." Albus said. "I thought as much, but Harry, I'm afraid I must insist in other arrangements. I'm afraid you will have to go back to the Dursleys."

"Why?" Salazar asked in disbelief. He knew the blood wards had fallen, so there was no need for him to go back there. Not that the blood wards were of any use to him to begin with.

"Because I just need you to." Albus stated.

Salazar narrowed his eyes and tightened his grip on the wand that was in his pocket.

"I'm afraid that is not going to happen Headmaster. I'll be going now, and I will certainly be letting everyone know about this conversation." He said, and stood up to make his way to the door.

"I'm afraid I can't allow you to do that Harry." Albus said, and he jumped out of his seat with surprising speed.

Salazar turned back towards him in just enough time to see Albus brandish his wand.

"Oblivat…"

With a flick of his wandless hand Salazar disarmed Albus, then he brought his wand up and cried, "Stupefy!"

Albus's wand skittered across the floor and he fell over backwards and slumped in his chair.

The old Headmaster's portraits were in an uproar, and many of them, including Phineas Black, were out right cursing him, but Salazar paid them no mind.

He was fuming.

He picked up Albus's wand and snapped it in half. Then he quickly scribbled a note, laid the broken wand on top of it, and left.

When Minerva revived him later that day after the train had left, Albus stared at the broken wand in horror, and read the note with shaking hands.

If you EVER try to obliviate me again, something much worse than a broken wand will happen to you. Have a pleasant summer.

Sincerely,

Harry James Potter

Chapter End Notes

Woo hoo! Another year down, five to go! I do hope you all enjoyed the chapter. Salazar is going to have a bit of fun this summer, seeing as he now has his adult form back!

LOL
Also, what kind of repercussions will the snapping of the elder wand cause in the future? Time will tell my lovelies! *grins wickedly*

I know you all may be wondering about third year, but the next chapter will contain what happened during it, and then we will jump right into forth year, which i know a lot of you are looking forward to. So with that, i bid you all good day (or night depending on where you are in the world), and ask you kindly to leave a review if you are willing.

Thank you to everyone who has bookmarked, commented, and subscribed, and thanks also go out to my guest readers who have been keeping up with the story! I love you guys, and will see you in the next chapter!

***THIS OFFICIALLY MARKS THE END OF SECOND YEAR***
Wow, a few people were not happy about the last chapter. I was surprised at how many people left, but what can i say? I guess they just didn't like it. To make the last chapter a little more clear, Hermione and Neville were not afraid of the sixteen year old Voldemort because of a number of factors. They knew Salazar would find and rescue them, and they knew that the basilisk wasn't a threat to them. They also knew that Salazar was a lot more powerful than Riddle.

Riddle was just a memory, and he had been disarmed as soon as they knew he had Ron's wand, which only emboldened the Gryffindors knowing that Godric was there as well.

Anyway, I'm sorry to see those people go, but there isn't anything I can do about it, except to carry on. However, I do thank everyone who is reading this chapter for still sticking with me. It means so much to me!

With the combining of canon's second and third year, I didn't feel the need to drag this third year out with (too much) mindless drivel, but I did want to give you all a sense of where everyone is and what they are doing. I know it feels a little rushed, but there isn't a whole lot to say about third year.

I do hope you all enjoy the chapter though!

***THIS OFFICIALLY MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THIRD YEAR***

Chapter 35

Third Year in a Nutshell

"Can it be fixed Gregorovitch?" Albus asked nervously, as he sat in the man's warm and lavishly decorated house. "Please, you have to try."

The old retired wandmaker stared at the two pieces of the Elder Wand in shock, but he shook his head sadly.

"I'm sorry Dumbledore." He said hoarsely. "The wand is lost forever. I can't believe the boy snapped it."

"He didn't know what it was."

"Clearly." Gregorovitch replied with a nod. "But Albus, even if I could fix it, it wouldn't answer to you anymore. It's a lost cause my friend. I know what it took you to get this wand out of the hands of Grindelwald, but the wand died the day Harry Potter snapped it."
"But you were working on a way to duplicate it." Albus pressed hopefully. "Surely you made some headway."

"I never did. Grindelwald stole it before I could truly study it. I'm sorry Albus. I can make a fittingly powerful wand for you, but it won't be the Elder Wand."

Albus sighed heavily and nodded. "All right. Thank you Gregorovitch. For now I'll get a temporary wand from you."

"Very well." The wandmaker replied.

As Gregorovitch shuffled out of the room, Albus leaned back in his chair and stared into the flame of a nearby candle. He was angry and sad over the loss of the wand, but he was more than angry at 'Harry Potter', and vowed to do something about the boy.

Slowly but surely, Albus began to form a new plan to take down 'The Dark Lord-in-training'.

"I warned you!" Perenelle laughed as she took in Minerva's flushed cheeks and bright smile when the witch sat down at the table. "He's a devil with a silver tongue, and has made many a witch swoon."

Minerva giggled slightly and leaned over towards her. "He's also a really good dancer."

"That he is." Perenelle chuckled as she nodded her head. "But his singing is horrible."

Minerva laughed loudly, and they watched as Salazar began twirling a grinning Lily Potter around the dance floor.

It had been a month since the school year ended and Salazar and Godric had just got back from Rio. Harry's birthday party had been a week ago with all his school friends, but Merlin insisted that they have another birthday party at his house, so everyone else could celebrate it as well.

The real Harry hadn't minded that idea at all.

The garden surrounding Merlin's small cottage had been transformed into a party area with a dance floor, and everyone was smiling and laughing as they watched people dancing with whomever wanted to dance.

Fred, George, Percy, and Arthur were in attendance, though Ron, Ginny, and Molly had stayed home, but Molly did send Lily, James, and Harry her good wishes.

Hermione, Blaise, and Neville were there as well, and Harry seemed to be getting along with all the other children. In fact, Hermione was currently giggling and grinning because Harry was leading her, somewhat awkwardly, around the dance floor.

As the song ended and the next one began, Lily made her way over to Minerva and Perenelle as Salazar began dancing with Andromeda Tonks.

"He is so very happy that he has his adult form back." Lily said breathlessly as she sat down next to Minerva.

"He seems to be." Perenelle said. "I can't began to imagine what it has been like for him to be trapped in a child's body."

"Indeed." Minerva agreed. "But he seems to be catching up."
"Oh he is. I assure you." Godric chuckled from the next table over, as James, Sirius, and Remus laughed loudly. "I think he has flirted with every witch he's come into contact with."

"I heard that!" Salazar cried as he and a laughing Andy passed close to the tables.

Godric chuckled, but then something else caught his eye. "Oh dear. Fred, George, and Harry are standing by the cake. I better go rescue it."

"Least we all end up with green hair or something." Lily laughed, as she watched the boys closely.

It wasn't green hair they all ended up with, but bright blue hair, which caused Tonks to laugh loudly and Hermione to scold them through her giggles.

However, as dinner was served that evening it was actually Severus who shocked everyone by standing to up to make a small speech. He stood up with a glass of brandy in one hand and looked around at everyone with bright, shining eyes.

"As you all know, I'm not one draw attention to myself. I mostly prefer to remain in the shadows and observe my surroundings closely, but I figured I would step out of those shadows for a brief moment to make a toast."

"Is it because you're a little tipsy Severus?" Salazar asked with a chuckle.

"Probably." He drawled with a lopsided grin plastered to his face, which sent Lily into a fit of giggles. "As I was saying, I'd like to make a toast to good friends, family, and…forgiveness." He said as he nodded slightly in Sirius's direction. "I have held onto grudges long enough and I am ready to move on. I have made terrible mistakes in my own past and have wanted forgiveness for them, so it is not fair that I NOT afford the same to others. However, if Black, Lupin, and Potter turn my hair blue again, I will retaliate in kind." He added, then he sat back down.

Everyone burst out laughing, while shouting 'Here, Here' at the top of their lungs, and clinking their glasses together.

"Sev, just so you know, it wasn't James, Sirius, and Remus who spiked the cake. It was Fred, George, and Harry." Lily said loudly. "And in case you haven't noticed, we all have blue hair." She laughed.

Severus waved his hand around as if to dismiss the last part of what she said, but turned a stern eye towards the twins and Harry.

"One hundred points from Gryffindor, and detention until you graduate!" He shouted with a slight hiccup, causing everyone to burst out laughing again.

"We love you Uncle Sev!" Harry shouted with a grin.

"I love you all too Harry." Severus answered as he grinned at everyone. "And I really do mean that."

That declaration earned him a kiss on the cheek from Lily, and brotherly hug from a very happy and forgiven Sirius.

The summer soon drew to a close, and the new school year began. Compared to the last two years, things were quiet for the most part. Remus had returned as Defense Professor, and everyone was happy to have the same teacher for (mostly) two years in a row. Classes were a bit more complicated than in the two previous years, so they all had their work cut out for them.
Potions class went a little more smoothly, though Severus had to keep up his spiteful appearance. Neville finally shed his fear of the Potions Master, and finally realized that the man didn't hate him.

Aside from their core classes, they had settled on their electives. Salazar had picked Care of Magical Creatures and Runes, Hermione and Blaise chose Creatures, Runes, and Arithmancy, and Neville chose Creatures, Runes, and Muggle Studies.

Runes was pretty boring for him, but the other three found it fascinating. Professor Babbling was an excellent teacher, and Salazar had nothing bad to say about her teaching style. She even complimented him on his display with the butterflies last year, and admitted to secretly hoping that he would end up in her class. Professor Babbling asked Salazar where he had learned it, and his standard answer of 'I read it in a book' had not only made Hermione, Blaise, and Neville grin broadly, but caused the stunned Professor to remain speechless for several seconds.

By now though, everyone else in the class wasn't surprised in the least, seeing as they had already gotten used to 'Harry' just knowing things.

Hagrid was their teacher for Creatures, seeing as the previous Professor had retired. Salazar wasn't really impressed with Hagrid's teaching style, but he did have to admit that Hagrid knew all about his animals. Draco was also in this class as well, and was very vocal with his displeasure about Hagrid being a Professor. He had sworn loudly in the common room one night that he was going to get the man fired.

Speaking of Draco, Salazar had hoped that the boy had grown up a little over the summer, seeing as Draco had become a teenager, but luck wasn't with him. Draco was still the same snot nosed little brat, spouting off about his Daddy's money and influence, and Salazar found himself having to bite his tongue on more than one occasion.

There was one boy who did seem to grow up a little bit though, and that was Ron. After the events of last year, Merlin had gone to The Burrow and worked with him and Ginny. While Ginny was still a little afraid of her brother, she felt better after Merlin talked to her about what happened, and as she watched Ron after the incident, she began to understand that those events were not going to be repeated.

Ron's treatment had been a little more complicated, but Merlin sorted it out in the same way he had helped Sirius. The damage Riddle had done was extensive, but it was correctable. With Molly and Arthur's permission, Merlin entered Ron's mind to find the lingering trauma, and set about helping the lad in correcting the issues. As with Sirius, a lot of healing was up to Ron. Merlin wouldn't force Ron to accept things, nor would he use any potions or spells to force his point of view, but he did lead Ron in a direction that would help him.

This therapy had helped Ron, and while he wasn't fully healed by the time school started again, he was almost there. For the first month or so of school, Merlin came up on the weekends to work with the boy, which also helped tremendously.

Ron still didn't care much for 'Harry' and 'Gordy', but he seemed to come to terms that his family was fond of them, and he began to accept that. Especially since 'Harry' had saved his life.

Now that Hermione, Blaise, and Neville knew everything, Salazar and Godric were a little more relaxed around them. Salazar felt better that he didn't have to lie to them anymore, and truth be told, he felt a little more free, seeing as he and Godric didn't have to sneak around anymore.

It was the middle of November when something noteworthy finally happened. Salazar, Godric, and
Blaise were sitting in the common room studying when Helena floated through the wall.

Everyone in the common room looked up in shock because The Ghost of Ravenclaw Tower had never entered the Slytherin common room to their knowledge. Salazar looked up from his Charms paper and watched as she approached him.

"I need to speak with you both privately." She said sadly, glancing at Salazar and Godric.

Blaise looked up questioningly. "Is everything all right?" He asked.

"We will let you know." Salazar assured him, before following Helena and Godric into an unoccupied corner of the common room.

After throwing up a privacy ward, Salazar and Godric looked up at Helena curiously.

"What is it Helena? You look upset by something." Godric said.

"I am ashamed." She said shaking her head as a ghostly tear ran down her cheek. "After learning what was happening with Ron Weasley last year I have been afraid to speak up, but I cannot in good conscience keep quiet any longer."

"Keep quiet about what?" Salazar asked.

Helena turned towards him and shook her head. "There is another one here Uncle. It has been here for many, many years, but it is inactive. It too is a horcrux, and it is all my fault." She said sadly.


"Riddle came to me many years ago and inquired about Mother's diadem. I told him the story of how I had stolen it and hid it in Albania, but it was only years later that I learned he went to get it. I told him that story many years ago when he was a boy in school. He was very charming and polite and seemed to really care."

"I imagine he did." Salazar said dryly, but then he sighed. "How do you know it's here?"

"He came back several years ago, maybe twenty or so. I knew who he had become, so I followed him to make sure he didn't harm anyone, and I saw him hide the horcrux diadem in Mother's Room of Hidden things. I could feel the evil coming from it and then it made me shiver terribly." She said, but then she smirked slightly. "The disgusting boy seemed so proud that he had defiled it, but I had the last laugh Uncle. He never knew it was the junk copy Mother had made as a replacement."

"I was wondering about that." Salazar said with a nod. "When I opened the pillar in first year, I saw your Mother's diadem in its rightful place, and yes, Helga and I took a cue from Rowena and made copies of our own artifacts. The copies are not valuable at all."

"It was many years after I died that I learned of the copy." She admitted, suddenly returning to her sorrowful state. "I had thrown my life away for junk."

"We never told anyone that we had made the copies." Salazar said, shaking his head. "I wish you had come to me during that time Helena."

"Or me my dear." Godric said sadly as he shook his head. "You really should have come to one of us."

"I was too proud at the time." She said in a mournful tone. "But I wish to right my past wrongs." She
"Do you know where it is in the room?" Godric asked.

"No sir, I'm afraid I don't know." She answered.

"All right. It seems we need to go looking for it. Thank you for telling us this Helena." Salazar said with a nod.

"You're welcome Uncle." She said with a nod. Then she turned, and disappeared into the wall.

Godric and Salazar looked at one another and sighed.

"I'm getting tired of cleaning up that boy's messes." Salazar growled. "He dares to hide a thing so vile in our school."

"Indeed. So what's the plan?" Godric asked.

"You let Blaise know what is happening, and I'll go find Severus and Minerva. As much as it pains me to say, Albus is the Headmaster and needs to be told about this right away, least he somehow figures out the fake diadem is a horcrux at a later date. It will only raise questions." Salazar said with a sigh, but then he continued.

"In the meantime, I will speak with Emeralda to see if she is willing to let us use more of her venom to destroy yet another horcrux. I may see if she is willing to let us milk her venom for future use, though I don't know what container will be able to hold basilisk venom because it is so corrosive."

"You'll need something made from goblin silver." Godric said. "Our swords are the closest thing that comes to mind right now."

Salazar shook his head. "No, they are too big for this purpose, and cannot be easily concealed." He said, tapping his nose in thought.

"All right then." Godric sighed, staring at the ceiling in thought. "I do have a small dagger given to me by my great-great-grandfather. It is also made from goblin silver, and it's at home."

"That will work." Salazar said with a nod, but then he smirked. "Count on you to have weapons of all shorts laying all over the place."

Godric grinned and chuckled. "I learned long ago that to NOT have a back-up weapon within reach could mean the difference between life and death."

"Indeed my friend." Salazar laughed, patting Godric on the shoulder. "You go talk to Blaise because the young man is about to burst with curiosity, and go get your dagger. I'll go find Severus and Minerva."

"Sounds good to me." Godric nodded as he canceled the privacy ward, and headed towards Blaise.

Ever since the new school year started, Albus had avoided Harry as much as possible. Especially after the angry chewing out he had received from Sirius, Nicholas, and Perenelle. Harry had apparently told them what had happened on the last day of school, and Nicholas made it a point to say that he had already secured the boy's memory of what happened, just in case Albus tried obliterating him again. Nicholas also brought up the fact that the memory would be used against
Albus if he decided to press charges against the lad, or tried to expel him for attacking the Headmaster.

Sirius made it known that he didn't want his Godson anywhere near the Headmaster alone, and said that Albus as not allowed to call Harry to his office unless it was for official school related business. Albus was not allowed to 'chat' with Harry in the corridors, and if Albus needed to talk to Harry, Sirius was to be notified immediately so that he could supervise the meeting. If he was not available for some reason, then Remus would stand in his place. The meetings were to be attended by at least one other person, preferably Minerva since she was Deputy Headmistress, and Severus was not allowed to take her place if she was unavailable, seeing as Sirius didn't trust the 'greasy haired git'.

These demands had not set well with Albus, but he had no other choice and had to comply. However, that did not mean Albus could not go forward with the plans he had made over the summer. After Gregorovitch told him that the Elder Wand could not be repaired, a plan began to form in Albus's mind, and ever since school started, he had been enacting that plan.

He had already started turning Harry's Professors against the boy the previous year, and now he began telling them that Harry was a lot worse than he had previously feared. He had begun quietly filling the minds of Professors, Ministry officials, and anyone else who would listen, with tales of how Harry showed off his magical talents. Albus told them Harry gloated over the fact that he was more magically gifted than his peers, and that he was arrogant, self-centered, and a show-off who cared not for anyone but himself. Sure, Harry portrayed himself to be a loving, kind, caring friend, but in reality he was anything but that.

Harry was just like Voldemort in Albus's mind, and no one could sway him otherwise.

However, Albus was not doing this to be malicious or petty, he was doing this for everyone's own good. He wanted to protect them from the inevitable fact that Harry would kill them all in the end. Harry was dark and everyone needed to see that. In the end, Harry would die. He would need to die in order for Voldemort to be destroyed forever, and if everyone would just accept that fact now, it would be easier on them in the end.

In the meantime though, Albus vowed to watch the boy closely... very closely.

Albus's thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a knock on his door, and he looked up in confusion.

"Come in!" He cried.

To his shock and surprise, Minerva, Remus, Harry, and Severus, who looked like he'd rather be someplace else, walked in.

"Albus we have a very distressing situation." Minerva said gravely, then she turned to Salazar. "Go ahead Mr. Potter, tell him what you told me."

Salazar nodded slightly, before taking a deep breath. "Gordy and I were sitting in the common room studying when The Grey Lady floated through the wall. She approached us and asked to speak with us. She told Gordy and I about another horcrux that is inside the castle. She said it is her Mother's diadem, and that Voldemort hid it in her Mother's Room of Hidden Things. She said she came to us because I destroyed the last one."

"Albus, do you know what that means?" Minerva asked. "I've never heard of a Room of Hidden Things, and...a diadem? Could The Grey Lady be talking about Rowena Ravenclaw's diadem?"
"The Grey Lady is Helena Ravenclaw, Rowena Ravenclaw's daughter." Albus said, after recovering from the shock of learning that another horcrux inside the castle. "And yes, I do believe that Helena Ravenclaw is referring to Rowena's diadem, but I saw the diadem in the golden pillar Harry opened during first year. It was thought to be lost to time."

"The Grey Lady said that the diadem horcrux is a fake and nothing more than junk. The real one is in the pillar." Salazar said.

"If what you are telling us is the truth Harry," Albus said sharply, while glancing at Salazar. "Then it is a good thing the real one is hidden. However, this poses a problem. The Room of Hidden Things as never been found, at least to my knowledge."

"So what do we do Headmaster?" Severus asked.

"I will search the castle thoroughly, and speak with The Grey Lady in order to find it. In the meantime, Harry, you are not to utter a word of this to anyone. Do I make myself clear? You are to stay away from this."

"Yes sir." Salazar said with a polite nod, while trying to refrain from rolling his eyes.

"Very good." Albus stated curtly. "You are all dismissed, and thank you for bringing it to my attention. I will handle it from now on."

They all filed out of the office, but when they got into the corridor, Salazar snorted.

"Well, Albus searching the castle should keep him busy and out of our hair long enough to find and destroy it. That is, if he is telling the truth about not knowing where the Room of Hidden Things is located."

When do you want to start searching?" Remus asked.

"This weekend." Salazar answered. "It will give me time to speak with Emeralda, and get some of her venom absorbed into Godric's dagger. I know for a fact that The Room of Hidden Things has collected mounds of junk over the last thousand years from students hiding things in it, so it really needs a good cleaning, so I'll need all hands on deck. I'll be teaching the children the vanishing charm for the rest of the week, and they can help us search for it. It must be done carefully though, least we accidently vanish the horcrux, and we must work in pairs. I don't know what kind of spells Voldemort put on this thing, so remember, be extremely careful."

"What of him asking The Grey Lady where the room is?" Minerva asked.

"She won't tell him anything. Helena knows that Albus is trying to turn many people against me, and she doesn't like it."

"Good then. Maybe she will steer him in a different direction." Severus said with a nod.

"She is her Mother's daughter." Salazar said with a grin. "Don't underestimate a Ravenclaw because they can be worse than a Slytherin at times."

This caused everyone to burst out laughing, before they headed off in different directions.

Emeralda had been more than willing to let Salazar collect a few drops of venom from her so that the dagger could be used, but the search for the horcrux was excruciatingly slow. They all worked hard every weekend, stopping only to eat and work on writing school papers, grading said papers, and
homework if need be. Nicholas, Merlin, Sirius, and Perenelle were brought into the room by Nehum so that Albus wouldn't get suspicious because of their presence, and they worked extra hard when the Professors and the children were unable to help.

Salazar had been right in saying that the room had mounds of junk stacked everywhere. In fact, it almost seemed to have been an understatement. Working with dragon hide gloves to protect their hands from anything nasty they might encounter, everyone worked in pairs with every child having an adult working with them.

Blaise was paired Severus, Neville with Sirius, Hermione with Perenelle, Fred with Merlin, George with Nicholas, and everyone else paired with whomever was available. Remus suggested that they all start at the front and work their way to the back, and this seemed to work out rather well.

They searched through the small piles first, leaving no box, trunk, or cabinet unopened and unsearched as they vanished everything they came across. The only thing that they kept were books, which would be donated by an 'anonymous' source to the Hogwarts library. The Professors said they would look through them to see if they were cursed before they were donated, and any dark arts books would be split up among Salazar, Severus, and Merlin.

However, most of the stuff they came across they vanished without a second thought. Old rotted out trunks, mattresses, lamps, tables, chairs, and potions of unknown substances that not even Severus would go near. Rotten food, dead rats, an old broken vanishing cabinet, phials filled with blood, melted cauldrons, various cursed items, and other discarded things of a dubious nature. There was even a life sized copy of Severus that someone had animated, and mutilated, to the point it was almost unrecognizable.

Needless to say, Severus had been very shaken up after that.

When the small piles at the front of the room were taken care of, they levitated the tops off of the larger mounds of junk, and spread the things out on a cleared section of the floor. This made tackling the near ceiling high mounds a little easier, and they kept right on working.

Christmas came and went with no signs of the horcrux anywhere, but there was still nearly half of the room to search through. Albus was still searching the castle trying to find the Room of Hidden Things, which only made everyone else chuckle. Albus had asked Helena, Baron, and The Fat Friar if they knew where the room was, but they played dumb, and seeing a Nearly Headless Nick knew nothing about the room, he was clueless. Albus even asked Peeves, but the poltergeist only threw handfuls of chalk at the Headmaster, before flying away and cackling loudly.

It was the second weekend in February when Blaise suddenly, and happily, shouted, "I think I found it!"

"Please dear Merlin don't touch it!" Salazar shouted from somewhere deep in the room.

"I have no intention of touching it Salazar!" Merlin shouted from somewhere else.

This only caused everyone to burst out laughing.

"Oh shut it old man. You know what I meant." Salazar chuckled, as he rounded a pile of junk and saw the others standing around Blaise.

"It's the diadem Salazar." Godric confirmed with a nod, as he pointed at a small wooden box.

Inside the box, the fake gold diadem was perched on a dark piece of red velvet cloth, and everyone
eyed it warily as if it was going to jump up and bite them. Salazar began casting a few spells around
the object, and sighed heavily.

"It's a horcrux." He announced as he glared at the diadem, but then he turned to the others. "All
right. Blaise, you did a very good job, and so I thank you, but now I need all of you to go stand in
that far corner in the front of the room. I have no idea what this soul piece will do, or say, so just try
to ignore it."

Everyone nodded and they began to quickly shuffle towards the corner.

"I say we take it to a nice cleared out spot so that I can stab it." Godric said as he unsheathed the
dagger that was attached to his belt.

"Good idea." Salazar said as he levitated it to a clearer spot. "All right Godric, make sure you are
quick." He added.

Nicholas, Severus, Sirius, and Merlin, who didn't shuffle to the corner, along with Salazar backed up
a few steps. Godric took several deep breaths, and brought the dagger down hard right in the middle
of the large sapphire gemstone.

The sound was like a cannon blast, and several people yelped and screamed when the massive
shrieking black cloud erupted out of the diadem. Godric and the others were blasted backwards and
landed hard on their backs, as the black mass filled the void above them. A twisted mangled face
appeared in the cloud and it snarled and glared at them before one last scream erupted from it, then it
vanished in a violent puff of smoke.

Everyone shakily got to their feet and stumbled about for a moment, before letting out large sighs of
relief.

"Well that was rather exciting!" Sirius exclaimed with a happy grin, causing everyone to chuckle.

"Speak for yourself Sirius." Minerva said with a disapproving frown, as she and the others made
their way back towards Salazar.

"Gordy, are you ok?" Neville asked, looking at him with concern.

"Yeah, I think so. I got blasted in the face by that damned thing and I saw stuff I'd rather forget."

"To Poppy we go!" Salazar said gleefully as he grinned at his best friend. "Better you than me she
scolds this time." He added, as he helped Godric to his feet.

Godric laughed and whopped Salazar upside the head. "Shut up." He said with a grin, causing
everyone else to chuckle.

"What about the rest of the junk?" Hermione asked, as she looked around the room.

Three quarters of it was completely cleared, but the last little bit was still a mess.

"I'll take care of that." Merlin said with a smile.

With a wave of his wand, all the remaining hidden books zoomed out of their places and joined the
others that were stacked in up in a large pile. Then with another wave, the rest of the stuff vanished
leaving the Room of Hidden Things completely empty, except for the books.

"I suppose we can look through the books later." Remus said eyeing the large pile.
"Indeed. It would give us something to do for the rest of the year." Severus said. "What of the horcrux?"

"We give it to Albus." Salazar said, shrugging his shoulders. "It would give him something to ponder over. I'll leave the rest of you out of it, but Godric, Nicholas, Merlin, and myself can take the blame."

"After all, you are an arrogant, attention-seeking brat, who likes to show-off." Severus said with a smirk.

"That I am." Salazar said with a large grin. "Now, let's get Godric to Poppy, so I can take pleasure in the fact that her scolding isn't directed at me for a change."

This caused Godric to groan, but everyone else chuckled as they headed out the door.

Albus was livid.

Harry had apparently disobeyed his direct order and told those two meddlesome fools about the horcrux in the school. On top of that, not only had Nicholas known where the Room of Hidden Things was located, but he joined Harry and the Roffin boy in their search for it!

Albus gritted his teeth and snarled at his office door the quartet had just walked out of.

How dare they?! He thought, as he glared at the blackened diadem sitting on his desk.

Oh how Albus wanted to find it himself, but luck had not been on his side. Over the years, Helena had forgotten where exactly the Room of Hidden Things was located, (a side effect of being dead she had told him), and none of the other ghosts could remember either. Peeves hadn't wanted to be any help what-so-ever either, and the elves had also been less than helpful in his search.

This was due to a very devoted house elf telling the Hogwarts elves that Albus had been trying to slander 'Mr. Harry Potter sir', which caused them all to frown upon the Headmaster. It was also why said elf kept secretly spiking Albus's tea with a babbling potion, causing him to babble nonsense at any given time of the day.

Not that he didn't already do that on most days.

Still though, Dobby stood still as a statue and grinned at the clearly annoyed and irate Headmaster, as the man began to drink his afternoon tea.

Winter faded in to spring, which turned into early summer as the year came to an end. Albus was suspicious of the large donation of books to the library, but Madam Pince scolded him and threw him out of the library when he tried to confiscate and study them for dark curses. She had assured him they had already been checked, and wouldn't stand for them to be out of her sight until she had cataloged and put them all away.

Exams came and went with the children doing a little better this year than previous years. Everyone in Godric and Salazar's study groups had actually gotten an 'E' or above. Neville shocked everyone, and himself when he walked away with an 'E' in potions. Salazar said it was because Neville knew Severus wasn't out to kill him anymore.

Albus didn't try any of his usual end-of-year tricks to get Salazar to go where he wanted him to for the summer, so as the Hogwarts Express pulled into King's Cross Station, Salazar grinned as he caught sight of Nicholas, Perenelle, and Sirius standing on the platform.
Better safe than sorry. Salazar thought as he said goodbye to the children as they departed with their families. I just hope that next year is as calm and uneventful as this year has been.

*A/N* Will Salazar get his wish? I doubt it! *grins* Anyway, I hope you all enjoyed it, and now there is one less horcrux to worry about! So with that, we say goodbye to third year, and turn our sights to fourth year. I know many of you have questions about the Triwizard Tournament, but they will all be answered soon!

***THIS OFFICIALLY MARKS THE END OF THIRD YEAR***
Arrest at the Quidditch World Cup

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

***THIS CHAPTER OFFICIALLY MARKS THE BEGINNING OF FOURTH YEAR***

Chapter 36

Arrest at the Quidditch World Cup

Salazar sighed, pinched the bridge of his nose, and glared at the six people who were currently staring at him with giant puppy dog eyes and pleading faces.

He stared at the ceiling of Merlin's small cottage, and shook his head in defeat. "Fine." He said with exasperation, and those six people erupted with loud shouts of joy. "But only if you agree to my stipulations!" He cried loudly as he was engulfed by several people giving him hugs.

"Anything Uncle Salazar!" Harry cried as the boy grinned up at him. "Just as long as I get to go!"

He had been arguing all morning with Lily, James, Harry, Godric, Sirius, and Remus on whether or not the Potters should risk going to the Quidditch World Cup that was going to be held in several weeks. All of the Weasleys were going, sans Molly, because Arthur had procured several tickets that would place them right in the Minister's box, which were said to be the very best seats in the stadium.

Hermione was going to be with Salazar and the others in their box, while Blaise and Neville would be sitting in the box right next to the Minister's, because Blaise's mother had secured three tickets of her own for the World Cup.

Salazar had been completely against the Potters going, and had argued all morning about all the possible dangers that could befall them while there. Everything from someone slipping up and calling them the wrong name, to possible Death Eaters that could be at the World Cup.

He had been out argued on everything, and Godric was right in the middle of it, egging them all on. As Merlin, Nicholas, and Perenelle chuckled in the background, Godric laughed and grinned at the Potters.

"I told you I would get him to crack."

"I hate you." Salazar responded with a withering sigh.

"You'll live Salazar." Godric chuckled.

"It's not me that I'm worried about living, it's them!" Salazar cried, motioning towards the Potters.

"Well, what are your stipulations, and we will do all that you suggest." James said with a happy grin.

Salazar glared at him, but then he sighed again. "First, you Polyjuice yourselves to look like random muggles off the street. On top of that, you will all wear portkey necklaces keyed to bring you here. It will activate with the phrase 'emergency', and of course, you will go by different names."

"We could use the names Mary, John, and Jimmy Olsen." Lily offered.
"No." Salazar said shaking his head. "That's what you go by in your 'current location'. We need to think up a different name."

Lily sighed and scrunched up her face in thought. "All right, well what about using placeholder names?" She asked.

"What's that?" Salazar asked curiously.

"They are common names muggles use for people who are unknown, forgotten, or irrelevant. In the U.S they use John and Jane Doe for adults and Johnnie and Janie Doe for children. In the U.K they use the last name 'Bloggs'." She answered.

"I like the last name Doe." Harry said with a nod. "It reminds me of your patronus Mum."

"Nope, nope, no, no, no!" Salazar shouted, waving his arms around. "I don't want anything that could remotely tie you all to being the Potters."

Godric burst out laughing. "Salazar, your paranoia is showing."

"Shut up Godric." Salazar grumbled, causing everyone to laugh.

"Hey I have a name!" Harry cried, snapping his fingers. "Remember at my twelfth birthday party when you used the name 'Cliff Danielson'? I could be Cliff Danielson, Dad could be…oh I don't know…Radcliff Danielson, and Mum could be Emma Danielson."

"Radcliff!" Sirius shouted as he burst out laughing. "James is rad. Rad I tell you!"

"Radical!" James cried. "I'm a rad Cliff!"

Lily rolled her eyes at her husband and his best friend. "I swear, you two are barmy."

"Well, I like the names, and there is no way anyone can possibly trace the name 'Radcliff Danielson' and his family to the likes of Harry Potter." Salazar said with a firm nod. "However, I do want to press upon you the seriousness of the situation. If there is any sign of trouble, you use the portkeys. Don't worry about anyone else. You just get to safety."

"We understand Salazar." Lily said with a sincere nod. "If something should happen, we will get out first thing."

"I know I'm not the usual type to say 'run' at the first sign of danger, but in in this case I say 'good'." Godric said with a nod. "I don't want to lose my grandson and his family."

"I'm not going anywhere Grandpa." Harry said with a grin. "I promise."

"See that you don't." Godric said with a grin as he ruffled the boy's hair.

"It's true that you're not going anywhere, except to wash up so that you can eat your dinner." Lily said, shooing her son towards the bathroom. "I know you've been running around outside and throwing a ball for Padfoot to catch. Now, go wash up."

"Mum!" Harry mockingly whined as he grinned. "I'm not a baby anymore. I'm fourteen!"

"You'll always be my baby, now shoo!" Lily cried, causing Harry to groan and everyone else to chuckle.

As Salazar watched the lad hurry out the room, he sincerely hoped that he hadn't made a terrible
As the Quidditch World Cup drew closer, Salazar became more and more agitated. He began to think up all kinds of security checks and started to plan who would sit where in the Minister's box, as well as what to do should trouble arise. They were, after all, going to be in a very large public place.

And to say that Salazar was paranoid over that, was an understatement.

He had already apparated into London and nicked the hairs off a completely oblivious muggle family sitting at a table in an outdoor café. He also went and bought a few sets of muggle clothes, seeing as the dress code for the Quidditch World Cup was to dress like one, and he kept a close eye on everything having anything to do with the event. He also knew of all of the security measures the Ministry had put in place, thanks to Arthur.

When the day arrived for them to go, Salazar, Godric, Lily, James, Sirius, Remus, and Harry all decided to gather at Salazar's flat and apparate to the designated apparition spots that surrounded the stadium, using side-along apparition for Salazar and Harry. Hermione, Neville, Blaise, and Blaise's Mum were meeting up at the Weasleys, and they would all be traveling in by portkey. They had overnight campsites were they would be setting up their tents, and thankfully they were only a few spots away from the Weasleys, much to Fred and George's delight.

Salazar had decided to go as Harry, and used his Polyjuice Rock from the year before because Nicholas hadn't made the current one for the upcoming year yet. This, he thought, would work better than him going in his adult form, and he would use himself as a decoy should anyone get suspicious.

Not to mention, it would be easier to explain why he was speaking Parseltongue, seeing as Nora insisted on coming.

It was early in the morning when they arrived at the stadium, and Salazar scanned the crowd for anything suspicious as they made their way towards the campsite. He knew he was on edge and he glared at Godric, who was using his stone to look like 'Gordy', every time he said 'lighten up'.

After they reached their campsites and set up their tents, Salazar breathed a small sigh of relief as everyone began to settle in. Blaise, Neville, and Blaise's Mum were sharing a tent a few spots away. Godric, Salazar, Sirius, Remus, Harry, Lily, and James were in their very large tent, and Hermione was bunking with Ginny in the Weasley's tent.

Arthur, Fred, George, Percy, Hermione, Blaise, and Neville knew exactly who the newcomers were, but they were introduced to everyone else as friends of Gordy's family. Everyone not 'in the know' accepted it without a fuss, and Salazar silently cheered, seeing as that part of the plan had worked really well.

He tensed up again though, when the children decided they wanted to go off exploring. Harry of course wanted to go with them, so James and Lily decided to go too. The children wanted to see if they could spot fellow classmates and also to buy trinkets and souvenirs from the multitude of vendors milling about the campsite areas. Godric, Sirius, and Remus went with them, but Salazar stayed behind to watch over their tent.

He didn't know if he would be able to stop himself from hexing anyone who dared to accidently bump into one of the Potters.

It was during this nerve wracking time that a grinning Percy wandered over towards him, and he smiled at the lad as he approached.
"I just wanted to let you know that I got a job at the Ministry!" Percy exclaimed, sitting next to Salazar in the shade of the tent. "I'm now working in the Department of International Magical Cooperation."

"Percy, that is really great, and I am so proud of you for being able to achieve your dream. Your NEWT scores were fantastic." He replied, giving the young wizard a sincere grin.

"Thanks Harry. It feels good to moving onto the next stage of my life. Mum is proud of me, Dad is proud of me, and I hope to be an inspiration to Fred and George, but they only seem interested in pranks. Especially now." He said with a knowing chuckle.

"Well, there is nothing wrong with pranks and jokes. There truly isn't." Salazar said with a chuckle. "Take Zonkos for instance, if not for their love of pranks and jokes they wouldn't be successful. You wanted to follow your dream, and you have. Fred and George have their dreams too, it's just that theirs are different. It would be an awfully boring world if we all did the same thing."

Percy furrowed his brow for a moment, but then he nodded slowly. "I suppose if you put it like that, I understand what you mean. Perhaps you are right. I just wish they would do a lot better in school."

"I do agree on that one. I think Fred told me that they got barely six OWLs between them. Don't worry though, I scolded them." Salazar said with a grin.

"So did Mum." Percy laughed, but then he grinned too. "Hey there's my boss Mr. Crouch! He's talking to Dad and Ludo Bagman." He said, as he stood up. "Maybe they are talking about what's going to happen this year at Hogwarts, so I better go."

Salazar chuckled. "I know all about the Tournament, but don't worry, we haven't said a word about it to the children. You take care though, and if you need anything, just let me know."

"I will Harry, thank you." Percy said as he took a deep breath, and hurried over to his father and Crouch.

Salazar smiled as he watched the lad go, but his calculating gaze kept sweeping the crowds for anything out of the ordinary.

It was much later when everyone returned for lunch. Lily had made sure they took a swig of their Polyjuice potions, which eased Salazar's mind, but Hermione appeared to be slightly angry about something. When lunch was served by Peaky and Dobby, Salazar asked her what was wrong.

Hermione let out a long sigh and shook her head. "It's Ginny. She keeps asking all kinds of personal questions about you. It's getting rather annoying actually."

Fred groaned and shook his head. "She still hasn't grown out of her crush on you Harry. She asks us all the time about you."

"She even asked me if I was your girlfriend. I told her no of course, but all she wants to do is talk about Harry Potter." Hermione said, sounding slightly embarrassed at that.

"I don't mean any harm, but I don't date children." Salazar said firmly. "I know your sister has had a crush on me since the very first time I saw her, but I'm not interested."

"She wants to date 'The-Boy-Who-Lived'." George said, rolling his eyes.

Lily scoffed. "Only over my dead body would I let someone date or marry my son just because of his fame."
"Rightly said Mum." Harry said. "She's pretty, but I wouldn't date her. No offense guys." He added, sheepishly glancing over at the twins.

"None taken Cliff." Fred said with a wink, but then he grinned at Salazar. "You don't date children, but would you date someone like…McGonagall, for instance."

Godric burst out laughing. "Yes, so don't let him lie to you."

Harry, Neville, and Blaise looked slightly green and started to sway in their seats.

"No one wants to talk about old people's love lives!" Harry shouted, causing Sirius, James, and Remus to burst out laughing.

"Yeah, people are trying to eat here!" Neville added.

"Hmm, Speaker and Kitty. A nice combination." Nora said, looking up from the table where she had been napping.

"Don't start my dear." Salazar warned. "Or I will leave you here."

"You wouldn't dare, or I will bite you in your sleep…again." She threatened with a soft hiss, causing the others to grin and giggle.

"You and McGonagall?" George laughed. "That would be something to see!"

Salazar grinned at the lad, and hit him with a stinging jinx, but in that same moment a trumpet sounded all throughout the area.

Arthur, along with Percy, Ron, Ginny, and Blaise's Mum, came rushing in a few moments later.

"Here we go!" Arthur said with excitement while rubbing his hands together. "Shall we head up to our seats?"

The rest of lunch was abandoned immediately as everyone stampeded towards the tent door.

No sooner had Salazar gotten everyone situated according to the prearranged seating plan he came up with, than his entire body stiffened on instinct. Harry, who was seated right next to him, looked at Salazar curiously, but all questions were answered as soon as the problem spoke.

"Well, well if it isn't Scarhead and Rotten. Oh, I'm sorry, I meant Potter and Roffin." Draco smirked, as he and his family settled themselves into a few seats away from them. "I'm surprised you all could afford…"

Draco was instantly cut off when Lucius jabbed the end of his cane in his son's chest. Draco let out a slight 'oof' sound, but quickly shut up.

"Not here Draco. Remember your manners." Narcissa said, looking straight forward and trying to ignore the presence of those 'beneath' her.

"Sirius don't, Sirius don't." Lily hissed, but she was ignored.

"Funny you should mention anything about affording things Draco, seeing as the Malfoys can't afford anything more a goat pen." Sirius said in a deadly tone, as he turned and glared at them. "Hello Narcissa."
"Cousin Sirius." She acknowledged with a semi-polite nod, as Lucius glared at him.

Nothing more was said though, as the Minister's box slowly began to fill. As Salazar watched everything with a sharp eye, Nora broke into his thoughts with a loud hiss.

"Speaker, I don't like the way The Clown is glaring at your back. It's as if he is trying to set you on fire. Perhaps I should wrap myself around the railing in front of us, so that I can keep a better watch on your back. I shall bite him if he flinches."

"An excellent suggestion my dear. The more eyes we have on them, the better." Salazar said, as he unwrapped her from around his arm and laid her on the railing in front of them.

The Minister's box suddenly became still and quiet as everyone stopped talking to glance in their direction. Fudge, who looked positively ashen at hearing Parseltongue, stared at Salazar nervously.

"Ah, Mr. Harry Potter. I had heard rumors you were a Parselmouth, but it's a pleasure to have the Savior of the Wizarding World among us today." Fudge said, nervously shaking Salazar's hand.

"Minister, it's nice to see you again. How is the head-hunting coming along?" Salazar asked with a chuckle, which caused Remus to snort.

Fudge looked slightly taken back, but he relaxed and chuckled as he caught on. "Very well I'm pleased to say. Though that nasty business with Peter Pettigrew is still being worked on. I'm afraid to say there's been no headway."

"Not surprised the rat got away. It's what he's best at." Sirius growled.

"We will find him, rest assured." Fudge said with a nod.

"Speaker, there is something suspicious I see!" Nora suddenly yelled from her position on the rail she was wrapped around.

Salazar turned sharply with his wand in his hand. "Where my dear?"

"That scared looking elf has someone invisible sitting next to her. I see his heat signature! He's under some sort of…"

"Accio invisibility cloak!" Hermione suddenly shouted, cutting Nora off. Everyone stared in shock as the cloak flew into her outstretched hand.

In the next moment, chaos erupted in the Minister's box as several people screamed, 'Barty Crouch Jr!' and began trying to scramble out of the way.

The thin blondish haired man sat frozen in shock with wide eyes, as the elf sitting beside him began wailing loudly. He suddenly snapped out of his stupor and began trying to run, but an unseen stunning spell from Godric saw the man crumple to the ground.

Fudge began barking orders at nearby Aurors, while the Malfoys looked around in shock and retreated to the far corner of the box. Arthur began shielding his children and Hermione, as Remus and Sirius began shuffling the Potters out of danger, but it was Neville who shocked everyone even more.

The lad leapt over the railing that separated the two boxes and began shouting, hexing, punching, and kicking the still unconscious Crouch.
"YOU BLEEDING BLOODY DEATH EATER! YOU HELPED TORTURE MY PARENTS! WHY ARE YOU NOT IN AZKABAN WHERE YOU BELONG!?!" Neville bellowed.

"Neville! Neville stop!" Hermione cried, banging her hand on the rail in order to get his attention, but Neville wasn't paying attention to her.

A blast from Sirius's wand, and a tackle to the ground from Godric brought Neville somewhat back to his senses. Aurors began filing into the box and they quickly apprehended the still unconscious, and severely bleeding wizard. However, Godric was still trying to restrain a struggling Neville as he continued to shout.

"That's only part of what I'll do if I EVER get my hands on Bellatrix Lestrange! So you better hope I never set eyes on that psychotic witch who kissed the arse of that half-blooded son of a muggle! I'm more pure-blooded than VOLDEMORT will ever be!"

Neville collapsed against Godric, and it was all Godric could do but hold the boy up until he got him seated. Neville began shaking as he clinched and unclenched his fists.

"Peaky!"

"Master called for Peaky?" The elf asked, glancing around at everyone.

"Get a calming draught from anywhere you can." Godric ordered, and Peaky popped away immediately.

Peaky apparated in a few moments later with the calming draught and Godric practically had to force feed it to Neville, who instantly became a little calmer. He sat there breathing heavily for a few moments, but then he looked up at everyone.

"I'm…I'm so sorry. I-I don't know…I just saw him and…I-I…"

"Neville, I think you have been hanging out with way to many Gryffindors." Blaise said, trying to ease the tension in the box.

Neville snorted and let out a large breath he had been holding. "But I am a Gryffindor."

"I know, but Harry, Gordy, and I have been secretly trying to turn you into a Slytherin." Blaise teased.

Everyone chuckled at that, but Fudge looked around at everyone.

"Young man, what is your name?" He asked sternly.

"Neville sir." He answered, standing up and looking at the Minister apologetically. "Neville Longbottom. I'm a Hogwarts student going into fourth year."

"Longbottom." Fudge whispered loudly, as recognition dawned on the man. "Very well, under the circumstances Mr. Longbottom, seeing as the man we just apprehended was partly responsible for…well you certainly understand…I will let you off with a warning about underage magic. We have him now and we will get answers." He said firmly, then he turned to Hermione. "And you young lady, who are you and how did you know that Crouch Jr. was there?"

"My name is Hermione Granger sir, fourth year Gryffindor, and it was Nora who saw him." She replied, pointing to Nora who was still wrapped around the railing. "Nora said she spotted someone suspicious sitting next to the elf that was there, and mentioned that she saw the heat signature of the
man. She said he was invisible, and I cast the reversal spell for the disillusionment charm, but that didn't work so I summoned the cloak." She answered, handing the cloak to a nearby Auror who was taking down notes.

Fudge stared at her in disbelief. "You speak Parseltongue?" He asked, glancing from Salazar, to Nora, then back to Hermione.

"Oh no sir." She said, shaking her head. "But I can understand it. Harry taught myself, Fred, George, Neville, and Blaise, how to understand it back when we were in first year."

"I see." Fudge said, glancing at everyone.

"Professor Dumbledore is the one who sort of gave us the idea Minister." Fred said. "He can understand Parseltongue as well. We asked him if it was hard to learn and he said it was, but we were determined to learn it so Harry taught us."

"Oh yes, yes, I'm aware of Dumbledore being able to understand Parseltongue." Fudge said, suddenly coming back to his senses. "Dumbledore is a very good man. Very well then. Miss Granger, I commend you on your quick thinking and actions, and I will also let you off with a warning about underage magic. As for Nora," He said, turning towards her with a nervous smile. "If you can understand me, I thank you. Because of you, we have apprehended a dangerous man."

Salazar chuckled as Nora raised her head up proudly and slithered over to him, causing Fudge to take a small step backwards. "You're very welcome Mr. Important Person. I do what I can."

"She says you're welcome." Fred, George, Neville, Hermione, Blaise, and Salazar said at the same time, then they burst out laughing.

Fudge nodded and smiled nervously, but then he glanced at the Auror. "Do you have everything?"

"We still don't know who stunned Crouch Jr. Minister." The Auror replied, checking over his notes.

"Oh, uh, that was me." Godric said, raising his hand.

"You did?" Fudge asked in disbelief. "Well I didn't even see the spell."

The Auror and everyone else looked at Godric in stunned disbelief. "How old are you Mr…?"

"Roffin, Gordy Roffin sir. I'm a third year Slytherin." Godric replied.

"Blimey, a child that can cast spells that are silent and invisible. A mark of a duelist." The Auror commented, scribbling that information down. "A warning for this lad as well Minister?"

"Oh yes, yes." Fudge said, staring at Godric who just shrugged.

"I think we got all we need now." The Auror said, rolling up the parchment. "I'll get this to Madam Bones, and we will find out how Crouch escaped Azkaban." He said, eyeing Sirius suspiciously.

"Hey don't look at me." Sirius said, throwing up his hands. "Crouch supposedly died a week after his parents visited him. I know this because he was in the cell next to mine. I would talk to Barty Sr. if I were you."

"Yes, find Barty immediately. I know that elf belonged to him, so get this mess straightened out." Fudge snapped, suddenly growing angry. "If I find out he had anything to do this…" His voice trailed off as he crushed the hat he was holding. "We have a Quidditch World Cup to be getting on
with. Someone find Ludo Bagman and get him up here so we can start the match."

"He's probably still taking bets on who will win Minister." The Auror said rolling his eyes. "But we will find him." He added, before hurrying out of the box and down the stairs.

The occupants of the box somewhat regained their composure and began retaking their seats. However, Fudge looked over at Neville, who was back in his seat in the next box over, and spoke.

"Mr. Longbottom, if I may, what was that bit about You-Know-Who being half-blooded?" He asked curiously.

Neville looked at him apologetically and he flushed with embarrassment. "It's true sir. Voldemort's real name is Tom Riddle. His father was a muggle."

"How do you know that?" Fudge gasped, as he stared at Neville in disbelief.

Salazar cast a smirk in the Malfoys direction as they stared at Neville in shock and disgust, but he spoke up.

"Professor Dumbledore will have most of the answers to your questions Minister." Salazar said, still not taking his eyes off the Malfoys. "But we can tell you that we found an old diary of Voldemort's at Hogwarts last year. It had a lot of information about him in it. Voldemort's full name is Tom Marvolo Riddle. If you are familiar with anagrams, the letters of his name can be arranged into a sentence that says 'I am Lord Voldemort'."

That wasn't the entire truth though, seeing as Neville and Hermione were the first know it. Riddle had taken great pleasure in spouting off several useful facts before Salazar and the others had arrived in the Chamber.

Salazar smirked as Lucius gulped slightly, but he continued. "We learned a lot about Voldemort from the diary actually. Neville was right, he is more pure-blooded than that half-blooded son of a muggle that fancies himself a Lord. I find it amusing that my own blood is also purer than Voldemort's blood. At least both my parents were magical."

Sirius burst out laughing. "Oh Harry, if James had heard that, he would laugh so hard."

James was indeed trying not to laugh, or draw attention to himself, but Lily sat there with a proud smirk on her face as she faced forward in her seat and stared out over the pitch.

"Well Mr. Potter," Fudge said with an air of authority. "I will certainly be asking Dumbledore about that. Do you know where this dairy of You-Know-Who came from?"

Salazar took his eyes off Lucius long enough to glance at the Minister. "I don't know sir, but Dumbledore does, and he also knows just who is responsible for the diary making its way into the school." He added.

"Very well then. I'll make it a point to speak with Dumbledore about that." Fudge said, but then his eyes lit up. "Ah! Bagman at last. I think it's time we start the match old boy!"

"Indeed Cornelius!" A grinning, portly man dressed in an old Quidditch uniform said, as he bounded into the Minister's box.

With everyone distracted, Salazar glanced back at Lucius, who was glaring at him, and smirked. Lucius's eyes narrowed but Salazar took great pleasure in mouthing the word 'you', and watched with glee as Lucius paled drastically.
The match lasted for several, several hours, but in the end, Salazar was happy to note that Bulgaria caught the snitch, even if Ireland won. Everyone was in their tent, and Salazar found it amusing as Godric and Ron babbled on about Viktor Krum and his 'amazing and brilliant' flying methods, but seeing Ron joking and laughing with everyone made him smile. However, Ginny kept casting glances at Salazar and seemed to try and follow him around everywhere he went.

He made it a point to stick close to everyone and not go off alone.

Everyone was in a celebratory mood though. Singing, dancing, laughter, and conversations flowed throughout the tent as the sounds of partying echoed around them from people in other tents. Harry, James, and Lily were smiling brighter than Salazar had seen them do in a long time, and he was pleased to see how easy Harry seemed to fit in with all the children.

They were quickly all becoming very good friends.

It was 3am when the adults finally ushered the children off to bed in their respective tents. There was a lot of loud complaining, but everyone was getting rather sleepy. Salazar laughed as Harry protested, and said he wanted to sleep in the Weasley tent, and argued that he'd sleep on the floor next to the twins' beds if he had to, so Lily finally relented and made him take another swig of Polyjuice Potion, before going to help him get settled in.

When she came back, she found Salazar sitting at the table in the quiet tent, sipping coffee, and reading a book.

"You're not going to bed?" She asked, sitting down beside him.

He shook his head and smiled at her. "I'll sleep tomorrow when I'm back at home and you are all safe in Rio." He whispered.

"It has been stressful for you with us being here." She said, looking at him sadly. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be." Salazar assured her as he patted her hand. "It has been stressful, I admit, but it has been worth it. Seeing you all do something normal for a change has been wonderful, and it gave Harry more time to get to know everyone else."

"It has been fun. I don't think we have had this much fun in years." She said with a smile. "Thank you Salazar."

"I know, and you're welcome Lily." He said with a chuckle. "You head to bed though, it's been a long day."

"It has." She agreed as she tried to stifle a yawn. "But what do you think about Crouch? Why was he here and what was he planning to do?"

"I don't know." He said shaking his head. "I knew he was a Death Eater, but I didn't know what happened to him until I read back dated issues of The Daily Prophet. Crouch was sent to Azkaban for his part in Frank and Alice's torture. The paper said he died, like Sirius said, but I don't know much more than that."

"I'm sure it will be in the paper tomorrow, or the next day." Lily said with a tired nod.

"Or a version of it anyway." Salazar chuckled.

"True." She said with a smile. "All right. I'm headed to bed. I'll see you in the morning."
"Goodnight Lily."

He watched as she shuffled off to bed, and smiled as he caught sight of the first hints of her red hair beginning to show itself.

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**Barty Crouch Sr. Arrested for Helping Death Eater Son Escape Azkaban!**

*By Rita Skeeter*

Just before the start of the Quidditch World Cup yesterday, there was a disturbance in the Minister's box as Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived, and his friends helped take down the dangerous Azkaban escapee, Barty Crouch Jr.

Details are a bit fuzzy, but it is said that Harry Potter's pet snake saw someone suspicious sitting in the Minister's box, and that Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Neville Longbottom heard the snake mention that something was amiss.

Potter, a Parselmouth Slytherin going into his fourth year, and his two friends, who understand Parsel tongue, immediately sprang into action. They defended Cornelius Fudge in what could have been a well thought out assassination plot against the Minister's life.

Hermione Granger, a studious Gryffindor going into her fourth year, summoned the invisibility cloak Crouch Jr. was hiding under, thereby exposing him for all to see. Harry Potter leapt in front of Minister Fudge in order to defend him, and stunned Barty Crouch Jr. before the Death Eater could even draw his wand.

In an odd twist, Neville Longbottom recognized the wizard for his part in his parent's torture, and the young brave Gryffindor hexed the Death Eater six ways from Sunday while shouting at him.

Aurors were instantly on the scene, and they quickly apprehended Barty Crouch Jr, and arrested his father, Barty Crouch Sr., just a few hours later.

During the aftermath, Harry Potter said some very interesting things about You-Know-Who, while speaking to a very shaken and disturbed Minister. Mr. Potter claims to know about an old school diary that belonged to You-Know-Who. Mr. Potter said that the old diary revealed that You-Know-Who's real name is Tom Marvolo Riddle, and that an anagram can be made of the name. An anagram that ominously says, I am Lord…You-Know-Who.

Using other information found in this mysterious diary, Mr. Potter also claims that You-Know-Who is in fact...a half-blood!

Mr. Potter is quoted as saying, "Neville was right… (In what he said while shouting at Crouch Jr.)...he (Mr. Longbottom) is more pure-blooded than that half-blooded son of a muggle that fancies himself a Lord. I find it amusing that my own blood is also purer than Voldemort's blood. At least both my parents were magical."

Could it be true!? Is You-Know-Who a half-blood!? Born from a common MUGGLE!?

Me, Myself, and I want to know, as do you my wonderful readers! I promise to get to the bottom of this and see what other juicy details I can dig up. Until next time...

Rita Skeeter

For details involving Barty Crouch Sr.'s involvement in his son's escape from Azkaban...see page
"It wasn't me that stunned Crouch, it was Godric!" Salazar shouted, after reading the paper Merlin handed to him when they returned to Ireland the next morning. "I was too busy trying to wrap my head around what was happening!"

"And just what is that woman trying to do? Paint a target on my son's back!?" Lily cried. "Ok not my son…but you all get the point!"

"I already have a target painted on my back, so it's ok Lily. Don't worry." Salazar said, shaking his head.

"An assassination plot? What is that rubbish?" Godric asked.

No one seemed to know, and just glared at the paper now sitting at the table.

"The article on page three goes on to describe how Crouch Sr. carried out his dying wife's last request and broke his son out of Azkaban using Polyjuice potion, and switched his wife for his son." Merlin said, motioning towards the paper. "However, they are denying that it was an assassination attempt on the Minister's life. They claim Jr. was just there to watch the match, and that the elf was supposed to be watching him. Crouch Sr. is going to Azkaban for not only breaking his son out of prison, but also using the Imperius Curse on his son in order to control him and keep him inside the house at all times. This apparently has been going on for many, many years."

"Well that is their problem, not ours." A red, bleary eyed, and very exhausted Salazar said as he stood up. "And with that, I'm going home to get some sleep. I trust you all to get home safely from here." He added with a smile as he gave the Potters goodbye hugs.

"Uncle Salazar, I hope you have a good day's rest, and I hope to see you at Christmas." Harry said, throwing his arms around the old wizard. "We love you, now go home and get some sleep."

Salazar chuckled as he pulled Harry close. "I love you too Harry, and I'll hopefully see you all soon."

After another round of goodbyes, Salazar apparated to his flat in Diagon Alley and slipped into his bed for some much needed rest.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* Please dont be angry at me! LOL I wanted something different than the usual (and highly predictable) 'Death Eaters Attack Quidditch World Cup' scene. Every forth year story ive read has it and no one has thought about catching Crouch Jr. before he could get to Mad-Eye. Besides, after what happened with Crouch i dont think Malfoy and the rest of his Death Eater buddies would dare play dress-up for old times sake. Lucius may be an idiot, but he's not completely stupid.

Anyway, i know some of you are wondering about Moody, but dont worry, he will still play a part in this year. Also, the events that unfolded at The Quidditch World Cup sets us up nicely for what i have in mind for fourth year. All of your questions about the Tournament will be answered when we get to that point. I 100% cross my heart and hope to die, promise! LOL I hope you all enjoyed the chapter!
"He's arrogant, and a show off Minerva." Severus spat. "And all three of them should be expelled for using underage magic!"

"The Minister himself let them off with a warning Severus, so who are you to say anything about it!?" She spat back. "Or are you just upset over Mr. Potter's comments about You-Know-Who?" She asked with a haughty smirk.

Severus glared at her over the table and threw down the addition of *The Daily Prophet*, with Skeeter's article, he had been holding in his hands. Flitwick, Poppy, Remus, and Sprout were firmly on Minerva's side and they glared at the Potions Master, who sat down with a scoff.

It was the day before school started, and Albus had called for everyone to attend the usual pre-term staff meeting that was held every year. Albus had brought to everyone's attention the article written by Rita Skeeter three weeks before, and said he wanted to get everyone's opinion on the matter.

Which, of course, was why Minerva and Severus were yelling at each other.

Albus and the other Professors sat back watching the confrontation, but Albus had been quiet during the argument. He had already expressed his opinion on the matter, and had agreed with both of them. He agreed that Harry was an arrogant show-off, but didn't agree with expelling him.

"Contrary to your belief Minerva, Potter and his friends aren't the perfect little angels you make them out to be."

"I know they aren't angels Severus, but the point is that the Minister let them off with a warning. They shouldn't be expelled for defending his life!"

"Actually," Remus broke in, "Harry never fired a spell that day. I was there. It was Mr. Roffin who stunned Crouch. Not Harry. Skeeter's article sort of embellished what took place that day."

"Of course you'd jump to the Golden Boy's defense Lupin." Severus said rolling his eyes.

"Well, I personally think the matter should be dropped." Flitwick said with a nod. "It was nearly three weeks ago, and we have more important matters to discuss."

"Rightly said Filius." Sprout said, as she continued to glare across the table.

"I also agree." Albus said with a nod, as he leaned forward in his chair. "The Triwizard Tournament will kick off on October 30th with the arrival of Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, and The Champions will be selected the following night, which of course, is Halloween. I want Hogwarts to make a good impression on our guests, so Mr. Filch, I want the castle to sparkle. Clean everything. The portraits, corridors, walls, everything. I also want us to put aside our in house bickering for the year." He added, glancing pointedly at Minerva and Severus, but then he continued.
"While Beauxbatons and Durmstrang will be housing and teaching their own students, they will be
taking meals in the great hall, and they are more than welcome to wander around and explore the
castle if they wish. Madam Maxime has requested that her students be seated with Ravenclaw, and
Headmaster Karkaroff has requested that his students be seated with Slytherin. Any questions?"

Everyone, except Minerva, shook their heads, but the Deputy Headmistress adjusted her glasses and
eyed Albus sternly.

"You say you want us to put aside our in house bickering Albus, but what about you? Are you going
to continue slandering Mr. Potter in front of our guests, or are you going to let them make up their
own minds about the boy."

There were several loud gasps heard throughout the room, but the Head of Gryffindor never
wavered as she continued to eye Albus pointedly. Severus, Remus, and Poppy clamped their jaws
shut in order to hold back the snorts and giggles they were suppressing.

Albus on the other hand, glared at her. "I will not dignify that with a response Minerva." He nearly
growled out, but then he took a deep breath and glanced around the room. "Since there are no other
questions, I wish to bring to your attention to an extra member of our staff this year. Most of you
know him, but for the very few who don't, I ask you all to welcome my good friend, Alastor
Moody."

From out of one of the dark corners, Moody stepped out and thumped his way over towards the
table. His magical blue eye spun rapidly in its socket as it swept the entire room, but zeroed in on
Severus as the old retired Auror stood with his back against the nearest wall.

"Alastor has agreed to stay at Hogwarts this year for the simple purpose of security." Albus went on
to say. "I know everyone here knows what Igor Karkaroff's former occupation was, and while I do
think he has turned from that path, I'm not willing to take any chances. It's no secret that Durmstrang
openly teaches the Dark Arts, and I want each and every one of you to keep a close eye on our
Hogwarts students, particularly Harry and his friends."

"Albus!" Remus cried, jumping out of his seat. "What are you suggesting? That Harry is going to
run off wanting to learn how to curse muggles with Karkaroff?"

"Not at all Remus," Albus said calmly, "but I don't want Harry getting any ideas about learning the
Dark Arts. He already knows too much about them as it is."

"I seriously doubt that there is anything Potter can learn from Karkaroff." Severus drawled.

The double meaning of Severus's statement caused Minerva to outright snort, but she covered it
quickly by glaring at him.

"I seriously doubt that there is anything Mr. Potter wants to learn from Karkaroff. I am pretty sure he
already knows all about the Death Eater." She spat.

Albus sighed loudly. "This is exactly what I'm talking about. We have got to stop the in house
bickering. Alastor is only here as an extra security precaution. Giving his feelings about Death
Eaters, I seriously doubt that Harry will want anything to do with Igor himself. However, learning
the Darks Arts from the Durmstrang students is another matter altogether."

"Oh I get it now!" Remus said, laughing loudly. "So Mad-Eye is here to protect Karkaroff from
Harry."

Albus glared at him as Minerva and Poppy burst out laughing, but everyone jumped in their seats
when Moody also began laughing.

"Sounds like my kind of lad actually. Especially if he hates all Death Eaters." He said gruffly, eyeing Severus and making the young man shift uncomfortably in his seat. "As I recall, he did call their precious Dark Lord a half-blooded son of a muggle. I don't think I stopped laughing for three full days after I read that in the paper." He said with a twisted grin that did not seem to suit his face at all.

"What of those remarks Albus?" Flitwick asked curiously. "Is what Mr. Potter said true?"

"They are, though I don't know how he found out about them. Fudge came to me asking questions about the diary, though he didn't mention anything about it being a horcrux, so I don't think Harry said anything about that."

"He didn't." Remus confirmed. "He led everyone in the Minister's box to believe that it was just a common diary. However, he told Sirius and I, that he, Mr. Nilrem, and Mr. Flamel had looked into Voldemort's background and discovered that tid bit of information, and of course, he shared it with his friends."

"Well regardless, I had to tell Fudge only part of what he wanted to hear, and I also let him believe it was just a common diary." Albus said with a sigh.

"Sounds like Mr. Potter is a true Slytherin." Minerva said, smirking at Severus who sneered at her.

"Potter is a dunderhead." He said simply.

"A bit miffed are you Snape?" Mad-Eye growled, causing Severus to bristle slightly.

"Alastor." Dumbledore said in a warning tone. "Getting past this and back to the subject at hand," he continued with a loud sigh. "With Barty Sr. in Azkaban, Ludo Bagman has taken the helm of running this tournament. Other than Barty, Ludo is the only other one that knows every aspect about it, so expect to see him around here a lot more."

"Keep your gold in your pockets!" Flitwick chuckled merrily, and others groaned and shook their heads.

The staff meeting broke up soon after that, but as they all filed out of the room, Remus, Minerva, Poppy, and Severus glanced nervously at one another. They all knew that with Mad-Eye being around this year, they would have to be extra careful in avoiding him…and that blasted eye of his.

"...and Pigeon is just jealous that I did something wonderful, and she didn't." Nora said, slithering around on the seat in the train compartment. "It was me, not her, who caught the man, and I am proud of me. Although I really didn't relish being stuck on that railing because it was very high off the ground. I don't have wings like that haughty feather duster."

Salazar chuckled and looked around at the children. "This is what I have had to put up with for the last three weeks."

"And you will continue to 'put up with it' until I'm done praising myself." Nora answered, as everyone burst out laughing.

"Where is Hedwig by the way?" Hermione asked, trying to hide a giggle.

"She decided that she wanted to fly on ahead this year." Salazar answered, pointedly glancing at Nora, who was happily investigating the box of Bertie Bott's Neville was holding.
They were already halfway to Hogwarts and Salazar and Godric had sat all the children down to warn them about Moody and stressed that they needed to be extra careful about what they said and did this year. Fred and George had left to go find their friends after that, but the twins mentioned that they were also familiar with Moody, and said that the man was very paranoid and he always yelled 'constant vigilance' to anyone within earshot.

As soon as the staff meeting let out yesterday, Severus had apparated straight to Salazar's flat to warn him about the retired Auror. Salazar was somewhat familiar with Moody because of the first war, but because of losing his memories and being sent to the Dursleys, he didn't know what Moody had been up to since then. So, Severus told Salazar all about Moody, and how he had put most of the Death Eaters in Azkaban.

Knowing that the ex-Auror was as paranoid as he was, Salazar warned the children to stay out of the man's way. He didn't want anything to happen to them if Moody got suspicious.

"Do you think Moody would side with us?" Blaise asked suddenly, shaking Salazar out of his thoughts.

He sighed and shook his head. "Likely not. Moody and Albus are really good friends so there is a pretty good chance that Albus has told Moody what he thinks about me. No doubt I will be closely watched by both men this year. All we need to do is get through this year without drawing attention to ourselves. Remember, Moody's magical eye can see through practically anything, so be extra careful of your surroundings, and keep any pranks you plan to play in your rooms, or the Room of Requirement." He said, but then he cocked his head to the side. "Actually, I should tell Fred and George that too."

"What about Moody seeing through magical disguises? Does that mean you and I are in danger of being discovered?" Godric asked as Salazar stood to exit the compartment. "I admit, I don't know much about the man other than what I've been told."

He paused with his hand on the door, and looked back at his best friend. "I don't think so, but Severus did say that he can see through the disillusionment charm and invisibility cloaks. The stones are physically transforming stones, so I think we will be all right."

"That's a relief." Neville said with a sigh.

"Indeed." Godric said with a nod. "Let's just make this year a quiet one like last year and we should be fine."

"I agree." Salazar said, stepping out the compartment.

He left Godric with the children and headed down the train until he found Fred and George, and they assured him that they would hide everything in the Room of Requirement. However, on the way back to his compart he found his way blocked by a blond with two bookends.

"Where do you think you're going Potter?" Draco snarled.

"Back to my compartment." Salazar answered, trying to side step them, but Crabbe and Goyle blocked his way.

"You think you're so special Potter, but those things you said about the Dark Lord are nothing but lies." He hissed. "And you will pay for what you have said Potter. You will see."

"I seriously doubt that there is anything you can do to me Draco." Salazar said with a slight chuckle.
"There are a lot of people who are very angry for you saying what you did." Draco replied with a dangerous glint in his eye. "Be careful, or you will wind up dead."

Salazar chuckled with amusement and playfully ruffled Draco's hair. "You're absolutely hysterical Draco. I'll keep that in mind, so you can run along and play now."

"You'll die this year Potter. Mark my words." Draco said through gritted teeth, before stalking away.

Salazar just rolled his eyes and made his way back to the compartment, but he did wonder about the threat, and decided to keep his eyes open.

The rest of the journey passed with no incident and when they arrived at the castle, it was storming. They met up with Colin and Luna, who had been sitting with other friends of Colin's for the trip, and shielded their heads and against the driving rain as they quickly found an empty carriage and settled in.

"I really feel sorry for Dennis." Colin chuckled, shaking the rain out of his cloak.

"I feel sorry for all of the first years." Godric laughed.

"Your brother is so excited to be here Colin." Luna said, watching in fascination as the rain drops ran down the carriage window.

"Yeah he is, but we had a sneaky suspicion that he was magical a year ago when he stopped the Christmas ham from falling when Dad almost dropped it on the floor." Colin laughed. "They all thought it was me at first, but nope, it was Dennis." He said with a large grin.

"Well I'm happy for your family." Salazar said with a chuckle. "Two magically gifted children from the same muggle family is really rare."

"How does that happen by the way?" Hermione asked curiously, as the carriages came to a stop in front of the castle's doors.

"Well honestly, I think it's because of two reasons. First, I believe its magic's way of protecting itself." Salazar answered as they stepped out of the carriage. "As the purebloods continue to intermarry, magic comes up with a way to keep itself pure and fresh. It's no secret what happens when family continues to marry family, and muggle genetics proves that. It also because of squibs. It's well known muggle borns come from squibs who have married muggles, though it takes several, several generations for the magical gene to resurface."

"That is the biggest load of dragon dung I've ever heard Potter." Pansy Parkinson said with a scowl as they all made their way inside. "Everyone knows that pure bloods are far more superior compared to filthy muggle borns."

"As evidenced by Crabbe and Goyle." Hermione shot back, just as Crabbe tripped over his own feet and fell face first in the mud.

Pansy glared at her, but brushed past them and headed into the great hall. They all shook their heads and giggled as Crabbe picked himself up and looked around in confusion, but they split up and headed for their respective tables.

The sorting commenced, and just as he did every year, the sorting hat began to sing. Hat's song told everyone about the Founders and how they came to choose their students, but something the hat sung caught the attention of more than a few people who stared in a chuckling Godric's direction.
"Hat ousted you." Salazar whispered with a grin. "Now they know he belonged to you."

"I'll never hear the end of Hermione's questions." Godric chuckled. "Particularly the ones about how we all cast the spell to make him come alive."

"From the look on Fred and George's face, something tells me that we are going to have a bunch of singing hats to deal with this year." Salazar said with a slight groan.

Blaise burst out laughing. "That sounds like an excellent prank."

"Indeed." Godric grinned, as Salazar shook his head and chuckled.

As the sorting ended and the feast began, the usual chatter and sounds of eating filled the great hall. They hadn't been eating long when the great hall's doors flew open and Peeves zoomed in cackling madly.

Everyone stopped eating and looked up in horror, wondering what the poltergeist was up too.

"PEEVES!" Baron and Nearly Headless Nick roared together, as they glared at the menace. "We told you no!" Nick finished.

"Well I don't need your permission your Headlessness." Peeves snapped, as he glared at Nick. "I'm not here to talk to you."

"Peeves, what is it that you want?" Baron asked angrily. "You've already asked to attend the feast, but we already told you no because you can't behave."

"Well, I'm here to ask for permission from someone else." He said in a silky voice as he grinned. "Peeves," Albus said as he stood up. "You may attend if you behave."

"I'm not asking for your permission Headmaster." Peeves said with a glint in his eye that suddenly made Salazar's stomach knot up. "I'm here to ask Lord Slytheryness and Lord Gryffy for their permission."

Godric groaned slightly and shook his head as Peeves glided over to them and stopped just above their heads.

"Lord Gryffy, Lord Slytheryness, may I have your permission to attend the feast. I promise to behave and not throw food." He asked in a false innocent tone that instantly caused Salazar to raise an eyebrow at him.

"Mr. Potter, Mr. Roffin you may not know the details of Peeves's earlier antics when he scared the house elves out of their wits in the kitchen!" Baron yelled. "All because we told him he couldn't attend."

"No one asked you!" Peeves shouted. "All I want is to be included. I feel so left out of the goings on in the castle."

Salazar didn't believe that for a second, and he cleared his throat to speak, but Godric cut in.

"And why should we let you Peeves, when we know that you will likely throw food."

"I won't Lord Gryffy! I promise!" Peeves exclaimed. "If I do anything unsavory during the feast, I will stand still and let you banish me forever." He said with a wide grin.
"I say we give him a chance." The Fat Friar said, floating over towards them.

"It couldn't hurt." Godric said, looking at Salazar and shrugging.

Peeves grinned at Godric, but Salazar stood there with a smirk on his face. "And what about after the feast Peeves? You said during the feast, but what have you got planned for after it? You can't pull the wool over my eyes." Salazar said, eyeing Peeves carefully.

Peeves's grin widened. "Lord Slytheryness is just too smart to make a deal with old Peevsie!" He exclaimed.

Peeves began cackling loudly, and all of a sudden, he began lobbing water balloons in every direction. The students shrieked and ducked, but Peeves zoomed out of the great hall at top speed. Salazar glared at the retreating poltergeist, and sat back down with a huff.

"We should have gotten rid of him a century ago." Godric grumbled, as he picked a busted water balloon out of his mashed potatoes.

"I agree." Salazar said with a sigh, then he glanced up at the Head Table.

Albus was frowning at him, and a man with a big blue false eye was studying him carefully. Salazar knew that it was Moody, and it made him uncomfortable with the way Moody was looking at him.

The rest of the feast went by without incident, but when Albus stood up to make his usual Start-of-Term announcements, Salazar and Godric grinned at each other. Albus told everyone that Quidditch was canceled for the year in favor of the Triwizard Tournament being held at the school. This caused an excited murmur to spread through the great hall, until Albus told them the restriction.

No underage wizards were allowed to enter.

This caused an uproar in the great hall that took Albus several minutes to squelch. He explained the dangers of the Tournament, and said that they would be taking precautions to make sure no underage wizards could enter, which only caused more grumbling. He then went on to explain that they would be hosting Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, and asked everyone to be on their best behavior this year.

During this time, he also introduced Moody. Several Slytherins eyed the man with a bit of fear, but most just stared at his face, which was stony as he surveyed the student body.

When Albus finished his announcements, he dismissed them to their common rooms, and everyone filed out of the great hall whispering excitedly about the Triwizard Tournament.

"You have to Harry, you just have to!" Fred pleaded.

"Please Gordy!" George begged. "We will do anything!"

"No." Godric said, shaking his head. "Because I'm sure your Mother would find a way to kill us if we did."

It was the next morning at breakfast, and the twins were nearly on their hands and knees in front of the Slytherin table begging Salazar and Godric to help them enter the Tournament. Minerva was up at the Head Table chuckling, and Poppy was glaring daggers at them, as if to dare any of them to actually end up in the contest.

"But we will be seventeen in April!" Fred cried as he looked up at the two Founders with pleading
eyes. "That's before the school year ends. You have to help us."

"What are we supposed to do this year? With no Quidditch and us not being able to enter the tournament, we will be bored!" George exclaimed.

"And that doesn't bode well for the residents of Hogwarts." Fred added ominously.

"Oh I don't know, perhaps you could concentrate on your school work?" Salazar said, making Godric chuckle.

The twins stared at him in shock, as if it was the most ridiculous thing they had ever heard, but they both sighed loudly and picked themselves up off the floor.

"Fine." George said with a still determined grin.

"But that doesn't mean we won't try and find away ourselves." Fred said, loud enough for the whole great hall to hear. "We will not give up without a fight!"

"Here, here!" Lee Jordan shouted from the Gryffindor table. "But why are you asking for their help? I have an idea!"

"Excellent old chap!" Fred cried, mock glaring at Salazar and Godric before quickly making their way back over to their own table.

Salazar laughed and shook his head. "Think they will succeed?" He asked.

"I don't know, it is Fred and George." Blaise chuckled. "Personally though, I'm not interested. People can get killed in this Tournament."

"Yes, they can." Salazar said seriously, but he looked up as Severus approached.

"Potter, if your worshipers are done making a scene, I wish to ask for your permission to pass out the schedules." He said with a sneer.

Blaise choked down a snort, but Salazar stood up and mockingly bowed.

"You may proceed Professor." He said, which caught Severus off guard for a moment.

He narrowed his eyes, and smirked. "Weasleys! Five points from Gryffindor for making a scene!"

Fred and George began protesting loudly, but Salazar just shook his head, and sat back down as Severus scoffed and shoved Salazar's schedule in his face. They all knew Minerva or Remus would correct the points later.

"What happened to getting through this year without drawing attention to ourselves?" Godric asked with a chuckle.

"Well, Severus and I have to have our yearly spat when he passes out the schedules." Salazar shrugged. "The year wouldn't feel right if we didn't."

Blaise snorted just as Neville and Hermione came hurrying over to compare schedules. They ended up having Defense together, as well as Runes, Creatures, and Potions, which made everyone happy. Colin and Luna also came over to compare their schedules with Godric, but just as they sat down, a loud bang was heard and several breakfast dishes rattled as someone slammed their hand down on the table.
"I have put up with filth sitting at this table for the last three years, but I won't anymore!" Montague shouted as he stood up. "Leave now!" He added, glaring at the three Gryffindors and lone Ravenclaw.

"Oh, so now that your little buddy Flint has finally graduated, you've taken his place as top Death Eater-in-training." Salazar said with an amused chuckle. "Congratulations."

"They are not going anywhere." Godric added, glaring at the boy. "They have every right to sit here."

"They are not in Slytherin! Tell them to go back to their own worthless tables." Montague said through gritted teeth.

"No." Salazar said, glaring at the idiot.

Salazar's simple matter-of-fact tone cause Neville to snort, which seemed to set off the high-strung Montague. The idiot boy jumped up and brandished his wand, but Salazar and the others were instantly on their feet. Hermione, Blaise, and Neville stood in front of Colin and Luna, with Salazar and Godric standing in front of them.

Salazar shook his head and sighed, then he looked at Montague. "Do you really want to take on all of us by yourself? I suggest you just reconsider." He said calmly.

"He's not alone!" Draco shouted, jumping up, along with Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, and Pansy. "You may think your better than us Potter, but you are far from it!"

"You and your filthy, unworthy friends are going to pay for all that you have done and said over the last few years Potter! We aren't going to put up with you any longer!" Pansy shouted.

"Is that right?" Salazar asked, as a bit of amusement flickered across his face.

"I insist you all stop this at once!" Albus shouted from the head table, as he glared at all of them. "Harry, apologize to Mr. Montague and his friends."

Salazar stared at Albus in shock. "Why? They are the ones who should apologize."

"Do as I said Harry." Albus said sternly.

"Absolutely not!" Salazar shouted, suddenly growing very angry. "I will not apologize for protecting my friends from Death Eaters-in-training. I won't! They were the ones calling Hermione, Colin, Neville, and Luna 'filthy' and 'unworthy'!"

"Harry, you will apologize for instigating the confrontation!" Albus shouted.

"Instigating the confrontation…" Salazar said in disbelief, as his voice trailed off and he stared at Albus, but then Salazar glared at him. "I'm not apologizing to them Headmaster, and as an educator, you should have enough common sense to not let the guilty party get away with their transgressions, while at the same time punishing the innocent! All it does is breed more bad behavior!" He shouted.

"Don't you shout at me Harry!" Albus exclaimed. "I saw what I saw!"

"Well you clearly need to clean your glasses." Salazar spat, causing Godric to snort loudly.

"One hundred points from Slytherin!" Albus shouted. "That puts Slytherin at negative points seeing as the year just started."
Salazar clinched his jaws together and glared daggers at Albus. "One hundred and ten points to Slytherin, for me having common sense!" He suddenly shouted.

Everyone watched in complete shock as ten emeralds fell into Slytherin's hourglass. Albus's mouth dropped open, but Salazar continued to glare at him.

"Do not trifle with me Headmaster, because you have no idea who you are dealing with."

"And just who is he dealing with Potter?" Moody asked, suddenly standing up and making his way to the side of the head table.

Salazar didn't take his eyes off Albus as he answered Moody. "Someone who has disarmed the man twice, stunned him once, and snapped his wand in half. Just get the kind and grandfatherly Headmaster to tell you all about the last day of my second year, when he tried to obliviate me!" He shouted. "I have the memory as proof if you don't believe me."

There was several gasps from not only the students, but the Professors as well, and Moody glanced sideways at Albus, as if waiting for an explanation.

However, Albus just glared at Salazar. "Harry, I know it wasn't you who did that. It was that Nilrem man instead. He must have been here that day."

This caused Salazar and Godric to burst out laughing. "That's all you have to say about it?" Godric asked. "You can't even admit that you tried to obliviate a twelve year old!"

"I did it for his own good!" Albus shouted as he glared at Godric.

"For my own good, or 'The Greater Good' Headmaster? Which was it?" Salazar asked pointedly, as he raised an eyebrow. "Your old pal Grindelwald would certainly be delighted to know that you have resurrected that particular phrase."

"ENOUGH!" A red faced and enraged Albus shouted. "Isn't it time for all of you to head to your first period classes!? I suggest you get there!"

Albus stalked out of the great hall with Moody at his heels, but the other students just sat there staring at Salazar and Godric, until Minerva started shooing everyone out of the great hall.

"So much for a quiet year." Godric grumbled, as they headed back to the Slytherin table to gather their things.

"What was I suppose to do? Let him walk all over us? No, I think not." Salazar replied gruffly.

"No it's not that." Godric replied, as they all made their way to the doors. "I was just talking about in general."

Salazar sighed and nodded. "I understand. Let's just try to get through the rest of the day as quietly as we can."

Hermione laughed. "Easier said than done I expect."

"Indeed." Salazar said, and rolled his eyes as Draco sneered at them.

Albus sighed heavily as he sat down in his desk chair, while Moody stood in a corner and swept the room with his magical eye. Albus called for some lemon tea and when it arrived, he stirred it slowly before looking up.
"Do you see what I mean about Harry being arrogant and a show-off?" Albus asked, looking over at his friend.

"I do, but Albus, I've got to disagree with you on one point. Potter didn't instigate anything." Moody said, eyeing Albus carefully.

Albus sighed again and nodded. "I know Alastor." He said quietly. "But I have been trying to be kind to those Slytherins who are in the most danger of becoming Death Eaters. I'm trying to send a message that I will stand up for them, and are willing to help them."

"And what of Potter?" Moody asked.

"Harry is a lost cause I'm afraid. Although, at times I wonder if it's not the horcrux in his scar that influences the boy. He acts so much like Voldemort did when he was in school."

"But you can't vilify Potter if he is innocent Albus, and I actually have to agree with the lad. Letting the guilty get away with things, and punishing the innocent isn't going to solve anything. It's just going to make the problem worse. I know those kid's families. Malfoy, Nott, Parkinson, Crabbe, Goyle, and Montague spout the same rhetoric that their father's do. You can't save them all Albus."

"I saved Severus." Albus said sharply.

"That's because Snape wanted to be saved. These ones don't, but I still don't even know if I trust Snape."

"Well I do." Albus replied. "All I ask you to do is keep a watch out for Nicholas and Nilrem. They like to walk around here disillusioned and/or under invisibility cloaks. I don't trust them, nor do I trust Harry. Also, keep a watch on Karkaroff and the Durmstrang students when they arrive."

"I will Albus, that's why I'm here." Moody said gruffly. "But I have got to say, have you ever realized that 'Nilrem' is 'Merlin' spelled backwards?"

Albus looked up startled, but he tilted his head to the side and thought about it for a moment.

"So it is." He said, taking another sip of his tea. "His parents probably fancied the name and got cleaver with the spelling. He certainly isn't the first child his parents named after Merlin. Just watch out for him. He's a graduate of Durmstrang and I fully believe he is a dark wizard. Karkaroff may know something of him."

"I'll keep both my eyes open." Moody said with a nod. "I have another thing Albus, what of the hourglass? How was Potter able to give points to Slytherin?"

"A confundus charm I suspect." The Headmaster said, leaning back in his chair. "He's probably hoodwinked them to accept points from him."

"A fourth year!?" Moody exclaimed.

"Don't underestimate him Alastor." Albus warned. "That boy is capable of doing magic way beyond his age level, though admittedly, I've never been able to figure out how he is able to do the things he can."

Moody eyed him carefully, but then sighed. "I'll see if I can find out. I'm going to go make my rounds. I'll see you at lunch."

Albus nodded and watched Moody stagger out the room, but when his friend was gone, he sighed
No one understands Harry like I do. He thought scowl. He dangerous. Why can't people just see, and accept that?

Salazar had been in a bad mood all day, and not just because of what happened with Albus in the great hall that morning. All day long he had heard people whispering about him being a liar, and that he hadn't stunned the Headmaster. Nevermind that Albus practically admitted that it had happened.

Sometimes Salazar just didn't understand some wizards, or their lack of critical thinking skills.

Godric suggested he use the enchanted ceiling in the great hall as a pensieve to show the memory of Albus trying to obliviate him. He insisted it would put an end to those calling him a liar, but Salazar refused. He said it would only cause more problems and make people ask more questions.

Besides, he felt it was best to save that trick for a rainy day.

To his knowledge though, Salazar didn't think anyone knew about the true nature of the enchanted ceiling. In the 'old days', Helga would go on trips to study non-native magical plants, then she would come back and turn the ceiling into a pensieve and use it as a teaching tool. She'd point out and explain all the properties of different plants and herbs, and it was also a great way to show the children of those days different parts of the world.

Godric and Salazar used it to teach Defense Against and the Dark Arts at the same time. They would get into duels in an attempt to show both sides of the galleon, and then later they would bring their memories of the event back to the school. They couldn't hold these duels on school grounds though, because they were much too dangerous and Rowena was afraid someone would get hurt.

As Salazar settled into bed that night, he had a sudden pang of regret when he realized that he hadn't visited Helga and Rowena's graves in a while. Ever since Godric had reappeared in his life he had neglected them in favor of his best friend. He knew he needed to change that, so as he lay in bed staring at the ceiling, he vowed that he would visit them again soon.

In an old rundown manor house on the outskirts of Little Hangleton, a man was kneeling on the floor, whimpering in fright, and staring into the eyes of a large deadly predator.

"Hurry up Wormtail! I don't have all night!" A cold raspy voice snapped.


"Try to bite him, but don't really do it." The voice said with a hint of amusement. "I want to see him squeal again."

"Can I take just a little piece of flesh Master?"

"No. He will die, and all of our hard work will be for naught."

The large greenish snake huffed with annoyance, but snapped at the whimpering rat like man, and watched with delight as he squealed and jumped backwards quickly.

"Wormtail!"

"S-she will bite m-me Master."
"No she won't! Now hurry up!"

Peter whimpered again as he eyed Nagini closely, but scurried back towards her. He held up a small phial with a shaking hand, and watched in horror as her fangs descended from their resting place. Placing the phial just underneath one of her fangs, he carefully collected the small amount of venom she deposited into it, but as soon as he had corked the bottle, she hissed loudly and lunged towards him.

Peter screamed loudly, and landed with a soft thump on his back as Voldemort looked on in amusement.

"That was a good one Nagini. You'll have to do that again."

"I try to please you Master." She said in a silky voice as she slithered over towards him.

Peter quickly scrambled to his feet and, made his way over to the bubbling potion that was sitting in the corner. He placed a small amount of the potion into the phial, mixed the two, and with a terribly shaking hand, placed the phial to the deformed and grotesque lips of his master.

After he drank the potion, Voldemort smiled a twisted cruel smile.

"Nagini, now you may chase the rat around the room."

"With pleasure Master!" She exclaimed.

He watched for several minutes as a screaming Peter ran around in circles trying to get away from the large reptile, but Voldemort finally called a halt to the evening's entertainment with a flick of his hand.

"Wormtail, I am cold. Place my chair closer to the fire." He commanded, lifting a twisted finger and pointing towards the fireplace.

"Of course Master." The out-of-breath man wheezed, and carefully moved the chair into the desired location.

Voldemort stared into the fire and watched the flames flicker and dance.

_The boy dares to curse me and my lineage. He will pay for that._ He thought as his scowl deepened. _With Crouch being caught and now in Azkaban, I need to figure out a new way in order to get Potter into the Triwizard Tournament. He needs to be kept alive through out it though. How do I go about doing that?_ He mused, still staring into the fire as Nagini gleefully began chasing Wormtail around the room again.

Chapter End Notes

Ugh, this chapter gave me so many problems. It's not as good as i wanted it to be, and apologize for that. However, the next chapter will be the one you are all waiting for, and all those questions you guys have will be answered. You have my word!
Expansions and Champions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*A/N* Hey guys, i know that the beginning of this chapter is a little weird, but i have a purpose for it which will become a lot clearer towards the end of 5th year. I know what Salazar does is very 'drastic measures' but i ask you guys to remember, there is a method to the madness.

Chapter 38

Expansions and Champions

The month of September was a whirlwind of activity inside the castle as preparations were made for the arrival of Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, and Salazar was stressed out because of it all. On top of classes, which actually didn't bother him in the least, a large scale cleaning of the castle was underway, along with a campaign by Minerva to 'teach the students how to make themselves presentable', which he was fully in support of. Godric even found himself snapping at random children, telling them to dress correctly, and to pick up their discarded pieces of parchment and other assorted rubbish. They both called in Peaky and Dobby to help with the cleaning, and began pointing out specific areas that needed an extra good scrubbing.

Neville, Fred, George, and Blaise began teasing them, but Hermione fully supported the two Founders, and reminded the others that they wanted to be proud of the school, because after all, they did help create it. That seemed to silence the rest, and they also began helping out where they could. Fred and George even went as far as to charm hats that loudly shouted 'Pick up your rubbish!' along with 'You need to comb your hair!' and 'Let's make Hogwarts shine!' which always brought a smile to everyone's face.

However, the preparations weren't the only thing causing Salazar undue stress. Albus and Moody were behind a lot of it.

Albus and Moody seemed to pop up at the most unexpected times, and while Albus didn't speak to Salazar, Moody did. He asked him all kinds of questions, but Salazar saw no point in lying to the man. When Moody asked him why he disliked Albus, Salazar gave the grizzled ex-Auror more than he bargained for. Salazar flat out told him all about the abuse at the Dursleys, Albus's manipulations during first year and how he used the stone to 'try' and lure Voldemort to Hogwarts, Albus's outright hostility during second year and the fact that he almost got Ron killed, and finally last year when Albus began his slandering campaign of his character.

To say that Moody was shocked was an understatement, and Salazar asked Moody if he could like or trust someone who did those kinds of things.

To which Moody simply replied, "No."

Salazar didn't know how much Albus had told the man, but as far as Salazar was concerned, at least Moody now knew the truth about why he hated the Headmaster.

It was also during this time that the Slytherin common room had turned into a war zone, though the 'war' only involved Draco, Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, Pansy, and Montague vs. Salazar, Blaise, and
Spells were shot at them at random times, homework was stolen or torn up, books, quills, parchment, and ink bottles were stolen, and they tried to poison Nora twice.

Severus told them they needed to stop, but because Albus had turned a blind eye to what was happening, they didn't listen, so there wasn't much Severus could do without blowing his cover.

Minerva tried to step in and handle it properly, but Albus stopped her and said 'they (meaning Draco and company) needed to be shown compassion'. When Salazar heard that, it sent him into a near blind rage and he blew up three-quarters of the common room, nearly causing it to flood when the windows looking out into the lake exploded.

Albus tried to take points and give him detention for doing it, but Salazar just put the points back and absolutely refused to show up to the detention.

And the assault still continued.

Salazar and Godric told Blaise to defend himself in any way necessary, but as for the two Founders, they tried not to retaliate, seeing as they were adults and could hurt the idiots…badly. Meanwhile, Nora suggested that they feed Draco and his cohorts to the Shrew, but they shot that idea down.

In between all of this mess, they managed to section off a small back corner of the common room and set up the blood protection ward that Salazar used to protect their bed areas. This stopped the theft, destruction, and spells, but it only forced Draco and the others to think up cunning ways of attacking them when they walked in the common room.

Getting from the door to their corner was like running a gauntlet, and Salazar was getting tired of it. Albus kept allowing Draco and the others to get away with all but murder, and seeing as Severus was undercover and Minerva's job had been threatened on more than one occasion already, Salazar and Godric decided to put an end to it themselves.

An idea came on the last day of September when Godric grumbled about having a safe place to study and sleep, and that was when Salazar came up with a brilliant plan.

He decided it was time to expand the Slytherin common room.

Using their protected corner as an entry point, and using the same spells they used to build the castle itself, they blasted a temporary hole in the common room floor and began excavating underneath the entire common room.

For the next four days, loud bangs, low rumbles, and shouts could be heard throughout the main common room as the floor shook because of the vibrations coming from underneath. Salazar and Godric broke down the bedrock and vanished the loose rocks, debris, and dust, while Blaise stayed in the main common room so that he didn't get in trouble.

It was Saturday, the fourth day, when Albus finally made his appearance. He stalked into the Slytherin common room red faced with anger, and with Moody, Remus, Minerva, and Severus following behind him. When they entered the common room, they immediately ducked on instinct as a loud reverberating boom caused all the tables in the common room to shuffle across the floor.

Severus, Remus, and Minerva almost burst out laughing when they heard muffled voice suddenly shout, 'You bloody Gryffindor! You could have killed me!' followed closely by loud obnoxious laughter.
"I demand to know what is happening here!" Albus shouted, causing several already frightened students to jump in their seats.

"It's like we told Professor Snape sir!" Pansy cried. "It's Potter and Roffin. They are doing something underneath the floor, but they won't say what!"

"Zabini!" Severus shouted. "Get Potter and Roffin up here NOW!"

Blaise jumped out of his seat and stuck his head in the hole to shout down at them, and a few minutes later a few people yelped when Salazar stuck his head out of the middle of the common room floor. He rose up a few more feet until just his upper body was hanging out of the solid stone. He was covered in dirt and dust, and his hair had small bits of rocks stuck in it.

"Can I help you Headmaster?" He asked, giving Albus an annoyed look. "Gordy and I are in a bit of a mess down here and really don't want to be interrupted. Is there a way to continue this conversation later?"

Remus snorted before he could stop himself, and Albus glared at him before he turned to glare at Salazar.

"I demand to know what you are doing down there!" Albus shouted.

"Building a safer common room." Salazar answered simply. "Which, I might add, you have denied us." He continued as he glared at Draco and the others.

"Potter, how are you building another common room?" Moody asked as his eye whirled in its socket. "And how are you able to stick out of the floor like that?"

"With a few spells. Namely lots of blasting curses, gouging spells, vanishing charms, a bit of transfiguration, and a whole lot of planning." He answered with a nod. "As for my present location, we know of a potion that can allow someone to walk through walls. Which is how we were able to start this little project in the first place."

"But how Harry?" Albus asked through gritted teeth. "Hogwarts has not let anyone expand or build anything in, on, or around the castle since the Founders. Why is Hogwarts letting you build?"

Salazar shrugged. "How should I know, you're the Headmaster, but maybe it's because Hogwarts knows the Heir of Gryffindor is not safe here, so she is allowing me to do the work." He answered, which caused Albus to give him a leveled stare.

"We are just thankful that Hogwarts looks after her own." Godric said, also sticking his head out of the floor, but then he turned to Salazar. "Hey, I'm thinking about building a tunnel that will directly connect to the Chamber of Secrets. That way if Emeralda wants to visit it will be easier for her."

"An excellent idea! Emeralda has been cooped up in that Chamber long enough. She deserves to be let out."

"I'm glad you like it." Godric said with a sly grin. "Now, can I turn one wall of the new common room into a weapons wall?"

Salazar's face fell as he glared at him. "Of course there would be a compromise." He grumbled. "Well played my friend."

"Brilliant!" Godric cried, as he disappeared back into the space below.
"Potter," Moody growled. "Who, and what, is Emeralda?"

"Oh, she is the giant snake that lives in Salazar Slytherin's infamous Chamber of Secrets. She is really nice, but she's very large. She is actually a sixty foot basilisk."

Several students screamed, and some gasped and covered their mouths. Moody staggered backwards in shock, but Albus sighed heavily and shook his head. However, Moody regained his composure quickly and studied Salazar closely.

"Potter, do you know what a basilisk is? Do you know that they can…"

"Kill you with a glance?" Salazar interrupted. "Yes Mr. Moody, I'm quite aware of that. She has told me of precautions and spells that Slytherin placed on her so that she couldn't accidently kill anyone, though if you look into her eyes she can still petrify you. I'm sure she will allow us to use a sticking charm to place towels over her eyes. Not to mention, it would make us feel a tad bit safer around here."

Albus scowled at him. "Harry, I demand you stop this nonsense at once. There is no need for such drastic measures."

"Oh I think there is." Salazar said calmly. "I am tired of having to constantly watch my back around here, so I decided to do something about it."

"I will expel Mr. Roffin if you don't stop." Albus stated.

"Expel him, and I will leave too." Salazar spat. "Despite your current feelings about me, I know you still need me for...various purposes. As long as I'm under this roof, you can keep an eye on me. Who knows what kind of dark and dangerous magic I could fall into if the 'Leader of the Light' isn't watching over me." He replied, rolling his eyes.

"POTTER!" Severus shouted. "You will show some respect…"

"No!" Salazar shouted. "I won't show him any respect! What in the bloody hell has that man ever done to earn it!?"

"POTTER!"

"Harry, I demand you apologize to me!" Albus shouted.

"Headmaster, you can take your wanting an apology and shove it up your…"

"HARRY!" Remus shouted with warning. "You're walking a thin line there young man."

Salazar took a deep calming breath. "I'm sorry Professor Lupin, but I still won't apologize to the Headmaster."

"Well, that is for you to decide." Remus answered. "But I must ask you this, and I only ask because I am worried about your safety. You say you are building a common room, but how big is it and is it safe?"

"Oh, well that is an easy question." He said with a grin. "Yes, it is safe. It's the exact same size as this one, but it won't be as tall. The dorms will be…"

"You're building new dorms!?" Minerva cried.

"Yes ma'am." He answered with a nod. "With just enough beds for Gordy, Blaise, and I. We are
also putting in two loos and a shower room. The loos, showers, and new dorm is going to be over there along that wall." He said, pointing towards the lake side. "I rather enjoy the sound of the water swishing around at night. We are also going to add a few large windows looking out into the lake and a larger fireplace."

"I see." She answered with a raised eyebrow.

"Sounds down right awful." Pansy spat. "Who wants to stay down there in your dingy old tomb?"

Salazar ignored her. "Anyway, we are actually about halfway through with the excavation of the bedrock down here. We did spring a minor leak, and lake water started trickling in, but with a bit of creativity, transfiguration, and charms, we turned it into a nice decorative waterfall. Since it's the weekend, we are hoping to get it done by Monday so the noise and distractions will stop. We really don't want to disturb the fifth and seventh years more than we have too. We also should be completely finished with it by the end of the month, if we don't get interrupted too much."

"I'm sure the fifth and seventh years appreciate that Mr. Potter." Minerva said with a slight smile.

"And just how do you plan on getting into your tomb Potter?" Draco asked with a smirk. "Are you going to jump in your little hole every time?"

Salazar rolled his eyes and chuckled. "No Draco, it's called stairs. Stairs are something you walk up and down. They get you from one floor to another. Your parents should have taught you that by now."

"Don't question my parents!" He shouted.

"Then don't ask stupid questions Draco, and I won't have to question your parent's parenting skills. Although, from what I have witnessed, they are severely lacking in that department."

"Shut up Potter!" Draco cried, but then he smirked. "At least I have parents."

"Mr. Malfoy!" Remus yelled. "Fifteen points from Slytherin!"

Draco sneered at him when Albus leaned over to quietly whisper something in Remus's ear, and Salazar noticed Remus clenching his jaw and tightening his grip on his wand.

"As I was saying, we are going to have stairs that come down from that corner." Salazar said, pointing to the protected corner. "We have plans to build a separate entrance and tunnel so that we aren't attacked when we walk in here. In fact, we won't even need to step foot in this part of the Slytherin common room again. We are calling our new Slytherin common room, The Snake Pit, seeing as there will be live snakes down here. It was Nora's idea."

"Sounds like you have this all figured out Potter." Moody commented, still scanning the room below their feet. "Where will the entrance be located?"

"In the entrance hall." Salazar said. "We will build a tunnel that connects straight from there to here. It will partially block off the protected corner because we will have to build a new wall, but it won't be much. The entrance will also be protected by a Parseltongue question that can be answered in English, and set up for entry similar to the Ravenclaw common room."

"And just how do you know what measures are taken to get into the Ravenclaw common room?" Albus asked hotly.

"Luna." Salazar said simply.
Albus glared at him. "Harry, I'm afraid I cannot allow this to continue."

"And just how do you plan to stop us?" Salazar asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I'll ask Hogwarts herself to stop the work."

Salazar scoffed. "Good luck with that Headmaster." He said with a wave, then he disappeared back through the floor.

Albus gritted his teeth and glared at the spot Salazar was just in, but Remus turned to Moody.

"Mad-Eye, can I trouble you in asking something? Is it really safe for them to be down there?"

Moody sighed as he scanned the room below. "I actually can't see any problems Remus, and truthfully, it looks very good so far. The space looks to be about sixteen feet high and as big as this whole common room. Just like Potter said, they are using the gouging spell, which I'm sure you know allows them to cut through the bedrock easier. That would explain the progress they've made in such a short amount of time."

"How many people are down there?" Albus asked, staring at the floor. "Do you see anyone else?"

"No Albus. It's just Potter and Roffin." He answered. "Oh, hold on!" He suddenly cried.

The floor shook violently, and sent the table and chairs shuffling around the room.

"That was a gouging spell." Moody sighed. "It looks like they have about half left to do, which if they keep going like they are, they may actually finish before Monday."

"Well that would be a welcome relief!" A fifth year shouted as the floor shook once more.

"I will find a way to put a stop to this." Albus growled. "I cannot have students taking it upon themselves to do things like this. I am the Headmaster, and I am in control here. This is my school!" He shouted as he stalked out the room.

Minerva and Remus shared a slight smirk as Severus fought to keep his face free of emotion, but Moody looked at them curiously before following Albus out the room.

It had been two weeks after the confrontation in the Slytherin common room, and Albus was leaning forward at his desk and rubbing his temples in frustration. There was only one week before Beauxbatons and Durmstrang arrived, and he had hoped to have this nonsense with Harry cleared up by then.

Unfortunately for Albus, things were not going his way.

"Potter is a cunning little Slytherin isn't he?" Moody chuckled as Albus glared at him.

"What are you saying Alastor?"

"Just that I think this is a large game of chess, and if I may be blunt, you're losing."

Albus sighed as he leaned back in his desk chair. "I've tried everything. Absolutely everything. Hogwarts refuses to stop their work. I have forbidden the elves to tend to this new common room, but you tell me that they have personal elves down there helping them. Where and when did Harry get an elf?" He asked, throwing his hands into the air.
"You brought this on yourself." Moody said, leaning against the wall. "By allowing Malfoy and his little gang to attack Potter and get away with it, you forced his hand. Personally, I think the lads have shown great restraint. Zabini is the only one that fights back, and it looks like Potter and Roffin live behind shield charms. Thankfully Malfoy and the others aren't stupid enough to attack them in the halls or during classes, else they'd never be able to come out of their new living space. Which is almost complete from what I've seen. They are in the decorating stage right now."

"I know they have had help Alastor. Nicholas and that Nilrem man are behind this. I just know it!" Albus cried, banging his hand on the desk.

"Albus, I have not seen any strange men walking around the school. Everything that Potter and Roffin are doing, they are doing alone, except for the elves."

"But how!" Albus shouted, jumping out of his chair. "I know Harry is powerful and capable of doing things beyond his age level, but how!? Mr. Roffin is the same way! How, just how are they doing this!?"

"I don't know Albus, but from what I have seen, you are chasing ghosts by insisting that Flamel and Nilrem have been responsible for Potter and his behavior. Potter is doing this himself."

Albus sighed and shook his head. "Watch them Alastor. Just watch them. If you see anything out of the ordinary, please let me know."

"I will, but don't expect me to sugar coat what I have to say, and if I think you're wrong about something I'll speak my mind."

"I know you will." Albus replied as his shoulders slumped.

Moody nodded, before thumping out of the Headmaster's office.

"…and with that we are done!" Salazar cried out happily as he and Godric stood around to admire their handy work.

It was Friday evening, the night before the arrival of Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, and the new common room was completely finished. The once rough stone walls were smooth and polished to a shine. The floor had a slight greenish hue thanks to color changing charms, and they even managed to bring in large rugs to cover parts of the floor. Godric had pitched a fit over the color scheme, saying he didn't want just green and silver, so Salazar had to settle for green and gold instead. Looking at the finished product though, he reluctantly admitted it had been a good decision.

The waterfall worked perfectly and provided a soothing sound throughout the room, and the large fireplace in the middle warmed it to a comfortable temperature. Most of the furnishing and decorating had been done by Peaky and Dobby, with Perenelle, Lily, and Minerva's advice.

The furniture was of very high quality, and there was plenty of richly upholstered couches, lounge chairs, and armchairs made from green, gold, and black fabrics. There were several wooden tables and chairs for studying, and there was a large built-in library full of books, while several flame chandeliers and lamps brought light into the area.

It was richly decorated with snake statues, trinkets of all sorts, wall hangings, and pictures of landscapes. They had charmed two large portions of the wall to be see through so that they could look out into the lake, and Godric's weapons wall was solid black with silver brackets that displayed all manner of swords, daggers, and other weapons he had collected over the years.
There were three tunnels leading out of the room. One lead from the Chamber to the new common room for Emeraldra's use, one that connected to Salazar's personal tunnel to make getting off the grounds a little easier, and of course the main entrance tunnel that began in the entrance hall.

The dorm portion was set up for three individual bedrooms, with a common shower room and two toilets, and they had managed to tie all of the necessary plumbing into the schools existing plumbing.

To say that it was extravagant was an understatement, but that had been Salazar's goal all along.

"I still can't believe you two did all this." Hermione said, shaking her head.

"I can't believe that we are standing in the 'other' Slytherin common room." Neville added.

Salazar shrugged. "What does it matter? It's not like any of them can protest or keep you out of here." He said, pointing to the ceiling.

"But it is a bit dark in here, even with all of the lamps." Blaise added.

"Ah!" Salazar exclaimed with a large grin. "And that is where our final surprise comes in!"

He waved his wand over the entire ceiling, and suddenly, they were looking straight up into the main Slytherin common room area. Several students cried out in shock, thinking they were going to suddenly fall through the floor, but others screamed in terror as they caught sight of Emeraldra sprawled out in the room below them.

"I'd like to see those miserable little snots try to attack you now Speaker." Nora said in a haughty tone. "They will never make it past me or the Shrew alive."

"For once I agree with you Fish Bait." Emeraldra hissed softly.

"Well that does provide a lot more light down here, but please tell me they can't look down into our bedrooms or the bathroom." Blaise said, giving Salazar a worried glance.

Salazar gave him a 'do I look that stupid to you' look, before grinning and waving up at a completely shocked Draco and Pansy.

"Well, our new accommodations are done." Godric laughed. "I say we relax a bit."

"You two old and ancient codgers did pretty well, if I do say so myself!" Fred exclaimed, as he and George finished poking around and looking at everything.

"I like it, but why the see through ceiling?" George asked, as he stuck his tongue out at a scowling Draco.

"Well for starters, it allows more light in, but it also allows Albus to check up on us so that he can't accuse us of conducting secret 'dark' magic experiments and things, and lastly, it allows me to keep an eye on them." Salazar replied pointing at Draco, Pansy, Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, and Montague, who were scowling and apparently yelling about something, though Salazar and the others couldn't understand what it was, seeing as it was muffled.

"Looks like we have company." Blaise said, pointing to the main common room door.

Albus came storming in with Minerva, Remus, Severus, Moody, and a seventh year prefect trailing after him, but they all stopped dead in their tracks as they took in the sight below them. Salazar sighed, summoned the 'Walking-Through-Walls' potion, and took a sip before passing it off to
"Give some to Blaise too." He said. "But you all need to stay here. The Slytherins won't count this as being part of the common room, even though I have sanctioned it as such, but that way you can never be accused of being in the 'main' Slytherin common room."

The Gryffindors all nodded, but Godric began building a flight of stairs that stopped just short of the ceiling, and he, Salazar, and Blaise made their way up through the ceiling to speak with Albus.

"Welcome to the official opening of The Snake Pit!" Salazar cried happily, causing Albus to glare at him. "As you can see we are very comfortable and cozy down here."

"Mr. Potter, is that... is that..." Minerva stuttered, pointing towards Emeralda.

"The basilisk? Yes it is. You can see that she is very gentle, as evidenced by Hermione sitting on top of her head." Salazar replied, causing Blaise to snort. "But she is very protective of me for some odd reason, so I wouldn't trifle with me, or her for that matter."

"I think it's because you can speak Parseltongue." Godric added.

"I have been writing to him, Mr. and Mrs. Flamel, and Mr. Nilrem to keep them updated. In fact, Mrs. Flamel even helped us pick out most of the decorations, and Blaise's Mum even offered her advice as well."

"Mr. Potter, it seems to me that you have thought of everything."

"Probably." Salazar replied. "You know, I just thought of something. Maybe Hagrid can make basilisks the subject of one of his lessons during next term. Emeralda would be happy to make an appearance."

"Hagrid would certainly appreciate that Mr. Potter. I shall approach him with the idea."

"I think it's because you can speak Parseltongue." Godric added.

"No, I'll take your word for it." She said with a nod, already knowing that Blaise's Mum had said it was ok. "And you Mr. Roffin?"

"It's the same." Godric replied. "Though my parents were thinking about home school instead of Beauxbatons or Durmstrang. I talked them out it though. Besides, they know Nehum would protect me if any major harm came my way."

"Who is Nehum Roffin?" Moody asked gruffly as he eyed Emeralda.
"He's my phoenix sir."

"Phoenix!" Moody exclaimed, looking at Albus in shock.

"Yes, the boy has a phoenix." Albus grumbled.

Moody eyed Godric as if seeing him for the first time, and his magical eye slid from him, to Albus, to Salazar, and back to Godric, before settling on Draco and his friends, who were glaring angrily at the trio sticking up out of the floor.

"Speaking of..." Salazar said, snapping his fingers. "Both Nehum and Hedwig could now reside down here with us. We just need to install a way for Hedwig to get in and out."

"Oh that's going to go over real well with Nora." Blaise said as he burst out laughing.

Salazar grinned. "Nora will just have to live with it. Besides, after the two attempts on Nora's life, I don't trust anyone to protect Hedwig from the same thing." He said, glaring at Draco and Albus pointedly.

"Harry, I don't want you down there." Albus said, crossing his arms in front of him. "I insist you stop all this nonsense and come back up here where you belong."

"I'm sorry Headmaster, but under the circumstances, I have to decline. My life has been threatened numerous times and I won't stand for it any longer. You refuse to put a stop to it, and because of your negligence, you have put myself, Gordy, and more importantly, Blaise in danger. You have some kind of complex that makes you think you are the be all, end all of the universe, and it is disgusting." He spat.

"POTTER!" Severus yelled.

Salazar ignored him and continued. "I feel it is my duty to issue you a fair warning Headmaster." He said in a cold, deadly tone. "I am gathering evidence of child neglect and endangerment against you, and I fully intend to see you out of this school. It won't be this year and it may not be next year, but I promise you, it will come and you will no longer be Headmaster. That title will go to someone who is worthy of such a respected position. You have been warned."

Minerva's eyes were wide as galleons, Moody was studying him closely, Remus was in shock, and Severus, ever the spy, glared at him. Albus however, looked down right murderous.

"Bold words Harry. Especially coming from a fourteen year old. You say not to trifle with you, well I should afford the same warning to you. Do not trifle with me." Albus said in an equally cold manner. "You have no idea who you are dealing with."

"That's the difference between us Headmaster. I do know who I am dealing with. It is you who doesn't." Salazar replied, before turning and heading back down into the new common room.

The next morning, Salazar sat bolt upright in his bed as a scream ripped through the new common room. He leapt up out of the bed with just his pajama pants on, grabbed his wand, and rushed into the lounge area where he saw Blaise standing in front of one of the large windows shaking with fear.

"What is it? What's wrong?!" A wide eyed Godric cried, running into the room in a similar manner, but with a dagger in one hand and his wand in the other.

Blaise pointed a shaking finger at the window. "Squid." He managed to croak out.
Salazar glanced at where the young man was pointing and nearly stumbled backwards in shock. The giant squid had apparently stuck itself to the window, and its massive tentacles were spread out as if he were trying to devour the thing.

"And I thought someone managed to get in here." Godric mumbled as he stared at it.

Salazar glanced at him and snorted. "Godric, why do you have a dagger in your hand?"

"I always sleep with a dagger under my pillow." He replied, as if it was the most normal thing in the world.

"I'm sorry I yelled you guys, but it scared me. I've just never seen it do…that." He said motioning to the window. "I've only ever seen it swim by in the main common room."

"It's alright Blaise, don't worry about it." Salazar chuckled as he shook his head.

"Are we having sushi for breakfast?" Nora asked as she made her way into the room.

Blaise burst out laughing. "No Nora, but the sushi may be having us for a meal."

"As long as it stays out there doesn't come in here." She replied, causing Salazar to snort.

Shaking his head at Nora's sometimes oblivious nature, Salazar made his way into the bathroom to go about getting ready for the day.

The rest of the day was spent lounging in the new common room studying, doing homework, and reading. Fred and George brought their friend Lee down into the Snake Pit because Lee didn't believe them about the giant squid, which hadn't moved all day, and Colin took several pictures of it. Luna stared at it in fascination and said that they would never have a nargle problem, because apparently nargles were afraid of squids.

That only caused Hermione to giggle a bit.

However, as evening drew near they began getting ready for the arrival of Durmstrang and Beauxbatons, and before Salazar knew it, the time had come.

"Comb your hair Mr. Finnegan! Mrs. Brown that is not the proper way to wear a hat! Mr. Weasley, tuck in your shirt!" Minerva cried as her expert eye roamed over her Gryffindors.

Salazar, Godric, Blaise, Neville, Hermione, Colin, and Luna were standing next to the door of the new common room grinning like fools as they watched the flustered Deputy Headmistress sweep through the crowd. The entire school was gathered to welcome Beauxbatons and Durmstrang. The students were crowded in the entrance hall, and the Professors were standing outside the front door, wrapped up in cloaks, and shivering against the cold.

An excited murmur filled the air as they waited, but suddenly someone shouted, "Look! Up there!"

"Beauxbatons Academy of Magic has arrived!" Albus called out loudly, as five winged horses landed gracefully on the lawn in front of the front doors, and the students and their Headmistress carefully got out of the carriage.

Salazar and Godric stood a little taller and smiled politely as they approached, even though the two Founders were deeply buried in the crowd of students, they still felt it was their duty to act appropriately.
Albus greeted Madam Maxime and showed them inside. The Beauxbatons students gazed around the castle, but Salazar felt like hexing a few of them as they scowled.

About fifteen minutes later, someone shouted to look at the lake and everyone gasped and began talking excitedly as a ship rose up out of the water.

"Well that was quite impressive." Godric murmured, and Salazar nodded his approval.

It wasn't long before the Durmstrang students made their way towards the castle, and from his position at the back of the crowd, Salazar glared at Karkaroff. He had already told the others about the man being a Death Eater so they knew to stay away from him.

Albus greeted the Durmstrang students warmly, but suddenly a low buzz of a different sort swept through the crowd.

"Is that Viktor Krum!" One girl shouted.

"Where?!" Cried another.

Salazar chuckled as Godric's eyes widened and he practically climbed the wall behind them in order to get a better look at the young Quidditch player.

"Godric, what are you doing?" He asked, grinning at his best friend.

"It's Viktor Krum!" Godric whispered.

Hermione giggled. "It's nice to know that even you two can get excited over a celebrity." She said, and Godric chuckled.

"He is one of my favorite Quidditch players, but I didn't know he was going to be here this year. This is brilliant! I wonder what Ron is doing?"

Salazar burst out laughing. "Probably the same thing you are." He replied.

Godric whopped him upside the head, making the others laugh, but it was at that point Albus announced the feast, and they all headed for the great hall.

They all sat at their respective tables, but everyone was shocked when Beauxbatons sat with Ravenclaw and Durmstrang sat with Slytherin. Godric couldn't wipe the grin off his face when Krum sat two seats away from him, and for a moment, Salazar thought that he was going to make a fool of himself because of it, but thankfully Godric managed to hold in his excitement.

Albus once again welcomed the two schools, and the feast began. Thankfully nothing out of the ordinary happened during it, but after the feast was over, a hush fell over the great hall as the Goblet of Fire was brought out.

Albus stood beside the goblet and smiled brightly around at everyone. "Three of you," he began. "Will go on to be this year's Triwizard Champion!" He cried, causing an excited hum to fill the great hall. "All you must do is simply write your name upon a piece of parchment and place it in the goblet, but be warned, this decision is not to be made lightly. People have died in this tournament before." He said ominously as he gazed around the room, but then he continued.

"Those who wish to submit their names will only have twenty-four hours to do so, and at this time tomorrow night the Champions will be selected. Now, as you all know, no one under seventeen is allowed to compete, and to ensure that this does not happen, an age line will be put in place. I advise
you not to try and cross it." He added with an amused smile, as he glanced over at the Gryffindor table with twinkling eyes. "As of this moment, the Triwizard Tournament has begun!" He cried loudly.

Blue flames suddenly erupted out of the Goblet of Fire, and everyone stared at it in wonder. Salazar chuckled as he looked around the great hall. Students from every house were whispering and a few were even writing their names down.

Godric started chuckling too, and he pointed over to the Gryffindor table where Fred, George, and Lee already had their heads together and appeared to be plotting something.

"Ten galleons says they will try an aging potion." Godric said with a grin.

"You're on." Salazar laughed. "But I'm going to say they will have an older student put their names in."

Godric snorted. "Maybe, but I say an aging potion."

"We'll see." Salazar said, and they began clapping as students began putting their names in the Goblet.

The feast was officially over, but they hung around for a while to see who would be submitting their names. About ten students from Hogwarts had already entered, as well as three from Beauxbatons, and four from Durmstrang. Krum was one of these students, and everyone hushed and watched him with wide eyes as he put his name in.

After about thirty minutes people started wander off. Salazar, Godric, and Blaise said goodnight to Hermione and the others before heading off to the new common room for the evening.

It had been a long day for those waiting to see if they had been chosen to be Champion, and for those wanting to know who the Champions were going to be. Salazar lost the bet with Godric, and grumbled loudly when the twins had indeed used aging potion, though everyone burst out laughing because they had grown long white beards.

Finally the moment had come though. Ludo Bagman, along with Albus, Karkaroff, and Madam Maxime had just finished eating the feast that had been prepared for Halloween. Albus stood up, and everyone's attention focused on him as the food, plates, goblets, and eating utensils disappeared.

"In just a few moments, the Goblet will select the Champions. I ask those who are chosen to make their way into the great hall's antechamber please." He said with a smile. "Good luck to you all!"

As soon as those words left his mouth, the Goblet erupted in bright red sparks, and a piece of parchment flew out of the Goblet.

"The Champion for Beauxbatons…Fleur Delacour!" He cried.

The great hall erupted in applause and cheers, as well as a few cat calls and whistles, when a blond headed witch stood up gracefully at the Ravenclaw table. She shook hands with Albus, Karkaroff, and Ludo Bagman before disappearing into the antechamber.

Seconds later, another name burst out of the Goblet and Albus snatched it out of the air.

"The Champion for Durmstrang…Viktor Krum!"
The great hall erupted in more cheers and Krum got up and headed for the antechamber as well, after shaking hands with everyone.

The great hall became quiet as everyone awaited for the last champion, and when the Goblet lit up for the third time and Albus smiled widely as he caught it.

"The Champion for Hogwarts…Cedric Diggory!"

The Hufflepuff table exploded as they all jumped up to pat the Quidditch Caption on the back. The rest of the great hall cheered and clapped with them, but Salazar felt a small pang of envy because it wasn't a Slytherin. However, he was still proud of the young man.

Cedric was truly worthy, and he knew if Helga were alive that she'd be beaming with pride. He looked at Godric, who was clapping and cheering his hardest, and Salazar knew he felt the same way.

However, everyone gasped in surprise as the Goblet's flames turned bright red once again, and everyone stared as another piece of parchment was spit out.

Albus reached out in confusion to grab it, but when he read the name, his face turned bright red with anger and he glared at the Slytherin table.

"HARRY POTTER!" He bellowed through gritted teeth.

Salazar froze in his seat in shock, and everyone in the room gasped as they stared at him. Godric had stopped cheering and nearly fell out of his seat when he sat down with a thump. Blaise stared at him in disbelief, but already the whispers and accusations began to erupt from those in the great hall. Several people yelled 'cheat' while others yelled 'show-off'.

Albus nearly stomped over towards Salazar and when he reached him, Albus hauled him to his feet by his arm.

"Turn me loose this instant!" Salazar shouted, sending a stinging jinx at Albus's hand.

Albus ignored him and practically dragged the struggling and shouting Salazar into the antechamber, where a heated argument between Ludo Bagman, Madam Maxime, and Karkaroff was loudly taking place. A wide eyed Minerva, Severus, Moody, and one ticked off looking werewolf entered just a few seconds after them.

Albus roughly shoved him across the room, but Salazar had already had enough of being manhandled and as he spun around, he quickly brought his wand up and non-verbally cast the severing charm.

Unfortunately, Albus was ready for him and blocked it with a simple shield charm. Salazar glared at him with all the hatred he had in him, but Albus was doing the same and they both stood there snarling at each other.

Madam Maxime, Karkaroff, Bagman, Cedric, Fleur, and Krum stood there watching this in stunned silence, but Remus, Moody, Minerva, and Severus didn't even flinch.

"Tell me why you did this!" Albus demanded.

"I didn't do anything!" Salazar shouted. "I have no idea why my name came out of the goblet!"

"Lies!" Albus cried. "I knew you were an arrogant show-off, but Harry, this is unfair to the other
schools! Hogwarts isn't meant to have two Champions!"

"I already told you I didn't do anything! I'm just as shocked as you are!"

"Stop lying to me!" Albus shouted.

"Let me see the paper, I guarantee it isn't my handwriting!" Salazar shouted, causing Albus to pause for a moment.

Albus shoved the piece of parchment toward him, and Salazar snatched it out of his hand and studied it closely.

"Like I suspected, this isn't even my handwriting." He growled.

"Give it to me Potter." Severus sneered, holding his hand out expectantly.

Salazar handed it to him, and Severus studied it a moment before glancing at Albus.

"As much as is pains me to do so, I have to agree Headmaster. This isn't the brat's handwriting."

Albus scoffed loudly. "I know he still had something to do with it."

Salazar continued to glare at him, but then he raised his wand. Albus took a half a step backwards and tightened his grip on his own wand, but Salazar held his up in front of him.

"I swear upon my magic that I did not have anything to do with the name Harry Potter being placed in the Goblet of Fire." Salazar said in a clear voice, hoping that they didn't catch that he didn't say his own name.

A white wave of magic swirled around him for a moment before it settled, and Salazar brandished his wand.

"Expecto Patronum!" He cried, and his ten foot python erupted out the end of his wand, and settled down by his feet.

"Well Albus, he clearly isn't lying." Minerva said with a smirk, as everyone stared at the patronus.

Moody stared at the patronus in shock and glanced at Albus, who just glared at Salazar. Remus however, growled at the fuming Headmaster.

"Apologize Albus." He said through clenched teeth.

"Don't worry about it Professor Lupin. The man is incapable of admitting when he's wrong. Even though it is very frequent." Salazar spat.

"He had someone else do it." Albus said suddenly.

"I did not!" Salazar shouted. "For the love of Merlin Headmaster, I'm not responsible for everything that goes wrong! I don't even want to compete in this tournament!"

Albus glared at him. "You've done something Harry. I know you have, but regardless of what you want, you have to compete."

"No I bloody well don't!" Salazar shouted. "I did not put my name in the Goblet."

"You do Mr. Potter." Ludo Bagman interrupted nervously, as his eyes bounced between Albus and
Salazar. "Your name came out of the Goblet. You have to compete, you're under a magical binding contract."

"No I'm not." Salazar said in a matter-of-fact tone. "A contract, magical or muggle, needs both parties consent to be legal, and I certainly did not consent."

"Sirius won't let him compete anyway." Remus stated. "He's not seventeen."

"I doesn't matter." Bagman said. "Rules are rules."

"To hell with your rules." Minerva said stomping her foot. "Mr. Potter is not competing."

"Then he loses his magic." Bagman said. "It matters not if he consented. He will lose his magic."

Salazar turned his glare on Bagman, causing the man to shuffle backwards. "That is a load of rubbish and you know it. Show me anything that says someone will lose their magic. You can't because that doesn't happen. That is a scare tactic that won't work on me." He spat. "All that happens with a magically binding contract is the contract forces you to abide by whatever the contract states. I did not consent to this rubbish, nor did any other wizard who happens to be named Harry Potter." He said, glancing at Remus and Minerva. "Potter is a popular last name in the United States and Canada, and I'm pretty sure I'm not the only wizard in all of the wizarding world named Harry Potter, so unless you plan to round up all of us, I suggest you keep quiet Mr. Bagman." He said, causing Albus to glare at him, but Salazar did notice that Remus and Minerva looked incredibly relieved by that statement.

"All that he said is right." Moody said from his place in the corner. "But then the question remains, who put Potter's name in the Goblet."

"I could give you a list of names of people that want me dead." Salazar said, rolling his eyes. "Starting with Malfoy."

"Which one?" Moody asked with a gruff laugh.

Salazar scoffed loudly. "Take your pick."

"I still think he had someone put his name in." Albus said, not taking his eyes off Salazar.

"That's because you're you Headmaster." Salazar said, glaring at him again.

"Potter, how confidant are you with your magical capabilities?" Moody suddenly asked.

"Fairly confidant. Why?" He answered, looking at Moody curiously.

"Then you should compete…"

"No." Salazar said, cutting Moody off. "Absolutely not."

"That would not be fair to my champion! That would mean Hogwarts has two Champions!" Karkaroff shouted.

Moody glared at Karkaroff. "Stow it Karkaroff, because you are at the top of Potter's list, and I think you know why."

Karkaroff’s expression gave off the impression that he had been sucking on a lemon, but he wisely remained quiet.
"Potter, listen to me. Compete in this tournament so that we can expose whoever did this. I'm sure they will make themselves known eventually. Besides, you strike me as the type to thumb your nose up at your enemies when you best them." Moody said with a twisted grin. "Won't it rub them raw if you live?"

Salazar laughed. "Sounds intriguing."

"Offer yourself up as BAIT!" Minerva shrieked, as she stared at him in disbelief.

"Sirius won't allow it." Remus said with a sigh as he shook his head.

Salazar stared at Moody as if he was contemplating the idea, but he also shook his head.

"It's not fair to Miss Delacour, Mr. Krum, or Cedric. I can't do it."

"What if the judges," Moody said nodding at Madam Maxime, Karkaroff, Bagman, and Albus, "scored you zero throughout the whole tournament? We can say you were forced to compete because of the rules, but you are not a serious Champion. Personally, I want to catch the scumbag who did this and see that he has a long vacation in Azkaban."

Salazar seemed to think about that for a moment, but then he glanced at the other Champions. "What is your opinion on the matter?"

Fleur studied him for a moment, before rapidly speaking French to Madam Maxime, who seemed to nod in agreement with what she said.

"I feel this is ok, as long as you are scored zero throughout the tournament, and you come in last for all challenges." She said in a thick French accent.

"I agree." Krum said as he nodded. "But I do not want to have to babysit you. If you choose to do this, do not expect me to rescue you, because I won't."

Salazar nodded, even though he didn't like the young man's tone, but then he looked at Cedric.

"Harry, if this is what you choose, then that is up to you. I can't fault you for wanting to know who did this. It may not be fair to us for you to enter, but it's not fair for you to NOT know who is trying to kill you."

Salazar smiled at the young man. Helga, you would be so proud of him. He thought, but then he sighed and looked down at his robe sleeve, where for the last ten minutes Nora had been quietly trying to get his attention.

"What about you my dear?"

Karkaroff nearly tripped over his own robes as he stumbled backwards at suddenly hearing the Parseltongue. Moody chuckled as he kept his magical eye on the Death Eater, but everyone else gasped in fright.

"Speaker, I want to know who did this, that way I can bite them. Pigeon will want to peck their eyes out, and The Shrew would want to eat them, but only after I have injected my deadly venom into their worthless bodies." She hissed loudly.

Salazar chuckled. "We will have to see about that my dear, but I'm happy to know your opinion."

"Anytime Speaker." She said, settling into a more comfortable position now that she had spoken her
mind.

Salazar looked around the room and nodded. "All right. I want to know who is trying to kill me, but I also agree with Miss Delacour. I get scored zero and I will come in last for all the challenges. Please make it known that Cedric is the only official Hogwarts Champion, and I am only competing because I have to. Let's leave out the bit about someone trying to kill me, so that we don't tip them off."

Albus scoffed loudly. "No one is trying to kill you Harry. You are only doing this because you are a show-off who loves the attention you get from breaking the rules. You use your fame to get what you want, and you don't care about anyone but yourself. If you think I'm going to let you get away with this unpunished, you are mistaken."

"Headmaster," Salazar began, trying to stay calm. "You can think what you want to. It is clear to everyone within earshot that you think I'm some kind of Dark Lord-in training, but I personally don't care. You are certainly entitled to your opinion, but let me make something clear to you. If I find out you had anything to do with this in order to further your defamation of my character, only Merlin himself will be able to save you from my vengeance."

"You are a dark and dangerous wizard Harry, and you have an agenda that I aim to put a stop to."

Salazar smirked at Albus. "Oh I do have an agenda Headmaster, and I'll tell you, and anyone else who asks, what it is." He said with a grin, but then his voice turned dark and cold. "My agenda is to kill anyone who bears the dark mark, and their master who created it. If you aim to stop that, then you will be the cause of a lot of innocent people dying."

At that moment, Salazar stalked out the antechamber's door, leaving several stunned people in his wake.

Chapter End Notes

Now that this part has been posted i can answer some of your questions. Canon never said Harry would lose his magic. That was something 'fanon' came up with and it sort of stuck. In canon, Harry felt obliged to abide by the rules, but in reality, he wouldn't have had to compete. Also, Salazar isn't a serious champion and he will likely use this tournament as a teaching tool of sorts, which is the main reason why Albus thinks he is 'showing off'.

I know a lot of you wont be happy about Salazar being in the tournament but this has to happen in order for Voldy to pop out the cauldron. Things are not going to go how you'd expect it to in the graveyard though. I have a few surprises lined up for that. Please remember, this story is somewhat canon with my own little twist UNTIL around 5th year, but towards the end of 5th, things are going to be vastly different.

With all that said, who put 'Harry's' name in the cauldron? Let the speculation begin! Here's a hint though, it wasn't Voldy. LOL Thanks to everyone who has subscribed, commented, and bookmarked and i hope the first part of the chapter wasn't too much for you guys, but that is something ive had planned since first year, however it didn't feel like the right time to do it then. Anyway, please leave me a comment to let me know what you think! As always, your comments help me so much, and they oftentimes give me great ideas that you may see pop up in future chapters!
"Godric, I need your help." Salazar said as he burst into their new common room.

Hermione, Neville, Blaise, Fred, and George all jumped up as he entered, and glanced at him nervously. Godric, who had been pacing in front of the large windows stopped to look at him curiously.

"What for?" He asked.

"I'm going to compete and I need…"

"WHAT!?" Hermione shrieked. "Why?"

"Because someone is trying to kill him and Speaker wants to flush them out. Shrew, you may eat them after I bite them."

"Sounds like a plan. Who do I get to devour Master?"

Salazar chuckled. "No one just yet, but yes, whoever put my name in the goblet is trying to kill me. It is well known that the Triwizard Tournament is designed to test a Champion's magical skill and strength, and that people often die."

"Well I guess you don't have to worry about dying, but you can still get hurt!" Hermione exclaimed. "What if your head gets crushed, or worse, you get beheaded, or lose an arm, or a leg, or…or…"

Hermione faltered as her bottom lip began trembling uncontrollably, and she burst into tears. She leaned heavily on Emeralda for support, but Salazar looked at her and smiled softly, before going over and hugging her close.

"Hermione, I will be fine." He whispered, as the sobbing witch wrapped her arms around his neck. "Even if any of that should happen, I will live. Magic is a beautiful thing, and can always be counted on. Limbs can always be reattached, and as for being beheaded, it wouldn't be the first time it's been attempted on me. The magic that gives me immortality will never fail. Don't worry about such things, I will be fine."

She sniffled a few times before hugging him tighter. "All right." She whispered, finally releasing him with a small sigh. "I'm just…I'm just scared for you."

"I know, but you don't need to be." He said softly.

"None of you need to worry." Godric said, looking around at each of the scared children. "We have not lived this long without learning a thing or two."

"I'm sorry. I know I'm acting stupid, but…"
"No you're not Hermione." Godric said, smiling softly. "You are a kind and caring person, and that is why we love you so much."

"Even if you are a know-it-all." Salazar said with a wink, causing Hermione to smile and giggle a bit.

She took a deep, calming breath. "All right. I know you'll be fine, but why are you competing, and furthermore, why are the Professors letting you?"

"An excellent question, and I will explain." Salazar said, sitting down on one of the sofas.

Salazar told them what happened when Albus dragged him into the antechamber, and it took Neville, Fred, and George to talk Godric out of outright killing Albus because of his stupidity. By the time Salazar was done, everyone just stared at him and shook their heads.

"So it was Moody who came up with this idea?" Godric asked, furrowing his brow.

"It was, and in all honesty, I agree with him. Whoever did this is going be in for a shock because they aren't expecting me to live." Salazar answered.

"Do you think Moody could have done it?" Neville asked. "I mean, if he suggested it, it could have been him."

"Exactly what I was thinking." Godric mumbled.

"I don't think so." Salazar said, shaking his head. "Moody may be strange, but I don't think he's the type to put a, seemingly, fourteen year old in a Tournament like this."

"So who then?" Fred asked.

"Your guess is as good as mine. Take your pick. Any of the older Slytherins who don't like me, or anyone who doesn't like me really. Someone who came to the castle last night, Albus, Karkaroff, any Death Eater who got off. I'm sure Severus will keep his ears open. Regardless, we will find out."

Blaise sighed and leaned back in his seat. "So when is the first task?"

"November 24th from what I understand." Salazar said. "That gives us three weeks to figure out what the first task is, and for me to get prepared. As soon as I find out, I'm going to tell Cedric. If I have my way, Cedric will win this Tournament." He chuckled.

Godric laughed. "We can't have the other schools win. This is our school."

"Indeed." Salazar grinned. "But I want you children to throw your full support behind Cedric. I'm afraid that with 'The-Boy-Who-Lived' being in this Tournament, that he will be terribly overshadowed. The school must unite behind its rightful Champion."

"What about the public?" Hermione asked.

Salazar sighed. "The public is going to have a field day, and I'm afraid that no matter what we say or do, Cedric will be an afterthought in their eyes. I will do what I can to stay out of the papers, and if they try to ask me questions, I will just walk away after telling them that they need to speak with Cedric."

"Hopefully that will work." Godric said, but then he looked at Salazar curiously. "So what do you need my help with?"
"Oh yes, that." Salazar chuckled. "I have no idea what to expect in this Tournament, so I need your help with brushing up on my physical combat skills. I'm afraid I've grown a bit rusty in my old age."

Godric burst out laughing. "I will enjoy kicking your baldheaded self from one side of this school to the other." He said, causing Salazar to playfully glare at him.

"Wait, I thought you were only allowed a wand in the Tournament." Hermione said in confusion.

"I am, but I'm still going to carry a concealed dagger. No one will be able to spot it."

"Except Moody." Blaise pointed out.

"Hmm, I didn't think about that. Well, I can try to get away with it. If he tells Albus, so be it, if not, well then…great!" He replied, throwing up his hands. "But it is getting towards curfew, so you all need to head to bed. I don't want you all in trouble."

The Gryffindors sighed and nodded as they stood up, then they said goodnight to the others, before heading out of the Snake Pit. Blaise, Salazar, and Godric sighed and leaned back in their seats as they sat lost in thought.

"Speaker, the Snots are trying to get your attention." Nora suddenly said from her spot on the back of his chair.

They all looked up to find Draco and company desperately trying to figure out how to break through the floor. The blasting curses they were using weren't working, and because they didn't cast the spells needed for the building or adding on to Hogwarts, their gouging spells were utterly useless.

Salazar, Blaise, and Godric watched them for a while, and laughed as each of Draco's efforts continued to fail.

"Master, would you like me to take care of the problem?" Emeralda asked, as Draco began stomping on the floor/ceiling and yelling in frustration.

Pansy and the others quickly followed suit, and Salazar just laughed as Montague tried another gouging spell.

"Do what you must my dear. I'm afraid they will hurt themselves if they keep doing that."

"With pleasure." She replied in a silky tone.

She threw her head against the ceiling/floor, causing it to shake violently. Several students shrieked, but since they were right above Emeralda, Draco and the others went crashing to the floor. They picked themselves up and glared at Salazar before stomping off to go sulk in a far corner of the common room.

"Well Shrew, it seems you are good for something." Nora said in an approving tone as she slithered over to her. "With your strength and my deadly venom, we could make a good team."

"Fish Bait, I really do find you and your delusions amusing, but I do have to agree with you on a part of what you said."

"Thank you." Nora replied, causing Salazar, Blaise, and Godric to snort. "Now, I must warn you about a certain haughty feather duster named Pigeon. She is a ruthless animal that takes great pleasure in teasing me, but she belongs to Speaker so we can't eat her. Also, the Peacock that sits on the silver perch in the corner is a bit of a show off, but he belongs to Jolly. He has never done
Nehum seemed to gaze at the two snakes in amusement, and he ruffled his feathers a bit and settled into a more comfortable position on his perch. Salazar just grinned at his two beloved snakes and was delighted by the fact that they seemed to be getting along. On a small scale, they reminded him of two cats that had finally come to terms with the fact that they would be living with, and seeing a lot of each other.

Godric just laughed and shook his head as Nora and Emerald continued with their, somewhat, civilized conversation, but then he looked at Salazar and grinned.

"Speaking of Hedwig, I have an idea for a way to allow her to get in and out of here."

"Oh?" Salazar replied, raising an eyebrow curiously.

"A simple owl shoot." He said with a grin. "Since the entrance tunnel that leads to down here is just off to the side of the front doors, I was thinking we can cut a hole in the outside wall, and have the owl shoot connect to the tunnel. It's simple, effective, and will give Albus a major headache due to the small owl size hole in the castle's wall by the front doors. We can charm it to keep out rain, wind, leaves, and other such things, and also charm it so that Hedwig is the only one that can come in and out."

Blaise burst out laughing. "You two are determined to drive the Headmaster crazy."

"He already thinks very lowly of us, so I really don't care," Godric replied with a grin. "Besides, us two 'old codgers' still have a few pranks we need to play."

"Rowena would kill us for putting a hole in the wall outside the front door, but it will be worth it to see Albus's face. Besides, it's only for a few days and then we will charm it to look like solid stone. Hedwig will still be able to come through it though." Salazar laughed.

"I'm not going anywhere near it." Blaise said, standing up and stretching.

"You're a Slytherin, so I wouldn't expect you to." Godric laughed. "Self-preservation and all."


"Old enough to know better." Godric answered.

Blaise snorted. "But Gordy, you're aggravating and old enough to know better."

Godric pretended to look hurt, but Salazar laughed. "He was born that way Blaise. Don't you know that being aggravating is a key trait for being a Gryffindor?"

"Shut up Salazar." Godric snorted.

Blaise laughed loudly. "Well, I'm going to bed, so I'll leave you to plan your next headache for the Headmaster." Blaise said with a grin.

"We can work on that later. Right now I'm tired, so I think I'll follow your example." Salazar said as he tried to stifle a yawn.

"Aww, why can't we get started on it tonight." Godric pouted, but then he chuckled. "Seriously, I agree. We can work on it this week. I'm going to bed."

Salazar and Blaise laughed, but they all said goodnight at that point, and headed off to bed.
Alastor Moody was not a stupid man, and as he thumped along the corridors of the castle making his security rounds, he knew that there was something more going on here.

Things just weren't adding up in his opinion.

Albus had told him all kinds of things about Harry Potter, things that Moody was just now finding out to be a little different than what he had been led to believe. He didn't think Potter was evil or dark, in fact, he thought the boy possessed good common sense and a well-honed need for 'constant vigilance'.

There was also Potter's best friend. Roffin has a *phoenix* for Merlin's sake! That proved that Roffin wasn't dark for certain, and he knew that a phoenix wouldn't hang around a supposed dark wizard like Potter to begin with. Not to mention, according to Minerva, Fawkes had already studied Potter's soul and deemed it light.

So why was Albus being so blind to the issue?

Remus had mentioned that it was because Potter and Albus don't see eye-to-eye on a lot of things. Most notably, on how to handle Death Eaters and Voldemort. Albus wanted to save them, but Potter wanted to kill them all.

Understandable on both sides of the galleon, but to a point.

Moody didn't think killing them in cold blood was going to solve anything, but he didn't think trying to save them all would work either. While Moody didn't relish the idea of killing anyone, Death Eater or not, he wouldn't hesitate to do so if push came to shove. Death Eaters don't play by the rules, and sometimes rules need to be broken if you want to survive.

That was a point that he had tried, and failed, to get across to Albus for many years.

He had to chuckle though as he remembered the look on Karkaroff’s face after Potter declared that his agenda was to kill anyone bearing the dark mark. The man had paled drastically and almost soiled himself. Snape however, had remained strangely calm.

And that was something else that seemed suspicious to Moody.

Something was off. His gut instinct, which was always right, told him there was more here than what meets the eye. Minerva and Remus seemed to be strangely untroubled by Albus's physical treatment of Potter, yet they defended him strongly when Albus was yelling at him?

That didn't seem right.

And then there were the mysterious glances often shared by Minerva, Remus, and even on rare occasions, Snape. It was almost like they knew something. Something they weren't telling Albus. Moody was paranoid by nature, but something made him pause about going to Albus with his thoughts.

While he didn't trust Snape no farther than he could physically throw the man, he did trust Minerva and Remus. He knew them well, and if they were a part of something much bigger here, then he aimed to figure out what it was.

It had been a week and a half since the Champions had been selected, and a lot had happened since then. Sirius, along with Nicholas, Perenelle, and Merlin had shown up the day after, demanding
answers from Albus for not only his physical treatment of 'Harry', but how 'the boy' wound up in the Tournament to begin with. Albus held to his belief that Salazar had put his own name in the Goblet somehow, but he did apologize for his treatment of him. Sirius got in Albus's face and warned him never to touch his Godson again, and Perenelle threatened legal action and warned Albus that they would be watching him closely. Moody had been present the whole time and watched silently, but Albus gritted his teeth because of the threats and agreed to not be 'so rough' with Salazar in the future.

However, Salazar had much more pressing matters to deal with, like finding out what the first task was about. Minerva, Remus, and Severus didn't know, because it seemed that Albus was being tight lipped about it. Apparently, he was thoroughly against anyone trying to cheat and he didn't want anyone helping the two Hogwarts Champions, so that meant none of the other Professors knew either.

Except Hagrid.

Hagrid had alluded to something being kept in the Forbidden Forest, but so far all they managed to find was a big load of nothing. Every time they tried going into the forest to see what they could find, they found themselves wandering aimlessly around in circles.

Which meant that whatever was in there, had charms placed on it to keep others away.

Unfortunately however, Hagrid had taken a fancy to the Beauxbatons Headmistress, and word had it, he let slip to her what it was.

Karkaroff was strutting around the castle with a smug look on his face, and Severus told them Karkaroff mentioned that his 'old contacts' in the Ministry told him what the first task was. Severus tried to get information out of him, but Karkaroff wasn't telling.

So that meant that both Krum and Fleur knew, but Cedric and Salazar did not and that wasn't setting well with the Founder of Slytherin.

On top of not knowing what the first task was, the entire school was thoroughly against 'Harry Potter', and were not subtle in showing their disapproval of him being named the other Champion. Most were jealous because he was underage, or thought he had cheated to get in. Hufflepuff looked at him with murder in their eyes, and even Professor Sprout had shown her displeasure with him. None of this mattered to Salazar though, in fact, he welcomed it with open arms. Someone had made a charmed badge that said 'Support Cedric the Real Hogwarts Champion', but when it was pressed, it read 'Potter Stinks'. Draco and his friends loved shoving it in Salazar's face, but all Salazar did was laugh and say 'Aww, how cute', before walking away with a grin, which only made the blond angry.

Whether this was the work of Albus, or whether this was just how the students chose to act was unclear though. Albus wasn't helping matters by spreading his prattle to whoever would listen, and that just made Salazar even angrier at the Headmaster than he already was. It seemed people were choosing to actually listen, and more than a few students had been convinced that Salazar was a dark, evil boy.

It was Saturday, only a week left to go until the first task, and Godric was truly enjoying the physical combat training he was helping Salazar brush up on.

Mainly because he had been kicking Salazar's butt.

It was a cold clear day and they had decided to take their practice out of the Snake Pit, and move out
into the main courtyard so that they could get out of the stuffy castle and really move around.

All of the children had gathered to watch them, and Colin and Luna were sitting on the ground watching in awe as the twins kept randomly shooting spells at both Founders to try and keep them on their toes. Quite a few other people gathered as well though. Mostly students of Hogwarts, but a few from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang as well.

"What was that!?" Salazar cried, after he landed flat on his back and looked up into the face of his grinning best friend.

"It's called a hip toss my friend. You really need to keep up with muggle styles of fighting."

They were both covered with dirt and sweat, despite the weather, but they were enjoying themselves none-the-less.

"We are supposed to be sword fighting." Salazar grumbled as he picked himself up off the ground.

"What do you say we take a breather?" Godric said with a chuckle. "You are old you know."

Salazar glared and shot a spell at him, but Godric blocked it with a shield.

"Suit yourself." Godric laughed. "Hermione, Fred, George, Neville, Blaise!" He called out. "Come over here a minute."

Salazar eyed them carefully as they all huddled up in a group, and he really didn't like the shark like grin that was plastered on Godric's face when they broke up. The children though, began to fan out around them until they had formed a circle around the two Founders.

"Back to back. We have to face them." Godric said as he grinned.

Salazar was a little reluctant to turn his back on Godric at the moment, but he carefully eyed the twins and Neville who grinned mischievously at him.

"This reminds me of the time we were surround by a group of muggles holding pitch forks and spears." Salazar mumbled.

"Exactly, but do you know what is different about this time?" Godric asked.

"No, what?"

"I'm your enemy!" Godric shouted, as he spun around quickly.

Salazar had just enough time to turn around and bring up his sword as Godric brought his down. The children began shouting spells and aiming them at both the Founders, who not only fought each other, but tried to shield themselves from the onslaught of spells being aimed at them.

Various colors flew through the air as the Founders blocked the hexes and jinxes with their swords and shield charms. Godric tried to grab ahold of Salazar and hip toss him again, but Salazar had learned his lesson, and side stepped him. Clangs, bangs, clongs, and small booms could be heard as the metal swords connected and the spells hit the shield charms.

Salazar and Godric were so focused on each other that they didn't even notice that quite a few more people had gathered. Minerva had come out of nowhere, ready to disperse the crowd and stop the commotion, but she stopped dead in her tracks when she realized who was responsible for it. Remus had come for the same reason, but he too stared in awe as the ever growing crowd gathered. Moody
watched them both with a mixture of awe, respect, and fear, but Albus frowned upon the whole thing and scowled. Severus though, was lost in the moment, and he watched every move they made like a hawk, and drank in every detail as he watched his mentor fight hard in order to claim victory.

However, Salazar was getting tired as he continued to roll, side-step, dodge, and duck, so he decided to take a moment and gather his thoughts.

And promptly disappeared in a massive ball of flames.

The spell fire stopped immediately, and the children stood there with wide eyes and open mouths.

"Where did he go?!" Hermione shrieked.

"Did he apparate!?" Blaise cried.

"You can't apparate inside Hogwarts!" Neville yelled. "Err…right Hermione?"

"Right." She nodded, still staring at the spot where Salazar had disappeared from.

Godric though, was unconcerned with the sudden turn of events.

"No he's still here, and just like any Slytherin, he's trying to get the upper hand. What's the matter Salazar, are you tired?" Godric teased, as he narrowed his eyes and kept his sword and wand at the ready. "Are you wanting to take a breather? Why don't you sit down and have a cup of tea? Shall I bring you a sandwich as well?"

Neville snorted, but froze when Salazar's magnified voice echoed throughout the courtyard.

"Just like any bloody Gryffindor, you have to run your mouth Godric." Salazar said calmly.

"Show yourself you slimy, slippery reptile!" Godric shouted as he grinned wickedly.

"No." Salazar simply replied. "I'm enjoying my cup of tea, and I'll have a ham sandwich from the kitchens if you don't mind."

The twins burst out laughing as several people in the crowd chuckled. Moody was one of them, but he kept his magical eye on Salazar, who was about a foot off to Godric's right, and moving in circles.

"How did you do that!?" Hermione cried as she stomped her foot in frustration. "You absolutely have to teach us that!"

Salazar chuckled. "I plan to, so don't worry. Oh and Godric?"

"What?"

"Boo!" Salazar cried, letting loose a large flaming snake from the end of his wand.

Godric stumbled backwards, but managed to put the flaming snake out with a simple water charm before it reached him, then he did something completely unexpected. Godric cast his sword aside, disarmed Neville, then ran around and grabbed him from behind.

Salazar, who was still invisible, grinned as he picked up on what his friend was doing. After all, how many times had they taught this lesson? Then Salazar saw Godric whisper something in a shocked Neville's ear.

"But…" He started to say.
However, Godric clamped his hand over Neville's mouth, and whispered something else to him. Salazar saw Neville's eyes momentarily light up, but then they narrowed with determination.

He stomped on Godric's foot, elbowed him in the stomach, and then shoved him backwards. Godric was still upright though, and grabbed Neville's arm as he tried to run away.

"What do we do!?" Hermione cried, as she nervously aimed her wand at the two of them.

"Nothing." Salazar's disembodied magnified voice said. "Just watch."

Neville punched, kicked, screamed, and yelled in Godric's ear as Godric, who was slightly bigger than him, tried his best to hold on to the struggling wizard. Then Neville paused for a brief moment, and suddenly ducked down and kicked one of Godric's legs out from under him, sending him crashing to the ground.

Neville punched, kicked, screamed, and yelled in Godric's ear as Godric, who was slightly bigger than him, tried his best to hold on to the struggling wizard. Then Neville paused for a brief moment, and suddenly ducked down and kicked one of Godric's legs out from under him, sending him crashing to the ground.

Neville spun around and quickly ran away, only to be blindsided by an invisible Salazar who cast a spell at him.

Neville stopped dead in his tracks and whimpered slightly as silence descended over the courtyard, as everyone tried to figure out what they were doing.

"It's dark outside, and you can't see a thing. You can't run because you might run into a tree or other obstacle." Salazar said calmly. "Your wand has been taken from you, and your attacker is still mobile. He is stalking you. What do you do?"

"I listen." Neville said, taking a deep shaky breath as he held his arms out to his sides, and started to creep around carefully.

"Listen for what?" Salazar asked, as a limping Godric grinned, got to his feet, and started to make his way slowly towards Neville.

"His footsteps." He answered.

"And…?"

"And…and…” His face scrunched up in concentration, but he shook his head.

"You just got finished beating the snot out of him, so he is…”

"Breathing heavily!" He cried suddenly.

"Very good." Salazar said, as everyone looked on in shocked silence.

Neville cocked his head to one side as he tried to listen to where Godric's footsteps and breathing were coming from. Then he turned his head quickly towards the sound, and began to back away slowly.

"You feel trapped." Salazar said. "You start to panic because you trip and fall." He said, casting a tripping jinx at Neville, who fell down with a small yelp. "He heard you cry out, and he is coming at you. You hold your right hand straight out in front of you." Salazar said, and Neville did. "You feel the panic well up inside you. You wish you had your wand, but you don't, and he's there! He's there!" Salazar shouted. "He's right in front of you! He's reaching out to you!"

"Stupefy!" Neville screamed with everything he had in him.

A red light flew out of his outstretched hand, and Godric landed at Neville's feet in an unconscious
Every jaw dropped open in shock, before a cheer erupted around the courtyard. Salazar reversed his disillusionment charm, canceled the voice amplifying charm, and grinned at Neville as he also canceled the blinding hex he placed on the young lad. Neville's eyes widened in shock as he saw Godric laying at his feet, but then he grinned at Salazar.

"I did wandless magic!" He cried.

"Yes you did." He said with an approving nod. "And very well I might add."

He revived Godric, who needed a moment to get his wits about him, but then he also grinned at Neville.

"If I could get away with awarding you points, I would." He said, as he shook Neville's hand. "You did excellent."

"Thanks!" He exclaimed as he beamed at both of them.

"Twenty points to Gryffindor Mr. Longbottom!" Minerva said, as she looked on in pride. "And twenty points to Slytherin Mr. Roffin and Mr. Potter." She added. "Now, perhaps you both could teach me how to do that."

Godric grinned as Salazar burst out laughing. "Just passing on what Mr. Flamel and Mr. Nilrem taught me." He said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well done Longbottom." Moody said, thumping his way over towards them. "And you too Potter and Roffin. Have any of you ever thought about becoming an Auror?"

"No sir, not really." Salazar replied.

"Well you should. Not many people can do what you have just displayed. I mean that. Longbottom, you just learned a valuable lesson. Always keep that in mind, and if you ever find yourself in that situation for real, you may be able to get out of it alive."

"Thank you Mr. Moody." He said, still grinning from ear to ear.

"Neville that was brilliant!" Fred shouted as he grinned at them. "I want to go next!"

"You two are going to put my Defense classes to shame." Remus said with a chuckle. "That was very good. Mind if I borrow it? After you have taught me how to do it?"

Godric burst out laughing. "Feel free Professor Lupin."

"Fear, panic, and horror is what fuels wandless magic." Salazar said loudly as he gazed around at the crowd. "Every witch and wizard has performed it. So called 'accidental magic' is nothing more than wandless magic, and contrary to popular belief, it does not magically disappear the first time you hold a wand. Just because you are wandless, doesn't mean you can't cast spells."

"It also doesn't mean you're defenseless." Godric said as he also addressed the crowd. "Neville just showed us, that even using a muggle method of fighting can bring someone down."

"But you can't fight a duel without wands." Hermione said loudly, furrowing her brow in confusion. "I mean, you might be able to cast one or two spells, but an all-out duel is impossible...right?"

"Is it?" Godric asked as he grinned at her.
"It takes practice, lots and lots of practice, but yes, you can have an all-out duel with no wands."
Salazar said.

"Prove it!" Draco cried, in the same moment Albus shouted, "Stop filling their heads with lies Harry! It takes an exceptionally strong and powerful witch or wizard to do the simplest of spells with wandless magic, and I insist that you stop this immediately!"

Salazar rolled his eyes and shook his head. "No it doesn't." He replied as he continued to address the crowd. "I'll say again, it does take practice, but it can be done."

Godric however, scowled at the Headmaster. "What do you consider a stunning spell Headmaster? Is that the simplest of spells?"

Albus glared at Godric as he approached the group. "This is what I'm talking about. You show off your abilities to others."

"I was teaching them what has been taught to me you old goat!" Salazar shouted. "Surely an educator such as yourself can see that!"

"By showing off."

"No, Gordy was helping me learn physical combat skills because I don't know what to expect from this bloody tournament." Salazar said as he glared at Albus. "Then we just happened to turn it into a teaching lesson."

"You are cheating then?" Albus asked with a smirk. "Because you can't ask for help from anyone."

"I DIDN'T WANT TO BE IN THIS DAMN THING TO BEGIN WITH!" Salazar bellowed. "So help me Albus, you are trying my patience."

"You're a liar Harry. You're a spoiled, arrogant, little boy who takes pleasures in showing off and displaying what you can do. You love the attention." Albus said, glaring at him.

Salazar gritted his teeth, but took a large, calming breath. "Godric, we need to go...NOW." He said.

"Yep, because the day you start acting like a Gryffindor is the day the world goes to hell. Let's go." Godric replied, grabbing Salazar's arm and steering him away.

Minerva glared at Albus as Godric and Salazar walked away, with most of the children following after them.

"Why can't you just leave well enough alone?" She asked. "They were doing just fine, and if I may say so..."

"No you may NOT say so Minerva." Albus said cutting her off as he scowled. "They are 'teaching' foolish ideas and notions. It is not good for the rest of the students."

"I cannot wait for the day Mr. Potter throws you out of this school on your bum Albus, and that day cannot come soon enough as far as I'm concerned." She said with a huff, as she turned sharply and stalked away with Remus following in her footsteps.

"I think you're wrong Albus." Moody said. "The boys actually made some good points and gave a good demonstration. Personally, I've never seen anything like that, but whatever works. Longbottom cast a wandless stunner. Can you say that you have ever done that?" He asked, raising an eyebrow at Albus, before walking away.
Albus watched one of his oldest friends walk away and he shook his head.

"You all don't know what I know about Harry." He mumbled, just before someone hit him with a spell that turned him into a goat.

He stood stock still for a moment, before letting loud 'baaa', and bounding away, much to the amusement of the few remaining students that had been standing around.

Minerva finally found him two days later wandering the grounds and half frozen. She transfigured him back to his normal form and took him to Poppy, who simply gave him a pepper-up potion and sent him on his way. Albus tried to accuse Salazar of doing it, but Salazar swore an oath saying it wasn't him.

It was actually Fred and George, but neither of the Founders knew that, and the twins had decided to keep it their own little secret.

"Hey Potter, can I talk to you a minute?" Ron asked quietly as they exited their first period charms class.

Salazar quirked and eyebrow at the boy, but he nodded and followed him to a quiet corner of the corridor, which was quickly filling with other students.

"Is everything ok?" Salazar asked.

Ron's ears turned pink and he nodded slightly as he shuffled his feet. "Yeah, but I have something that need…no, want, to tell you." He said, taking a deep breath. "I don't know if Fred and George have told you this yet, but this morning at breakfast we received a letter from our brother Charlie. He works with dragons in Romania, and said that he will be at Hogwarts for the first task. He also mentioned that the first task is dragons. He didn't say exactly what it was all about, but he said it involved dragons."

Salazar stared at the boy, hoping to Merlin that this was some sort of prank thought up by the twins.

"Are you sure?" Salazar whispered in horror.

"Yeah." Ron nodded. "The twins made a copy of the letter and gave the original to Ginny, but I kind of wanted to tell you myself." He said shyly, as he shoved his hands into the deep pockets of his robes. "I guess it's my way of saying thanks for saving my life."

Salazar smiled at the young man and patted him on the shoulder. "You're welcome Ron, and I do thank you so much for telling me this. If there is anything I can do for you, just let me know. I owe you one."

"Nah." Ron replied, shaking his head. "Let's call it even."

"Deal." Salazar said with a grin, just as Godric came around the corner.

He cast a quick eye over the scene and spotted Hermione, Blaise, and Neville eyeing Ron and Salazar from a few feet away. Then he shot Salazar a 'what's going on look' before stopping in front of them.

"I'm on my way to Charms. What's…?"

"The first task is dragons." Salazar said, and Godric's eyes widened in alarm.
"Oh dear Merlin." He breathed, glancing at Ron.

"Indeed." Salazar replied, letting out a long deep sigh. "I have to find Cedric. Ron," he said as he turned towards him. "Thank you so much. I know you didn't have to tell me, but I am truly grateful."

"It's no trouble Potter. I guess I'll see you in Defense later."

"All right. I'll see you then." Salazar said, offering out his hand.

Ron hesitated for a very brief moment, then he shook Salazar's hand before giving him a small smile, then he turned to head towards his next class.

"Dragons. Bloody awful dragons." He said shaking his head, as Hermione, Blaise, and Neville quickly approached them.

"You're going to tell Cedric right?" Hermione asked with wide eyes.

"Oh yes, the sooner the better. You two go ahead and get to class." Salazar said motioning to Neville and Hermione. "I don't want you to be late. We can talk about this more at lunch."

They nodded and quickly ran up the corridor to their next class, but then Salazar turned to Godric.

"I'll see you later."

Godric also nodded his head, but sighed and cast his best friend another worried glance, before hurrying inside the classroom. Salazar and Blaise high-tailed it to the entrance hall so that they wouldn't be late for Herbology.

"Harry, can dragons understand Parseltongue?" Blaise whispered once they got outside and began walking towards the greenhouses.

Salazar shook his head. "No they can't. Dragons are essentially ruthless, unbearable, dangerous lizards with wings, and I hate them. The only dragon I tolerate is the one that guards Hogwarts herself."

"There…there is a dragon here?" Blaise asked, stopping in his tracks and looking around nervously, as if he expected it to suddenly show up.

"Oh yes." Salazar replied. "The largest, most fearsome, and deadliest dragon we could find during that time. He's solid black with venomous fangs, but he's been placed into a strong enchanted sleep. He lies in the ravine that the covered bridge crosses over, and only a Founder can awake him. It takes at least two of us to do it though, and looking back now it wasn't a good security measure, seeing as if we were all dead he'd stay asleep forever. Why do you think our motto is what it is?"

Blaise suddenly burst out laughing. "Never tickle a sleeping dragon! I get it now!"

"It was Godric's idea of course." Salazar said with a chuckle. "He loves his puns, and of course, large deadly creatures. The bloody Gryffindor reminds me of Hagrid a lot of the time."

"And Emeralda isn't a large deadly creature?" Blaise asked with a grin.

"She's a snake and doesn't count." Salazar grumbled as he mocked glared at the boy.

Blaise burst out laughing again, but the conversation came to halt as they scooted into class just as the tardy bell rang.
Chapter End Notes

I hope you guys enjoyed the chapter! Next chapter will feature my spin on the Weighing of the Wands, Salazar telling Cedric about the dragons, and the first task! It's probably going to be a long one, so get ready for it. I love you guys!
Chapter 40

Dragon Lady and Lady Dragons

It was the day after Ron had told him about the first task, and Salazar stared at the door of one of Hogwarts's many unused classrooms, and sighed heavily. Colin had just came to get him out of Potions, and told him that he was needed for interviews and photos for the Triwizard Tournament. He really didn't want to do this, and he was hoping to figure out a clever way of getting out of it.

He hadn't found a chance to tell Cedric about the task yet, but the copy the twins made of the letter that Charlie had sent them was in his pocket. He was hoping for the chance to speak with Cedric after this nonsense was over.

He sighed again, pushed the door open, and glanced around. Fleur, Madam Maxime, Krum, Karkaroff, Cedric, and Albus were standing in front of the fireplace. Ludo Bagman was also there, along with a photographer and a blond headed witch in magenta robes. They all turned to look at him, and only a few people smiled.

"Ah Mr. Potter! At last!" Bagman exclaimed as he rushed over to Salazar. "Now that you are here, we can begin! Welcome to the Weighing of the Wands! This a tradition of the Triwizard Tournament and it is to ensure that all of your wands are in good working order. Mr. Ollivander will be conducting the tests."

Salazar looked up and was a bit startled as the old wandmaker stepped out of one of the corners. Ollivander smiled and nodded, before sitting down in a chair. He motioned Fleur over and she handed him her wand without a word.

Salazar watched as Ollivander inspected Fleur's wand and was surprised to learn that veela hair had been used for it. He almost laughed though when Fleur announced that it was hair from her own Grandmother, which made Fleur part veela. It also made him realize why most of the male population of Hogwarts acted like fools when around her.

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Krum went next and Salazar was surprised that Krum's wand was made by Gregorovitch. He was somewhat familiar with that wandmaker, but he had mostly preferred wands made by the Ollivander family.

Cedric went next and his wand was made by Ollivander, which the wandmaker was pleased to note, but then Ollivander turned to Harry and smiled.

"Now it's your turn Mr. Potter."

Salazar smiled and presented his yew and basilisk hide wand, which Albus frowned at.

"Harry, I prefer you use your holly and phoenix feather wand. That wand is dark."

Salazar sighed heavily and shook his head. "I'm sorry Headmaster, but I am more comfortable with
using this wand. It's the one I always use." He said, handing the wand to Ollivander.

"Well Mr. Potter, I'm sorry to hear that you prefer this wand over the holly and phoenix feather, but it's wise to stick with the one you are most familiar with. I don't blame you a bit for that." Ollivander said, giving him a small smile.

"Thank you sir." Salazar replied, as Albus scowled at him. "I have the holly and phoenix here," he said, taking it out of his pocket. "But as I understand, we are only allowed to have one wand."

"That is correct." Ludo Bagman said, looking at the two wands in confusion.

"Mr. Ollivander, would you be so kind as to hold the holly and phoenix feather for me at your shop? I could fetch it from you this summer, if it's not too much of a bother." Salazar asked. "I wouldn't want Professor Dumbledore accusing me of cheating since he knows that I have two wands, at his insistence I may add."

Albus scowled at him again, but the witch in magenta robes quirked an eyebrow in his direction, and she looked a bit intrigued by what Salazar had said.

"I'll be happy to take care of the wand Mr. Potter." Ollivander said with a smile, as he carefully took it and placed it in his own pocket. "Now let me see if your preferred wand is still in good working order. It is very old if I recall."

Salazar handed it to him, and Ollivander once again inspected it.

"Ah yes, eighty four years old to be exact. Yew and basilisk hide, from the shop Wands and Things in Knockturn Alley. You were a naughty boy to go in there Mr. Potter, but it's a fine wand none-the-less. A bit dark, but that's because of its materials. Let's see how it preforms."

Ollivander conjured up several black smoky daggers, before vanishing them. He smiled and nodded his approval as he handed the wand back.

"Basilisk hide, huh Harry?" Cedric asked with a grin. "It wouldn't be from your rumored pet now would it?"

Salazar burst out laughing. "No, Emeralda is still very much alive, so I would think not."

"So it's true then." Cedric asked with wide-eyes. "Rumor has it you have a pet basilisk!"

"Yes, she is one-thousand years old and nearly sixty feet long. She sleeps in the Snake Pit with Gordy, Blaise, and I. She's very nice actually."

"But she can kill you." Cedric said, still staring at him in disbelief.

"No, she won't do that. Salazar Slytherin put blinders on her so she wouldn't kill anyone with her gaze, but she can still petrify people, so we stuck thick towels over her eyes to avoid that."

Everyone stared at him as if he had two heads, but the witch in magenta robes had a smile on her face as she looked him up and down like a lion stalking prey.

"She won't bite?" Krum asked, furrowing his brow in confusion. "How do you know? You can't train a basilisk."

"I'm a Parselmouth. She answers and listens to me." Salazar replied with a smile. "She is very gentle. In fact, if you want I can introduce you to her. Not many people have had a chance to meet one,
"I think that would be lovely Mr. Potter." The witch in magenta robes said with an abnormally large grin. "I'm Rita Skeeter by the way. I write for The Daily Prophet, and I'm here to interview you all for the Tournament."

"Oh." Salazar said looking at her with wide-eyes, but then he had a sudden idea. "Well, you are welcome to come meet her too. Unfortunately though Mrs. Skeeter, I'm afraid I must decline an interview at the moment. You see, my name was placed into the Goblet without my knowledge or consent, but because of the rules, I am forced to compete. The real Champions are Cedric, Mr. Krum, and Miss Delacour. Please Mrs. Skeeter, I know that because of who I am, that the public is very curious about me, but I would ask you very kindly to focus on Cedric when you mention Hogwarts. He's the one people should know about and support. He is Hogwarts rightful Champion."

"But you are the juicy news Mr. Potter." She said sweetly.

"I'm sure I am." Salazar said with a large sigh. "I would be happy to give you an interview, after you have written and published the main article for the Tournament. I just ask that you leave out any Tournament business from the interview I give. As I said, I know the public is curious, so that is my offer. I actually found the article you wrote about the Quidditch World Cup very entertaining. Not many people would be willing to print that Voldemort is a half-blooded son of a muggle."

Salazar saw Karkaroff scowl at him, but Rita laughed lightly.

"Well, I do try to give my readers something entertaining to read. Would you be willing to answer questions about You-Know-Who if I agree to your terms?"

"Of course. I'll answer any question you ask me. All I ask is that you keep my name to a minimum when talking about the Tournament. Miss Delacour, Mr. Krum, and Cedric are the ones that deserve to be focused on."

"And you'll still let me meet the basilisk?" She asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Certainly." Salazar said with nod.

"Delightful!" She exclaimed with a grin. "I can already tell you and I will become good friends Mr. Potter. I look forward to that interview. May I write about what you have said here today about your basilisk? It would give my readers something to look forward to."

"Please understand that it is Salazar Slytherin's basilisk, but yes I suppose that will be fine."

"Wonderful!" She cried. "Well, I guess that I will get started on the others, I bid you good day Mr. Potter."

"You too as well Mrs. Skeeter." Salazar said with a grin, as he took her hand and kissed the back of it lightly.

She giggled a bit, and Salazar noticed that her eyes were shining brightly. He knew of the woman's reputation because Nicholas, Perenelle, and Merlin were familiar with her, and her work. He also knew that she didn't care for Albus at all, which is what he was counting on.

And judging by the look on Albus's face, he knew it too.

Salazar grinned internally as he said goodbye to everyone, then he headed out the door.
He didn't go far though, and for two hours he stood under a disillusionment charm outside the door. He breathed a small sigh of relief when the door finally opened and they all exited the room. Fleur, Madam Maxime, Krum, and Karkaroff walked off down the corridor, but Albus, Cedric, Bagman, Ollivander, Rita, and her photographer stood around for several minutes and talked.

Salazar waited patiently, but finally they all wandered off. Albus walked off looking deep in thought, but Cedric began heading towards the Hufflepuff common room. Rita and her photographer however, began having a hushed conversation and Salazar decided to stick around a moment to see what they said.

"Are you going to do what Dumbledore suggested?" The photographer asked.

Rita seemed to think about it a minute, but then she shook her head. "Normally I would, but if I do I'll lose the opportunity to interview Potter. Something tells me that Dumbledore and Potter don't get along, and that is something that intrigues me. Dumbledore said Potter is an arrogant show-off, and that he's a dark wizard and very dangerous. I want to get Potter's side of the story, then I'll make my decision. You head on back to *The Daily Prophet* and get those photos developed. I'm going to stick around here for a little while to see what everyone is talking about."

"All right Rita, I'll see you later." The man said, and quickly hurried off.

However, Salazar grinned and quirked an eyebrow when Rita checked the corridor to make sure the coast was clear, then she changed into a small beetle and flew away. He chuckled a bit, but then he headed off down a few shortcuts in the hopes that he could intercept Cedric before he reached the Hufflepuff common room.

He barely managed to cut the young man off, and he exited the last shortcut just as Cedric came around the corner.

"Psst Cedric!" He called in a loud whisper, causing the young man to jump slightly.

Cedric turned around, but furrowed his brow in confusion when he didn't spot anyone. Salazar lifted his disillusionment charm though, and pulled the letter out of his pocket.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you, but I have something important to tell you and I wanted to wait until you were alone." Salazar said, handing him the letter from Charlie. "Fred and George gave it to me at lunch yesterday, but I've just now been able to tell you. Their brother Charlie works in Romania with dragons, and he sent that letter to them. The first task is about dragons, but they don't know exactly what it all entails, and since Fleur, Krum, and I know, it's not fair for you not to know."

Cedric looked at him in surprise, but took the letter and quickly read it. Then he paled and his hands started shaking.

"I saw the twins yesterday afternoon in Transfiguration. Why didn't they tell me?" He asked, looking at Salazar curiously.

"Because they know I wanted to tell you myself. Do you have any ideas on what you could do? The task is five days away."

"I'm not sure." Cedric said, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Well I'm thinking about using transfiguration somehow, but not knowing what the task actually is, it's hard to plan a strategy. Remember though, dragons breathe fire, so cast a flame freezing charm on yourself as soon as you can. Also, I have this for you." Salazar said, handing the boy a small piece of
paper. "It's an old forgotten spell that conjures up a solid silver wall, but it will withstand the heat from a dragon's fire and it will not crumple if a dragon bites or tries to crush it in any way. I suggest you practice it because it may come in handy. Especially if the dragon decides it's hungry. I'll be around if you have any questions about it." He said with a small encouraging smile.

Cedric's suspicious expression faded as he gazed at Salazar, but he glanced down at the letter and piece of paper, then back to Salazar. However, before he could say anything, they heard loud talking and laughter coming from around the corner and down the next corridor.

"Some of your housemates are coming, so I better go." Salazar said, cutting his hand with his wand and smearing the blood on a nearby painting. "Be careful Cedric. I want to see you win this Tournament for Hogwarts." He said with a grin. Then he disappeared through the painting without another word.

Cedric stared in bewilderment at the spot Salazar disappeared in, but he was snapped out of his stupor as a group of fourth years rounded the corner.

"Hey Cedric! Just letting you know I support you fully!" Ernie Macmillan said as he showed off his badge. Then he pressed it and laughed loudly. "Potter stinks!" He laughed.

Cedric cleared his throat and gave the boy a stern glare. "Actually Ernie, Harry didn't even want to be in this Tournament. His name was placed into the Goblet because someone wants to try and kill him. He didn't ask for this, so I'll ask you kindly to please get rid of the badges. They aren't doing any good at all."

Ernie's face fell just a bit. "But Dumbledore said…"

"I don't care what the Headmaster said. Harry isn't the bloke Professor Dumbledore paints him as. Just get rid of the badges please." Cedric replied, and made a point out of vanishing each badge that the group had pinned to their robes.

They all stared at him for a moment, but then Justin Finch-Fletchley looked at him curiously.

"Are you ok Cedric?" He asked.

"Yeah, yeah I'm fine." He assured them, as he stuffed the letter and piece of paper Salazar had given him into his pocket. "Just please spread the word about the badges. I have a task to get ready for."

Cedric turned around and headed into the common room, leaving the group of fourth years standing there in confusion.

"…aside from these three Champions, a surprising fourth Champion has been entered, and that boy is none other than fourteen year old Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived." Peter read out loud, causing Voldemort to suddenly look his way.

It was the day after the interviews, and Peter had his morning copy of *The Daily Prophet* spread out before him. He had just finished collecting Nagini's venom, but managed to avoid getting chased because she was more tired these days, due to the cold winter weather that floated freely through the drafty old house.

The article he had been reading talked a lot about the other Champions, and described their backgrounds, families, where they come from, their strengths, and magical knowledge. Peter had been reading through it, curious about the Triwizard Tournament, but then he came across that line about 'Harry Potter' and reread it out loud for his Master.
"What else does it say about Potter Wormtail?!" Voldemort snapped. "Read it to me!"

"Y-Yes Master." Peter squeaked, and the paper rustled slightly as he jumped when a stinging jinx landed on his arm. "Harry Potter declined to give an in-depth interview, saying that his name was placed in the Goblet of Fire without his knowledge or consent, but that he still had to follow the rules and compete. He respectively asked that we focus on the true Champions of the Triwizard Tournament and show our support for them, not himself. Me, Myself, and I agree with Mr. Potter, if anyone should be supported, it should be Miss Fleur Delacour, Mr. Viktor Krum, and Mr. Cedric Diggory." Wormtail read, but because of Voldemort's glare, he decided to keep reading.

"However, Mr. Potter is aware that the wizarding world is curious about its hero, and has agreed to allow me to interview him for matters separate from the Tournament. These matters will pertain to his life, You-Know-Who, and other very interesting things. Several people claim, and Mr. Potter himself confirmed, that he lives with a one-thousand year old, sixty foot long basilisk!"

"WHAT!?" Voldemort shouted.

"There-there is more Master." Peter said nervously, as he eyed the wand in his Master's hand.

"Keep reading!"

Peter gulped and continued. "Salazar Slytherin's basilisk to be exact. Mr. Potter, the basilisk, and several of Mr. Potter's friends live in what is described as The Snake Pit. A room that is rumored to have been built by Mr. Potter and one other friend under the Slytherin common room. Mr. Potter has taken security precautions regarding Slytherin's basilisk of course, and has agreed to allow me, Rita Skeeter, to meet this large dangerous creature. Me, Myself, and I hope to have that interview soon, so stay tuned my lovely readers!"

Peter glanced nervously at Voldemort, who sat lost in thought as he stared into the fire.

"Someone unknown to me has done me a great service by putting Potter's name into the Goblet." He said suddenly. "Potter doesn't care for Dumbledore very much, and if their relationship from Potter's first year has soured even more, then I wish to see where he stands regarding me. I already have all I need to complete my ritual, but I want to invite Potter for my rebirthing ceremony. You did well in discreetly getting a vile of Dumbledore's blood for me Wormtail, and you will be rewarded once I have gained my full body back."

Peter's eyes widened in surprise. "Thank-Thank you Master." He said breathlessly, but cringed as he remembered that night.

He had almost been caught half a dozen times when he had snuck onto the grounds. He had stood in front of the gargoyle for nearly an hour trying to guess the password, and when he finally got it right, he snuck into the Headmaster's office and into his bed chamber. He had to stun the sleeping Headmaster before he could withdraw his blood.

The blood of an enemy that had been forcibly taken.

He had revived the Headmaster, then obliviated the man just to be safe. However, even though he had gotten in and out safely, Peter really didn't want to go back to Hogwarts anytime soon.

He took a small deep breath, and held it as he asked, "Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Not at this time." Voldemort said, and Peter let his breath out quietly. "I must began thinking up ways for you to bring Potter to me, but I can't just have you capture him. It will be suspicious if he just ups and disappears before the Tournament is complete. He may have cursed my lineage, but I
want to give the boy a chance to join me. He is powerful. I've seen how powerful he is during his first year, and no doubt he has only gotten stronger." Voldemort said in a raspy tone, as he shifted slightly in his chair.

"And if the boy doesn't join you?" Peter asked.

"He dies." Voldemort said in an unconcerned tone. "This current body isn't strong enough to survive the ritual yet, so I still have time to figure out how to get Potter to me. I also want to see what he says in his next interview. It will tell me about any weakness he may have. Potter will join me, or he will die."

Peter knew it was unwise to speak or make a sound, so he just nodded and glanced back down at the article. However, something told him that Harry wasn't going to join his Master.

Salazar was sitting at the Slytherin table reading the same article and smiled. Rita had held up her end of the bargain, and now he would have the chance to get his story out. If he played this situation correctly, he could have an ally in the media.

And that would be an advantage worth having.

He was a bit startled when an owl fluttered down beside him, but he took the letter and the free edition of The Daily Prophet it had clutched in its talons.

Dear Mr. Potter,

I have sent this letter and this morning's edition of the paper so that you may have a chance to look over the article I have written. If you find it to your liking, I would really like to interview you tonight after dinner. I understand you have a task in four days, but I would like to do the interview before then, just in case anything...unfortunate...should happen. Please get back to me as soon as you can.

Yours Truly,

Rita Skeeter

Salazar grinned and took out a spare bit of parchment from his bag and scribbled a quick note telling her that it would be fine and that she should meet him in the entrance hall at 6pm. Then he sent it off with the waiting owl.

"She wants to do the interview tonight." Salazar said, looking at Blaise and Godric, who were looking at him in confusion.

Godric's eyes lit up. "Are you taking her into The Snake Pit?"

"Of course." He replied with a grin.

"I'm just surprised no one has come trampling in here yet to remove their children because of Emeralda, but I suppose they may think that Dumbledore will handle it." Godric said, taking a bite of his toast.

"We will see." Blaise said with a grin. "But my money is on Malfoy's father coming in here and demanding she be killed."

"Possibly, but maybe not. He wouldn't want anyone to know he was advocating to have Salazar Slytherin's basilisk killed." Salazar said with a sly grin, as they all stood up to head towards their first
That's why I kept stressing to Mrs. Skeeter to print that little fact. The Death Eaters wouldn't want to condemn her because of that fact, and like Godric said, the rest will trust Albus to handle the situation. If they see that he isn't worried, then they won't worry either."

"Most wizards are like lemmings." Blaise muttered.

"Indeed." Godric said, as they headed out the door of the great hall.

"I bet you like all of this attention Potter." Draco spat, as they entered the entrance hall.

Draco and the others were leaning up against the wall, and they all scowled in his direction. Salazar took in the sight and chuckled lightly.

"Look Blaise, little Draco actually agrees with Dumbledore on something!" Salazar exclaimed loudly, causing everyone to stop and stare. "They both agree that I'm an attention seeking prat! I wonder what Daddy Malfoy would think about his son agreeing with the Leader of the Light!"

Blaise snorted as several people laughed, but Draco's face turned red as he stomped over to an unconcerned Salazar.

"Are you scared yet Potter? You know you will die in this Tournament don't you?" Draco hissed as he continued to scowl.

"Perhaps, but I seriously doubt it. Dying just doesn't suit my fancy, but it's clear to me that it suits yours. Tell me Draco, do you know who put my name in the Goblet?"

Draco smirked at him. "No." He said simply, folding his arms across his chest.

"Well, something tells me you do." Salazar said with a grin, but then he chuckled and began walking away, leaving a still smirking Draco behind.

"You'll get what's coming to you Potter! You'll see!" Pansy shouted, as Draco laughed loudly.

"Looking forward to it Pansy!" Salazar shouted back, as Godric burst out laughing.

"Stop antagonizing them." Godric said, whooping him on the shoulder as they headed up the main staircase.

"Why? I find it rather funny. I've tried to be nice to them and help them with different things, but they brush me off and don't listen. I made a mistake during first year with Draco, I admit that, but hopefully one day I can get the boy to see reason." Salazar said. "Until then, it seems to me that he is just going to have to learn the hard way."

"If he can learn." Blaise said sarcastically. "Draco sometimes acts like more of a Gryffindor than Gordy does."


Salazar chuckled. "We better get to class. Minerva will have my head if I make Blaise late."

They all laughed at that, but then they headed off to their first period classes.

The rest of the day passed quickly, and dinner was quiet. Draco had continued to taunt and tease him throughout the day, but Salazar ignored him for the most part.
Somehow Albus got wind of when the interview was to take place, and insisted that he be present for the entire thing. Salazar told him no and even got Sirius involved (through Remus) who also said no. It was a short victory though, seeing as Albus insisted on sending Moody to 'supervise' instead.

Salazar had gritted his teeth, but agreed that Moody was better than Albus in this case.

It was right at 6pm when Salazar met Rita Skeeter and her photographer in the entrance hall. She raised an eyebrow at Moody, who was lurking nearby, so Salazar briefly explained his presence.

After he was done with that, Salazar looked at Skeeter and smiled.

"Mrs. Skeeter, may I ask which house you were in?"

"I was in Slytherin Mr. Potter, and please, call me Rita." She said with her familiar wide grin.

Salazar chuckled. "Then please call me Harry." He said, then he motioned her over to the entrance to the Snake Pit. "This is how we get in and out of the Snake Pit. My friend Gordy and I did this so that our other non-Slytherin friends can gain entrance to our little abode." He grinned. "They understand Parseltongue, so it's easy for them to gain entrance. The Headmaster can understand it to, but to my knowledge he's never attempted to enter here."

"Do you know why?" Rita asked curiously.

"Not a clue." Salazar said with a chuckle. Then he turned to the door and opened it. "Being a member of Slytherin House, you will no doubt recognize exactly where we are when we get down here."

"Harry dear, before we really get started, would you mind if I use a quick quotes quill?" She asked in an overly friendly way.

Salazar laughed loudly. "Oh those nasty little quills. I am familiar with them and how they operate, but feel free to use it." He said with a grin.

She studied him closely, but then she laughed. "All right then." She said, then she opened her bag and brought out the acid green quill and a notebook, and charmed it so that floated along beside her.

She turned to her photographer and instructed him to take lots of pictures of everything, so pretty soon their way was partially lit up by the flashes of the camera.

"Harry, I get from your tone when speaking about the Headmaster that you don't particularly care for him. May I ask why?"

"Certainly." Salazar replied as he grinned into the semi-darkness in front of him. "The Headmaster believes that I am an arrogant show-off, not to mention a dark and dangerous wizard who is some kind of Dark Lord-in-training. He couldn't be further from the truth though."

"Really? How so?"

"Well, the problem the Headmaster and I seem to have is our difference of opinion in regards to 'light' magic and 'dark' magic. He feels the need to separate certain kinds of magic into those ridiculous categories, but in truth, magic is magic. It's neither light nor dark, but it's the intention behind it. For example, I can cast a severing charm to cut up a piece of fabric, which is deemed 'light' in the Headmaster's eyes, or I can cast a severing charm to cut someone's arm off. So I ask you Rita, is the severing charm light, or is it dark?"
"An interesting question Harry." Rita said thoughtfully as they reached the Snake Pit.

"My friends have agreed to stay in the library for the duration of our interview, so we are somewhat by ourselves down here." Salazar said as he opened the door.

Her eyes became as big as galleons as she looked around, and the photographer once again began snapping pictures. Salazar led them into the main sitting room, but he pointed out the new dorms as they passed by them. When they arrived in the sitting room, which took up the largest portion of the Snake Pit, she looked up somewhat amused.

"You can see straight up into the main common room. How did you achieve that, and how did the young ladies react? They do wear skirts you know." She asked, looking at him with a calculating gaze

"A simple charm, and as for the young ladies, we can't see anything, seeing as everyone wears long floor length robes. You can't see anything even if you tried."

Rita seemed to stare up at the students, who were looking down at her curiously, but a seventh year girl walked right over top of her, and Rita laughed.

"I suppose your right about that." She chuckled.

Salazar just laughed, and continued explaining the reason for the Snake Pit. "The Headmaster tried to put a stop to our work down here, and rightly so, but he failed. I say 'rightly so' because he is the Headmaster, and he can't really allow students to make such drastic changes to the castle. However, his efforts failed because Hogwarts herself refused to put a stop to the work."

"Why do you think that was?" Rita asked curiously.

Salazar shrugged. "I don't know really. My best guess is because I'm the Heir of Godric Gryffindor, and she knew I wasn't safe in the main common room, due to Professor Dumbledore's negligence."

Salazar went on to explain how they built the Snake Pit, and Rita asked why they built it in the first place. When Salazar told her it was because the Headmaster refused to put a stop to the attacks by Draco and the others, she seem very interested in that. Salazar told her point blank about all that Draco had been doing, and why Albus had not stopped it.

"So the Headmaster thinks that those children aren't doing anything wrong?" She asked, as her quill continued to write furiously.

"I suppose so, but you have to look at their families. Their fathers are Death Eaters, and they spew the same kind of crap their fathers do."

"But the Malfoys, Crabbes, Goyles, Notts, and Parkinsons were acquitted of their crimes when they claimed that they were imperiused." Rita said, raising an eyebrow.

Salazar burst out laughing. "If those Death Eaters were imperiused then I am Helga Hufflepuff." He said, causing Moody to laugh loudly.

"So where is this basilisk I keep hearing so much about?" Rita asked with a grin.

"Oh, Nora, my black adder snake, has gone to get her from the Chamber of Secrets. It takes a little bit for them to get back due to the distance." Salazar explained. "In the meantime, feel free to look around."
"Well I did notice the phoenix sitting there. Is that yours as well?"

"Oh no. Nehum isn't mine, he Gordy's."

"So let me get this right." Rita said leaning back in her seat. "You live down here with a phoenix, one of the lightest creatures known to our world, and a basilisk, one of the darkest creatures known to our world?" She asked, as she thoughtfully gazed at him.

"Yes we do. There is also Nora, of course, and my owl Hedwig, who I believe is out hunting at the moment. Ah! Emeralda my dear!" Salazar said, as Emeralda and Nora appeared out of the tunnel.

Moody took several steps backwards, but Rita's face split into her famous large grin. Her photographer began snapping away with his camera as her large body continued to fill the large room.

"Rita, this is Emeralda, Salazar Slytherin's basilisk. My dears, just so you know, I'll be speaking in English for the benefit of the others."

"I understand Master." Emeralda said, but Nora just glared at him as she slithered off of Emeralda's back and settled onto the back of his chair. Salazar was momentarily blinded as the photographer snapped a picture of him with Nora.

"You are a lovely creature. I felt sure my life was over when you entered, but I see now that I have nothing to worry about. It's a pleasure Miss Emeralda." Rita said, then she motioned for her photographer to take her and Emeralda's photo.

"You can see that she is very gentle. I wouldn't allow this if I wasn't absolutely sure that she wouldn't attack." Salazar said, as Rita patted her large head.

"What I don't understand Harry, is why does the Headmaster claim you are evil and dark? There is a phoenix down here, and everyone knows that a phoenix would not want to be around a dark wizard."

"Your guess is as good as mine." Salazar chuckled as he leaned back in his seat, where Nora was still quietly glaring at him. He knew she was still a bit miffed that he had asked her to go get Emeralda. "His own phoenix, Fawkes, has already deemed my soul light, so I don't understand why the Headmaster is so blind to the issue."

"Interesting." Rita said, tilting her head to the side. "Now that we are fully settled, tell me about your life up until now."

So Salazar did.

He told her about the Dursleys and how they had treated him, then he went on to explain that Albus had placed him there and tried to send him back. He also told Rita how Albus had tried to obliviate him at the end of second year, and once again, Salazar was secretly delighted that she had her infamous shark like grin stretched across her face.

Moody stood in a corner the whole time listening, but he never interrupted. He had heard all of this before, and he continued listening as Salazar finished telling Rita about Albus's plan to slander his character. Rita just kept on asking questions, but finally Salazar was able to steer her in the direction he wanted her to go, and she finally asked the question he wanted her to ask.

"Harry, do you feel that the Headmaster is trying to control you?"
Salazar chuckled a bit, but he nodded. "I think he is. Why he is trying to control me remains a mystery though. Professor Dumbledore strikes me as the type of person that believes that he alone has all the answers and that he alone knows how things are supposed to work out. That's why it seems like I rebel against him, but I'm really not. I have an agenda that I aim to see through, and Dumbledore aims to put a stop to it."

"Oh really?" Rita said, raising her eyebrow. "And what agenda is that?"

"My agenda is to kill every person who bears the dark mark, and the half-blooded son of a muggle who invented it. Anyone who is anyone knows that Voldemort is still out there. Whatever happened that night in Godric's Hollow remains a mystery, but Voldemort's body was never found. I don't think I kill him then, but I will kill him should he ever try to return again."

"And Dumbledore aims to stop that?" Rita asked with a grin.

"He said that himself." Salazar said, as he sat forward in his chair. "And I have the memory to prove it."

Rita's face lit up, and her expression gave Salazar the impression that Christmas had come early for her.

"Well Harry." Rita said, putting away her quill. "This has been a wonderful chat and I thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me."

"I had a lovely evening Rita." Salazar said, as he stood up and took her hand. He kissed the back of just like he did last time, and smiled at her. "If you ever want to chat again, just let me know. I found this absolutely engaging."

"As did I Harry." She said with a wink as she stood up.

Salazar walked with her all the way back to the entrance hall, and he could tell she was excited over the interview. He knew it would be slightly eschewed because of the quick quotes quill, but he didn't care. He had accomplished his mission for the evening and it went off without a hitch. The woman could be a Dragon Lady at times, and Salazar knew she didn't like Albus. She now had enough juicy gossip about the Headmaster to last her for a while.

Salazar continued to escort her down the front steps of the castle, but saw her off from there. He was lost in his thoughts as he continued to watch her hurry down the path towards the front gates, but the thump, thump of Moody's wooden leg brought him back to his senses.

"Well played Potter." The man said gruffly as he came to a stop next to Salazar. "Were Roffin and Zabini there as your back-up?"

Salazar chuckled. "I figured you would see them, and I thank you for keeping quiet about them. You are correct though, they were there just in case. Not that I didn't trust you to help if need be, but better safe than sorry."

"Constant vigilance." Moody grumbled. "Just so you know, Albus wants my memory of the interview."

"I figured he would." Salazar replied, turning to face the ex-Auror. "He will need to do some major damage control after this, but please remember, he started it."

"I know he did." Moody said with a loud sigh. "I like you Potter, I don't want to, but I do anyway. You don't just lie down and take anything, and you don't accept things just because you're told to do
so. I admire that, but I also hope you know what you're doing and what you are getting yourself into."

"As I said a few weeks ago Mr. Moody. I know exactly who Albus Dumbledore is, and yes, I do know what I'm doing." Salazar said as they walked back into the castle.

"I hope so Potter." Moody mumbled as they parted ways. "I really do hope so."

"He's arrogant Alastor." Albus said with a scowl as he stood beside his pensieve.

They had just watched the memory of Skeeter's interview, and already Albus was going over scenarios in his mind on how he could control the damage that was surly coming. He knew Rita and her work well, and he also knew that she didn't like him.

Moody didn't show Albus the short conversation he had with Salazar after the interview though. He felt it was best if he left that part out.

"He thinks he has won this battle." Albus said, looking at Moody. "But the boy has no idea of what I can do."

"I don't think getting into this with Potter is a good idea Albus. The boy is confident that he knows what he is doing." Moody warned, glancing at Albus with concern. "If Potter aims to have you thrown out of Hogwarts, you could be walking into a trap."

"He's fourteen Alastor." Albus said dismissively as he waved his hand at his friend. "All children think they know better."

"That may be true Albus, but remember he's not alone. Black, Flamel, and that Nilrem fellow you always talk about are behind him."

"Have they been here?" Albus asked, peering at Moody closely.

"No, but that doesn't mean he can't contact them. Remember, Remus is here, and there is the owl post."

"Hmm, you may be right. I'll set up a mail redirection ward on both Harry and Remus, and I'll monitor Remus's floo chatter with Sirius."

Moody sighed and shook his head. "Four words Albus. Roffin...has...a...phoenix. Something tells me they communicate to the outside world with him, and Remus is smart enough not to use the floo for something like that."

Albus shook his head and sighed. "I'll think of something then."

Moody just shook his head and walked out of Albus's office in order to leave the man to his thoughts. He had a bad feeling about all this, and if his instinct was right, Albus was not going to win this war with Potter.

It was finally the day of the first task. Rita had contacted Salazar to say that the interview would be published two days after the first task, so that in case the worst should happen to him, people would know what his 'finial words' were. He had chuckled about that, but he didn't feel the need to argue.

However, at the moment Salazar was sitting at the breakfast table unable to eat. He was picking at
his food as Godric and Blaise watched him, but he could also feel Hermione and Neville's eyes watching him from across the room. It was Hermione's words from a few weeks ago that began floating around in his head.

_You may not be able to die, but you can still get hurt!_

It was all true of course, and since he had no idea what the first task actually _was_, he had no way to plan a strategy. Sure it involved dragons, but beyond that, he had no idea what to expect. He was nervous about his well-being, and more importantly Cedric's, but Salazar hoped that the information he had supplied the young man helped him in some way.

"Salazar, you need to eat my friend." Godric whispered with concern as he pushed a plate of toast in front of him, but Salazar just pushed it away again.

Godric sighed loudly, as Salazar shook his head. "I'm not hungry."

"But you need to eat." Blaise said, waving a piece of bacon in front of his nose.

Salazar chuckled, but shook his head. "I hate dragons." He mumbled under his breath. "Why couldn't it have been unicorns, or snakes, or even a griffin? Hell, even 'Fluffy' would be better than a bloody dragon. Nora even elected to stay in the Snake Pit because she couldn't watch me get hurt, and that's saying something!" He exclaimed a bit too loudly, causing several people to look his way.

"What's the matter Potter?" Draco sneered. "Afraid are you? Well you should have thought about that before you put you name in the Goblet. I bet you won't last ten minutes in this task, but my Father disagrees. He thinks…"

Draco didn't get to finish that sentence because Godric hit him with a silencing charm under the table, but it was still kind of funny. Draco kept on talking for a moment, before he realized what had been done to him. He scowled at Godric, but then he smirked at Salazar and began acting out an over exaggerated 'death moment'.

Salazar just rolled his eyes and shook his head. He was not going to retaliate, seeing as he had more important things to worry about.

However, at that moment, the great hall's doors flew open and instant chaos erupted throughout the room as everyone began screaming in terror. Salazar, who had just managed to take a sip of pumpkin juice, spewed his drink all over himself as Emeralda and Nora, who was sitting on top of Emeralda's head, came slithering in.

All of the students and most of the Professors, including Bagman and several other Ministry officials, had flattened themselves against the walls, but Salazar just continued to sit at the table and shake his head. Godric burst out laughing, and Blaise snorted as they took in the scene around them.

Over at the Gryffindor table, Fred and George had fallen out of their seats, but Hermione and Neville were already up and moving towards them.

"Speaker, I have changed my mind." Nora announced as she slithered off of Emeralda's head, and into Neville's out-stretched arms. "If you are determined to die in this silly little contest, the Shrew and I have decided that we will at least support you."

Godric snorted, but Salazar continued to sit there and shake his head.

"They are wild animals with minds of their own. What did you expect?" Godric said as he wiped tears of laughter off his face.
Salazar glared at him. "Shut up Godric. I don't need this right now."

"I know, but the rest of us do," he replied, causing Salazar to roll his eyes.

"Speaker, did you hear me?" Nora asked, as Neville brought her over to him.

"Yes my dear, I heard you." He sighed. "But why did you feel the need to burst in here? Couldn't you have waited outside?"

"I suppose we could have little Master, but we didn't think about that." Emeralda replied as she gently nuzzled against Hermione, who was petting her side.

"Clearly." Salazar said, glaring at his two snakes.

"Well we are here now, and that's all that matters. I wish to stay with Bottom throughout the duration of this nonsense you call a Tournament. If you are going to die, then I should at least see how you go about accomplishing it." She said in an unconcerned tone, causing Godric to snort again.

"Little Master, I am sorry if we have caused you more distress, but I have to agree with Fish Bait. However, due to the...terror...my presence is bringing, I shall wait outside. I would be happy to give you and/or your friends a ride on my back, to get you all where you need to go. I just need someone to tell me how to get there, seeing as I can't see." Emeralda said simply.

"I'll tell you where to go Emeralda." Hermione said, patting her side again.

"That would be fine Emeralda." Salazar said, smiling for the first time that morning. "Just please wait outside until I figure out what is going on."

"Hey Emeralda," George said, looking at her happily. "Are you really going to let us ride on your back?"

"Yes little one, of course I am. I don't trust some people around here and I want to make sure you are all safe." She said. "Just find me when you come outside. I won't be hard to miss."

That caused several of them to chuckle, but she managed to slither backwards until her large body was outside the great hall. Then she nudged the front doors of the castle with her nose, and headed outside.

Everyone in the great hall stared at Salazar, but he just pinched the bridge of his nose and shook his head. Then he stood up.

"Everyone, I'm so sorry about that. She's not going to hurt you, honest. She's always been very gentle and kind. Please don't be afraid of her."

Albus stood up at that moment, and Salazar braced himself for the worst.

"What Harry says is true. Emeralda is not here to hurt anyone. Please retake your seats and continue on with your breakfast. The first task of the Triwizard Tournament will start in one hour." He said, then he sat back down and began carrying on a conversation with Bagman like nothing had even happened.

Salazar raised an eyebrow at Albus and briefly wondered what the man was up to, but Godric regained his attention by waving another piece of bacon under his nose.
"Eat." He commanded, shoving the bacon in Salazar's mouth as he went to answer.

Salazar glared at him and removed the bacon. "I am not an infant Godric. I do not need to be fed like one."

"Sure you do." Godric grinned and once again made like he was going to repeat the process, but this time Salazar ducked.

"Will you stop that?!" Salazar snapped.

"Alright, alright." Godric said, throwing up his hands and grinning. "I'm sorry, but seriously, eat something."

"No." Salazar said simply, crossing his arms in front of him, causing Blaise to laugh loudly.

This time it was Godric who rolled his eyes. "You're so stubborn. Fine, starve yourself then."

Blaise snorted again, but the young man stood up with his plate in his hands.

"Since you two are about to get into a duel, I'm going over there with Hermione and Neville so I'll be safe. I'll see you later." He said, getting up and dashing across the great hall with his plate in one hand and his pumpkin juice in the other.

"Think he will be alright over there?" Godric asked, eyeing the lad as he sat down between Hermione, Neville, and Nora.

"Don't know." Salazar grumbled.

"Well you are certainly no fun this morning, so I think I will go join Blaise. You can sit over here by yourself and sulk." Godric said stuffing a piece of toast in his mouth. Then he grabbed his plate and goblet and headed after Blaise.

Salazar sighed, shook his head, and glanced over at the Gryffindor table. Some of them seemed to be giving Blaise and Godric evil looks, but most of the table ignored the presence of the two Slytherins. Salazar didn't care though, because at the moment, he did just want to sulk.

Oh how he hated dragons.

Nearly forty-five minutes later, Salazar found himself in a tent with Fleur, Krum, and Cedric. He had been escorted there by Minerva, who seemed to be just as jittery and anxious as he was. She had warned him not to get hurt, saying that Poppy would likely have his head, immortal or not, which did make Salazar chuckle a bit.

Bagman was in the tent too, and he had already explained the rules of this task to them, which seemed to slightly lesson Salazar's burden. Knowing that they had to claim a golden egg didn't seem that hard, did it?

It was then that Bagman held up a silk bag and told them to reach in and grab one of the things in it. Fleur went first, and Salazar's heart sank as she withdrew a dragon known as a Common Welsh Green. Krum withdrew a Chinese Fireball, and Cedric withdrew Swedish Short-Snout. Salazar swallowed hard and closed his eyes as he reached into the bag, but almost got sick when he withdrew a Hungarian Horntail.

Bagman went on to explain that the dragons were nesting mothers, and that the golden egg would be
in the nest. Nesting mother dragons were some of the most ferocious things on the planet, so needless to say, Salazar felt like blowing something up.

Namely the idiot who thought up this stupid task.

The crowd had begun to enter into the spectator stands and he heard the familiar sliding and voice of Emerald as she went past the tent he was in. He just hoped that neither her, nor Nora, would try to interfere if a dragon tried to eat him.

Because that would not end well for anyone.

The crowd settled down after a while, and Albus, Madam Maxime, Karkaroff, and Bagman gave them final words of encouragement before heading off to the judges table. Cedric had to go first, then Fleur, Krum, and finally Salazar, but Salazar wished one of the others had gone first, so that Cedric would kind of know what to expect.

He cringed when Cedric left the tent and entered the dragon enclosure. However, Bagman's running commentary gave him some measure of hope, and Salazar even grinned to himself as Fleur and Krum listened to Bagman with rapt attention.

"I don't know where Mr. Diggory found that spell, but it seems to be working!" Bagman exclaimed gleefully. "Dragon handlers, you best take note! Oooooh! He's building a tunnel out of those silver walls, and the dragon can't break through it! Excellent, excellent!"

The crowd roared its approval, and about ten minutes later, it was screaming with excitement as Bagman announced that Cedric had managed to safely capture his golden egg.

Fleur went next, but by that time two tentative plans began forming in Salazar's mind, and he hardly paid attention to Bagman. It was during this time that Salazar remembered something Godric had said to him back in second year.

It's amazing what a bit of Transfiguration can do to a simple rock. All it needed to do was lie in a coffin.

His head suddenly snapped up. It didn't need to be perfect, it just needed to be real enough to fool the dragon!

Salazar began going over different strategies in his head, and he started to pace around the tent. Krum was called out, and it took the lad about fifteen minutes to get his golden egg.

Finally it was Salazar's turn, and when he entered the dragon enclosure, the crowd fell silent just like it had with the others.

Salazar looked around cautiously to try and see where the dragon was, but he almost ended up getting crushed when the tail of the Hungarian Horntail nearly came down on top of his head. He quickly glanced around and spotted the nest and the golden egg. The first thing he tried to do, as he ducked another blow, was to summon the egg, but to no avail.

They must have placed an anti-summoning spell on it. He thought, as he glared at his dragon.

So then he launched Plan B.

He summoned a small rock, and just simply stood there staring at the very angry Horntail. The dragon seemed to study him for a moment, as the crowd hushed and stared at him.
"Potter needs to keep moving or he's going to be set...he's on fire! He's on fire!" Bagman shouted frantically. "Wait, where did he go? He was just there! Did his body turn to ash!?" Bagman shrieked.

A disillusioned Salazar grinned to himself as he quickly transfigured the rock he was holding into a somewhat believable copy of himself, then he quickly stepped away from it and lifted the disillusionment charm from the transfigured rock.

Several people in the crowd were screaming and crying, while others cheered, (namely Draco and company) but everyone stared in shock as the transfigured rock suddenly shimmered into view.

Salazar cast a quick animating charm at it, and the rock stood up and began waving at the dragon, who looked slightly confused by its sudden appearance.

"That slippery Slytherin used a flame freezing charm on himself! Alastor Moody says Potter is perfectly fine ladies and gentlemen! Let's see what he does next, and is that a transfigured rock or is that actually Potter?" Bagman asked in a slightly confused tone.

Salazar kept one eye on the enraged dragon as it tried to incinerate the rock, but he crept closer and closer to the nest. Finally the dragon gave up trying to set the rock on fire, and bashed it to smithereens with its tail and began stomping on the pieces for good measure.

Pieces of rock were sent flying in all directions as the crowd shrieked and screamed again, but Salazar had reached the nest, and quickly grabbed the golden egg. Then he made a beeline to safety.

"The golden egg is gone! It's gone! Look at that! There's Potter! He was using a disillusionment charm the whole time! He seems to be all right! Excellent, excellent!" Bagman shouted over the roaring crowd.

He was quickly escorted into the medical tent by Minerva, who flip-flopped between glaring at him, and grinning at him. However, when he got inside the medical tent, he came face to face with one angry Healer.

"Ouch, ouch, ouch!" Salazar cried as a few stinging jinxes landed on his backside. "Ouch woman! You're going to do more damage to me than the dragon did!"

"Don't you ever scare me like that again! I felt for certain you had withered into ash!" Poppy cried, sending a few more stinging jinxes at him.

"Ouch!" He cried again, as one managed to slip through his shield charms. "I'm fine Madam Pomfrey." He said with a wide grin, as he bowed slightly. "You don't have to look me over."

"Don't you try and charm your way out of an exam Harry Potter!" Poppy exclaimed, waggling her finger at him. "You get into that bed right now. Get!" She cried, sending another jinx at him.

He burst out laughing, but finally complied. He climbed into the bed and let Poppy do whatever it was she need to do, but he laid there with a grin on his face as he held the golden egg up to study it.

He may have gotten through this task relatively unscathed, but there was still two more tasks to go.

And yes, he still hated dragons.

Chapter End Notes
Hey everyone, I told you it was going to be a long one! Nearly 10,000 words! I hoped you enjoyed it. Slowly but surely i am building up the friction between Albus and Salazar, and now with Rita on the scene, it can be made public. Albus should really take Moody's words to heart though. Albus could be walking into a trap! Next chapter will feature Rita's interview, a lot of people's reactions to it, and other things. So i hope you stay tuned!

Also, i decided to use Dumbledore's blood instead of Salazar's for Voldy's rebirth ritual. One reason is, because it's always Harry's blood that gets used so i wanted something different. Another reason is, it seems rather redundant to use Salazar's blood, seeing as Salazar is Voldy's great, great, great, (you get the point) grandfather. So he already has Salazar's blood running through his veins. Anyway, i hope no one was blindsided by that bit of news, and that you guys see the logic there.

Please remember to let me know what you think! Your comments always mean so much to me, and thanks to everyone who is still sticking with me! You guys are the best!
Articles and Reactions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*A/N* Hey guys! I just wanted to let you all know that i tried to write the article how Rita would have written it. We know she cares little for the actual details, such as names being spelled correctly, and misapplied quotes, and things like that. I tried to keep her voice from the movie in my head as i wrote it, so i hope i did a good enough job with it. If i didn't, i hope you all forgive me! LOL

Chapter 41

Articles and Reactions

A grinning Salazar sat in his favorite chair in the Snake Pit later that night, with the golden egg sitting on his lap. Hermione, Neville, Fred, George, Godric, Blaise, Nora, and Emerald were sitting around him, debating on whether or not he should open it. Hermione said it should be studied closely, but Godric was all for just opening the thing to get it over with.

Salazar knew the suspense was getting to the man.

"But we don't know what kind of spells have been placed on it." Hermione said, motioning to the egg. "I mean, what if Harry opens it and something bad happens. This Tournament is designed to test your magical skills and knowledge. What if he opens it and we all go deaf, or blind, or something?"

"An excellent point." Salazar said, nodding in her direction.

"But they aren't going to do that." Godric said rolling his eyes.

"Gordy's right." Fred said. "And even if we go deaf, pass out, or what-have-you, it will most likely be temporary."

"Can you say that with certainty?" Hermione asked, raising an eyebrow at him.

"All I know is, if Speaker opens that silly egg and something bad happens to him, I'm biting someone." Nora said as she glared at it.

"I agree Fish Bait. You bite them, and I'll squash them."

"Then Pigeon can peck their eyes out, and the Peacock can drop them into a volcano." Nora said with a nod, as Hedwig hooted and bobbed her head and Nehum ruffled his feathers.

"Finishing them off for good measure, huh Nora?" Neville asked with a grin.

"Correct Bottom." She replied with a firm nod of her head. "That stupid winged lizard is lucky I was far enough away from her this morning. I could have done some major damage to her."

Emeralda hissed loudly in agreement. "Her other eggs looked rather tasty."

Salazar chuckled and grinned at his beloved snakes. "Well, you all make valid points, but I agree
with Hermione. In a case like this, you always, always, always study the object closely. We know it's an egg and we know it deals with the Tournament, but beyond that, we don't know much about it."

"Ok, so how do we inspect a magical object?" Blaise asked, looking at Salazar curiously.

"Normally, you would not touch it, because you don't know what could happen if you did. However, since we have already done that, we know it's safe to touch. You would visually scan the object and run a few simple tests on it. This spell is used for a single object only, and it lets us know if it is a dark object. The spell is…Tenebris Revelio."

He said, waving his wand in circles around the egg.

The egg glowed a bright yellow, and Salazar nodded.

"Tenebris Revelio means 'darkness reveled'." Godric said. "The yellow lets us know that there is no dark charms on it. If there had been, it would have glowed a blood red."

"Oh, kind of like the blood protection ward."

Blaise said, and Salazar nodded.

"Right." Salazar said. "The charm is designed to get around so called 'undetectable' dark charms and curses, so it never fails. If you cast that spell upon an object and it glows blood red, it's best to leave it alone, and call someone who knows about dark objects and things. But…moving on. Godric, your turn."

Salazar said with a grin.

Godric chuckled. "Next you would cast a revealing charm to see if it holds any secrets, and you would visually inspect the object after you cast the spell. If that turns up nothing, more than likely the object is safe and you can pick it up."

"More than likely?" Blaise asked.

Salazar chuckled. "It's best to levitate it if you're still unsure."

"True." Godric laughed.

Salazar showed them the 'revelio' and the 'specialis revelio' spells, but neither of them showed anything out of the ordinary.

"So the egg is just a golden egg that needs to be opened." George said, eyeing it with excitement.

"It seems that way." Salazar said with a nod, and he twisted the top, which made the sides of the egg pop open.

The noise emanating from the egg was so loud and obnoxious, that it made everyone clamp their hands over their ears and start yelling at each other. Hedwig let out a loud, disgruntled hoot and flew down the entrance tunnel. Nora dove off the back of Salazar's chair and slithered under it, while Emeraldal bolted down the Chamber tunnel as fast as her large body would allow her to. Nehum squawked loudly, ruffled his feathers angrily, and promptly disappeared.

Salazar had jumped out of his seat, which sent the egg crashing to the floor, but Neville jumped on top of it and was finally able to lock it shut.

"What in the name of Merlin, Morgana, and Godric's left butt cheek was THAT!?" Fred cried, causing his brother to burst out laughing.

Godric, who had been caught off guard for a moment, stared at him stupidly before Salazar also burst out laughing.
"I have no idea what Godric's left butt cheek has to do with anything, but I dare say that was a bit loud." Salazar chuckled, sticking his fingers in his ears and wiggling them around in an effort to stop the ringing.

"Was it supposed to do that?" Hermione giggled, glancing at Godric who was now grinning.

*Where is Dumbly!?* Nora cried, slithering out from underneath the chair. *"I want to bite him! Whose brilliant idea was it to make a screaming egg?!"

"What do we do now?" Neville asked, setting the egg down very carefully on the study table.

"Well, Bagman said that the egg holds a clue for the second task, so I do need to figure it out, but I have no idea how to go about doing that." Salazar said, as he gazed at the egg.

"Gordy? What is it?" Blaise asked, looking at Godric curiously as he got up from his chair, and began pacing back in front of the large windows that looked out into the lake.

"Now that my ears have stopped ringing, and I can somewhat think about it, I've heard that sound before. Unfortunately, I can't place it, but I know I have heard it." Godric said, turning towards Salazar.

"Heard it from where?" Hermione asked, furrowing her brow.

Godric shook his head. "I don't know. It's like I said, I can't place it. Maybe if I heard it again…" He started to say, but he was cut off by a loud 'NO' from Hermione, Neville, and Blaise, which caused Fred and George to start laughing again.

"*Jolly, if you open that egg and it starts screaming again…I will bite you!*" Nora cried, flicking her forked tongue at him in a threatening manner.

Fred snorted. "I think Nora is actually serious."

*I am.* She replied as she glared at him and Godric.

Salazar chuckled. "No, I don't think opening it tonight is going to do any good. Besides, it's getting late and we have classes tomorrow, so you all need to head to bed."

"Good point." Hermione said as she stood. "We have a test in Transfiguration first thing, and something tells me Professor McGonagall won't like it if we fall asleep during it."

"Indeed." Salazar chuckled. "We have plenty of time to study the egg because the next task isn't until February 24th."

"Hopefully I can remember where I've heard that sound before." Godric added. "It's going to drive me batty until I do."

"You're already batty." Salazar said with a grin.

"Shut up you baldheaded fool." Godric laughed. "Anyway. Out with all of you, so you don't get caught after curfew." He said, shooing the laughing children towards the entrance tunnel.

The Gryffindors left, and the others headed to bed, but it would be a long time before any of them actually fell asleep that night. They were all thinking up ideas that could help them figure out the egg.

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**Is Albus Dumbledore Trying To Control The-Boy-Who-Lived?**
By Rita Skeeter

Harry Potter, age fourteen, is a delightful and polite young man, with handsome looks and a charming smile that could capture the fancy of any young witch. With his well-known act in defeating the dark wizard You-Know-Who as an infant, it's no wonder the young man is strong, confidant, smart, quick witted, and likeable.

But is there a darker past to the boyhood hero? Are the stories our children grew up hearing just fables our imaginations have thought up to entertain them?

It seems so.

A dark shadow lurks over the young man's shoulder, a shadow that seeks to control our Harry. It isn't dark magic, a villainous dark wizard, or an escaped Death Eater. No, the dark controlling shadow that lurks over our hero is none other than Albus Dumbledore, aged one-hundred thirteen, Headmaster of Hogwarts, Chief Warlock, Grand Sorcerer, and Supreme Mugwump.

I was able to sit down with Harry Potter to talk about his life, and it seems that it has not been a fairy tale like we thought.

Our evening began with Mr. Potter showing me to the Snake Pit, a room that he and his friend, Gordon Ruffin, aged thirteen, built out of necessity to escape the attacks of children whose parents are known to have been involved with Death Eater activities.

"Gordy and I built this place because the Headmaster refused to put a stop to the attacks by the children of Death Eaters. It wasn't safe for us to remain in the main Slytherin common room because they would attack us with all manner of borderline dark hexes, jinxes, and curses, but Professor Dumbledore said that they were doing nothing wrong. As a Slytherin, I employed our infamous self-preservation skills, and built the Snake Pit."

As I, Rita Skeeter, entered the Snake Pit, a lovely, rich, and lavishly decorated room that rivals the main Slytherin common room itself, I looked around in amazement. A beautiful phoenix sat on a perch in one corner, and an equally beautiful and gentle sixty foot basilisk was stretched across the large area. The ceiling was see through, and I could look up into the main Slytherin common room, a place Me, Myself, and I called home for seven years.

Harry Potter seated himself in a dark green wing-backed chair with gold trim, and his pet snake Dora, a black adder, was perched on the back. He gave me a charming smile, and I began asking our young hero about his life prior to Hogwarts.

"It wasn't a bed of roses." Mr. Potter said, sorrowfully shaking his head.

He went on to tell me horrible tales of the muggles he was forced to live with after that infamous night in Godric’s Hollow. His muggle Aunt and Uncle treated him worse than a house elf, and starved, beat, tormented, and mocked him throughout his young life. All because they hated magic. Something that Albus Dumbledore knew before HE placed the infant Harry with the magic hating muggles.

"I don't hate my Aunt and Uncle though. I dislike them, but I don't hate them. You can't judge all muggles to be horrible because of a few bad ones. It's like accusing all witches and wizards of being just like (You-Know-Who). They aren't all bad, and neither are we." Mr. Potter said.

As Mr. Potter continued to tell me of his pre-Hogwarts years, my horror grew worse and worse. How can someone like Albus Dumbledore knowingly place a child in that kind of abusive
environment? He is the Headmaster of our greatest educational system in the Magical British World.

He should know better!

Was there something more to the sinister agenda of Headmaster Dumbledore? I needed to know, so I asked Mr. Potter about his first three years of Hogwarts under Albus Dumbledore’s rule.

Young Harry went on to tell me tales of rampaging trolls, a Professor that fell from the Astronomy Tower to his death, dangerous animals that were locked up in the school, possessed diaries belonging to You-Know-Who, an escaped convict (who turned out to be innocent), and dementors, (which admittedly were NOT the Headmaster's fault.)

But what of Mr. Potter himself?

"He (Professor Dumbledore) tries to control me, and we don't get along because I see things differently than he does. I don't see magic as 'light' and 'dark'. I judge the intention behind it. If I cut up a piece of fabric with a severing charm, that's ok, but if I use the severing charm to cut someone's arm off, it's not."

Wise words from a mere fourteen year old.

Mr. Potter went on to explain the past actions of the Headmaster to me.

"My first year was sort of all right, but at the end he told me I had to go back to my muggle Aunt and Uncle's house. A place he knowingly knew was bad for me. He had a Professor meet me on the platform, and escort me through the barrier and into the hands of my so-called family. When I got 'home', they had installed a cat-flap in the bedroom door so that they could throw scraps of food at me. There were many locks on the door, so that they could keep 'abnormal freaks' like me away from respectable people (them), and they had placed bars on my window so that I couldn't escape."

Mr. Potter took a deep breath during this painful memory, and petted the head of his beloved snake Dora to calm himself.

"I wanted to curse them, but I didn't. I did use some magic in order to get away from there, but I felt my life was in danger and that I had no other choice. I hope I don't get in trouble by saying that. I know I'm not supposed to do underage magic during the summer." He had said with a small apologetic smile.

Me, Myself, and I don't blame him a bit.

"When I returned to school on September first, I was immediately called into Professor Dumbledore's office. He wanted to know why I hadn't stayed at my Aunt and Uncle's during the summer, so I explained it to him, and he got mad at me for not doing what he wanted me to do."

Come to find out, the Headmaster had placed a tracking charm on young Mr. Potter in order to control him further.

But thankfully for our hero, Mr. Potter was discovered wandering around that summer by Nicholas Flamel, aged six-hundred and thirty, the famous alchemist and known maker of the Philosopher's Stone.

"Oh, the Flamels have been wonderful!" Mr. Potter exclaimed when I asked about them. "I lived with them after I escaped from my Aunt and Uncle, and Mrs. Flamel told me all about my family heritage, what it means to live in our world, and all kinds of things. They have been really great to me, and have helped Sirius and I out so much!"
I went on to ask Mr. Potter about his God Father, Sirius Black, and if he was nervous about living with him.

"No, I'm not. Sirius is really great. He is able to tell me stories about my parents that no one else could have told me. Living with him is really fun and we do a lot of great things."

Great things that Albus Dumbledore apparently doesn't want Mr. Potter to experience.

"At the end of my second year, which had been full of confrontations with the Headmaster, he tried to obliviate me. He wanted to send me back to my Aunt and Uncle's, though I don't know why. It's still unbelievable that he would want to send me back there."

This shocked me to my very magical core my good readers. Albus Dumbledore tried to obliviate a TWELVE year old! I makes me wonder how many of YOUR children he has obliviated.

"I know most people won't believe I was able to do this, but I'll swear an oath to prove it's true. I disarmed him, stunned him, and snapped his wand in half in order to protect myself."

And it seems my rabid readers, that ever since that moment, Albus Dumbledore has sought to smear our young hero's name.

"He calls me a dark and dangerous wizard. He thinks I'm arrogant and a show-off, and that I'm some kind of Dark Lord-in-training who is out to kill everyone, but I'm really not."

All of this is because Mr. Potter disagrees with how Albus Dumbledore has tried to control him his entire life.

"I know some people believe him. They look at me and see an 'evil' Parselmouth Slytherin, but ask any of my Gryffindor friends, two of whom are muggle borns, and you'll see the truth. I'm just a boy who is trying to be the best wizard I can be, and enjoy my school years so that I can hopefully pass on all that has been taught to me. I want to become a Professor one day."

A respectable position in our world I may add. I admire young Mr. Potter's ambition to become a Professor at our great Hogwarts.

However, Mr. Potter knows it's not one-sided. He admits to handling some things wrong regarding the Headmaster.

"I know there are some situations I could have handled differently, and I know I'm not totally innocent in my actions towards the Headmaster, but I'm only fourteen and doing the best I can."

I asked Mr. Potter about the more peculiar things the Headmaster dismisses when it comes to our young hero. Like the fact that he is the Heir of Gryffindor, and why the phoenix, which belongs to a friend, would hang around Mr. Potter if he was a dark evil wizard like the Headmaster claims. These are things that are common sense to us, but it seems like Albus Dumbledore turns a blind eye to them.

"He sees what he wants to see, and no one can tell him any different." Mr. Potter explained. "Anyone who disagrees with him is labeled dark, dangerous, wrong, and sometimes worse things."

When I asked him specifically about being the Heir of Gryffindor, Mr. Potter laughed and had this to say.

"It's a running joke among my friends and I. Ever since I learned that I'm the Heir of Godric Gryffindor, my friends call me Salazar Slytherin because I'm in Slytherin and I talk to snakes. I find it
rather funny though. Most people forget that Gryffindor and Slytherin were best friends. My best friend Gordy is also a Slytherin, but I call him Godric sometimes because he acts like a Gryffindor, but our Gryffindor friends find it all funny. We are a weird group of mates." He laughed. "But aside from titles, and who I'm related to, I'm just a child and I'm not perfect. I do get advice from Professors and other adults that I trust, but I absolutely refuse to bow down and worship the ground the Headmaster walks on."

And apparently that doesn't set well with Albus Dumbledore. Has the Headmaster gone senile in his old age? Is it time for him to hang up some of his titles and retire before he can do more damage?

It seems that way.

Mr. Potter told me of his agenda, an agenda that would have most people cheering him on.

"My agenda is to kill every person who bears the dark mark, and the half-blooded son of a muggle who invented it. Anyone who is anyone knows that (You-Know-Who) is still out there. Whatever happened that night in Godric's Hollow remains a mystery, but (You-Know-Who's) body was never found. I don't think I killed him then, but I will kill him should he ever try to return again."

What makes that statement so profound is that Albus Dumbledore aims to stop Mr. Potter from completing that agenda, and just in case anyone thinks Mr. Potter is lying, he has proof should the right parties come looking for it.

But why does Albus Dumbledore aim to stop our young hero? Mr. Potter doesn't know, and quite frankly, nor do I.

However, the question still remains. Has Dumbledore gone senile? Should he retire to a quiet spot in the middle of nowhere? Does Albus Dumbledore, an adult, have the right to control every aspect of a young boy's life? A boy that has no other relationship to him other than school related? Should Mr. Potter, a fourteen year old child, be slandered and vilified for protecting himself from Albus Dumbledore?

You be the judge.

Until next time my wonderful and delightful readers!

Rita Skeeter

Lily and James burst out laughing after a grinning Sirius read the entire article out loud to them via the mirrors. It had been a week since the first task, and Rita's article had finally been published.

"I think I like that woman!" Lily said, as she laughed loudly. "I hope Dumbledore is squirming in his seat right now. I hope Molly Weasley sends him ten howlers! I hope he gets mail from every parent that has a child at Hogwarts telling him what a horrible man he is! I hope…"

"Lily!" James shouted through tears of laughter. "Breath sweet heart!"

"Well I'm not done." She giggled. "Ok I am, but you know what I'm talking about. That man has the gall to try and control my son! I still cannot wait for the day I get to punch him in his self-righteous crooked nose!"

Sirius snorted. "Salazar has been handling himself well. I think Harry's name is still pretty much intact."
"He is doing a good job." James agreed with a nod. "The Potter name is still going to be respected, but if it's not, I don't blame him. I blame Albus."

"I agree. I don't blame Salazar. The man has done the best he can." Lily said with a sigh. "He has defended Harry's name even though it's not Salazar's name to defend. I think I respect him even more now. Besides, when the final truth comes out when Voldemort is finally gone for good, Albus is going to have a massive amount of egg all over his face."

"Yes he will." Sirius agreed. "Well, aside from Albus's name now getting thoroughly trashed in the paper, I have something exciting to share. My house is finally finished!" He said with excitement.

He vanished the black wall he had placed behind him, and he grinned as he held his arms wide open. His little cottage was one big open area that had no indoor walls, due to them making Sirius feel like he was back in prison. The roof was held in place by a combination of magic and a large double-sided fireplace that warmed the entire cottage. The fireplace also somewhat shielded the open bedroom from visitors, but hid the bathroom completely from view.

The cottage was decorated sparsely, but it had a kitchen, a small area for bookshelves that could be considered a library, if you squinted just right, and a sitting area in the middle of the room. The walls were painted with red and gold stripes that could make a person go cross-eyed if they stared at them for too long.

He had built it on a few of the back acres on Merlin's large property because he had come to love the area. Merlin was happy to sell him a few acres to let him build a house of his own. It was a peaceful, secluded place, and just what Sirius wanted. He was his own man now, and that suited him just fine.

"So Padfoot is Irish now?" James asked with a teasing grin. "I know there is a four leaf clover joke in there somewhere."

Sirius burst out laughing. "Yeah, you can hang some clovers from your antlers to honor me Prongs."

"Not in this lifetime!" James shouted, causing Sirius to grin at him.

"It's really great here and I love it." Sirius said with a laugh. "Merlin lets Moony run wild on the full moon, and I run with him. Even though he's at Hogwarts, he still comes here for the change. It's just like old times Prongs, only less danger cause there is no one around. Hey!" He suddenly exclaimed, snapping his fingers. "Maybe you can come next full moon! Bring Lily, and all of us can run together!"

"It would be a good way to show off my animagus form." Lily said with a grin. "We better run that by Salazar though, and Merlin too of course."

"That's true, but I don't see why Salazar would object. My place is still protected by Merlin's wards." Sirius said, but then he started to bounce around with a boyish grin on his face. "I can't believe it though. My very own house, and I even have my very own house elf. Her name is Winky. Her former Masters were the Crouches." He said, rolling his eyes. "Her bond to the Crouches was officially and safely broken when they went to Azkaban, but she bonded with me and seems to be doing fine. She is fiercely loyal to me, which is something I have never experienced from a house elf before."

"You spent too much time around Kreacher." James said, scowling at the thought of the Blacks demented house elf.

"I supposed so." Sirius nodded, but he started running around and pointing out different things he
had done to the place.

Lily just looked at her husband's best friend as tears began to form in her eyes. Seeing him so happy and full of life after the horrors he had been subjected to was worth all the years of putting up with his pranks and slight insanity.

Lily grinned playfully at Sirius. "Padfoot, I don't want to put a damper on your jovial mood, but I have to say, you finally grew-up."

Sirius stared at her in mock horror as James burst out laughing.

"Prongs! Situation critical! I need help! Quick, who can I prank?" Sirius asked as he looked around wildly.

"Albus!" Lily shouted at the same time James said, "Salazar!"

Sirius stopped and thought about it. "Hmm, Albus would be my first choice, but I have to go with Salazar. I sense that Godric is slacking on the pranks, and the twins are too. I'll think of something devious."

"But harmless." Lily warned. "He has enough going on with the Tournament."

"You are right, as always." Sirius said with a sigh, but then he grinned. "I know just the thing to get our favorite Slytherin grinning again."

With a bit of a groan, Lily rolled her eyes and hoped Salazar wouldn't end up killing the man.

While Sirius and James began planning an epic prank on Salazar-Nicholas, Perenelle, and Merlin were sitting at Merlin's breakfast table reading the same Rita Skeeter article.

"He charmed her." Perenelle said with a grin. "The cunning little devil."

Nicholas chuckled. "I wonder what Albus is thinking right now?"

"Probably on ways of getting back at Salazar. I'm sorry to say though, it won't work." Perenelle replied with a haughty nod.

"Are you sure?" Merlin asked, looking at them with raised eyebrows. "I'm afraid this is only the beginning. We are going to see it get nasty before it gets any better. Albus is not going to take this lying down."

"You have seen something?" Perenelle asked with wide, concerned eyes.

"I have seen many things." Merlin said with a sigh as he gazed out the window. "But as I told Godric nearly two years ago, to speak of details will cause more harm than good."

"Will Albus get what's coming to him?" Nicholas asked, hoping the wise, ancient wizard would give him a straight answer.

"This goes far beyond Albus and Salazar's posturing." Merlin said, shaking his head. "I'm afraid many are going to suffer before it's all over."

"What can we do Merlin?" Nicholas asked in a voice just above a whisper.

"For now, nothing." Merlin replied. "Two wars are coming, and they are coming fast. One will be
fought with words, posturing, and bravado, but the other war will bring darkness, death, and despair."

"Voldemort." Perenelle gasped.

Merlin nodded sadly. "Yes." He whispered. "Change is coming to our world, but we must let it come. We must endure the hardships, death, and horrors if we are to see a bright future. It will be painful, but we must fight."

"Even you?" Nicholas asked, raising an eyebrow at his old friend.

"Even me." Merlin said, as his eyes grew hard as steel. "The time is coming for me to make my presence known. For I, in good conscience, cannot sit the coming war out. It will take all of us to bring the madman down."

"All of us." Perenelle whispered in horror.

"All of us." Merlin confirmed, as he laid The Daily Prophet down on the table.

The two pictures that accompanied the article stared back at them. One of Albus, who was standing tall and proud as he stared into the camera, and one of 'Harry Potter' sitting in a winged back chair, smiling innocently with Nora stretched out across his shoulders.

Merlin sighed as repeated his confirmation. "All of us."

"I am NOT a pet! And that frilly woman spelled my name wrong!" Nora exclaimed, as she hissed angrily and flicked the paper with the end of her tail. "We should use this article to line Pigeon and the Peacock's perches."

Godric chuckled as he patted her head. "It's all right Dora, she spelled my name wrong too."

"If you call me by that awful name again, I will bite you." She hissed, as she haughtily slithered over to Blaise, who was trying to hold back a snort.

"Gordon Ruffin? Where in the world did she come up with that name?" Salazar asked with a crooked grin plastered on his face, as he reread the article for the third time in a row.

They were at breakfast, and already the front page article was causing a stir among staff and students alike. Many of them were glaring at the Headmaster, who had a pained and constipated look on his face as he shifted around uncomfortably in his chair, but a great many more were glaring over at Salazar, as if daring him to continue his assault against the great and wonderful Albus Dumbledore.

Salazar didn't care though, because he grinned at an owl flying fast and hard towards the Headmaster. In its beak was a red envelope, no doubt containing a howler that must have come straight from someone in Hogsmeade, seeing as it got to the Headmaster so fast.

"ALBUS DUMBLEDORE!" It roared in an unknown witch's voice, after Albus visibly cringed and opened it. "YOU LEAVE THAT SWEET LITTLE BOY ALONE! HOW DARE YOU TRY AND CONTROL HIM! I HAVE HALF A MIND TO NEVER SELL YOU ANOTHER LEMON DROP AS LONG AS I LIVE!"

"That must be Mrs. Flume!" Blaise whispered loudly, as the howler stopped to catch a breath. "She and her husband own Honeydukes!"
"IF I EVER HEAR OF YOU TRYING TO PUT HIM THROUGH MORE HELL, YOU WILL WISH FOR DEATH! I CAN THINK UP MANY POISONS THAT I CAN SLIP INTO YOUR PRECIOUS CANDY THAT WILL KILL YOU SLOWLY! YOU HAVE BEEN WarnED!" And with that, the howler began ripping itself to shreds.

Over at the Gryffindor table, the twins were howling with laughter, and even Ron looked highly amused over what just happened. Neville and Hermione were trying to hide large grins, but they were failing miserably.

Up at the head table, Minerva and Poppy had smug, wicked grins on their faces. Severus looked bored, but Salazar knew him well enough to know that his eyes were shining with laughter held back by sheer, strong will-power. Sprout and Flitwick were grinning, while Remus cast a silencing charm on himself so he could laugh loudly, but still hide the fact he was laughing. However, the other Professors were shooting sympathetic looks Albus's way, and Karkaroff and Madam Maxime looked torn on how to react.

Karkaroff finally settled on smirking, while Madam Maxime preferred to remain indifferent.

Surprisingly, another owl came swooping in and deposited another red envelope in front of the Headmaster. Albus sighed and quickly broke the seal in an effort to get it over with.

"ALBUS!" It bellowed in a clear, strong manly voice. "I TOLD YOU THAT ONE DAY YOUR SELFISH, SUPPOSED, ALL KNOWING, SLIMEY, WAYS WOULD COME BACK AND BITE YOU IN THE ARSE! I SUGGEST YOU APOLOGIZE TO THAT YOUNG MAN WHILE YOUR HEAD IS STILL ATTACHED TO YOUR SHOULDERS! YOU ARE NOT THE SECOND COMING OF MERLIN, AND YOU DON'T KNOW IT ALL, I ASSURE YOU! AND DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT COMING DOWN HERE TO TRY AND TALK SOME 'REASON' AND 'SENSE' INTO ME, BECAUSE I KNOW THINGS YOU DON'T! MAY GODRIC GRYFFINDOR HAVE MERCY ON YOUR SOUL!"

"Who the bloody hell was that?" Blaise asked, staring wide-eyed at the howler that was ripping itself apart.

"THAT, my young friend, was Aberforth Dumbledore, Albus's younger brother." Godric whispered with a wicked grin, as he sipped his pumpkin juice. "I'd know that voice anywhere. He owns the Hogs Head Pub in Hogsmeade. I go there all the time to grab a couple shots of firewhiskey. Dodgy place, but Aberforth is a good man, and a good friend. You need to meet him Salazar. He knows who I am."

Salazar looked at his friend in shock. "Really?" He asked, and Godric nodded. "Why did you never tell me?"

"Slipped my mind really, with all the things we've had to put up with. He doesn't know who you are, but he does know about me. Which explains the 'mercy' part of his howler. No doubt Aberforth thinks I'm headed up here right now to claim my Heir and behead Albus for trying to slander you." Godric chuckled.

Salazar laughed. "I'll be happy to meet him on our next Hogsmeade trip, but as Salazar, not Harry. I trust you to know if he's trustworthy, but I don't want him to know the big secret." Salazar said, looking at Albus, who was pale faced and still staring at the pieces of the howler from his brother.

"Fair enough, but Aberforth has a point, Albus isn't the second coming of Merlin." Godric chuckled.
"Yeah, because the first coming of Merlin hasn't moved on yet." Blaise whispered with a knowing grin.

"Nor will he ever." Salazar chuckled, as another owl swooped in with a howler.

It was from Madam Rosmerta, who ran the Three Broomsticks, and she threatened to poison Albus's personal stock of butterbeer that he bought from her every month. After that, Albus shooed everyone out of the great hall and sent them to their first period classes.

For the rest of the day everyone could hear snippets of all the howlers that arrived at all different times throughout the day, but they weren't all for the Headmaster. Salazar received some as well, and he got a good laugh out of some of them as they bellowed things like 'you're just a child, respect your elders', or 'Professor Dumbledore is a good man', and his personal favorite, 'how dare you question the great Albus Dumbledore'.

However, he destroyed the nastier ones that shouted awful things and went into details about how they wanted to kill him and spill his evil, nasty, worthless guts on the ground. These were things no child should be subjected to hearing, and he frowned at the ashy remains of the howlers from those sick and twisted people who considered themselves 'light'.
"The picture of 'innocence'." Voldemort chuckled. "That boy is about as innocent as me. I can see it in his eyes and his posture. He may be able to fool his friends, family, and supporters, but he can be swayed." He said with a malicious grin. "Little Nora has grown up too I see. I actually liked her and found her amusing during Potter's first year. She will no doubt prove to be an excellent companion for the boy when he joins us. Isn't that right my lovely Nagini?"

"If you say so Master, but can I eat the other snake?"

"No, that would only alienate the boy, and cause him to hate us. You must embrace them both."

"If that is your wish Master." She said with a slight bow of her head.

"Oh how I could stick it to Dumbledore if the boy joined me!" Voldemort laughed. "He would be responsible for sending the boy right to me because of his stupidity! The Heir of Slytherin and the Heir of Gryffindor a TEAM! Ha! Take that you foolish old goat!" He shouted gleefully, as he picked up a nearby dinner knife and began rapidly stabbing Albus's picture with it. "A lovely, gleeful day it will be!"

Peter cringed at the Parseltongue. Personally he thought his Master was slightly loopy, but he dared not to say that out loud. Peter seriously doubted that Harry would ever join his Master willingly or not, but he didn't voice that opinion, because if he did, he knew he would find himself cursed.

So as the deranged madman continued to laugh maniacally and babble to his dammed snake, Peter quietly snuck out of the dining room and headed up to Voldemort's bed chamber, so he could get it ready for when his Master decided to retire for the evening.

To say that Albus was having a bad day was an understatement, and as he sat in his office, he continued to stare at the article and shake his head.

His desk was littered with the ashes and ripped up remains from the many howlers that had been coming in at a steady pace all day. Fawkes had left earlier that morning in order to get away from the noise, and his office held an unusual silence since the normally sleeping and snoring portraits of past Headmasters had moved off elsewhere.

"I didn't realize it was going to be this bad Alastor." He said, and Moody scoffed loudly as he stood with his back to the wall.

"It's Rita Skeeter. What did you expect?"

"The boy has the public eating out of his hands." Albus replied, motioning to the ashy remains of the howlers he had yet to vanish. "Thankfully, some of my more stanch supporters believe this is nonsense. Cornelius floo called me earlier to assure me that I have his full support. Cornelius believes, just as I do, that the boy is evil. Several in the Wizengamot and other Ministry officials agree with me, and say I need to watch Harry closely."

"Potter is odd Albus, I don't deny that, but I don't think he is the second coming of Voldemort."

Moody said.

"He is a Slytherin." Albus said looking at Moody sharply.

"So is Malfoy and his little gang." Moody snapped.

Albus waved him off. "Harry is different. Alastor, you don't understand. Harry is the mirror image of Tom Riddle when he was at school. He is unbalanced, evil, cunning, powerful, and he uses people
to his advantage. Case in point, Mrs. Skeeter." He said, motioning to the article. "I know Harry manipulated her in order to get her on his side."

"Pot calling the kettle black Albus?" Moody said with an amused grin.

"This is different." Albus shot back. "I do it for the Greater…the good of all people." He stammered.

"Uh huh." Moody said, eyeing him closely. "So what about the allegations Albus? What of Roffin's phoenix? Why has the phoenix not alerted Roffin to Potter's 'evilness', and why is it still hanging around Potter?"

"Nehum probably has, but Mr. Roffin obviously refuses to listen to his phoenix, and Nehum probably stays around Harry in order to protect Mr. Roffin. I don't doubt Mr. Roffin's lightness. He wouldn't have a phoenix if he was anything other than extremely light, but I worry about that boy, as I do the Gryffindors. I'm afraid Harry will corrupt them and fill their head with dark and dangerous notions. Harry has tricked his 'friends' into believing he is good, but in reality he is not. Tom Riddle did the same thing, and some of his 'friends' turned out to be the first Death Eaters."

"So what you are saying is…you think Potter's agenda is fake." Moody asked curiously.

"No, that I believe is true, but I think it goes deeper than that. Harry wants Voldemort out of the way so he can take Voldemort's place as the next Dark Lord. If you look closely, you will see that he has slowly gathered supporters. Supporters that he has taken away from me. All of the Weasleys, Minerva, Poppy, his friends, and his family. Namely Remus, Sirius, the Flamels, and that abhorrent Nilrem fellow, who by the way, I think is helping Harry to achieve his ultimate goal. He has taken a lot of my supporters, and he loves to rub my face in it." Albus said, growing angrier and angrier with each word. "All of these people are walking into a trap, and he will kill them all. That is his plan!"

A skeptical Moody looked at Albus. "Are you sure about that? Potter may hate you, and Merlin knows he loves to rub you the wrong way, but to everyone else he's perfectly honest. Case in point, I overheard some Hufflepuffs talking about Pomona taking points away from Potter for not paying attention in class. They were shocked because he didn't put them back like he always does when you take points from him. They said he nodded and accepted the point loss humbly."

"That's because he wants everyone to believe that he is a good little boy." Albus said as he glared at his friend. "It's the same way Tom Riddle was. He'd humble himself in front of authority to make them believe he was a good child. Harry knows that I am on to him, so he lashes out at me because he knows I'm not fooled."

"I don't know Albus." Moody said, shaking his head. "Something is just not adding up here. There is more to this than what is right in front of us. You must tread carefully."

"There is nothing more here Alastor. I know I am right about this. Harry Potter is an evil little boy, and he mustn't be allowed to continue to behave like this."

"So what are you going to do? Expel him?"

"No, because believe it or not, he do still need him to defeat Voldemort because of the prophecy. However, the mindless killing of everyone bearing the dark mark is senseless, and cannot be allowed. That is what I take issue with as far as his 'agenda' goes." Albus said with a sigh, but then he looked at Alastor. "As for what I am going to do, I'm going to strike back. I'm going to tell the world just what I think about Harry Potter. I'm going to warn the world, and I'm going to clearly point out the similarities between Voldemort and Harry Potter."
"He's fourteen Albus!" Moody exclaimed. "You can't crucify the boy in the public square!"

"Better they have their eyes opened now before it's too late." Albus said with a steely resolve blazing in his eyes.

Moody just stared at his friend in stunned disbelief, and only one thing entered his mind.

Potter had somehow known this was going to happen, and Albus was walking into some kind of trap.

Chapter End Notes

You can now sort of see the madness with Voldemort and start to get a sense of how unstable he is going to be throughout this story, but please don't think he will not be a threat! Unstable madmen like him are capable of anything! As for Albus, well he has his own opinion and despite his brother's warning, he still thinks he is right about everything. Will he ever learn? Time will tell!

I hope you enjoyed the chapter, and I'm already working on the next one. It will have the first Hogsmeade visit, and Salazar will meet Aberforth as himself, not Harry, and talk of the Yule Ball is going to pop up as well! I hope you stay tuned!
For the most part, life had been quiet for the last few days since Rita's article. Salazar had occasionally come across someone who made a scathing remark or two, but he just shook his head and ignored them. Draco was torn about what to do, seeing as he didn't want to defend Albus, but nor did he want to agree with 'Harry' on anything.

It was quite funny to watch his inner struggle really.

However, many people had come up to him to offer sympathy and encouragement. Susan Bones even told him that her Aunt, Amelia Bones who was Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, had contacted her and asked Susan to tell him that if he wanted to press charges against his muggle family that she was more than willing to look into making that happen. Salazar told Susan that he didn't, seeing as that part of his life was done with forever, and assured her that he would send a letter to her Aunt explaining his decision.

Salazar received a letter back from Madam Bones telling him that she understood the need to move on from unpleasant past experiences, but that if he ever changed his mind, her offer would still stand.

Salazar was just thankful that there was someone out there who was willing help out a 'child', instead of sending him nasty howlers full of gruesome details of what they wanted to do to him.

With the exception of the occasional turning of a page, it was completely silent in the Snake Pit as Salazar, Godric, and Blaise sat at the tables doing homework, reading, or studying. Nora was sleeping soundly on the rock Salazar had gotten her during the summer after first year, while Hedwig and Nehum sat together on Nehum's perch. They were leaning against one another and snoozing. Emeralda wasn't with them though because she was out hunting for food in the Forbidden Forest. She had come back many times saying she had a belly full of spiders.

Salazar just hoped she wouldn't eat one of the centaurs.

"SIR!" A disembodied voice shouted just inches from Salazar's ear, causing him to jerk so violently that he smeared the ink on his Potions homework.

Blaise and Godric were also startled, and Godric drew his wand and stared around with wide eyes, as Blaise let out a slight yelp and dropped his Transfiguration book. Nora hissed loudly, and Nehum and Hedwig squawked angrily.

"Even though you are disillusioned Severus, I can see the cheeky smirk on your face." Salazar chuckled, causing Blaise and Godric to snort as they relaxed and went about what they had been doing.

Severus chuckled as well. "It's not every day I get to sneak up on you. However, there is something very important that I need to discuss with you." He said, suddenly sounding very serious. "It involves my dark mark."
Salazar looked towards Severus's voice in alarm. "What's the matter?"

"It's growing darker." The young man said with a bit of nervousness.

"Let me see it. We can go to my room so the rest of Slytherin house won't see you." Salazar replied as he stood up.

They walked the sort walk to Salazar's room, and only after the door was shut, Severus finally lifted the disillusionment charm. Salazar studied the pale, nervous Potions Master as he lifted the sleeve of his left forearm.

Salazar took his arm and held it up to inspect it.

"You were right. It's definitely getting darker." Salazar said with a sigh as he leaned against the wall.

"Karkaroff's is getting darker as well. He came to my office yesterday evening to show me his. He, like myself, is scared, though I did not show that I was alarmed. You know what this means don't you?" Severus said, looking towards his mentor as the man began to pace the bedroom.

"Yes, and we can assume that the rest are getting darker as well. Has Malfoy contacted you?"

"No sir, but if you want I can check with him."

"I'll leave that up for you to decide. With Karkaroff readily available to us, you may not need to check with others. Keep me posted, but have you told Albus yet?" Salazar asked.

"No sir, I came to you first. Honestly, I was hoping it wasn't real, because it's been getting darker for over two months now, but when Karkaroff came to me last night, I knew I couldn't ignore it any longer."

Salazar nodded and squeezed Severus's shoulder tightly. "Four years ago I told you it was your decision. If you want to leave the spy life, I will look into removing that mark, but if you choose to do this, it is your choice. However, you do need to tell Albus because he needs to know, BUT if you choose not to be a spy, you tell him point blank-no. Do NOT let him guilt trip you into spying on Voldemort." Salazar said, looking at the young man with fear in his eyes. "One slip up Severus, and Voldemort will kill you. I don't want to bury you while you're young." He added in a whisper as he drew in a deep breath, but then he continued.

"I want to bury you at an old age, after you have lived a full, healthy, free, and loving life." Salazar said as his voice cracked slightly. "You mean too much to me, and I can't lose you right now, my son."

Severus looked at him in shock, but there was hope in his eyes. "Son?"

Salazar nodded softly. "It's been a long time since I've had one, but yes, I consider you a son."

They looked at each other for several long minutes, but finally Severus nodded. "Thank you." He whispered. "It's been four years, but I'm still getting used to being wanted for me, and not for what I can do for someone."

"It takes time." Salazar said softly. "But it's true, I love you like a son." Then he took a deep breath. "I know what I want you to do, but it's not my choice to make. If you choose to stay a spy, I will support your decision."

"I think I will sir." Severus said quietly. "We need someone on the inside, and I'm the perfect man
for the job, but I don't want to disappoint you."

"You can never disappoint me." Salazar said with a reassuring smile. "And as I said, I will support you, but if at any time you want to quit, do so. I will not think less of you."

"I will sir." Severus said with a hint of a smile on his face. Then he stood up straight and regained his 'Professor' stance. "I will tell Albus about my mark the first chance I get, however at the present time, I need to make an announcement in the common room."

Salazar chuckled a bit. He knew this was knew to Severus and it would take a while for the young man to process it all. Instinct forced him to clamp down on any emotion until he could work it out in private later, so Salazar was not surprised by the abrupt change of subject.

"All right. We will wait until you enter the common room, then we will give you the chance to snarl and glare at us, before shooting the floor with a blasting hex to get our attention." Salazar said with a grin, which caused Severus's eyes to sparkle with mischief.

"I think you will like this announcement though." Severus said with a feral grin, as the reapplied his disillusionment charm.

"Oh really? What is it?"

"You will have to wait Mr. Potter." Severus 'snapped'. "You get no special privilege from me."

Salazar threw back his head and laughed loudly as they made their way back into the sitting room. Godric was looking at him oddly, and Blaise looked curious as Salazar sat back down in his chair, as Severus headed out of the entrance tunnel.

"Well, his mark is getting darker." Salazar said in a more subdued tone. "That means Voldemort is getting stronger, and will likely return soon. How he is accomplishing this is a mystery though. I told Severus to let Albus know, but everyone else needs to know as well."

"Salazar, we are in no position have Voldemort return. We can't kill him permanently because we don't even know if we have found all of his horcruxes yet." Godric said with wide, concerned eyes.

"I know." Salazar said with a deep sigh. "Seven is the maximum number he can make, so unless we find out otherwise, we need to assume that is how many he has. We have destroyed the one in me, the diary, and the diadem."

"That's three, so we need four more." Blaise said, staring at Salazar with wide eyes. "What could they be?"

"Anything." Salazar said with a sigh. "And that's the problem."

"What do we do?" Blaise asked. "I mean, I know what you all are going to do, but what about us kids?"

"Learn everything you can." Salazar said as he gazed at the young man. "Godric and I will teach you all we can on top of your normal classes. If war is coming, it's coming sooner than any of us predicted and you and the others will be a target, simply for being my friend. You have to learn to defend yourselves."

Blaise gulped slightly, but he nodded firmly. "I understand."

Just then, a loud boom sounded above their heads, and they looked up to see Severus snarling at
them. Salazar stifled a chuckle as Godric readied the stairs, and Blaise summoned the Walking-Through-Walls potion.

When they emerged from the floor, Severus snarled at them again before turning to address the rest of the house.

"Now that Potter and his worshipers have graced us with their presence, there is an announcement that I need to make." He said dryly. "It is a tradition of the Triwizard Tournament to hold a ball. This ball is called The Yule Ball and is held on Christmas night. It is open to only fourth years and above, unless you are lucky enough to have an older student invite you as their date." He said, and another sneer appeared on his face as he looked at Godric. "So some of you, will have to peel yourself away from your hero worship for an evening." He said, then he turned to readdress the rest of the house. "This is a formal ball, so dress robes are required. Our Champion," he snarled, "must find a date since it is required that he have one as well, even if he pretends he does not want to be a Champion. No excuses Potter." He spat. "I will not let you embarrass Slytherin house more than you already have. You will do what is required of you, or I will personally see that you have detention from now until you graduate. Is that clear?"

A very pale and flushed cheek Salazar swallowed hard. "Yes sir."

"Good." He said with smirk, then he strode out of the common room with his robes billowing behind him.

An excited hum filled the main common room as Salazar slowly sank back down in the Snake Pit.

This was not going to be fun.

"I'm going to kill him. I'm going to kill him." Salazar muttered under his breath the next morning at breakfast as they sat at the Gryffindor table.

All night long he had pleaded with Severus to try and get him out of this somehow. Unfortunately, the order had not come from Severus, it had come from Albus, who said all the Champions must open the Yule Ball with the traditional opening dance.

So he absolutely needed to find a date for the evening.

"Who are we going to kill Harry? Snape or Dumbledore?" Neville asked with a snort.

Salazar glared at him. "Albus. Who else?"

George laughed loudly at him. "Cheer up Harry, you can always take Ginny."

Salazar turned his glare on the lad, and shot a particularly nasty horn growing hex at him, but George managed to duck just in time. The lad burst out laughing, but everyone glanced down at the length of the table to find Ginny making googley eyes at Salazar.

"I think not." Salazar said, turning to bury his head in his plate. "This would not be a problem if I was fourteen. The problem is, I'm not fourteen. I don't want to take a young lady who is going to think that we are going to end up as a couple, and nor do I want to take someone who only wants to go with me for bragging rights."

"Oh Harry, you're such an idiot!" Hermione said, whopping him on the arm with a book. "Take me you dolt. I will think neither thing, and since I know the truth, it will be easier on you."
Salazar sighed and looked at her. "That was my first thought Hermione, but then I thought about it. It's not fair to you. This is your first ball, and you need to have fun. You need to go with someone whom you truly want to spend the evening with, not someone who you have to spend the evening with. You only get one fist ball, and it must be an enjoyable one. I can't do that to you."

"Aww, how sweet Salazar. I didn't know you had it in you." Godric snorted, causing Salazar to grab Hermione's book and hit him with it.

Everyone laughed, but Hermione smiled softly and patted his arm. "I do want to go with you Harry, you must believe that."

Salazar smiled, and took a deep breath. "I'll tell you what, if you don't have a date before two days prior to the ball, then we will go together. I say that because I also don't wish to deny any young man the pleasure of your company for the evening." Then his face grew dark and he scowled. "So long as he keeps himself respectable, abides by your wishes, and keeps his hands to himself. If he so much as holds your hand in a fashion you don't want him to, I'll hex him until he cries, and will make him apologize to you while on his hands and knees, begging for mercy."

Everyone burst out laughing, but Hermione blushed a deep red. She giggled a bit, and leaned over to kiss his cheek.

"Yes Father." She said, causing Salazar to grin stupidly and Godric to roar even louder with his laughter.

"Good." Salazar said with a firm nod. "But you must promise me that you won't deny someone who may ask simply because you are worried about me."

"I promise Harry." She said with a giggle.

Salazar chuckled, but Fred grinned. "So Harry, who are you taking to the ball?"

Salazar groaned and shook his head. "I have no idea."

Everyone grinned and snorted. Clearly this was not as cut and dry as it seemed.

It had been four days since the announcement of the Yule Ball, and two weeks until said ball. The last four days had been a nightmare for Salazar though, because not only did he NOT have a date yet, he kept getting asked to the ball by girls he had never even spoken too, and needless to say, it made him uncomfortable. Godric's constant teasing was the only thing that made him grin, though it was starting to get old now.

Salazar had actually taken to walking around the castle under a disillusionment charm because of the unrelenting female student population. Moody looked at him curiously at first, until Salazar sighed heavily, canceled his charm, and motioned for Moody to follow him. Salazar got all the way into the courtyard before a second year Ravenclaw came up and asked him to take her to the ball. He politely said no, before reapplying the charm. Then he pointedly looked at Moody, who burst out laughing and shook his head as he walked away.

Salazar honestly didn't know why the ladies kept asking him to the ball, when before, they basically ignored him. Neville said he overheard a few Ravenclaws saying it was because of the way he defeated the dragon, but Blaise said he had heard a few whispering it was because they wanted to 'mother' him, meaning they thought he needed someone to love and take care of him.

Salazar had to laugh at that because not only was it weird, but he hadn't needed a mother in
very long time.

There were a few ideas about his predicament that had been voiced, each more ridiculous than the next. Fred suggested he turn Nora into a human and take her, but that was impossible to do. Remus said he should ask Poppy or Minerva, which was shot down seeing as showing up with either of them would raise more than a few eyebrows. Godric said he should just transfigure a rock and take it, but Salazar glared at him for suggesting it.

Blaise had ended up asking Daphne Greengrass to the ball, and Salazar was happy for the young lad. Neville was going with Hannah Abbot, whom he had asked after their last Herbology class, though the poor lad stuttered through the whole thing. Hannah was just as red faced as he was when he asked her, but she said yes which brought a smile to everyone's face.

Hermione hadn't been asked yet, but there was still time, and as far as Salazar getting a date, he just hoped it all worked out so that he wouldn't have to take a transfigured rock to the Yule Ball.

Because that would be embarrassing!

To compound the problems he was currently having, everyone had been alerted to the dismaying news of Voldemort's soon return. Lily and James became frightened, but promised that they would start keeping a lower profile. Sirius, Remus, and Minerva said that they would keep their eyes and ears open, while Merlin, Nicholas, and Perenelle began brushing up on older magic that had been long forgotten, in the hopes that it would give them another advantage over the madman.

The news also made the children sit up and pay a bit more attention in class. Fred and George's grades actually began to improve somewhat, and Neville seemed to sit up a bit straighter and he began to study everything he could get his hands on.

Severus had gone to Albus with the news, and he reported back and said that the Headmaster had paled drastically, but had nodded his head. Albus immediately told Severus that he needed to prepare himself to resume his spy duties.

This had made Severus and Salazar bristle with anger, seeing as Albus told Severus to do it, instead of asking him.

It was Saturday, the first Hogsmeade weekend of the year and they were all sitting at the Slytherin table, completely ignoring the evil stares Montague, Draco, and the others were giving them. However, everyone's attention was diverted when a scowling Albus walked in. Everyone stared in shock because his long white hair and beard was standing straight up and was dyed red and gold. He actually had to physically part it with his hands in order to see where we was walking.

Salazar, Godric, and everyone else burst out laughing because it was the funniest thing they had seen in a while, but Remus looked downright murderous as Albus came to a stop next to Flitwick. Albus bent down to whisper something to the Charms Master, who nodded and stood up.

"You can't Filius." Remus said through gritted teeth. "It has no counter charm, and will only wear off in three days."

Professor Flitwick looked at him in surprise, but Remus kept right on going as he glared at Albus.

"Albus, I demand to know why you have put a mail redirection charm on Harry!" He snarled loudly, causing everyone to stop laughing and look at him curiously.

"I have done no such thing Remus." Albus said with as much dignity as he could muster, given his
present predicament.

"LIAR!" Remus shouted.

"What are you talking about Lupin!?" Severus snapped, but he looked just as curious as Salazar did.

"That prank was meant for Harry!" He shouted, still glaring at Albus. "It came from Sirius, who thought it would be funny. Sirius and I spent all last weekend creating it, and it was supposed to get him as soon as he opened the box! Harry was supposed to get it, not you Albus! Now tell me why you have placed a mail charm on Harry!? What business do have to do so?"

Albus glared at him. "As Headmaster of this school it is well within my rights to make sure my students stay safe. If I suspect someone of smuggling in dark objects or other suspicious dark magic related things into Hogwarts, I am allowed to place a mail redirection ward on that individual."

Remus glared at him and gritted his teeth. "Harry, you and Gordy can cast a corporeal patronus right?" Remus said, glancing at them.

"Yes." Salazar said as he stood up and looked at him curiously.

"Later today after you get back from Hogsmeade, I'm going to teach you something that you can do with them that is very useful." He said clearly.

"Remus you can't!" Albus cried. "That is only for…"

"To hell with that Albus!" Remus shouted. "You have forced my hand!"

Albus tried in vain to get his long beard and hair to lay flat as he attempted to glare at Remus, but it just kept springing back up as soon as he let it go. Finally the Headmaster stopped struggling with it, and once more parted it in the middle like a curtain, using both of his hands to hold it in place.

"Remus, I forbid you teach that…spell…to Harry. It is not a good idea."

"Oh I think otherwise." Remus said, still snarling. "Harry, you and Gordy come see me after dinner tonight, and Albus, I will be telling Sirius about this."

Albus glared at him, before stalking out of the great hall. Moody sighed loudly, but followed him.

"I told you that putting up a mail ward was a bad idea Albus." Moody said as soon as the door to the Headmaster's office closed.

"Alastor, what am I going to do for the next three days?" Albus said with a sigh as he plopped down in his desk chair, once again trying his best to fight with his beard and hair.

"Cut your hair?" Moody asked with a chuckle, causing Albus to glare at him.

"I want you to go into Hogsmeade today to keep an eye on Harry. I want to see who he is talking to, and what he does. Try to be discreet. I was going to do it myself, but…" His voice trailed off, as he motioned to his hair.

Moody snorted, but nodded and headed out the door.

The children had already left for Hogsmeade by the time Moody got back down to the first floor. He had already silenced himself so that no one would hear his leg, and the tell-tale thump, thump it
always gave off. He also stopped by his room to grab his invisibility cloak so that he could sneak around, though he knew he needed to try and blend in with the crowd so that Potter's blasted snake wouldn't see him.

Salazar and Godric were coming up from the Snake Pit, just as Moody was making his way into the entrance hall. The place was deserted, but he stopped to listen to their whispered conversation. He kept his magical eye on Salazar's right robe sleeve, knowing that is where Nora always lurked, but he was surprised to see that she wasn't there.

"Albus needs to see me leave the grounds, so that that he doesn't think I'm up to something dastardly. Give me ten minutes to get home and get changed, then I'll meet you in the Hogs Head Pub. Are you sure Aberforth can be trusted in knowing half of the truth?"

"Yes Salazar, I told you a hundred times. Aberforth and Albus don't get along. It goes all the way back to what happened to their sister. Aberforth would kill Albus himself if he had the heart to do it. Besides, Albus looks down on Aberforth and belittles him at every chance." Godric said, shaking his head. "Look he knows about me. I've already told you that. Seeing you in the flesh is not going to rattle him a bit. I told him of my past and all that I had done. He told me that if I ever found you, to bring you. Every time I go in there for a drink he always asks me, 'have you found old Slytherin yet?'" Salazar chuckled, but then sighed. "I'm still not going to tell him the big secret Godric. He's too close to Albus, and I can't risk it."

"I understand Salazar, trust me I do."

"I know Godric. I'm sorry, but this is not the place to hold this discussion. We need to go…"

"Uncle? Godric? May I have a word?"

They both looked up a bit startled as Helena floated towards them with a determined look on her face.

"Of course Helena. What is the trouble?" Godric asked, furrowing his brow.

"There is a young third year in Mother's House by the name of Luna Lovegood. I know she is a friend of yours, but she is having problems and is trying to hide it. She is being terribly bullied and other Ravenclaws keep stealing her things. For the last three days the child has been forced to go barefoot all about the castle. She can't even go to Hogsmeade today because they have stolen all her shoes and socks." She answered.

"Dobby!" Salazar called.

"Mr. Harry Salazar Potter…"

"Dobby!" Salazar nearly hissed.

"Dobby is sorry Mr. Harry Sal…Potter sir, but Dobby is just excited you called for him! How can Dobby be of service sir?" The elf asked as he bounced from one foot to the next.

"Will you personally see that all of Luna Lovegood's things are found? They have been stolen and hidden all over the castle. Once you find everything, I want you to bring it all to the Snake Pit so that I can charm it accordingly." Salazar said.

"Of course sir!" Dobby exclaimed, popping away with an excited grin.
"Do you want to catch the bullies?" Godric asked. "We could use the charms we used to use to put a stop to that sort of rubbish."

"Exactly what I was thinking, but I also want to put the anti-theft charm on her things too, so that if they continue to steal them, Luna's things will automatically be returned to her."

Godric nodded and turned to Helena. "I want you to alert Professor Flitwick to this problem, and ask him to address the issue. Don't give names, just bring the problem to his attention. If/when he calls for a meeting in Ravenclaw Tower, I want you to attend, then report back to us please."

"Of course Godric." She said with a smile and a nod. "I shall do so as soon as I see Professor Flitwick."

She turned away, and floated through the opposite wall, leaving Godric and Salazar to shake their heads. It seemed no matter how much time had passed, things like this would always happen.

"Hogs Head, ten minutes. We've lingered long enough." Salazar said, taking a nervous look around the entrance hall.

"Meet you there." Godric replied.

Godric disillusioned himself and headed towards his house, but Salazar stayed in full view as he headed for the front gates so that he could apparate to his flat. They both needed to change their clothes so they could return to their adult forms.

Moody however, stood there gob smacked as he watched Salazar run towards the front gates. His mind was whirling with everything that he heard, but there was one thing that he did know.

He was going to be at the Hogs Head Pub in ten minutes.

When Salazar got to the Hogs Head, he entered the dingy pub cautiously. He had on a dark green robe with the hood pulled over his head, so that no one could see his face. The pub was empty, except for Godric, who was already at the bar joking with a man that looked a lot like Albus, though just a bit younger.

When the door opened, Moody, who was disillusioned and under his invisibility cloak, looked up in shock as Godric laughed loudly. He had snuck in when the last customer left the bar, and he was certain that no one knew he was there.

"And the baldheaded fool graces us with his presence!" He laughed. "Salazar, we were just discussing ways of permanently turning Albus into a goat. What say you?"

Salazar pulled back his hood, and took a look around before chuckling. "I think you have already had too many shots of firewhiskey." Then he looked at Aberforth. "Don't you know that, that bloody Gryffindor can't hold his liquor? He'll be drunk before you can say Quidditch."

Aberforth laughed loudly. "He told me he finally found you." He said, holding out his hand. "Aberforth Dumbledore sir, but you can call me Abe, and I'm very pleased to meet you Mr. Slytherin."

"Salazar please. Mr. Slytherin seems too obvious." Salazar chuckled. "And it's nice to meet you as well."

"Or you can call him baldheaded fool." Godric teased. "He had hair last time I saw him. I think he
burnt it all off in an accident to be honest."

"And I think you are delusional." Salazar laughed. "Being bald is a personal choice."

"So he says." Godric grinned. "Give him a firewhiskey Abe. He needs to loosen up."

Aberforth chuckled and plucked a glass from behind the counter before poring the whiskey, but then he looked at Godric and grinned.

"After that article in the paper, I felt certain you were going to go charging into the school to give Albus the what for, but I see my brother still has his head attached to his shoulders."

"Well I've got a secret for you Abe." Godric said with a crooked grin. "I'm actually posing as a student up at the school so I can keep a better eye on my grandson."

Aberforth mouth fell open in shock, while Salazar felt like slapping the idiot upside the head, but he managed to refrain from doing it.

"Is that why I hardly see you anymore? I was afraid you'd moved off." Aberforth said. "But I take it my brother doesn't know this."

"No he doesn't. I've befriended Harry. I told the hat to put me in Slytherin so I could better keep an eye on him. If you remember that article, Harry mentioned his best friend Gordy, well that's me." Godric laughed. "Gordy Cigrd Roffin. It's an anagram for Godric Gryffindor. Albus hasn't caught on yet."

Aberforth burst out laughing. "I'm surprised, but my brother tends to overlook the simple things. Everything has to be complicated for him to understand something. His brain is always working, but it's like he never comprehends what's right in front of him. It's a shame really."

Salazar laughed. "Well your brother is something else. I can say that for sure. I don't believe anything that he's spouting about Potter though."

"I don't believe it either." Aberforth said with a sigh. "Albus came down here the day I sent him that howler, which I'm sure Godric's told you about. He said that I didn't know what I was talking about, and he said that he was personally going to destroy the boy. Crucify him in the papers!" Aberforth shouted, as he shook his head and furiously wiped down some glasses. "Albus said he is going to tell everyone that Potter is just like Voldemort. Outline very similarity they share, right down to being descended from the Peverells. I told him it wasn't a good idea."

"Did you say the Peverells?" Godric and Salazar asked in unison, as they looked at Aberforth in shock.

"Yeah why?"

"The makers of the Deathly Hallows." Salazar said, as his mind began churning. "The elder wand, the resurrection stone, and the cloak of…oh my Merlin! How could I have been so stupid!?" Salazar shouted, suddenly jumping up from his seat.

He started muttering to himself as he began pacing back and forth in the pub. Godric chuckled, as Aberforth looked at him curiously, but Moody's head was reeling. At this point he didn't know what to think.

"Salazar, do you want to share what's on your mind?" Godric asked.
Salazar waved him off, but then he pinched the bridge of his nose and looked at Aberforth, then back to Godric, before pinching the bridge of his nose again.

Then he sighed.

"Damn it Godric I could kill you!"

Godric looked at him oddly, but Salazar sighed again. "During first year, I got a 'present' from Albus. The note accompanying it said that 'my father' let him borrow it before he died. It was an old invisibility cloak that James said had been in his family for many generations. I didn't think anything of it, nor did I realize just what James had said when I returned it to him."

Godric furrowed his eyebrows in confusion. "But invisibility cloaks don't last that long. Most began to fade in a few months, depending on the charms placed on them."

"I know that, but that didn't occur to me. The Potter's cloak of invisibility is one of the Deathly Hallows. Only the cloak of invisibility can withstand time." Salazar said, looking at his friend and shaking his head. "Do you know what that means?"

"If the Potters are related to old Ignotus Peverell, who made the cloak, then that would make Voldemort related to Cadmus. Everyone alive during that time knew the story of the Peverell brothers." Godric said, then he sighed heavily. "I sought the elder wand for years hoping to find it. I thought that if I held the elder wand that it would be strong enough to break the immortality spells, and that I could finally kill you for leaving us, after torturing you properly first." He admitted with a sigh. "But I never found it, and I'm glad I didn't."

Salazar gave his best friend a weak smile, but he patted him on the shoulder. "I'm glad you didn't find it, for both our sakes."

"Indeed." Godric said with a nod as he smiled at Salazar. "Antioch Peverell, who made the elder wand, never had children, so that means Voldemort is descended from Cadmus Peverell, maker of the resurrection stone."

"That means someone in Voldemort's family has the resurrection stone." Salazar said. "Ten galleons says Voldemort has it, seeing as he is the last of my line. At some point, the Slytherins must have married into the Peverell Family."

"But why would Voldemort want it?" Godric asked in confusion. "He's scared of death, hence all the horcruxes. I mean, all the stone does is bring love ones back from the dead, and it barely does that. Besides, something tells me he wouldn't want to have a mother-son chat."

"True." Salazar said.

"Albus has, or had, the elder wand." Aberforth said suddenly, causing both Founders to stare at him.

"What do you mean…had?" Godric asked.

"Harry Potter snapped it when Albus tried to obliviate him at the end of second year." Aberforth said. "He came down here wanting a drink, and began raging about how the boy was stupid for doing it. The old wandmaker, Gregorovitch, had it before Grindelwald stole it from his shop. Albus won the elder wand from Grindelwald after their duel."

Godric stared at Aberforth for a long minute, but Salazar burst out laughing and after a moment, so did Godric.
He hiccuped slightly, and looked at his best friend with a lopsided grin. "You snapped the elder wand. You baldheaded, stupid fool. You…snapped…the…elder…wand!" He cried as he laughed loudly. "And you call me a bloody Gryffindor!"

"Is that why Albus hates me so much?" Salazar said with a snort.

"What?" Aberforth said, looking at the two laughing Founders in confusion.

Salazar suddenly sobered up a moment, but then he sighed loudly, and in an ungraceful manner, began banging his head on the bar.

"Godric, you tell him."

Godric snorted loudly, and told Aberforth everything. When he was finished, Aberforth sat sideways on a barstool, threw back his head, and laughed for several long minutes.

"The Potters are alive, and for the last thirteen years, you have been masquerading as Harry Potter!" He cried gleefully. "And Albus doesn't know!"

"I don't trust him. I just don't. I can't. I know too much about him and he just…I can't trust him." Salazar said as he shook his head and downed another shot of firewhiskey.

"Well, you are right not to trust my brother." Aberforth said as he leaned on the bar. "Albus says he doesn't like power, and it's true. He's never wanted to be Minister, and he is fine being Headmaster, but he likes to know it all, and be it all. He really does believe that he is the second coming of Merlin."

"Well he's not. We knew Merlin, and Albus is no Merlin." Salazar said.

"Oh yeah, that's right. Merlin was a Slytherin." Aberforth said with a chuckle, as Salazar nodded.

"Well Salazar, my hats off to you. It really is. You did more for the Potters the night you sent them away, than my brother did their whole lives. I told him point blank, I said 'Albus, they are a young couple. Get them out of the country.' And he told me no, said that they needed to stay here because of some prophecy. Load of bullocks if you ask me." He grumbled.

"Well that prophecy is a whole other ball of wax." Godric snorted.

"It was told to Albus right here in this pub, but I didn't get to hear all of it myself. Had to throw Severus Snape out on his bum." Aberforth said with a snarl.

"Yeah, we know all about that." Salazar said with a nod. "There are a few Professors up at the school who know the truth. Remus Lupin, Minerva, Poppy, and Severus."

"Snape knows?" Aberforth asked in shock.

"Yeah." Salazar said as he downed another shot of firewhiskey. "He was the first who knew. Lily just knew Severus was the reason Voldemort asked who he thought was her, to stand aside that night. When I questioned him under veritaserum, he told me his loyalty resided with Albus, and not Voldemort. I trust him. I really do. He made a mistake when he was young, and he regrets it.

"I imagine that being the Founder of Slytherin has a lot to do with it also." Aberforth said, and Salazar nodded. "Well my friends, I can say all of this makes me feel a lot better. Knowing that it is you up there in that school, and not a real child sets my mind at ease, but it's still horrible what Albus is willing to do to a, seemingly, fourteen year boy. It makes me sick, but knowing in the end that my brother will get knocked off his high horse…well let's just say…it makes me laugh." Aberforth said
with a wicked grin.

"We aim to throw him out of our school on his bum." Godric said with a serious tone. "We don't really care what he does to us, well Salazar really, but the way he puts real children in danger just rubs us wrong."

"Case in point, Ron Weasley." Salazar added as he took another shot of whiskey, and Godric nodded.

"The Weasley's are a good family." Aberforth said with a nod. "But is there any news on who put Harry Potter's name in the Goblet?"

Salazar shook his head. "None. It could be anyone really, but with Voldemort returning to full form, I'd say he has a hand in it somehow."

"I thought it was Moody at first, to be honest. He's the one who suggested Salazar go through with it." Godric said, causing Moody's head to snap up.

"I don't think it was though." Salazar said, shaking his head. "It's like I told everyone before, I don't think he's the type to put a, seemingly, fourteen year old in this much danger. I actually like him."

"So do I." Aberforth said, nodding in agreement. "Mad-Eye is a good man. He's a paranoid old codger, but a good man none the less. He and Albus have been friends for years, but Mad-Eye doesn't go along to get along. If he doesn't agree with something he'll let you know. During the first war, Mad-Eye and Albus disagreed a lot with how the direction of it was going. Mad-Eye said we needed to actually fight, but all Albus wanted to do was save the Death Eaters." He said, rolling his eyes. "He said it could be done, especially since Snape had switched sides. Albus said if it was possible for one, it was possible for them all."

Salazar sighed and shook his head. "Albus is either delusional or lying to everyone. Severus switched sides because he realized that he messed up. He loved Lily. They were childhood friends, but one day he slipped up and called her a mudblood and Lily broke off their friendship. The fact that she married his arch rival, James Potter, sent him over the edge and he took the mark. When he learned that Voldemort was targeting the Potters because of the prophecy he overheard that night, he ran to Albus and told him. If it wasn't for Severus tipping Albus off, the Potters would have been dead a lot sooner. Severus knows that he messed up by telling Voldemort the prophecy in the first place, but he knew that Albus would protect them. Severus has changed his ways though, that I am certain. He's been bitter all these years because he knew he was responsible for their deaths, but that is all behind him now. Lily and James have forgiven him, and he has finally been able to forgive himself. The real Harry calls him Uncle Sev, so needless to say, he's doing a lot better now." He said with a chuckle.

"Blimey, I never knew all that, but what about when Voldemort returns? What will he do then?" Aberforth asked.

"He's going to spy." Salazar said with a deep sigh. "I don't want him to because I'm afraid for him. I'm terrified that Voldemort will suspect something and kill him. He's like a son to me, and I don't want to lose him. However, it is his decision so all I can do is support him in it."

"Well, my opinion of Severus Snape may have just changed." Aberforth said. "I never knew all that. He's a lot braver than I ever gave him credit for."

Their conversation was suddenly interrupted as the door to the pub flew open, bringing in a freezing cold wind as it did. However, no one appeared to be standing there. Salazar, Godric, Aberforth, and
even Moody went for their wands, but a familiar voice shouted, "It's just us!"

"Blaise?" Salazar asked curiously, lowering his wand slightly.

Neville, Blaise, and what looked like Hermione, suddenly shimmered into view. She was passed out between them, with her arms were slung over their shoulders, as her head rolled from side to side. She didn't look like herself because it looked like she had been cursed with several nasty hexes all at once.

"We were closer to here than the castle!" Neville cried, as he passed Hermione off to Godric, who scooped her up and laid her on the bar.

"She was attacked outside of Honeydukes by Pansy, Millicent, and one of the Carrow sisters. She had forgotten to get Tooth-Flossing String mints because she said her parents would be intrigued by them. Said something about them being dentists, whatever that means, but we were waiting for her across the street at Zonkos. We were standing outside looking at the stuff in the window. She came out looking really happy about something, but those trolls came running out after her. They shouted, 'you're not good enough for him you filthy mudblood' and then they cursed her with who knows what!?" Blaise said in a high pitched voice.

"We tried to cancel the spells, but it didn't work." Neville said with wide panicked eyes. "We just disillusioned her and ourselves so that they couldn't follow us, and we came straight here."

"All right, all right." Salazar said. "You both did the right thing. Now, I want you to calm down, so take a deep breath, and sit. She will be all right."

"Salazar, she needs to be sent to Poppy." Godric said, waving his wand over her. "It's been way to long since I've dealt something like this. She's been cursed with so many hexes and jinxes I can't begin to wrap my head around it all. Nehum!"

Nehum appeared, and circled the small pub before settling down on the bar. He looked over the scene, and thrilled lightly which sent a calming effect throughout the pub. Everyone took a deep claiming breath, and smiled as the phoenix settled down on the bar.

"Nehum, will you be willing to take Hermione to Poppy?" Godric asked, and Nehum nodded. "Please take Neville as well so he can explain what happened to her."

Nehum nodded again, and gently settled on Hermione's chest and grabbed her winter cloak with his talons. Then he waved his tail feathers at Neville, who grabbed hold of them. However they stopped moving when Hermione moaned and reached for Salazar's hand.

She opened her eyes a little bit and smiled at him. "Viktor Krum asked me to the Yule Ball, and I said yes." She managed to say, before she passed out again.

Salazar squeezed her hand and patted it softly. "I approve." He whispered with a smile. Then he nodded at Nehum, who disappeared in a ball of flames with Hermione and Neville in tow.

"Cowards. The lot of them." Godric said, trying to hold back his anger.
The rage building up in Salazar was near its boiling point and was about to spill over, but for the sake of not blowing up the pub, he managed to hold himself in together.

"This is all Albus's fault. It's one thing if those Death Eaters-in-training want to try and curse us, but's another thing when they go after the others."

"I fought back when they were doing what they did at the beginning of the year." Blaise said. "And you guys hid behind shield charms."

"That's because we know we could seriously hurt them. They are children, we are not." Godric said.

"And Albus isn't exactly going stand up for you Blaise. You're a Slytherin, and our friend." Salazar said through gritted teeth.

"Do you think Professor Dumbledore will take action now? Since Hermione is a Gryffindor and a muggle born?" he asked.

"I hope so." Godric said as he patted Blaise on the back. "I really do hope so."

"We will see, but even if he does or doesn't, Godric, it's time to take matters into our own hands. They may be children, but we can't let this continue. They are getting bolder because Albus has let them get away with everything they have done, and on some level, so have we. I've just been reluctant to do anything after I messed up so horribly with Draco in first year." Salazar said with a sigh. "But as I said, we need to do something."

"I agree." Godric said with a nod.

"My brother has really messed things up for a lot of people." Aberforth said sadly, as he handed Blaise a lukewarm butterbeer. "Drink up lad. It's on me."

"Yes he has." Godric said. "Blaise, you finish your butterbeer. Then we need to go so we can get changed back into your other forms. I want to see how Hermione is doing."

"I do too, but we need to sober up a bit first." Salazar said as he rubbed his eyes. "If we walked into the hospital wing tipsy, Poppy would turn us both into tea cups and take great pleasure in gifting one of us to Minerva for Christmas."

"And you still have to get Nora from 'the Minions' sometime today." Godric chuckled.

Salazar laughed. "Yeah she said she would have more fun with them because she wanted to see all the jokes in Zonkos. She is planning to get revenge on Albus for snooping through our mail."

Godric, Aberforth, and Blaise laughed, while Moody silently chuckled.

They mostly sat quiet for the next few minutes and waited for Blaise to finish his butterbeer. During this time, Salazar asked Aberforth for an oath, promising to keep the secret, and Aberforth gladly did so. Then he offered his help and said if there was anything he could do for them, to let him know.

After they had left the bar, Aberforth went into the back room to bring out more bottles of firewhiskey to get ready for the evening crowd. Moody took another look around the pub to make sure he was alone before he stood up.

"Albus, you really have no idea who you are dealing with." He muttered with a sigh, as he quietly slipped out the pub.
He made his way slowly through the village and thought about what he learned. He needed some
time to think about everything. He wasn't going to blindly follow behind the Founders simply
because of who they were, even if Salazar had saved the Potters. However, he liked what they had to
say, and he liked the fact that they were willing to actually fight in the coming war, verses trying to
save everyone, but they needed to prove themselves to him first. He knew they weren't evil though,
there was just too much evidence to contradict that.

It also made everything they said and did make much more sense. They were Founders, so of course
Hogwarts wasn't going to stop the work they did for the Snake Pit. Of course 'Potter' could control
Slytherin's basilisk, and it made sense why Peeves called them Lord Gryffy and Lord Slytheryness,
which is something that had greatly confused him. It also made sense why they were able to do
things they shouldn't, and why it seemed that they showed off. Potter and Roffin weren't showing
off, they were teaching.

Moody sighed as he reached the gates of the castle. He wasn't going tell Albus about any of this. It
was too risky, and he wouldn't want to be the downfall of thirteen years of hard work. He knew if
someone did that to him, he wouldn't think highly of them.

He hid what he had learned behind his occlumency shields, and with a sigh, he began to make up a
story to tell Albus as he made his way up to the castle.

Chapter End Notes

It really wasn't my intention to tell Aberforth everything, but this chapter kind of took
off on it's own and i just sort of followed. I blame Godric, he was kind of tipsy. Moody
knows, but they dont know he knows, so we will have to wait and see how that plays
out in the future. Also, they are getting closer to figuring out the ring horcrux.

The next chapter will have who Salazar is taking to the Yule Ball, and the Ball itself,
and Albus's article in the paper. Here's a hint he's going to write it himself. That should
be interesting!

Anyway, i hope you all enjoyed the chapter!
“You should have seen it Bushy. It was wonderful! The Minions showed me all the jokes and pranks that were laying all around the joke shop. I told Speaker we needed to get some so that we can prank Dumbly.”

“I would like to see it Nora, so can you hold off until I'm better?” Hermione asked as she gave Nora a smile.

“Of course, but first I have to bite the trolls that did this to you. Also, you should know that I have already spoken to the Peacock, and he said it would be a good idea to feed them to the Sushi.” Nora said, as she flicked her tongue in a mischievous manner.

Hermione giggled a bit and patted Nora’s head. “Thank you Nora.”

“You're very welcome Bushy.” She replied as she curled up next to Hermione’s pillow. “But I think I should stay here in case they come back, but come and get me before dinner Speaker.” She added, looking at Salazar who was sitting by Hermione’s hospital bed.

“I will my dear.” Salazar replied with a grin. “I'm just surprised that you are willing to miss breakfast.”

Nora hissed loudly and decided to ignore him, but Hermione laughed softly.

It was before breakfast the day after the Hogsmeade visit, and Hermione was still in a weakened state due to being cursed by Pansy, Millicent, and Hestia Carrow, whose twin sister was Flora. Poppy had removed all the various curses, but said that Hermione still needed to rest and then she would be released in a day or two.

Minerva nearly threw a fit when she learned what happened to Hermione, and demanded Albus do something about it. He did, but it was hardly enough. He pulled all the girls into his office and gave them a stern talking to, took a few points from Slytherin, then let them go with a warning. No detention, no letter home, no loss of Hogsmeade privileges, and he didn’t even make them apologize to Hermione. Everyone was livid, but there was nothing that Minerva or Remus could do, especially since Albus forbade them from doing anything. Salazar and Godric had decided to take matters into their own hands, though they didn’t exactly know what they were going to do yet.

“So Hermione,” Blaise asked with a grin. “Tell us how the wonderful Viktor Krum asked you to the ball.”

Hermione giggled and blushed, but she gave everyone a large smile. “Well, he admitted to waiting until you guys weren’t around because he was shy about asking me. I had seen him in the library a lot and he was always smiling at me, and I would always smile back. When Viktor asked me in Honeydukes, he said he thought I was nice because I was the only girl NOT throwing myself at him
and he admired me for that. He asked if anyone had asked me to the ball yet, and I told him no. He looked shocked and admitted that he figured one of you had, but I told him no, and he asked me just like that!” She exclaimed. “He’s really a shy person, which surprised me because of being famous for Quidditch and now the Tournament, but he seems really nice.”

“I'm happy for you Hermione.” Salazar said with a grin. “I really am, and I think you going with him is a wonderful thing.”

“He did ask me if you would be angry because you're one of my good friends, and a Champion, but I assured him you wouldn’t be.” She replied.

“I'll let him know that myself so that he doesn’t worry, but I’ll warn him to watch where he puts his hands.” Salazar said with a grin, which caused Hermione to blush a deep red and smack him on the arm.

“Don’t you dare threaten him!” She cried, causing everyone to laugh.

“He won’t.” Godric said with a grin. “He’s all talk, haven't you all figured that out by now? But I have news too, I'm going to the ball as well.”

“With who?” Salazar asked curiously.

“I'm not telling. You’ll have to wait and see.” Godric said with a chuckle.

“Uh oh.” Neville chuckled. “Something tells me this ought to be good. What about you Harry?”

Salazar sighed and shook his head. “Still no idea.”

“Well you need to get a move on Mr. Potter.” Poppy said as she walked over with a breakfast tray. “But you all must go so that Miss Granger can eat in peace, then rest. You all can visit later.”

“Yes ma’am.” Salazar said with an over exaggerated sigh as he rolled his eyes, but he grinned at the medi-witch who huffed in annoyance.

“Wait, before you go,” Hermione said, propping herself up with her pillows as Poppy set the tray down. “Did Professor Lupin show you that thing with the patronus?”

“Yes he did actually.” Godric replied. “During the first war, Albus invented a way to make a patronus talk so that they could deliver messages to each other safely. Remus showed us how to do that last night. It’s ingenious really, and I have to admit it, Albus was pretty smart to come up with something like that.”

“I agree.” Salazar said with a nod. “Godric and I have decided that you all need to be taught the patronus charm, and we will also show you how to make them talk. It’s really advanced magic though, and most adult witches and wizards can’t do it, but we will work with you. It’s going to be tough, so make sure you're ready.”

“We will.” The children chorused.

“We will start after Hermione is deemed to be alright by you.” Salazar chuckled after noticing Poppy’s glare.

“And not a minute before. Now shoo, so she can eat in peace.” Poppy said, waving them towards the doors.
Everyone laughed, but said goodbye to Hermione as they all headed to the great hall for breakfast.

Albus Dumbledore Speaks Out About Harry Potter’s Accusations!

In a shocking letter sent to us from Albus Dumbledore, we at The Daily Prophet felt it was our duty to publish this letter in its original form. This letter has not been altered in anyway, and was penned by Albus Dumbledore himself. We at The Daily Prophet are not liable for its contents.

Dear Wizarding World,

It is with a heavy heart and mind that I have decided to address the issues that Harry Potter has so publicly aired, but I must ask you all to read through this letter so that you better understand the situation.

While some of what Mr. Potter has said is true, the facts have been greatly exaggerated, and because of that, I have barred Mrs. Skeeter from coming onto school property and conducting personal interviews. However, she is still welcomed for Triwizard events only.

It is true that I have made grave mistakes where Harry Potter is concerned. It is true that I placed him with his abusive muggle relatives, but contrary to what Mrs. Skeeter wrote in her article, I did not know they were abusive at the time, and for that I am humbly sorry.

It is true that I tried to obliterate Mr. Potter, but I assure each and every one of you, I have never tried to obliterate any of your children.

I had a good reason for my actions against Mr. Potter, reasons that, due to his young age, Mr. Potter doesn’t understand and deems ‘controlling’.

I was trying to protect him from being influenced by a very dangerous and dark wizard.

There are very few people in this world that I don’t trust, but one man in particular is someone whom we all should be wary of. His name is Nilrem, and while I know many of you will realize that name is Merlin spelled backwards, he is not anything like the great Merlin himself. He is a dark and dangerous wizard, and certainly not the best person to be influencing young Mr. Potter’s mind. Especially since Mr. Potter has aspirations of becoming a dark wizard himself.

Let me explain.

In her article, Mrs. Skeeter referred to Mr. Potter’s ‘agenda’. That agenda is quite true. Mr. Potter does indeed want to permanently rid the world of Lord Voldemort, but he also wants to take his place as the next Dark Lord.

Harry Potter is a dark wizard and it is my fear that if Mr. Potter is left to be influenced by a man like Nilrem, he will become much worse than Lord Voldemort himself ever was. There are already many similarities between Lord Voldemort and Harry Potter that are very disturbing that makes me draw this conclusion.

For example…

Both are half-blooded (though this in itself is not bad.)

Both were raised by muggles. (Again, not a bad.)
Both hate muggles.

Both are Parselmouths.

Both are Slytherins.

Both own pet snakes.

Both practice very dark magic. (I myself have witnessed Mr. Potter use blood magic on several occasions and know of him using extremely dark hexes and jinxes, though none have been Unforgivables... so far.)

Both have eschewed views on what constitutes as light magic and dark magic.

They are cousins. (Through the ancient Peverell family line.)

Both have ‘friends’ that they use for their own gain. (Lord Voldemort’s school ‘friends’ ended up being the first Death Eaters, though I am uncertain if Mr. Potter will adopt a similar moniker.)

Both rebuke authority, and never follow the rules.

Both wanted to be Professors and teach at Hogwarts. (Though I can assure you, this will never happen.)

These are just some of the examples of the similarities that they share, and I'm sure that as Mr. Potter ages, there will be more that they have in common.

Mrs. Skeeter called Mr. Potter a ‘delightful and polite young man, with handsome looks and a charming smile’, but what you all fail to realize is... so was Tom Riddle, also known as, Lord Voldemort.

Tom Riddle was a boy just like Harry Potter, but I saw through him and he hated me for it, just as Harry Potter currently hates me.

Tom Riddle began attending Hogwarts in 1938 and graduated at the top of his class in 1945. I knew then that Tom Riddle was not the boy he made himself out to be, and I tried to warn everyone, but no one listened to me and well... you all know what happened after that.

It is my great fear that no one will listen to me again. I am afraid that you all will not be able to see past ‘The-Boy-Who-Lived’ and will not see him for what he really is.

An aspiring Dark Lord.

Please, I beg you all, do not be fooled by his charming smile and demeanor. Do not be fooled by the fact that he has several muggle-born friends and is friends with many Gryffindors. He uses them, just as Tom Riddle used his so-called friends. Do not be fooled by Harry Potter.

Your lives depend on it.

Sincerely,

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

Headmaster of Hogwarts

Chief Warlock
Salazar stared at *The Daily Prophet* and couldn’t decide if he wanted to laugh, or blow up the great hall. All around him students and staff were whispering and giving him fearful looks, and even the Slytherins, including Draco and company, were slowly edging away from him in fear.

“It reads like a disjointed train of thought.” Godric muttered as he began to reread the letter. “It’s like he couldn’t decide on one topic and just kept jumping around.”

“It’s definitely safe to say that Dumbledore isn’t a writer.” Blaise muttered.

“It’s because he’s senile.” Salazar said as he rolled his eyes. Then he looked around the great hall. People were beginning to point at him now, and Albus looked smug as he sat in his chair at the head table. Severus was scowling, but that could be interpreted many ways, Minerva looked ready to kill someone, and Remus was shaking so badly with anger that the edition of the paper he was holding was rustling loudly.

Salazar knew he needed to diffuse the tension in the room, before someone did something horrible to the idiot Headmaster.

So he decided to do the only thing he could do.

He stood up in his seat and loudly cleared his throat. The entire great hall hushed, and many whimpered loudly and cringed in fear.

“Fred, George!” He snapped loudly, causing the twins to furrow their brows in confusion. “As my friends, I *demand* that I *use* you for my own entertainment!” He shouted angrily as he stomped his foot. “Now, get up out of your seats this minute, and jump around and cluck like chickens! Do this, or suffer my wrath!”

Godric and Blaise snorted and nearly choked on their bite of breakfast, while Neville, who was sitting with them at the Slytherin table, burst out laughing. Fred and George grinned, and a few moments of chaotic clucking ensued as Salazar stood on his seat with an exaggerated angry look on his face.

“Enough!” Salazar cried abruptly. “Thank you servants! Now shut up and sit down!”

“Yes oh great and powerful Dark Master. We will obey, we will obey!” They cried in unison.

“Can I shine your shoes oh Great One?” Fred called out loudly.

“Shall I feed you myself?” George asked.

“Yes, you mustn’t let your wand arm get tired…”

“…your hands are so pretty and you might accidently bite yourself, if your arm does get tired…”

“…if it does, we can do your homework for you oh Great Dark Master…”
“...for five galleons an essay though...”

“...two galleons for standard homework...”

“THIS IS NOT A JOKE!” Albus bellowed, as he jumped out of his seat so fast that he knocked it over.

Despite Albus’s letter, nearly everyone in the great hall was giggling, but it all ceased immediately as the enraged Headmaster’s face turned purple.

“This is not a joke.” He repeated a bit more calmly, but Godric snorted loudly, which sent Neville into a fit of laughter, while Blaise tried to hide a snicker.

Albus glared at Godric and Salazar, but then he turned his gaze on Neville.

“Mr. Longbottom, I am very surprised at you. I know you are Harry’s friend, but you have to see that he is using you. After what the Death Eaters did to your parents...”

“Albus!” Minerva cried loudly, as Neville glared at him and started shaking with anger.

“Don’t you dare.” Neville growled as he tightened his grip on his wand. “Don’t you dare try and use my parents like that! They were good people, and it’s because of YOU that they are in the condition that they are in! You want to save the Death Eaters. You want to change them and bring them over to the light side. YOU’RE AN IDIOT! They won’t change! They will NEVER change, and they teach their children the same crap that they believe! HERMIONE IS LAYING IN A HOSPITAL BED BECAUSE YOU ARE TOO MUCH OF A COWARD TO STAND UP TO DEATH EATER SCUM!” He bellowed. “Good people are getting hurt, while you plead for the very bigots who hate you! YOU’RE AN IDIOT!” He repeated as he shook with uncontrolled anger.

But Neville wasn’t finished.

“And as for Harry, this whole thing is rubbish!” He shouted, throwing down the paper and stomping on it. “You don’t know a damn thing about Harry! You sit up there with your judgmental, arrogant, pompous, self-righteous attitude and look down on people who think differently than you. You are nothing but a manipulative bastard, and you sacrifice good people for ‘The Greater Good’! Harry is no more a dark wizard than I am, and as for Mr. Nilrem, well I can't WAIT for the day he knocks you flat on yourarse! You stay away from me Dumbledore, because if you don’t, you’ll be sorry. I promise you that, and you can tell my Grandmother exactly what I have said here today, but I can tell you, she WON’T be mad at ME!” He shouted, then he whirled around, stomped over to Malfoy, grabbed him by the hair, hauled him to his feet, and shoved him into the wall.

“You stay away from us Malfoy. I'm not scared of you because you are just a little snout. You are not a man, you are a sniveling little coward who will be dealt with soon enough.” He growled, before punching Draco in the face, knocking him out, and causing his nose to bleed. Then he rounded on Pansy.

“As for you Parkinson, you're lucky you're a girl. You're lucky I was raised to not hit a female, but if you so much as LOOK at Hermione wrong again, you will be dealing with me. IS THAT CLEAR??” He asked, getting in her face and causing her to fall out of her seat and whimper in fright.

But Neville still wasn’t finished. He rounded on a completely ashen faced Albus, and looked him directly in the eye.

“You may have pointed out a bunch of stupid things that Harry has in common with Voldemort...
yeah I said his name…” He said, looking around as nearly everyone in the great hall flinched. “But there is one glaring difference between the two of them. YOU are the only wizard Voldemort is afraid of, but Harry isn’t afraid of you. Voldemort himself will tremble in fear once Harry gets ahold of him, so Headmaster, you keep that in mind when Harry has you thrown out of this school on your arse because you will also be sorry that you have crossed him.”

And with that, Neville stormed out of the great hall leaving it in shocked state of silence.

Salazar and Godric sighed deeply as they looked at Albus.

“Well, he’s not wrong about any of it.” Salazar said, as he, Godric, and Blaise walked out to find Neville, with the twins hurrying after them.

They searched for nearly an hour to find Neville, and they finally found him in the astronomy tower, sitting down against a wall, and looking out over the grounds. The cold wind was howling fiercely and all of them shivered against it, but Neville seemed to not be bothered by it as he ignored their approach.

It wasn’t until they all sat down next to him that Neville spoke.

“I’m sorry for my outburst.” He said quietly as he continued to stare out over the grounds. “And I’m sorry for what I said about you not being afraid of him.”

Salazar patted the young man on his knee and smiled. “It’s all right. You were right about everything thing you said, and there’s no point in pretending otherwise.”

“I hate him. I wanted so badly to kill him for trying to make me feel guilty about being your friend by using my parent’s condition. I just…I wanted to kill him. I knew at that moment that I could cast the killing curse and end his life. I just knew I could.” He said, as tears spilled down his cheeks. “Does that make me a bad person? Does that make me no better than a Death Eater?” He asked, finally looking at Salazar and Godric with a worried expression.

“No Neville, it makes you human. You had a right to be angry, and maybe it could have been handled differently, but you only shouted. You didn’t hex him, you didn’t jinx him, you didn’t assault him, you only shouted.” Godric answered as he gazed at the young man with concern. “You are nothing like a Death Eater Neville, because a Death Eater would have killed him, but you didn’t. That makes you better than them. Despite your anger and hatred, you were able to control yourself. A person should never kill anyone because they hate them.”

“I punched Draco.” He said sheepishly.

“That’s because he’s a git.” Fred said, causing Neville to chuckle a bit, but then he sighed.

“But we hate the Death Eaters, and you guys say we should kill them.” He said. “What does that make us?”

“There is a difference in killing someone in self-defense and killing someone simply because you don’t like them.” Godric gently explained. “We would not just walk up to Lucius Malfoy in Diagon Alley and strike him dead, but if he was dressed in Death Eater garb, engaged us in a fight, and was determined to kill us, then we would respond in kind.”

“So self-defense is what makes the difference?” He asked.
“Correct.” Salazar said softly. “The hatred you feel for Dumbledore is normal, especially because he used your parent’s condition to try and make you feel guilty.”

“But be careful with your anger and revenge.” Godric warned, and then he sighed. “Do you remember back in second year when Albus said that revenge is a slippery slope that can lead you down a dark path?” He asked, and Neville nodded. “Well, I hate to say this, but he was right. You cannot let your hatred and revenge control you. Believe me, I know.” He added, looking at Salazar sadly. “Righteous anger is perfectly normal and fine. On some levels, it’s even healthy because you don’t want to bottle that stuff up, but don’t let it control and consume you.”

“I understand.” Neville said, taking a deep breath as he wiped the tears off his cheeks. “I feel a lot better now. Thank you.” He said with a smile.

“You're welcome.” Salazar and Godric said together, as they helped him to stand up.

“Uh oh.” Blaise suddenly said, pointing towards an owl heading their way with a howler in his beak.

Salazar sighed, took the howler, and promptly set it on fire. He knew it was going to be the first of many more to come.

“You had no right to do this Albus! NO RIGHT!” Sirius yelled, as Remus tried his best to restrain him. “Harry is only a child! A CHILD! You had no right!”

“And what you said about Mr. Longbottom’s parents were WAY out of line!” A red faced Minerva yelled.

Everything in Albus’s office shook violently because of the sheer power coming from the combined anger of, Merlin, Nicholas, and Perenelle, plus Sirius, Remus, Minerva, and even Severus, who was standing in his favorite dark corner.

Moody was standing behind Albus with his back against the wall, and even he felt like cursing the man. He had warned Albus not to send that letter to the paper, and he warned him to stop his vendetta against Salazar, but clearly the Headmaster didn’t listen.

Yesterday, Moody had told him that Potter had just had a good time out with his friends and that he did all the normal things that everyone does on Hogsmeade trips. Up until Hermione was cursed that is. Thankfully Albus had believed him.

At the moment though, he was staring at Merlin who was eyeing him carefully, which greatly unnerved him.

However, Sirius turned into Padfoot, breaking free of the hold Remus had on him. He growled, snarled, and lunged for Albus’s throat, but Merlin grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, just as Remus hit him with the animagus reversal charm. He fell to the floor with a loud thump and glared at them as he scrambled to his feet. Then he glared at Albus.

“The Potter name will forever be marred because of your stupidity!” He shouted, going for Albus again, only to be stopped again as Merlin grabbed him around the waist.

Sirius continued to shout and wouldn’t stop struggling against Merlin, but a sudden red light engulfed him and he went limp in Merlin’s arms. The ancient wizard sighed and carefully lowered the stunned man into a chair.
“He can be mad at me later.” He announced as Remus chuckled despite the situation. Then Merlin turned to Albus. “Mr. Dumbledore, give me one good reason why I shouldn’t strike you dead because of your stupidity?”

“Because you can’t. You’ll go to prison, and your life will be over.” Albus said, glaring at him.

“Trivialities.” Merlin said, waving his hand dismissively. “You have single handedly ruined a young man’s life because of your know-it-all assumptions. Harry is NOT an aspiring Dark Lord, but he will become a Professor here one day.” Merlin said with a smile, causing Albus to glare at him. “He does love to teach after all.”

“You are a fool Albus.” Nicholas said, bristling with anger. “But this is not over.”

“No it’s not.” Perenelle said in a haughty manner, as she looked down her nose at him. “One day Albus,” she said as she pointed her finger in his scowling face. “One day you will find yourself disgraced and without a job, titles, and money. Mark my words.”

“You know,” Albus said standing up abruptly. “That is the second time today I have been threatened in such a manner.”

“And I doubt it will be the last, that is, until all is in place and our plan is launched.” Merlin said with a smile. “Harry is young, and it is possible for him to bounce back from this if given enough time, but you Mr. Dumbledore, well let’s just say, you put the final nail in your own coffin.”

“And do tell me what plan you have.” Albus snarled. “You have no idea what kind of power I hold.”

Nicholas laughed. “We are unconcerned about your power. Magical, political, or otherwise, and so is Harry. You don’t seem to comprehend the situation here Albus. Your little letter to the wizarding world will only be used against you in the future.”

“I’m done being talked to like a child!” Albus shouted, pointing to the door. “Get out of my office, and get out of my school.”

“This is not your school Mr. Dumbledore.” Merlin said in a cold tone that made everyone shiver involuntarily. “It never has been your school, and it never will be your school. You are just a Headmaster, though for how much longer is up for debate.”

“It certainly isn’t yours.” Albus said as he glared at Merlin. “Now get out.” He growled.

“No, it’s not mine.” Merlin said with a devious chuckle. “This school belongs to the Founders, so do think on that Mr. Dumbledore.”

Nicholas levitated Sirius, and with polite nods to Moody, Remus, and Minerva, they quickly left. Minerva then turned her furious gaze on Albus.

“And I will be writing to Augusta Longbottom to tell her exactly how you tried to manipulate her Grandson by using his parents, her son and daughter-in-law’s, condition to prove your petty point!” She shouted.

“Minerva,” Albus said, glaring at her. “I have had enough of your insubordination! You’re fired! Get out of this school and my office!”

Remus bristled, but Minerva smiled. “As you wish Albus. I’ll enjoy the extra-long holiday, seeing as I’m sure I’ll be back when Mr. Potter throws you out! Just so you know, you’ll have to find yourself
a new Deputy Head, Head of Gryffindor, and Transfiguration Professor. I'm taking Pomona and Filius with me too. That leaves you stuck finding Heads for Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, as well as new Professors in Charms and Herbology.” She said, turning on her heel and storming out.

“And a new Defense Professor. Goodbye Albus.” Remus said promptly, and followed her out.

“Headmaster,” Severus drawled. “If I may, perhaps you should rethink that decision. After all, we are…vulnerable…at the moment.” He said, motioning towards his left forearm.

Albus paled drastically as Severus’s words sank in, and he quickly realized the predicament he had just placed them all in. Then he jumped out of his chair and ran after them.

“Well played Snape.” Moody said gruffly.

Severus sneered at him and walked out without a word, but Moody just chuckled and shook his head. He didn’t know if all of this was a natural reaction, or if they had planned it.

He did know one thing for certain though, Albus had no idea who he was up against.

“It has been an incredibly long day.” Salazar said as he flopped down in his favorite chair in the Snake Pit.

He had been warding off howlers all day long, though he did find the one from Molly to Albus pretty funny. However, he was already getting tired of people nearly running away from him in fright.

The only thing that made him laugh, was when Severus told him what happened in Albus’s office earlier that day, and what happened after Albus went running after Minerva and Remus. Apparently he pleaded for them to rethink their decisions to leave so quickly, and Minerva even managed wiggle a pay raise out of him before she agreed to stay.

Salazar was quite proud of her actually.

They had also spent more time visiting Hermione in the hospital wing, and Salazar was pleased to find Krum sitting with her when they arrived. He had pulled the young man aside and told him that he was happy that Hermione would be attending the ball with him, seeing as she and Salazar had more of a ‘brother/sister’ relationship.

Krum had given him a wide smile after that, and they shook hands. Krum told Salazar that he would look after her, which pleased Salazar even more because he didn’t even have to threaten the young man’s life. He felt sure Hermione would be all right during the festivities that night.

“Well Harry,” Blaise said as he sat down on the sofa and pulled out a book on advanced charms. “Look on the bright side, at least you won't have to hide from the females anymore.”

“It’s too bad you don’t have a date already though.” Neville said, watching a few mermaids swim by the window. “Because now no one will want to go to the ball with you.”

Blaise chuckled. “But if you already had a date, you wouldn’t anymore because no one would want to attend the Yule Ball with an aspiring Dark Lord.” He said sarcastically.

Salazar sighed and gazed at the golden egg that was still sitting on the table. “I was going to ask
Susan Bones, but I don’t think I will now. She would say no.”
“Tough luck too.” Neville said shaking his head. “Hannah told me earlier today that Susan doesn’t have a date yet.”

“Susan’s a smart girl. She wouldn’t say yes to me right now if I was the last person on earth. It would cast a bad light on the Bones’s name.”

“So what are you going to do?” Godric asked, as he continued to charm the rest of Luna’s things so that they could get the stuff back to her.

“I don’t know Godric.” Salazar said, throwing his hands up in frustration. “Right now I’m torn on trying to create a spell that would allow me to turn Nora into a human for the evening, or just take a transfigured rock.”

“I would love to be your date Speaker.” Nora said as she laid on her rock in the corner. “But you must understand that I don’t think I would make a very good dance partner, seeing as I have never had feet. However, I would like to wear a set of red robes. I do think they would look nice against my pretty black scales.”

Salazar chuckled. “My dear, if I could take you, I would.”

“Face it Harry.” Blaise said, not looking up from his book. “The only person who would say yes to you right now is someone like Rita Skeeter.” He chuckled.

Salazar stared at him owlishly. “What did you say?”

“I said, Rita Skeeter is the only one who’d say yes to you right now.” Blaise repeated.

“Blaise that’s brilliant!” Salazar cried, jumping up from his chair as a plan began to form in his mind.

“But she’s not allowed to come on school grounds.” Godric said, looking up at him curiously. “And you’re fourteen, and she’s an adult.”

“Albus said he barred her from doing personal interviews on school grounds, but she is still allowed to be here for Triwizard events. The Yule Ball is a Triwizard event! She’d love to gossip about who was wearing what, who went with whom, and see what other kinds of juicy things she could find out about people. Not to mention, it would annoy Albus.” Salazar said as he grabbed a quill and a piece of parchment. “And I’m not fourteen.” He added, glaring at Godric, who chuckled.

He sat and stared at the parchment for a little while as conversation flowed around him, but then he grinned as he began to write.

My Dear Rita,

I know this letter may come as a shock, but I must ask you something very important. Will you be my date for the Yule Ball that will be held here at Hogwarts on Christmas Eve? I know that it is very short notice, and I will understand if you already have plans, but I think this could be very beneficial for both of us.

You see, because of the Headmaster’s letter that was featured in The Daily Prophet, I am now unable find anyone who is willing to be my date for the evening. As a Champion, I am required to have one, seeing as all the Champions have to open the ball with the traditional opening dance, as well as attend the traditional dinner. It is my understanding that all Champions, their dates, and their Head of Schools will be seated together at the same table. I’m sure there will be some
conversations that would peak your interest. Not to mention, I'm sure your readers would love to have inside gossip about who went with who, and what fashions the young pure-blood ladies were wearing for the evening.

I know that the Headmaster barred you from conducting personal interviews on school property, but seeing as the Yule Ball is a Triwizard event, there really isn't much he can do about it. I also happen to know that it is not against the rules for you to be my date, seeing as there is no age limit.

I really do hope you consider my proposal, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely Yours,

Harry James Potter

P.S. Do be sure to bring your lovely quill and notebook if you are able to come. I'm sure there is a charm out there that can render it invisible. Just be sure to watch out for Alastor Moody.

“Harry, you're barmy.” Neville chuckled, after Salazar finished reading it out loud.

Salazar just gave him a wicked grin before tying the letter to Hedwig’s leg.

“Please get this to her as fast as you can, and peck the eyeballs out of anyone who tries to stop you.” He laughed as he scratched her head.

She hooted loudly and nipped his fingers, but then she quickly took off down the entrance tunnel.

“Neville is right Harry, you really are barmy.” Blaise snorted.

“I can't believe that you actually asked Rita to be your date.” Godric laughed.

“And I can't believe that you still haven't told me who you are going to the ball with.” Salazar replied.

“Only the prettiest girl in school.” Godric said with a mysterious wink, as Salazar glared at him.

The rest of the night was spent doing various things. Godric finished charming all of Luna’s stuff, and Salazar asked Dobby to return them to her. They hoped that the charms Godric put on them would deter anyone from stealing from Luna again, seeing as their skin would turn purple and the word ‘thief’ would appear on their foreheads, but only time would tell if they learned.

The next two weeks flew by for Salazar. The day after he sent the letter to Rita, he got an owl back saying that she would meet him in the entrance hall at five o’clock sharp, so that took a load off of Salazar’s shoulders. He decided to warn Severus, Minerva, Remus, and Poppy, and he told the children to make sure they were polite, and charmed and flattered Rita, because if they didn’t, he was sure that Rita would not be kind to them.

Rita’s response wasn’t the only thing that caused a stir among those ‘in the know’ though. A few days after all of Luna’s things had been returned to her, three of her dorm mates showed up at lunch with purple skin and hair with the word ‘thief’ written across their foreheads. They hadn't been seen all day, but they came in with Poppy, who pulled Albus aside to explain the situation. Salazar and Godric just smirked and went about their business, but they did eventually tell Poppy that it would wear off in a week. She was furious with them, but once they told her what Helena had said, she
lightened up a bit.

Helena reported back to them and said that Professor Flitwick had called for meeting in Ravenclaw Tower. Apparently the Head of Ravenclaw was furious, and punished the thieves appropriately, and warned that if anyone was caught bullying or stealing from another student that he would take the appropriate measures to see them out of Hogwarts for good. This greatly increased the respect the two Founders had for Professor Flitwick.

“Neville, you have to help me!” Ron cried desperately as he stared at his hideous robes in the mirror. “I don’t know what else to do!”

“Ron, I don’t know what to tell you mate.” Neville said, looking at the boy sympathetically.

“But…but…there has to be something!” Ron cried, as he tried to fight with frayed edges of the lace he had attempted to cut off.

Neville glanced at his watch. “Look, there is an hour and a half until dinner, so if we hurry, Harry or Gordy might be able to do something.”

“No, no, I’ll just…suffer.” Ron said with a dejected sigh.

“But would you want Susan Bones to suffer?” Neville asked with a raised eyebrow.

“No!” Ron exclaimed as a pained expression crossed his face. “Do you think they would be willing to help?”

“They would.” Neville assured him, and he grabbed Ron by the arm and began dragging him from the dorm.

They ran full speed down all the stairs and corridors, stopping only for a moment when Neville answered the Parseltongue question, ‘what is the proper incantation for the patronus charm?’ before heading into the Snake Pit.

“Now I’m all sweaty.” Ron grumbled when they entered, but then he looked around with wide eyes when they entered the main sitting area. “Blimey, they did all this themselves?”

“Well, they had help from some elves and decorating advice from a few people, but yeah.” Neville said as he shrugged his shoulders. “Harry!? Gordy!? Are you here? We have a problem!” He called out.

A muffled, “Hang on!” Came from Salazar’s room, but he emerged a few moments later with wet hair and hastily thrown on pajama bottoms and a shirt.

“What’s the matter?” Salazar asked as he looked at the two curiously.

“Can you help Ron?” Neville asked, motioning to the red faced Weasley.

“Oh!” Salazar exclaimed, as he realized the state in which Ron’s robes were in. “I can try, but come here and let me look at you. I’m not a professional seamstress so nothing will be perfect, but I do have a few tricks up my sleeve.” He chuckled.

He studied the highly embarrassed young man for a moment, before he began to carefully vanish the frayed ends from where Ron tried to get rid of the lace. Then Salazar cast a freshening charm on the
lad and his robes to get rid of the musty smell, which seemed to make Ron grin happily.

“Do you want a different color?” Salazar asked, looking at Ron’s smiling face.

“Yeah, I hate maroon, so can you just go with black?” Ron asked hopefully.

Salazar smiled, but did as the young man requested and pretty soon he was finished. He had used a switching charm to temporarily switch the old fashioned collar with a newer collar from one of his own spare dress robes, and used an invisibility charm on the cravat to give it a more modern appearance.

When he was done, he pulled Ron into his room so that the young man could see the change, and Ron grinned happily.

“Harry, you are a life saver!” Ron said. “I know it’s not perfect, but my robes look and smell loads better! Thank you!”

“You’re welcome.” Salazar chuckled, as he gave the young man a smile. “Just remember to bring it back so I can switch the collars back.”

Ron nodded. “First thing tomorrow Harry, and again, thank you!”

Neville grinned and checked his watch again. “Forty-five minutes! We better get back up to Gryffindor Tower and finish getting ready. Thanks Harry!”

Salazar laughed as the two ran back up the entrance tunnel, then he looked around and briefly wondered where Godric had gone, before darting back into his room to get himself ready.

At five o’clock sharp Salazar was standing in the entrance hall greeting a grinning Rita Skeeter. He had on dark emerald green dress robes with silver edges, and she was wearing silver dress robes with emerald green edges. He grinned at her when they caught sight of each other.

“Rita, you are looking very fetching this evening.” He said with a grin as he bowed and kissed her hand, which caused her to giggle.

“And you as well Mr. Potter. I am looking very forward to this evening.” She said with a small laugh.

“Ah! Harry!” A very familiar older voice said from a few feet away. “I’m so glad to have caught up with you.”

Salazar turned around to find Godric, in his adult form, grinning at him. “Listen lad, I know what that letter in the paper said about you, but I want you to know that I have no problem with you and my son remaining friends.”

“Well thank you Mr. Roffin. Gordy and I were afraid you would disapprove.” Salazar said, never missing a beat as he tried to keep from glaring at his best friend because of his idiocy.

_Bloody Gryffindor, he better not get recognized!_ Salazar thought, trying to keep his facial expression clam.
Godric, who was wearing red and gold dress robes and had trimmed his red hair and beard, grinned at him. “Not at all. In fact, it is my belief that the Headmaster is a glory hound to be honest.”

“Oh really!” Rita exclaimed with a shark like grin. “Do explain Mr….”

“Please forgive me Rita. This is my best friend Gordy’s father. This is Gordon Roffin. Mr. Roffin, this is my lovely date this evening, Rita Skeeter.”

“Ah! Miss Skeeter! Lovely to meet you my dear.” Godric said with a charming smile. “I am a fan of your work, and to answer your question, it is my belief that Albus Dumbledore wishes to find dark wizards laying under every rock, just so people would look to him to vanquish them. First Grindelwald, then You-Know-Who, and now he is trying to make young Harry out to be a dark wizard to continue the trend. It seems he is trying to keep himself…relevant.”

“A very interesting statement Mr. Roffin. May I…quote…you on that?”

“Of course my dear.” Godric said, giving her a wink, which caused her to grin widely.

Just then, a hand appeared on Godric’s arm and a smiling Poppy stopped to greet him and Rita. Salazar managed to refrain kicking Godric in the shins, but snorted when Godric began tripping over his words as he tried to complement her.

Poppy giggled and blushed, but Minerva began loudly ushering everyone, except the Champions and their dates, into the great hall. Draco and Pansy, who passed by Rita and Salazar, made a side comment about him not having a ‘real’ date, which made Rita quirk an eyebrow at him.

“That’s Draco Malfoy.” Salazar said rolling his eyes. “He thinks he is the best thing to walk the earth, but all he does is spout off about how great his father is. One would think Draco would try to make a name for himself instead of furthering his father’s reputation.”

“Indeed.” Rita said with a nod as she studied Draco’s date with distaste. “And who is the girl he is with?”

“Oh, that is Pansy Parkinson.” Salazar whispered.

“I see.” She said with a smirk.

“Harry! You look so dashing this evening, and Miss Skeeter, I’m so happy to finally meet you!” An excited voice said from behind them.

Salazar turned to find Hermione and Viktor grinning at them, and Salazar returned her grin.

“Hermione, you look lovely this evening. Viktor, you keep a watch on her, someone might try and steal her away.” He said, causing Hermione to blush and Viktor to laugh.

“You Harry?” Rita asked as she laughed.

“Oh no, Hermione is another one of my good friends. She and I are more like brother and sister.” He chuckled. “Stealing her away from Viktor would be…”

“Awkward.” Hermione laughed.

“Indeed.” Salazar grinned. “Who wants to go on a date with a brother figure?”

“But as your friend, does it bother you that she is here with Mr. Krum?” Rita asked, raising an eyebrow. “He is a fellow Champion after all.”
“Oh not at all. In fact, I think it shows that we are more than just competitors in the Tournament. The Triwizard Tournament, after all, is supposed to be about international magical cooperation.”

“So it is.” Rita said with a smile. “I know my readers will love to know that there is nothing but friendship and respect among all the Champions, though they probably would be more interested if there wasn’t.”

“Oh there is a lot of conflict going on at Hogwarts this year, but it’s not from the Tournament.” Cedric laughed, as a beautiful Cho Chang nodded politely at Rita.

“Is that so Mr. Diggory?” Rita asked, looking intrigued.

“Yes, between Harry and Professor Dumbledore. Which by the way, Harry, I want you to know that I don’t believe the rubbish he said about you in the paper. I don’t see that from you. I know Dumbledore is a brilliant man, but something is not adding up. I don’t know what it is, but there is something not right with him.” Cedric said shaking his head.

“He doesn’t like me.” Salazar laughed. “That’s the problem, but thank you Cedric. It’s means a lot.”

“I think all of this is nonsense.” Fleur said, flipping her long blond hair back in a snooty manner, causing Roger Davies, her date, to stare at her in awe. “Madam Maxime says it’s improper for a Headmaster to say such horrible things about one of his current students. It makes Hogwarts look bad to us. Headmaster Dumbledore should be ashamed of himself.” She added with a firm nod.

Salazar managed to keep the grin off his face, and he could see Hermione doing her best to hold back a snort.

“Headmaster Karkaroff feels the same way, though he also thinks the whole thing is funny.” Viktor simply added. “However, I myself am not pleased with Headmaster Dumbledore’s lack of action against the attack on Hermione.” He said with a deep scowl.

“What attack?” Rita instantly asked.

“I'm a muggle born and I was attacked in Hogsmeade by Pansy Parkinson and her group of friends.” Hermione explained. “I spent two days in the hospital wing recovering, and Professor Dumbledore did nothing but give them a stern talking to. For someone who claims to hold muggle borns in high regard, he sure didn’t punish those Slytherin girls.”

Rita once again had her infamous grin on her face, but the sound of approaching footsteps interrupted the conversation.

“Are you all ready?” Minerva asked, but then she smiled at Rita. “Miss Skeeter, it is lovely to have you here this evening.”

“Minerva McGonagall.” Rita said with a raised eyebrow as she caught sight of Minerva’s rather ugly arrangement of thistles she had placed on her hat. “It’s a pleasure to be here.”

“Good evening Professor.” Salazar, Hermione, Cho, and Cedric said together as they grinned at her.

“And how is one of my favorite Professors this evening?” Salazar asked with grin. “You look lovely as always.”

Minerva let off a rather girlish giggle and blushed. “Very well Mr. Potter, thank you. Miss Skeeter, I should warn you that Albus,” She said, rolling her eyes in a very unbecoming manner. “Has caught word of you being here this evening, and he’s not exactly happy.”
Rita’s eyes shone with glee. “I'm sorry to hear that.”

“Well, I don’t agree with him trying to keep you away from here in an attempt to silence you, or his attack on a mere boy of fourteen.” Minerva said motioning to Salazar. “He should be ashamed of himself.”

“Exactly what Madam Maxime said.” Fleur repeated with a nod.

“I agree fully.” Rita said with a chuckle. “May I…quote…you Minerva?”

“Of course. He’s already threatened me and my job. In fact, he tried to fire me because I disagree with how he is handling the situation with Mr. Potter, but he realized his mistake and changed his mind.” She said with a smirk.

“Really?” Rita, Cedric, and Cho asked with a surprised gasp.

“I’ll explain at another time.” Minerva said, ushering them to the doors. “Right now it’s time for the Champion Procession. Just take your seats at the table where all the Heads of School are seated.”

They all nodded at her, and got ready to enter the great hall as the doors opened.

Everyone gasped as they entered richly decorated great hall, though Salazar was unsure if it was because Rita was on his arm, or because of Hermione, who, if he was honest with himself, looked extremely beautiful in her flowing periwinkle robes. He heard whispers throughout the great hall, and saw many people pointing, but he just gave everyone a smile as they settled into their seats.

Albus didn’t look too happy as Rita sat across the round table from him, and he scowled at Salazar who just politely nodded in his direction. All the Heads of House and main subject Professors sat at the next table over, and Salazar was happy to note that it would be easy to hold a conversation with them as well. Albus also kept shooting glares at Godric, who was sitting with Poppy at that same table, but Godric pointedly ignored him.

The conversation was light and airy through most of dinner, but towards the end, Godric cleared his throat loudly, causing all conversation at both tables to come to a halt.

“Mr. Dumbledore, I'm not sure if you remember me, but I'm Gordy Roffin’s father. May I ask you a question about your letter in *The Daily Prophet*?”

Salazar bit his lip in an attempt to suppress a snort as Albus glared at Godric.

“What is it Mr. Roffin?” Albus asked with strained politeness.

“Well, something has been bothering me actually. If you knew what kind of boy Tom Riddle, or You-Know-Who was, then why didn’t you stop him before he became so powerful?”

Salazar noticed Rita’s shark-like grin was back in a flash as her eyes gleamed brightly. Everyone else remained calm, but Severus sneered at Godric, while Sprout and Flitwick raised curious eyebrows in Albus’s direction.

*Godric, if I weren't worried about drawing unneeded attention to you, I'd hug you my friend. There might be a bit of Slytherin in you after all. Salazar thought as he stifled a snicker.*

Albus however, glared at him. “I am unsure what you are trying to imply Mr. Roffin.”

“You obviously knew what kind of boy he was, so why didn’t you stop him back then? The war
could have been avoided, and lots of innocent people wouldn’t have died, including Harry’s parents.” Godric said, taking a bite of his dessert.

“Would you say that the Wizarding War was your fault Albus?” Rita immediately asked with an innocent smile.

“Of course not!” Albus exclaimed a bit too loudly, causing the other nearby tables to become quiet. “Mr. Roffin, you have obviously read what I wrote. Aren’t you concerned about your son being friends with Harry?”

“No at all.” Godric said with a dismissive wave of his hand. “If Harry were indeed an ‘aspiring Dark Lord’ as you put it, Nehum, Gordy’s phoenix, would have warned him.”

“I think he’s ignoring Nehum’s warnings.” Albus said in a frank tone.

Godric glared at him. “Gordy would most certainly not!” Godric cried. “And I don’t appreciate you making accusations against my son like that. He value’s Nehum’s guidance, and would never jeopardize their bond. Isn’t it true that your own phoenix has studied Harry’s soul and deemed it light?”

“That was quite some time ago. Things have obviously changed with Harry.” Albus said with a glare.

“So let’s settle this then.” Remus said. “Call for Fawkes and have him study Harry’s soul again. If it’s dark, Fawkes would let us know, and if it’s light, then it proves you wrong.”

“Now is not an appropriate time.” Albus said curtly.

“Ah, but Albus,” Karkaroff said with an amused smile, “wouldn’t we all like to put this matter to rest?”

“I know I would, especially since I haven't anything to worry about.” Salazar said with a grin. “Too bad Gordy’s not here. He could call for Nehum to do it for Fawkes.”

“He answers my calls too Harry.” Godric said with a wink.

“I don’t think now is the best time.” Albus repeated.

“Are you afraid of having egg on your face Albus?” Minerva asked with a raised eyebrow, causing Albus to glare at her.

Rita’s eyes bounced from person to person as she grinned, but Albus shook his head.

“Since I'm not bonded to Nehum, I'm afraid I will not be able to interpret his answer.” He replied.

“Are you saying that I would lie?” Godric asked in a dangerous tone.

“Not at all, I just…”

“You dare to question my honor?” Godric angrily continued, not giving Albus the chance to complete his reply.

“No Mr. Roffin, I don’t.” Albus said as he clenched his teeth together. “Our guests…”

“Would like the matter settled once and for all.” Madam Maxime finished.
Albus looked slightly taken aback by her statement, but he shook his head. “Now is not a good time. Perhaps later.”

“I know what it is.” Rita said with a smile. “You wish me not to hear the results. Isn't it Albus?” She asked in a false sweet voice that caused Salazar to chuckle.

Albus took a deep breath. “Not at all Rita, but I do think dinner has come to an end.” He said quickly as he stood up. “I believe it’s time for dancing.”

The great hall hushed as Albus stood up to make the announcement, but Cedric leaned past Rita in order to whisper to Salazar.

“I told you Harry, something is not right. I think he’s making it all up.” He said.

“He is Cedric.” Salazar whispered back. “It’s as I said. He just doesn’t like me.”

“That is going into my next article boys.” Rita said with a chuckle. “If you don’t mind that is.”

“Not at all Rita.” Salazar said with a smile, as Cedric laughed. “Would you care to dance?”

“Certainly.” She said with a bright smile.

The rest of the evening was spent mostly dancing and having fun. Salazar stole Poppy from Godric for a few dances, and was able to also fight off Godric in order to dance with Minerva when Rita went to ‘mingle’ in the crowd. He also danced with Hermione, while Krum danced with Fleur, who then danced with Cedric.

He was happy to see Ron grinning as he danced with Susan Bones, who looked to be in pain from having her feet stepped on, but it looked like they were having fun none-the-less. Neville and Hannah seemed to be enjoying themselves as they danced, and Blaise and Daphne looked to be having fun as well.

Salazar talked to Hannah and Daphne a little, and he was happy to note that both of them had been assured by Neville and Blaise that he wasn’t going to kill them all in their sleep one night, and Salazar smiled when Daphne said how sorry she was when she had heard about Hermione.

By the time the evening came to a close, Salazar was tired, but he was happy. Rita had a lovely time both dancing and obtaining gossip, and he couldn’t wait to read her next article.

He knew Albus wasn’t going to like it.

However, as he entered the Snake Pit that night, he spied the golden egg sitting on the table and he knew he needed to get busy on trying to solve it because the second task was coming soon.

Chapter End Notes

This was a long one! It took me a while to write it so im sorry for the delay. I actually had every intention of Salazar going to the ball with Susan Bones, so that i could somewhat introduce Amelia, but one of my reviewers on the other site asked me if Salazar was taking Rita, and a plan flew through my head like a rocket! Most of this chapter was because of that one little review! I think it works good and is somewhat believable though. With Albus's letter, i cannot see any girl from a 'light' family saying
yes to Salazar, and no 'dark' one would either because he is 'Harry Potter'.

Next Chapter will feature Rita’s response, but i need you guys help. Do you want me to write another 'Rita article' or do you want me to just have the characters mention the key points in passing? Im unsure of what to do. Also, the second task is coming up, so that will be in the next chapter as well.

I hope you guys liked the chapter! Until next time!
Chapters are always magical, but it has always been especially so around Christmas. With decorated trees, suits of armor singing yule-tide carols, and the snow on the ground make it seem clean, crisp, and beautiful.

This year the staff out did themselves for the season, and as I walked into the castle to meet my date for the traditional Yule Ball, held this year because of the Triwizard Tournament, my eyes were met with the splendor.

It didn’t take long to find him though. Harry Potter was standing tall with his group of friends, and he greeted me in a manner that spoke of a high society pure-blood, despite his half-blood, raised by muggles status.

Which is more than I can say about Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson, who both made very rude and snide comments about Mr. Potter not having a ‘real’ date for the ball, and commented on Mr. Potter’s robes by saying how ‘cheap’ they looked. I can personally vouch for my date’s robes, and I tell you that Mr. Potter’s emerald green and silver robes were made from the finest silk available and were expertly made.

Minerva McGonagall, the Deputy Headmistress who was wearing a lovely set of red tartan robes with an unusual arrangement of thistles in her hat, began ushering everyone, except the Champions and their dates, into the great hall. During this time, I had a rare opportunity to speak with the Champions. I asked them about their thoughts on Albus Dumbledore’s letter to the Wizarding World, and if they were frightened about being alone with Mr. Potter at that point.

It seems that none of them were.
“I don’t believe the rubbish that Professor Dumbledore is saying about Harry.” Cedric Diggory said. “I just don’t see it. I personally think he is making the whole thing up.”

“It makes Hogwarts look bad, and Headmaster Dumbledore should be ashamed of himself for saying those horrible things about a little boy.” Said Fleur Delacour, the Beauxbatons Champion who was wearing robes of beautiful silver satin.

“We from Durmstrang agree.” Viktor Krum commented. “Headmaster Dumbledore should be ashamed of himself.”

Viktor Krum’s date, Hermione Granger, a beautiful muggle born girl who was wearing a gorgeous set of flowing periwinkle robes, only had one worry on her mind, but it wasn’t Harry Potter.

“I was attacked by Pansy Parkinson and her group of friends on our last Hogsmeade trip, but Professor Dumbledore did nothing about it. I’m worried that they will try it again. I spent two days in the hospital wing because of those Slytherin girls.”

Viktor Krum scowled deeply at this point and became angry when he said, “Yes, I too am upset by Headmaster Dumbledore’s lack of action for the attack on Hermione. He should have done more. Hermione and all muggle borns should feel safe here at Hogwarts.”

“For someone who holds muggle borns in high regard, he sure didn’t do anything about it.” Mr. Potter said as he shook his head sadly.

My dear readers, at this point I was shocked because I felt sure Professor Dumbledore would take immediate action against a travesty such as this. Could it be that Albus Dumbledore is getting lax on his views about muggle borns, OR does his lack of action on Miss Granger’s attack have more to do with her being good friends with Mr. Potter?

Perhaps it was both?

As you may already know, Mr. Potter and Miss Granger have been friends since their first day on the Hogwarts Express, and consider themselves more than just friends. They look at each other as brother and sister. I asked Mr. Potter if he felt betrayed that Miss Granger was Mr. Krum’s date for the ball, seeing as both young men are Champions, but he just laughed.

“No, I think it’s wonderful really. This competition is about international magical cooperation. Besides, who wants to go on a date with their brother?”

If you are anything like Me, Myself, and I dear readers, I know you chuckled over that gem of a comment.

While a part of me wishes I could tell you of hateful, vengeful, and contempt feelings among the four Champions, the truth is, there isn’t. All the Champions hold each other in high regard and consider themselves friends and respect each other, which I do think is lovely.

But by now you have to be wondering what effect Albus Dumbledore’s shameful letter has had on Mr. Potter, and you may be wondering why Me, Myself, and I was his date, instead of a lovely young witch his own age.

Well my dears, it’s because of the letter. It’s sad that a handsome, charming, and good natured young man like Mr. Potter had to resort to asking me as his date. While I am flattered he thought about me, seeing as he knew how much I’d love to be there, it really shouldn’t have been.

Because of the Headmaster’s letter, no respectable young lady his own age wanted to be seen
with Mr. Potter that evening. Why the Headmaster felt the need to make up lies about Harry Potter and cause the young man more worries is anyone’s guess. Especially since a solution to finding out, for certain, if Mr. Potter is an aspiring Dark Lord is so close at hand. How you may ask? One word my lovelies.

Fox, Albus Dumbledore’s own bonded phoenix.

A notion was brought up at dinner by Professor R.J. Lapin, who teaches Defense against the Dark Arts. He proposed a brilliant idea. Just have Fox search Mr. Potter’s soul to see if it is light. This idea was widely popular with everyone sitting near us during dinner, including Mr. Potter himself.

“Please, I’d love to have my soul searched. He already did it once before and you said that my soul was light. Why can’t he do it again? I have nothing to worry about. I’m not an aspiring Dark Lord. Please have Fox search me.” Mr. Potter pleaded.

But Albus Dumbledore cruelly denied Mr. Potter the right to have Fox search his soul by saying, “Now is not the proper time.”

“He always does that.” A disgusted Minerva McGonagall said later in the evening. “Albus is always trying to deny Mr. Potter the right to defend himself. He fired me you know, because I disagree with how he treats Mr. Potter. I do not think the boy is an aspiring Dark Lord and I have been very vocal about it, so Albus fired me for it. He eventually changed his mind when others said they would leave as well.”

This is shocking my lovely readers! Is there a split within the walls of Hogwarts?!

Anyone who is anyone knows that Professor Minerva McGonagall is a fierce and strict teacher. She’s not afraid to call out anyone who is acting up, or acting in an improper way, and it seems that the Headmaster is no exception.

Are the Professors fighting amongst themselves? If Minerva McGonagall and others such as Pomona Sprout and Filius Flitwick, both Head of Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw respectively, threatened to leave because of the Headmaster’s behavior, then this could be bad news for Albus Dumbledore.

But why won’t Albus Dumbledore just have his phoenix search Mr. Potter’s soul? No one seems to know, but there is a running theory.

Albus Dumbledore doesn’t want to be proven wrong!

“I think he looks under every rock to try and find a Dark Lord to vanquish.” Said Gordon Ruffin Sr., the father of Mr. Potter’s best friend, Gordon Ruffin Jr. “I personally think the Headmaster tries to keep himself relevant because of it. It seems to me that he needs that fame. He’s a glory hound.”

Could this be true?

First Grindelwald, then You-Know-Who, and now Harry Potter? Now no one is denying the horror that the two former Dark Wizards have wrought on us in the past, but to throw Mr. Potter, a mere young man of fourteen, into that horrible mix is quite a stretch.

Mr. Ruffin even suggested that his son’s own phoenix would have told his son that Mr. Potter’s soul is dark, which led Albus Dumbledore to imply that Mr. Ruffin’s son is ignoring the phoenix’s warnings.

As you can imagine, Mr. Ruffin was highly insulted by the Headmaster’s callous words.
“Let me ask you something Mr. Dumbledore.” Mr. Ruffin angrily said at dinner. “If you knew all about You-Know-Who when he was a young man, why didn’t you stop him then? The War could have been avoided, and lots of innocent people wouldn’t have died if you had taken action before he became so powerful.”

A very interesting question, and Albus Dumbledore replied with…silence.

SILENCE!

Me, Myself, and I went on to ask Albus Dumbledore if the Wizarding War was partly his fault, but Dumbledore side stepped the question by promptly announcing that dinner was over and that the dancing needed to begin.

It makes one wonder what the great Headmaster of Hogwarts is hiding, and it makes one wonder why he refuses to answer these very important questions.

The rest of the evening was lovely though. The sea of color from everyone’s dress robes were striking in contrast to the normal black of everyone’s school uniforms. Everyone was happy, and after several dances of various tempos, which I must say, Mr. Potter is an exceptional dancer, I snuck off to mingle with the crowd. During this time, I observed Mr. Potter dancing with several friends and Professors alike. He also shared a dance with Miss Delacour, Miss Granger, and even a few others that didn’t seem to mind his presence.

I overheard people talking about him though. People like Daphne Greengrass, who was wearing an exquisite set of green velvet robes, said that Harry Potter was a nice boy, and her date, Blaise Zabini, who is one of Mr. Potter’s good friends, had nothing bad to say either.

Neville Longbottom and Hannah Abbot, both pure-bloods and friends of Mr. Potter, looked lovely together, and Miss Abbot especially looked fetching in her solid black robes with a yellow silk sash. No doubt a nod to her house.

However, as I wandered over to a group of Slytherins I overheard the nastiest things coming from them, and even as a Slytherin myself, I was appalled by the hateful remarks.

Millicent Bulstrode, who is no princess, nearly snarled in Mr. Potter and Miss Granger’s direction when they were dancing together. It is my belief that Miss Bulstrode was highly jealous of the beautiful Miss Granger, seeing as Miss Bulstrode, a pure-blood, was wearing a rubbish bag for dress robes.

Mr. Vincent Crabbe and Mr. Gregory Goyle were without dates, though one would think they were there with Draco Malfoy. All three of them spent their time whining about Mr. Potter and how ‘stupid’ he is. Until Mr. Malfoy changed the subject and began talking about his father, which seems to be a favorite topic of his.

“My father could throw a better ball than this. This is a ball for servants and those less worthy. Just look at Weasley.” He scoffed. “He is so poor that this will be the nicest ball he ever attends.”

“And Bones looks like a cow.” Pansy Parkinson commented right after.

I personally think that Ron Weasley and his date looked lovely together. Young Miss Susan Bones was wearing a charming set of cheerful yellow fitted robes that worked very well with her striking red hair, which was pulled into an equally charming ornate braid.

However, Mr. Malfoy and Miss Parkinson are not ones to talk really.
Mr. Malfoy and Miss Parkinson, despite their wealth and pure-blood standings, looked like two five year olds dressed up for Mummy and Daddy’s boring political meetings. Mr. Malfoy had on a drab set of black robes, while Miss Parkinson, a pug-faced looking girl, was wearing an awful set of pink robes that looked more like curtains that had been shredded by an angry cat.

But I digress.

As the evening drew to a close, I reunited with Mr. Potter, and as the perfect gentleman that he is, he walked me all the way to the front gates of the grounds, and saw me off safely with a bow and small kiss on the back of my hand.

All in all, I had a lovely evening, and if I was a (much) younger witch, I’d claim Mr. Potter all for myself, but alas, I’m not. I just hope that when Albus Dumbledore is finally proven wrong about Mr. Potter, that everyone will be able to look past the Headmaster’s slandering, and see Harry Potter for who he really is.

A true gentleman, a hero, and a wonderful, down to earth, lighthearted young man.

Until next time my rabid readers,

Rita Skeeter

It had been a week since the Yule Ball, and the great hall was silent as everyone devoured Rita’s latest article. Salazar glanced up at the head table to see Minerva smirking, Remus chuckling, Sprout and Flitwick grinning, and Severus, as usual, scowling.

What really amused Salazar, was the fact that other Professors were casting questioning glances at Albus, who sat in his chair glaring right at Salazar, who for the last week, walked around the school with Nehum perched happily on his shoulder.

According to Godric, Nehum was perfectly fine with this arrangement, and Godric had even asked Nehum to study Salazar’s soul just to be sure. Of course the results came back ‘light’ as expected, but it was hysterical to watch everyone’s reactions as Nehum cooed, sang, nipped at Salazar ears, and preened his hair in contented manner. They wanted to run away from him in fear, but the presence of Nehum seemed to root them to the spot and they only stared at Salazar in confusion. During this time there had been an influx of people heading to the library in order to check out books on the behaviors of phoenixes, which seemed to irritate Albus to no end.

The only one who complained about the newest arrangement was Nora, who constantly grumbled about ‘show-off Peacocks’ hogging all the attention, and she even threatened to bite him, which seemed to amuse Nehum.

The rest of the Christmas holidays had been wonderful though. Merlin once again portkeyed the Potter’s in for Christmas, and even though he couldn’t spend more than a few hours with them, Salazar had fun slipping off the grounds to go see them.

Harry was a little let down that he couldn’t spend the whole break with his Grandpa and ‘Uncle Salazar’, but the lad understood why. James and Lily told him they were furious with Dumbledore and his letter, and Merlin had to almost physically restrain them from heading up to Hogwarts and cursing the Headmaster. James sincerely hoped that the Potter name wouldn’t be forever tarnished because of the old goat’s stupidity, but Merlin told them all that once the truth finally came out, it would be all right.
Salazar just hoped the ancient wizard was right.

“How could that woman say that about me!? I’ll have her job!” Pansy Parkinson suddenly yelled, causing everyone in the great hall to stare at her.

“What is she talking about!” Millicent Bulstrode shrieked. “My dress robes cost fifty galleons!”

Salazar, Godric, and the children were sitting in their normal spot at the Slytherin table along with Krum, looked up to see Pansy and Millicent glaring at the paper in disbelief.

“How could she call me pug-faced, and her,” Pansy sneered as she pointed at Hermione, “beautiful. She’s just a mudblood!”

“Miss Parkinson!” Minerva shouted. “Ten points from Slytherin, and see me after breakfast!”

Pansy glared at her, but then scowled even more at Hermione, who chuckled and shrugged her shoulders. Krum scowled at the girl, causing Pansy to whimper, but she got up and ran out the room when Neville glared at her.

Draco pointedly set his copy of the paper on fire, sneered at Salazar, and followed her out with Crabbe and Goyle hot on his heels.

“I see once again that Headmaster Dumbledore is not going to take action.” Krum said with a scowl, as Albus did nothing but continue to eat his breakfast. “He is a cowardly man.”

“If you can believe it, he is a Gryffindor, though an unworthy one I’d say.” Godric grumbled.

“I want to bite him.” Nora said, as she peered over Salazar’s copy of the paper in order to glare at Nehum.

“You want to bite everyone my dear. Could you be more specific?” Salazar asked, causing nearly everyone to snort.

She hissed in annoyance. “You, the Peacock, Dumbly, and Jolly.”

“Me?” Godric asked, looking at her in shock. “Why?”

“Because that stupid screaming egg woke me up this morning because you just had to ‘study’ it.” She replied, flicking him on the arm with her tail.

“Oh, is that why you're in a bad mood? I’m sorry I woke you up Nora.” Godric chuckled, as Hermione quietly giggled and translated the conversation for Krum. “I was trying to see what I could make of it.”

“I say we just throw the stupid thing into the lake, so that the Sushi has to deal with it. It would make for quieter mornings.” She huffed, as Hermione continued to translate.

Godric suddenly gasped and looked up with a sudden start. He glanced at Krum, then Salazar, then back to Krum who began chuckling.

“I have already figured it out.” He admitted with a small smile. “It is all right to talk freely if you wish, but I understand if you don’t.”

“What is it?” Salazar asked, as he stared at Godric with a clueless expression, then glanced at Krum.

“The egg. I just realized what that sound is.” Godric said as he jumped up.
Salazar glanced at Krum, who just shrugged. “I could leave if you want me to.” He said kindly, but Salazar shook his head.

“If you say you have figured it out, I believe you, but I must grab Cedric.”

Krum laughed. “I don’t mind if you do, and you will understand why when you figure out the egg. Shall I ask Fleur to come? I think she already knows too.”

Salazar hesitated. He really only wanted to talk to Cedric, but if Krum and Fleur had already figured it out, then what was the harm? They could test them to be sure.

“Might as well.” Salazar said, nodding at Krum.

“Are we going to the Snake Pit?” Blaise asked as they all stood up.

“Yeah.” Godric answered. “Hermione, you get Krum and Fleur down there, the rest of you come with me.” He said, dragging Salazar by the arm towards the doors.

Salazar only had a split second to grab a hold of a very surprised Cedric, who let out a yelp and dropped his fork, as Godric continued dragging him out the room. Nearly everyone in the great hall looked confused as all four Champions, and a gaggle of Salazar’s friends, headed out the room. Fred and George saw what was happening from their seat at the Gryffindor table, and made a mad dash after them.

“This is where you live!” Cedric cried as he gazed around the Snake Pit. That is, after he got over his shock of seeing Emeralda up close.

Salazar laughed. “Yeah.” He replied as Hermione, Krum, and Fleur made their way down.

“What is this about? Viktor said it has something to do with the second task.” Fleur said as she gazed around the room.

They all headed into the sitting room, and Fleur shrieked and began shaking at the sight of the giant squid stuck to one of the large windows.

“We have to…we have too?” She stuttered as she flattened herself against the opposite wall.

“He’s not going to hurt you. In fact, he is very friendly.” Cedric assured her, then he looked at Salazar curiously. “So Harry, what is this about?”

“I have no idea, you have to ask Gordy.” Salazar said, shrugging his shoulders as he pointed towards Godric.

“Ok, who here besides Harry has not figured out the egg?” Godric asked.

The only people who raised their hands were the twins, which made everyone chuckle and shake their head.

“I figured it out two days ago.” Cedric said with a grin. “But I’m still working on a way to actually do it.”

“I realized its secret a week ago.” Krum admitted. “And I agree with you Cedric, it is proving to be harder than I thought.”
“I already know what I’m going to do.” Fleur said, eyeing everyone suspiciously. “But pardon me for not telling.”

“No, no one has to talk about what they are going to do for the task. That’s not why we are here.” Godric quickly assured her. “I was just asking because I wasn’t sure.”

“Can we obtain some proof?” Salazar asked, eyeing them all.

“Sure Harry.” Cedric laughed. “It’s not really figuring out the egg that’s the problem, its completing the task.”

“I agree.” Fleur and Krum said together as they nodded.

“I’ll start so that you know we aren’t lying, though I hope you have a bathtub in here somewhere.” Cedric laughed. “I’ll just pick a line. ‘To recover what we took’. ” He said with a grin, as Fleur chuckled.

“Let’s see, ‘it won’t come back’.” She said.

“While you’re searching ponder this.” Krum added with a grin.

“Yep, we all know. Do you Harry?” Cedric asked, looking at him curiously.

“No, but I think…”

He was interrupted by a shout from Nora as she caught sight of Godric grabbing the egg.

“Jolly, don’t you dare!” She shouted. “I hate the screaming egg! I will bite you!”

Godric burst out laughing. “Calm down Nora, it won’t scream, but to answer your question Cedric, no we don’t have a bathtub, but we do have a waterfall.”

“Gordy, will you just get to the point?” Salazar said, rolling his eyes.

“What they said proves they have figured it out, so me doing what I’m about to do isn’t going to hurt anything. Now listen, because of Nora’s comment about throwing the egg in the lake, I realized what the sound was. I lived on a very small hidden island off the coast of Blackpool for…a-a while.” He suddenly stammered. “Here watch this.”

Godric laid the egg in the shallow pool of the waterfall, which was only about two feet deep, and grinned as he opened it. To everyone’s surprise, except Krum, Cedric, and Fleur, it didn’t start screaming.

“The screaming is what a mermaid sounds like above water. The Irish Sea, which is where the hidden island is located, has a colony of merpeople. Stick your ear in the pool.” Godric said with a grin.

Salazar stared at Godric, then whacked himself in the forehead. “I should have known that.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Godric laughed. “Ear, water, now.” He chuckled, pointing to the egg.

Salazar got on his knees and stuck his ear just under the water, and what he heard made him shudder.

*Come seek us where our voices sound,*

*We cannot sing above the ground,*
And while you're searching ponder this;

We've taken what you'll sorely miss,

An hour long you'll have to look,

And to recover what we took,

But past an hour, the prospect's black,

Too late, it's gone, it won't come back.

Salazar stood up and stared at Godric in horror. “There is NO BLOODY WAY I'm taking a swim in the Black Lake in the middle of February!” He shouted, which caused the other three Champions to burst out laughing.

“That is what I said, but we have to.” Fleur said with a shrug as she sat down in Salazar’s favorite chair.

His outburst caused Godric and the children to quickly scramble over to the shallow pool of water so that they could listen to the song. When they pulled away they stared at the four Champions with wide eyes.

“How in the world are you going to be able to breathe underwater for an hour?!” Blaise cried.

“Don’t know.” Cedric laughed. “It’s like we said, it’s not really figuring out the egg, it figuring out how to do the task.”

“I agree.” Fleur said as she picked up Blaise’s book of advanced charms that was sitting on the table, and began flipping through the pages. “I already know what I'm doing though.” She added.

“Harry?” Neville asked, looking at him curiously, as Salazar paced back and forth in front of the large window that the squid was stuck to.

“Well, I know what I'm NOT going to do, which is take a dip in the freezing cold lake. I'm a snake, not a fish.”

“In more ways than one.” Godric grinned, causing Salazar to glare at him, and silently threaten to end his life if he spilled the beans about his animagus form.

“But Harry, how will you find what has been taken if you don’t swim?” Hermione asked, furrowing her brow in confusion.

“Since I’ll be coming in last anyway, I’ll just say this. I'm not swimming.”

“But…”

“Still not swimming.” Salazar said, looking at her pointedly. “Let’s put it this way…howlers in my first year.”

The twins gasped as their eyes widened with the memory of Salazar freezing their mother’s howlers, and instantly understood what he was getting at. Cedric was a little slow on the uptake, but Salazar had to give the Hufflepuff credit because he didn’t give away the fact that he also realized what Salazar was talking about.

Fleur and Krum looked confused, but they remained quiet. Hermione on the other hand, continued to
ask questions.

“But Harry, if what the mermaids took is **under the water**, how are you going to get it back if you don’t swim?” She asked.

Salazar chuckled. “I have my ways.” He said with a mysterious smile, but she still looked confused. “A problem doesn’t always have to be solved logically Hermione. Sometimes it takes a bit of cunning to arrive at a solution. Just trust me.” He said with a grin, causing the twins and Neville to burst out laughing.

“You’re a true Slytherin Harry.” Cedric said with a chuckle as he shook his head.

“I should hope so.” Salazar said with a chuckle, causing everyone to laugh even harder.

A few days after having heard the egg’s song, Cedric pulled Salazar aside and apologized for not telling him about the egg, but explained that he wanted to have it all figured out before he told Salazar anything. Cedric then told him that he planned on using the Bubble-Head charm, which he had found the night before, and gave Salazar the incantation for it, if he decided he actually needed to swim. Salazar admitted that he had spouted off the information about the frozen howlers in a misleading way, and told Cedric not to worry. In the middle of February, the lake is already completely frozen over, so he would just walk across the ice towards the mermaid colony.

Salazar then told Cedric that he had read the book **Hogwarts: A History**, and it mentioned that the four Founders had made a deal with some merpeople, who kept being spotted by muggles off the coast of Cornwall, England. They brought the merpeople to Hogwarts and allowed them to live in the Black Lake, where they made themselves comfortable in the middle and at the very bottom.

Salazar told Cedric that if he wanted to swim under the ice then that was up to him, and reminded the young lad about using the hot water charm in order to melt the ice when he came back up. However, Salazar told him that he was going to walk because all they needed to do was get to the middle of the lake. Cedric then asked him how he planned to get back what had been taken from him, but Salazar just grinned and told Cedric that he would simply summon it.

Salazar was fiercely determined NOT to freeze to death!

With the stress of the Yule Ball having long been over, and with the contentment of knowing what the egg was and how to get through the second task, the month of January and the first weeks of February flew by for Salazar. Even the uproar over Albus’s letter to the paper had somewhat died down.

Parents had apparently been writing to their children warning them to stay away from the ‘evil Slytherin’, but the children had been writing back to tell them about Nehum the phoenix, and how he sat on ‘Harry Potter’s’ shoulder. It may have been a while since Nehum had done that, but the effect it had on everyone at the school seemed to put all their fears to rest, and eventually talk about him being ‘evil’ came to a screeching halt.

The only person this didn’t seem to set well with was Albus, who still maintained his opinion that Salazar was an aspiring Dark Lord. Severus had pretended to be confused over the matter and went to Albus to ask questions, but what he found out really wasn’t a surprise.
Albus fully believed that Nehum was somehow confused, confounded, or had some other spell placed on him. When Severus pointed out that it couldn’t be done, Albus said that it was likely a very dark, very dangerous spell that Salazar had used to trick the phoenix. Severus walked away from that conversation shaking his head in disbelief. Albus was either being deliberately thickheaded about all this, or worse, he really did believe the drivel he was spouting, and no one seemed to be able to figure out which one it was.

However, while things may have calmed down inside Hogwarts, outside of Hogwarts was a different matter.

The impact of Rita’s article was still having an effect on people because it seemed no one knew what to think anymore. Those with children at Hogwarts who had seen Nehum with Salazar believed Rita Skeeter’s articles, and those who didn’t, believed Albus’s letter. There were even reports of pub brawls were people would challenge each other to a duel because the Wizarding World was so divided over the issue.

Nicholas had gone to the Ministry to speak to his contacts and learned that Fudge believed every word Albus was saying, and because of that, the rest of his staff and several high ranking officials believed the same thing. Except one person.

Percy Weasley.

Due to the imprisonment of Crouch Sr., Percy had been promoted to Junior Assistant to the Minister of Magic, and the lad had been doing his best to fight off the brainless assumption that ‘Harry Potter’ was an aspiring Dark Lord. Nicholas talked to the young man and warned him not to go too far with correcting those much older and powerful than himself, because that could put him in danger of losing his job. Percy took the old wizard’s advice and dialed back on his beliefs just a bit, but he still held them firm and would not hesitate to tell anyone who asked what his thoughts were.

In the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office, Arthur had convinced his coworkers of the truth, but in the Auror Department, Tonks was not as successful. The Aurors were split fifty/fifty, and Madam Bones seemed to want to reserve judgment on the matter. While she believed what Susan had said about Nehum, she was unwilling to blindly believe that ‘Harry Potter’ was good. However, she also knew enough about Albus Dumbledore to not blindly believe anything he had to say, which was why she decided to watch the situation carefully and be ready for anything that might happen.

It was finally the night before the second task, and the Snake Pit was unusually quiet. Nearly everyone was quietly working on various things, or in Salazar’s case, staring out of the window into the lake. The twins were quietly working over a simmering cauldron, on some kind of concoction of their own making, and having a hushed conversation with Nora. Emeralda was currently sleeping, seeing as she had just got back from hunting. Hermione, Neville, and Blaise were studying for a Defense test, and Godric was reading.

“No! Oh no! No, no, no!” Fred suddenly cried, just as George let out a loud yelp.

“Someone help us!” Nora cried, causing Salazar to vault over a chair, a coffee table, and sidestep Neville, who had also jumped to his feet.

A small explosion erupted from the cauldron, causing a goopy mess to make an audible splat against the see-through ceiling. Thankfully Blaise was quick enough to vanish the mess, before it came back down and landed all over Emeralda’s back.
“Do I even want to know?” Salazar asked as he cautiously peered into the now empty cauldron.

“Only if you want to take points from Gryffindor.” Fred said sheepishly, causing Godric to chuckle.

Salazar raised an eyebrow at them, but then smirked. “Let me guess, it’s a prank.”

“Yes, but I'm teaching a class, so you must go.” Nora informed him, causing Salazar to look at her curiously. “It’s called Brewing with Nora, the Deadliest Snake in the World. Now go away.”

“You’re not using snake venom are you?” Godric asked sternly, suddenly looking up from his book. This question got the attention of everyone in the room, and they all stared at Fred, George, and Nora with wide eyes.

“If we said yes, would we be in trouble?” George asked with a slight squeak.

Godric leveled his gaze at the young man, causing George to shrink back against the wall. Salazar however, only chuckled.

“I'm surprised it took you this long to use snake venom. I figured you would have asked me for Nora or Emeralda’s venom long before now. Normally it’s used for dark potions though, so tell me what it does, and we will decide if we need to stop you.” Salazar said calmly.

“Well um…well um…I...we were just going to prank Dumbledore.” Fred said, looking at the two Founders awkwardly.

“Using a potion that has snake venom as an ingredient?” Godric asked pointedly, folding his arms across his chest.

“It’s not bad.” Fred quickly assured him. “We worked it all out and found that it just needs one tiny little drop from a slightly venomous snake.”

“Deadliest snake in the world!” Nora corrected.

“The deadliest snake in the world.” Fred said with a slight grin. “It causes someone to walk in a zigzag pattern. We were going to ask Dobby to put it in the Headmaster’s tea.”

“Fred!” Hermione cried. “You can't do that!”

Blaise snorted, but Neville burst out laughing. “It would be hysterical to watch Dumbledore forced into walking in a zigzag pattern. How long does it last?” Neville asked, causing Salazar to chuckle.

“Three full days.” The twins chorused with grins plastered on their faces.

Godric sighed loudly, but gave them a disparaging glance. “I suppose that would be all right, but no more potions with snake venom unless you ask first. I mean that.” He said sternly as he waggled his finger at them.

“Yes sir.” They said sincerely as they nodded vigorously.

Godric sat back down with a grunt and cast a withering look at Salazar, who just stood there trying not to laugh, but then Salazar looked at the twins.

“All right, but you obviously have done something wrong, so let me see your recipe.” He said with a grin.
He started to read over the piece of paper that they handed him, but then another loud explosion sounded throughout the room, causing them all to jump. However, this one sounded above their heads and they all looked up to see Severus, Albus, Moody, and Minerva standing in the main Slytherin common room, looking down at them.

They all furrowed their brows in confusion, but Godric readied the stairs, as Salazar summoned the walking-through-walls potion. He quickly drank a small sip, and scrambled up the stairs to poke his head out of the ceiling/floor.

“Do you need Blaise and Gordy too?” Salazar asked as he glanced at each of them.

“Actually no Mr. Potter, we only need to speak with Miss Granger and Mr. Roffin.” Minerva said. Then she glared at Albus, and looked back at Salazar. “They will be coming with us.”

“All right.” Salazar said, looking at her curiously.

“We don’t want that stupid mudblood…”

Draco didn’t get to finish that remark, seeing as Salazar immediately turned him into a footstool, and quickly banished him into the still blood protected corner they had used at the beginning of the year. Severus was a ‘little slow’ in trying to turn Draco back into a human though, and glared at Salazar in disgust. Draco wasn’t the only footstool in the corner though. Two other footstools were stacked neatly against the wall, and they caught the attention of Minerva.

“Mr. Potter, are those students!” She cried staring at them in shock.

“Yes ma’am.” Salazar said sheepishly. “Montague is the pretty pink foot stool, and he tried to curse Gordy behind his back. The purple footstool is Goyle, who thought it would be funny to beat up a first year Hufflepuff, and of course, the red and gold footstool is Draco, who can't seem to control his mouth.” He explained. “Gordy and I caught them doing these things today, and put them there ourselves, but they will be returned to normal and unceremoniously ejected from the corner at midnight, where they will land, none to gracefully, on their bums in the middle of the room.” Salazar explained with a flourish.

Minerva tried her best to hold back a snicker, but it slipped through despite her efforts. Albus and Severus glared at him, but Moody burst out laughing.

“I see you have decided to take matters into your own hands Potter.” Moody said with a twisted grin that made Salazar look at him oddly. However, Minerva just shook her head and sighed.

“Fifteen points from Slytherin Mr. Potter because we are never to use transfiguration as a punishment.” She said sternly.

“What’s the point Minerva?” Albus said gruffly. “He will just put them back.”

“Actually Headmaster, I only do that when you take points.” Salazar spat. Then before anyone could say anything, he slipped back down into the Snake Pit.

“What do they want?” Blaise asked.

“They only want Hermione and Godric.” He said, looking at each of them.

“Why?” Hermione asked nervously as she glanced around at the sneering Slytherins.

“They didn’t say.” Salazar answered, glancing at Godric.
“Well, we better get up there.” Godric sighed. “Don’t worry Hermione, I will look after you.”

Godric took the walking-through-walls potion and sipped it before passing it off to Hermione. She made a face because of the taste, but then they headed up through the ceiling/floor. Hermione had her wand in her hand as she glanced around nervously, while Godric positioned himself in order to shield her better. They didn’t stand around very long though, and they hurried out the common room leaving Salazar to stare after them in confusion.

“Why did they leave?” Neville asked.

“I don’t know.” Salazar replied as he shrugged his shoulders. “I suppose we will have to wait for Godric to come back and tell us. What time is it anyway?”

“We have an hour until curfew.” George said as he brandished the potion recipe. “Can you take a look at this for us? If you don’t mind that is.”

“Of course.” Salazar laughed.

Before any of them realized it, they only had ten minutes left until curfew so the Gryffindors hurried up the entrance tunnel in order to try and make it back to Gryffindor Tower before they got in trouble.

“I wonder why Gordy hasn’t come back yet.” Blaise said as he yawned and stretched.

Salazar furrowed his brow and shook his head. “I have no idea. Perhaps it’s taking longer than they thought.”

“I could be.” Blaise offered as he put away his Herbology homework. “Why don’t you get some sleep, because you need a full night’s rest.”

Salazar nodded slowly. “You’re right, and I do need sleep. I don’t know why I’m worried because Godric can take care of himself. I just hope someone hasn’t suck up on him or something. Actually, I’ll just ask Minerva to see if he’s left yet.”

Salazar cast his patronus and the spell to allow it to talk, then he sent it off. He really liked this spell because you could have the patronus talk to a bunch of people at once, or make it to where only one person could hear what it had to say. That came in handy if the person was in a room full of people.

A few minutes later, Minerva’s cat patronus came bounding down the entrance tunnel and into the sitting room.

“He is still with us, but he’s not happy. I can’t say any more than that. I’m so sorry.”

Salazar furrowed his brow as Blaise looked at it in confusion.

“Why wouldn’t he be happy?” The lad asked.

Salazar shook his head. “I don’t know, but I’m sure he will wake me up when he gets back. Let’s just head to bed.”

“All right. Goodnight Harry.”

“Goodnight.”

Salazar laid in his bed for a while, pondering Minerva’s cryptic message, but he eventually drifted off to sleep, unaware of what was happening in other parts of the castle.
The next morning Salazar awoke with a start because of someone shaking him. He sat up rather
groggily and rubbed his eyes, only to find a worried looking Blaise peering at him.

“Gordy didn’t come back last night, and his bed hasn’t even been slept in. Are you awake, and
understanding what I’m saying, or do I need to splash you with water?”

“I could bite him. That would assure us that he is awake.” Nora said with a loud hiss. “I wonder
where Jolly has run off too though.”

“Godric isn't back?” Salazar asked, blinking rapidly to try and clear his head.

“No he’s not.” Blaise said nervously.

“All right. Let me get up and get dressed so that I can wake up properly. I’ll try to find him.” Salazar
replied.

Salazar quickly went about his normal morning routine and hurried into the sitting room, and who he
found there made him stop in his tracks.

“Neville?” He asked, shoving his glasses on his face, and looking at the nervous lad who was
ringing his hands together. “You never come down this early. What’s wrong?”

“Hermione never came back last night. I waited for her, but I fell asleep on one of the couches in the
common room. I asked Lavender Brown to check on her, but she said Hermione never came in, and
her bed hasn’t even been slept in.”

“I told him it’s the same with Gordy.” Blaise said, looking at Salazar nervously.

“Ok, let’s not panic.” Salazar said, trying to remain calm. “They are probably at breakfast right now.
Let’s just get to the great hall and find out what’s going on.”

Blaise and Neville nodded, and they all headed for the great hall, but when they arrived, they didn’t
see Godric or Hermione anywhere.

“Have you seen Hermione?” Salazar asked, as he tapped Krum, who was sitting at the Slytherin
table, on the shoulder.

“No I haven't, which is odd. She promised to meet me this morning so that we could eat together.”
Krum replied.

“Gordy is missing too.” Salazar said shaking his head, just as Cedric came over.

“Something is going on guys.” He whispered. “I can't find Cho, and word has it, Fleur can't find her
little sister.”

The doors to the great hall flew open at that moment, and Fleur ran in casting panicked glances all
around the room. She spotted Salazar, Cedric, and Krum standing over by the Slytherin table and
quickly ran over to them.

“I can't find Gabrielle. Have any of you seen her? Please, please say you’ve seen her.” She pleaded.

They all shook their heads no, but Cedric said, “We can't find Cho, Hermione, or Gordy. They are
all missing too.”
It was then that everything clicked into place for Salazar.

“He cried, kicking the wall behind him. Then he turned to the other three stunned Champions. “They are what we will sorely miss!”

“No!” Fleur cried as tears began spilling down her cheeks. “Gabrielle is just a baby! She’s only nine years old! They can't, they can't!” She said, sinking down into the nearest seat.

“This is not right.” Salazar said, shaking his head. “Whose brilliant idea was it to use PEOPLE? I swear to Merlin someone better have a good excuse for this nonsense!” He shouted, slipping into Parseltongue because he was so angry. “I can see using a valuable item, or a treasure, or a keepsake one holds dear, but to use a PERSON is outrageous!” He shouted, then he took a deep breath and sat down in his seat with a loud huff. “What time does the task start?” He asked in a raspy tone because of all the shouting he had done.

“In half an hour.” Cedric replied solemnly, as he shook his head and patted Fleur’s shoulders. “But Harry, there is more. There is no ice.”

“What?” Salazar asked in a somewhat startled way.

“There’s no ice.” Cedric repeated. “The top of the lake has been completely thawed out. It’s just cold, cold water. I went out there this morning and discovered it.”

“Speaker, what do we do now?” Nora asked. “Can I still come with you, or do you have to swim now?”

“I don’t know. I need time to think.” Salazar replied, then he turned to Cedric. “I’ll figure something out. Right now I’m too angry to comprehend half of what is going on. Whose stupid idea was this anyway?”

“Those in the Department of Magical Games and Sports.” An angry voice behind them said. They turned around to find a frowning Minerva looking down at them, but she sighed and continued. “The Heads of all three schools had to sign off on it though. I personally think it is preposterous, as did Miss Granger and Mr. Roffin. Mr. Roffin was so against it that he nearly blew up the Headmaster’s office.” She said with a smirk. “But in the end he agreed to this nonsense, seeing as the next choice was to take Mr. Zabini.”

Blaise paled drastically. “Me?” He asked, and she nodded.

“What about Hermione?” Salazar and Krum asked at the same time.

“And Cho?” Cedric added.

“Miss Granger also agreed, after learning that a younger student from Durmstrang was going to be used. As for Miss Chang, she thought it was romantic and agreed right away.”

“Why did they take Gabrielle?” A red faced Fleur asked, lifting her head up to look at Minerva.

“I cannot speak for her Miss Delacour.” Minerva said sadly. “I was only privy to the Hogwarts students. You may have to ask Madam Maxime about it.”

“They should have taken Roger Davies, not a nine year old little girl.” Salazar growled.

“I agree.” Fleur said, standing up to go speak with Madam Maxime.
They all watched the very loud exchange with interest, but it was an angry Fleur who flounced her way back toward them a few minutes later.

“I have half a mind to leave Beauxbatons this very instant.” She said with an angry scowl as she sat across from them. “Madam Maxime says that using Gabrielle was the only way to ensure that I did my best to win. As if I would have done any less if it was someone or even something else.” She huffed.

“Let me bite her.” Nora said, causing Salazar to roll his eyes and ignore her.

“All right. What we need to do is focus on getting them back safely. They have been down there all night, and I can only hope that they have had charms placed on them to keep away the cold.” Salazar said as he shook his head in disgust.

“Actually Mr. Potter.” Minerva said. “They are in an enchanted sleep, so they are not aware…”

She was cut off by a loud screech from Fleur, as the young witch caught sight of Ludo Bagman and several Ministry officials as they entered the great hall. She nearly flew over to them with an angry scowl on her face, and began shouting at them in rapid French. Bagman had gone slightly cross eyed as Fleur got right in his face and continued her shouting, but when she drew her wand and pointed it at his head, Madam Maxime yelled at her.

It was during this time that Salazar really wished he had taken the time to learn French. He knew Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Latin, and even bits of German and Russian, but French is the one language he had never bothered to learn.

He didn’t have time to dwell on it though, because it only took two long strides for Madam Maxime to get from the head table to where Fleur was in order to restrain her.

“I apologize for her behavior.” Madam Maxime. “She is upset that her sister is in the lake.”

“Oh!” A clueless Bagman exclaimed happily. “Well I see that all the Champions have figured out what they will sorely miss. Good, good! This task should be quite exciting to watch then!”

Salazar shook his head at the idiot, but laughed when a stinging jinx flew out of Fleur’s wand and hit Bagman in the forehead. Then she wrenched her arm out of Madam Maxime’s grasp and stomped her way back over to the Slytherin table, where she sat down with an angry grunt.

Salazar, Krum, and Cedric grinned at her, but she just shrugged her shoulders.

“I am part veela, so what did you expect?” She said in an unconcerned manner.

They all burst out laughing, which caused Fleur to laugh with them.

Half an hour later all four Champions were standing on the shores of the Black Lake, dressed in nothing but swim trunks and thin t-shirts, as a cold breeze blew off the water. Fleur, Krum, and Cedric were craning their necks to try and see how far into the murky depths they could see, but Salazar glared at the slightly rippling, thawed surface.

The crowd sat in elevated stands that had been arranged along the opposite shore line, which was only a half a mile away, and they all could hear the loud, excited chattering and cheering from where they stood. Bagman, the Ministry officials, Albus, Karkaroff, and Madam Maxime were all sitting in
the judge’s box, while Minerva, Moody, Severus, and Sprout sat next to them in armchairs that Albus had clearly conjured. Poppy was there as well, and Salazar could see that she had several potions and warm blankets stacked up on a separate table.

“Speaker, are you sure you won't have to swim? There is no ice.” A disillusioned Nora hissed softly as she tightened her grip on his forearm.

He only nodded, but then Bagman, who still had an angry red welt between his eyes, stood up.

“The second task of the Triwizard Tournament is about to begin!” He cried, as his amplified voice boomed out over the lake. The crowd on the other side could clearly be heard as it erupted into loud cheers. “Each Champion has lost something that they must reclaim within an hours’ time, for if not, it will be lost forever!” He continued, oblivious to the mutinous glares coming from all four Champions. “They must retrieve their treasure and come back here in order to receive their scores. Let us begin! Three…two…one!” He shouted, and then a loud boom sounded, sending the crowd into a cheering frenzy.

Krum, Fleur, and Cedric immediately headed into the water, but Salazar just stood there glancing around the shore.

When he could no longer see the other Champions, he began executing his revised plan of attack.

“Glacius!” He cried, causing a small strip of water, about a meter wide, to freeze solid in front of him.

He cast the spell again on either side of the strip to make it wider, then he cautiously stepped on it, and smirked when it held his weight. The spell had only frozen about eight inches of water though, so he knew he had to be careful not slip, fall, or otherwise jar it in anyway, least it break up and send him into the freezing cold depths.

Salazar continued this pattern, making sure that each piece would hold him before he would walk across it. However, it made for slow progress. About twenty minutes into the task, which only put him about half way to his destination, he caught sight of a pair of yellow and black swim trunks a foot or so below the surface.

That meant Cedric was following his ice path.

Salazar chuckled to himself, but he knew he need to speed up so that at least Cedric could get back first. So he did, and about ten minutes later, he had reached the middle of the lake. Now, he wasn’t exactly sure where the mermaid colony was, but he knew he was in the general area and he began to widen his ice path just a bit, and turned it into a large ice platform. Cedric seemed to know that this was the spot though, and Salazar saw him disappear into the depths below.

The crowd was cheering loudly, and even though he was far away, he could hear the twins, Blaise, and Neville loudly chanting his name from the stands. Salazar chuckled to himself, and sat down to wait. His revised plan to retrieve Godric from the lake would require him to make sure that all the Champions and hostages were out of the water, just in case he made a mistake and ended up drowning someone.

And he wouldn’t be able to live with himself if that happened.

“Speaker, I'm bored. You must amuse me.” Nora said, causing Salazar to roll his eyes.

“By doing what exactly?” He asked.
"Try summoning the Sushi. I want to see Dumbly’s reaction when it comes flying out of the water. Then you must banish the Sushi in his direction so I can watch as he runs away screaming." She said.

Salazar burst out laughing. "My dear, as much as it would delight me to do that, I can't. The summoning charm will not work on living things. The closest thing I have heard it working on was a donkey, and that is just a story. I don’t think it’s true."

"Have you ever tried it?" She asked.

"No, because it can't be done." He answered.

"Well then how do you know it won't work, and how do you plan to get Jolly back?" She asked.

"I have an idea, but I don’t think the fish and the merpeople are going to be very happy about it."

"Oooh, what do you plan to do?"

"You will have to wait and see." Salazar replied mysteriously.

Nora hissed in annoyance. "Fine then you must amuse me or I will bite you. Try summoning Jolly anyway."

Salazar sighed with irritation. "Very well. Let’s see, Accio Godric Gryffindor." He halfheartedly said, not expecting anything to happen.

It didn’t.

"See we can't summon him. I told you, you can't summon living things."

"Speaker, I'm not stupid. I know you didn’t try hard enough. Try summoning the Sushi. You are a very old and powerful wizard. If anyone can summon the Sushi, it's you."

"My dear, the giant squid is much bigger than Godric. If I can't summon a person, then I certainly can't summon the giant squid."

"Just try, or I will bite you."

Rolling his eyes again, Salazar concentrated hard on the giant squid, but just as he got ready to say the incantation, Bagman’s voice boomed out across the lake.

"Due to not being able to get past the grindylows and almost drowning, Fleur Delacour has been forced to forfeit this task because of medical reasons."

Salazar turned sharply to see Albus, Madam Maxime, and Poppy dragging a frantic, screaming Fleur out of the water. She was fighting to claw her way back into the lake, but Madam Maxime had her in a tight hold. He was just barely able to make out Poppy wrapping a warm blanket around her shoulders, and forcing two potions down her throat.

"That is very unfortunate." Salazar murmured as he shook his head. "It’s up to us to get Gabrielle back to the surface."

"By summoning her." Nora said in a silky voice.

"You're not letting this go are you?"
“Of course not, now try to summon the Sushi.”

Salazar sighed and rolled his eyes again, but then he concentrated hard on the squid, and loudly called out, “Accio Giant Squid!”

A loud, odd sort of sucking/slurping sound came from their left, about halfway from their position to the shore, and the lake started to roil and churn, as if something was fast approaching the surface. Salazar’s eyes went as wide as galleons when the giant squid flew out of the lake. Its massive tentacles were flailing wildly as its large body zoomed towards him.

In a sheer moment of utter panic, and out of fear of being squashed by the giant beast, Salazar gathered all his strength and power, and loudly cried, “Depulso!” And banished it towards the shore.

Unfortunately, he really hadn’t been aiming all that well, and the giant squid went sailing over towards the judges table. He heard Minerva scream in a very un-Gryffindorish way, while everyone else scattered like ants.

The giant squid came crashing down on the judge’s table, just as everyone got out of the way, but then the poor disoriented squid just laid there for a moment, before slowly crawling back into the water. Salazar watched as it quickly swam away, and hoped to Merlin that it was all right.

He cast a voice amplifying charm, and sheepishly looked over at the judges, who were standing around with their mouths open in awe. “I am so, so very sorry about that. I honestly did NOT think that it would work.” He said, as the crowd roared with laughter. “I really do hope everyone is ok, but especially the squid. Is there a way to have Hagrid check on it?”

“We will have him look after it Mr. Potter, but in the future, please don’t ever do that again.” Minerva said with a shaky voice.

“Mr. Potter, this is Professor Flitwick. Fifty points to Slytherin for achieving the impossible. I didn’t think it was possible to summon, much less banish, such a large living creature.”

The crowd roared with laughter, but it quickly turned to cheers as Cedric and Cho broke the surface of the water. They were about fifteen feet off to Salazar’s right, and he quickly began creating more ice as he made his way over to them.

“They are right below us, but it’s a long way to the bottom. That’s why it took me so long to get back up.” Cedric said through chattering teeth, as Salazar helped him to get a sputtering Cho out of the water. Then Cedric pulled himself up and flopped on the surface of the ice, before standing up.

The crowd was going nuts and Cedric waved to them, but they were only halfway done, seeing as Cedric and Cho needed to get back to shore.

“Pardon me for being a little shaken up right now.” Salazar said, as he began to, rather awkwardly, help them dry themselves off. “I just summoned and banished the giant squid. It went crashing down onto the judge’s table.”

“What!?” They both cried disbelief.

“I’ll tell you about it later. Accio two of Poppy’s warm blankets!” Salazar cried, and they saw Poppy’s blankets come zooming over to them. “Here take these, but get back quickly. Fleur is out because she got attacked by grindylows.”

“What about her sister?” Cedric asked in alarm, as he threw the blankets over his and Cho’s
“Don’t worry, I’ll get her. You just get back, and be careful. The ice is only eight inches thick.”

Cedric nodded and they quickly, but carefully, made their way back to shore.

“Speaker, you made the Sushi fly.” Nora said gleefully.

“Yes, let’s not talk about that. I’d rather just forget it.” He replied.

“But it was hysterical! I never saw Dumbly run so fast!”

Salazar just shook his head and sat down on the ice with his head buried in his hands, as the crowd began chanting ‘Flying Squid, Flying Squid!’ He highly suspected the twins were behind it, but Salazar just shook his head and tried to tune them out.

“You should try summoning Jolly again.” Nora said.

“I think I will. I was just going to create a whirlpool and have it bring them gently to the surface by manipulating its flow, but I don’t think I have it in me to create another spectacle today.”

Nora started to reply, but was cut off as the crowd began cheering loudly again. He looked over to see Krum and Hermione grinning and waving to the crowd. He summoned the rest of Poppy’s blankets, and motioned Krum and Hermione over to him. He helped Hermione up as Krum pulled himself onto the ice.

Just like he did with Cedric and Cho, he began helping them dry off with the hot air charm, and wrapped them up in blankets.

“Fleur is out, but I’ll get Gabrielle so don’t worry. Cedric made it back just after the hour was up.”

“Why haven’t you gotten Gordy up yet?” Hermione asked, pulling the blanket tightly around her shoulders.

“I can’t. Its goes with me having to come in last, besides, I've been…preoccupied.”

“Why is everyone shouting ‘Flying Squid’?” Krum asked, looking at the crowd in confusion.

“Because Speaker made the Sushi fly!” Nora hissed excitedly, causing Hermione to stare at him.

“You did what!?” She cried loudly.

“Later, I promise. Now, get back to shore.” Salazar said, ushering them down the ice path. He watched them carefully make their way back to shore, then he turned towards the water, closed his eyes in concentration, and took a deep breath. “Accio Gabrielle Delacour!” He cried loudly.

To his surprise, she came sailing up out of the water, but he slowed her down with a charm, and gently caught her in his arms. She opened her eyes and seemed to be a bit groggy, but she smiled at him and threw her arms around his neck.

“Fleur?” She asked, drawing back and looking around questioningly.

Salazar knew she didn’t understand much, if any, English so he shook his head ‘no’ and pointed to the shore.

“I will take you to her.” He said, hoping she understood, and she nodded and smiled as Salazar dried
her off and wrapped her in a blanket.

He repeated the process with Godric, and grinned at his best friend when he came to.

“Did you have fun?” Salazar asked, looking at a relieved Godric as he helped him up.

Godric began to dry himself off, then Salazar handed him a blanket.

“I can’t believe they would place humans down there. They knocked us out with a potion, and gave
us to the mermaids. I was so angry…why is Gabrielle here?” He asked, interrupting himself.

“I know you are angry. Minerva told us all about it after we figured out what was down there. To
answer your question though, Fleur was attacked and almost drowned because of the grindylows, so
I brought Gabrielle up. I couldn’t let her stay down there and wait for someone to fetch her later.”

“Good call.” Godric said with a nod. “But how did you get us to the surface?”

Salazar sighed loudly and shook his head as he wrapped Gabrielle up in a second blanket, then
Godric picked her up and carried her so she wouldn’t have to walk on the ice, and they began
heading to shore.

“I summoned you.” He finally answered.

“What?” Godric asked in shock, stopping to stare at him.

“Jolly, Speaker made the Sushi fly! You should have seen it! He summoned the Sushi and banished
it towards the judge’s table! Dumbly screamed and ran away when it came crashing down on top of
him!”

“What!?” Godric cried again.

“That’s not exactly what happened, but Nora talked me into trying to summon the giant squid. I told
her it couldn’t be done, because it’s not supposed to work on living things, but she threatened to bite
me, so I did.”

“And it worked?” Godric asked.

Salazar burst out laughing at the memory. “Yes it did, but it wasn’t Albus who screamed, it was
actually Minerva. Godric, you have GOT to watch the pensive memory of it. You will die laughing.”

Godric grinned. “So you are telling me that you haven't even gotten wet today?”

“Nope!” Salazar replied proudly. “They thawed the ice sometime last night so I just made my own. I
have absolutely no intention of getting in that water.”

“Is that so?” Godric asked with a wicked gleam in his eye.

“Godric don’t you…aaarrrggghhh!” He cried, as Godric purposely used his shoulder to slam into him,
causing Salazar slip on the ice and fall into the freezing cold water.

Then that laughing bloody Gryffindor took off running towards the shore, with a giggling Gabrielle
held tightly in his arms.

Chapter End Notes
Ah! My longest chapter ever! I hope you all enjoyed the laugh! I always thought the lake task needed a bit of spicing up, after all, the crowd only stared at the water for an hour! I blame Nora, she's a sly little devil.

Next up we will be hearing from some people who we haven't seen in a while. Sirius, Merlin, the Potters, along with the Malfoys, and others, so i hope your ready for it.
Hey guys! I'm so sorry that I have not updated in a while. The holidays threw me off of my routine, and since then I have been updating my seriously neglected online jewelry store. I have been a busy bee making all kinds of stuff, and I really haven't had time to work on C&C. I'm back now though! This chapter is a little shorter than normal, but I hope you all can forgive me. I seem to have found my mojo again though, so you can expect my regular updates to resume. Thanks for sticking with me during this brief hiatus!

Chapter 45

Fun Pranks, and Sudden Dark Events

"Why does it keep glaring at me?" Salazar asked, as he stared at the giant squid that was stuck to the window.

"It's not." Neville said with a chuckle. "It's just your guilty conscience playing tricks on you."

"No, it is not. It is glaring at me. It's almost like it knows." Salazar whispered, causing everyone to laugh.

"Who cares about the flying Sushi!?" Nora yelled. "What about me!? Jolly pushed Speaker into the water and I nearly froze to death! Even Pigeon and the Peacock laughed at me!"

"Were you turned into a snake-cicle?" Fred asked.

"Or how about a Nora-cicle?" George added.

Nora turned to glare at the twins. "I...will...bite...you!" She said with a threatening hiss, causing everyone to snicker.

"Don't worry my dear, I have a plan to get Godric back." Salazar said as he smirked at Godric, who had started to laugh.

It had been a month since the second task, and everyone was still talking about the giant squid incident. Minerva and Poppy had not been happy with Salazar, and after the task he had received several stinging jinxes to his backside because of it. He had tried to apologize again, but they weren't willing to listen.

When Rita published her account of the second task, the flying squid incident was talked about in true Rita fashion, which caused an uproar in the wizarding world. In the days after, several people from the Ministry came to Hogwarts to talk to Salazar and ask how he did it. He just shrugged his shoulders and said he didn't think it would work, but he had decided to try it anyway.
Tests were done with the summoning charm, and it was found that only very powerful wizards could summon living things, but there was a distance limit to it. Albus had tried to summon a member of the Accidental Magical Reversal Department from Hogsmeade, with no success. This was tried several times with different people casting it, but it was eventually determined that people could only summon living things if the living thing was less than one-hundred yards from the caster. How 'Harry Potter' was able to summon living things remained a mystery, but everyone eventually chalked it up to him being 'The-Boy-Who-Lived'. That explanation was quickly accepted by everyone and it was dismissed, much to Salazar's relief.

Among the student body however, he was a hero. The twins and other Gryffindors made mention of it every chance they got, and even some of the neutral and light Slytherins were proud that one of their own had made the discovery. The Ravenclaws dove into the new information and studied it from every which way possible, while the Hufflepuffs congratulated him on the discovery. Needless to say, it had been the most entertaining thing to happen at Hogwarts in a very long time.

At the current moment though, Salazar and Godric were working with the children on the patronus charm. The children had come a long way since they started, and by now everyone was able to cast really strong shield patronuses.

"Have they said what the last task is going to be yet?" Hermione asked, as she canceled the shield patronus and readied herself to cast another.

"Not yet." Salazar replied with a sigh, as he watched Blaise cast the charm. "I wish they would hurry up though. How are we to prepare for it if we don't know what it is?"

"Actually you mean to say, 'how can I think up ways to help Cedric win if I don't know what it is'." Blaise laughed, causing everyone to snort.

Salazar grinned at him. "You know me too well my young friend." He said with a laugh. "The only thing they have said is that we will be told when time for the last task draws closer. The date for it is June 24th."

"And tomorrow is April 1st." Hermione said, chewing on her bottom lip in thought. "We have three more months to go. That's a long time to wait."

"I know." Salazar said, shaking his head.

"That's right ladies and gents, tomorrow is April 1st and you know what that means." Fred said in a sing-song voice, as George grinned widely.

Everyone groaned in unison. Tomorrow was the twins' seventeenth birthday, and nearly everyone had been dreading that day because the twins had been hinting at a major April Fool's Day prank. However, what everyone didn't know was that Salazar had been in cahoots with the twins, and was planning a surprise separate attack on Godric to get him back for pushing him and Nora into the lake. Fred and George had their own plan to prank the entire castle, though they needed Dobby's help to do it, which meant Salazar knew what they were planning.

"I got it, I got it!" Neville suddenly cried.

They all turned sharply to find a medium sized, bright, silvery animal with long claws and sharp teeth looking up at Neville as if it was studying him.

"What is that?" Blaise asked peering closer at the animal.

"A wolverine." Godric said with a proud grin, as everyone began congratulating Neville. "They
symbolize power, ferociousness, defense, strength, and my personal favorite, courage. Among other qualities." He added.

"I thought it would be a lion." Fred said with a grin.

"I like it." Neville laughed as he bent down to look at it closely, causing the wolverine to rear up on its hind legs to get a better look at him.

"Neville, I'm so proud of you." Godric said, patting him on the back. "Here's something you all may not know. My first thought for Gryffindor's house animal was actually a wolverine, but one day Rowena told me that I always reminded her of a lion because of the way I look, so I went with that instead."

"Really?" Neville asked, looking at Godric curiously.

"Yes." Godric said, smiling at the lad. "However, now you have to try the charm again."

Neville groaned slightly, but he repeated it with enthusiasm and was able to gain the same results again. Neville's success spurred the others on, and they began to eagerly try harder to find out what their corporeal patronus might be.

The children continued to practice for the remainder of the evening, but shortly before curfew Severus entered the room just as Hermione squealed.

"I did it!" She cried, causing everyone to start cheering.

A silver otter was swirling around the room, and the look on Hermione's face said it all. She was so happy to have finally gotten it right.

"Quite amusing that it's an otter Miss Granger." Severus said, after the noise died down a bit. "But a beaver would have been more fitting, seeing as you both have the same big front teeth."

Hermione glared at the disillusioned Professor, before letting a small smirk appear on her lips.

"Thank you for the compliment Professor Snape." She said with a large smile, showing off her front teeth on purpose. "We already know that insulting Gryffindors is your way of showing us that you are happy about our accomplishments."

"Preposterous." Severus drawled, but he had an unseen grin plastered on his face. "Leave it to a Gryffindor to confuse an insult with a compliment."

"We love you too Professor." She said with a chuckle.

"Dunderheads, the lot of you." Severus replied, but this time his chuckle gave him away.

Salazar snickered. "Well, Neville has been able to produce one as well, and it turned out to be a wolverine."

"I thought it would be a lion." Severus said with a hint of amusement. "Considering Longbottom is the very definition of a Gryffindor. Impulsive, reckless, hot-headed…"

"Oh shut up Severus." Godric said, laughing loudly and causing the children to burst into giggles.

"What can we do for you?" Salazar asked after he stopped laughing.

"I have to speak with you both." He replied, suddenly turning serious. "I'm torn on a decision that I
have been thinking about for some time, and I was wondering if you could help me."

"We can certainly try." Salazar said, as the children took the hint and began gathering their things.

They all said goodnight, and Godric told them that they would resume practice tomorrow. Blaise took his things to his room, saying that he was going to study for 'the horrible Potions test' tomorrow, which caused Severus to chuckle again.

By the time everyone left, it was just Salazar, Godric, and Severus in the common area of the Snake Pit.

"What is on your mind Severus?" Salazar asked, after he sat down in his favorite green chair.

"It is difficult to put into words." He said, sighing deeply as if he was still uncertain about saying what was on his mind. "The past few years have given me a fresh new outlook on life. Before then I was a downright miserable, poor excuse for a human being, and didn't care at all about myself, much less anyone else, but now I have so much to look forward to. I have real friends and most importantly, a family." He said, giving Salazar an unseen smile, but then he sighed once again and continued.

"For the first time in a long time my life truly matters to me, and I don't want to lose it. If The Dark Lord was making his return five years ago, I wouldn't have cared. I'd have spied on him for the Headmaster, probably died in the process, and that would be the end of me. I wouldn't have cared. However, I don't feel that way anymore, and...and I'm scared sir." Severus said quietly as he stared at the floor. "I don't want to die anymore because I have too much to live for. I have a surrogate nephew that, damn it all, acts just like his father, but I love him. I have my best childhood friend back, which I never thought would be possible, and my once greatest enemies are now ones I consider dear friends. But more than all of that, I finally have...a father, and I don't want him to have to bury me," Severus whispered, "and I don't want my family and friends to live without me either."

A thick silence hung in the air as Severus paused. In his heart he knew that Salazar and Godric knew what he was trying to say, and he silently thanked them for giving him a moment to gather his thoughts on the matter.

With one more nervous sigh, Severus asked the question that he had been alluding to.

"Do you think it would be wise if I were to become an immortal?" He asked, looking at the two Founders with a hopeful expression.

Salazar stared in the direction of Severus's disembodied voice, but then he slightly shook his head. It was not to say 'no', but more of a...stunned...reaction.

Salazar's selfish nature immediately kicked in though. He wanted Severus to live through this upcoming war, and remain unharmed along the way. Immortality would certainly come in handy, because he didn't want to have to bury the young man. Especially now that Severus had something to live for. Salazar considered him a son, and what father wanted to bury his son?

But the little voice in the back of Salazar's mind fought its way to the front. He knew that Severus was likely to end up miserable in a few hundred years, especially after Lily and Harry's deaths. He remembered when he had to bury his own friends and family, and it was often very lonely afterwards. In fact, it wasn't until he met Nicholas and Perenelle that he actually started living again. But then again, Severus had Merlin, Godric, and Salazar himself. They would never die.

Oh how Salazar was torn over this.
It was Godric that finally broke the silence, as an unseen Severus continued to gaze at the two Founders.

"If I know you as well as I think I do, you have thought this over carefully." He stated in a clear, matter-of-fact tone.

"Yes sir." Severus said, nervously glancing at the quiet Salazar, who sat in his chair with his head bowed and lost in thought.

"Are you asking for permission, or are you asking for advice?" Godric continued, but in a more caring and quiet manner. "Because immortality is not to be taken lightly Severus."

"A little of both sir." Severus admitted quietly, as he shot another glance in Salazar's direction.

"I thought as much." Godric said with a small smile. "If you were one of the children I would say 'no' without hesitation, but you are not a child. You are a grown man that is perfectly capable of making a decision like this on your own. However, I must caution you. Immortality lasts forever, or until the world itself ceases to exist, whichever comes first. It can be lonely. May I ask, what will you do when Harry, Lily, James, Remus, Sirius, and all of the children you have come to love are dead and gone? Have you thought about that? What will you do if any of them are lost in this coming war? How would you feel if they died, and you lived?"

"I have thought about that." Severus said with a small nod, as he stood up and began to pace back and forth in front of the window. "I would feel that a small part of me has died and I would miss them terribly, but I think I could carry on. After all, I do have you, Salazar, Merlin, and to some extent, Mr. and Mrs. Flamel. I wouldn't be completely alone in the world."

"That is true." Godric admitted with a nod. "But you have to understand that eventually we all may drift apart. People change over time. Now that's not to say we will never speak at all, but we all have our different ways of doing things, our own interests, and our own lives to live. We could grow tired of each other, or any number of things really. Forever is a long time."

"Godric is right Severus." Salazar said with a loud sigh, finally breaking his silence. "My first thought was to say 'yes, of course!', but it would have been for purely selfish reasons. You are a son to me, and I don't want to lose you. However, I don't want to subject you to a life of misery once you have lived for several hundred years. The only thing I will say is this...it is up to you Severus. Only you can choose to live forever. We cannot make that decision for you, but we can caution you on its drawbacks."

"Indeed." Godric agreed. "I say give it more time. Really contemplate on the pros and cons of this decision. If you feel it is not worth it, then that is fine, but if you still want to go through with it, that is fine too. It's as Salazar said, we cannot make this decision for you."

"If you choose to go through with it though, you will have to speak to Merlin." Salazar said. "We cannot perform the ritual for you. It has to be Merlin for it to be done right. Many have tried, and failed, to obtain immortality on their own, myself included. He is the only one that has been able to achieve it successfully, and allow you to remain in your right mind."

"Case in point, Voldemort." Godric said.

"Exactly." Salazar nodded. "Horcruxes were the worst possible route he could have taken." He added, shaking his head at his heir's stupidity.

"But sir, what about the Flamels?" Severus asked, with a tinge of confusion in his voice. "They are
Salazar chuckled a bit. "No, through the Elixir of Life, Nicholas and Perenelle have obtained longevity, not immortality." He stressed. "Merlin and I constantly argue over the issue. He says he has obtained longevity, because he always says 'where would I be if the world ended', but I disagree with him on the difference." Salazar said with a grin. "But anyway, the Elixir of Life does not afford the same thing as immortality. If Nicholas and Perenelle were to get struck by the killing curse, then they would die. They can die just like anyone else. The only difference between them and a normal witch and wizard, is the fact that they can live until they choose not to, or as I said, they are killed."

Godric nodded in agreement. "They say that there is no way to shield yourself against the killing curse, and there is not. However, if you can shield yourself from death itself, you have protection from the killing curse. That's what the immortality ritual is, a shield from death."

"I agree," Salazar said, "but that doesn't mean you still can't get hurt. You can still bleed, feel pain, and so on, but you can't die because of it."

"So you can still feel the torture curse?" Severus asked.

"Yes." Godric and Salazar said in unison.

"That was the Dark Lord's favorite thing during the first war," Severus said, shaking his head. "One little slip up would earn you a torture curse, and a major slip up would earn you the killing curse."

"I know." Salazar said with a loud sigh. "I gleefully watched many a Death Eater got killed or tortured the last two months of the war because of Voldemort's paranoia. However, this time around you can expect much worse. The horcruxes he has made will be a major contributing fact to that. He will be extremely unstable. Whatever choice you make Severus, be very careful around him. If you choose to become immortal and he hits you with the killing curse, it will bounce off of you and your cover will be blown. If you are not quick enough to get away after that, he can, and probably will, torture you into insanity. That's after extracting the information on just how you were able to survive it, out of you."

"Just like the Longbottoms." Severus whispered with wide eyes.

"Yes, and you will go through eternity like that." Salazar said, looking at the young man with sad eyes. "I don't want to see that happen either."

"You have a lot to think about Severus." Godric said, giving the still unseen Potions Master a small smile. "But we trust you to make the right decision that best suits you."

"Indeed." Salazar said with a firm nod.

"I still have a lot to think about it seems." Severus finally said after a long pause in the conversation. "Thank you so much for your insights on the matter. I will certainly take all that you have said under advisement."

"I know you will." Salazar replied. "Just don't make it a rash decision. Do it for the right reasons, not the wrong ones."

"I will sir. Thank you." Severus said. "I must be getting back to my office. It is late and I still have papers to grade. Again sirs, thank you."

"Anything you need Severus." Godric said. "We are always here for you."
"Always." Salazar said, smiling in the young man's direction.

"I know." Severus whispered, before he took his leave and silently left.

The next morning dawned bright and early for Salazar, and as he got dressed, he thought about the conversation the night before. He still knew what he hoped Severus would do, but he also knew that it wasn't his place to make the decision for him. He sighed as he thought about how close the next war really was. The dark mark on Severus's arm was growing darker by the day, and they knew it was just a matter of time before Voldemort made his grand reappearance.

How, when, and where Voldemort decided to this still remained a mystery though.

Salazar was also a bit concerned about the Tournament. He still had no idea who put his name the Goblet of Fire, and truth be told, he had little time to go about looking for the one who did it. He still felt that Albus, or possibly Karkaroff, had done it, but there was no way to prove it.

However, as he continued to go about his morning routine, his thoughts shifted to the upcoming chaos that was soon to hit Hogwarts. It was April Fool's Day, the twins' birthday, and he grinned to himself as he caught sight of Blaise and Godric sitting at one of the tables.

"About time you got finished. I swear you're worse than a woman with all your primping and preening. I'm starving." Godric said with a grin.

Salazar chuckled. "As opposed to your 'just rolled out of bed look'. I choose to look civilized, not like a wild jungle man."

Blaise snorted, but didn't say anything as he grinned and listened to the two Founders trade insults all the way to the great hall.

When they arrived, Salazar caught sight of Fred and George's grins, and knew that Dobby had already executed their prank. He watched the twins as they looked around at everyone enjoying their breakfast, and knew that chaos would soon befall the great hall.

Salazar, Blaise, and Godric sat down in their usual spots, and Salazar grinned even wider when Godric began diving into his breakfast. Salazar however, took out his Transfiguration homework and began checking it over, while trying to ignore the gnawing hunger pains in his empty stomach.

It took about five minutes for Blaise to realize that Salazar wasn't eating, then the young man dropped his fork back into his plate with a loud clatter.

"Oh no." He whispered, looking up at Salazar, who was trying to pretend that he didn't hear him. Though the grin plastered on Salazar's face gave him away.

"Oh no." Blaise whispered again, then turned sharply in his seat and craned his neck to look over at the Gryffindor table.

Fred and George were sitting at the table, clearly munching on leftovers from last night's dinner, which caused Salazar to mentally kick himself for not thinking of.

"Oh no." Blaise said again as he stared at his plate, then to Salazar, then back at the twins. "What did they do to the food?"

This question got Godric's attention, and he immediately took stock of the situation before dropping
his fork as well.

Salazar snorted. "You both might as well finish your breakfast because you have already been pranked. Oh and Godric, if I were you, I'd make sure you eat more than your fair share. It might be a while before you can eat again." He added mysteriously.

"Why?" Godric instantly asked.

"You'll see." Salazar grinned.

"Bloody, seething, slippery, slimy, serpent." Godric grumbled, causing Salazar to chuckle and Nora to hiss with amusement.

"*Wolfy isn't eating his breakfast either.*" Nora announced, which caused them all to look over at a grinning Remus as he eyed everyone in the great hall.

"That's because this whole thing was cooked up by the twins and the Marauders." Salazar replied. "*Dobby was the one who spiked the food and drink. They all needed to clue me in because Dobby wouldn't go through with it unless I knew about it.*"

"What's going to happen to us?" Blaise asked with a slight bit of worry in his voice.

"You'll have to wait and see." Salazar grinned.

They didn't have to wait long though, because as the first ones finished with their meal stood up to walk out the great hall, they found out that they couldn't walk at all. Their feet felt like lead, which caused them all to waddle around like penguins. Add to that, the twins decided to spike all of the drinks with the zigzag potion they had concocted from Nora's venom.

They never ended up pranking Albus with it because they decided to save it for 'a rainy day', which turned out to be today.

Every resident of Hogwarts was now forced to waddle like a penguin, on top of walking in a zigzag pattern. The only ones that escaped this fate were the twins, Remus, Salazar, and Moody, who was always at meals, but never ate or drank anything because he was so paranoid.

Slight panic began to set in as more and more people began to notice that something was wrong, and tried to walk, only to find out that they couldn't. It finally came to a head when Severus angrily stood up, tried to walk, but promptly fell over with a very loud, surprised yelp.

Snarling and growling, he crawled his way to the front of the head table, and made his way down the stairs. Then he managed to struggle into a kneeling position, before glaring around the room, as if daring anyone to laugh at him.

"*WEASLEY!*" He bellowed, causing everyone's eyes to land on the silently laughing duo, but then a small snort from the Slytherin table caught his attention, and Severus's head snapped towards the sound. "*POTTER!*" He yelled just as loud. "What is the meaning of all this!?"

"Concrete powder and zigzag potion!" Fred called out loudly.

"The muggles gave us the idea for concrete powder, and well, we can't really say anything about the zigzag potion." George added with a grin, causing all the children to snort loudly.

"But Harry offered his amazing potion creating abilities, and helped us prefect it." Fred added, causing Severus to narrow his eyes at a grinning Salazar.
"Fifty points from Gryffindor, and all three of you have detention!" Severus yelled, only for Remus to stand up with a loud laugh.

"Fifty points TO Gryffindor for the amazing creativity displayed here today!" A very animated Remus shouted as he threw his arms wide open.

Only nothing happened with the hourglass, which seemed odd to everyone in the great hall. Remus looked at it in bewilderment, but shrugged it off. Then he turned his attention back to Severus, who was trying to maintain his balance as he stood up.

"Oh come on Snivellus…err…I mean Snape…no wait…Professor Snape." Remus said, gagging on the 'professor' part. "You can't throw these fine, upstanding, handsome, lads into detention just because of a little April Fool's fun!" He cried, jumping over the head table in a very uncharacteristic manner.

Severus visually bristled at the hated nickname, but then he narrowed his eyes at Remus, who was casually strolling towards him with his hands behind his back, and a shark like grin on his face.

Severus gritted his teeth and glared at him. "BLACK!" He shouted, as he instinctively brought his wand up in order to defend himself if need be.

'Remus' stopped in his tracks and looked at Severus with a pout. "You ruined it!" Sirius shouted, throwing up his hands in frustration, but then he grinned. "It was because of the Snivellus comment wasn't it? Oh well, no matter!" Sirius laughed as he turned to face the great hall. "Yes it is I, Sirius Black! Professor Lupin couldn't be here today, due to being kidnapped, hogtied, and thrown in a broom cupboard somewhere in the castle. I can't remember where I left him really…"

"BLACK!"

"Right Snape! I am babbling. Anyway, all Defense Classes are canceled today due to Remus missing, and actually, all classes will be canceled today, due to no one being able to make it on time, including the Professors. Soooooo…" Sirius said, pausing for effect, "here's to an early start to the weekend!" He shouted gleefully, causing the entire great hall to break out into cheers.

"BLACK!" Severus shouted once again, trying to be heard over all the noise. "In case you have forgotten, the only one allowed to cancel classes is the Headmaster."

Sirius stopped high-fiving the nearest Gryffindors long enough to snarl at Albus, who was glaring at Sirius with hatred.

"Well, what else can be done?" Sirius asked. "No one can walk properly, or quickly for that matter. Hell, it will take all of Gryffindor and Ravenclaw at least two hours to make it back to their towers. It will take all of Hufflepuff one hour to get to their common room, and all the Slytherins can go drown themselves in the lake. With exceptions of course." He said, winking at Salazar, who just shook his head.

Severus glared at him. "I do not appreciate you telling my house to go drown themselves."

"Whatever Snape." Sirius said as he rolled his eyes. "Anyway…"

"Mr. Black, you cannot come in here and cancel classes!" Minerva shrieked, as she very slowly, yet carefully made her way out from behind the head table. "And I demand that these pranks be reversed this instant!"

"Well that is the problem Professor McGonagall." Fred said sheepishly. "The effects of the concrete
powder last for exactly seven hours, which non-coincidentally, is the same amount of time classes are in session each day. The zigzag potion however, will last for three full days."

"It will wear off just in time for classes on Monday." George added with a grin, causing Minerva to glare at them.

"Well there is a little bit more that I personally need to add here today." Salazar said, as he stood up.

Sirius grinned at him. "You have the floor my good man." He said, as he bowed low.

Salazar laughed at him, before turning to Godric. "Gordy, you are my best friend in the entire world, but I cannot let you get away with the stunt you pulled at during the second task. This is payback!"

Godric's 'deer-in-the-headlights' look made Salazar laugh loudly, but before his friend could defend himself, Salazar cast a Bubble-Head charm on him. Then, with a large grin, he quickly surrounded Godric in a very cold ball of water.

Godric tried to jump up, but realized he couldn't because of the twins' pranks, so he rolled over onto his back to look up at Salazar, who was standing over him laughing. No matter what Godric tried, he could not get out of the water, and it flowed around his body, mimicking every move he made.

"Cold isn't it?" Salazar asked with a wicked gleam in his eye. "That's how the lake felt when you pushed me in it."

He emphasized. "Everything you try to do today will not end well. Every piece of paper you touch will become soggy, every book will be ruined, and not one spell will make it past that water. You can try to get out of it, but you will fail." Salazar said gleefully, while rubbing his hands together. "I'll tell you this though, it will wear off tomorrow morning."

Godric narrowed his eyes at Salazar and tried to speak, but no sound came out.

"What was that?" Salazar asked, cupping his hand to his ear. "I'm sorry I couldn't hear you. What?"

Godric glared at him again, but then grinned as he very carefully stood up, which made the water splash around and soak everything that Godric tried to touch.

He began to carefully reach for various pieces of fruit, eating utensils, napkins, and anything else he could get his hands on, but finally Godric manage to spell out what he was thinking, even if everything was soggy and drenched with water.

The crudely constructed message read, 'you gave me 24 hours to think up payback'.

Salazar grinned at his best friend. "Looking forward to whatever your limited brain can conjure. I hope you have a very cold, wet, soggy, waterlogged day." He grinned, causing Godric to smirk at him.

"Harry, remind me never to cross you!" Sirius said gleefully as he looked at Godric and laughed.

"Never start a prank war with me Sirius, and you won't have to worry about it." Salazar replied as he, Sirius, and the twins helped Neville, Hermione, and Blaise out of the great hall, leaving Godric behind to waddle his way after them.

Classes were indeed canceled for the day, seeing as no one could get anywhere. It took nearly three hours just for everyone to clear out of the great hall, due to all of the slow waddling and chaotic zigzag walking.
Minerva sent them a patronus message saying they were all going to be sorry about this, but it only caused everyone to laugh. More points were taken from Gryffindor, but Minerva took a few points from Slytherin for Salazar's small roll in it.

Salazar didn't get in trouble for his prank on Godric, but Minerva publicly 'gave him detention' for cursing a fellow student.

He didn't care though.

Sirius finally fetched Remus from his office cupboard, and they had a small row about Sirius's kidnapping methods, but as soon as Remus saw the chaos that had befallen the school, he was grateful to have been spared.

They both managed to get a disillusioned Severus into the Snake Pit without much incident, seeing as everyone was confined to their common rooms and offices until the concreted powder wore off, so at least Severus was able to sit comfortably and talk with everyone.

Godric was left standing at the door to the entrance tunnel, unable to get past the snake because of not being able to talk properly. Fred finally took pity on him and went to fetch him, despite Salazar's protests.

When he got into the Snake Pit, Godric immediately headed for Salazar's room and lay on the bed, causing the sheets, mattress, and blankets to become waterlogged. Then he went about making sure *nothing* of Salazar's remained dry, including Salazar himself. He kept flicking water at him every chance he got, and Salazar soon began regretting this not so well thought out prank. He just knew that there was going to be more payback to come.

Happy April Fool's Day indeed.

As Albus Dumbledore sat all alone in his office, trying to recover from the day's pranks, he began to rock back and forth in his chair. His eyes darted around wildly hoping that someone, anyone, would walk in so that he could try to get their attention, and try to alert them that something wasn't right. Ever since the Board of Governors meeting the night before the school year started, he had been trying to fight what was going on. He hated the thoughts that were floating around in his head. They weren't his, and they kept telling him to do things.

Things he would never do in a million years.

*No, no, no, no.* He thought as the voice whispered to him. *I won't kill him. I won't!* *No!*

He tried to open his mouth and call for Fawkes, but the voice wouldn't let him.

It had been eight months ago when the voice told him to tell Fawkes to leave for an extended amount of time, and his heart ached as he remembered the hurt look in Fawkes's eyes.

The phoenix hadn't understood *why* Albus wanted him to leave.

He made excuses, excuses the voice told him to make about why Fawkes wasn't around. Fawkes was out hunting, or on an errand, or some other thing Albus needed him to do, and Albus hated himself for it.

At first his pride wouldn't let him admit that he was under someone else's control. He was the great Albus Dumbledore and he could fight off this silly curse on his own. He was old and powerful so he could fight it without anyone's help.
Oh how wrong he had been.

Now, eight months later, he regretted that decision and he longed for someone to notice, but as time passed it got harder and harder, and people began to accept that it was actually him doing all of these horrible things. It hurt him to know that Alastor had somewhat withdrawn from him because of his actions. Alastor was an old friend, surely he would know that Albus wasn't himself these days. Even Minerva and Severus didn't notice, and that hurt too.

But it was all Albus's own fault.

For the past two years Albus had slandered Harry. He told anyone who would listen that the boy was evil and dark, and that he couldn't be trusted. The voice had used that against him, and now Albus was forced to continue what he had started. He hadn't wanted to write that letter. He knew it was wrong to let the Slytherins get away with what they had been doing, and yet he continued to slander Harry's name.

He wanted to stop, but he couldn't. He wanted to cry out, but he couldn't.

And now…and now he wanted to…

_kill Harry Potter._ The voice said.

_NO!_ Albus shouted back.

Fine, have it your way!

"Crucio!" Albus cried as he pointed his own wand at himself.

Pain filled every fiber of his being and he gritted his teeth as he tried not to bite his own tongue in half. He breathed a sigh of relief when the voice allowed him to stop, but it was enough to make Albus comply with its wishes.

_kill Harry Potter._ It repeated.

Yes, yes. Ok. Albus thought weakly, and he got up off the floor where he had fallen, and began to make his way down the stairs and towards the entrance to the Snake Pit.

Lucius Malfoy grinned as he opened his eyes. Narcissa sat across from him and eyed him carefully as she smirked.

"Did he do it yet?" She asked.

"No, but he is on his way. Soon we will finally be rid of Potter, and once Dumbledore has killed the boy, I will have him turn his own wand on himself. The world will never know what really happened, and our Lord will be able to return peacefully." He said as he held up his left arm.

"Are you certain that your life will be spared?" Narcissa asked with a hint of worry.

"It was because of me that the Dark Lord's diary was destroyed, and he no doubt knows that it has been discovered, seeing as it has been talked about in the papers. If I kill Potter and Dumbledore, he will have no opposition and he can take over our world with ease. I will be rewarded."

"You better hope so Lucius." She replied. "If Sirius finds out we had something to do with it, I will be banished from the Black family and then we would be forced to live in squalor." She hissed.
"I have it all under control." He assured her. "Just a few more minutes and our troubles will be over."

"Very well. Just stop toying with him. It's been eight months already. You've had your fun, and now it's time to end it."

"As you wish my dear." Lucius said with a smile.

Then he closed his eyes again, and reconnected with Albus's mind.

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Do it. Lucius whispered. You can understand Parseltongue. Open the door.

He's only a boy, he can change. Albus tried to argue, but it was no use. Before he knew it, he was passed the door and heading down into the Snake Pit.

It was late at night, and Albus knew that the boys were in bed. The basilisk was not there, something that he was thankful for, but he continued to creep around with only the light from his wand to light his way.

He stopped just outside of the first bedroom door, and looked at the nameplate.

Roffin. That won't do. Lucius said. His phoenix would instantly come to his defense. Move to the next door.

Albus tried to struggle as he caught sight of the next nameplate on the door. It was Harry's room. He tried to make some sort of noise to let Harry know he was there so that he could run or protect himself, but the voice wouldn't let him and he pushed the door open with tears in his eyes.

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For the last eight months Hogwarts had looked upon her Headmaster's actions with disapproval, but as she watched him this night, she knew something was really wrong. She knew that no matter how much the Headmaster disliked her Founder, he would never kill anyone.

Much less someone he thought was a child.

She could feel the worry, despair, and sorrow flowing from her Headmaster in waves, and it was in that moment that she realized something was desperately wrong with him. She could feel what his intent was, and she sensed that it was something he was being forced to do against his will. He was fighting, and unbeknownst to the Headmaster, he was sending out cries for help that only she could hear. These were not his actions, and she knew that both her Founders would kill her Headmaster in a heartbeat if they knew he was trying to kill a child.

Hogwarts knew she needed to act fast, so she began to draw upon the ancient magic her Founders had poured into her ten centuries ago, along with all the recent magic her two remaining ones had recently performed within her walls. With all of that magic combined, she did something she had never been able to do before…

*A/N* Well that is it for this chapter. Before anyone ask's, no the part about Albus being cursed is not part of the April Fools jokes. He really is about to try and kill 'Harry'. The next chapter will be the fall out of the attack, and...how does Hogwarts's role play out? I hope you stay tuned to find out!
Despite his predicament, Godric was having the time of his life. Sure he was cold, soggy, waterlogged, and he was pretty sure by now his skin was wrinkled and pruned so badly that he looked like an over dried raisin, but he was in a pretty good mood as he hovered in a corner by the window.

He hadn't really been able to sit down all day, due to ruining various chairs and things, but he didn't care. Salazar was made to suffer for his not-so-well thought out prank. Every time Salazar moved, Godric flung water at him. Every step Salazar took, a sloshing Godric was right behind him. When Salazar went to bed that evening, Godric laid down right beside him, drenching Salazar, his bed, floor, and everything else with water.

Salazar tried drying off his things, but Godric would be right back in there, soaking everything in sight, and when Salazar tried locking his door, someone (Blaise) kept unlocking it so that Godric could get back in.

He could have put heavier charms on his door, but knowing Godric, he would have gotten Severus to undo it all.

Salazar finally gave up and decided to sleep in a curled up ball in his favorite chair, but that was proving to be difficult, seeing as every time he dozed off Godric flung cold water on him.

To Godric, this form of entertainment made up for the lack of sleep, not being able to sit down all day, and the lack of food.

To Salazar however, it made for a frustrating night, but because of his own stubbornness he absolutely refused to undo the prank.

It was during one of Salazar's dozing sessions that everything happened. Godric was now making his way over to Salazar in order to fling more water on him, but a light coming from the entrance tunnel made him pause. He stared at it for a moment, before shrugging it off.

*Maybe it's Severus.* He thought, as a grin spread across his face. *Ha! Maybe I can scare him.*

He shuffled/sloshed as quietly as he could to the nearest corner, but as the unknown person made their way into the Snake Pit, Godric stared at him.

*What in the world is Albus doing in here?* He thought, as he made himself blend into the shadows as best he could.

He watched as the Headmaster glanced around the seemingly deserted common area of the Snake Pit, but upon not seeing anything, he headed over to the bedroom doors.
That's odd. Godric thought as he continued to watch Albus.

Albus paused outside of Godric's door, then he quickly moved over to Salazar's. It was here that Godric began hearing odd whimpering sounds coming from Albus, but he kept up his silent watch as Albus pushed open the door.

*It's soggy and wet in here. Everything is drenched with water. Albus thought desperately. You can't make me do this! Please...*

*Shut up you old fool! Lucius shouted. Kill him! Do as I command, or you will be sorry!*

Due to the zigzag potion, Albus stumbled a bit as he headed for the bed, only to find it empty.

*Find him! Lucius commanded. He's there somewhere!*

Unable to fight Lucius's hold over him, Albus awkwardly turned and headed out of the room.

Godric watched as Albus made his way out of the room, but he furrowed his brow in confusion as he caught sight of Albus's face as he passed him. Albus seemed to be crying. There were tears flowing freely from his eyes, which to Godric looked sort of glassy and vacant.

Due to the near pitch black darkness of the Snake Pit, Godric had been able to carefully maneuver himself into a corner by the window, hoping that it would allow him to somewhat blend in with the watery background. He watched as Albus raised his wand a little higher, and noticed that the Headmaster's hand was shaking violently. Fast and furious whimpering came from Albus as he caught sight of Salazar curled up in his chair.

*There he is. Say the words. Lucius urged triumphantly. Point your wand at him and say the words. Avada Kedavra. They are so easy, so simple. Say them, say them.*

One last time Albus tried to fight, but it was a feeble attempt as his violently shaking hand pointed his wand at Salazar.

"Avada Keda…"

*NOOOO! Godric frantically screamed to himself, as he bolted out of his hiding spot. He tackled Albus to the ground, drenching the old man as he flung his arms around him.*

Albus began struggling against his sudden cold, watery assailant, and due to the effects of the curse, Albus was able to fling Godric off of him.

*Kill him! Lucius commanded frantically. Kill them both!*

Albus jumped up with wide panicked eyes, and brought his wand around to hit Godric, but Godric dove out of the way, as a sickly green light erupted from the Headmaster's wand and crashed into the wall behind him.

He dove right on top of a sleeping Salazar, who grunted from the impact of being thrown to the floor.

"Sweet Merlin Godric, you didn't have to…oof!" Salazar cried, as Godric grabbed him, threw him over the nearest table, and flipped it over in a feeble attempt to shield themselves.
It took Salazar a moment to gather his wits, but when a tear streaked, wide eyed Albus nearly came flying over the table in an attempt to curse them, he knew what was happening.

Salazar's wand was in his hand in an instant. He quickly undid the prank spell, allowing Godric to finally move unimpeded.

It was in this moment that Hogwarts knew she needed to act. Now that both her Founders had their wits about them, and with Godric now unrestrained, she knew they would kill her Headmaster.

She acted quickly.

The entire castle shuddered violently, sending every resident within her walls crashing to the floor as they fell out of their beds.

The stones turned from their normal dark grey to blue, as shield charms sprang up in every window frame, door frame, crack, nook, and cranny as the castle went into lockdown.

Brilliant bronze eagles filled the spaces above these areas. Everything from the tiniest eagles in the smallest places, to the largest eagles in the great hall, they spread their wings wide open, as they stared down at everyone looking up at them in shock and confusion.

Hogwarts had taken it upon herself to activate Rowena's security enchantments.

Godric and Salazar stared at each other as Rowena's shield charms held them firmly in place. Their wands had been snatched from their hands by eagles who appeared and swooped down on top of them.

They could see that Albus was in the same state of affairs, but they looked at him oddly as a mixture of relief and fear appeared on his face.

"Did you…" Salazar began to say, only to be cut off by Godric.

"Nope…did you?"

"Nope."

"Young man, please stun the Headmaster."

The stern voice made all of them jump, and Salazar craned his neck to see who was speaking. He saw Blaise standing in the doorway, looking at everything in stunned silence.

"Young man, did you hear me? Hogwarts wishes you to stun the Headmaster. If I were you, I would not keep her waiting."

Blaise glanced at Salazar and Godric, who were staring at the eagle situated above the doorway to the entrance tunnel in shock.

This was not normal.

"Young man!" the eagle barked, causing Blaise to jump.

"Stupefy!" Blaise cried, aiming his wand at the Headmaster, who could do nothing but watch the red light fly towards him. As soon as it struck, Albus crumpled to the ground in an unconscious heap.
"Very good." The eagle said as all the shield charms in the castle disappeared, leaving the other residents of Hogwarts to move about freely.

Another eagle, which was situated above the window, turned its head towards Salazar and Godric.

"Hogwarts insists that you hear her out. There is a reason for her actions here tonight, but she wishes to wait until the others arrive before she explains it."

"The others?" Salazar and Godric asked together with stunned expressions.

"Professors McGonagall, Snape, and Lupin are on their way here as we speak." The eagle above the entrance tunnel announced.

"What the hell happened here?" Salazar asked, turning to Godric. "I don't even understand…"

"Salazar, he tried to kill you." Godric said as he stared at Albus's crumpled form. "He was going to use the killing curse. He nearly hit me with it."

"What?" Blaise asked in disbelief, as the young man slumped against the wall. "Why?"

"I don't know." Godric replied, as Salazar's expression turned sour.

"I'll kill him! Give me my wand!" He demanded, glaring at the eagle who stole it.

"No." The one over the entrance tunnel simply replied.

"WHY NOT!?" Salazar shouted.

"Hogwarts wishes to…"

"Hogwarts my left foot!" Godric cried, suddenly growing very angry. "How are you able to speak!? The eagles have never been able to speak before! Tell us now!"

The eagle he had been shouting at glared at Godric sternly, which, in a silly sort of way, kind of reminded him of Rowena's disapproving glare. It was in that moment that a wide eyed, concerned looking Severus ran into the room.

Severus glanced around the room and saw Albus, then looked questioningly towards Salazar, who looked ready to do serious harm to the pompous eagle if he didn't start answering questions soon.

"We have overridden the Parseltongue security to allow the other two Professors in. They will arrive momentarily." The eagle announced, causing Salazar to stare at it in shock.

Minerva, dressed in nothing more than a yellow nightdress and slippers, and Remus, who was wearing only pajama bottoms, nearly flew into the room. They franticly began looking around, but they came to a dead stop when they spied Albus.

"Now that the others have arrived, Godric, please recant what happened." The eagle said, eyeing him closely.

Godric did, and when he was done, Minerva sank into a chair with a hand over her heart, while Remus and Severus looked ready to rip the Headmaster to shreds.

"No one move, or we will disarm you. Hogwarts, as you know, has activated us herself, and has given us a temporary voice so that we can alert you to the real situation."
"Which is?" Salazar growled, causing the eagle to glare at him.

"The Headmaster's actions tonight were not of his own desires. Hogwarts knows her Headmaster, and he would never kill anyone, much less someone who he thinks is a child. No matter how evil or dark he may think that child to be. She has been watching him with disapproval for many months, but his actions tonight caused her to become very desperate. She knew you both would kill him if she didn't take action, so she gathered all the magic you have placed within her, and using Rowena's ambient creativity, was able to activate Ravenclaw's security enchantments. She was also able create a temporary voice for herself through us. The Headmaster was in danger, she had to protect him, but she is ashamed that it has taken her this long to realize it."

"What do you mean his actions are not of his own desires?" Salazar asked curiously.

"Simply put Salazar, he is cursed." The eagle replied.

"The imperius curse?" Remus asked in shock, as he stared down at Albus.

"Yes."

Minerva let out a strangled cry and nearly flew out of her chair towards Albus. She gently rolled him over, and cradled his head in her arms.

"Oh my goodness, oh my goodness. Albus…what do we do? I don't know what to do." She said, desperately looking to Godric for answers.

However, it was Salazar who spoke.

He looked at the eagle with a calculating gaze. "How do you know his actions are not his own? He doesn't like me, and even though you say he wouldn't kill a child, who's to say he hasn't suddenly decided Harry Potter would be better off dead?"

"He has been struggling with an inner problem for many months, but tonight he cried out desperately for help. It was then that Hogwarts realized the severity of the problem. He is not himself. You must trust her Salazar." The eagle replied.

"Well that would certainly explain Albus's actions tonight, but what about all the rest? One would think that a powerful man like him would be able to resist the imperius curse." Salazar said angrily.

Godric glanced at him. "Salazar, you know, as well as anyone, that being placed under a strong imperius by a very capable wizard is nearly impossible to resist. I trust Hogwarts, and so should you. I don't like Albus anymore than you do, but even you should know that he would never kill a child. Don't let your hatred of him get in the way of the issue."

Salazar opened his mouth to speak, but was quickly cut off by the eagle. "Mr. Alastor Moody wishes to gain entrance. Due to the sensitivity of this situation, and the secrets surrounding it, do you wish me to allow him entry?"

"I'll go talk to Mad-Eye." Remus said, heading towards the tunnel. "I don't know how he knows we are down here, unless he can see us from this far away."

"Please tell him it's being handled, and that there is nothing to worry about." Minerva said, as she tried to make herself more comfortable on the still wet and soggy floor.

"Also, the children in Gryffindor tower are looking for answers." The other eagle over the window said. "Do you wish us to give them an edited version?"
"Yes, please." Godric said, looking at the on over the window. "I will fill them in with the details later. Could you also tell my mother that everything is under control?"

"Of Course Godric." It replied.

"We need answers from Albus." Salazar said with a sigh as he shook his head. "And we need Merlin's help to do it. He is the only one that can break an imperius curse through the use of legilimency."

"That is possible!?" Severus and Minerva cried.

"Oh yes. Merlin dives into the mind to find the one who cast it. He will be able to talk to them and force them out of Albus's mind, thereby breaking the spell. Then it will be up to Albus to give us the answers we seek." Salazar replied. "Actually, now that I think on it, it's best to have Nicholas here when Albus wakes up. If he sees only 'Nilrem' he's likely not to talk."

"Wise thinking Potter." A gruff, slightly amused voice said from the tunnel.

They all looked up to see Moody, and a very apologetic looking Remus, standing there.

"As soon as the door opened he came barreling in. I'm sorry, I couldn't stop him." Remus said breathlessly.

"That's because I knew that the answers lay down here." Moody replied, causing everyone to look at him in confusion.

"I hate to interrupt, but Hogwarts knows the danger has now passed, and she cannot keep us active on her own any longer." The eagle above the window announced. "If you wish to keep us active, you know what to do, but we will no longer be able to speak." It continued, looking at Salazar and Godric knowingly.

"We bid you farewell then, and Hogwarts, we thank you for bringing this to our attention." Godric said, bowing his head in respect.

"She says your welcome." The eagle over the tunnel said, before they all disappeared.

The castle returned to normal in the blink of an eye, causing everyone to stare around in wonder. Salazar, Godric, and Albus's wands clattered to the floor, and Salazar nearly leapt on top of them in order to snatch them up.

"Potter, there is something you and Roffin need to know." Moody said, eyeing them all carefully. "I was in the Hogs Head Pub the day you both talked to Aberforth."

The stunned silence that followed was very strained as Salazar scowled and glared at Moody, who seemed unconcerned and continued.

"I have not said a word about anything I heard that day, and as Minerva, Remus, and Snape can tell you, my occlumency is above par. What I am about to offer you, I never offer often due to believing that my word is good enough. However, in light of all that is at stake, I am willing to say, I will swear a vow to protect your secrets."

"Mr. Potter, if I may add my two Knuts worth, Alastor has always held my complete trust." Minerva said, glancing over at him. "I think it would be very beneficial to have him on board."

"I can also second what Minerva said Harry." Remus added.
Salazar glanced at Severus, who nodded slightly, causing Moody to chuckle as he turned towards the Potions Master.

"Snape, I can tell you that my opinion of you has changed. I want to tell you, man to man, that I admire you for what you have done. I will admit that I never believed that you changed during the war, but since learning all that you have done, I now do."

Severus just stared at Moody as if he were a different person, but remained quiet as Godric cleared his throat.

"Well, if you know the truth then there is no point in denying it." He said, looking at Salazar, who sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.

"I guess you're right. It would not be worth…Severus disappear now!" Salazar cried, just as he cast a disillusionment charm over Albus's still unconscious form.

Now that Rowena's enchantments had been lifted, some of the Slytherin students were venturing out of their dorms and into the main common room, and Salazar didn't want them seeing anything.

"Perhaps I should make an announcement." Minerva said, standing up and drying off her nightdress. She cleared her throat, before casting a voice amplifying charm. "**All students are to remain in their dormitories and try to fall back to sleep. All prefects are to ensure this rule is followed. The situation is being looked into carefully. All Professors will meet with me in the staff room at eight sharp to be apprised of the situation.**" She said, glaring at the Slytherins who were still looking down at them.

They finally began to wander back to their dorms, but Salazar sighed and shook his head.

"We should take this elsewhere, and I know just the place." He said, looking around the room.

"Blaise, I can't sit here and tell you to go back to sleep because I know that's not likely to happen, but you should at least try. We will let you know what happened when we get back."

"Yes sir, I understand." He replied, then began heading back to his room.

Salazar then turned to Moody. "Before I became sidetracked, I was going to say that it would not be worth the effort to try and obliviate you." He said with a chuckle, causing Moody to raise an eyebrow at him. "I like you Mr. Moody, and I agree with the others. It would be an honor to have you on board."

Moody nodded, and right there swore a vow to keep all the secrets safe. He even told them about his hunch on 'Nilrem', but due to the unbreakable vow, they could neither confirm nor deny the claim.

Salazar went on to tell the others to follow him to the seventh floor, while Godric used Nehum to get to Merlin's and to alert Nicholas to the situation.

After levitating Albus all the way to the seventh floor and into the Room of Requirement, Salazar requested that the room take on the appearance of a small dank dungeon. This was to ensure that Albus didn't know where he was when he came to.

By the time Godric arrived with Merlin and Nicholas in tow, everything was ready. Merlin wasn't nearly as surprised as Nicholas was to find out that Moody was with them. He just laughed and grinned at the old Auror, who stared at him in amazement when he officially introduced himself. Salazar accused him of knowing more than he let on, which Merlin didn't deny.
After that, Albus was seated in a chair, though for now he was unrestrained. Merlin and Nicholas were horrified after learning exactly all that had happened, but Merlin nodded when Salazar asked him if he would be willing to break the imperius curse upon Albus.

"He's a master at occlumency." Severus said, glancing at Merlin. "It will be tough to get through his defenses."

"My area of expertise is mind magic Severus." Merlin said with a gentle smile. "I will be able to get through his defenses. Though when he comes to, he will likely have a very bad headache."

"Do you think we should call for Poppy?" Minerva asked.

"She is probably fretting as we speak." Salazar said with a nod as he glanced at Godric. "I think it's for the best, just in case."

Godric nodded and sent Nehum off to get her. It took only a moment for him to return with her, but as soon as she arrived, Minerva began filling her in.

During that time, Merlin dove into Albus's mind.

Lucius was in a panic. He knew something had gone wrong, but he wasn't sure exactly what it was. He was still firmly connected to Albus's mind so that when the time came, he could strike quickly and get this over with. He very was worried though. This was not going according to plan at all, and he could not afford to fail.

"This will not end well for you Lucius."

Lucius turned around and sneered at the owner of the voice. "Shut up you muggle loving fool. I need time to think."

They were inside Albus's mind. Albus's full conscious 'shade' was shackled tightly to a wall, while Lucius's sub-conscious 'shade' prowled around, free to do whatever it pleased.

"Harry is not a stupid boy. He will have alerted someone by now." Albus replied. "Everyone will realize something is wrong."

"No they won't. I have spent lots of time making your supporters doubt you. They will think you did it on your own because Potter is 'an aspiring Dark Lord'." Lucius smirked. "Perhaps you will be thrown in Azkaban for this. Yes, yes, there's an idea. Then I can kill Potter another way, and I will be rewarded by my Master when he returns. Hopefully, this will absolve me of my past indiscretions concerning the Dark Lord's...personal belongings. Besides, how can Potter alert anyone? He was trapped by Hogwarts as well. What happened old man? What, and who, were those eagles!?" He demanded.

"Something to do with Ravenclaw I imagine, though I honestly don't know where they came from." Albus replied. "Something similar happened a few years ago. Only during that time it was something to do with Hufflepuff."

"Well, it was nothing more than a simple set back. If Potter managed to escape, he will kill you for trying to kill him. He hates you Dumbledore." Lucius sneered. "He will not alert anyone to anything. He will kill you, and then he will dispose of you. It's only a matter of time."

"I have faith in him."
Lucius glared at the chained up man. "Trusting until the end." He scoffed. "We will see who comes out the winner, and as for Severus, running to you and squealing about the Dark Lord returning was not a smart move. When the Dark Lord returns, I will personally see to it that he dies." Lucius hissed. "Severus is a spy, and the Dark Lord does not like spies."

"I have a feeling that will not end as you hope, Lucius Malfoy."

Both Albus and Lucius jerked towards the foreign voice. Merlin was standing there with a furious scowl on his face as he faced the Death Eater, but then he glanced to Albus, who looked relieved, though highly nervous about his appearance.

"Mr. Nilrem." Lucius said with a hint of worry, though he tried to mask it. "How are you here?"

"I am a man with many talents." Merlin replied simply, then he turned to Albus. "Forgive my intrusion into your mind Mr. Dumbledore, but I'm here to help. Harry, despite his feelings for you, knows that your actions tonight were not your own."

Albus's face lit up with a smile, and for the first time in a long time, his eyes began to twinkle. Lucius however, glared at him.

"You are a dark wizard, so why are you helping him?" He asked, jerking his head towards Albus.

"I am no more a dark wizard than Hagrid is." Merlin said with a scowl. "But I think it's time for you to go Lucius."

Without another word, Merlin pulled his wand from his sleeve, and began to rapidly cast spells and write runes on the walls around them. Then, as a powerful white light erupted from his wand, Lucius was violently thrown out of Albus's mind. In that same moment, the chains binding Albus's fully conscious 'shade' exploded, and Albus fell to the floor.

He was finally free.

"Lucius! Lucius!" Narcissa cried frantically as she helped her husband off the floor. "What happened?"

It took a moment for Lucius to get his wits about him, but then he looked at his frightened wife.

"Things did not happen as they should have." He answered in a raspy, and downright scared tone. "My actions have been discovered."

"Albus! Albus!" Minerva cried as she rushed over to him. His head was rolling from side to side as he began to come around.

Poppy was beside her in an instant and began waving her wand over him, while Godric and Nicholas stopped Merlin from stumbling and falling over. The room provided a chair for Merlin, and he sat down heavily as he glanced up at Salazar.

"It was Lucius Malfoy." He said, taking a deep calming breath. "When I arrived he was threatening Severus." He added quickly. "He said he was going to inform Voldemort about Severus being a spy."

Salazar's eyes widened in alarm, but Severus scoffed and nearly burst out laughing.
"Lucius can say what he wants to, but what he doesn't know is, that one of the last orders the Dark Lord gave me was to spy. After I came to Albus for help, he hired me to be the Potions Master in order to better protect me. The Dark Lord was nearly beside himself with glee because he now had a 'faithful servant' close to the enemy. The Dark Lord will be pleased that I haven't abandoned my 'post', and I will use that to somehow get back into his good graces."

"Are you certain?" Salazar asked, just as Albus sucked in a long deep breath.

Severus only nodded, but due to the present circumstances, they knew that this conversation was not over yet.

"Do you wish me to disillusion myself?" Severus whispered hurriedly to Salazar, just as Poppy helped Albus to sit up a little straighter.

Salazar shook his head. "No, it might make him feel more comfortable with you here."

Severus nodded, then took on his familiar 'I hate everyone' look.

"Where…where am I?" Albus asked in a raspy tone, as he looked around the small dank dungeon.

"Don't be alarmed Albus." Moody said, moving to the front of the group. "We are in a safe place. We brought you here because we didn't know what to expect. Everything is all right."

"How do you feel?" Minerva asked, looking at him with concern.

"I feel…free." He said with a relieved sigh, as he closed his eyes and took another deep breath.

"Do you need anything Headmaster?" Severus asked, peering at the man with what could pass for slight concern.

"I'm fine Severus." Albus assured him, then he straightened his glasses and looked around. He spotted Merlin sitting a few feet away, and stared at him for several long seconds before he spoke again. "How?" He asked.

"How is not as important as why Mr. Dumbledore." Merlin replied, glancing at Salazar.

Albus's followed Merlin's gaze, and he stumbled as he stood up. He walked over to Salazar and grasped his shoulders as he looked at him.

"Are you all right? I'm so sorry Harry, for everything. I tried to fight, but…but I couldn't. I just…I'm so sorry. Trying to kill you filled me with so much heartache, and you have to believe that I would never do anything like that. The letter was not me, you must know that, and ignoring the danger you were in, in the main Slytherin common room, I wanted to stop it, but I couldn't. I'm so sorry Harry. It was through my actions that your name ended up in the Goblet. I didn't want any of this to happen. I'm so sorry Harry, please, please forgive me." Albus said desperately while peering into Salazar's eyes, hoping for some sort of forgiveness.

Salazar kept his gaze steady as he thought it over for a moment. "Before I offer any sort of forgiveness, I want to know, how long was he in control of you?"

Albus sighed and shook his head. "Ever since the beginning of the year." He said, causing Poppy and Minerva to gasp. "It happened right after the Board of Governors meeting the day before first term started. Lucius Malfoy pulled me aside, and just as the last member left, he cursed me. I was not expecting it. Especially since there was so many potential witnesses. I'm so sorry."
Minerva moaned and sank into the chair that Merlin had just vacated. "Albus, we should have known. We all should have known."

"My actions from the last few years didn't help, and that's what Lucius was counting on. I do not blame any of you for not noticing." Albus said as he rubbed his tired eyes.

Salazar sighed and glanced at Godric, who nodded slightly. "I forgive you for your actions this year Headmaster, but your actions in years past are still of your own accord, so I cannot say the same for those."

"I know Harry." Albus said quietly as he gazed at Salazar. "But I am thankful that you are able to forgive me of this so quickly. I promise that I will work to correct the damage that has been done. I don't think you are an aspiring Dark Lord. I do however, think you have dark intentions, but as you so clearly and correctly pointed out to young Mr. Weasley in your first year, we all do."

Salazar nodded. "You are not wrong about that Headmaster." He said, but then his gaze shifted to a smiling Merlin. "Why are you smiling? Did you know about this? Did you know that he was cursed?" He asked, causing Albus to glance at them curiously.

Merlin chuckled. "No, I did not know that Mr. Dumbledore was cursed, but I do know that because of this, we are able to work together towards a common goal in the future."

Salazar mock glared at the man, only for Albus to furrow his brow in confusion. "What do you mean?"

"I am a seer Mr. Dumbledore, and what I have observed of the future is both terrifying and joyful. However, I cannot, and will not, say anything more than that." Merlin replied.

"I can respect that Mr. Nilrem." Albus said with a small smile. "Thank you for your help, though I must admit that I am still curious how you did it."

"We all have our secrets Mr. Dumbledore. As well as family magic." Merlin said with an apologetic smile.

"I understand completely." Albus said with a nod, then he turned back towards Salazar. "Harry, I want you to know that I have a lot to make up for, for my past actions. Being cursed this year has thrown that into sharp focus for me. I have made grave mistakes the last few years, both with you and young Mr. Weasley. From now on, you have my word that I will do my best to make right the wrongs I have done. I was wrong about you. I know that now, and I have a lot to make up for."

"Your actions against me are of no concern Headmaster. I have said it before and I will say it again, I can take care of myself, but please do not be mistaken. I still plan to take down Voldemort and all of his Death Eaters, if we ever cross paths. However, Lucius Malfoy just zoomed to the top of my list." Salazar said, glaring at Severus. "As for your actions against Ron, you will have to settle those with the Weasleys."

"Arrogant Potter." Severus sneered. "You think you can take on the world all by yourself, but be careful, you may just have to find out the hard way that you can't."

"Severus please." Albus said gently, then he looked at Salazar and sighed. "By now I know better than to argue with you Harry, but I do want to caution you. Things may not turn out as you hope. Some things just can't be avoided." He added sadly.

"We all must learn Headmaster." Salazar replied, still boring hateful holes into Severus's head.
With a sad sigh, Albus stood up a little straighter and looked over everyone. "If someone could recant the evening’s events after young Mr. Zabini stunned me, I’d be very grateful, and also, I’d like to return to Hogwarts. I need to call for Fawkes because I have been missing him dreadfully. Oh, and Minerva, if I ever try to fire you again, cursed or not, hit me with your best hex."

Minerva chuckled and dabbed at her eyes. "You can count on it Albus, but how did you get Lucius to take that back?"

"He's scared of Voldemort." Albus said simply. "But more about that after I have had a decent rest."

Everyone nodded knowingly, and they headed out the door that had suddenly appeared.

When they stepped out of the Room of Requirement, Albus was shocked to find out they were still at Hogwarts. Nicholas, at Merlin's encouragement, told him about the room and what it does. Needless to say, Albus chuckled and mentioned that he didn't know if he would ever be able to figure out all of the castle's secrets.

Albus wanted to go straight to his office, but Poppy wasn't having that. She practically strong armed him towards the hospital wing and insisted that he stay there at least for a few hours so she could watch over him. Albus finally complied with her wishes without much of a fuss.

Salazar was at a loss on how to really feel about the situation. He did feel sorry for Albus, but a part of him wanted to be angry because of all the damage he had done this year. In his heart though, he knew that it wasn't Albus's fault. The imperius curse was unforgivable for a reason, because this is the kind of damage it could do. As for Albus's past actions, Salazar wasn't really to the point where he could forgive, or overlook them. However, how Albus acted from this point forward would determine how much Salazar was willing to trust the old man in the future.

Despite all that had happened though, he felt a little at peace. He now knew who, how, and why his name had ended up in the Goblet of Fire, and he knew that he could now relax just a bit. Perhaps even have a little fun during the next task. It was clear to him that, at first, Lucius thought that the tasks would kill him quickly and easily, but as they wore on Lucius quickly realized that might not be the case. Maybe it was desperation that drove Lucius to try and kill him tonight, but what was his end game? What did Lucius hope to accomplish by doing this? Salazar didn't know, but he was determined to find out. What he did know however, was that Lucius was going to pay for this, one way or another.

Salazar sighed as he looked out of the nearest window. The morning sun's rays were just beginning to peak over the horizon, and he knew that soon the castle would be bustling with activity. It was in this moment that he realized just how tired he was, and his eyelids drooped just a bit as he leaned against the window sill.

"The children will be worried." Godric said, coming to stand beside him. He too looked extremely tired from the lack of sleep, not to mention the toll the prank took out on him, and he leaned against the window sill to better hold himself up.

"I know. Perhaps we can fill Blaise in, and then he can retell what happened to everyone so that we can go to sleep." Salazar replied with a yawn.

"I was thinking we could all eat breakfast, tell them what happened, then we could catch a nap, because this isn't over yet. Sirius will get involved as soon as Remus or Merlin tell him what happened." Godric replied.
"That is true." Salazar said with a nod. "I need to tell one of them to tell Sirius to hold off doing anything for just a bit. I want to give Albus a day or two to tell us exactly what Lucius was up too. It is clear that Lucius is not going to tell Severus anything, so our only hope is that Albus will talk."

"I agree with that plan." Godric said as he stifled a yawn, but then he grinned. "Gryffindor Tower isn't far from here, so what do you say about popping in there? It would not only ease Hermione, Neville, and the twins' minds about what happened, but it would freak out the rest and make them wonder how two Slytherins were able to gain entrance. Besides, I've been meaning to say hello to my Mother."

Salazar thought about it for a moment. "That is an excellent idea. We could turn it into a lesson on security. We could tell them that we overheard their password, and that they should think up better ways of safeguarding it. Too many times I have heard a Gryffindor just shout out the password to your mother without a care as to who was around. Perhaps we could even encourage them to think up other ways of protecting the tower. Especially in light of what happened to me this morning. We can't afford someone trying to sneak into somewhere to kill anyone."

Godric looked at him and nodded thoughtfully. "That is an excellent idea. We could ask Minerva to help us. She could mandate that all Gryffindors focus on security measures. Maybe they can write an essay on how they could better protect the tower from outside forces."

"Especially with Voldemort's soon return." Salazar said, letting his voice trail off a bit as he stared at out the window in thought. "What the students learn from that could transfer to their personal homes. They could think up ways of protecting their family. I'm sure most have strong wards and spells that protect their houses, but as we saw during the last war, Death Eaters can bring those down very easily. It's always best to have multiple defenses."

"It think that is the best idea you've had in a long time." Godric said as he nodded vigorously. "But let's not just limit it to Gryffindor. The other three houses need to learn it too."

"I agree." Salazar said with a smile. "All right. Let's go teach the children about security measures."

And they did.

The Gryffindors were shocked to see two Slytherins making themselves at home in their common room when they came out of their dorms that morning. Hermione, Neville, Fred, and George caught on to what they were doing as soon as Godric began scolding them about safeguarding their password better. The Gryffindor prefects were angry at the two Founders, but they were angrier at their own house mates. Some of the older Gryffindors threatened to curse Salazar and Godric, but most took their words to heart. Especially when Hermione loudly proclaimed that they should better protect the tower from outside forces. She shouted at a few older students, and said it was better that it was Harry and Gordy who did it, and not someone like Malfoy or Pansy Parkinson. A few of them finally began to agree after that.

Minerva was 'livid' that two Slytherins were able to gain entrance into the tower so easily, and gave Salazar and Godric 'detention' for doing it. In private though, she thanked them for the idea, and did set forth a two page essay that required all Gryffindors to thank up better ways of, not just protecting the tower, but their own homes as well.

The other three Heads of House followed her lead when they learned what had happened, and they too set essays for those in their house. Albus was rather shocked about the whole thing, but in the end he agreed with why they did it, especially after listening to their reasoning.
During that conversation in the Headmaster's office, Salazar never let on that he knew about Voldemort's very soon return, seeing as he wasn't supposed to know. He did however, say that they did it because of Voldemort's eventual return. He told Albus that whether Voldemort returned today, or fifty years from now, it didn't matter. People should be prepared at all times.

And to his utter surprise, Albus agreed with him.

Salazar didn't get to take his nap until after lunch time, but since it was the weekend, it didn't matter. He fell asleep feeling a little better than he had in a long time, but he knew this matter wasn't over yet. Word had it that Sirius was frothing at the mouth to get to Lucius, but Merlin and Remus were able to talk some sense into him, and he finally agreed not to do anything…for now.

*A/N* I know i took more than a few liberties with the imperius curse, but i thought it would be interesting to see how that curse actually works. I mean, it takes over a person's actions so having Albus's fully conscious 'shade' shackled to a wall inside his own head makes sense to me, while Lucius's sub-conscious roamed around. Anyway, i hope it was entertaining for you all to read.

Also, in a review, someone asked me why Albus was not able to withstand the curse, when in canon Harry was able to resist not only Crouch's imperius curse, but Voldemort's as well. My thinking on this is, Lucius was very motivated to keep Albus under the Imperius, so his could have possibly been stronger than even Voldemort's own in canon. In canon, Voldy just wanted Harry to 'bow to death' in the graveyard, and he probably didn't really care if Harry did it or not. As for Crouch and his imperius on Harry in class, it was just a test, and he also probably didn't care. It is my belief that neither Voldy nor Crouch's cannon imperius curses were very strong, simply because they didn't really care about the outcome. As you know, Crouch Sr. was under his son's imperius almost throughout the whole book. This to me signals that crouch was more motivated to keep his father under the spell, verses harry's test in class.

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Chapter End Notes

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Is Albus Dumbledore Daft!? The Headmaster Accuses Lucius Malfoy of using an Unforgivable-in A Plot to Murder Harry Potter!

Our courtroom reporter was on hand as the Wizengamot held an emergency session early this morning. The crime Lucius Malfoy was said to have committed was…the IMPERIUS CURSE!

According to The Daily Prophet's sources, Albus Dumbledore said that just after the regular Board of Governors meeting the day before Hogwarts's first term, Lucius Malfoy pulled him aside and…out of the blue…cursed him just like that!

Dumbledore accused Malfoy for being behind all of the decisions regarding fourteen year old Harry Potter this year. Everything from putting the young man's name into the Goblet of Fire, to attempted murder just four nights ago, while the boy was asleep in his bed at Hogwarts!

According to Dumbledore, he had been under Malfoy's imperius curse the whole time.

But is it true?

Not according to Lucius Malfoy.

In a back and forth he said, they said courtroom shouting match, the accusations flew as the Headmaster attempted to drive his point home, and get the elder Malfoy arrested and sent to Azkaban.

"He forced me to put Harry's name in the Goblet of Fire! He forced me to allow his son and his friends to put several students, including Harry, in danger, forcing Harry to take the matters of their safety into his own hands! He forced me to keep my staff from interfering with his son's actions! He forced me to write a very damaging letter to the wizarding public, about Harry's similarities to (You-Know-Who)! He forced me to try and kill Harry and his friend that night!" Dumbledore shouted during the hearing.

"LIES!" Malfoy instantly shouted back. "It is clear to me, as it should be to everyone in this room, that the Headmaster is delusional! For the past several years he has slandered Mr. Potter, and now he claims that all his actions this year are my fault?! It's preposterous! It seems to me that Dumbledore is trying to wiggle himself out of a trip to Azkaban for using the killing curse against a child under his roof! He's looking for a scape goat. Everyone knows how he feels about Mr. Potter! Besides, where is the evidence!? And also, IF, I repeat IF, I had placed Dumbledore under the imperius curse, HOW did he manage to break it!? It is well known that the caster is the only one able to cancel the curse!"

A very astute question.
According to our courtroom reporter, the mysterious wizard known only as Mr. Nilrem, testified that he was able to break the imperius curse placed upon the Headmaster. He refused to say exactly how he did it, citing family magic as the reason, but he did offer us a memory.

The entire Wizengamot watched in stunned silence as a ghostly memory was replayed in the courtroom's enchanted pensieve. It showed a brief confrontation between Mr. Nilrem, Malfoy, and a chained up Dumbledore, in what was explained to be Albus Dumbledore's own mind.

In the memory, it showed Lucius Malfoy threatening Hogwarts's Potion Master, Severus Snape with death at the hands of You-Know-Who. Mr. Malfoy accused Snape of being a spy in You-Know-Who's ranks, and said that You-Know-Who will be returning SOON!

The memory then showed Mr. Nilrem casting several silent unknown spells, as well as unknown runes, on the wall of the Headmaster's mind, before throwing Lucius Malfoy out of Dumbledore's mind, thereby breaking the curse.

Another memory was also given in evidence, this time it was Albus Dumbledore's own memory of the day Lucius Malfoy allegedly cursed the Headmaster.

One would think this would be enough to convict Malfoy, but the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, stepped in and vouched for Mr. Malfoy as a character witness. The Minister himself accused Dumbledore and Mr. Nilrem of memory tampering, citing that the 'bit about You-Know-Who returning' went a little too far in this farce.

"It is clear to me that Dumbledore and Mr. Nilrem have a personal vendetta against Lucius Malfoy. Everyone knows that You-Know-Who is dead and gone. Harry Potter saw to it that night thirteen years ago when he was only a one year old baby. If it hadn't been for that, I might have been inclined to believe it." The Minister said during the proceedings.

The hearing ended shortly after that with the Wizengamot voting for the acquittal of Mr. Malfoy, but it was a close one.

Twenty-three of the fifty members of the Wizengamot voted guilty, while the other twenty-seven voted not guilty. With the vote handed down, a proud and smiling Minister Fudge read out the verdict, thereby dropping all of Albus Dumbledore's charges against Mr. Malfoy.

After the trial, our reporter caught up with a smiling and victorious Lucius Malfoy and asked him about his feelings with the outcome.

"I'm delighted, obviously, that the majority saw reason and voted against this farce of a hearing. Dumbledore is daft, plain and simple, and his role as the Headmaster of a school that oversees the education of our children needs to be looked at closely. For him say that I used the imperius curse on him in the attempted murder of Mr. Potter, as well as all his other actions this year is deplorable. It is my belief that his actions were his own."

So what of the attempted murder on Mr. Potter?

Due to the nature of the surroundings, no one can prove or disprove the imperius curse claims, so Dumbledore was not charged at all. We spoke to Sirius Black, godfather and legal guardian of Mr. Potter, after the trial and he had this to say on Mr. Potter's behalf.

"We know that it wasn't Dumbledore's actions that night. We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was all Lucius Malfoy's doing. Harry is upset and angry that this was allowed to happen. I personally have no proof, but those that voted not guilty were probably bribed by Malfoy's very deep
pockets, and those pockets of his are about to become a lot less deep." The former Azkaban resident said.

What that means is anyone's guess, but for now, things seemed to have settled down. We at the Daily Prophet promise to bring you any more developing stories on this matter, should they arise.

"HE WILL PAY FOR THIS!" Voldemort suddenly bellowed, causing Peter to jump in his seat.

He had just finished reading the article out loud at his Master's insistence, and he knew that Voldemort wasn't going to be happy when he finished.

"Lucius will pay for his blunders." Voldemort said, gritting his tiny, vicious teeth as he stared into the dying fire. "First, he loses my diary, then he attempts to out Severus, my most faithful servant and spy. Then he tries to murder a possible ally, thereby likely turning Potter against me. THEN he blabs about my soon return. THEN he tries to take the joy of ME killing Dumbledore away from me! AND ABOVE ALL, HE TRIES TO USE ME AS A PAWN TO DO HIS BIDDING!" He bellowed. "Saying that he will have ME kill Severus! HOW DARE HE?!"

"Bu-but Master, the paper didn't say he tried to kill Dumble…"

"QUIET!" Voldemort shouted. "I know that Wormtail, but knowing Lucius as I do, that was his end plan. I do not believe for a second that he is innocent of this. I know Lucius to well. I want to kill Dumbledore. I want to kill Potter, if he doesn't join me! NO ONE TRIES TO TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME!"

"You are right Master." Peter said, bowing low in the hopes of avoiding the numerous curses that began flying around the room.

Once the curses stopped, Peter once again stood up. "Is there anything you wish me to do Master?" He asked, trying to keep his voice from quivering too badly.

"Yes Wormtail, there is. As you very well know, I have been studying the traditions that go along with the Triwizard Tournament. I want Harry Potter to be my guest of honor for my rebirth, and I have a brilliant idea. One of the traditions is using the Triwizard Cup as the final prize of the last task. It is always a portkey to send the winner straight back to the judges, so that there is no doubt as to who the winner is. I have to doubts that Dumbledore, the sentimental fool that he is, will see to it that this tradition is followed."

Peter looked at him in confusion. "S-so M-M-Master, what exactly is it you need me to do?"

"I want you to slip into Hogwarts, and bring me Severus Snape any way that you can." Voldemort answered, giving the trembling man a twisted smile.

Peter gulped and nodded. "Yes Master."

Lucius Malfoy Left destitute for His Role in the Attempted Murder of Harry Potter!

By Rita Skeeter

As I walked into the Hogs-Head Pub, a small, out of the way place in Hogsmeade, it took a moment for my eyes to become adjusted in dim quiet place. However, a smile instantly appeared on my face as I caught sight of my contact, one Mr. Harry James Potter, who was using up a precious Hogsmeade visit to bring me this story.
He wasn't alone though.

As I sat down at the table, I was greeted by a grinning Sirius Black, who welcomed me to sit down and offered to buy me a drink of my choice. I was curious as to why Mr. Potter contacted me, but I knew I had stumbled into something good when he began his story.

Apparently, the Malfoy's are now broke.

How did this happen you may ask? Well, I'll be delighted to tell you my dear readers.

As you may already know, three weeks ago, Lucius Malfoy was accused of using the imperius curse on Albus Dumbledore, who later, at the bidding of Malfoy, tried to kill Mr. Potter. Lucius was acquitted of all charges, but that was not the end. Immediately after the trial that day, Sirius Black, Head of the House of Black, a notorious family known for their sly political tactics and slightly darker views on matters, went to Gringotts and had Narcissa Malfoy (nee Black) thrown out of the Black family!

Why is this important?

Because apparently Mr. Malfoy's alleged Death Eater antics during the first war left the Malfoy family penniless, and for the last thirteen years, it has been Narcissa Malfoy, through her Black Family ties, as the sole person keeping the Malfoy family living in the exquisite life style they had come to enjoy.

This has been a dirty little secret that the pompous peacock known as Lucius Malfoy has been trying to hide for years!

And they have been trying to keep their current state of affairs hush, hush for the last three weeks.

When I asked Mr. Potter and Mr. Black why they did this, the response was immediate.

"We know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that money from the Black family fortune was used to bribe the Minister and members of the Wizengamot. They were bribed into voting not guilty, and my Godson's would be murderer was set free because of it." Mr. Black said with a scowl. "I refuse to allow the Black Family fortune to fund that Death Eater's plans."

When I asked Mr. Potter about the Headmaster's actions this past year, he sighed and had this to say.

"I know it wasn't his fault now, and I have forgiven him for his actions this year. However, his past actions are still his own, and I have yet to forgive him for those. We are currently working towards a better relationship, but it will still be a very long time until I can trust him."

For a fourteen year old, it seems that Mr. Potter is very wise in his way of thinking, but what of his feelings on Lucius Malfoy?

"I think it's funny that he's trying to hide the fact that he is broke. He must be afraid that all of his connections will drop him like yesterday's rubbish." Mr. Potter stated, as he laughed loudly. "I personally kind of hope they do, because now, he is of no use to them."

If we suddenly see Narcissa Malfoy shopping at the secondhand robe shop in Diagon Alley, we know that things are indeed very bad for the Malfoys. Until then however, we will just have to keep a close watch on the Malfoys to see what they do.

So how will the downfall of one of the wizarding world's most influential family play out?
"That was so petty." Godric chuckled, as they all sat down at the Slytherin table.

It had been a month since the night Albus tried to kill him, and Salazar had been trying to keep his head down for the most part. People were shocked to learn what exactly took place that night, and most of the time people kept shooting sympathetic glances his way.

The only ones who didn't sympathize with him were Draco and his friends. Ever since the trial, Draco had been strutting around gloating that his father had come out the winner, and that Albus, Salazar, and everyone else had egg on their faces.

However, at the moment Draco was staring at the paper, white as a ghost, as his 'friends' began to slowly edge away from him.

"I know it was petty Godric." Salazar said as he calmly ate his breakfast. "But Sirius didn't want them to try and hide it any longer. I just went along with it."

"It's funny that they tried to hide it." Neville said as he laughed loudly. Then he turned to Draco. "Not going to be strutting around now, are you Malfoy!?" He asked loudly, causing everyone in the great hall to stop and stare at them.

That did it. Pansy, Millicent, Crabbe, Goyle, Knott, Montague, and the Carrow sisters shot out of their seats and retreated further down the table. Malfoy just stared at them, then back at the paper with his mouth open in shock.

"Neville!" Hermione suddenly cried, whacking him on the arm with a book. "Be the bigger man!"

Neville's face flushed red, but he nodded as he held his chin up high. "You're right. I'm sorry." He said, glancing at Salazar and Godric, who were looking at him with stern expressions. Then he turned to Draco. "Malfoy, I'm sorry for what I just said."

"I don't need your sympathy Longbottom!" Draco shouted, snapping out of his stupor with a scowl. "As for you Potter, this isn't over!"

Draco stood up and ran out of the room, causing whispering to break out at every table.

"I don't think his parents even bothered to tell him." Blaise said, shaking his head. "It's obvious he didn't know."

"I think you may be right Blaise. The only thing the Malfoy's have left is their home and possessions, but they will likely have to sell it all off in order to live." Salazar said with a smirk. "I look at it this way, the Malfoys were Voldemort's main financial source during the last war. If they have nothing, then Voldemort will have less money to fund the next one."

"He still has a lot of other wealthy pure bloods at his beck and call though, so don't be mistaken." Godric warned.

"I'm fully aware of that Godric." Salazar replied, rolling his eyes. "But the Malfoys are one less he has at his disposal."
"I suppose your right." Blaise said with a sigh as he stood up. "I suppose we better get to class. Unlike some of you," he said, mock glaring at Salazar, "the rest of us have exams to get ready for."

Salazar chuckled. "I suppose it's one of the perks to being a champion." He said, grinning at Blaise, who rolled his eyes.

"But it's not like either of you have to study for anything." He teased, throwing a piece of toast at Salazar. "You already know this stuff."

Salazar just grinned at the lad, but Hermione's soft spoken 'thank you' caught him off guard.

"For what Hermione?" Salazar asked, looking at her in confusion.

She looked up at him with a soft smile. "I've been meaning to tell you, 'thank you'." She said, then she sighed. "I was curious about my overall standing in our year, so I went to Professor McGonagall to ask. I was shocked when I learned that I had the highest grades out of everyone in our year. I thought it would be you, and I told her that. She smiled at me and said no, that you actually keep yourself below the top tenth percentile."

"So I've been found out," Salazar said with pout. "I'm not as smart as everyone thinks I am. I'm quite the idiot really, and I've just been hide…"

"Oh shut up." Hermione giggled, causing everyone to snort.

"Truth is Hermione," Salazar said softly as he patted her hand. "It's not fair for me to outshine those that have the potential to do their best. I'm far older, wiser, knowledgeable, and magically advanced than a normal school child. I keep myself under the top tenth percentile for that reason. It gives children like you the chance to truly shine. I actually try to hover around the top fifteenth to be perfectly honest."

"I do the same in my year as well." Godric said with a smile. "It's like he said, it wouldn't be fair if we didn't."

"I wonder where I stand." Blaise thought as he stared at the ceiling. "I've never thought about before. All I know is that I get good grades."

"Same here." Neville wondered.

Salazar chuckled. "In truth it's none of my business, but as an educator, I find it hard to keep my nose out of my student's business." He said, only to be met with shocked glances. "Yes, Godric and I consider you not only friends, but our students too." He said, causing the children to grin. "Anyway, I asked Minerva about your standings, and she told me. Blaise you are fifth behind Hermione, and Neville, you are eighth."

Blaise and Neville's eyes lit up, while Hermione beamed at them.

Godric chuckled. "We are very proud of the three of you. You all have done this yourself. We don't force you to study and do your best. You do all that yourselves. We help if you have a question, or need help understanding something you may not grasp right away, but for the most part, it is all on you. We are very proud." He repeated.

"What about our different subjects though?" Neville asked, giving Godric a happy grin.

"Well, if you dive a little deeper the rank changes." Salazar said with a smile. "Neville you are at the top for Herbology. Hermione, you are the top in Charms, Transfiguration, and Runes, and Blaise,
you are the top in Potions and Care of Magical Creatures."

"In Defense(122,196),(883,214) however, you three are one behind the other for the second, third, and forth spots."
Godric said with pride.

"Who is first?" Hermione asked curiously.

"I probably shouldn't say, seeing as grades are a personal matter, but it's not like any of you are going to attack her to get her out of the way." Salazar laughed. "But it's Susan Bones."

"Well that's no surprise, seeing as to who her Aunt is." Blaise said, as Hermione and Neville agreed.

"I suppose that's true." Godric said.

"What about Draco?" Blaise asked.

"That we won't say." Salazar said apologetically.

"I understand." He said with a knowing nod.

In that moment, they stood up to head off to their first period classes. Salazar began to think about Draco though. He was the third highest ranking student overall, and Salazar wondered if Draco's home life was going to change that. The boy had a lot of potential, and could actually do some good in the world if he would just let go of his hatred for anything 'beneath' him.

A sinking feeling settled into the pit of Salazar's stomach though, as the realization hit him that maybe Draco's new home life would drive the lad even further away from changing his ways. He sincerely hoped not. It was then that Salazar realized what the implications of his actions could hold. He hadn't even thought about what it could mean for Draco. All Salazar had been focused on was, not only getting back at Lucius, but causing Voldemort to have less at his disposal for the upcoming war.

Salazar sighed heavily and whacked himself in the head. How could he have been so stupid and blind?

There was only two outcomes he could foresee happening. One, Draco would sink even lower and really follow in his father's footsteps, or two, Draco's new home life could have the potential to make Draco see just how far his family had fallen. With any hope and luck, maybe it would give the boy a new outlook on life, and maybe, just maybe, the boy would change.

"Move away Wormtail, and give Severus some breathing room." Voldemort hissed, causing the rat like man to jump away instantly.

It had not been easy for Peter to get him here. Snape rivaled Moody when it came to securing his quarters, but in the dead of night, just like he had done with Dumbledore, Peter snuck in using rat holes in the castle's walls to get in.

But getting out had been a lot trickier.

After stunning a sleeping Severus, Peter tied him up, disillusioned him, as well as himself, and carefully made his way out, so that he could apparate himself and the unconscious man back to his Master's hideout.

It had been sheer luck that he hadn't run into Moody.
Severus moaned as Voldemort waved his wand at him, thereby bringing him around. Once Severus was awake though, he was instantly alert and bolted out of his chair. His black eyes darted around the room and the first thing he saw was Peter, who was cowering behind a large moth eaten winged back chair that appeared to have black robes tossed in the seat.

"Pettigrew." Severus snarled, reaching for his wand, only to find it missing. His body instantly stiffened as he glared at the little man.

"Settle down Severus." An amused voice hissed. It was coming from the robes in the chair, but Severus blood ran cold as his eyes widened in shock.

He stood there for several long seconds as thin, scaly, waif like arms appeared out of the robes. They pulled back a hood that reveled a head no bigger than a child's, but this head was distorted and looked downright gruesome, and it took every ounce of willpower not to flinch as a set of sharp, red eyes stared at him.

"Is that how you greet your Master Severus? By staring?"

"My-My Lord? Forgive me please." Severus stuttered, instantly kneeling and kissing the hem of the robes. "I'm...I'm in shock."

"I know, and you are forgiven. My most faithful servant, I am pleased to welcome you. Please forgive Wormtail's methods of bringing you here. He is a bit cowardly, and didn't want to face you while you were awake." Voldemort chuckled. "Wormtail!" He suddenly snapped, causing Peter to flinch. "Give Severus back his wand. I want him to feel comfortable."

Peter nearly flung Severus's wand at his head, then instantly jumped back behind the chair, as if to use it as a shield in case Severus decided to hex him. Severus didn't, but he did snatch his wand out of the air and held onto it for dear life.

"Please sit down Severus, we have much to discuss." Voldemort said, motioning to the chair that he had formally been sitting in.

Severus did so without hesitation, though his mind was reeling so badly that he almost stumbled.

"My Lord. It is an honor." He lied, as he bowed his head as if to show respect.

"I should hope so Severus. Only you have been chosen worthy enough to see me in such a weak state, but that is about to change soon. I had Wormtail bring you here because I require you to do something for me."

"Anything My Lord."

"Severus, I have been keeping up with the news this past year, and reading the Daily Prophet has not only been amusing, but the source of much information. Potter, it seems, has grown up quite a lot since the last time I saw him. He hates Dumbledore just as much as I do, and I have a plan to bring him to my rebirthing ceremony. I plan to offer him a place amongst us. If he declines, then I will make him the first victim of my return. It seems somewhat poetic if you ask me. He's the last I tried to kill, and will be the first to die upon my return. If that is what he chooses."

Severus, not knowing what to say, kept quiet as Voldemort continued.

"Lucius will pay for all of his mistakes, and I must admit that I have been worried about you. When I read in the paper about you being ousted as a spy, I knew I needed to see you. Have things changed with your relationship with Dumbledore?"
"No My Lord, he still believes me to be faithful only to him."

"Good, good. I was worried. Has he confided anything in you? The paper only brushed over a few things, and I need details."

"Yes My Lord." Severus replied, as he thought quickly. "Lucius ran his mouth about your soon return. We all know it will happen, given how the dark mark has been growing clearer by the day. Dumbledore, through Lucius's actions, has become aware of it as well. He told me Lucius's plan was to kill Potter, then have Dumbledore turn his wand on himself in order to make it look like a murder-suicide. According to Dumbledore, Lucius said that he was hoping to be rewarded upon your return. He was hoping that it would make up for him losing your diary. He felt that if he were to remove Potter and Dumbledore that you could return peacefully and continue where you left off, only this time…unchallenged." Severus finished, making seem like it was the most ridiculous thing he had ever heard.

"HE DARES TO THINK ME SO WEAK?!" Voldemort roared, causing Peter to whimper, and Severus to tense up. "He dares to think that I will not be able to handle Dumbledore and Potter myself?! HE WILL PAY WITH HIS LIFE! I am Lord Voldemort, the most powerful wizard that walks this earth, and I DO NOT need a simpleton's help!"

Curses began flying, and both men bowed low, hoping to avoid being hit. Severus thought it was ironic that Voldemort should say such a thing, seeing as Peter had obviously been helping him for some time.

Once Voldemort's anger had somewhat abated, he spoke again. Only this time, he seemed a bit calmer.

"Arise Severus, and retake your seat. I want to say that I am most pleased with you. You, as well as the ones who went to Azkaban, are deemed my faithful ones. You however, I consider my most faithful. Not only did you NOT abandon the last order I gave you, you managed to gain the trust of my worst enemy, who, by his own foolish reasons, kept you out of Azkaban and by his side the whole time. I am very pleased with you Severus."

"I am honored to receive such praise My Lord." Severus said, kneeling once again to kiss Voldemort's robes, but once he retook his seat, he sighed. "However, I believe I may have done my job too well. I must tell you My Lord, Dumbledore wishes me to spy on you, for him."

"I suspected as much. You must do this Severus. I, of course, will tell you what to tell him. It will be trivial things, and in some cases, simple attacks with a few followers who don't matter much. It will be just enough to keep him hooked and looking to you for answers, and in turn, confiding in you. I have no doubts that he will reform his pitiful Order of the Phoenix, but you must join this group, and tell me everything."

"Of course My Lord." Severus replied.

"Very good. Now, for the main reason I wanted you here tonight. Potter has done well in the last two tasks of the Tournament, but he always comes in last. I need you to ensure that he comes in first for the last one. Also, when the time comes, I need you to offer to place the Triwizard Cup wherever it is supposed to be during the last task, and turn it into a portkey that will send him to a predetermined location, which I will reveal at a later date. Ensure that Potter is the only one who reaches it."

Thoughts and plans ran through Severus mind quickly, and he suddenly had a quick thought.
"My Lord, I must inform you of an arrangement that may have a very big impact on your exceptional plan." Severus said nervously.

"What is it?" Voldemort replied coldly.

"In order to figure out who put his name in the Goblet, Potter agreed to be a non-threat to the other, real champions. He is basically just going through the motions, doing just enough to ensure that he gets through them unharmed. There is a big rumor going around that the dunderheaded Diggory boy and Potter are working together to ensure a Hogwarts victory. If Potter were to reach the cup first, it will be very suspicious to not only Dumbledore, but the Ministry officials who will demand answers."

Voldemort appeared lost in thought as Severus finished speaking, which caused Severus to hold his breath for what seemed like eternity. Finally Voldemort nodded.

"I see. Let me ask you Severus, how confident are you with Potter's magical abilities?"

"Personally I think he is highly overrated, but I must admit that he is gifted. It pains me to admit that My Lord, seeing as I hate the whelp with every fiber of my being." Severus said with extreme distaste. "However, all of his plans to have the Diggory boy come in first have worked. Even I must admit that the Potter spawn is resourceful. Rumors state that it was Potter who gave Diggory the spell to get past the dragon, and during the lake task, Potter and Diggory worked together again, though I am unsure of what the plan actually was."

"But it worked." Voldemort stated, and Severus nodded. "Very well Severus. This is what I want you to do. Let them go through with their little plans, but I want you to ensure that Potter and Diggory BOTH reach the cup together, and use any method you desire to ensure this happens. I will use their own schemes against them, and when they arrive to me, I, being the merciful Lord that I am, will show lenience towards the Diggory boy…at first. I will use him to get Potter to show me just how magically gifted he is, and I will allow Potter to…demonstrate…that power, by torturing the Diggory boy. If he doesn't, I will kill them both. If he does, I will oblivate Diggory and send him back to Hogwarts via the Triwizard Cup. Any injuries that the Diggory boy sustains will be passed off as part of the task, and my return will go unnoticed. After that, Potter will have a choice, join me or die. If he chooses to die, I will kill him. Then you must return his body to Hogwarts, and pass it off as Potter dying during the last task."

Severus thought that this was the most ill thought out plan he had ever heard, and it took all the power he had not to burst out laughing. In a way, he couldn't wait to see what Salazar would say to this. However, there was just a bit of confusion.

"I will be with you during that time My Lord?" Severus asked in an unsure tone.

"Oh yes, when I return to full form I plan to call my followers to me, and I want you there. Those that return will be shown a bit of mercy, except Lucius. Those that don't, will die."

"I understand My Lord."

"Good. You are dismissed Severus, and be on the lookout for a letter giving directions to the place of my rebirth. I need not to say, don't tell anyone of this, and Severus, do not fail me." Voldemort warned.

"I won't my Lord." Severus replied, once again bowing low and kissing the robes.

He left at that point, knowing that he would wake Salazar as soon as he returned to Hogwarts.
They were in Severus's office when Salazar exited Severus's pensive memory. He was ashen faced and worried, but Godric began laughing his butt off.

"That has got to be the stupidest plan I have ever heard concocted in my life!" He cried, wiping tears out of his eyes. "The holes in that plan are so big that the Hogwarts Express could barrel right through them!"

"Yes Godric, thank you for your wonderful insight, now be quiet and help me think!" Salazar snapped.

Salazar grabbed Severus by his robes and instantly pulled him down to his eye level so that they were face to face. He looked him over carefully, and upon seeing no damage, he sighed with relief.

"Are you sure you are all right?" He asked, looking into Severus face.

"Yes sir." He replied softly.

Salazar nodded and gently gave him a hug before releasing him. Then he turned to Godric, who looked a little more subdued as he watched the two of them.

"Our number one priority is Severus and Cedric's safety." Godric said, and Salazar nodded.

"Yes." Salazar agreed, still looking a bit wide-eyed because of the state of shock he was in. "We mustn’t do anything that will jeopardize their lives. I am glad that he accepted your actions the last few years, as though they were normal and what he had expected. The role of a double spy is not something I would have expected him to agree to, but I think it keeps you just a bit safer, and that is what is important." He said looking back at Severus with relief written on his face.

"I would not have expected it either, but I felt it must be known to him, just in case."

"Yes." Salazar nodded again. "Have you told Albus yet?"

"No sir, I came straight to you both." Severus replied as his eyes darted from one Founder to the other.

"Ok, next step is alerting Albus, who will no doubt tell Moody, Minerva, and Remus. Godric you tell Poppy, and I'll alert Merlin and Nicholas. From there, the word can be spread. Once everyone is aware, we need to come together to figure out the best way to proceed. Albus is not likely to share this with me, but that doesn’t mean we can't plan a strategy anyway." He said, pulling on the cloak he had hastily thrown over his shoulders when Severus came to get him.

"Are you going now?" Severus asked, looking at him with wide eyes, and Salazar nodded.

"Do you want Nehum to take you?" Godric asked, causing Salazar to shake his head.

"No, I'll use my personal tunnel to get off the grounds. The long walk to the front gates will give me time to get my thoughts in order. I'll just apparate to Merlin's." He replied, as he nearly ran out of Severus's office.

"He's worried about you, that's all." Godric said, giving Severus a small smile as the young man stared after Salazar. "Your kidnapping has thrown Salazar for a loop, and when his wits catch up to him, I have no doubts that Pettigrew will pay with his life. Salazar will be out for that rat's blood worse than ever before."

Severus stared at Godric for several long seconds, causing Godric to chuckle a bit.
"He loves you Severus." He added, patting the stunned man's shoulder. "Never doubt that."

Severus nodded and Godric was sure he heard him choke back a sob, but he wasn't about to point it out. He just smiled at Severus, nodded, and left to go wake Poppy.

When he was gone, Severus sank into his desk chair and for the first time since he held what he thought was Lily's dead body, he began to cry.

For the last three days Salazar had gone from shocked, to downright pissed off. He had spent an hour at Merlin's that night, telling him and Nicholas, who Merlin had floo called, about what happened. Merlin asked for the memory of the memory, and Salazar had given it to the man so that he could see for himself what took place.

He and Godric had talked about Voldemort's appearance, but they were at a loss on what could be the cause for it. They knew it was something very dark, maybe a potion of some kind, but nothing they knew of could explain why he looked the way he did.

The best they could come up with was that Voldemort had invented it himself.

During those three days, the word had indeed spread. Lily and James were told by Sirius and Merlin, via Sirius's mirror. Lily and James became even more frightened than they had been before and they immediately asked about Severus's well-being, but were assured that he was fine. Minerva, who had been told by Albus, nearly threw a fit at how easily the little rat could sneak into the grounds, which actually drew their attention to that problem. Everyone else had focused on what had happened, versus how it had happened.

Godric mentioned that perhaps it was time to look into Hogwarts's wards, which was something he had been going over a few years back, but it got pushed aside due to more pressing matters and basically had been forgotten. Salazar and the others agreed with him, and they added that to the list of things that were going to be looked over during the summer. They didn't know exactly what they were going to do, but they knew something needed to be done.

The last thing they needed was for Pettigrew to sneak into the grounds and kidnap one of the children.

Speaking of, the children had all been notified as well, and to say that they were frightened was an understatement. However, their determination to learn all that they could really kicked in, and all of them, even Fred and George, could be found in the library at any given time studying hexes and curses of every nature.

Godric put forth the idea that maybe during the summer they could teach the children the Unforgivables. Minerva, Remus, and Molly thought that was a bit drastic and perhaps going a little far, but Godric pointed out that if they found themselves in a life or death situation, knowing how to properly defend themselves would come in handy. Both Founders were confident that none of the children were going to use the Unforgivables willy-nilly, because they all knew better than that. It's not like they were going to attack their fellow classmates in the halls, but if a gaggle of Death Eaters cornered them in Diagon Alley, it was best to be prepared. Especially since the children were easy targets, seeing as they were very close friends of 'Harry Potter'. It was only after that, that Minerva, Remus, and Molly agreed, though they did so very begrudgingly.

So that was also added to the list of things to do over the summer, and they knew that Merlin's heavily warded property would allow them to practice, without the Ministry being tipped off due to the underage use of magic.
It was the best any of them could do for now, seeing as there was still a lot they didn't know.

It had been a week since Severus's kidnapping, and no one was any closer to having any absolutes on how to handle the last task, or what was to follow. However, Salazar received the shock of his life when he was summoned to the Headmaster's office late in the evening on Wednesday.

When he arrived, he was even more shocked to find Sirius, Merlin, and Nicholas there, as well as Severus, Moody, Remus, and Minerva. All of them looked worried, and he glanced around curiously, but no one gave a hint as to why he was there.

Albus was seated behind his desk, with a pensive in front of him, and he too looked very worried, but he smiled slightly when Salazar entered. After taking another look around, Salazar sat in the offered chair and studied Albus carefully.

"Is there something wrong?" Salazar asked curiously, once again looking around.

"Yes Harry, there is." Albus said, straightening up in his chair a bit. "Something has been brought to my attention, something very troublesome and dangerous, but we feel that you need to know about it. Normally I would not have told you about this, but in light of what happened to me this year, I learned a very valuable lesson, and I don't wish to repeat my past mistakes."

Salazar raised a curious eyebrow. "What do I need to know about?"

"Something that involves Voldemort." Albus simply said, causing Salazar's eyebrows to shoot up into his hairline.

"Voldemort?" He asked.

"Yes Harry. I have something to show you. A memory that belongs to Professor Snape to be exact. Are you familiar with a pensive?" Albus asked, motioning towards it.

"I've heard about them, but I don't know exactly what they are." He lied.

Albus briefly explained what they were used for, and after ensuring Salazar understood, he nodded.

"We have all already seen the memory, but Sirius, Alastor, and myself will be accompanying you." Albus said as he stood up. "After you have watched the memory, then we will talk about what you have seen."

"Just put your face in the bowl Harry." Sirius said with a smile. "It will be alright, and remember, nothing in there can hurt you, and nothing you do to anyone will hurt them."

"Yes sir." Salazar said, returning his smile, then he put his head into the bowl.

Once Sirius, Moody, and Albus arrived, it started. At this point, Salazar wasn't surprised to find out it was the memory of Severus's kidnapping, but it was no less shocking than before.

When they returned to Albus's office, Salazar returned to his seat, buried his head in his hands, and tried not to think about how that meeting could have gone if Severus had slipped up and said something Voldemort hadn't liked.

"Are you alright Mr. Potter?" Minerva asked with concern.

Salazar nodded, but then he looked up. "Yes ma'am, I'm just shocked is all. I had no idea that Professor Snape was actually a real spy." He said, then he realized something that they all had been
overlooking, and he nearly smacked himself in the forehead. "Has Cedric been notified?" He asked, causing them all to raise their eyebrows.

"Are you trying to get me killed Potter?" Severus hissed in surprise. "That dunderhead would be spreading this all around the school!"

"Well if you weren't such a miserable bully, your students would be less inclined to kill you!" Salazar shot back, causing Sirius to snort.

"I told you this wasn't a good idea Headmaster. My life is at stake here! Potter will get me killed!" Severus shouted.

"It's all right Severus." Albus said, trying to calm him down. "Harry, this has to be kept very secret, because as Professor Snape said, his life is at stake. The reason we all agreed to tell you is because we feel you need to be prepared."

"And Cedric doesn't?" Salazar asked. "He's as much a part of this as I am!"

"But Harry…" Albus started to say, but Salazar cut him off.

"Look, I'll do what you tell me to do, but please hear me out. Professor Snape, I can tell you that my trust and respect for you just went from absolute zero, to next to nil, simply because you threw Lucius Malfoy under the proverbial bus. I will do everything I can to ensure that you are not found out in any way, but letting Cedric know would be very beneficial. I'm certainly not going to torture him, which will just get him killed by Voldemort. The best thing we can do, is alert him to what is coming, and get him out as quickly as possible."

"Then what about you Harry?" Sirius asked, looking at him with worry. "Voldemort will kill you."

"He's going to kill me anyway." Salazar said, shaking his head. "I'm not going to join him, that's for certain, but getting Cedric back safely will lessen the death toll. I know I can't sit here and say that I can fight him on my own, because I can't. However, that doesn't mean I can't think up ways to escape. If Cedric is blindsided by this, his bloody Hufflepuff tendencies will get him killed. Cedric will not go and let me fight Voldemort and a bunch of Death Eaters on my own. If I come up with an escape plan, having to get both of us out at the same time will increase the chances of one, or both of us, getting killed. However, if I can get him out first, then I can concentrate on me."

Albus leaned back in his chair as the room fell into silence. The only sound heard, was Severus's loud breathing because he was 'irritated'. Not even snoring from the old Headmaster's paintings could be heard, because for once, they weren't pretending to be asleep.

"And just how do you plan to escape from the Dark Lord Potter?" Severus finally asked with a scoff.

"I don't know, but Cedric getting back to the cup to return to Hogwarts will be fairly easy, if he is aware of what is happening." He stressed.

"Mr. Diggory is still unlikely to leave you Harry." Albus said softly. "I'm afraid that even if he were aware of the situation, it would turn out the same. He is a loyal lad, and he still won't leave you there to face this alone."

Salazar sighed heavily. "Then what do we do?"

"We don't know yet." Albus said as he shook his head. "There is still a lot of uncertainty at play here. There are still many variables, and we just don't have enough of the facts."
"So this is basically a 'fend for yourself' situation." Salazar said with a chuckle.

"Harry…" Albus began, but Salazar cut him off again.

"No listen, I'm not mad about that, so please don't get me wrong. I can figure out a way to get myself and Cedric back alive, but I need information. The first part is easy, and it doesn't require much, I just need to know what the last task is. I can figure out a way to get Cedric and myself to the cup first, without raising the suspicion of the other schools and champions. Once that is done, Professor Snape will be seen as doing what Voldemort required of him, and he should be free and clear after that, as long as Cedric and I act like we have no idea where we are when we get to Voldemort. The problem is I need time to plan. Headmaster, I need to know what the last task is."

Albus sighed heavily and stared at the ceiling with tired eyes, but then he nodded slowly.

"The last task is a maze made out of charmed hedges. The hedges are about eight feet tall so that the champions cannot see over the top. The Triwizard Cup will be placed deep in the maze, at the very center. It's not just a matter of finding your way through the maze though. The maze will hold all manner of challenges ranging from getting past dangerous animals to even more trying and dangerous obstacles."

"Where will the maze be?" Salazar asked curiously. "Somewhere on the grounds, or somewhere else?"

"The Quidditch Pitch." Albus replied.

Salazar mind began whirling, but he grinned and jumped out of his seat. "The Quidditch Pitch!" He exclaimed. "It couldn't be more perfect!"

"Why do you say that Mr. Potter?" Minerva asked, completely confused.

"Don't you see Professor, Cedric already has a major advantage over everyone, even me. How much time has he spent on the pitch during games and practice over the last several years? He is like a walking compass. His Quidditch instincts will easily get him to the center because he knows the pitch better than any of us. He can use the stands to see where he is, and judge the distance to the center based off those points of reference. Even if he gets turned around in the maze."

"An interesting way of looking at it Harry." Remus said with a surprised nod. "But what of the challenges you all will face?"

"I can get them past the creatures and obstacles." Moody said, causing everyone to look over to him. "I can see through anything with this eye. Charmed hedges are nothing. I can tell Potter and Diggory what is coming up, and give them ideas on how to defeat them. Not to mention, I can tell them where to go if Diggory goes off course. The only problem is, I won't have a way to talk to them."

"I have an idea." Sirius said as he leaned forward in his chair. "When we were in school, James, Remus, and I had a way to communicate with each other, even if we were in different parts of the castle. We used charmed mirrors. If I can make some mirrors, we can give one to Harry and one to Mad-Eye, so that they can talk. Harry can find Cedric, and then Mad-Eye can get them both through the maze, past all the crap, and to the Cup first."

"This is a good plan to get you both to the cup first, the only problem is, it requires Mr. Diggory to have knowledge of the situation beforehand." Albus pointed out.

The room seemed to deflate a bit as everyone realized that, and they all sighed and rolled their eyes.
"Then what do you propose Albus?" Minerva asked, giving the stubborn man an exasperated look.

"I don't know Minerva, but I'm sure we can think of something else." Albus replied. "But we need to figure out how to get Harry and Mr. Diggory to the cup first, then we need to figure out a way to get them back from Voldemort safely."

Salazar sighed, closed his eyes, and shook his head. The man is absolutely no help at all. He thought, as he tried his best to not show his annoyance.

He knew getting Cedric and himself to the cup was going to be easy, now that they had a plan, the only problem was, getting Cedric out alive, without Voldemort knowing that they had been tipped off by Severus.

Chapter End Notes

I know that in the books Severus didn't go back to Godric's Hollow after the attack and cry over Lily, but I thought using that bit from the movie worked well for that scene, so I hope you all forgive me.

This chapter kind of took off with a mind of its own, but I think it works well. Albus, even though he is no help at all, is trying to make up for past mistakes, which I think is admirable. Voldy on the other hand, is delusional. He still thinks there is a chance Salazar will join him, and he thinks having Salazar torture Cedric is going to help Salazar make up his mind? He is a madman, and a dangerous one at that. He doesn't care who he puts in harms way and he is determined to get what he wants.

Voldy is in for a big surprise though and he's going to get more than he bargained for. I have a big surprise in store for old Voldy, and he is likely to not be happy.

I hope you all stay tuned. The next chapter will feature the last task, and the graveyard scene. Will Cedric die? Will his Hufflepuff traits allow him to leave 'Harry' by himself? You will have to wait and see. *grins evilly*
Chapter 48

The Truth is a Lie

"Cedric wake up." A hushed and hurried voice whispered.

"Mmmm…mmmm…what…who?" Cedric moaned, as he was shaken out of a pleasant dream, which involved him winning the Triwizard Cup, and putting to rest the rumor that all Hufflepuffs were idiots, once and for all.

"Shhh, be quiet. I don't want your dorm mates to hear."

"Who…what…” Cedric mumbled as he sat up.

"Get up, I need to tell you something. Come on, get your slippers on and follow me."

"Harry?" Cedric mumbled, as he caught sight of Salazar in the soft wand light. "How did you get in…?"

"Nevermind that. Just come with me."

"Why?" Cedric asked, still in a sleepy haze as he pulled on his slippers.

"Here, take your cloak too." Salazar whispered, as he handed the yawning and stretching young man his cloak. "It's a bit chilly where we are going."

"Why?"

"Shhh!" Salazar scolded, just as one of Cedric's dorm mates snorted loudly in their sleep.

Cedric, now somewhat more awake, stared at him, but followed Salazar out of the dorm, through the Hufflepuff common room, and out the door. When they reached the corridor, Salazar put a finger up to his own lips, and motioned for Cedric to follow him silently.

Using a few shortcuts, they carefully made their way down into the dungeons, and into Severus's office.

"Harry!" Cedric explained in a horse whisper. "We can't be in here! We will get in loads of trouble if Snape catches us!"

"Its fine Cedric, trust me. Here is some floo powder." He said, handing the wide-eyed boy the powder. "Use the floo, and call out the Hog's Head Pub. Your parents are waiting for you."

"What?" Cedric asked, somewhat startled as he looked at Salazar.

"It all will be explained in a few minutes, just go."

Cedric nodded numbly and did as he was told. Salazar waited for him to go through, then quickly followed behind him.
"Why does it have to be my son Arthur?" Amos Diggory was shouting as Salazar stepped out of the floo. "Why can't someone trained in dealing with dark wizards take his place!? They can use polyjuice or something!"

It was two in the morning, and The Hog’s Head Pub was mostly silent, except for Amos's shouting, as Aberforth, Nicholas, Moody, Severus, Godric, and Minerva, who was comforting a distraught Mrs. Diggory, looked on. Arthur was doing his best to calm Amos down, but nothing seemed to be working.

They had talked to Aberforth a few days before, and he agreed to close the pub down early for them to have this meeting, because they didn't want to risk Albus getting wind of it if they had brought the Diggorys into the castle. Arthur had caught up with Amos at the Ministry and told him that he and his wife needed to be here because it dealt with Cedric and the Tournament. Amos thought it was an odd time to hold a meeting, but he came never-the-less.

Salazar already knew that they had been shown Severus's memory, as well as Salazar's own memories that he had chosen to share, including the one from Albus's office. He didn't relish the idea of three more people knowing his bloody secret, but it was necessary and unavoidable. Cedric needed to understand that when they reached Voldemort, that he needed to take the cup and return to Hogwarts immediately.

"He has to Amos." Moody said, shaking his head. "Unlike Potter, Cedric willingly placed his name in the cup, and he is bound by the contract. He has to compete in the last task."

Amos sputtered a bit and got ready to start shouting again, but then he spotted his son standing behind the bar.

"Cedric!" He cried, jumping over the bar in order to get to him. Mrs. Diggory bolted out of Minerva's arms and also ran to him, and they both nearly knocked him over as they hugged him tightly.

"What is going on?" Cedric asked, looking at everyone in confusion.

"Son, sit down. There is something going on that you need to be aware about." Amos said, casting a glare at Moody, who just sighed and shook his head.

It took nearly two hours to get Cedric caught up with everything that was going on, but by the time the lad had come to understand, he was stunned speechless.

"You're not Harry Potter, you're Salazar Slytherin and you're really Godric Gryffindor?" He asked, causing both Founders to nod. "This is unbelievable." He whispered, as he leaned back in his chair and stared at them in shock. He finally came to his senses a few minutes later, and looked around in horror. "You-Know-Who wants me."

"To an extent." His father replied. "I still don't see why we can't polyjuice someone to look like Cedric."

"But Dad, if You-Know-Who finds out that it's not really me, Professor Snape will die." Cedric replied, causing Severus's eyes to widen in surprise as he stared at the boy.

"But son…"

"No Dad, no. We can't take that chance. Professor Dumbledore was right, if left up to me I wouldn't have left Harry by himself to face down You-Know-Who and a bunch of Death Eaters, but knowing
that he is Salazar Slytherin, a wizard who is not only much older than me, but who is also unable to be killed, leaves me feeling a little better about the whole leaving thing." He said glancing around. "We get there, act like we don't where we are, and when Harry sees that Peter bloke, he yells at me to run. I run. It's simple as that. You-Know-Who will still think that Professor Snape did his part, I'll be safe, and Harry gets...left...behind." He said slowly as he sighed and shook his head. "I hate saying that, it makes me feel like a coward."

"You're not a coward Cedric, in fact, I think it's very brave of you." Godric said, giving the young man an encouraging smile. "Not many people would willingly choose to face Voldemort knowing that they could be killed."

"I have a question though." Mrs. Diggory said, speaking for the first time. "Will You-Know-Who already be back in his old body, or will he still look like that...that...thing." She said, pointing to the pensieve sitting on the bar. "If it's just Pettigrew, Mr. Potter can probably hold him off very easily, giving Cedric a chance to run, but if You-Know-Who is back in his body when they get there, things are likely to go wrong."

"The way the Dark Lord spoke, it seems he wants Potter there to witness his 'rebirth', so it is likely that he will still look like that...thing." Severus said with a curled lip as he glanced at the pensive. "That's something I've been wondering myself truthfully." Arthur said with a sigh. "So are you certain Severus?"

"I am...fairly...certain. One can never know anything with one-hundred percent certainty when it comes to the Dark Lord." He replied.

"Regardless of whether he is or isn't, I think I can hold both he and Pettigrew at bay long enough to let Cedric escape. I plan to put myself between Cedric and them anyway." Salazar said.

"Then I want to do this." Cedric said with a firm nod. "Cedric please think about..."

"Mum, I'm seventeen." He said, looking at his Mother with determined eyes. "One day I can tell my children how I pulled the wool over You-Know-Who's eyes, and left him standing there wondering what in the world went wrong. Even if...I don't make it back...at least I'll die knowing that I tried to do my part. It's only fair. They are doing their part, I need to do mine."

The pub was silent as everyone stared at the determined young man.

"Helga would be so proud of you Cedric." Godric whispered. "She always liked things to be fair, and believed that you should always work hard and pull your own weight. You are a true Hufflepuff, and that is nothing to be ashamed of."

"Really?" Cedric asked, looking at Godric with wide eyes. "Yes." He nodded.

Cedric smiled, but then he immediately frowned. "I feel really bad though. I'm pretty much guaranteed to win the Tournament. Fleur and Krum are really nice people, and I hate to do this to them."

"I know what you mean." Salazar said with a sigh. "Fleur is a bit snooty, but she is really nice, and Krum is not how I expected him to be, seeing as he is from Durmstrang. He is a very respectable young man, and I didn't even have to threaten him to keep his hands to himself when he took
Hermione to the ball."

Godric snorted. "I'm surprised you didn't anyway, just to prove a point."

"Shut up Godric. Just because I didn't hex him, doesn't mean I didn't keep a sharp eye out."

Godric began laughing. "You were too busy dancing with Minerva to see him kiss Hermione."

"What!?" Salazar cried, jumping out of his chair. "I'll hex him!"

"Oh sit down you idiot, I was only joking."

Salazar narrowed his eyes at Godric, but everyone else burst out laughing.

"Are they always like this?" Amos asked, looking over at the Professors.

"Yes." Minerva answered through her giggles, as Severus chuckled.

"They can be highly amusing at times." He said.

"Don't get cheeky Severus. I've told you before, it doesn't suit you." Salazar said with a grin.

To everyone's utter shock, Severus stuck his tongue out at him, which caused Cedric to burst out laughing.

"So wait a minute, every time you two have a blow up in the great hall, it's all an act?" He asked with wide yes.

"Yes." Salazar replied.

"Wow, you two really are cunning Slytherins. Everyone thinks you hate each other's guts. I never would have guessed it." He laughed.

"Well I can't be seen being best mates with the one who brought down the Dark Lord, now can I?" Severus chuckled.

"No sir, I suppose not." Cedric laughed.

"I still don't feel right about all this though." Amos said as he sighed and shook his head. "My son's very life is at stake here."

Salazar glanced up at Amos. "So is my son's life Mr. Diggory."

A sudden silence filled the room as Amos, Cedric, and Mrs. Diggory stared at Salazar.

"Granted, he is not blood related, but I consider Severus as a son." Salazar continued. "I am doing all I can to keep not only your son safe, but mine as well. I understand where you are coming from, and if Severus wasn't involved with this, we would not be having this conversation. We would polyjuice Godric to look like Cedric, make a copy of the Triwizard Cup, have Godric waiting by the copy cup unseen until Mr. Moody gets me through the maze, and we would use the copy of the cup to get to Voldemort, while having someone else stationed in the maze with the real cup, ready to put it back in its rightful place. The Tournament would carry on without anyone realizing anything was amiss." He said with a sigh, but then he continued.

"However, we cannot take the chance that Voldemort will somehow find out that Godric is not really Cedric. He is capable of anything. Just because he said that he would obliviate Cedric and send him
back to Hogwarts, doesn't mean he actually will. If he tries to kill Godric, and it doesn't work, Voldemort will know Severus tipped us off. We can't play dead either, because the killing curse bounces off of us. There is no mistaking it, and I'm certainly not going to let a non-immortal just stand there and take a killing curse for the hell of it."

Once again silence reigned inside the little pub as everyone stared at Salazar.

"You really have thought this all the way through, haven't you Harry?" Arthur finally said.

"Yes Arthur, I have." Salazar said with a nod. "Severus and I already know that because of Cedric's escape, that there is a chance that Severus will be tortured. However, if I can figure out a way to blame Pettigrew for it, Severus may be spared. I absolutely have no qualms about throwing that sniveling, murdering, traitorous, rat bastard under the bus."

"I have to do this Dad." Cedric said quietly as he gazed at his parents. "If I don't, Professor Snape is liable to be found out, and we can't take that risk. At least when I make it back, I can tell Dumbledore and whoever else, what I saw. Whatever I say will probably make its way into the Daily Prophet, but if they polyjuice someone and do it the other way, someone will likely have already won the tournament, and it might not be me. That will make it into the paper too. We already know You-Know-Who reads the paper, and if Krum or Fleur end up winning, You-Know-Who will know it was a trick, and Professor Snape will probably die. We just can't take that risk. I can do this Dad. I really can. All I have to do is run when Harry tells me too."

Amos sighed loudly and rubbed his tired eyes, as his wife started crying again.

"My brave boy." She said, grabbing her son and pulling him into a hug. "My brave, brave boy."

"All right." Amos said, looking at his son with tears in his own eyes. "All right. If this is what you want to do Cedric, I will support you, but it doesn't mean I like it."

"I know Dad, I know." Cedric replied. "I'm scared, and I'd be lying if I pretended otherwise because this is You-Know-Who we are talking about here, but I can do it."

Everyone smiled at the family, but Aberforth spoke up for the first time with something that they all had momentarily forgotten about.

"I hate to add more to this meeting, but we are forgetting about Albus." He said, causing everyone, except the Diggorys, to groan.

"Yes, it appears we have." Nicholas said, rolling his eyes. "Salazar, from the time you and Cedric leave this pub, both of you need to pretend that this meeting never took place. When you make it back from Voldemort, Albus is probably going to want your memory, so Cedric you need to act like you know nothing about this during the task, or when you get to Voldemort. When Salazar finds you in the maze, you need to pretend that it's a good idea that you work with him in order to help him stay alive."

"I like that idea. I can do that, because everyone thinks you're only fourteen." Cedric said, turning to Salazar. "We all know you didn't want to be in this tournament anyway, so it can look like I'm helping you to stay alive. I can say it's because of the brooms you bought Hufflepuff in second year, because I did tell you that I owe you one for that." He added with a grin.

Salazar laughed. "Yes, I suppose you did."

"All right, remind me why we need to keep this from Dumbledore?" Amos said. "Because it seems like he should know."
"Because of the Potters Mr. Diggory." Aberforth said, as he wiped down his bar for the umpteenth time. "If my brother knew that the Potters were still alive, we fear that he would likely try to bring them back here in order for the real Harry to fulfill this blasted prophecy. Hell, my brother is already wanting to sacrifice Salazar for the Greater Good, I have no doubts that if he were to find out the truth, he'd want to do the same thing to the real Harry."

"He wants to what!?" Cedric cried, looking at them with wide eyes, as his parent's eyes bounced from person to person in shock.

"That is what he told me during Potter's second year, Mr. Diggory." Severus said with a sigh. "Dumbledore believes that the prophecy is real, because the Dark Lord believes it to be real. He already thinks that the Dark Lord himself needs to kill Potter," he said motioning to Salazar, "in order for the horcrux in his head to be destroyed. It is one of the reasons why he tried to obliterate Potter in second year, not to mention, slander him, as well as trying to turn everyone Potter loves against him. He is trying to make it 'easier' on everyone because when the time comes, according to Dumbledore, the boy must die by the Dark Lord's hand in order for him to be destroyed for good."

"Holy sweet Merlin." Amos said breathlessly. "He would do that to a child?"

"In order for my brother to come out looking like a shining hero, yes." Aberforth said in disgust, as he slammed his rag down on the bar.

"We also fear that if Dumbledore were to find out who I really am, that he would believe that the prophecy doesn't pertain to me, but the real Harry." Salazar said as he shook his head. "I'm still undecided if the prophecy is actually real, or if it is a fake one made up at the time. I've always thought Trelawney made it up in the hopes of getting the job as Professor."

"I have to admit Salazar," Godric said as he shook his head. "The more this plays out, the more I think the prophecy pertains to you and not the real Harry."

"What since would that make?" Salazar asked. "Lily and James did not give birth to me."

"I don't know." Godric said. "But you were the one marked, not the real Harry, and we both know that there are often many ways a prophecy can be interpreted."

"I suppose your right." Salazar said with a sigh as he rubbed his forehead.

"I have no doubts that Albus is hoping You-Know-Who kills you when you get to him." Minerva said with a scowl as she looked at Salazar. "I firmly believe that is the only reason he told you of this. I think it's his way of atoning for past mistakes. He may think he owes you this one last thing."

"I second what Minerva said." Aberforth growled.

"As do I. He seems to be a bit too…happy…about all this." Moody said gruffly, causing everyone to glance his way.

"I'm not surprised at all." Salazar with a half chuckle, half scoff.

"So this is all to protect the real Harry and his family." Amos said, as he nodded in understanding.

"Yes." Godric simply answered as he sighed heavily.

"All right then. I never knew any of this, and I don't like it. None of it. Not putting Cedric in front of You-Know-Who, not Dumbledore's plans, not…any of it, but I will go along with it." He said with a sigh.
"I thank you Mr. Diggory, I really do, and Cedric, you as well. As Godric said, you're a very brave lad." Salazar said, causing Cedric to smile.

The meeting officially broke up shortly after that. Nicholas secured their minds, but after that, Amos said he needed a whiskey, which Aberforth happily provided him. They did sit and talk about trivial things, but none of them forgot about why they were there in the first place.

When they finally left the pub, the sun was just beginning to rise. Thankfully it was Sunday, so all of them could have a bit of a lie in without arousing too much suspicion.

Salazar felt a little better about everything though. They had a firm plan to get him and Cedric to the cup first and back to Hogwarts safely, however, after that was anyone's guess. Voldemort was unpredictable, and once they got to him, anything was possible.

The next few weeks seemed to crawl by for Salazar, simply because he was nervous. He wanted to get this whole thing done and over with, and he wouldn't rest easy until it was over. Not that that would be much better, seeing as the madman would be on the loose again.

Talk was put forth by Remus and Sirius that maybe Salazar should just get rid of Voldemort again, just like he did last time. They argued that it would give them more time to find all the horcruxes and destroy them, then they could wait until Voldemort regained his body again and kill him for good. It sounded like a good plan on the surface, but as others had argued, they may never have this opportunity again. Next time it may be years before Voldemort returned again, and then it would be up to their children, or their children's children to deal with him. Not to mention living with the near-constant fear that he could return again at any moment, and show up on their doorsteps.

Sure, Salazar, Godric, Merlin, and Nicholas would still be around, but they may not know about until Voldemort began killing again, and then they would have to find him in order to defeat him. Severus may not be around during that time, giving them inside information on where he was, and other such things. They would be clueless, and would have to start all over again.

It was a terrible feeling for all knowing that they would be allowing Voldemort to regain full power, but they agreed it needed to happen. They needed to deal with this now, versus years and years from now. There would be death, there would be destruction, but as Merlin had pointed out many times, the future would be a lot brighter, and the generations that followed would not need to live in fear.

It was during these talks that Salazar began to form a tentative plan on how to deal with his blood-thirsty Heir. He didn't talk about them to anyone, surprisingly, not even Nora and Godric. He decided to keep these thoughts to himself because he didn't really know how to go about carrying out his plan, and he was afraid that they would advise him against it.

Should he use fear in the attempt to control his heir and keep him in line? It was a thought. It may, or may not, work but anything to lessen the death toll that was surly coming would be worth a shot, wouldn't it?

Also during this time, Albus had checked up on Salazar from time to time. He had come up with no definitive plan to get him and Cedric back from Voldemort safely, but he was always careful to remind Salazar that Severus's life was at stake, and that he needed to be careful so that he and Cedric could get to the cup first.

Salazar just shook his head and came to the realization that Minerva was probably right with what she said that night in the Hog's Head Pub.
Albus was hoping 'Harry Potter' would die that night.

The day of the final task had finally arrived, in fact, there was only one hour left until it started. The champions had been allowed to spend the day with their families, who would be allowed to watch the final task, so Sirius, Merlin, Nicholas, and Perenelle were there to show support and give Salazar encouragement. They all had taken the opportunity to wander around the castle, giving Sirius history lessons on its different parts, which made everyone chuckle a bit.

Sirius took it for what it was, and laughed and joked with each fact Salazar and Merlin threw at him, and he even laughed about some of the stories. Merlin told the one where Godric and Salazar had placed a bunch of toads in Helga's office, and how classes were canceled for three days because she had turned them into fish, and banished them into the lake. This story only made Sirius's eyes shine with mischief though, and Salazar knew he had to be on his guard.

During dinner, the children sat with them at the Slytherin table and the conversation ebbed and flowed, but as the minutes ticked by, everyone became more and more nervous. They knew that by the end of the night, Voldemort would be back among them.

"Welcome to the final task of the Triwizard Tournament!" Ludo Bagman's happy voice rang out, causing the stands to erupt into cheers.

Salazar looked over to the judge's table to see him, Albus, Karkaroff, Madame Maxime, several Ministry officials, and to his surprise, a smiling Cornelius Fudge sitting there smiling happily. Even from this distance he could see Albus's twinkling eyes, which made him narrow his own in suspicion.

"In first place we have Hogwarts Champion, Cedric Diggory!" Bagman cried, sending the crowd into a frenzy. "In second place, Durmstrang Champion, Viktor Krum! In third place, Beauxbatons Champion, Fleur Delacour! And last place, Hogwarts's other Champion, Harry Potter!"

Salazar could hear a few boos among the crowd, but he also could hear the old familiar chant of, 'Flying Squid, Flying Squid!' coming from many, many of the students, Fred, George, Neville, and Blaise in particular. He just grinned, pointed at them, and waved as the applause died down.

"Yes, yes, well done Champions for making it this far. Now, as you see before you, there is a maze that stands between you and your prize, The Triwizard Cup!" Bagman exclaimed, sending the crowd into another cheering frenzy. "But that's not all. Not only is the maze eight feet high, but inside the maze lies all manner of dangerous creatures and obstacles. You must overcome them in order to reach the cup, which lies in the center of the maze." He said, causing a few of the audience members to shout 'oohh and aahh'. "Champions will enter one at a time, and with each blow of my whistle, the others will follow. If for any reason you wish to withdraw from the maze, simply send up red sparks with your wand, and we will come and fetch you. Good luck Champions!"

Bagman blew his whistle, and with one last look towards his nervous and highly agitated looking parents, Cedric entered the maze. Another minute passed and again the whistle blew, and Krum entered, followed by Fleur, and then Salazar.

When he stepped into the maze, the bushes instantly closed around him, blocking him from view and shutting out the noise from the crowd. He walked a few more steps before stopping, then he looked
around cautiously before pulling out Remus's mirror that was key to Sirius. He shrunk it down, knowing that the charms would hold up, and then he placed it in his ear so that it would act like a tiny hearing aid of sorts. He had gotten the idea from the muggles, remembering all the commercials about them from the telly he had seen during his time with the Dursleys.

"Can you hear me Potter?" Moody's voice asked in his ear.

Salazar only nodded, knowing that the ex-Auror could see him.

"Good. Double check to make sure that dagger is secure. I don't like the way it's swinging around under your sleeve." Moody growled in his ear.

Salazar just chuckled, but double check to make sure it was indeed secure. It was Godric's dagger that was infused with Emerald's venom. If there was ever a time he needed it, it was now. He knew that it would kill anything he may encounter, so he wanted to have it close at hand.

"Diggory is on the path to the right. It appears that he may be waiting there, but I can't be sure because he seems to be walking in circles."

Salazar nodded once again, and set off. He held his wand tightly in his hand, and only the moonlight and his wand light allowed him to see where he was going. He rounded a corner and took the right path, which is where he found Cedric, who was indeed walking in circles.

"Cedric? Are you ok?" He asked, causing the young man to look up and smile.

Cedric breathed a sigh of relief as he grinned at him. "Harry! I'm so glad I decided to wait for you."

"You're waiting for me? Why?" Salazar asked, pretending to be confused.

"Listen, I know you didn't want to be in this Tournament to begin with, and I understand if you don't want to do what I suggest, but I hope you will. I think it's best if you stick with me. You're only fourteen, and I know you know lots of spells for your age, but I just want to make sure you come out of this alive."

Salazar appeared to wither with relief as he grinned at him. "I think that is an excellent idea, but are you sure I won't slow you down?"

"No, in fact, you might be able to help me." He said, wiggling his eyebrows.

"There might be some Slytherin in you after all." Salazar teased, causing Cedric to recoil in mock horror.

"Just get on with it!" Moody shouted in is ear. "Krum and Fleur are just a head of you, and when you get to the fork, go left."

"Ok, well we better go." Salazar said, motioning on ahead.

They made their way carefully through the maze. Sometimes Cedric would point out a better way through, and sometimes Moody would suggest another way, which helped them avoid some of the nasty things that were lurking about.

They did come across a boggart and a real dementor, which caused Salazar to start swearing up a storm. Moody told him that Fleur had come across it earlier and was nearly kissed by it. Salazar became extremely angry upon hearing that, and he cast his patronus, and chased the bloody thing out of the maze and off the school grounds. He knew that the judges and crowd had seen it, but he didn't
care.

He was determined to have words with Albus about that.

Moody kept them updated on where Fleur and Krum were. Apparently, sometime after the dementor, Fleur was so distraught that she sent up red sparks, so Minerva went to get her. Krum was actually in front of them, but Moody said that he appeared to be stuck in some kind of golden mist, and had been there for several minutes. This spurred Salazar to pick up the pace a bit, but he hated knowing Fleur had to withdraw from the competition.

Cedric and Salazar pushed forward, with Cedric in the lead except where some of the creatures were located. He did take care of a Red Cap, which was hiding in a hole in the ground that had blood around it, and was also able to easily get them past a Hinkypunk, which tried to lead them into a small bog that was placed in one of the dead ends.

Their luck ran out however, when they came across one of Hagrid's Blast-Ended Skrewts. The thing was ginormous, and couldn't be avoided no matter which way they went. Salazar's hair got singed when fire erupted out of its back end, but between the two of them, they were able to subdue it with well-placed stunners to its underbelly.

"Almost there Potter. I'm sure you're smart enough to answer the riddle from the sphinx, and right past that is the cup. Krum is now behind you, because it took him nearly ten minutes to get out of that golden mist." Moody said quietly.

Salazar only nodded, and they headed down another path, which took them right to the sphinx. Cedric stared at it with wide eyes, but Salazar smiled.

"Hello great lady, how are you this fine evening?" He said, looking up at it.

"Fairly well small boy. You are the first ones to reach me tonight." She replied, causing both of them to let out deep, relieved sighs. She smiled at them. "Listen closely to me, what you seek lies right past me. Answer my riddle correctly, and I will let you pass. Answer wrong, and I will attack. If you say nothing, I will let you walk away to find another way to what you seek."

"That seems fair." Salazar said with a nod. "May we hear the riddle?"

"Of course. First think of the person who lives in disguise, who deals in secrets and tells naught but lies. Next, tell me what's always the last thing to mend, the middle of middle and end of the end? And finally give me the sound often heard, during the search for a hard-to-find word. Now string them together and answer me this, which creature would you be unwilling to kiss?"

Cedric gasped, but then he smiled. "I think I got this Harry, hang on." He said, and then turned to the sphinx. "Can you repeat that, but much slower?"

"Certainly." She replied, and did so.

Salazar watched Cedric pace back and forth for several seconds, and smiled when he snapped his fingers together.

"Ok Harry, I think I'm right, but in case I'm wrong, get ready to run."

"All right." Salazar replied, but he didn't move.

Cedric took a deep breath and glanced at the sphinx. "A spider." He said hesitantly, and with a slight cringe.
The sphinx grinned at both of them. "You are correct child. You may pass."

Salazar and Cedric grinned at each other, and walked passed the sphinx when she moved aside.

"I have to confess Harry, one of my guilty pleasures is solving riddles and puzzles. My Dad often stops by a muggle book shop in London on his way home from the Ministry, and brings me muggle books filled with them." Cedric said with a grin.

"I think that is wonderful Cedric. I think it is always great to keep your mind sharp, and solving puzzles and riddles will help with that. It also helps with your logical and critical thinking skills, which most witches and wizards highly lack." Salazar replied, just as they caught sight of the cup.

When they walked into the small clearing they both stared at the cup, but knowing what lay on the other side of it, caused them both to pause and stare at the cup with wide eyes.

"Listen Harry," Cedric said, suddenly tensing up as a quiver entered his voice. "I have an idea, and I owe you this because of the brooms you bought Hufflepuff in your second year. I don't know what's going to happen when I grab the cup. It may be nothing, or it may send me back to the judges, but I don't want you to have to fight your way back through all that mess." He said, motioning behind them to the maze.

"What are you saying Cedric?" Salazar asked in confusion.

"I want you to take it with me. I could use the disillusionment charm on you, so if it takes us back to the judges, they won't see you. If it doesn't, then we can just make our way back through the maze."

"Moody will see me." Salazar pointed out.

"Yeah I guess you're right, but I don't think he will say anything, especially if we explain to him what we are doing." Cedric replied.

"I guess you're right." Salazar said with a nod.

Their eyes met, and Salazar could see the sheer terror going on in the boy's eyes, but there was also a strong determination there too.

"Shall we?" Salazar asked, and Cedric nodded.

"Have you heard of the disillusionment charm?"

"I have only read about it, but I don't know how to do it." He replied.

"Ok, well it feels like an egg is being cracked over your head, so be ready for it."

"Ok."

Salazar grinned and slightly shivered as the sensation passed from his head to his feet, but he shuffled close to the cup when he was no longer visible.

"Are you ready?" Cedric asked. "I can't believe it Harry, I won the Tournament!" He suddenly exclaimed with a bright smile. "I can't believe it."

"You did Cedric," Salazar replied with a happy grin, "and thank you for helping me. I really didn't want to have to go back through that stuff myself."

Cedric chuckled. "It's all right Harry. It's like I said, I owe you this."
"Ready? One…two…three…" Salazar replied, and they grasped the cup together.

They hit the ground with loud 'oofs' when they landed, but by this time, Salazar's stomach was nearly in is throat because of how nervous he was. He would not breathe easy until Cedric was away from this place. The cup had landed several yards away, and he motioned for Cedric to move closer to it, until he realized that the lad couldn't see him.

They could smell fresh earth and see dim objects all around them, which cast eerie shadows on the wet grass beneath their feet.

"Where are we? Do you think it's still part of the contest?" Cedric asked nervously.

"I don't know, reverse the disillusionment charm that's on me." Salazar replied.

Cedric quickly did, but noticed that Salazar was between him and most of the objects.

"I can't see a bloody thing." Cedric whispered fearfully.

"Let me handle this." Salazar said, holding up his wand.

A bright ball of light shot out from the end of it, and hung in the air over the center of what appeared to be a graveyard. They crept closer to the center, and right in the middle of all the tombstones, they saw a large black cauldron that was bubbling away innocently. Salazar's sharp eyes were darting around, hoping to catch sight of any sort of movement.

"Harry, I don't like this place." Cedric whispered. "What do you think we should do?"

Salazar kept quiet though, as he glanced at some of the graves. One in particular however, made his eyes widen in shock.

"Tom Riddle." He said loudly.

"What?" Cedric asked, looking around wildly. "Hey isn't that You-Know-Who's real name? I remember that from an article I read in the Daily Prophet at the beginning for the year."

"Yes." Salazar said as he nodded. "Cedric, I don't know what is going on, but we need to get back to the cup right now. Hopefully it takes us back to Hogwarts."

"I'm with you on that." Cedric croaked, as he quickly made his way over to it.

Cedric was already beside the cup, waiting for Salazar's next signal when they heard movement behind them. Salazar quickly spun around with his wand at the ready, and scowled as he saw Peter come out of some sort of mausoleum, with a bundle of robes in his arms.

He heard Cedric gasp behind him, and Salazar would wait no more.

"Peter Pettigrew! You killed my parents!" Salazar shouted at the top of his lungs. "Cedric, get to the cup! Go, go, go!"

"Not without you Harry!" Cedric cried, just as Salazar turned to run. "Come on, come on!" Cedric screamed.

"Go Cedric!"

"Hurry Harry!" Cedric cried.
“STALL POTTER NAGINI!” Salazar heard Voldemort shout, just as Salazar thought he might get them both out of there at the same time.

Cedric was already in the process of reaching for the cup, knowing that Salazar was bolting towards him, but Salazar was blindsided by a very large snake that shot up out of the grass and quickly knocked him off his feet. His wand and glasses went flying, but he was able to see a bright light near Cedric, and the popping sound of the portkey taking the boy away.

Cedric hit solid ground again, which sent the cup flying away from him, but this time he heard nothing but the roar of the crowd.

"Harry! Harry!" He screamed, as his eyes darted around. "He was just with me! He was just with me!"

Albus came barreling his way towards him, as his extremely relieved parents shrieked loudly and began running full speed towards him.

Albus reached him first and tried to calm him down, but Cedric knew that he still had a part to play.

"Headmaster, Harry…Tom Riddle…Peter Pettigrew…” He babbled, just as Amos Diggory grasped his son in a tight hug.

The man was sobbing heavily, both from relief and happiness.

"My boy! My boy!"

"Amos I must speak to Cedric a moment." Albus said, trying to pry Amos off his own son.

A stinging jinx caught Albus on his hand, and he cried out with surprise. He turned around to find Mrs. Diggory with her wand in her hand.

"Whatever you have to say can wait Albus." She said with a forced smile. "We have to celebrate a moment."

She brushed past Albus and hugged her son tightly, but before Albus could get another word in, Cedric was being surrounded by cheering students.

Pain.

That was what Salazar felt as the large snake sank its fangs into his collarbone. He tried to squirm his way out, but another very painful bite was all he received for his efforts. He brought his one free hand up and punched the snake in the face, but it hissed loudly in pain and bit him again, this time on his left forearm.

He wisely stopped struggling after that, but he did make his displeasure known.

"Get off of me you silly peasant!" He hissed loudly.

"Shut up you stupid child, or I will bite you again." The snake replied as it brought its face close to his own.

"I have a very hungry basilisk that would love you for a snack!" Salazar shouted, causing the snake to draw back, ready to strike again.
"Nagini, you must not play rough with our guest." Voldemort said with a hint of amusement. "Do not bite him again unless I say, or unless he hits you again." He added, with his voice laced with warnings."I do not wish him to die from blood loss...just yet."

It was too late though. Salazar could feel blood trickling from the bite wounds already, though thankfully she had missed all his major arteries.

Salazar glared at Peter and Voldemort, who both seemed to be unconcerned with his predicament. He was lying a few feet from the cauldron, but Peter turned his back on him as Salazar laid there, still trapped by the snake.

"Do it now Wormtail!" Voldemort suddenly snapped. "I do not wish to wait a moment longer!"

Salazar watched the blurry outline of Peter drop Voldemort into the bubbling cauldron, and was somewhat mildly interested in what would take place next, though he curled his lip when Peter began reciting instructions he clearly had been instructed to remember.

"Bone of the father, unknowingly given, you will renew your son." Peter chanted, and flicked a wand at the grave of Tom Riddle.

Salazar glared at the little rat, then at the cauldron because he instantly knew what this potion was. It had been used a few times before by other dark wizards, and had been invented by Morgana.

Merlin was not going to be happy about this!

"Flesh of the servant, willingly sacrificed, you will revive your master." Peter whimpered, and Salazar's eyes glinted with glee as Peter's scream ripped through the air when he cut off his hand.

"Blood of the enemy, forcibly taken, you will resurrect your foe." Peter said in a very shaky voice as he uncorked a vial of blood with his teeth, and poured the blood into the cauldron.

Peter instantly fell over backwards, which caused the snake to hiss loudly. He scrambled away, still whimpering in pain, but Salazar just glared at him and briefly wondered whose blood it had been.

He didn't get to thank on it long however, as the cauldron exploded with the force of muggle TNT. Voldemort appeared out of the rising smoke, with black robes billowing all around him. He seemed to stop a moment to take a deep breath. Then he began running his hands all over his body, which made Salazar highly nauseous.

Red eyes met green ones in an instant, but Salazar did not look away. He only glared at Voldemort in disgust, which seemed to amuse the snake like creature who towered over him. Voldemort did not say a word to him though, instead he looked at Peter, who was in the midst of trying to bow and cower at the same time.

"Master, Master!" He whimpered in a mixture of pain and fear.

"Rise Wormtail, and hold out your arm." Voldemort said, as his red flashed dangerously.

A brief moment of relief appeared on Peter's face as he stood, but the next moment had him gulping in fear. He held out his left arm, and shrieked with pain as Voldemort placed a bony white finger to the dark mark on his arm, while simultaneously snatching the wand out of Peter's hand.

"Now we will see. Yes, we shall see." Voldemort murmured to himself as he looked towards the sky. "Who will return? Who is faithful, and who is foolish?"
Salazar continued to lay still with the snake wrapped tightly around him as Voldemort paced the graveyard. He could feel the sticky wetness of his blood around him, and dreaded the moment Voldemort issued the snake to release him, knowing that the blood would began to flow out of him more freely.

He knew she was poisonous because he was already starting to feel slightly woozy. She was green he noted, and her markings reminded him of Emeralda's. He wondered if maybe she was related to the basilisk family.

Just then loud pops echoed throughout the graveyard, and Salazar stifled a laugh as he thought of the irony this situation brought. The last time he himself had been at a Death Eater gathering saw him laying at Voldemort's feet in his animagus form. Now he was at another Death Eater gathering, laying at Voldemort's feet, wrapped up in the coils of his new pet.

Salazar knew from instinct who was who, just by where the Death Eaters stood. They all had assigned places, and he smirked in Lucius Malfoy's blurry figure as the man bowed low. Out of curiosity, he glanced in Karkaroff's place, and stifled another laugh, seeing as that spot was completely empty. Then he glanced at Severus's spot and a brief moment of fear pierced his heart as he saw it empty, but one more loud pop set his mind at ease as that spot was quickly filled.

He breathed a bit easier after that. He couldn't see Severus clearly, seeing as his glass were still laying in the grass somewhere next to his wand, but his heart told him that Severus was watching him, and he closed his eyes and felt his body relax just a bit.

Voldemort was making a grand comeback speech, babbling about thirteen years, and how long it's been, but Salazar laid there with his eyes closed as a plan quickly began forming in his mind on how he should handle the situation. It was brilliant really, so simple, but he knew it was going to hurt like mad.

It was a shame the snake had to die though, she really was beautiful, even if she was a simple peasant.

Salazar squeezed his eyes shut and tried to picture where his glasses and wand were, then he took a deep breath, and gathered all his power to him.

"AVADA KEDAVRA!" He shouted.

The sudden shout and bright, sickly green light lit up the graveyard. It was silent for a moment, but then a small pop was heard as Salazar apparated out of the dead snake's coils, and landed by his wand and glasses. Using Voldemort's momentary lack of 'knowing what in the hell is happening' he scooped them up, and promptly disappeared in a massive ball of flames.

That was not the only thing that happened though. A second after having disillusioned himself, an unearthly scream erupted from the dead snake, and Salazar's jaw dropped open as a massive black cloud filled the space above her. It was only after the cloud vanished and its screams died down that he burst out laughing.

He could have fled back to Hogwarts in that very moment, but he didn't want to.

No, he wanted to up and stay a while. Besides, he needed to protect Severus from any backlash.

Voldemort screamed with rage, and every Death Eater hit their knees in the hopes of not being hit by the green curses that began flying around the graveyard. Salazar hid behind a tombstone and snickered to himself, but shuffled off when it exploded as a random killing curse collided with it.
He was hurting now though. Apparating caused his body to constrict, and landing caused it to expand again. The bites he had received from the now dead snake began bleeding even more, and he felt even woozier than he had before. He tried a minor healing charm on his bites, but to his dismay, they did not heal.

Despite this major setback in his plan, Salazar still grabbed a small rock that was lying next to him, because he knew it would come in handy soon.

"POTTER!" Voldemort screamed, sending a killing curse nowhere near Salazar's direction.

Then he felt something shimmer in the air that made him snort. Voldemort had put up anti-disapparition wards.

"What!?" Salazar called back. "Sorry about your snake Tom, I didn't realize she was one of your…trinkets!"

"You dare!? You dare!?!" Voldemort yelled as he cast another killing curse, only this time in the direction of Salazar's voice.

"You missed me! Just so you know!" Salazar yelled back, causing Voldemort to huff loudly.

He was pacing back and forth like a caged up cat, and his actions reminded Salazar of Voldemort's memory in the Chamber of Secrets nearly two years ago.

He laughed again, and reversed the disillusionment charm.

"Sorry I look a mess right now. Covered in blood and such. I guess that's your fault really." Salazar said, making his way into the center of the circle of Death Eaters, who were staring at him wide-eyed and in shock. Salazar tried not to flinch though, as pain shot down his collarbone.

"Let's see…the snake was obviously one of your…trinkets. Rowena's fake diadem was another one of your…trinkets, then there was the diary…then me! Yes that is…let's see…one, two, three, and four. Four now! Three to go I assume?" He asked, looking at Voldemort, who glared at him in a stunned silence, but then Salazar chuckled again. "You seemed stunned. Is it because I found Rowena's fake diadem, or is it because you just now learned that I was one of your…trinkets?"

Voldemort continued to glare at him, but Salazar smirked.

"No wait, assuming that you have made the maximum number of…trinkets…and you are stunned because you have realized that you can't make anymore of them. Yes, that is it. You can't make anymore…trinkets. I'm so sorry about that, but you see, you disappoint me Tom. I warned you. I warned you all the way back in my first year. Don't you remember, it was during Christmas Holiday! Don't tell me you have forgotten! I nearly scared the crap out of Ron Weasley with a giant flaming snake, along with a giant water snake. It caused a lot of…steam…in…the…great…hall." He said letting his voice die down as he looked into Voldemort's still stunned expression, even though his heir was trying to hide his shock.

"No? Yes? No then, I guess. I shall remind you. I had a big ol book written by Salazar Slytherin, or rather I should say…written by me…but I read a big passage about…trinkets…and how they caused a wizard to become mad, deranged, and unstable. Remember when I mentioned Herpo the Foul and how I killed him. You remember, you have to remember. You were sitting right there! Firmly planted in the back of Quirrell's head!"

Salazar sighed and shook his head, as Voldemort continued to stare at him.
"You're giving me nothing Tom. Absolutely nothing." Salazar said, throwing his hands up in the air, then realized what an idiotic mistake that was, seeing as his wounds were still bleeding.

Voldemort began pacing again, but he kept his sharp red eyes on Salazar the whole time, and still said nothing.

Salazar sighed, pinched the bridge of his nose, and shook his head. "What am I to do with you? You do realize that not even Godric's children turned out like this…and they are bloody Gryffindors! Oh and that potion you used? You mentioned it was old magic. Do you know just how old that potion is, and how many times it's been used? Morgana herself created that blasted potion. Did you know that? It's so unoriginal." He said with a sigh, as he shook his head again.

"But let's get back to the trinkets. Now, I'm not foolish enough to ask what they are, and where they are because I know you're not going to tell me, but do you realize how much trouble you have caused me? My own bloody heir has gone off and created trinkets, and I, along with Godric, have to hunt them down, destroy them, then me…Salazar Slytherin…has to kill you. I have to kill off my own bloody family line. Do you know how much that hurts me to have to do?" Salazar asked as he shook his head once again, but then he continued on with his mini-rant.

"I've always wondered why fate placed me in the body of a half-blood this time around, but now I know. I have to kill off my own family line. Why in the hell could you not do what any other normal wizard has done? Why couldn't you just find a sweet little witch, settle down, and keep the family line going? I swear on Godric's left butt cheek, you have caused me nothing but headache, after headache, after headache!" Salazar cried, sighing with exasperation as he glared at Voldemort, who was still pacing back and forth, but now he was outright glaring and sneering at Salazar.

"Finally! I finally get a reaction out of you. I swear this so called 'Slytherin Mask' is a pain in my arse. Why in the hell do all of you Slytherins have to walk around acting and looking like a bunch of emotionless inferi? It's pitiful! Absolutely pitiful!" He shouted, then he staggered sideways just a bit.

"Oh my head. I've lost a lot of blood, so I have to wrap this up pretty quickly. I do hope Cedric made it back ok, but Godric is going to be very worried about me, seeing as I have not been found in the maze yet. He is going to pitch a bloody Gryffindor fit because I am nowhere to be found. I need to let him know that I have destroyed another trinket though, that might cool his temper a bit."

"What are you talking about Potter?" Voldemort finally hissed.

"What do you mean?" Salazar asked, looking up at Voldemort. "Oh, are you talking about why I'm talking about being Salazar Slytherin, and Gordy is Godric Gryffindor?"

Voldemort's glare showed him that was, indeed, what he was talking about.

"Oh, Godric and I are immortal…in a sense." Salazar sighed, as he flinched a bit and tried to shift his weight a little.

Voldemort eyes grew wide at that. "What do you mean Potter?"

"Well, you see, I told you that time in the great hall. I told you that I was looking for a way to live forever. I found it you see. I live for one-hundred and fifty years, and then I die. Right after, my soul gets reborn into another wizard who is just being born. I believe the muggles call it reincarnation. I get to keep all of my memories, skills, knowledge, and power, but the only drawback is the fact that I have to grow up all over again. I have to endure childhood as a normal child, but when I get that Hogwarts letter, that is when I get all my real power back. Godric got mad at me because I did it without telling him, but when he saw me eleven years later, as a young pure-blood lad with a whole
new name and appearance just starting Hogwarts, he was intrigued. Why in the hell do you think I disappeared from Hogwarts, never to return again? Godric waited until I was ready to die again, and then he also went through the ritual, though it was a year later, so he always ends up at Hogwarts a year behind me. The sorting hat let's him know who I am and what house I happened to pick that time." Salazar replied, but then then he sighed heavily and slumped against a nearby tombstone.

"Any more questions? I really should be getting back."

"You're not going anywhere Potter." Voldemort said, as he fingered his wand. "I believe this is all lies. LIES!" He shouted. "A nice story, very cunning and well thought out, but lies none the less!"

"Lies?" Salazar chuckled. "If I'm lying, try and kill me. I guarantee I won't die. Not until I turn one-hundred and fifty."

The slits that passed for Voldemort's nose flared just a bit, and Salazar sighed and shook his head.

His heir was so damn predictable in moments like these.

"AVADA KEDAVRA!"

The curse struck Salazar right in the chest, but it bounced and headed right back towards Voldemort, whose eyes widened in shock. He dove to the ground in a very ungraceful manner as the curse just barely missed him. However, unfortunately for Peter, he was standing right behind him, and took the full brunt of the curse.

Salazar burst out laughing, but he had to slump down against the tombstone so that he wouldn't pass out. Voldemort stared at him, then at Peter, then back to Salazar with wide eyes.

"I told you so." Salazar chuckled as he gazed up at Voldemort. "It couldn't happen to a nicer bloke though. He betrayed my parents, so I could actually care less. I know a few people who will be happy to know that he is dead."

Then Salazar turned his attention to Lucius.

"Are you scared yet Mr. Malfoy? If Tom doesn't kill you, I surely will. You tried to kill me, then you used the Black family fortune to bribe your way out of Azkaban. Very Gryffindor of you, especially knowing that Sirius was going to do what he did. If you had been smart about it, you would have gone to Azkaban, and gave that bribe money to your now impoverished wife and son. I told you once before that your actions were very Gryffindorish. Remember back in Dumbledore's office in my first year? You peed yourself. You remember that, don't you Tom? I do believe you even laughed about it."

No sound came from Lucius, but Salazar saw that the man was terrified. Salazar however, continued.

"You have a lot to answer for. First you turn tail and scream imperius, then you live the high life, then you give away one of Tom's trinkets, which, I might add, allowed me to destroy it, thereby alerting me to just how many trinkets my wayward heir has. I already knew I was one. I remember exactly what happened that night in Godric's Hollow. Then you tried to kill me and Dumbledore. Did you really think anyone was going to be happy with you?"

"I will be dealing with you later Lucius, make no mistake about it. You are going to pay with your life. I am going to kill you, just not here, and not right now." Voldemort said with a tone laced with deadly venom.

"Aww, I don't get to watch? That sucks." Salazar said weakly as he gazed up at Voldemort, who had not taken his eyes off Lucius.
Lucius took that moment to rip off his mask and hood, as he stared at Voldemort with terrified eyes and hit his knees.

"M-My L-Lord please. I have never renounced the old ways. I was just waiting for your return. I thought that if I…"

"Crucio!" Voldemort shouted.

Lucius's screams echoed around them, but Salazar only laughed. After a few more moments, Voldemort ended the curse, but no one made a move to help the twitching man now laying limp on the ground. Then Voldemort's uncaring eyes shifted back to Salazar.

"Tell me…Salazar…how did you destroy my…trinkets?" He asked with mild curiosity.

"Emeralda's venom. She is my basilisk after all. She bit your diary clean in half, but I accidently nicked my hand on her tooth. I knew at that point it was just best to let the venom circulate through my system, until it reached the trinket in my head. It got destroyed then. By the way, I'm mad at you for setting her loose fifty-two years ago. A muggle born got killed, and do you know how distraught Emeralda was when she learned she had been tricked by you? She realized that she killed one of her 'little ones' by accident. I should feed you to her. It would make her day. Speaking of snakes though, Nora is probably worried. I really should be going soon."

"You're not going anywhere." Voldemort hissed. "You are going to join me, and together, we are going to rule this world."

"You have not been paying attention at all have you? I'm going to kill you, just not today because…I can't. Seeing as there is still more trinkets left to find, and rest assured, I will find them." Salazar laughed weakly.

"Crucio!"

The pain was horrible. He hated the damn curse, but Salazar sat slumped against the tombstone cringing and gritting his teeth in pain. He refused to cry out though, he was not going to give Voldemort the satisfaction of hearing him scream in pain.

Voldemort let up a few moments later, but Salazar closed his eyes and leaned his head against the tombstone.

And began laughing again.

Voldemort watched him closely, ready for anything, but Salazar finally opened his eyes and looked at him once more.

"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches, born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies…have I got your attention yet?" Salazar asked with a weak grin, as Voldemort's eyes widened. "I remember it like it was yesterday. Dumbledore came to our house. I was playing with a stuffed dragon in my crib, and Mum and Dad were seated on the couch just a few feet away. Dumbledore told them of the prophecy. I have never given much thought to divination, seeing as I consider it beneath me, but Godric said something to me the other day that has got me thinking that maybe this one is true."

"Tell me the rest Potter, or I will curse you again." Voldemort said with warning.

"Oh I'll tell you, but not because you threatened me. I'll tell you because it's fair warning. Back in my original days, it was proper to warn another wizard that you were out to kill them. It was polite you
see." Salazar laughed, but then he continued. "And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal," He recited, as he tapped the scar on his forehead, and he noticed that Voldemort's eyes flickered to it, "but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...I'm guessing that's my own immortality, knowledge, and power..." He added. "And either must die at the hand of the other, for neither can live while the other survives. The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies." Salazar finished with a sigh as he closed his eyes.

Then he chuckled.

"And seeing as I can't die, you're pretty screwed." He said, looking up at the snake like man as he towered over him.

"I will find a way to kill you Potter, for I still do not believe your story. However, your continuous babbling has provided me with a lot of information, so I thank you for that."

"Take it however you want Tom. I do not care if you don't believe me. Dumbledore knew you were there during my first year. Nicholas knew too, but that was only because I told him. Dumbledore will know what I have said here tonight, and he will find out that you have returned when I give him this memory. He will be shocked to learn what I have said, because he does not know any of this, but I don't care. I know Dumbledore is the only one you are afraid of, but there are two more wizards you should be even more terrified of. Godric and myself. We are coming for you, and unlike Dumbledore, we don't play with tickling charms and stunners. We came from a time when it was kill or be killed, so be warned, if you come against me, you will die. I will kill each and every one of you if you cross my path." He added, as he looked around the circle of Death Eaters.

"I do not fear the Ministry and I do not fear Azkaban, because I can easily escape. If I hear of even a whisper of muggles being tortured, I will find you. If I hear of one wizarding family being attacked, I will find you. Tom, you better find a cave and hope to Merlin you never have a reason to come out of it, for if you do, Godric and I will be waiting. You better heed my warning boy, because the longer you hide, the longer you will live." Salazar finished, as his cold, serious eyes bored into Voldemort's red ones.

Voldemort narrowed his eyes and huffed with annoyance. "I do not fear you Potter. Your story is nothing but lies, as I said before. I will take you from this place, and I will torture you until you give me all of the answers to the many questions that I still have."

"You can try and detain me Tom, but you will fail, just as you always do." Salazar said with a weak grin.

Voldemort waved his hand nonchalantly at Salazar, but then Voldemort turned his back on him, in order to address his followers.

Salazar saw his chance.

With the last bit of strength he had left, he shot a curse at Voldemort's feet, which lit the wizard up like a Christmas tree. Voldemort screamed like a little girl as the electricity surged through his body, then it sent him flying into a nearby cluster of Death Eaters.

Salazar leapt up from where he had been sitting, and dived on top of Peter's lifeless body. Then with one swift move, he summoned the dead snake. Voldemort was in the process of trying to regain his wits, but he glared at Salazar.

"Portus!" Salazar cried out loud and clear with a grin.
Then, with a cheeky wave, he portkeyed away, with Peter and the snake in tow.

Salazar hit the ground hard, but he sighed with relief as he realized he had made it back to Hogwarts. He could see the start of the maze just off to his left, and he smiled weakly when he heard a few people gasp, but then he heard a familiar voice shriek loudly.

"Harry!" Hermione cried, but it was Godric's face he saw hovering over him a moment later.

He unclenched his hand to reveal the small rock that he had been clutching the entire time.

"It's a portkey." He mumbled, then he passed out.

Chapter End Notes

I know some of you may be angry at how I handled the graveyard scene, but i ask you, why does it always have to end in an epic duel of magical knowledge and power? Why cant it be handled with a bit of Slytherin cunning? I'll leave that up to you to answer. I hope you all still stick with me though because there is lots more of the story to come.

There is a debate on Harry Potter wiki on whether or not Nagini could be killed by the killing curse. Some believe she can, by pointing out the fact Harry died by one in canon, but others say no because Harry died by one from Voldy, whose horcrux it was. I took the liberty to say that she could, so i hope that answers that question, and that no one is mad at me.

Also, before you all ask, i want to point out that 'anti-portkey wards' do not exist in HP canon. That is more of a 'fanon' thing. However, the anti-disapparation jinx (or ward, whichever word you prefer) is canon. I took the liberty to make anit-portkey wards not part of my story. However, that doesnt mean Merlin, or someone cant invent 'anti-portkey wards' at a later time. :)

Next chapter will be the wrap up of 4th year. It will feature Albus's reaction to what happened in the graveyard, which should be pretty funny, but also Fudge's reaction to everything. Will Cedric as a witness make Fudge see the truth, or not? Until next time my dear readers...Rita...oh wait...I'm sorry...preciousann! :)

Chapter 49

Arrested

When Salazar woke up, he didn’t know where he was at first, but then he began to smell the old familiar smell of the hospital wing, and he smiled. He took stock of himself as he laid there, and he realized that there was a light weight in the middle of his chest, but then he realized there was a much heavier weight down by his feet.

Confused, he opened his eyes just a bit and lifted his head, only to start chuckling at the surprise that was waiting for him.

"Hello my dears." He said softly, as he sat up.

Nora was laying on his chest, and Emeralda's head was down by his feet, though it was half hanging off the bed. He was actually shocked to see her here, and began wondering what was going on.

"Speaker!" Nora cried, at the same time Emeralda shouted, "Master!"

"To what do I owe the pleasure, and does Poppy know you're here?" He asked, taking a large gulp of water from the glass by his bed.

"She knows Master." Emeralda replied with a slight tinge of disgust in her voice. "In fact, she is encouraging it because that stupid fool who fancies himself a leader wants to haul you off to prison."

Salazar furrowed his brow, but before he could ask what she meant, Nora spoke up.

"She means Babbles. Babbles wants to take you to jail for killing the rat. He thinks you did it out of spite."

"How long have I been asleep, and did Cedric and Severus make it back ok?" He asked, still a bit confused.

"Master, you have been asleep for two days, and yes both the little one and Severus made it back just fine. In fact, Severus wanted me to tell you that he is in the clear, and that Voldemort doesn't suspect a thing." Emeralda replied, as she shifted her large body into a more comfortable position.

Salazar breathed a sigh of relief and rubbed his forehead.

"Tell me what happened." He requested. "And where is everyone?"

"They all went to dinner Speaker, but Jolly, Dumbly, Shaggy, and Wolfy said that they would be back afterwards. As for what happened, when you got back, you passed out. Jolly immediately went to you, and Dumbly brought you here. Healthy and Kitty were beside themselves with worry over you because of how much blood you were covered in. When you got in here, Healthy ran scans to determine what happened, and nearly fainted when they showed that you had been bitten and poisoned, as well as having been under the torture curse."
"Godric wanted to use Nehum's tears right way to heal you, but Miss Poppy wouldn't let him. She said that she wanted to try to treat you properly, and didn't want phoenix tears to become the cure all for every little bump and scrape." Emeralda replied.

"However, nothing she did worked. She didn't understand it, and neither did anyone else. Your bite wounds refused to heal and stop bleeding, and after twenty-four hours with nothing working, she finally let the Peacock heal you." Nora added.

"What happened to Pettigrew and the snake I brought back?" Salazar asked, as he sat up a little higher.

"Well that's the thing that's got everyone in a tizzy Master. At first, no one knew what happened and no one understood why you had brought back a snake, but Pettigrew was a little easier to understand. It wasn't until Severus returned later that night that everyone understood. He returned very late, and went down to the Snake Pit to talk to Godric first. He showed him his memory of the graveyard, then he went to the Headmaster."

"Then all of the nonsense started Speaker. You wouldn't believe it. Babbles..."

"She means the Minister." Emeralda interrupted.

"Hush up Shrew, I'm telling this part!" Nora cried with a flick of her tongue, which caused Emeralda to hiss loudly. "Anyway Speaker, Babbles thinks this is all made up. He thinks you killed the rat out of spite, just like I said before. Dumbly told him that it wasn't you, instead it was Morty, but Babbles doesn't believe a word of it. He says its all made up, and that you and Dumbly are trying to ruin him."

Salazar stared at his beloved snakes in shock and confusion. "But what about Cedric? He saw Pettigrew and Voldemort."

"The Minister did question him, and the little one told him, but when the Minister asked if he saw Voldemort himself, the little one said no. He only saw Pettigrew, the gravestone with Tom Riddle's name, and a bundle of black robes in Pettigrew's arms."

"Dumbly tried to tell Babbles that the black robes had Morty in them, but Babbles said he was mad and started yelling at him. Babbles believes that this is all a lie, and that the handsome one was confounded into believing what he says he saw. Handsome tried to tell him otherwise, but Babbles disregarded him. It was then that Batty jerked up his sleeve to show Babbles the dark mark, but Babbles just stared at him and started saying that everyone was in on the plot to ruin him."

"As for Pettigrew being dead, the Minister wants to haul you in on charges for murder. He said you tried to take justice into your own hands. Godric told me what was happening, and I wasn't going to stand for it, so I came up here to protect you from being hauled away. The Minister won't step foot in here as long as I'm in here."

"The Shrew has her uses." Nora added.

Salazar eyes continued to bounce back and forth between the two snakes, and couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"But what about the memory? Hasn't Albus showed Fudge the memory?"

Emeralda shook her head no. "The Headmaster hasn't shown anyone the memory, except Moody."

"WHY??" Salazar shouted, hopping out of the bed and glaring at them, though they knew he wasn't
mad at them.

"Batty thinks it's because you mentioned that Morty was here in first year, and that Dumbly knew about it. Batty suspects that Dumbly is trying to protect himself."

Salazar's eyes grew hard and cold with fury. The windows in the hospital wing began rattling, but they weren't the only ones. Every window in the castle was rattling violently, then when Salazar let out a loud, furious yell, they all exploded.

"That will get everyone's attention." Emeralda hissed with amusement. "No doubt Godric will be here any minute."

Salazar turned to glare at the windows that were already in the process of repairing themselves, and he knew that Godric was the one responsible for it. Then he sighed loudly, sat back down on the bed, and shook his head in frustration.

"Who has seen the memory?" Salazar asked.

"Everyone has seen the memory Speaker, but that's only because Jolly made a copy of it before Batty went to Dumbly. I have seen the memory too, because I was with Zabby when he and the others saw it. Shrew is too big, so she hasn't." Nora gloated, causing Emeralda to snap her jaws at her.

Nora just slithered closer to Salazar and glared at her.

"Everyone agrees with Severus though. They believe the Headmaster is protecting himself. The little ones are all angry because of it."

"Oh but Speaker," Nora said in a light, airy tone as though she was trying to laugh, "You should have seen Kitty give Babbles a piece of her mind when he came in here trying to arrest you the second time. He went cross eyed as she got into his face and started yelling. Wolfy finally tried to pull her back after a minute or so, but he was having a hard time with it until Lovely stepped in."

"Perenelle actually hexed the Minister and threatened to turn him into a toilet." Emeralda added, which made Salazar chuckle a bit because he could actually picture Perenelle doing that.

"I threatened to bite him."

"And I told him that I would devour his pitiful little carcass."

"Jolly translated." Nora added with an amused flick of her forked tongue. "And Babbles hasn't been back in here since."

"I have a curious question. What does Albus, and everyone else, think about everything I said in the memory?" Salazar asked, as he leaned against his pillows.

"They all thought it was funny how you handled it, and all Zabby kept doing was muttering about Slytherin cunning. However, Kitty, Healthy, and Bushy started crying when you were tortured. As for Dumbly though, apparently he is torn on what to believe. On one hand, he thinks that the Old One and Greybeard…"

"She means Merlin and Nicholas."

Nora glared at Emeralda and hissed in annoyance, but she otherwise ignored her and held her head up in a haughty manner.
“Anyway, as I was saying. On one hand, he thinks the Old One and Greybeard put you up to all of it, but on the other hand, he thinks it's true. Batty says he's torn because he really doesn't want to believe it, but he also says that Dumbly mentioned that a lot of what you and Jolly have done around here makes much better sense if you are really Founders.”

"Like what?" Salazar asked curiously.

"Well for starters, the Snake Pit." Emerald said. "Not to mention your 'lessons' on various things, and how wise and knowledgeable you are about nearly everything. He said it makes sense because of how Peeves reacts to you both as well. He just doesn't want to believe it could be true."

Just then, the doors to the hospital wing burst open, and Poppy was the first one through them. She already had her wand out, and began scanning him as soon as she laid eyes on him. Godric was right behind her though, as were the children, Sirius, Remus, Moody, and Minerva.

"I take it you know about Fudge and all of his stupidity?" Godric asked with a chuckle as he sat in a chair next to Salazar's bed.

"Indeed. I've been catching up, and needless to say, I'm not happy." Salazar replied, shaking his head in a disgusted manner.

Godric laughed. "Well we have about a minute or so before Albus gets in here. Severus, Merlin, Nicholas, and Perenelle have slowed him down a bit to give us a moment. We were all in the great hall eating, and he was very startled when the windows suddenly blew out, but I jumped up and repaired them instantly."

Blaise started laughing. "Yeah, then he shouted 'Salazar's awake!', and we all jumped up to follow him out."

Salazar chuckled. "Bloody Gryffindor."

Godric just grinned. "Albus cornered me earlier today and started asking me subtle questions about everything you told Voldemort. I sighed loudly and begrudgingly admitted that we are, in fact, the reincarnated Founders. Needless to say his eyes got bigger than galleons. I excused myself after that though, and said I needed to see to my best friend's well-being. I left him standing in the corridor in shock." Godric said in a rush.

"We are still undecided if we should act like we know about all this or not." Hermione said.

"Well decide quickly, he is coming." Moody warned.

Salazar seemed to think about it for a moment, but then he nodded. "Yes, you've known about me since first year, and knew who Godric was when he arrived in second. You know all about everything. Got it?"

"Got it." All the children said together, as they nodded and grinned.

"What about us Professors?" Minerva asked quickly. "Do we know too?"

Salazar nodded. "Yes. Poppy you found out first year because of your scans, and you asked me, rather sternly, about why they were off, so I told you."

"That shouldn't be so hard, seeing as that's basically true." She grinned, causing Godric to snort.

Salazar chuckled, but then turned to Minerva. "You didn't find out until second year when Godric
got here. He liked you, and thought you were admirable because of how you tried to protect me from Albus's actions and decisions the year before. I agreed, so we told you together. Remus, you know because I told you and Sirius at the same time."

"And why did they never tell Albus?" Moody asked. "And hurry, they are right outside the door."

"You didn't tell him because we asked you not to…you respected that decision…we didn't want special treatment…you all know that we have told each of you…Severus didn't know until the graveyard…" Salazar said in a whispered rush, just as the doors opened.

Albus, Severus, Nicholas, Perenelle, and Merlin stepped in, but Salazar kept his eyes on Albus, who seemed to study him closely.

"I told you he was awake." Godric chuckled, as he nonchalantly cleaned the dirt from under his fingernails.

"Godric stop that. I've told you a million times that is gross." Salazar whined, as he brushed fingernail dirt off his blankets, but then he sighed and turned to look at everyone. "Well, by now I'm sure you all have realized that, as the muggles say, the jig is up. Voldemort now knows about Godric and I, and I'm assuming by Professor Snape's presence, so does the Headmaster. I'm sorry that I never told you Professor Snape, but seeing as you treat me how you do, we didn't trust you."

Severus curled his lip. "I'm still in doubt Potter."

"Well you shouldn't be." Poppy said with a huff. "I've known since he was first brought to me in first year. I can say for certain, that is Salazar Slytherin." She added as she pointed right at Salazar.

Albus glanced from her, to Salazar, then back to her. "Poppy?"

She turned to glare at him. "If you hadn't pulled that stunt with the stone in first year, you might have known too." She huffed, causing Albus's mouth to drop open.

"Yes, they all know about that." Salazar said with a smirk as he watched Albus squirm under everyone's glares.

Perenelle started chuckling. "You cunning little devil."

Salazar winked at her. "I had you fooled for the first ten years of my life, Mummy."

Every mouth dropped open in shock, while Godric burst out laughing. However, Perenelle and Nicholas's eyes shone with mischief.

"You're grounded. Go fetch the goats from the mountain side…without magic." Perenelle said with a twinkle in her eye.

"You're still trying to ground me after all these years." Salazar said, as he shook his head and laughed.

"You'll always be our little boy Benjamin." Perenelle said fondly, as she leaned over and kissed his forehead, causing Nicholas to chuckle.

Albus was completely gobsmacked and he just stood there like a fish out of water as he watched the playful teasing. Godric snorted, but everyone else was grinning, even Severus, who was standing behind Albus furiously gritting his teeth as he tried not to laugh.
Albus sighed heavily and shook his head. "Now it all makes sense." He muttered. Then he turned to Merlin. "And I suppose you're some long lost uncle then?" He asked, with a bit of sarcasm.

Merlin chuckled. "No Mr. Dumbledore, just an old friend Salazar knew in his life before this one. I am an old man after all."

Albus sank in a nearby chair and shook his head. He looked tired and every bit his age as he stared at the floor. Then he looked up and gazed at Salazar.

"Your first year, you knew Voldemort was here. How?" He asked tiredly.

"It took me a while to realize it, but every time I was near Quirrell, my scar hurt." Salazar said truthfully. "At first I didn't know why, but I did some digging into cursed scars. I still didn't find what I was looking for, so I tried to put it out of my mind and pass it off as an anomaly. It wasn't until Fred and George caught me because of a map that I realized that Quirrell had Voldemort planted in the back of his head."

"What map?" Albus asked curiously as he glanced at the twins.

"It's a map James, Remus, Peter, and I made when we were in school." Sirius admitted. "It's a map of Hogwarts and it shows everyone inside the castle. That's how we were able to get away with all our pranks, and never get caught for doing them."

Fred pulled the map from his pocket and showed it to the Headmaster. "One night we saw 'Salazar Slytherin' poking around the third floor. At first we were shocked, but then we followed his movements." Fred explained, as he pointed to everyone's name clustered around in the hospital wing.

Salazar quickly glanced at Merlin with wide eyes, but Merlin only winked and made a motion that seemed to say 'no worries'. Salazar shrugged and focused on what Fred was saying.

"We followed his movements all the way into the Slytherin first year dorms. We knew then that something was off."

"We saw Malfoy, Blaise, Knott, Crabbe, and Goyle, but no Potter. That's when we put the pieces together." George said. "We watched him for the next several days, and everywhere 'Harry Potter' was supposed to be, only showed up 'Salazar Slytherin'."

"That's when they confronted me." Salazar said with a sigh. "I told them the truth. Over the next several days, we played around with the map doing various small pranks, but one day, we noticed that Quirrell was constantly being followed by someone named Tom Riddle. I did a lot of digging, and that's when I realized that Tom Riddle, was in fact, Voldemort. With my scar still hurting, I began to put the pieces together. I used my own pensieve to review that night in Godric's Hollow, and that's when I realized that I was a horcrux. I already knew what a horcrux was, and how to destroy them, but I had never come across a living horcrux before. I didn't know how to go about getting it out of my head." Salazar said with a sigh, but then he continued.

"It was also during that time that we realized that Pettigrew was inside the castle, and that he never left Ron's side. However, I had already found out, before I ever got to Hogwarts, that Sirius was in prison for betraying my parents, killing Peter, and a bunch of muggles. I knew that wasn't true, because I remembered my Dad, James, discussing with Sirius about switching secret keepers. So I contacted my old father," he said, motioning to Nicholas, "and asked for his help in trying to get Sirius out of prison because I knew he was innocent."

"That's when I told him about the stone being in the castle." Nicholas said, causing Albus to sigh.
heavily.

"Right, Nicholas did some digging and we found out that Sirius never had a trial." Salazar said.

"But you told me you saw Peter before then. He helped you get to Diagon Alley." Albus said with a bit of confusion.

Salazar shook his head and sighed. "I lied. I already knew Sirius wasn't the secret keeper, and I knew that Peter could turn into a rat. I told you that lie because one, I needed an excuse for how I made it to Diagon Alley, and two, so you could look into what really happened that night, and possibly get Sirius out of Azkaban, so that I could live with him, instead of the Dursleys."

"But you ignored that not so subtle hint." Remus growled. "Just like you always ignored my attempts at getting Sirius a trial."

"Indeed." Salazar said with a nod, causing Albus to sigh wearily. "Truthfully, I didn't need any help getting to Diagon Alley, because I already knew of it. In fact, it was me you saw that night in Godric's Hollow. I was the snake on the floor that scared Professor McGonagall."

Albus's eyes became wide. "That was you?"

Salazar nodded sadly. "Yes. I had gotten my Hogwarts's letter that day, and with it, all of my magical skills, abilities, and knowledge. I wasn't going to spend another minute with those hateful muggles, so got rid of the tracking charm that had been placed on me and apparated from the Dursleys to Godric's Hollow. I went back because I wanted to see the destruction from that night. I loved my new Mum and Dad, Lily and James. I had grown very fond of them. They were brave, caring, loving, and did all they could to protect me. I was powerless that night, because I was only an infant. I had no magical ability at my disposal, no wand to help them, my vocal skills and motor functions were all that of an infant, and couldn't tell them to get away, or save themselves. I knew I wasn't going to die, but I couldn't tell them that. I was powerless." Salazar said as tears flowed freely down his cheeks. "I'm so sorry." He added, looking to Sirius and Remus, who were also teary eyed.

"I know Harry." Sirius said quietly, as he squeezed Salazar's shoulder. "I know. It's all right."

Salazar took a deep breath and nodded slowly. "Anyway, after I left Godric's Hollow that night, I went back to my old house that I lived in prior to dying and getting reborn again. I got my old wand back," he said, holding it up, "did my shopping and stuff, and just waited for September first to roll around. When I walked into the castle that night, the bells tolled and the castle sang, which alerted the ghosts, portraits, and sorting hat that I had returned. It's Hogwarts's way of saying 'hello'."

"All right, so that answers those questions, but getting back to Quirrell and Voldemort." Albus prompted.

Salazar nearly chuckled, but he only nodded and sighed again. "Well, while Nicholas was busy trying to find a way to get Sirius out of Azkaban, I focused on Voldemort. I needed to figure out a way to safely get him out of the castle, because I didn't want him to be spooked and start firing off killing curses at random. This is a school, not a battle ground. I wanted to protect the students, which I might add, was not something you were willing to do, seeing as you put them in danger." Salazar said sternly as he glared at Albus, who gulped loudly.

"Anyway, I told the twins to keep a watch on both Pettigrew and Voldemort via the map, while I went after the stone myself. I kept checking the underground chambers until the stone was put in place, then I switched them out. I was the one who charmed 'Fluffy' to sleep. I was the one who kept warding the door. I was the one who blew the giant hole in the castle, thereby freeing the
griffin. I was the one who placed that charm on the trapdoor, and I was the one who kept writing the notes. I knew what you were up to whole time Headmaster, and it pissed me off to no end knowing that you were trying to manipulate me into facing Voldemort." Salazar said as he continued to glare at Albus. "I then placed the real stone in a safe place, and alerted Nicholas and Perenelle to its whereabouts."

"For which we were grateful. It wasn't until then that we could breathe easily." Perenelle said with a dignified huff.

"Indeed." Salazar grinned. "It was their genius plan to have you go through all of your traps, but I told Nicholas how to undo the curse on the trapdoor. Thankfully Voldemort left, somewhat quietly, after that. I didn't care about Quirrell. He deserved what he got."

Albus glared at Salazar, then at Nicholas and Perenelle, but he sighed and nodded in defeat. "So you were the actual 'spy' then?" Albus asked, looking at Salazar.

He nodded. "Yes, it was me the whole time. We didn't bring Nilrem in until second year. We still hadn't figured out a way to get Sirius legally out of Azkaban, so we decided to break him out by using Nehum, and he took Sirius to Nilrem's house."

"You can pretty much figure out how we dealt with the problems in second year." Godric said, speaking up for the first time as he glared at Albus. "It was also when we told Professor McGonagall who we were. I found her a very worthy Gryffindor, and given how she tried to protect Salazar in first year, she deserved to know."

"I should tell you that the Weasleys know about us, as does Aberforth, and now that Voldemort is back, Aberforth is our contact for anything unusual happening in Hogsmeade." Salazar added, knowing that Arthur, Molly, and Aberforth already knew about them being 'reincarnated'.

"The only ones of us who don't know about Harry and Gordy, is Ginny and Ron." George said. "Mum and Dad wish it to stay that way."

"Indeed." Godric nodded.

Albus nodded, but then he looked at Salazar. "So what you told Voldemort in the graveyard is true then. The horcrux in your head has been destroyed."

Salazar nodded. "Yes. I know that Fiendfyre and basilisk venom are the only ways to kill a horcrux. When I nicked my hand on her tooth, we took a chance and hoped it worked. It was painful," he said, shuddering at the memory, "but it was worth it."

"And the snake in the graveyard?" Albus asked curiously.

Salazar burst out laughing. "That was a very happy accident. I had no idea she was a horcrux, and I was shocked when the soul piece exploded from it. I don't think the killing curse would have worked on me though, seeing as I can't die by anything except old age. By the way, where is it? I told that snake I was going to feed her to Emeralda."

"Really Master!?" Emeralda said excitedly.

"Yes my dear. She was the one that bit and poisoned me." Salazar replied with a grin.

"She's lucky to be dead then." Nora hissed dangerously. "Or else she would have to face me first."

Albus chuckled a bit. "She is in my office under a stasis charm because, at first, I didn't know why
you brought her back. Seeing as she is now of no importance, I will give her to you to feed to Miss Emeralda. Better to be safe that no lingering effects of the horcrux remain with in it, though I doubt that is the case."

"Thank you Headmaster, I do appreciate that." Salazar nodded.

"I look forward to my meal, and I will take great pleasure in savoring it." Emeralda hissed with glee.

Salazar chuckled and nodded, but then he looked around the room at everyone. "So now that we have reached the end of our explanations, I need to ask you all, where do we go from here?"

The room became quiet, but after several moments of silence, Merlin spoke up.

"We need to work together now. I know there is still a bit of a trust issues here, and I'm not saying that we need to let bygones be bygones, but we do need to work together. Salazar, Godric, even though Voldemort knows about the both of you, I still don't think it's wise to babble all of this to the general public. If word got out that you both were still alive, it will only cause distraction. The public needs to focus on Voldemort."

"I agree." Godric said with a nod. "I've also been thinking about the children. Blaise, I think it's time we tell your Mother, your Grandmother as well Neville, Hermione, your parents are muggles, so I know that they won't understand, but I think they need to be aware of what is going on. With you being a muggle born and our friend, you and your parents are going to be at the top of the 'hit list' so to speak."

"Umm, a-actually, I-I was thinking about a different approach." She said, looking around a little unsurely.

"What is it? Is it something that we can advise you on?" Salazar asked.

"Well, yes, I suppose." She said, but then she took a deep breath. "I don't want my parents knowing about any of this. If they knew, they would take me out of school and never let me come back, so I was thinking about…"

"I can't let you run away." Salazar said as he shook his head.

"No, no you misunderstand." She said quickly. "I wasn't suggesting that at all really. I was…I was thinking about using memory charms on them. I want them to be safe, so I was hoping that maybe one of you could make them forget about me, and send them to Australia, or China, or somewhere. Once everything is over, we could set them right and bring them back. I know I will have a lot to answer for after that, but that will be on me."

"And where would you stay Miss Granger?" Minerva asked softly.

"I-I-I don't know actually. I was hoping you all could help me think of a place." She said with a slight quiver in her voice.

Everyone was quiet for a moment, but Merlin once again spoke up.

"I have a place. In fact, I think its best we all stay there. We can use it as a Headquarters and such. I understand if you all feel that is not warranted, but I think its best."

"And where is this place?" Albus asked curiously.

"I will not say, not right now at least." Merlin said with a mysterious smile. "But I can tell you it's a
castle. A very large castle that sits atop one of the Cambrian Mountains. We will have plenty of space and we would all be together, which would cut down on mobilization should an emergency arise."

Godric and Salazar glanced at one another, before staring back at Merlin with wide eyes.

"Are you for certain you want to use...that place?" Salazar asked.

"I am Salazar. I cannot think of a better, more secure place. Unless you all have someplace else in mind."

"What of its security and wards?" Albus inquired.

"Right now it's hidden behind muggle repelling charms, and numerous wards of every nature, including some of my own making. I can, and will, place it under a Fidelius charm if everyone agrees that is the best course of action."

"And you won't tell me where it is?" Albus asked.

Merlin shook his head. "No, I will only say...it is a place...of legend." Merlin said with a smile.

Hermione gasped and her hand flew to her mouth as she stared at him in shock. Albus glanced at her a bit confused, but Merlin turned to her and winked.

"It has an extensive library Miss Hermione. You are welcome to poke around in, it if you desire to stay with me there."

"I accept, I accept!" She said quickly, as her eyes shone with excitement.

Salazar chuckled. "All right Hermione, if this is what you wish to do, then it's not for me to say otherwise. When do wish to have your parents moved?"

"As soon as possible." She said quietly, as she turned to look at him. "I don't even want to see them on the train platform, because someone...namely a Death Eater...may spot them. I know it will be hard not seeing them and I will miss them terribly, but I can handle it. I just want them to be safe."

"Very well." Salazar said, taking her hand and giving it an encouraging squeeze.

"Perenelle and I will make sure your parents are safe Hermione," Nicholas said. "We will see that it takes place over the weekend."

"Thank you." She said quietly. "I really do appreciate it."

"You're welcome dear." Perenelle said with a soft smile.

"All right then." Albus said with a nod. "Other than Hogwarts, I cannot think of another safe place. I assume you will act as secret keeper for this location Mr. Nilrem?"

"Oh yes, I will."

"Hogwarts would be too obvious a place anyway. We need somewhere that not even Voldemort would think of." Godric said, as he leaned back in his chair. "We must protect Hogwarts and the students at all costs, and having a headquarters here is like hanging a big banner over the school saying 'come and get me'." He added, causing Salazar to nod in agreement.

Albus looked at him. "And you know of this place...Godric?"
"Yes." He nodded. "I can vouch for its security, wards, and enchantments."

Albus sighed hesitantly. "Very well then. I know my input may be taken with a grain of salt, but I wish to officially reform the Order of the Phoenix. With Fudge not believing Voldemort has returned, I agree that we all need to work together. We need to try to convince everyone we can so that precautions can be put in place."

Salazar wanted to mention showing Fudge the memory, but he knew it was pointless. Not only would Albus likely make excuses, but Fudge wasn't going to believe it anyway because he could, and would, dismiss the memory as a false one. Especially since it contained...well let's just say...very hard to believe facts.

They discussed even more things, and Albus pleaded with them on Severus's behalf. Salazar told Albus that he didn't like spies, because spies always turn on you in the end, but Albus made his case. Salazar and the others 'begrudgingly' agreed to work with Severus, but warned that they would watch him closely, which caused Severus to scoff loudly and sneer at everyone.

It was at that point Salazar asked about Lucius, and was surprised to find out that he was still alive. Apparently Voldemort changed his mind in killing the blasted fool, and had decided that Lucius would take Peter's place as his personal slave. Godric had burst out laughing, but Salazar only grinned, chuckled, and said he deserved the humiliation.

It was then that Albus asked Salazar why he had told Voldemort who he was, and Salazar explained that he wanted to use fear as a weapon. With Voldemort knowing who he was, and knowing that he couldn't die, he was hoping that his wayward heir would think twice before stepping out of line. Salazar admitted that that was unlikely, seeing as Voldemort didn't believe a word that he said, but if by doing that saved just one life, then spilling his secret had been worth it. However, Salazar went on to say that while Voldemort may not believe him right now, in the future he would and then the fear would really kick in. He told them all that Voldemort fears death, and in time, Voldemort would fear Salazar, who is immune to death and out to kill him.

Albus wasn't too sure about using fear as a weapon, but agreed to see how it played out in the future.

Fudge and his reaction was also discussed at length. Salazar asked if there was an official warrant for his arrest, but Albus said there wasn't, at least not yet anyway. Amelia Bones had already looked into Peter's cause of death, and determined it to have been caused by the killing curse, so Albus expected a warrant at any moment. Salazar had sighed and said that he would figure out some way to get out of it. Everyone else chuckled at that, but Albus looked highly worried.

It was shortly after that when Poppy announced that they would have to leave. She insisted that Salazar needed his rest, and refused to hear protests against the matter. Salazar just grinned and said Poppy loved him and wanted to hold him hostage.

He received a stinging jinx for that remark, much to the amusement of everyone.

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*Harry Potter Wanted for Murder in the Death of Known Death Eater Peter Pettigrew!*

*By Rita Skeeter*

*It happened all in an instant. Cedric Diggory offered to allow a disillusioned Harry Potter to take the Triwizard Cup with him, in order to spare the young fourteen year old from having to go back through the dangerous maze. Harry Potter took the offer, and they both grabbed the cup together.*
But why was Cedric Diggory shouting frantically for Harry Potter when he landed back in front of the judges that night?

I have the answer for you my lovelies!

According to our Triwizard Champion, Cedric Diggory, the cup was a portkey set up by a nefarious unknown person, and it took them to a spooky graveyard in an unknown location. After poking around, thinking it was another part of the task, Diggory and Potter spotted something that turned their blood to ice. It was a tombstone with two words written on it.

Tom Riddle.

Knowing that this was the real name of You-Know-Who, their eyes became alert and suspicious, and a few moments later a man, Peter Pettigrew, stepped out of the shadows carrying a bundle of black robes in his arms.

"Harry screamed 'Peter Pettigrew, you killed my parents!' at the top of his lungs." Mr. Diggory said as I questioned him about the events. "He told me to run and get back to the cup, so I ran. I know who Peter Pettigrew is, and I know the name Tom Riddle, I wasn't about to stick around."

But our Champion waited for Mr. Potter to also run back to the cup.

"Harry was running right towards me, and I thought he had grabbed the cup with me, but when I landed back in front of the judges, Harry was nowhere to be found." Diggory explained.

So what happened?

I caught up with Mr. Potter in the Hogwarts Hospital wing three days after the task. According to Madam Pomfrey, the head medi-witch, Mr. Potter had been bitten by a large snake, poisoned by the snake, and placed under the Cruciatus Curse for no less than thirty seconds.

That may not sound like a long time, but to someone under the torture curse, it feels like a life time.

After arguing with the healer for several minutes, she finally let me in to speak with Mr. Potter, who was still recovering from his injuries. I went on to ask him why he hadn't reached the cup with Mr. Diggory.

"I was knocked off my feet by (You-Know-Who's) pet snake." He answered with a scowl. "It wrapped itself tightly around me, and bit me several times. It finally stopped after (You-Know-Who) told it to."

My dear readers, my eyes grew wide upon hearing that, and I had to ask Mr. Potter if I heard him correctly.

"Yes," Mr. Potter confirmed. "(You-Know-Who) told it to stop biting me."

With my heart pounding, I went on to ask Mr. Potter what happened next.

"(You-Know-Who) was in the black bundle of robes Pettigrew was holding. I don't know how he was so small, but I saw Pettigrew throw the whole lot, robes and all, in a really big cauldron that was large enough for a grown man to sit in. Pettigrew took a bone from the grave marked Tom Riddle, and started chanting. Then he cut off his own hand, chanted some more after screaming loudly from the pain, then he threw in a vial of blood. After a moment, the cauldron exploded, and after the smoke went away, a fully grown (You-Know-Who) was standing there."
I was shocked speechless! My very hands started trembling, and I was barely able to control my own nerves, but I managed to ask Mr. Potter to continue.

"He looked at me with red eyes, but ignored me, seeing as I was still wrapped up in his snake. I was laying on the ground defenseless. My wand had been knocked from my hand, and I didn't know what to do. I thought he was going to kill me right there, but he didn't. He walked over to Pettigrew, and I watched as he placed a finger on Pettigrew's dark mark."

With one hand over my mouth to stop myself from screaming loudly, I motioned for Mr. Potter to continue.

"After several minutes, they came. The Death Eaters did. I saw them all standing around in a large circle dressed in black robes and masks. They all bowed low, and (You-Know-Who) welcomed them all back. He called out a few of their names, and yelled at them for abandoning him."

I very weakly managed to ask Mr. Potter what names he heard that night.

"Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Knott, Parkinson, McNair, and Carrow. There were others, but he didn't address them by name, so I don't know who they were. He asked where Karkaroff was, but none of the others knew. He mention the Lestranges, Dolohav, and others, and said it was a pity that they were locked up in Azkaban." Mr. Potter said as he shook his head.

With tears flowing freely from my eyes at this point, I could barely see, much less write, but I finally pulled myself together, because I knew that me, myself, and I needed to bring you this shocking story.

After taking several minutes to calm my pounding heart, I asked Mr. Potter what happened next. I needed to know how, and why, Mr. Potter was alive and sitting on a hospital bed able to tell me his story.

This next part may be shocking for some of you, but I will quote what Mr. Potter told me, in full, and in his own words.

"It was during the time Voldemort was yelling at his Death Eaters that I planned my escape. I would be lying if I said I wasn't scared, and I was sure I'd never get away, but I knew I needed my wand. I was lying there helpless, and I couldn't move, but in a moment of desperation, fear, and panic, I was able to cast a wandless killing curse."

I shrieked my dear readers! I was so stunned, but Mr. Potter kept going.

"I killed the snake holding me hostage, and somehow, I don't know how I did it, but somehow I managed to apparate to my wand. I grabbed it up, but by that time Voldemort had put anti-disapparition wards, and I knew I was stuck." Mr. Potter said as he visibly trembled. "He started yelling and casting killing curses in all directions, but I was able to hide behind a tombstone, so he missed me."

Despite the state I was in, I managed to ask Mr. Potter if this was when Peter Pettigrew was killed, but he shook his head no.

"I had nowhere to go, and I couldn't run. I don't know what made me do it, it's possible that I hang around to many Gryffindors, but I summoned all my courage and stepped out of my hiding place, and began yelling back at him."

My eyes widened in shock once more, but I asked Mr. Potter to keep going.
"Voldemort stared at me like I was stupid, but I kept yelling at him. It was after I stopped that he cursed me. I saw it in his eyes just before he did it. He cast the killing curse at me. I couldn't run, and in that moment I knew I would get to see my Mum and Dad again, but I didn't die. The curse bounced off of me. I was so shocked that I just stood there with my mouth open. It went flying back towards Voldemort, but he dove to the ground in order to not be hit. Pettigrew was standing right behind him though, and that's when he died."

I was shocked silent for several minutes, but as I sit here and write this article right now, I wonder. Could this be what happened that night in Godric's Hollow thirteen years ago? Did You-Know-Who cast the killing curse at Mr. Potter, only to have it bounce off of the young boy and strike You-Know-Who? Is this how You-Know-Who was destroyed? Is our hero, Harry Potter immune to the killing curse? Or is he only immune to killing curses cast by You-Know-Who?

So many questions my rabid readers, and no one seems to know the answers.

At that point I asked Mr. Potter to continue his account of that harrowing night.

"After Voldemort picked himself up from the ground, he stared at me, but then he cursed me with the torture curse. It hurt very badly, like a thousand needles were being shoved into my body all at once, but I refused to give him the satisfaction of hearing me scream, so I gritted my teeth and hoped he would stop." Mr. Potter said, shuddering at the memory.

I placed a soothing hand on his own, and urged him to keep going.

"I was very weak by that point. I was feeling woozy from the snake bites and poison, and I almost passed out, but then he stopped. He sneered at me, then he turned his back on me to address his Death Eaters. That is when I saw my chance. I managed to cast a very bad curse at him, one that electrocutes you, he screamed from the shock he received, and the curse sent him flying into a bunch of Death Eaters. While Voldemort was trying to regain his senses, I managed to jump onto Pettigrew's body and summon the dead snake. I grabbed a small rock lying next to me, and hoping that I would get it right, I turned it into a portkey, which sent me back to Hogwarts."

As I write this article, a warrant has been issued for the arrest of Harry Potter for the murder of Peter Pettigrew, but I ask you my dear readers, why?

Does our own Minister not have any common sense? Has he not questioned Mr. Potter about the events of that night?

Apparently not.

According to Minerva McGonagall, Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts, our dear Minister has tried nothing except to pull Mr. Potter out of his hospital bed, and chuck him right into Azkaban.

"We actually have to protect Mr. Potter from the Minister!" She shrieked as I questioned her. "Emeralda, Salazar Slytherin's sixty foot basilisk, is actually in there with him right now, but because of her, the Minister is afraid to go in there to detain him."

"He only sees a dead body and no explanation for it." Mr. Potter's best friend, Gordy Ruffin, said. "The Minister doesn't believe that (You-Know-Who) is back. He thinks Harry killed Pettigrew because he was the one who betrayed his parents. If they were smart about it, they would take the dead snake, which Harry did kill, and try to match it with the same magical signature that killed Pettigrew. Common sense and a few spells will tell them the two don't match. If they don't believe that he killed the snake, Harry has no problem using the killing curse on a common rat, in front of Ministry officials and Aurors, in order to prove himself innocent."
But does our Minister want to do this?

In a simple word…no.

"The very notion of You-Know-Who having returned is absolute tosh!" The Minister yelled when I questioned him about his lack of common sense. "This is a plan thought up by Albus Dumbledore in the hopes that he can make me look like a fool, and take over as Minister for Magic. First Dumbledore tells me Harry Potter is a bad, dark wizard, then he changes his tune and the two start working together. It makes me wonder what is going on up at that school, and I plan to get to the bottom of it. I firmly believe that Potter killed Pettigrew out of spite! And just so we are VERY CLEAR…You-Know-Who is not back!"

Personally my dear readers, I'm not willing to take the chance that the Minister is wrong. I have to side with Mr. Potter on this. If he says You-Know-Who is back, then I believe him. It is why this is my very last article for a long while because I am going into hiding.

I am that scared.

I cannot sit here and tell you what to do, or who to believe, but I say again, I am not willing to take the chance that the Minister is wrong.

It is up for you to decide, but as for me, I'm leaving the country.

I wish you all luck.

Rita Skeeter

It was the last day of school, and the great hall was deathly silent as everyone read Rita's last article. A few people were sobbing, most notably Cho Chang, who sat with Cedric at the Hufflepuff table, gripping his arm tightly.

Salazar had been released from the hospital wing the night before, though Poppy admitted that he could have been let out a lot sooner, but she wanted him to have a refuge of sorts, so that the Minister would be hard pressed to snatch him.

He appreciated that, and thanked her profusely for it.

Viktor Krum had mentioned to him that Karkaroff had up and vanished, which no one, except the Durmstrang students, had noticed until this morning. Salazar didn't know if everyone had put the pieces together or not, but he hoped they would.

Hermione asked how they were going to get back to their school, but Krum just scoffed and said they didn't need Karkaroff's help getting home.

Fleur came up to him at the start of breakfast and kissed his cheek, and mentioned that she hoped to see him again in the future. Salazar replied in kind, and mentioned that she had done really well in the Tournament. Fleur had sighed and shook her head, before saying she could have done better.

Right now though, Albus was giving his customary farewell speech, though it was laced with urgent warnings as he pleaded with everyone to be extra careful. It was in this moment that Godric stood up. Salazar looked at him curiously, but Godric only patted his shoulder.

He waited for Albus to finish, but then he cleared his throat loudly.
"You wish to say something Mr. Roffin?" Albus asked, causing Godric to nod.

Godric stood up on the bench seat, and looked out over the great hall with a pleading urgency radiating from his very soul.

"I know that many of you are torn on who to believe, but whether you choose to believe us or not, I beg you all to remember the essay we had to write a few months back. Think of ways to protect yourselves, your homes, and most importantly, your life. I know that we cannot use magic outside school, but our parents can and they can take your ideas, and make them happen. I ask you all to listen to me very carefully. It is better for us to be wrong, and for you to protect yourselves, than it is for us to be right, and for you to not be prepared. Please think about that, and as Mr. Moody always says, constant vigilance. Be safe over the summer holiday, and I hope you all have a chance to return next year. To the seventh years, mind yourselves and please stay safe, you have your whole life ahead of you. Thank you for your time."

Godric finished and sat back down with a shaky sigh, but Salazar patted his back and nodded.

Albus also nodded as he faced the great hall once more. "I could not have said that better myself. I agree with all that Mr. Roffin said. Please be careful. You are dismissed, and the train will be leaving in one hour. Until next year." He said with a little bit of sadness.

The students all began shuffling quietly out of the great hall, some looked scared, others looked right terrified, and some didn't seem to care at all. Salazar just sighed as he looked around and shook his head. He really hoped that they would all be careful

It was only because of Emeralda's presence on the Hogsmeade platform that a scowling Fudge didn't arrest Salazar there, but when they got to King's Cross Station, he had a more victorious grin on his face.

Salazar knew it was coming, so he had told everyone to meet at up at Merlin's as soon as they could. Sirius was on the platform, yelling at the Aurors for how stupid they were. Perenelle was there as well, though Fudge made sure there was always someone standing between him and her.

As soon as Salazar stepped off the train, the Aurors swooped down and arrested him.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed the wrap up! In case anyone is wondering why Rita is running, its because I do believe she is terrified. After all, she published a lot of Voldy's secrets such as his real name and other things. Not to mention the fact that she published the 'half-blooded son of a muggle' bit. If I was her, I would be running scared too!

The next chapter will feature Salazar's murder trial, as well as other things, but I have a challenge for you. Can anyone guess Merlin's legendary place? It may be an easy guess, but are you right? You will have to wait and see!

***THIS CHAPTER OFFICIALLY MARKS THE END OF FOURTH YEAR***
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

***THIS CHAPTER OFFICIALLY MARKS THE BEGINNING OF FIFTH YEAR***

Chapter 50

A Travesty

"Are you sure all of this is necessary?"

"It would make me feel loads better Auntie."

Amelia Bones smiled softly at her niece and lightly patted the young girl's cheek. They were sitting in the kitchen enjoying their breakfast, but Amelia had a lot on her mind this morning, seeing as Harry Potter's trial was late that afternoon. It had been a week since they had arrested him, and they currently had him locked up in a Ministry holding cell. The Minister had not let anyone in to speak with him, but he had appointed a few Aurors to watch over him day and night because, according to Fudge, the boy was capable of anything.

Dumbledore had tried to get in to see Potter multiple times, as had Sirius Black and the Flamels, but Fudge refused to let them through. They tried pleading with the Minister to see reason, but Fudge had had enough, and Dumbledore was booted out of the Wizengamot, thereby losing his Chief Warlock position. Fudge was also currently trying to get Dumbledore out of the International Confederation of Wizards, and Amelia knew he was close to achieving that goal as well.

As for herself, Amelia was unsure about the whole situation. Her rational, logical mind was telling her that something was up because nothing about this situation felt right. However, it was her memories of the last war that brought up feelings of dread, and a part of her didn't want to believe it was true.

As Amelia looked across the table at Susan though, she knew she needed to take every precaution available...just in case.

She sighed loudly and nodded. "All right. I will take your essay ideas into suggestion, but I really don't think we have anything to worry about. There have been no hints about You-Know-Who returning."

"Auntie, Harry Potter is a lot of things, but a liar is not one of them." Susan said as she squared her shoulders just a bit. "Not to mention, Cedric was there in that graveyard too, and he knows what he saw. I believe them both."

"Tell me what you know about Harry Potter." Amelia said curiously, as she leaned back in her chair.

"Well, for a Slytherin he is very nice, but not in a fake way. He doesn't befriend you just because you might be able to give, or do something for him later down the road. At the end of every year he forms study groups to help anyone that needs help better understanding things. He always patient, kind, funny, and truthfully, he's very laid back about most things."

"What things is he not laid back about?" Amelia asked as she stirred her coffee.
"Safety for one thing. If he thinks something is unsafe, he speaks his mind about it. In fact, it's because of him and Gordy that we had to write the essays to begin with. They got into Gryffindor Tower and made themselves at home in their common room." She giggled. "Professor McGonagall was angry, but Hermione told her that they did it to prove a point. Apparently Gordy scolded all of Gryffindor House for shouting out their password where anyone could hear it. They put themselves and their house mates in danger by doing that. Anyone could get in there and cause harm to them and their friends."

"I see." Amelia said with a raised eyebrow. "What else can you tell me?"

"That's it mostly." Susan said with a shrug. "I don't really know him that well, but I do join his study groups at the end of every year, and one time I was having a difficult time in transfiguration. He noticed my frustration, got up out of his seat, and came to help me. I got the spell shortly after that."

"So you don't think he's capable of murder?" Amelia asked.

Susan sighed loudly and furrowed her brow. "I don't know. Cold blooded murder-no, I don't think so, but killing someone in order to defend himself-yes, I do think he would."

"Really?" Amelia said with slight shock.

"Harry's different Auntie. He's not a bad different, he's just different. He doesn't look at things the same we do, like magic itself for instance. I read in the paper where he said that magic is magic, it just depends on the caster's intentions which makes it light or dark."

"Yes, I do recall that Rita Skeeter article." Amelia said with a nod.

"Auntie, I believe what Harry says. I really do. I believe that You-Know-Who is back, but I don't believe that he killed Peter Pettigrew out of spite. IF he killed Pettigrew, he did it out of self-defense."

"But he is saying that he didn't do it at all. He claims that You-Know-Who's killing curse bounced off of him and hit Pettigrew. Susan, that's a little hard to believe." Amelia said with a bit of frustration.

"I know it is Auntie, but how did he survive that night when he was a baby? No one knows. Maybe he is just special." Susan replied.

Amelia sighed and nodded. "Ok. I still don't know what to think, but I will be objective about. His trial is today, and I already have run the magical signature that killed Pettigrew against the snake Dumbledore handed me. Apparently they were going to feed it to the basilisk, but changed their mind shortly after. I can say that the two magical signatures don't match, but the drawback with magical signatures is, they can't tell us who cast the spells."

"So do what Gordy suggested in the paper. Have Harry kill an old already dying mouse or something. Let him prove his innocence." Susan pleaded.

"All right Susan. I will do what I can, but the Minister is being a very big pain in my…well you understand. He's convinced himself that Potter is already guilty."

"Since when have you let that stop you?" Susan asked with a smirk, but then she looked at Amelia with pleading eyes. "Auntie, your Harry's only hope. Please try to do all you can for him. I don't believe he killed Pettigrew. I really don't."

Amelia took a deep breath and smiled at her. "All right. I will do all that I can to see that he gets a
Susan threw her arms around her Aunt and hugged her tightly. "Thank you Auntie." She whispered. "Harry deserves a fair trial. He is the Boy-Who-Lived...twice."

Salazar was cold, hungry, and tired. For a week he had sat in his barren cell with hardly any food or drink. Wandless warming charms only did so much, but because of the lack of food and water, Salazar couldn't hold them in place for long.

He chuckled to himself. *One would think I'd be used to this.* He thought with a shiver, as he watched another Auror walk by his cell.

Salazar was glad he left Nora with Neville, but he missed her right now. At least she would be entertaining company, even if all she'd do is threaten to bite anyone who walked by.

He knew he could have run, apparated off the train, or went with Godric's suggestion of letting Nehum take him home when they got to King's Cross, but honestly, what would have been the point? Running made it look like he was guilty.

And guilty he was not.

He knew his trial was today, so that was some good news, though he knew that nearly everything was stacked against him, and what made it worse was he really had no definitive plan. He could outwit individual people quite easily, but a whole courtroom full of witches and wizards was something else entirely. Crooked politicians were in the business of winning, and Fudge was determined to see him in Azkaban.

He had a plan for getting out of Azkaban though, should it come to that. Godric would send Nehum for him, and then he would just take out the polyjuice rock and continue on. 'Harry Potter' would be a wanted fugitive, but no one would be looking for a grown, still alive, Salazar Slytherin.

Salazar jumped a mile as someone banged on his cell door.

"Get up Potter." Dawlish snarled. "It's time for your trial."

Salazar glared at him, but stood up, and let the man lead him away.

The courtroom was packed with reporters, Ministry officials, and a few curious people of the general public, so Salazar had a hard time spotting Sirius, Remus, Dumbledore, and the others as he was roughly shoved into a chair. He heard Sirius start shouting obscenities at Dawlish, but Remus was able to get him calmed down pretty quickly.

The chair was large and had heavy chains, but Salazar was startled when they tightly wrapped around his hands and ankles. He quirked an eyebrow at Percy, who was sitting a few feet away with an ashen face as he watched him. It appeared as if he would be taking notes during the trial.

"It's alright." He mouthed, but Percy only shook his head no ever so slightly.

Salazar looked at him a bit confused, but didn't have time to dwell on it as the members of the Wizengamot filed in. He did his best not to glare at anybody, but since Fudge was grinning at him, as if he'd caught a mouse, Salazar found it kind of hard not to.

Fudge raised a hand for silence, and the murmuring died down immediately.
"The trial of Harry Potter will now began." Fudge said a bit too gleefully. "The charge is murder by use of the killing curse. If convicted, he will spend the rest of his life in Azkaban."

"Unlikely." Salazar mumbled.

"What was that boy?" Fudge said snapped as he glared down at him.

"I said…unlikely." Salazar repeated a bit more loudly, causing everyone to start murmuring again.

Fudge frowned, but Salazar only chuckled. He knew that this was being broadcast over the wizarding wireless network, and he knew that the whole wizarding world was listening in.

"Harry Potter you are charged with the murder of Peter Pettigrew, how do you plead?" Fudge asked.

"Not guilty." Salazar replied without hesitation.

"And yet you brought back his body as a trophy, so that you could show your godfather, Sirius Black, that you had murdered the man responsible for betraying your parents, thereby leading to their deaths. Is that right?"

"No, I brought back Pettigrew to show that…"

"I'm sorry Mr. Potter, but we are not here for tall tales."

"Where's your evidence that I killed him?" Salazar asked quickly.

"Evidence Mr. Potter?" Fudge asked with a laugh. "We don't need any. You were seen by no less than ten people clutching the dead man's body. You came back by an illegal portkey, with him in your hands. I believe it was you Mr. Potter that turned the cup into a portkey in the first place. You knew where Pettigrew was, and so you used the last task as a way to kill him. Then you and Dumbledore decided to pass it off as You-Know-Who."

"That's a bunch of bull Minister. What about Cedric Diggory!?" Salazar shouted.

"You confunded him!" Fudge yelled back. "You took a trusting friend, and tried to turn him into a pliable witness!"

"That's not true!" A voice suddenly shouted. "We were in a graveyard with Pettigrew and a tombstone with Tom Riddle's name on it!"

"Quiet!" Fudge shouted. "Aurors, escort Mr. Diggory out of here!"

Salazar couldn't turn in his seat, but he heard Cedric fighting them off as he kept yelling.

"Harry's telling the truth! You-Know-Who is back!" He shouted, just as the Aurors managed to drag him out the door.

"HE'S NOT BACK!" Fudge roared. Then he began setting off loud blasts from his wand to silence the courtroom.

When order had finally been restored Fudge glared down at Salazar.

"You-Know-Who is not back." He repeated. "This is all nonsense."

"It's not. I'm telling you, Voldemort cast the killing curse at me, and it bounced off of me and hit Pettigrew." Salazar said, trying to keep his temper under control.
"Yes, yes, I a likely excuse because it can't be tested." Fudge said, wagging his finger at him. "The killing curse bounced off of you. It's the biggest load of tosh…"

"Then what about the magical signatures…"

"Hem, hem." A girlish voice said loudly, cutting Salazar off. He glanced at her and noticed that she was wearing a rather repulsive looking pink hat. "Minister, if I may, why not test this so called defense? Why doesn't someone cast the killing curse at the boy? He's going to prison anyway. When he dies, so be it.'

"I disagree with this!" Amelia Bones jumped up and shouted suddenly. "I have already tested the magical signatures, and I can tell you, the one that killed the snake does not match the one that killed Pettigrew!"

"QUIET!" Fudge shouted, turning red in the face as the courtroom reporters began shouting questions at Amelia.

Once calm had been restored, Amelia straightened her monocle.

"I cannot condone Madam Umbridge's suggestion. We don't know if Mr. Potter is immune to everyone's killing curse, or just You-Know-Who's."

"He's not…"

"I'm not saying he is Minister." Amelia interrupted with a cold glare. "I was talking about the first time."

"Oh." Fudge replied looking a bit sheepish, but then he straightened his hat, which had gone crooked on his head, and straightened up a bit. "Evidence may show that the two magical signatures don't match, but I don't think we need to carry on with this pomp and flair any longer. I believe…"

"Let me prove…!" Salazar started to shout, only to be silenced by Dawlish, who had a very wicked gleam in his eyes, causing Salazar to glare daggers at him.

"Thank you for silencing him Dawlish." Fudge said with a nod. "Now, as I was saying, I believe that Harry Potter killed Peter Pettigrew in cold blood and out of spite. He did this knowingly, willingly, and without remorse. As is our law on the use of Unforgivables, there is no need for a vote. Harry Potter you are hereby found…"

"Is it because you're in denial!?!" Salazar shouted, after wandlessly reversing the silencing charm. "Are you scared that if I prove I'm innocent…" Once again Dawlish hit him with a silencing charm, but he immediately reversed it. "Stupefy!" Salazar cried, turning his hand ever so slightly, and dropping Dawlish just as he brandished his wand again. "If I prove that I'm innocent that it will mean that you have been wrong…protego!" He cried, throwing up a shield to protect himself from the witch with the ugly pink hat. "…and it will be solid evidence that Vol…stupefy…" He cried, stunning the pink hatted witch. "…Voldemort is back!" Salazar finally finished.

The entire courtroom was in an uproar. Salazar could hear Sirius cheering him on, and he saw many, many flashbulbs going off as the reporters furiously snapped pictures. Fudge just stood there openmouthed and stared at him, but then the Minister glared.

"Harry Potter you are found GUILTY of MURDER! Aurors take him away!" He shouted.

"VOLDEMORT IS BACK! YOU WILL SEE SOON ENOUGH, AND THIS TIME, HARRY POTTER WON'T BE THERE TO SAVE YOUR SLIMY, CROOKED, NO GOOD..."
SORRY ARSES!" Salazar bellowed, after casting a voice amplifying charm.

There was so much chaos, flashbulbs, shouting, screaming, protesting, and Aurors in the courtroom that Salazar never saw who stunned him.

"When are we getting him out?" A furious looking Hermione demanded, just as Godric, Merlin, Nicholas, Perenelle, Sirius, and Remus walked in the door.

They had all returned to Merlin's cottage in Ireland to regroup, and she had apparently been listening over the wizarding wireless radio.

"They railroaded him!" She continued in frustration. "I sat here and heard everything!"

"I'll send Nehum when it gets a little darker. They need time to process him in, and get him into a cell." Godric replied, looking a bit weary from the day's events. "He knows we need to wait a bit, or else it will look like he had help and then all of us will be under suspicion."

"Salazar should have killed them all!" An angry female voice suddenly shouted.

They all turned around to see Lily, James, and Harry in Sirius's enlarged mirror looking downright ticked off.

"I loved that bit at the end though. Fudge is going to find himself without a job when Voldemort finally shows himself." James added with a chuckle.

"What is Dumbledore doing?" Lily asked curiously.

"He is doing his part, and is looking to appeal, but we don't think he is going to be successful." Perenelle said with a frustrated sigh. "I do agree with Salazar though. They didn't want him to prove his innocence because it would prove Voldemort has returned."

"I do believe your right my dear." Nicholas said with a weary sigh. "I just wish I could get ahold of that witch that suggested someone hit him with a killing curse. We know it wouldn't hurt him, but still, to suggest it is just…"

"...unbelievable." Sirius said, sinking down onto the couch and shaking his head. "I wanted to hex her."

"Who was that by the way?" Godric asked curiously.

"Madam Dolores Umbridge. She is the Senior Undersecretary to the Minister." Nicholas replied with a scowl. "And she is a nasty piece of work."

"Apparently." Lily growled.

"But what are we going to do now Gordy?" Hermione asked with a slight sob. "Harry won't be able to go back to Hogwarts. He'll be a fugitive. I know he can hide easily enough, because all he has to do is take out the polyjuice rock, but then…he won't be with us at school."

"I don't know Hermione," Godric said as he patted her shoulder lightly. "We will figure something out."

"I bet Voldemort is having a laugh over this." James muttered bitterly.

"Probably, but once the news gets out of Salazar's escape, he won't be laughing long. Voldemort will..."
be looking for a fourteen year old Salazar, not a fully grown one." Perenelle spat, causing Harry to laugh.

"Voldemort will never see him coming." He said.

Everyone chuckled over that, but then a silvery wolverine suddenly bounded through an open window and stopped in front of Hermione.

"What's the plan?" Neville's voice rang out. "Blaise is rearing to go. He says we need to get him out as soon as possible, and Nora is here throwing a fit and threatening to bite everything that moves. I just hope she doesn't bite me." The patronus finished with a slight quiver in its voice, which caused the others to crack a smile.

Hermione cast her own otter patronus and sent a reply back saying they were working on it, and Sirius left to go inform his cousin Andromeda and her family. Tonks had been reporting in about Salazar's well-being throughout the week as best she could, but because of her Black family ties, she wasn't allowed in to see him.

Remus left to go to the Weasleys, but after he left Merlin turned to Godric.

"I think it's time we go. I want to have the castle under a Fidelius as soon as possible. I will need your help, seeing as I can't cast the charm and be the secret keeper for it."

Godric nodded. "All right. Salazar will likely want to go home, shower, eat, and get a decent night's rest before heading there though."

"Indeed." Merlin said with a nod, then he turned to Nicholas, Perenelle, and Hermione, who was gazing up at him slightly starry eyed. "Help yourselves to some tea and biscuits if you wish. We will be back shortly."

They nodded, and before they knew it, it was just them and the Potters. Perenelle sighed loudly as she sat down on a chair.

"Did they tell Neville's Gran and Blaise's Mum the truth yet?" Harry asked, causing Hermione to nod.

"They did, and needless to say, they feel better knowing Salazar and Godric are a part of this. Neville says his Gran was shocked to meet Godric, and Blaise's Mum was speechless for nearly ten minutes." She giggled. "Though they both nearly fainted when Merlin introduced himself."

"Did they tell them the truth, or did they tell them the reincarnation rubbish?" James asked with a chuckle.

"Both." Perenelle said. "They did that so if Albus asks any questions they wouldn't be surprised. They took oaths about everything though."

"So they know we are alive then?" Lily asked, causing Perenelle to nod.

"Well that's good. I don't know Blaise's Mum that well, but I always liked Augusta Longbottom." James said. "Frank and I had been childhood friends for many years, but when we got to Hogwarts, we ended up hanging out with different people. We were always friends, just not as close as we had been."

"I wonder if there is anything Merlin can do for Frank and Alice. Surely if anyone can, it's him." Lily said, looking at James.
"There is an intriguing thought." Nicholas said as he gazed at everyone thoughtfully. "I never thought much about it truthfully."

"Do you think the stone can help?" Perenelle asked.

"I don't know, but I will certainly look into it. That young man has suffered his fair share of heartaches and deserves to have this looked into." He replied, but then turned to Hermione. "Please don't say anything to him though, just in case. I don't want to get his hopes up if it turns out nothing can be done."

"Yes sir, I understand." She nodded.

"Hermione, have you figured out Merlin's secret place yet?" Harry asked with a grin.

Her eyes lit up, but Perenelle burst out laughing. "My dear Harry, she figured it out in three seconds flat."

Harry started laughing too, but Hermione blushed. "I'm excited. I never thought...it never occurred...no wonder no one in the muggle world can find it. It's behind muggle repelling charms. They now pass it off as a myth and a legend."

"Ah magic. I daresay that I can't wait to see...wait, what were we talking about?" Lily asked, looking a bit confused.

"I don't know. You were going to say something about...I can't remember." James said, looking around.

"Something to with Merlin..." Perenelle said as she stared at them all.

"I hate it when that happens." Hermione muttered with a frustrated sigh. "It's like I have just forgotten something."

They all stared around at one another with blank looks, but none of them could remember what they had been discussing.

"I implore you to see reason Cornelius!" Albus shouted. "You can't keep Harry locked..."

"He committed murder Dumbledore!" The Minister shouted back.

They were in the Auror office, standing in front of Amelia's desk, and having a serious row. All the Aurors were standing around, watching with interest and wide-eyes, but Salazar was leaning against the doors to his cell, with his ears pressed up against the bars trying to hear what they were screaming. The door leading to the cells was slightly open, but his guards watched him like a hawk, ready for anything he might do.

Apparently his little display of wandless magic had caused them to become jittery. Fudge had already come into the cell block and purposely snapped his yew and basilisk hide wand in half, right in front of him. That ticked Salazar off because he was rather fond of that wand, so he sent a very powerful stinging jinx at the man's face.

It was a wonder Fudge could even talk at all right now, much less scream his lungs out.

Salazar had been awakened just before he had been tossed back in his cell, and he had a splitting headache because of hitting his head on the back wall.
Dawlish had loved that.

"...YOU-KNOW-WHO IS NOT BACK!" Fudge was yelling.

"He is, and you are fixing to throw our only hope into Azkaban! Harry is a child! He didn't do this!"

Salazar had to hand it to Dumbledore. He was certainly making a scene, but he knew the Headmaster's efforts were not going to be enough.

"He did! He did!" Fudge yelled. "A killing curse does not bounce off of anyone. I don't know what you are teaching up at that school, but clearly you are teaching foolish notions. Which is why I am sending someone from the Ministry to evaluate the staff, curriculum, and the students. Everything taught will be looked at closely Dumbledore, mark my words."

"You have condemned us all. When Voldemort..."

"He's not..."

"...makes his move, you will be seen as the fool you are!" Dumbledore roared, causing several things in the Auror office to rattle violently.

Salazar was actually highly impressed.

"Are you threatening me!? You better watch yourself Dumbledore! Get out of here! Get out of here right now, and I don't want to see you back in here for a very long time!" Fudge shouted.

"You mark my words, when Voldemort makes his move, you will be clamoring to get Harry out of Azkaban, but then it will be too late. Imagine what the dementors are going to do to a near fifteen year old boy. You, Cornelius Fudge, have given Voldemort the upper hand. Just remember that." Dumbledore said, trying to reign in his temper as he stormed out of the Auror offices.

Salazar sighed and shook his head, but then he chuckled. He couldn't wait to see what Fudge's reaction was going to be when he escaped.

Albus sighed as he sat down behind his desk. He had just flooed in from the Ministry, and he was still trying to calm himself down. However, he had just sat down and called for a cup of tea when a small knock sounded at his door.

He sighed tiredly and looked up. "Come in." He called out.

A very frazzled looking Minerva came in, and after seating herself, looked at Albus expectantly.

He chuckled slightly and offered her some tea. "I suppose you were listening over the radio."

"Oh yes." She replied. "Poppy, myself, and Emerald were all in the great hall listening to the broadcast. Miss Emerald is in a right furious state, judging by all the loud hissing and tail flicking."

"How did you know I was back inside the castle?" He asked curiously.

She smiled a bit as she set her tea cup down. "A patronus message from George Weasley. Apparently they had been watching the map for your return."

"A patronus message?" Albus asked, looking a bit startled.

"Oh yes, Remus taught Mr. Potter and Mr. Roffin how to make a patronus talk after your little mail
redirection ward stunt. It was while you were under the imperius. They had been teaching the children the patronus charm for some time, and once they had mastered the charm, they taught the children how to make them talk."

"I see." Albus said with a thoughtful sigh. "Yes, I now recall Remus getting angry at me in the great hall. Thankfully Lucius never found out about that, though he did ask me what it all meant. I never told him. If I may, what are the children's patronuses?"

"Well, Miss Granger's is an otter, Mr. Longbottom's is a wolverine, Mr. Zabini's is a bear, and the twins have weasels."

"Just like Arthur's patronus then." Albus nodded.

Minerva also nodded, but then she looked at him. "How did he look Albus? Did he look ok? Judging by all the commotion at the end, I'm guessing he performed wandless magic."

"He did, and much to the surprise of everyone there, except us of course. He looked pale, slightly dirty, and frumpled, but otherwise seemed to be fine."

"That's good. He should be all right then. I'm sure they will have them out fairly quickly." Minerva said taking another sip of tea.

"I still can't believe what all has taken place in the last few weeks." Albus said with a sigh. "A part of me believes its all rubbish, but I can't justify those feelings because of all that has happened. I've been going over my copy of the book written by Salazar Slytherin, and he was indeed looking for a way to become immortal."

"Does it say how he accomplished it?" She asked.

Albus shook his head tiredly. "No, but it's still hard to come to terms with it. However, I look at all they have done and I can't deny it. The golden pillar in Harry's first year, the Snake Pit, Peeves, Helena Ravenclaw going to them about the diadem, and the castle itself. I always wondered how Harry managed to get out of my office that night in his first year. The castle let him out."

"That was the night he blew up this office, and yes, I already know you obliviated me." She said with a slight scowl.

Albus buried his face in his hands. "I've made a right fool of myself, haven't I?"

"I dare say so." Minerva replied. "Mr. Potter is also responsible for the badgers that year because the Founders' enchantments are activated by blood magic, though the castle took it upon herself to activate Ravenclaw's the night you tried to kill them."

Albus sighed heavily. "They don't trust me, do they?"

"Not completely." She answered truthfully. "But they are willing to work with you. Your extensive knowledge about You-Know-Who is very valuable. No one knows him better than you do. If anyone can help in the search for the horcruxes, it's you."

"That's if Harry is still willing to fight. You heard what he said after the verdict came in." Albus said in a slight worrying tone.

Minerva chuckled. "Albus, Harry Potter may not be there to finish off You-Know-Who, but Salazar Slytherin sure will. You have to understand something about him. He may say and do a lot of things, but he is a master at deception and misdirection. He is cunning, resourceful, determined, and
ambitious. He is the very embodiment of Slytherin, because he is Slytherin."

"And Godric?" Albus asked.

Minerva laughed loudly. "He is every bit the Gryffindor we have come to idealize him as. They are best friends though, and one cannot function without the other, at least not very well. They are like brothers in fact. They fuss, fight, poke fun, and play pranks on each other, but at the end of the day, if you mess with one, the other isn't far behind, and then you have to deal with the both of them." She said with a grin.

"It's ironic really." One of the past Headmaster's said. "The two houses have spent centuries despising each other, when all along their very Founders are the best of friends."

"It makes those of us who molded ourselves after a cold, dark wizard, pure-blooded activist seem very stupid." Phineas Black said with a loud sigh.

"Indeed." Another Headmaster said with amusement, causing Phineas to glare at him.

"Make no mistake about it," Minerva said, looking over at them. "Mr. Potter…Salazar…can be considered a dark wizard, but just as he said back in his first year, not all dark wizards are created equal. I do believe he told Ron Weasley that, and I quote, 'Salazar Slytherin was a dark wizard, but he looks like a fluffy bunny rabbit compared to You-Know-Who'." She chuckled. "However, he knows more dark magic than You-Know-Who could ever hope to learn, and lucky for us, he's not afraid to use it."

"That's what worries me." Albus said, glancing sharply at her.

Minerva sighed loudly. "Albus, you have to realize that Salazar is going to do what he sees fit, as he sees fit. He will take everyone's opinion under advisement, and he will back down if the majority thinks its best, but if sees an open opportunity to strike, he will." She said with deadly seriousness. "No one is saying that you have go about killing people if a battle breaks out, but Salazar, and Godric for that matter, will. They are not stupid though. They know that sometimes you have to take prisoners, so they are not going to go into battle looking to slaughter all of their opponents. Give them some credit Albus, they have lived a thousand years after all."

Albus sighed heavily and leaned back in his chair. "I suppose your right Minerva, but will they listen to anything I have to say? Will they take my advice and suggestions under advisement? I mean in all honesty, I kind of feel useless."

"You're not useless Albus, but I do think you need to be a little more open to the ideas and suggestions of other people. Aberforth is convinced you have a Merlin complex, and all this nonsense about your 'Greater Good' is looked upon with scorn and disgust. Take what happened to young Mr. Weasley in second year for instance. It's only by Merlin's good graces that you didn't end up dead. They would have killed you and blown up your office looking for that diary. A child's life was at stake, and I think you know how that made you look to, not just Salazar and Godric, but to everyone. The Weasleys are still hot under the collar over that."

Albus sighed heavily as tears sprang up in his eyes. "I have a lot to make up for." He said quietly.

"Yes you do." Minerva said in all seriousness, but then she sighed. "Albus, I shouldn't say this, but there is a lot you don't know. There is a lot you won't know until you prove yourself trustworthy in their eyes. They can look past all your actions from this last year because they weren't your own, and Salazar can look past all that you have done to him, because as he so plainly puts it, he's an adult and can handle it. He can look past the abuse of the Dursleys that you stuck him with, he can look past all
the crap you tried to pull with him in first year. He doesn't care how you treated him. He cares about how you have placed this school and its students in danger. He cares about how you blatantly ignored Mr. Weasley's situation in order to carry out your own agenda. He cares about how you disregarded the entire student body's safety when you lured You-Know-Who here because of the stone, and he cares about how you let Sirius rot in Azkaban for eleven years. It's not how you treat him, or even Godric, it's how you treat other people, especially people they love and care about."

Albus looked at her thoughtfully with sad eyes. "I think I am beginning to understand." He said quietly as he nodded. "But I honestly don't know what to do now."

"Prove to them that you can be trusted. Reform the Order, let the former members who don't know them, know exactly who they are. Swear them to secrecy, because I agree with Nicholas. Who they are doesn't need to get out into the general public, because it will only distract them from the real problem, which is You-Know-Who. However, when you reform the Order, don't let it be like it was the last time. Lily strongly advocated killing in self defense if need be, yet you always instructed everyone use non-violent charms and things. You can't win a war like that. You need to be a little more open-minded. It is part of what Mr. Potter was getting at in the hospital wing when he mentioned using fear as a weapon. You-Know-Who does not fear the Order, because he knows that we play fair, more than fair actually. If we are going to help Mr. Potter keep his wayward heir in line and keep innocent people from dying, then You-Know-Who needs to fear not only you, but everyone, and that includes the whole Order."

"Severus says that Voldemort still doesn't believe Harry's claims." Albus said with a sigh.

"Oh, I think he will before long, and Severus can do a lot to help with that." Minerva replied.

"I suppose that's true." Albus nodded. "All right Minerva. I thank you very much for being honest with me today, it's one of the reasons you are my right hand." He said fondly as he gave her a small, appreciative smile. "I will do all I can to help. I will reform the Order, just as I said in the hospital wing. If I recall correctly, there was talk about Mr. Nilrem having a place we can use, but we all need to come together so that we can talk about it. Maybe the Weasleys will afford us a stop over until everyone can learn of the new Headquarters."

"I will certainly run that by the Weasleys and I will speak to Mr. Nilrem." Minerva said as she stood up. "No doubt that Mr. Roffin will send Nehum to fetch Mr. Potter from Azkaban before long." She said with a sigh, but then she chuckled. "I do believe we are more worked up over him being sent there than he is."

"Harry won't be able to come back to school though. They will be looking for him, and Fudge has already said that he is going to be sending someone from the Ministry to evaluate us and everything we do."

"Who is he sending?" She asked with instant fire in her eyes.

"I have no idea yet." Albus replied as he shook his head.

Minerva scowled at the very notion of being watched like a hawk, but then she chuckled. "Well, I'm sure we will figure out something, and as for Mr. Potter's situation, I'm certain that he will figure out where to go from here. He is a Slytherin after all."

Albus chuckled as well. "That he is."

Albus watched her nod and take her leave, then he sighed loudly and leaned back in his chair. He was still uncertain about some of the things Minerva had said, such as the use of deadly force, but he
was determined to prove himself trustworthy, so he decided to go with it for now, and see how it all worked out.

It was shortly after Albus had left when Fudge came bustling back into the cell block, red faced from not only anger, but Salazar's stinging jinx. It had made him laugh loudly, but Fudge wasn't in the mood to play around, and barked at Salazar's guards to stun him. Salazar had scowled at him, and manage to block only three of the stunners.

So it wasn't a shock to him when he was awakened by once again hitting his head hard on solid stone. He immediately knew he was in Azkaban, due to the cold and the effects of the dementors that were already setting in, but he picked himself up, stumbling somewhat from the concussion he was sure he had, and turned around just as the cell door slammed shut.

"Have a nice stay Potter. The Dark Lord sends his regards." Dawlish hissed.

There were no other guards around, and Salazar's vision cleared somewhat, it allowed him to take a look at his surroundings. Apparently he was in the high security ward.

"My friends!" Dawlish called out loudly. "Fresh blood for you all to taunt and tease! The one-the only-Harry Potter! The Boy-Who-Lived has been convicted of murdering Pettigrew!" He laughed.

Laughter, sneering, jeering, and cheers sprang up from every Death Eater cell, but Salazar only scowled.

"Worry not my friends! The Dark Lord comes for you all soon, and we will all be reunited!" Dawlish called out happily, but then he turned to Salazar. "And when he does, he will finish you off once and for all Potter…or is it Salazar Slytherin?" He laughed. "Potter says, no he dares is more like it, to claim to be the reincarnated soul of Salazar Slytherin himself!" He cried, causing the Death Eaters to spat vulgar obscenities at Salazar. "The Dark Lord has no need to entertain such foolish notions though, so do not be fooled by this pretender. We come soon, so rejoice!" He cried, causing chaos to erupt from each cell.

"What's going on back there?" A distant voice shouted.

"Nothing Franklin!" Dawlish shouted back, but then he turned to Salazar once more. "I do believe this used to be Sirius's cell. Maybe he left something for you." He laughed, then with one last happy whoop, he left.

"Poor baby Potter. Locked up all alone with us scum." Rabastan Lestrange sneered from the cell next to his.

"Come to me baby Potter. I can be your new Mummy!" Bellatrix cackled from the one across from him.

Salazar just laughed loudly, and walked over to the bars to get a better look at her.

"You look like dragon shit Bella, but thanks to your stupid friend Dawlish, who is clearly a Death Eater we didn't know about until now, I have a few good things to report. Dumbledore will be very interested to know about a planned breakout, and while I may not be able to do anything right now, I look forward to separating your pretty little head from your shoulders. I will kill you if we ever cross paths again. It's the least I can do for the Longbottoms."

Her face took on one of excited glee. "Itty bitty Potter knows how to play rough!" She shouted gleefully. "But you can't, can you? You want my head? WELL YOU CAN'T HAVE IT!" She
screamed with fury as she pressed her snarling face against the bars of her cell door. "You can't get out. You can't get out. HAHAHAHA! Potter can't get out!" She cackled.

"Oh yes I can Bella. I expect to be out shortly."

She whimpered a bit but peered at him closely. "How? You can't get out! You can't get out baby Potter!"

"Yes I can. I can get out the same way Sirius did, but you should know, Sirius is head of the Black family. You've been cast out, as has Narcissa. You, your sister, and her pitiful spineless husband are penniless and are worse off than beggars on the street. Sirius controls the Black family fortune now." Salazar said with a twisted grin.

"I'll kill him! I'll kill him!" She screamed, grabbing the bars and shaking them back and forth violently, as if she was trying to rip the door off its hinges.

"And as for that half-blooded son of a muggle you call the Dark Lord, tell him Salazar Slytherin is coming for him. I'm going to kill him for good this time." Salazar said, pressing his face against the bars and grinning at her.

"You dare!? You dare?!!" Several Death Eaters screamed.

"YOU DARE TO SPEAK THAT WAY ABOUT OUR LORD?!" Bellatrix screamed madly.

"HALF BLOODED SON OF A MUGGLE! HALF BLOODED SON OF A MUGGLE! HALF BLOODED SON OF A MUGGLE!" Salazar bellowed gleefully in a sing-song voice, amidst the screaming protests of the Death Eaters.

He knew he was being childish, but he didn't care. He loved to see them so riled up.

"HE IS NOT! HE IS NOT!" Bellatrix roared with rage.

"Oh but he is sweet Bellatrix. You, a stanch, proud pure blood, bow down to a man named Tom Riddle and he is a HALF BLOODED SON OF A MUGGLE!" Salazar shouted again, but this time no protests came as a sudden deathly chill descended upon them. They all quickly backed away from their cell doors, and Salazar was no exception.

He tried in vain to wandlessly summon up a patronus, but he couldn't. The combination of lack of sleep and food, not to mention his concussion and earlier wandless exploits, left him floundering around.

He curled up in a little ball in the farthest corner of his cell and whimpered slightly, but then, almost as if it had known, a silvery hawk flew through the wall and wrapped its wings around him.

"I've got you my friend." Godric's voice said quietly. "I will send him soon. Just hang on a bit longer. We can't be too obvious."

Salazar choked back a small sob, but chuckled despite everything going on around him.

"Out of all the other times, you pick now to not be a bloody Gryffindor." Salazar mumbled, then squeezed his eyes shut and let the hawk keep the dementors at bay.
I know this chapter is mostly dialogue and I'm sorry about that, but I felt it was important to actually have them talk things out, especially Minerva and Albus. I did try to fit more in this chapter, but I couldn't without it being reeeeealy long, so I decided to cut it off here.

Salazar's in a bit of a pickle because he certainly can't go back to Hogwarts now, but I'm sure he will figure out something! Fudge will go down hard when everything hits the fan though. I always thought he got off easy in canon, so I will think up something nasty for him.

Next chapter will have Merlin's secret place (which most of you have guessed LOL), and the first meeting as the official Order. I hope you enjoyed this chapter!
Within Six Hours of Being Placed In His Cell-Harry Potter Escapes Azkaban! Is Sirius Black to Blame?

Salazar read the headline and rolled his eyes as he cast the paper aside. He wasn't interested in reading any further, because he knew that Fudge was no doubt spewing his prattle.

He had been asleep when Nehum came to get him, so he was very startled when he suddenly found himself sitting in the living room of his flat in Diagon Alley. Dobby, who had apparently been waiting for him, shoved Salazar towards the bathroom, where there had been a bath full of hot water waiting on him. After that, Dobby handed him some warm milk and biscuits, then shuffled him off to bed.

This morning he woke up to the smell of bacon and eggs though, and he smiled as he got up and went about his morning routine. The much needed rest, combined with a headache potion, had done him a lot of good and he was somewhat in a jovial mood, especially now that he was back in his normal adult form.

"The paper says that your doggy father broke out in his animagus form." Dobby said, trying to keep the tea tray he was holding from toppling over. "They says you be having an illegal animagus form too, and that's how you got out. They also says the mean snarling lady says you told her how you planned it. The nasty Minister is shocked you have an animagus form, because you're so young." Dobby grinned.
"Bellatrix must have talked." Salazar replied with a chuckle as he took the tray from Dobby. "I'm not surprised, and thank you for the tea Dobby."

Dobby's eyes lit up. "Your most welcome Mr. Harry Salazar Potter Slytherin sir! Can Dobby do anything else?"

"Actually yes. Since Hedwig is with Fred and George, will you be kind enough to take this letter to Godric?" He asked, handing a piece of parchment to him.

"Of course sir! Dobby will be back in a bit. You drink your tea and rest."

"I will, thank you."

Dobby popped away, and Salazar chuckled again as he leaned back on his sofa to drink his tea.

Dobby ended up finding Godric in his small little cottage at Hogwarts, but as soon as he read the letter, Godric apparated to Merlin's place in Ireland. He found the old wizard in his vegetable garden, teaching Sirius the fundamentals of basic gardening.

"I'm glad I found the both of you together." He said with a deep relieved sigh. "Dobby arrived at my place with a letter from Salazar. He says that we need to alert Albus and Moody to the fact that Dawlish the Auror is a Death Eater. Salazar was placed in the high security ward, in your old cell in fact," He said, pointing at Sirius, "and said that Dawlish told the other locked up Death Eaters that Voldemort would be getting them out soon."

"He's planning a breakout?" Sirius asked with wide eyes.

Godric nodded, but then he grinned. "Salazar said he kept teasing them. He kept calling Voldemort a half-blooded son of a muggle. Bellatrix threw a fit and started screaming that he wasn't. Then he went on to tell her what you did as far as casting her and Narcissa out of the family, and taking control of the Black family fortune. You can imagine her reaction. As for himself, Salazar says he is fine, but he needs a few hours to himself."

Merlin nodded but Sirius burst out laughing. "A part of me wishes I could have seen Bella's reaction!" He cried loudly.

Merlin chuckled and shook his head. "Have you seen the Daily Prophet this morning?"

"I have." Godric nodded. "What are we going to do?"

"Wait for Sirius to be called in for questioning I imagine." Merlin replied. "And I have no doubts that he will."

"Well Salazar said he will be at Hogwarts later today around three, but says he will stay invisible. He says now that he is on the run, Sirius will be watched closely, as will the Weasleys, and Hogwarts." Godric told them.

"He's right." Hermione said, coming out the back door into the garden. "I just got a patronus from Fred. He said Aurors showed up early, early this morning, before the sun even came up, and searched for Harry. They dragged them all out of the house and pretty much tore it apart looking for him. Professor Dumbledore is with them now."

Merlin sighed loudly and scowled. "All right. Godric, go to the Weasleys, talk to Dumbledore, and make sure everyone is all right. Sirius, go get cleaned up, and you and I will go ahead and go to the
Ministry together, because it will not look right if we wait until they call for you. Our story is, you just got up, read the paper, and are now concerned about your godson. However, we need to let them believe, even though it is impossible, that a fourteen year old has an animagus form. That way they won’t suspect Godric used Nehum.”

"What if they try to arrest me?" Sirius asked, paling at the thought.

"That's why I'm going with you lad." Merlin replied as he patted his shoulder.

"I'll tell Albus to go along with the animagus theory." Godric said, just before he apparated away.

Sirius watched him go, then nodded and nearly ran towards his house, but Merlin sighed and looked up at the sky.

"I should have seen this coming.” He said as he rubbed his forehead.

"We have a mess." Hermione said, looking at him with worry.

"Yes, we do, but we will be fine.” He replied, looking at her with a reassuring smile. "I need you stay here and tell anyone who may come what is happening. Tell them that Salazar said he will be at Hogwarts around three, under a disillusionment charm. I have no doubts that the school will be crawling with Aurors."

"Yes sir.” She said with a nod. "Lucky for us he can hide there easily."

"Indeed." Merlin said with a chuckle as he headed inside to get cleaned up.

Amelia Bones looked around her chaotic office and sighed, then she looked down at the morning’s *Daily Prophet* and smiled. She had been totally against this from the start. It was unthinkable what had been done to the boy. She found out that Fudge had held a backdoor secret meeting, and had already taken a vote on whether or not Potter was guilty. Those like herself who protested this farce, had not been invited. There was nothing she could do about it though. Once the Aurors had Potter back in custody, not even she was allowed in to see him, then they took him to Azkaban.

But there was something else she could do.

The Minister was crooked, that bit was widely believed, but he hid his secrets well, and now, more than ever, she was determined to find out those dirty little secrets. The Minister was known to ‘deal’ with people who came against him, and more than one suspicious ‘accident’ went uninvestigated. She would play by the rules for now, and when the time was right, she would personally see Cornelius Fudge into Azkaban, or worse. She would not, could not, let him get away with this.

Amelia smiled to herself when she remembered what happened yesterday and this morning.

She had went home yesterday a defeated woman and had to comfort her crying niece, but with the news this morning, Susan had perked up and began giggling.

Amelia had been confused at first, and she asked Susan why she was laughing, only for Susan to push the paper in front of her. After Amelia read it, the she stared at Susan with wide eyes when she said the animagus bit was a load of rubbish, and it was more likely that Nehum the phoenix got him out.

*That* sounded more like it, but she wasn't about to say anything. She knew that Potter was innocent,
and now because of everything that had happened, she was convinced that You-Know-Who was back.

Amelia was suddenly startled out of her thoughts as a rubbish bin loudly skittered across the floor. She looked up to see a mumbling and cursing Nymphadora Tonks scowling at herself as she picked it up and put it back in its proper place.

Amelia suddenly had a wild thought, jumped out of her chair, and ran to her office door.

"Tonks! Get in here!" She yelled furiously.

She saw the young pink headed Auror sigh, and make her way towards her.

"I'm sorry ma'am. I know I'm clumsy but…"

"I know you are keeping secrets!" Amelia shouted at her. "I want to know where Harry Potter is right now!"

"I don't know!" Tonks shrieked, just as Amelia grabbed her by the arm and pulled her into her office.

"Please sit." Amelia said with a scowl. "Sorry I had to do that. Look," she said banging her fist on the desk. "I know Potter is innocent, and I know that you are related to Sirius Black through your mother, and I'm hoping you can give me some information. I need to know if it's true that Nehum the phoenix got him out." She said, while wagging her finger furiously at Tonks. "If you can, please let Dumbledore, or whoever, know that I am on your side and…"

There was a sudden knock at the door, but before she could answer someone came barging in.

"Amelia, we need to talk."

Amelia stood quickly and huffed loudly. "Alastor, even better." She snapped.

"Look, Dumbledore and I don't know where Potter…"

"I don't care." Amelia hissed with a scowl.

"She's acting Mad-Eye, go with it a moment." Tonks whispered, with her eyes bouncing between the two.

Moody surveyed the both of them for a second, before nodding slowly, shutting the door, and carefully placing a privacy ward around it. "All right let me have it."

"I'm not stupid, one of you knows where Potter is, and that is fine by me." She said stomping her foot angrily, seeing as everyone walking by could still see them. "I just need to know if Nehum the phoenix got him out. I don't care that he escaped, but I need to know if that is true."

"Why do you need to know that?" Moody asked as he leaned against his long wooden staff.

"Susan said it this morning. The animagus stuff is a load of bunk, and she suggested the phoenix. I know Potter is innocent of killing Pettigrew, but I need to know if I am allowing a potentially dangerous wizard to roam free. If the phoenix got Potter out, that's all the proof I need. That will satisfy my mind for good that the boy isn't dark and dangerous." She said, scowling furiously, but her voice was full of pleading.

"He did." Moody said simply, causing Amelia to close her eyes in relief.
"Thank you. Now listen to me. I will push this animagus bit in order to protect the Roffin boy. Please let Dumbledore know that he doesn't need to fear anything from me personally, but Fudge has got the whole department under his thumb, and he is giving the orders, not me." She said, as she pointed her finger in his face.

Moody backed up a bit, but nodded slightly. "I'm glad to hear you say that you will push the animagus bit, but Potter is not why I'm here actually. Dawlish is a Death Eater. When he chucked Potter in his cell yesterday he told Potter that Voldemort is planning a mass break out of all the Death Eaters."

"How do you know this?" Amelia asked with wide eyes, as Tonks gasped in fright.

"Potter sent word to Roffin." Moody said simply.

"Well it makes sense." Amelia said with a true angry sigh. "When Pettigrew escaped from here, Dawlish and Kingsley Shacklebolt were on duty. Dawlish was stunned, but Kingsley was killed. I always wondered why. Now I do."

"So you believe that You-Know-Who is back?" Tonks asked.

Amelia nodded, though she did so with a scowl as if she were still yelling at them. "Fudge is doing everything he can to deny the fact. He's not You-Know-Who's man, but he is in denial, which makes him dangerous. He is doing everything he can to hold on to that belief, which includes chucking a clearly innocent boy into Azkaban. It's why he dismissed the magical signature evidence. It also why he didn't use veritaserum or ask for any memories at that farce of a trial yesterday. It's as I said, he is deliberately keeping himself in denial."

"But why would he do that?" Tonks asked, completely flabbergasted.

Amelia shook her head. "I don't know. It's possible that he's scared and doesn't want to face the truth, or any number of things really. Your guess is as good as mine."

"So what do you want us to do?" Tonks asked.

"I don't know exactly, but I'm assuming Dumbledore is doing a whole lot. Is he reforming his Order group?" She asked looking at them both sternly.

"He is." Moody said. "What I'm about to say goes for the both of you, and it goes no further than this office. If you want to join the Order, be at Hogwarts at three this afternoon. You'll have to apparate because the floo network department has locked down all floos in and out of the castle. When you arrive at the gate, disillusion yourselves and stay that way until you get inside the castle. There will be guards at the front door, but to get past them, stay under the charm, and whisper the password 'Salazar is a fluffy bunny' when you are asked for it." He said, causing Tonks to snort loudly. "We were going to use the Weasleys, but their house is in bad need of repair. The searchers did a number on them this morning."

Amelia looked at him oddly because of his instructions, but she sighed heavily. "I feel so bad for them, but you should know that Fudge has Aurors all over Hogwarts right now because he thinks that is one of the places Potter will show up."

"Doesn't matter. We have a few tricks up our sleeves. Just be there if you want to join Amelia. I know you well, and you are one of the few I trust, especially right now."

"I'll be there Mad-Eye." Tonks said with a firm nod.
Amelia looked at them both and sighed once more. "I'll think about it Alastor, but if I decide not to, just remember that you can come to me with anything you need." She said with a frown, which made him chuckle a bit.

"What about me?" Tonks asked.

"You will be watched closely because of you family ties to Black, so mind yourself."

"Yes ma'am." Tonks said as she stood up with a scowl.

Both Tonks and Moody stomped out, with Moody yelling obscenities at Amelia, and with Amelia shouting in denial about Voldemort's return, causing nearly everyone in the Auror offices to nod in agreement with her.

Salazar sighed with content as he exited Ollivander's wand shop. He had played the part of an Unspeakable, who was sent to confiscate Harry Potter's second wand due to him escaping. He did this because Unspeakables never give out their names, and always have their hoods up and faces covered, so he knew Ollivander wouldn't ask too many questions. Thankfully Ollivander had believed him and handed the wand over, but not before showing his displeasure and making his opinion known about the farce of a trial Harry Potter had received.

Salazar believed that he liked Ollivander even more now.

The holly and phoenix feather wand didn't feel as good as his yew and basilisk hide wand, but it was bonded to him, and he knew that he would have no trouble using it.

He apparated back to his flat to put the polyjuice rock back in, and since it was nearly three, he went ahead and apparated to Hogwarts.

When he landed in Godric's house and walked out of the forest under a disillusionment charm, Salazar nearly burst out laughing at the sight that met his eyes.

The Aurors that had been sent to watch Hogwarts for any sign of him were either running around trying to stay away from the large, charmed, transfigured lions, or they had already been caught and were being carried around in the lion's mouths. Some of them had even climbed trees in order to stay away from them.

He had hated that particular prank when Godric had used it on him, but as it was right now, it was really funny to see slobbering lions walking around with Aurors in their mouths. The Aurors tried in vain to vanish, kill, and take them down anyway they could, but because they were no more than transfigured rocks, sticks, leaves, and anything else Godric could find, nothing worked.

When he got closer to the front doors though, he nearly laughed again. Emeralda was coiled up right in front of them in a striking position, with Nora sitting on top of her head.

"Minions, someone approaches." Nora hissed softly, causing Emeralda to open her mouth to show off her teeth. "As always Shrew, get ready to eat them."

"Paaaaasswoorrrrd?" A deep disembodied, gravely, scary voice asked.

Salazar just stood there a moment, then he snorted. "All this for me? I feel loved."

"Speaker!"
"Master!"

"Wait!" Nora shouted suddenly. "That sissy little man Morty can speak to us too. Maybe it's him." Nora said, peering down to get a good look at Salazar's heat signature.

"I assure you my dears, it's me." Salazar chuckled.

"Well how do we know? I can't see you properly because you're invisible, and you haven't said the password. Even if I could see you, I have forgotten what you look like, seeing as I haven't seen you in more than a week. You decided you wanted to get yourself arrested and locked up." She hissed with sarcasm. "Those silly people are lucky I wasn't there. I would have bitten them."

Salazar chuckled again. "I've missed you too my dears, but no one informed me of the password, so I guess I run the risk of being eaten."

"It's just a scare tactic." Nora said. "Wait no, I take that back... just in case you are Morty...the Shrew will eat you."

Salazar snorted. "All right, how about I tell you something only I would know."

"That sounds fair Master." Emeralda hissed, causing Nora to glare at her.

Salazar looked around the grounds at the Aurors who were still running around trying to avoid the lions, and laughed. "Godric's a bloody Gryffindor."

"Oh, it is you Speaker. We weren't sure. You may proceed."

Emeralda hissed with amusement and shifted a bit so he could get to the door, and he chuckled again as he headed inside.

"Oh by the way, Fred, George, I like your scary voice." He said with a grin. "It has a nice affect."

"Thanks Harry. It was actually Hermione's idea for us to guard, but Gordy set the password." Fred's disembodied voice said.

George snorted. "It's 'Salazar is a fluffy bunny'." He whispered.

"I'm going to kill him." Salazar said, rolling his eyes.

"Yes, that is certainly you Speaker. I have no doubts now." Nora hissed, but then she turned her head sharply. "Minions, someone else approaches."

Salazar grinned as he shut the door, and quickly made his way into the great hall. He didn't reverse the disillusionment charm though, seeing as he didn't personally know some of the people sitting at the house tables.

All of the children were there, including Blaise's Mum and Neville's Grandmum, as were all the Diggorys and Weasleys, even Ron and Ginny. Salazar cast a confused glance in their direction, and headed over to where Godric was sitting by himself, apparently waiting for him to show up.

"Salazar is a fluffy bunny? I hate you." He said, lightly punching Godric in the shoulder, causing him to grin.

"I didn't tell you on purpose, and I'm disappointed that you haven't been eaten." Godric replied.

"Bloody Gryffindor." Salazar grumbled as Godric snorted. "Why is Ron and Ginny here?"
"The Weasleys were dragged out of their beds this morning so that the Aurors could search The Burrow for you. They have no place to go now, seeing as their house has basically been destroyed, so they are going to be staying at Merlin's. Ron and Ginny may as well know the truth, seeing as they are going to live at Headquarters now."

"They are going to stay with him in Ireland?"

"No, the other place."

"What other place?" Salazar asked in confusion.

Godric looked up a bit startled, but then he chuckled. "Fidelius Charm."

"Oh, have I forgotten something?" Salazar grinned.

"Apparently." Godric laughed.

"There are a lot of people here that I don't know." Salazar sighed as he looked around at the ten or so people he didn't recognize.

"Yeah, but they are all going to learn the reincarnated bit, and that includes Ginny and Ron. I told Albus about the enchanted ceiling, and now he wants to show everyone your memory from the graveyard, the talk in the hospital wing, and your memory from last night with Dawlish at Azkaban." Godric said.

"I actually think that's a good idea." Salazar said with a nod as he began pulling the memories out of his head. Then he placed them in the phials Godric handed him. "They all need to know what we know, so that they can be prepared and properly informed."

"Well that's not all. Moody suggested that we all take veritaserum and answer a few questions. He cited Pettigrew as the reason, and said that he didn't want to take any chances this time around."

Salazar's mouth dropped open in shock. "Albus is going along with it?"

"Surprisingly yes, though at first he was against it."

"What about Severus?" Salazar asked, looking over at him as he sat next to Moody, who was looking in their direction. "We can't take the chance that one of these people will talk if Voldemort catches them…"

"That's why Nicholas and Perenelle are here." Godric reassured him. "Severus will be safe, and none of these people will be able to talk about him."

"Severus agrees with this?" Salazar asked still somewhat shocked.

Godric chuckled. "Publicly no, but privately yes. He trusts the Flamels to get it done right."

"I still don't like it." Salazar grumbled.

"I know, but it is what it is." Godric sighed.

"Where's Merlin?" Salazar asked curiously, just as Albus stood up and began making his way towards the great hall's doors.

Godric grinned. "He's not here because of the veritaserum."
Salazar just shook his head and chuckled. "It's not like he couldn't beat it."

"He probably could, but he didn't want to take the chance. Besides, he's getting Headquarters ready so he has an excuse for not being here. He is going to tell them the truth about himself, but he wants to make sure everyone here is trustworthy before he spills the beans."

"I guess I can understand that." Salazar whispered, just as Albus, Nora, Emeralda, and the twins entered the great hall.

The great hall quieted down as Albus took his place at the podium, and Salazar took a moment to look around again. Not counting the people who knew the real truth about him, there were about twenty others who had shown up. Some of them he recognized, such as all the Professors, Madam Rosmerta from the Three Broomsticks, Florean Fortescue from Fortescue's Ice Cream parlor in Diagon Alley, and Tom, the barman and owner of The Leaky Cauldron. Salazar also recognized the witch who had stood up for him at his trial yesterday, but he didn't know her name. As for the others though, he had no clue who they were.

He focused his attention on Albus, who had cleared his throat and was smiling at them all.

"I am sorry for the delay, but we wanted to ensure that everyone who had been invited had arrived, and I am pleased to see that all of you have come. Before we really get started, I just want to say that many of you were part of the first Order, and I am so glad you have returned. As you can see from the not one, but two phoenixes behind me, we are still called The Order of the Phoenix. It's a good thing that I didn't name us Fawkes's Order, or else we'd have to change the name." He said with twinkling eyes causing everyone to chuckle, but then he continued.

"As for us meeting at Hogwarts today, it is going to be a onetime thing and in the future we will be gathering at our new Headquarters, which we will visit shortly after this meeting is over. I know many of you are here at great personal risk, especially those of you who work inside the Ministry, but I want to say that none of you are under any obligation just yet. Things are going to be vastly different this time around, and there is going to be some changes. Some will be minor, but some will be major. None so major than what I'm about to say in this…pre-meeting…if you will." He said taking a deep breath.

"Where's Harry!? Is he ok?" Someone suddenly shouted.

"Ginevra Weasley, sit down this minute!" Molly scolded immediately, pulling her daughter back down in her seat, but then she turned to Albus. "I'm sorry Headmaster, please go on." She said, turning back to glare at a red faced Ginny.

Albus chuckled slightly. "I don't know Mrs. Weasley, I haven't seen him." He said with twinkling eyes, but then he faced the rest of the great hall and continued. "Before we head to our new Headquarters, which is under a Fidelius Charm, we are going to make sure each and every one of you are who you appear to be. We are going to give you veritaserum and ask you a few simple questions. This was suggested to me by Alastor, who said this needed to happen, seeing as we were betrayed last time by one of our own. I spent a lot of time wrestling with this issue, but in the end, I agreed that it was for the best." He said with a large sigh.

"What are the questions Albus?" Amelia asked curiously.

"I'm glad you asked." He said nodding at her. "They will be-your name, are you a Death Eater, do you want to be a Death Eater, do you want to be a Death Eater in the future, are you sympathetic towards Voldemort's cause, and lastly, have you ever, or do you plan to, willingly and freely give Voldemort or any of his Death Eaters information that he can use against the general wizarding
public, and/or the Order. Let me be clear, answering yes to any of these questions does not mean we are instantly going to throw you out of this room on your bum. If you answer yes, more questions will be asked so you have a chance to explain your actions, then we will go from there. Once we are done questioning you, you will be given the anti-dote to veritaserum. We are going to do this right here, right now and in front of everyone, so that everyone knows, and so that there are no misunderstandings. No one is exempt, not even me. If you do not agree with these terms, there's the door." He said motioning towards it.

Salazar was happy to note, that even though people began murmuring under their breaths, no one got up to leave. Moody's magical eye was quickly scanning the room though, making sure no one slipped anything into their mouth's, and that made Salazar chuckle slightly.

The man was certainly paranoid.

"Everyone place your hands on the table in front of you, and keep them there until you are done being questioned." Moody growled. "We don't want anyone to accuse anyone of sipping the anti-dote beforehand. Mundungus!" He suddenly shouted. "What did I just say!?"

"Sorry Mad-Eye I was just putting me whiskey away!" A surly looking wizard shouted, causing Sirius to laugh loudly.

Moody growled at him, and his magical eye zeroed in on the wizard's pocket, causing Moody to scoff loudly. "Fine then." He grumbled, then he turned to Albus. "You first, then me."

Albus nodded, and once Moody had given him the veritaserum, he began to question him. Albus answered his questions, though some of the responses caused more than a few eyebrows to raise. Such as the one about passing information to Voldemort or his Death Eaters, but Moody let them go, knowing that Severus was the reason for Albus answering the way he did. Salazar knew that once Severus was questioned, that it would all make sense to everyone.

Once Albus was done, he questioned Moody, then Albus took over the questioning, so that Moody could concentrate keeping an eye on everyone. It was a slow going process, but everyone got questioned, and no one had to worry about being thrown out.

However, when Albus got to Severus, Salazar's stomach knotted up and he closed his eyes and shook his head. He didn't agree with this part at all.

As you can imagine, Severus answering yes to-are you a Death Eater caused a ruckus, but after Moody started yelling for everyone to hush, they listened as Albus kept questioning him. He asked Severus about being a spy, and where his true loyalties laid, and after Severus said 'to the light side' everyone seemed to relax a bit.

Finally there was only two more people to go, and everyone seemed to eyeball the lone Slytherin boy who had, seemingly, been sitting all by himself since the start of the meeting.

"You go first." Godric whispered out the side of his mouth. "You're the shock value, and maybe the Gryffindors will take it easy after I have been questioned."

Salazar snickered. "So that's all I am, shock value?"

"Of course." Godric whispered with a grin.

As Albus approached Godric, he tilted his head to one side, and Salazar stood up.

"I do believe it's my turn then." He said as he reversed his disillusionment charm.
Near instant chaos erupted.

"Harry Potter!" Nearly everyone shouted happily, and those who didn't grinned at him.

Salazar looked over at the grinning children and winked, because he knew that Fred and George had already told them he was there.

Albus smiled at him. "You are looking well Harry."

"I do feel better since I've had a good rest and some decent meals." He said truthfully.

Albus's eyes twinkled and he smiled softly. "Ready?"

Salazar nodded and opened his mouth. Albus waited a moment for it to take effect and then began.

"Who are you?"

"Salazar Slytherin." He answered, causing more than a few mouths to pop open in shock.

"Are you a Death Eater?"

"No."

"Do you want to be a Death Eater in the future?"

"No."

"Are you sympathetic to Voldemort's cause?"

"No."

"Have you ever, or do you plan to, willingly and freely give Voldemort or any of his Death Eaters information that he can use against the general wizarding public, and/or the Order?"

"Yes." He answered, causing the very few who had come to their senses to gasp

"How so?"

"Through Severus Snape." Salazar answered without hesitation.

"Very good Harry." Albus said softly, giving him the anti-dote.

"Wait! He didn't explain...how is possible he is Salazar Slytherin...where's Harry Potter..." More than one person began to shout.

"I knew he was a sneaky Slytherin!" Ron yelled.

"It's not true!? He's Harry Potter!" Ginny shrieked. "He saved us! Where is the Boy-Who-Lived?"

"QUIET!" Moody roared, causing everyone to look at each other with wide-eyes. "Nothing Potter said is a shock to some of us, and it will all be explained soon. Now sit and hush! We have one more person to question!"

Everyone sat back down, though they stared at him with wide-eyes. However, Albus turned to Godric and chuckled.

"Ready Mr. Roffin?"
"Of course." Godric said, and Albus gave him the truth serum.

"Who are you?"

"Godric Gryffindor." He answered, causing everyone to now stare at him in shock.

"Are you a Death Eater?"

"No."

"Do you want to be a Death Eater in the future?"

"No."

"Are you sympathetic to Voldemort and his cause?"

"No."

"Have you ever, or do you plan to, willingly and freely give Voldemort or any of his Death Eaters information that he can use against the general wizarding public, and/or the Order?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"Through Severus Snape."

"Very good." Albus said, then he went to give Godric the anti-dote.

"Wait!" Salazar cried, stopping Albus from giving it to him.

Albus looked at him curiously, but Salazar smirked at Godric.

"Why did you set the password as 'Salazar is a fluffy bunny'?" He asked.

Godric's glazed over eyes lit up for a moment and he slowly grinned.

"You're my best friend, and I love you like a brother. I wanted to annoy you and play a prank." He answered, causing the children, Sirius, and Remus to laugh loudly.

"You are a bloody Gryffindor, did you know that?"

"Of course I do." He answered, causing the children, Sirius, and Remus to laugh even harder.

Albus chuckled and gave Godric the anti-dote, and as soon as he was back to normal, Godric whopped Salazar upside the head.

"You sneaky snake." He grinned, causing Salazar to snort.

"He's a Slytherin Gordy, and he takes an opportunity when he sees it. You should know that by now!" Blaise shouted from his seat across the room.

"He'll get you back, so watch yourself!" Fred yelled. "We can help if you want it!"

"I'll bite you Minions!" Nora hissed loudly from her spot atop Neville's head.

"And then Miss Nora will see that you are fed to Miss Emerald." Albus laughed, causing everyone
to grin as Albus retook his place at the podium.

He turned to face the still mostly shocked great hall.

"I know that some of you are confused, but yes, they are two of Hogwarts's Founders, Godric Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin. Now that the questioning has been completed, and seeing as we don't need to toss anyone out, our Founders will explain how they are here. I found out something about Hogwarts today that no other Headmaster has ever known, so I am going to turn the floor over to Godric, or Mr. Roffin, for those of you who know him better by that name. Godric?" Albus said, motioning towards him.

Godric stood up and grinned. "To better help you understand who we are and why we are here, we are going to show you a few memories. The first one may shock and scare you, seeing as it is Salazar's complete memory of the graveyard. You will see Voldemort, you will see Salazar get tortured, and you will see what happened when Voldemort cast the killing curse at him. It's very disturbing to watch, but you need to understand everything that happened that night. The next memory I will show you is from a few days later when Salazar was in the hospital wing, and finally, from his short stay in Azkaban last night. Once it's over, if you have any questions Salazar and I will be happy to answer them. Once that's over, we will take a portkey to the Order's new Headquarters."

He said, then he raised his wand towards the enchanted ceiling and began to shoot white lights into it.

The ceiling absorbed the lights, and after a few moments, it turned into clear liquid, as if it were water hovering above them.

"It's called a reverse pensive." Godric said, looking around the room. "Helga, who was our potion mistress and Herbology teacher, used this to teach large groups of children about non-native plants that she encountered on her many worldly travels. Salazar and I used it to teach dueling. We would have very nasty, near deadly duels that couldn't be preformed on the grounds due to safety. We used it to show the effects of dark magic, how it looked, and how to counter it. Rowena would use it to safely teach the children new up and coming charms that either she had created, or had been created by others. This ceiling was an invaluable teaching tool." He said with a small smile.

"Whose idea was it to create it?" Professor Flitwick squeaked with excitement in his eyes.

"One would think it was Rowena's, but it wasn't. Helga is the mastermind behind this one." Salazar said with a grin, much to the shock and delight of Professor Sprout.

"To the children," Godric said looking over at them. "Remember, nothing in these memories can hurt you. Not Voldemort, not the Death Eaters, not the dementors. You will be all right. I promise."

They all nodded, seeing as they had seen the worst one before, but Ron, Ginny, and even Cedric looked a bit frightened as Godric uncorked the graveyard memory and began levitating it up to the ceiling. The ceiling turned black, and began to slowly engulf the great hall until it was pitch black inside.

"Just stay in your seats. This is normal!" Godric called out loudly. "The memory will start in a moment."

No sooner had the words left his mouth, they were surrounded by eight foot tall hedges, and were watching Cedric and Salazar discussing the cup in front of them. As the memory continued on, some people screamed when Voldemort made his appearance, but the twins began laughing loudly at Salazar's comment about Godric's left butt cheek.
Most sat horrified as the memory played on, but a few chuckled here and there at Salazar's more comedic moments. They were all watching with baited breath when the killing curse struck him, but were stunned the next moment when Salazar laughed at Voldemort's failure.

Professor Trelawney screamed when Salazar began reciting the prophecy, which caused everyone to jump, but after that everyone kept watching. Sirius and the twins roared with laughter as Voldemort screamed like a girl when Salazar electrocuted him, but cheered when the memory ended with him portkeying away.

Godric had already levitated the hospital wing memory into the ceiling, so it began to play immediately. This one seemed to make Albus squirm a lot as several people glared in his direction, but he kept quiet as it played on.

After that one, Salazar's memory of Azkaban the night before began to play, and both he and Godric kept a sharp eye on Sirius, who looked very pale as it played out, though he smiled a bit as Salazar taunted and teased Bellatrix. A few of the witches in the room began tearing up as Godric's hawk whispered to Salazar, but everyone smiled when, once again, Salazar called him a bloody Gryffindor.

As the enchanted ceiling return to normal and the memories floated back down to Godric, Salazar sat and watched everyone. Most were pale and had worried looks. Ginny was crying into her mother's shoulder, while Ron sat and stared at him in shock for what seemed like forever.

It wasn't until Sirius burst out laughing and stood up that everyone finally came out of their shocked stupors.

"So you're the reason why I had to drag my butt into Amelia's office this morning." He said with a grin, causing Salazar to look at him in confusion.

"I'm sorry. I honestly didn't think Bellatrix would say anything, and even if she did, I figured it would be passed off as babbling nonsense. I'm so sorry Sirius, was this…Amelia…hard on you?" Salazar asked with a slight worrying tinge to his voice.

"Actually no I wasn't." A female voice said with a bit of amusement. "Though I had to put on a show for others."

"So you're Amelia Bones, Head of the DMLE. I'm on the hunt looking for you, and I have been denying You-Know-Who's return because I'll lose my job if I don't." She said with a scowl.

Recognition sprang up in Salazar's eyes when he heard the name. "Amelia Bones, Susan's Aunt, and one of the few who didn't send me a howler after the letter was published."

She smiled at him. "And now I know why you refused my help with your muggle relatives Mr. Potter…or Salazar…Mr. Slytherin…" She said, stumbling over her words a bit. "Since you have an adult's mind, I understand why you took the route you did."

"Please call me Harry, Mr. Potter, or whichever you prefer. It's easier to do it that way, seeing as that's what everyone knows me as. It cuts down on confusion, and helps me to hide better."

"Noted." She said with a smile as she nodded at him. "It is a pleasure to meet you both actually. Even though Susan and I are Hufflepuffs."

"There is nothing wrong with that." Godric chuckled. "Helga was a wonderful woman, and being in
Hufflepuff is nothing to be ashamed of."

"I'm not ashamed," She chuckled. "A part of me wishes she was here too."

"You're not the only one." Salazar said with a smile. "We miss her and Rowena a lot. We were a family, but they didn't want to follow us. They chose to live their lives and move on, but we don't fault them for that."

"No we don't." Godric said with a sad smile.

Amelia smiled at them, but then sat back down as Albus cleared his throat.

"Does anyone have anything else that they would like to say?"

"I'm sorry." Came a small quiet voice from where the Weasleys were sitting. Ron stood up slowly with tears in his eyes. "I almost killed Nora, and I said and thought bad things about the both of you. I never understood why Fred, George, and Percy liked you so much. To me you were just slimy Slytherins. I hated that my family liked you so much, and I was shocked when you saved my life in the Chamber of Secrets. I didn't know why, but now I do."

Salazar walked across the room and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder as he smiled at him.

"Ron, you are young, and there are many things you don't understand, but I know you have changed. I thank you for apologizing, and I forgive you. Don't think on it anymore. We can move past it. You really are a good lad."

Ron smiled sadly, awkwardly sat back down, and was immediately enveloped in his mother's arms. Salazar glanced at Ginny, whose eyes widened as she blushed. She stared at him even more as he walked back to his seat, causing Godric to snort as he sat down.

Salazar kicked him for it.

Albus was speaking again by that time, and told everyone about Nicholas and Perenelle. The Weasleys, who had come into direct contact with their 'mind securing' techniques, began describing them. After they were done, the Flamels began making their way around the room, though when they got to the Diggorys, they 'acted it out', seeing as Albus didn't know that they already knew.

When Nicholas and Perenelle were done Albus stood up once more and smiled.

"There is one more that is a part of our group, but he is at the new Headquarters waiting on our arrival. He is our secret keeper, seeing as it his place, and I can assure you that Alastor questioned him vigorously under veritaserum." He said, causing everyone to laugh. "He is Mr. Nilrem, and is a close personal friend of both Salazar and Godric. We have a portkey here," he said, as he levitated a long rope from out of the corner, "and it will activate when Godric gives the command. Not even I have seen it yet, so I have been looking forward to this."

Salazar grinned as they all huddled around the rope and grabbed a part of it.

"Headquarters!" Godric called out, and they left Hogwarts.

When they landed, the sun was just beginning to set. In the twilight, they could make out a river flowing down the sloping sides of the small mountain they were standing on. Down below was a grassy valley, where all manner of birds were settling in for the night.
As they turned around to survey what was behind them, they realized that they were at the very top of the small mountain and actually standing on a large grassy plateau. In the distance, they could see other peaks just below them and two more rivers that seem to flow out of the mountain itself. The air smelled fresh and clean, and the wind blew gently all around them.

The sound of a chattering falcon drew their attention to a large stone sitting innocently in the middle of the grassy plateau, and Godric grinned as he motioned for everyone to follow him.

It was only a short walk but as the group neared, the small falcon, commonly known as a pigeon hawk or a merlin, took flight and Merlin himself began walking towards them with his arms open in welcome.

"It's a large group." He said, as he grinned and nodded at everyone in turn. "We have plenty of room though, so no one fret."

"Mr. Nilrem, this is a lovely place." Albus said, walking towards him and shaking his hand. "May I ask, where we are?"

"We are in Wales." Merlin said with a smile. "And we are currently standing on top of Plynlimon, the highest peak of the Cambrian Mountains, and since everyone here has been informed what this place is…I would like to formally welcome you all to Camelot." He said, as tears sprang into his eyes.

Hermione's sudden shriek caused Salazar to chuckle as his memories of this place returned in a flash. Everyone watched in awe as the innocent stone began to take the shape of a large castle and fill the void before them.

It was gleaming white with towers that stretched high into the sky, and its large girth nearly filled the whole plateau. Its widows gleamed in the quickly darkening sky, the flags on the towers flapped gently in the breeze, and the large front door stood open, welcoming them to enter.

Salazar chuckled as Hermione stumbled forward and ran a trembling hand across the castle's stones.

"I thought…I never…here? It's here? I thought…somewhere else…"

Her complete loss for words caused Salazar to outright laugh, and Merlin chuckled as he watched her.

"My dear Hermione, it was not here originally. This castle, Camelot, has been moved many, many times over the centuries. Such is the legend of Camelot. It is a legendary place without a particular home." He explained.

"But why Wales?" She asked as her widened eyes never left the castle. "Why here on Plynlimon?"

"Why not? I was born in a cave in Caernarfon Wales, was I not?" Merlin asked as he looked at her with a grin, but then it softened into a wistful smile as he gazed at the castle. "I am drawn this location to be honest. I can watch over the place of my birth from its highest peak, and in the home of my greatest and most precious friend, Arthur Pendragon. King Arthur may have been a muggle Hermione, but he was a great and generous man, and I loved him like a son."

She turned to look at him, and even in the rapidly declining light, Salazar could see her chin trembling.

"I'm honored Mr. Nilrem." She said as a tear slipped down her cheek. "Truly honored to be here."
Albus loudly cleared his throat and stepped forward as his eyes roamed over the great castle, before settling on Merlin.

"Mr. Nilrem, just who exactly are you?" He asked in a confused tone.

Merlin glanced at him and chuckled. "I shall tell you my story in just a short while. Come, please, all of you." He said, motioning for everyone to follow.

They walked into a large foyer that seemed to gleam a bright, almost blinding, white. A white marble grand staircase lead up to the first floor, and to their immediate right and left were two very ornate silver French doors. The set on the right lead into another part of the castle, but the one on the left opened into a large drawing room, which is where they all were headed. It had a large fireplace, and a warm fire was already crackling softly in its grates. A brilliant silver and gold sword with diamonds embedded on its handle and blade was perched delicately above its mantle.

Salazar and Godric grinned at each other as they walked into the drawing room just after Merlin.

"Wait for it..." Godric whispered, causing Salazar to chuckle.

Hermione shrieked again as she entered the drawing room, and caught sight of the fabled round table that sat in the middle of the room. She stopped so suddenly in her tracks that Severus smashed right into her, sending both of them crashing to the floor in a tangled heap.

"Miss Granger, I can certainly understand the state of awe you are in, but I do not appreciate the fact your left hand is painfully gripping my backside." He drawled.

"Oh my goodness!" She cried, instantly letting go and causing Fred and George to burst out laughing. "I'm so sorry Professor Snape. I'm so sorry."

"It is fine." He said, trying to untangle himself from her.

She stood up red faced with embarrassment, and went to stand beside one of the many ornate chairs situated around the table.

"Please have a seat." Merlin said, chuckling as he caught sight of Hermione's hesitation. "Choppy!" He called.

The elf appeared instantly and smiled as he looked around. "Tea and biscuits Master?" He asked.

"Yes please, if you don't mind."

"Not at all sir." He said happily as he popped away.

It was severed rather quickly and everyone began taking their seats. When they were all settled in, Merlin stood up once again, and smiled at everyone.

"Now that we are all settled, I would like to formally introduce myself. I must confess that my true name is not Nilrem, it is Merlin Ambrosius, and I am happy to count you all as my friends." He said, bowing slightly at the waist.

More than a few people shrieked, though this time, none of them was Hermione.

"It can't be true." Albus said, staring at him in disbelief.

"You sodding little buggers didn't tell me that!" Aberforth cried, glaring right at Salazar and Godric, who laughed loudly.
Merlin chuckled softly. "I know that to some of you, my true name is not surprising, but to the rest of you, I realize that it will take time to come to terms with it. I am the reason Godric and Salazar are immortal, because I am also immortal. When Salazar was searching for immortality, he went in every possible direction he could think of, before finally giving up and coming to me." He laughed. "I now wish to offer my home and my services in any way I that can. I am a seer," he said, which caused Trelawney to gasp loudly, "and I am gifted in many areas of magic."

"More than gifted I'd say." Professor Flitwick said, gazing at him with wide eyes.

"I try to keep a level head about it all." Merlin admitted with a smile.

"Pomona are you alright!?” Minerva suddenly shouted, just as Professor Sprout fell out of her chair.

Poppy was up in an instant, but Merlin quickly summoned a potion from a nearby cabinet and handed it to her.

"It's a calming drought for when she wakes." He explained. "I had some handy…just in case."

Poppy only shook her head and grinned as she brought Professor Sprout around. The Head of Hufflepuff gasped loudly and nearly snatched the calming drought out of Poppy's hand, and drank it down in one gulp.

"Forgive me please. I'm so sorry. First the Founders and now Merlin, I just…I just…I just need a moment." She gasped, placing a hand over her heart.

"I am very sorry to have been the cause of your current state Madam." Merlin said with genuine concern. "Do you wish to lie down?"

"No, no. I'll be fine. Please continue. I very much wish to hear what you have to say." She said, looking up at him in a somewhat pleading way.

Albus was still in a state of shock, so he just sat there dumbfounded as everything took place, though no one blamed him a bit for it, seeing as they were also in the same state of shock.

Once Professor Sprout calmed down though, Merlin returned to his seat and looked around the table once again.

"I would like to say this first and foremost, Mr. Dumbledore is the leader of the Order of The Phoenix, but I am more than willing to offer any advice, wisdom, and anything else that I am able to, but I want to remind you, I am not your leader. This table and room will house our meetings, but even though Mr. Dumbledore is the leader, I would like to think we all have an equal part in the Order. King Arthur made this table round for a reason. It has no head, and no one is above anyone else. I hope that each and every one of you will contribute with your ideas, suggestions, plans, and whatever else you can think of, no matter how small or insignificant they may seem. To you young people, I'm going to tell you a little secret about us old and world weary adults. We often get stuck in a rut. We have a tendency to rehash the same ideas over, and over, and over again. So much so that we become very predictable, and in this upcoming war, predictable is not something we can afford to be. Your fresh ideas, ways of doing things, and ways of seeing the world may not be something that we have thought of before, so please, do not be intimidated by those of us who are older. Speak up if you want to." He said with a smile, causing all the children to grin and nod. "Now with that, I am going to turn this over to Mr. Dumbledore." He said, motioning towards Albus as he took his seat.

Albus just sat and stared at him, but then he stood up somewhat shakily. "My brain is still trying to catch up, but I agree with everything that Merlin said. I can say for certain that I think we will be safe
here. Voldemort will not suspect this place at all. This is our safe haven. If you are injured, this will be the place to recuperate. Our meetings will be held weekly, on Saturday night. Since some of us have classes while school is in session, I do believe this is the easiest time for us. We may have emergency meetings if they are warranted, so be ready at a moment's notice if we need to call on you. If there is an emergency, you come here either by apparating or portkey, unless there is a floo?"

He asked, looking to Merlin.

Merlin shook his head sadly. "No I'm afraid there isn't, seeing as The Floo Network Authority will need to come here to hook up the floo. Since the Ministry is corrupt, I didn't want to take that chance."

"I understand." Albus said with a nod.

"Over the summer, Salazar and I want to teach the children how to apparate." Godric said, causing the children to grin wildly. "We realize that this is illegal, but it is necessary for their safety, unless of course anyone has any objections."

"There are many things that we would like to teach the children, with the parent's permission of course." Salazar added. "But we will go into that at a later time."

"We say this because Hermione, Blaise, Neville, and the twins are very good friends of ours, which makes them a target." Godric said. "Ron, Ginny, and Cedric are lesser targets, but still targets none the less, and unless they are trained properly, they are easy targets." He stressed.

"Please teach Neville all that you can." Augusta said with a firm nod.

"Mrs. Longbottom, we must inform you that some of what we wish to teach is dark magic, and the Unforgivables are at the top of that list. Some of you have already voiced your displeasure with that, so when the time comes we wish to hear what the rest of you think. We know that it is very drastic measures, but if they are caught in a battle for one reason or another, we wish them to be able to defend themselves properly." Salazar said, as Godric nodded in agreement.

"While the levitation charm is an excellent charm, it will not do much if they are faced with a fully trained, determined to kill them Death Eater." Godric added.

"I must admit that I may have been a little hasty before, but your logic is clear so I will have to think on that bit for a while." Augusta said. "Neville and I will talk about it. However, I am in agreement with the apparating. Please do teach him that."

"We understand, and we will." Godric nodded.

"I too am a little hesitant with teaching the children the Unforgivables, but I agree that now is not the time to discuss it." Albus said with a nod. "If you have something that needs to be brought to our attention, please contact the nearest Order member to you as soon as you can. Most of us will be at Hogwarts, so if you need to come there, please do so. However, due to the Ministry sending in someone this year to evaluate us, you will need to stay under a disillusionment charm as you make your way through the castle. You can also come here if you need too."

"I will be here all the time. However, if I am not here, please ask for one of my elves and they will find me quickly. They are Choppy and Whimsy, and have agreed to help us if need be." Merlin announced.

"We will be here." Arthur said, looking around at everyone. "The Burrow was destroyed this morning due to the Ministry searching for Harry. We don't have the funds right now to repair it, so
Merlin has offered us shelter."

"Arthur, please let me know how much you need, and I will gladly…"

"No Harry, it's not necessary. Molly and I have been talking about possibly expanding it anyway. Fred and George share a small room, and Bill and Charlie have to sleep on the floor and couch when they come home. We do have our possessions such as our clothes and personal belongings, but the house itself is a mess."

"But I do feel responsible. I really want to help."

Arthur smiled at him. "We'll talk." He said, which caused Salazar to nod.

"Aside from the Weasleys and Hermione, is there anyone else wishing to stay here at Camelot?" Merlin asked.

No one said anything, so Merlin nodded.

"I think it's best if we stay wherever we have been, especially right now." Albus said. "If we all up and suddenly disappear, it will be very suspicious."

"What about you Harry?" Ginny asked.

"I have a flat of my own, so I will be staying there mostly." Salazar replied.

She seemed a little disappointed at that, but she didn't say anything else.

"Godric, what about you and your parents?" Albus asked curiously.

"Oh, I took Hermione's idea and also sent my parents away. They know who I am of course, and so they were actually fine with it. I just wanted them to be safe, and seeing as I can't die, they agreed. When I'm not at Hogwarts for school though, I will be in my own home."

"I see." Albus said with a nod.

"If anyone, for any reason needs to live here for any length of time, please feel free." Merlin said. "Wards can fall and homes can be attacked, so mind yourselves."

"An excellent warning." Albus said, then he turned to Salazar. "Since you are a wanted fugitive, what are your plans Harry?"

"I'm not sure yet. I will be laying low of course. I will use different disguises so people won't recognize me."

"He's a master at hiding." Godric said with a grin.

"I'm sneaky that way." Salazar admitted, causing everyone to laugh.

"Hey, I have an idea." Fred said suddenly.

"Uh oh." Godric snorted, causing Fred to grin.

"Why don't we have Professor Snape slip a potion in You-Know-Who's tea. We can turn him a permanent shade of pastel pink. It would make him less scary looking."

"Fred!" Molly scolded as everyone burst out laughing. "How could you suggest such a thing?!"
"You are determined to get me killed, aren't you Mr. Weasley?" Severus asked with a raised eyebrow.

"No, but even you have to admit that a pretty pink Voldemort would be highly amusing." He grinned, causing Severus to roll his eyes.

"It's an idea." Sirius said gleefully as he rubbed his hands together.

"Oh dear Merlin." Professor Sprout said as she chuckled and shook her head. Then she realized what she had said, and turned red in the face. "I'm so sorry."

Merlin just laughed. "I'm used to it." He winked, causing everyone to grin. "Salazar does it all the time."

"Yes I do." He admitted.

Albus chuckled as he looked around the table. "I must admit that I didn't think that such an open form type of thing would work. Last time we were very hush, hush, tense, and most of us were scared out of our wits half the time. I've always believed that in order to be successful you need to keep your secrets close, but Minerva and I talked the other day and she set me right. I would have never advocated that the children should be part of the Order. I've always believed that they should be protected and kept from things, but since they are just as much a part of this as the rest of us, I agree that keeping them in the dark is not the best way to go. I do need to be a little more open minded. Minerva mentioned that Lily often said we needed to fight properly during the first war, but I was reluctant. Always capture, never maim, harm, or kill. Use light charms only, and don't sink to their level of violence. I sit here today and tell you that I was wrong." Albus said with a large sigh as a tear slipped down his cheek, but then he took a deep breath and continued.

"This time I will not dictate how you fight. Use what you feel is necessary to stay alive. We lost a lot of good people last time, and it was my fault. We never tested anyone's loyalty, we never asked questions, and I especially never thought that we could be betrayed by one of our own. I was blind because I always believed that everyone was good, and could be saved. I know that's not true now. This stunt Lucius Malfoy played was proof. I thought he could change if given time and proper help, but as Harry once told me, a Death Eater never changes their tattoo, though I think we can all agree Severus is the one exception." He said, causing everyone to chuckle softly. "Voldemort does not fear the Order, at least not yet. Last time Death Eaters ran rough shod all over the country killing everyone and everything that stood in their way because I was a blind fool. Well not this time!" He cried as fire blazed in his eyes.

Albus banged his hand on the table as he stood up sharply and continued.

"Not this time." He repeated. "This time our presence will be heavily felt. This time we will fight just as nasty as they do, and this time they will be scared to come out of their hidey holes. Many good families were wiped out last time, but this time, I will not let that happen. There are many orphans at Hogwarts right now, and I am ashamed because it is my fault. In ten years I don't want any more orphans to have to walk through those doors because I sat on my duff and let their parents die. This time, we fight back." He finished, as he glanced at everyone in turn.

"Well it's about damn time Albus. Where have you been hiding?" Aberforth asked as he looked at his brother with approval for once.

"I've always been afraid Abe." He said quietly. "I've always been afraid that I would fall back into my old habits."
"Grindelwald was not your fault." Aberforth said as he shook his head. "That boy was screwed up in the head long before you became his friend. You can't blame yourself for what he did. I know you have always been afraid of the power you possess, and I know why. I'm going to tell you something that you have been wondering about for nearly a hundred years. You've never wanted to know, because you thought you did it, but I'm going to tell you know. You didn't kill her Albus. I did."

Albus's head snapped up so suddenly Salazar was afraid it would fall off.

"What are you saying Abe?" Albus whispered as he stared at his brother with wide eyes.

Aberforth took a deep breath. "I cast the curse that killed our baby sister. I let you wallow in misery because I thought you deserved it. I wanted to take care of her, but you insisted that I finish school, and you, bitter as you were for having to do it, stayed and took care of her. If you had just let me do it, you never would have met Grindelwald, and wouldn't have had your head filled with the nonsense he spewed. I blamed you because I wanted you to suffer. I thought it would ease my own guilt over what happened that day, but it only increased my bitterness towards you and it caused me to hate you. You've changed a lot since then though. Some good, some bad, but you're a good leader Albus, and I am happy to be a part of this group with you at its head. Just do us all a favor and shed the Merlin complex you have, then you should be just fine. You don't know it all, and you never will."

Albus looked at his brother with tears flowing freely down his cheeks. "But how do you know Abe? How do you know you killed her?"

Aberforth shook his head slightly. "There this wonderful invention called a pensieve."

"I've never wanted to look." Albus admitted.

"I know, but what I have said is the truth of it."

Aberforth took a deep breath and nodded, but then he looked around at everyone who sat quietly around the table. Salazar noticed that they all seemed to shift around a bit, not knowing what to say or do. Minerva however, placed a hand on Albus's back and rubbed it in a comforting manner.

"I'm sorry everyone, I know its uncomfortable hearing family truths being aired." Albus sighed as he rubbed his head.

"That may be true Mr. Dumbledore." Merlin said softly with a comforting smile. "But the truth, no matter when it comes, who it comes from, or where we are when we hear it, lets us move on and helps us to grow and learn. Some truths hurt, others make us happy, and as I believe it is in this case, some truths help us to heal old wounds."

Albus stared at him thoughtfully for a moment, but then he nodded. "A very good way of looking at it, thank you Merlin." He said quietly, then he turned to the children. "Even us old ones never stop learning."

"I think Harry said that one time as well.” Hermione said quietly, causing Albus to chuckle.

"Well, getting back to our meeting, which I think is coming to an end. I would just like to thank you all once again for being here. I know what we will be doing is dangerous, and I know that there is a possibility that someone of us will not be here when this ends." He said sadly. "I want you all to be careful. We will meet next Saturday to discuss in depth details of all of Voldemort's horcruxes. In the meantime, please think about which of your particular areas of expertise can be used. Whether it's going directly into a battle, or being an extra set of eyes and ears in certain locations. Now with that
said, while Mr. Weasley's idea was very entertaining to think about, I think its best we don't go with it." He said, looking at Fred with twinkling eyes.

Fred just grinned. "Merlin said speak up, so I did. I know we can't do it, but it is funny to think about."

Albus chuckled. "A pink Voldemort. Yes, that is a rather funny mental picture." He said, then he turned to Severus. "Do you have anything to add?"

"Not much. The Dark Lord still doesn't believe Potter's claims, but I will tell him that you do, and that you have seen proof that it is true. However, I will claim not to know what that proof is. I have not yet heard of an Azkaban break out, but I will certainly keep my ears open." Severus said, glancing around the table.

"You need to tell him something Professor Snape." Salazar said. "He will dismiss it if you don't. Tell him I was questioned by the Headmaster under veritaserum with only Mr. Moody present. If you admit that you saw it, he may want your memory and we can't take the chance that he has access to a pensieve. Tell him the Headmaster believes me because of the Snake Pit, the castle's actions the night he tried to kill me because of Lucius, and also use the golden pillar in first year as well. He saw that with his own eyes, so to speak, so he will believe that one at the very least."

"And my feelings towards you?" Severus asked.

"Remain bitter. Always remain bitter when speaking about me. I do not care that you don't like or respect me, though as the Head of my House, I hope that we can at least work together in a civilized manner. There are light and neutral children in Slytherin that will become the targets of the sons and daughters of Death Eaters. We must protect them all. The children of the Death Eaters might have a chance to be saved because they are young. As for myself though, I am the son of your worst enemy, and you hate the fact that Salazar Slytherin was reborn to James Potter, and you detest me. Once he comes to believe that I am Salazar Slytherin, he will start becoming paranoid that everyone will abandon him because they are afraid of me. You must remain his strongest supporter and keep him relying on you. Also, tell him that the Headmaster told you the night of my stay in Azkaban. I told the locked up Death Eaters what he is, so that should help fuel his paranoia. Make Dawlish his enemy because of it."

"You want me to say 'half-blooded son of a muggle'?" Severus asked in surprise.

"If you feel you would be cursed for saying those words to his face, think of a way to put it delicately. You can say I shamed his immediate lineage. He will know what that means. I know I'm taking a lot of liberties here at the moment, but I hope you all will forgive me. If anyone disagrees, please let me know." Salazar said, looking at Albus in particular.

"No, I think what you have said is fine Harry." Albus nodded. "However, I think I should add to that Severus. Also tell him that there is one other that you found out about. Someone much older than Harry and Mr. Roffin. You only know that they look to him for advice, but don't know who he is."

"That will give him something to chew on." Merlin laughed loudly. "But I agree."

Hermione suddenly gasped loudly. "I just realized what you're trying to do Harry!" She exclaimed.

"What am I doing?" He asked with a sly grin.

"You're trying to make Voldemort paranoid enough to kill off his own followers, aren't you?" She said with narrowed eyes.
Salazar chuckled. "Better he kills them, so we don't have to worry about them." He said, causing Hermione to shake her head and chuckle.

"You sly little thing." Perenelle chuckled. "You never cease to amaze me Salazar. How you think up some of the harebrained schemes you come up with, I'll never know."

"I'm ambitious." He said simply, causing everyone to chuckle.

"He's sneaky reptile, so what did you expect?" Godric asked, causing them all to laugh loudly.

The meeting broke up shortly after that, though everyone wondered around the Camelot trying to get a feel for it. Severus barely managed to contain his glee when he found the potions lab because it had some of the rarest of rare potions ingredients, not to mention, Merlin's own potion creation recipes.

The Weasleys were shown to the rooms that they would be staying in, though they had none of their stuff with them at the moment, but Albus, Merlin, and Godric said that they would help them move their things.

Hermione, Neville, and Blaise cornered Salazar though, and asked what his plans were for the upcoming year, but he admitted that he still had no idea. They were sad that he wouldnt be with them this year, but they understood the situation.

When he finally left Camelot that night, Salazar was tired. The day's events had been long and filled with information that he needed to ponder over. He was very surprised that Albus went along with most of the suggestions, but wasn't surprised about his hesitation on teaching the children the Unforgivables. It was a touchy subject with a lot of people, so Salazar knew he and Godric may have to back down on that.

As Salazar climbed into his bed that night, he thought about Severus and the danger he was placing himself into. He didn't like the fact that everyone knew about Severus. He knew they couldn't say anything because of Nicholas and Perenelle, but he still didn't like it. He just hoped that Severus would stay safe, and that was the last thought he had before he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

As you can see, this chapter really gave me a fit, but I managed to get all that I needed into it. It is still not as good as I want it to be though. I know that this summer is a little longer than previous summers, but this is an important jumping off point for fifth year, which I am building up for. I made the Order a little bigger than in canon, and brought in some old faces, as well as new ones, but they all have a point and purpose which will be made clearer as time goes on.

I know some of you are angry because I'm handling Dumbledore the way I am, but he needs to grow as a character. He cant be the bad guy anymore, and even though this chapter didn't show it, there is going to be some angry people that will confront him over what he has tried to pull in the past. This will be seen in the next chapter. He also needed some sense knocked into him, and I think his talk with Minerva really did that, as evidenced by his actions and words in this chapter. Hopefully he will stay on this new course, but we shall see.

The next chapter will probably be the last 'summer' chapter before school begins, and
we will finally see what Salazar plans to do, so I hope you all stay tuned!
Planning a Rescue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 52

Planning A Rescue

Severus was in the middle of brewing a few of Merlin's potions in his residence at Spinner's End when he was summoned by Voldemort. It was the first time since the graveyard, and he sighed with a mixture of relief and dread. He would now have a location of his whereabouts to report to Salazar, but he dreaded having to face Voldemort.

However, as he landed in front of the gates at Malfoy Manner, he shivered at the sight. No longer was it the grand house it once was, seeing as the house and grounds looked withered and derelict. He lifted his left arm, almost like a salute, and the gates creaked open slowly, as if they were trying to give off an ominous warning.

He headed up the path, but then he slowed for a moment as his eyes caught sight of a few dead and rotting carcasses. Severus knew that, judging by the blood stained plumage, they were Lucius's prized albino peacocks.

As he entered the house, the inside wasn't much better. The once grand statues that stood proudly had been blasted to bits, and their pieces were scattered across the floor. The same had been done for some of the rare and expensive vases, and their dead flowers and leaves lay decaying where they had fallen.

As Severus made his way towards the drawing room, coldness engulfed him and he did his very best not to shiver. When he opened the door to make his way in, he caught sight of a large throne that had been set up at the very end of the table.

This is where he was sitting.

Lucius was sitting cross legged on the floor right beside his Master's feet. His hair was unkempt, his eyes looked glassy from pain, and he appeared to be dirty and unwashed. Severus's sharp eyes scanned the room and in a corner at the very back, sitting on the floor was Narcissa, who also looked to be in the same state as her husband, though without the glassy eyed look. Draco sat right beside her, and appeared to be in the same state as his mother, who had placed a protective arm around him. They both were sitting up straight, but as Severus walked further into the room, they both looked his way.

"New Wormtail, I'm delighted that you approve of my redecorating." Voldemort hissed with amusement as he looked down at Lucius. "It's always good when the former owners of a house approve of such changes. I did pay you a sickle so that I could buy it from you after all. Was that not enough money for you? Shall I throw you out of this house? It is by my good graces that I still let you live here." He added with chuckle, as he looked up as Severus approached.

"My Lord." Severus said, rounding the corner of the table and kissing his robes as he bowed low. "I
beg for your forgiveness in being late. I was in a meeting with Dumbledore when you called, and could not show my eagerness to answer your summons."

"Severus, please rise and have a seat. I assume you have news then?" Voldemort asked, motioning to a nearby chair. "I would offer New Wormtail as a seat, but I'm afraid that his back might give out because of the strain. He has been through a lot recently." Voldemort chuckled, as he kicked Lucius hard, causing the man to topple over.

Lucius quickly righted himself though, and resumed his position at his Master's feet.

"I do have news My Lord. Dumbledore has begun reorganizing the Order of the Phoenix, and I have done as you requested. He trusts me enough to allow me to join, though because of Potter and Roffin, I am not privy to the actual meetings because they don't trust me. I am told what happens during them a few days later. That is what I was doing when you summoned me." Severus said, as he bowed his head in respect.

"Very good Severus, though I am displeased that you aren't privy to the actual meetings, but that is not your fault. You are still a member and are being passed information, which is all that I require." Voldemort nodded. "At least some of you are capable of carrying out simple orders." He hissed in Lucius's direction, causing him to flinch as if he were waiting to be cursed. "What news do you have?"

"I must inform you that Dumbledore believes Potter's claim. He questioned the whelp under veritaserum with only Alastor Moody present. Potter is who he claims to be."

Voldemort looked up at him sharply. "Is Dumbledore for certain, or is it fanciful wishing."

"For certain My Lord. Potter is the reincarnated soul of Salazar Slytherin. Dumbledore told me that while I was meeting with him. Potter was there, along with the Roffin boy, and he too is who Potter claims him to be."

"Godric Gryffindor?" Voldemort asked.

"Yes My Lord. Dumbledore said that he believes their claims because of not only the veritaserum, but several other things as well. He explained to me that Hogwarts has not allowed anyone to build onto, or make changes to it in over a thousand years, but last year Potter and Roffin were able to create what they call the Snake Pit. Only a Founder knows the spells needed to start that kind of work. He also said Potter was the one who activated the Hufflepuff badgers in his first year when the troll nearly obliterated all of Slytherin House. The Founders enchantments are activated by blood, and only a Founder can call them forth."

"And I'm assuming that the golden pillar that lies under the great hall is part of that as well." Voldemort said leaning back in his chair, and absentmindedly began using Lucius's head as a foot rest.

"Yes My Lord." Severus replied, bowing his head once again.

Voldemort stood up sharply, causing Lucius to visibly tense up.

"So it is true then my lovely Nagini." He hissed, stroking the empty air above the back of his throne. "My ancestor has returned. No, no my sweet we mustn't be too hasty. We need time to think up a plan." He continued, as he got eye level with the back of the throne. "What did you say? I didn't hear...Oh, I know my dearest, but we have already checked on the others haven't we? Two of our horcruxes are in danger. One is missing due to that traitor Black, and one needs to be moved to a
more secure location. Yes, yes, we must ensure our survival. We are in danger my pet."

Severus never made a move as Voldemort continued to stroke the air above his throne thoughtfully, and it took all of his willpower not to appear to be listening, but as Voldemort retook his seat, Severus got up once again and bowed low.

"Is that all you have for me Severus?"

"No My Lord, there is more." He said, as he retook his seat.

"Go on."

"Potter told Dumbledore that Dawlish was the one responsible for putting him in his cell at Azkaban, and he soon figured out that Dawlish is one of us. Dawlish apparently began spouting off at the mouth and said that you were planning an Azkaban breakout."

"WHAT!?" Voldemort roared, as he leapt out of his chair. "Give me your arm New Wormtail! Give it to me!"

Lucius held out his arm and gritted his teeth in pain as Voldemort ripped his sleeve clean off, and jabbed his finger into his dark mark. Voldemort began pacing like a cat as he waited, and Severus didn't move or say anything during this time, but he watched with sharp eyes, ready to duck should curses start flying.

"Pitiful fools. I'm surrounded by them Nagini. What shall I do with him? What shall I do?" He asked, looking towards his throne. "Yes, yes make him suffer. Make him suffer. An excellent suggestion."

It was a few more minutes, but soon the door to the drawing room opened, and Dawlish bowed low and kissed the hem of Voldemort's robes.

"You called for me My Lord?" He asked nervously.

"Yes, Severus has been telling me a story. Do you have anything you wish to tell me?" Voldemort asked coldly, as his red eyes bore holes into the man's head.

"M-My Lord?"

"You put Potter in his Azkaban cell, did you not?" Voldemort asked icily.

"Y-yes My Lord." Dawlish answered, visibly tensing up as he briefly glanced at Severus, who looked unconcerned.

"And did you not babble to him about my plans for a breakout?"

"I-I-I-"

"CRUCIO!" Voldemort bellowed.

Dawlish's screams echoed all around them, and out of the corner of his eye, he saw Narcissa attempting to cover Draco's ears as he whimpered in fright. When Voldemort finally let up, Dawlish lay on the ground, panting heavily as he tried to get his breathing under control.

"Severus, was there anything else Potter said about that night?" Voldemort asked, shifting his eyes to him.
"There is My Lord, but I am reluctant to use the actual words he so...gleefully...said." Severus said, curling his lip as he scowled. "He teased our friends that are locked up, Bellatrix in particular. He called you a..."

"Half-blooded son of a muggle." Voldemort interrupted with a snarl.

"Yes, My Lord." Severus said, bowing his head.

"And how did they react?"

"Bellatrix denied that it was true, and the others cursed at him for it, but then he teased her again, by saying a proud pure-blood like her, bows down to an unworthy half-blood like you."

"And how did Bella react then?"

"Potter did not say My Lord."

Voldemort sat down in his chair and began rocking back and forth, mumbling words to himself that Severus couldn't hear, but then he looked up sharply.

"How do you feel about my lineage Severus?"

"My Lord, as you know, I am the half-blooded son of a filthy muggle, but I do not pretend, nor do I dare, to think that I am your equal."

Voldemort nodded. "That is right, you are half-blooded just like me. Yes, yes. You are loyal to me Severus?" He asked as his red eyes searched Severus's face.

"Of course My Lord." He said, bowing and kissing his robes.

"And what does my ancestor Salazar think about it?"

"My Lord, he laughs. Even though he himself was reborn as a half-blood this time, he considers himself to be a pure-blood. Despite his mudblood mother and his fourteen year old body, he is Salazar Slytherin, and considers himself above you. To him, you are just a small child throwing a temper tantrum who needs to be punished...severely." Severus said, trying to make it seem like it was ridiculous.

Voldemort continued to rock back and forth mumbling to himself, but then he suddenly stood up.

"Avada Kedavra!" He shouted.

For a moment Severus thought it was directed at him, but then he looked down and saw Dawlish spread out beside him. Severus never moved an inch, though he kept his sharp eyes alert.

"That is for your babbling." Voldemort hissed as he kicked Dawlish's corpse in the head, but then he turned to Severus. "Thank you Severus. You have done well. Please keep me informed of all you that you are given privy too. We must be careful though. We are dealing with a one-thousand year old wizard. He is not only my ancestor, but he is Slytherin. He must be very cunning, very cunning indeed, and with Godric Gryffindor at his side no less." He said, pacing back and forth across the drawing room. "He must know far greater magic than I do, and he claims he can't die until old age. There must be a way though, there must be a way." He mumbled, but then he looked up. "Can he be swayed to our side? He hates Dumbledore."

"My Lord, I wish, but unfortunately they have decided to put their past hostilities aside and work
"Crucio!"

Lucius screamed loudly from the unexpected curse, but a second later he found himself free of it, and whimpered as he tried to retake his position on the floor.

"You are dismissed Severus. Go and leave me to my thoughts." Voldemort said, as he sat down in his throne.

"Yes, My Lord." Severus said, bowing and kissing the robes one last time, before quickly heading out the door.

"We need to get Draco out of there." Salazar said in a grave and concerned tone, as he sat back down in his seat. "Possibly Narcissa, but Draco for certain."

"I agree." Albus said with a heavy sigh as he also sat down in his seat.

They had just emerged from Merlin's pensieve, which was placed in the middle of the round table. Severus had left Malfoy manner and immediately went to Salazar's flat to tell him what he heard and saw, then he and Salazar went to Camelot, where Merlin sent Dumbledore a patronus to come quickly. It was just the four of them right now, but Godric was due to be there later.

It had been three days since the meeting, and there wasn't much to do but brainstorm and get organized. The Weasleys had moved all of their belongings into Camelot, as had Hermione, and they all had gotten situated pretty easily. With Voldemort keeping to the shadows and also getting organized, life appeared to be somewhat normal.

For now.

"Mr. Snape, you know the Malfoy's better than any of us. What can you tell us about them?" Merlin asked, looking at him thoughtfully.

"I know that Narcissa and Lucius's marriage was arranged by their fathers. However, despite the arranged marriage, they care for one other very deeply, but Narcissa will do anything for Draco. Anything at all." He stressed.

"Including leaving Lucius to die at the hands of Voldemort?" Salazar asked. "Because Voldemort will probably kill him if Narcissa and Draco escape."

Severus took a deep breath. "I don't know. If she were one-hundred percent certain that Draco was safe, she would try and find a way to get Lucius out of that situation."

Salazar sighed heavily as he leaned back into his seat. "If we were to get all three of them out, do you think that Lucius would go back to Voldemort, despite all that he has been through the last few weeks?"

"I don't know." Severus said, shaking his head.

"It may be a risk we have to take." Albus said. "We are going to have to place our personal feelings for Lucius Malfoy aside, because Draco cannot be subjected to what is happening there. We need to get all three of them out together, so that he can remain safe."

"I agree." Merlin said with a nod. "And we have to do this delicately, so that Mr. Snape does not
"We will need Sirius's help on this. None of us have any place for the Malfoy's to go, but the Blacks have a few properties I think. I don't think it's wise to bring them here though." Albus said as he sighed heavily and rubbed his forehead.

"No they cannot come here." Salazar said in agreement. "We also need to ask Sirius about 'the traitor Black' when Voldemort was speaking about his horcruxes. It's not Sirius, so Voldemort must have been talking about another Black."

"When was this?" Severus asked, pretending to be confused.

"When he was speaking in Parseltongue to a no longer alive snake. Nagini to be exact, and I think that was the snake I killed in the graveyard. He seems to be slightly loopy to be honest." Salazar said with a scoff. "As for the traitor though, I don't have a clue what that means."

"He must have been talking about Regulus Black, Sirius's brother." Albus explained. "During the first war, Regulus joined the Death Eaters, but he disappeared without a trace. Sirius always thought that Regulus slipped up and got himself killed by Voldemort or one of his other Death Eaters. We never found out what happened to him."

"But for him to be labeled a traitor?" Merlin asked, slightly confused.

"I haven't a clue." Albus replied, shaking his head.

"All right, we will have to ask Sirius about this, but we have a meeting in two days. We can bounce around ideas about the Malfoy situation." Salazar said.

"I agree." Albus nodded. "Draco, at the very least, needs to be removed from that house."

"Indeed." Merlin said with a firm nod.

"Where is Black anyway?" Severus asked with a slight scowl.

Salazar burst out laughing. "He is in Diagon Alley shouting to the rooftops about the Ministry lying about having sent me to Azkaban. He is suggesting that they killed me instead, and he has actually gotten few people convinced of it. He's citing that farce of a trial I received, which the entire British Wizarding World heard over the wireless, as proof. He is also making everyone realize just how ridiculous it sounds for a fourteen year old to have an animagus form."

"The Ministry has begun to control the Daily Prophet." Albus said. "They are trying to block the truth at every turn."

"What can we do about it?" Severus asked, looking around the table at each of them.

"Try and convince as many as we can of the truth." Albus said with a sigh. "Other than that, there really isn't much we can do because you can't force people to believe something they don't want to believe. Our members who have jobs inside the Ministry will no doubt keep their eyes and ears open to who they think can be trusted though."

"The best we can do right now is let the Ministry make fools of themselves, because once the truth comes out, and it will, the Wizarding World will see them for the fools they are." Merlin said. "When those in power right now fall, we must be ready to move our people in, before Voldemort does."

"And I have no doubts that's what he will try to do. It's what he did last time." Albus said gravely.
"I will do my best to figure out everyone who is a supporter of The Dark Lord, that way we can either take them out, or just be aware of who they are so that we can work around them." Severus offered.

"We must be careful though." Albus warned. "He's not above using the imperius curse on innocent people to do his bidding."

"Anyone with a dark mark and who wears a hood and mask are our main targets, anyone who doesn't sport those things will be questioned under veritaserum, whether it's legal or not." Merlin said.

"This is of course, assuming that one cannot take the mark under the imperius or other means of force." Salazar said, looking to Severus for confirmation.

"One cannot. In order to receive the dark mark, you must be willing to receive it, if not, it rejects you. It's in the magic he uses to mark people. If it doesn't take, he knows they really don't want to be there, so he kills them in case they are spies trying to get in. It's one of the reasons why the inner circle, or those of us with the mark, are so few. He trusts us, and the rest he uses fear to control, which is why there are so many of them." Severus explained.

Salazar, of course, knew all of that from when he posed as Voldemort's pet snake for the last two months of the war. He also knew of the magic used to create the mark, as well as the incantation for it, which was a long string of Latin. He had only seen two people marked though, and both of them ended up dead after the war.

"How many Death Eaters are there?" Merlin asked curiously.

"There are twenty-two of us total, though some are in Azkaban right now." Severus replied. "They are, all three Lestranges, Crouch Jr., Dolohav, Lucius, the two Carrow siblings, Crabbe, Goyle, Knott, McNair, and Karkaroff, though he hasn't been seen and the Dark Lord wants him dead because he has apparently abandoned the cause. Then there is Yaxley, Travers, Jugson, Gibbon, Parkinson, Rowle, Flint, Montague, and of course, myself. The Dark Lord is looking to recruit more for the inner circle, since a lot of them have been killed. It's a ceremony and all of the inner circle is required to be there, so if and when someone else gets marked, I'll let you all know." He finished, causing Salazar to nod.

"I did notice that you didn't mention Merlin." Salazar said, looking towards him. "Why?"

Severus rolled his eyes. "I'm surprised at you Potter." He said with a slight sneer. "One cannot appear too eager to divulge all that they know to the Dark Lord. He will become suspicious."

Salazar smirked at him. "I'm just making sure you know how to be a good spy Professor Snape."

Severus glared at him, but didn't say anything.

Merlin however, chuckled. "Well, I think it's best we watch the memory again, particularly Draco and Narcissa's reactions to all that is taking place. Perhaps we can gain some clues on how they feel, which I can hesitate to guess, isn't all that good."

They once again dived into the memory, but this time they ignored Voldemort and Severus in favor of keeping their focus on Narcissa and Draco.

When Severus confirmed Salazar and Godric were who they said they were, Narcissa's breath hitched in her throat as she turned to stare at him with wide eyes, but when Severus brought up the bit about the badgers, Draco gasped.
"Mum, Theo Knott had been right all along." He whispered. "I remember that. Theo accused Potter of doing it, but Potter denied it in front of everyone."

"Hush Draco, hush." Narcissa whispered. "Do not speak a word of that to anyone. Don't let the Dark Lord know you know anything about anything. He may try to recruit you if he thinks he can use you. Just stay quiet." She whispered frantically, but they still continued to listen.

They didn't say anything else until Dawlish was summoned, and that is when Narcissa scooted closer to Draco.

"He's a dead man." Narcissa whispered, just as Dawlish bowed low. "Draco cover your eyes and ears. Don't look, don't look."

Dawlish screamed and they both cringed, as tears fell down Narcissa's face as she tried to shield her son from the sights and sounds. They listened closely to what Severus said next about Voldemort's half-blood status and Narcissa's eyes snapped to Voldemort angrily, but she quickly covered Draco eye's as Voldemort killed Dawlish.

"Mum how could that be true? I thought you said Potter was lying." Draco whispered once it was over, but in the next moment Draco let out a strangled cry when the torture curse hit Lucius, which made Narcissa clamp her hand tightly over his mouth. "Mum." He croaked after Lucius picked himself up off the floor. "He's going to kill us all."

"When the Dark Lord gets bored with your father, yes he will kill us all. Draco listen to me, if we make it that long, when you get back to school in the fall beg this Roffin boy for forgiveness, and see if he will get your father and I out of here. You yourself will be safe while you are at Hogwarts, especially with Dumbledore there. Potter won't be there though, because he is still wanted."

"Mum, Roffin hates me. He hates me.” Draco whimpered as he looked up at her. "He won't help us."

"He is Godric Gryffindor and he may show us mercy, so you must try Draco. Our lives depend on it." She replied hopefully as she gazed at her husband in anguish. "Don't trust Severus though. Just beg Roffin. Offer him anything, and beg…"

The memory ended with Severus's dismissal, and Salazar sighed heavily as they retook their seats at the round table.

"We need to get them out." Albus said firmly.

No one disagreed with him.

For the next two days, there was a lot of activity at Camelot as people came and went. Some had small bit of news about various things, and passed it onto Merlin without hesitation. Merlin was actually a bit worried because he kept encouraging people to go to Albus, but nearly everyone crinkled their nose at the thought.

Amelia and Augusta in particular had strong objections about that, and said they didn't trust the Headmaster because of what he had tried to pull the first three years of school. Amelia had half a mind to press charges and see Albus out of Hogwarts, especially over what he done in first year.

Leading Voldemort to Hogwarts in order to try and force a confrontation between the dark wizard and a, seemingly, eleven year old child was appalling.
Not to mention putting the rest of the students in danger.

The only reason why she didn't is because without Dumbledore there, it would just be Godric and that would leave the students vulnerable to not only a possible attack from Voldemort, but the Ministry stooge that would surely run roughshod all over the school without him there.

Merlin had only sighed and shook his head, then began trying to figure out what to do about this situation.

It was during this time that Salazar talked to Sirius, who was very reluctant to lift a hand to help out the Malfoys. Salazar however, pleaded with him, and finally Sirius relented and agreed to help, though he would have to look into which of the Black properties we was willing to give the Malfoys for refuge.

He cited that most of them were too nice of a place, and he still wanted them to suffer somewhat, which caused Salazar to chuckle and take the compromise.

"Welcome to the first official meeting of The Order of the Phoenix." Albus said with twinkling eyes as he smiled and glanced at everyone seated at the round table. "Before we get started with certain things that have been brought to my attention this past week, does anyone have any news to share?"

"I do." Merlin said with a loud sigh.

He had been thinking a lot this past week about the problem at hand, he thought that getting the air cleared once and for all would help them out in the long run.

He glanced around apologetically before clearing his throat.

"It has come to my attention that none of you have done what I have requested. All this week, nearly all of you came right to me with any news you had. I asked you all to look to Mr. Dumbledore as your leader, but you do not."

"What?" Albus asked, looking around the table in confusion.

Several people looked around guiltily and fidgeted, but Amelia looked up with fire in her eyes.

"We are angry Albus. I can speak for most of us and say, the night of our pre-meeting a few nights ago most of us were in shock over the fact that two of Hogwarts's Founders and Merlin still walked this earth. As the days passed however, it occurred to us just how nearly evil you had been the first three years of Mr. Potter's school year, especially first year when you lured You-Know-Who into a school full of children. We know you have apologized, and we know you are sorry, but the rest of just need some time to come to terms with it." Amelia finished.

Albus looked around sadly and sighed. "I had a feeling that this was coming sooner or later." He said with a tone full of regret. "It's one of the reasons why I have decided to retire…"

"Albus you can't!" Minerva gasped.

"Not right now, I assure you." He said quickly as he glanced at her. "But once the war is over and Voldemort is gone for good, I do plan too. I'm sorry for all that I have done. I have made mistakes that I admit were terribly off kilter and misguided. I was blind and reckless, but at the time I felt that I was doing right and good, but I have come to realize that I was wrong. What more can I do, but apologize over and over? So that is why I have decided to retire after this is over. Harry once told me last year that he planned to see me out the castle…"
"Headmaster…” Salazar interrupted, only to be waved off by Albus, who continued.

"…and I believe that he was on the right track. I'm an old man, who for the last twenty-five years or so, has made one wrong decision after another. I got a lot of good people killed during the first war and I wish I could go back and change that, but I can't. With Godric, Salazar, and Minerva watching over the safety of Hogwarts when all of this is over, I can, and will, go quietly." He said softly.

A pang of regret filled Salazar's heart as he watched Albus sit back down heavily. Albus looked every bit his age as he glanced around tiredly, and in a way, it reminded Salazar of himself nearly two hundred years after he gained immortality.

A world weary, broken down man who had nothing to live for.

"You're still a good man Headmaster." Salazar said softly. "Despite all you have done the last few years, you've done and accomplished more good things than you have bad things, and I will personally see to it that your reputation stays intact. The only people who will ever know your sins are in this room right now, and if they have problem with what I have just said, they can take it up with me." He said with a slight warning in his voice. "It's the least I can do because if I hadn't lied about who I really was, and had just been honest from the start, none of this would have happened. I didn't trust you at first, but I am slowly starting to get there." He finished, causing Albus to smile softly at him and nod.

"No matter how old we are, we all make mistakes." Merlin said quietly. "And the older we get, the more that our mistakes pile up. None of us is perfect, and if we don't forgive, especially in this day in age, we may never have the chance to. I can tell you from personal experience that that is not how you want to go through life. Forgiveness helps us grow morally as a person."

"I agree." Salazar said with a nod as he glanced at Godric, who smiled at him.

The rest of the round table remained quiet, but Salazar saw that most of them agreed as well. There were a few who looked like it would take a while to come around, but Salazar had a feeling that they would in time.

"We need to be a united force." Merlin said. "Because if we are weak, that only makes Voldemort stronger. Mr. Dumbledore is our leader. Please remember that."

Amelia sighed and turned to Albus. "I do think it's wise if you retire after this is over, but I will follow you in this war." She said, causing him to nod again.

"As will I." Aberforth added. "Just make sure you don't make any boneheaded, off the wall, decisions."

"In other words, don't act like a Gryffindor." Godric said, causing Salazar to snort loudly and burst out laughing.

"Ironic, seeing as that came from the embodiment of a Gryffindor." Salazar said, causing everyone to chuckle.

That seemed to break the tension in the room as everyone started to slowly outright laugh, and after a few moments, Albus smiled and nodded as he wiped a few tears off his cheek.

"I will confer with Merlin, Godric, and Salazar just to make sure I don't 'act like a Gryffindor'. You all have my word." He said with a chuckle.

"Then you better take Godric out of that equation." Salazar said with mock seriousness. "It's best if
you stick with the two Slytherins on…OUCH!"

"Shut up Mr. Potter." Minerva said with a smirk as she stowed her wand.

Salazar rubbed the back of his hand where the stinging jinx had hit it, but grinned and winked at her as Albus stood up with a chuckle.

"We should get on with business." He said, as his eyes began twinkling once more.

This caused everyone to sit up in their chairs a bit straighter and pay close attention.

"I have been thinking about several things this week, and I want all of your opinions on them. During the last war, Voldemort had all manner of dark beings and creatures at his disposal, giants and werewolves in particular." He said, glancing towards Hagrid and Remus. "I think it would be beneficial if we went to those groups and tried to persuade them to join us instead of Voldemort."

"That's actually not a bad idea." Hagrid said with a nod. "Olympe, or Madam Maxime," he explained with a slight blush, "and I could go to the giants and try to talk to them."

"You think that is wise Albus?" Elphias Doge asked with slight concern.

"I do. If all we do is dissuade them from joining Voldemort, I will consider it a win, but if they are willing to come to our aid if needed, that would be even better. Hagrid, will you talk to Madam Maxime?"

"Of course Headmaster." Hagrid said with an over enthusiastic nod, that caused Salazar to grin.

"And the werewolves?" Amelia asked with a bit of uncertainty. "Who will go to them?"

Sirius snorted as Remus shifted around uncomfortably. Albus looked at him with wide eyes, as he realized that not everyone knew about Remus.

Salazar cleared his throat, causing everyone to glance his way.

"How many here are afraid of werewolves?" He asked, and nearly everyone raised their hand. "And what would you say if you knew that there was one sitting around this table right now?"

Everyone’s eyes widened even further and they began to glance around, but no one said anything.

"It's me." Remus said with a loud sigh.

Ron, who had been sitting beside Remus, yelped and nearly killed himself as he jumped out of his chair and tripped over his own feet in order to get away from him.

"RON!" Fred yelled, whopping him on the arm.

"I'm sorry, I just…I just…"

"I'm used to it Mr. Weasley." Remus said with a chuckle, offering him a helping hand up.

Ron hesitated a moment, but then grabbed it and retook his seat with a sheepish look on his face.

"I'm so sorry Professor Lupin." He mumbled.

"It's alright." Remus chuckled again, but then he turned to Albus. "To answer your question Albus. I am willing to try and get the werewolves on our side, but what about classes? Not just mine, but
Hagrid's too."

"I've thought about it." Albus nodded. "I can ask Professor Grubbly-Plank to sub for Hagrid, at least until he gets back. As for Defense, I was hoping Sirius would be up to the task." He said, glancing towards him. "It would give credence to the fact that Harry hasn't been seen by you. Especially since the Ministry person will be there, watching you closely."

Sirius had a deer in the headlights look about him, and he started stammering. "I-I don't...I think...I can't...I-I..."

"Sirius." Merlin said, laying a comforting hand on his shoulder. "Slow down and breathe."

It took a moment but Sirius finally got himself together.

"Albus, I'm sorry, but I can't. The classroom is small, and it has walls. I can't...I just can't..." He said, shaking his head.

Albus looked at him slightly confused, but Merlin patted Sirius on the shoulder again, before explaining.

"Because of Sirius's stay in Azkaban, he has not been able to overcome small enclosed spaces, especially if there is a lot of people around him."

"I can't do a classroom setting." Sirius said with a loud sigh. "I can take over Creatures and the rest of Hagrid's duties because that is all outside work, but I can't do Defense."

"You're claustrophobic." Hermione said sympathetically.

"What?" Sirius asked looking at her in confusion.

"It's what the muggles call a fear of enclosed, small, tight spaces. Lots of people have that fear, so it's actually pretty normal." She explained softly. "It's not anything bad, so don't worry."

"Oh." He said with a slight smile. "I didn't know that."

"Ok." Albus said, as he furrowed his brow in thought. "I do prefer having a member of the Order as Defense teacher and Creatures. I trust Professor Grubbly-Plank, but she is getting a bit on in years and has retired with good reason. Sirius, if you want to take over as Creatures Professor, as well as Hagrid's other duties, we can arrange that."

"I can't stay in the castle." Sirius mumbled. "Too many people, and my living quarters will be too small."

"You can stay in my hut." Hagrid offered.

"Still too small." Sirius said as he shook his head, which giving the size of Hagrid, seemed to cause more than a few people to raise their eyebrows.

Merlin chuckled. "How about I teleport your home onto the grounds? If I can move Camelot from place, to place, to place, I can move your cottage too."

"I can do that." Sirius replied, as his head snapped up.

"Are you going to be all right in the great hall?" Minerva asked with concern.

Sirius nodded. "Yeah Minnie. It's a big, big room, so I know I'll be ok to take meals and stuff in
there. I just can't be cooped up in a classroom all day, every day." He said with a slight shiver.

"All right." She said, casting a glance at Albus.

"That seems fine Sirius. Whatever you need." He said with a nod, as he smiled softly.

"I'll give you my lesson plans and things, so that should help you a bit." Hagrid said.

While this was going on, Salazar had been forming a plan, but he waited as Albus offered the job to everyone else. When no one else could take the job, due to not being interested in teaching, or too busy with their other jobs, Salazar finally spoke up.

"I know someone who would love to teach Defense." He said with a slight glint in his eye.

"Oh really?" Albus asked hopefully.

Salazar nodded. "Godric, do you remember Pierre Robillard, the young man I took under my tutelage in my former life?"

"Yes." Godric said simply, wondering where Salazar was going with this.

"Well, he went on to be a private tutor, and I know that he would love to teach Defense. I have been in contact with him, so he believes that Voldemort is back."

"How old is he?" Albus asked curiously.

"Around fifty now I believe." Salazar answered with a smile. "I can tell you that he will not join the Order because he doesn't care for such organizations, but he is very trustworthy."

Albus nodded. "All right. I would prefer having an Order member, but if you recommend him, then I'm sure he will work out just fine. I do need to warn him about the curse on the Defense position though."

"Albus, I told you that I think I broke it." Remus said with a laugh. "I have been there the last two and a half years."

Salazar suddenly burst out laughing, as did the twins.

"Oh yeah, I forgot about that. I broke that curse in second year, just before that bumbling fool Lockheart left." Salazar said with a snort, causing Albus's eyes to widen. "Remember in my second year when the Defense corridor was pranked? The prank was the twins, but the loud boom that shook everyone awake that night was me breaking the curse. The twins used a few of their pranks to cover up the fact."

"I told you it was those insufferable Weasleys Minerva." Severus said, as he sneered at the twins who, were laughing loudly.

Molly huffed loudly as she scowled at her sons, but Salazar just grinned.

"It was my fault. I organized that little disaster." He said, causing all the Professors to chuckle.

Albus chuckled too, but he nodded. "Please get with me after the meeting so that we can talk about that. I'm very curious about it."

"I will. I can tell you that it was very rudimentary, but it was an old, obscure curse that was easy to miss." Salazar replied, still chuckling as the twins grinned and snorted. "As for Pierre though, I shall
contact him and send him to you sometime this week."

"Very good." Albus said with an enthusiastic nod.

Salazar winked at Godric, who looked at him with a raised eyebrow, but he didn't say anything. However Merlin just chuckled and kept his thoughts to himself, as Albus began asking what everyone would be able to contribute.

Sirius, Remus, Godric, Merlin, Salazar, Professor Flitwick, Albus, Moody, Tonks, Nicholas, Perenelle, and several others volunteered for battle duty, so if a battle broke out somewhere they would be the first on the scene, and everyone else would come in if they needed back up.

Amelia, Arthur, Amos and those who work inside the Ministry said that they will keep them up to date on what the Ministry was doing.

Tom, Madam Rosmerta, Aberforth, and Mr. Fortescue said they would keep an ear on what all their patrons would be talking about, so they could report back anything suspicious.

Since over half of the Order was going to be at Hogwarts, they would keep tabs on their students and fellow classmates, and Molly, Augusta, Mrs. Diggory, and Mrs. Zabini had decided to keep their ears open when they went on their shopping trips to various places. Mundungus, who besides Salazar and Godric, knew Knockturn Alley like the back of his hand said he would spy on his…less than honest friends, as long as he didn't have to go into battle. It made Moody scoff loudly and scowl at him, but Albus was willing to make the deal.

The twins had offered be 'weapons specialists', which caused Molly to moan slightly and shake her head. The twins explained that they could invent not only pranks that could distract their opponents in battle, but also potentially create a way for all of those who went into battle to remain anonymous. They admitted that they had been thinking about the Death Eaters masks and robes, and said that they were working on something called headless hats, which when worn would make a person's head invisible. Molly scolded them, but Merlin stopped her and actually encourage the idea because if they remained anonymous, the chances of the Death Eaters finding out who they were would be extremely difficult. Nicholas actually volunteered to work with them on their plans, which seemed to make Molly feel better.

Cedric reminded Salazar about his love for solving puzzles and riddles said that he would love to help come up with battle strategies. He even admitted to coming up with a plan to use the Ministry's own resources for the Order's use.

That seemed to make everyone pause and look at the young man in shock, but Cedric went on to explain.

"Sirius has already told us that he is telling everyone who will listen that the Ministry killed Harry. Of course the Ministry knows they didn't, but they also don't know where Harry is. Over the next few weeks Sirius needs to start acting like they really did. He could become a 'drunk' and frequent The Leaky Cauldron and The Three Broomsticks, while constantly mumbling about Harry being killed, and confront anyone who disagrees with him. This would get more than a few people to notice the change in Sirius, and many more might start to believe it, which could lead them to think about You-Know-Who possibly being out there."

"You want him to act like a belligerent drunk?" Rosmerta asked, causing Cedric to nod.

"He could randomly shout things like 'You-Know-Who is back and they killed Harry to cover it up', or other such things. Now, here is where it gets tricky, and also where Madam Bones comes in.
Since the Ministry knows they didn't kill him, Madam Bones could 'catch wind' of Sirius's unstable condition and come up with the idea that Harry 'may' seek Sirius out in order to comfort and reassure him. She can send a team of Aurors into Diagon Alley around the time school starts, by also stating that Harry might seek out his school friends. This could also work around Hogsmeade visits too.

"It would keep us safe, and it would afford us more fighters if Death Eaters should attack everyone trying to do their school shopping, or just having a Hogsmeade outing." Blaise said. "And even if they don't, it's better to remain cautious."

"Excellent work Cedric," Amelia said, nodded approvingly, as Amos proudly clapped his son on the back. "I will certainly go with that plan. I'll start working on that right away, and start feeding Fudge the 'maybes' in a week or so."

Sirius furrowed his brow. "Yeah, now that I think about it, I really haven't been acting like Harry's dead."

"Well now you should start, but ease into it. A sudden change would be suspicious." Merlin warned. "If anyone asks, you can say reality 'finally hit you'."

"An excellent, excellent idea Cedric." Albus said, nodding happily. "It will throw suspicion off of Sirius having seen Harry, and then when he shows up at Hogwarts as a Professor, we can say that he took the job to take his mind off things."

"I'm trying to 'move on' from the tragedy of losing Harry." Sirius said with a nod.

"Very good Cedric." Godric grinned. "If you'd like, I would like to work with you on the battle strategies, and seeing as we will be at Hogwarts together, we can use a classroom to work on them."

"That would be really brilliant! I'd love your help!" He exclaimed.

"And since we would be there too, we could help also." George said. "We can use your strategies to think up certain kinds of weapons."

Ginny suddenly burst out laughing. "Pink Death Eaters!" She cried, causing the rest of the children to snort loudly.

"Even funnier than a pink Voldemort." Neville added with a grin. "And it would certainly cause the Death Eaters to become distracted, thereby giving our people the upper hand."

"If I am ordered by the Dark Lord to take part in an attack, and I get turned pink, so help you all." Severus warned, letting his voice drop down low as he glared at them.

"I don't know Severus, pink would do wonders for your color. You always look so pale." Minerva said with a smirk, causing him to glare at her as the children burst into more giggles.

"It would make for interesting dinner conversation." Albus said as his eyes twinkled merrily, which caused Severus to huff loudly and roll his eyes.

Salazar chuckled. "Fred, George, Cedric, just remember that you have NEWTS this year, so don't abandon your studies in favor of your...extracurricular activities."

"We won't Harry." They chorused, causing the Professors to nod approvingly.

Albus chuckled again, but then he cleared his throat. "I hate to break up the humor, but there is a
very grave problem that has been brought to the attention of a few of us." He said, causing everyone to raise their eyebrows curiously.

Albus went on to explain about the Malfoys, and everyone was horrified to learn exactly what was going on in that house. Even Ron said that he wouldn't wish that on Malfoy, which shocked all the children, Salazar, and Godric. Albus went on to tell everyone that they needed a plan to get all three of them out of there, and everyone agreed enthusiastically. However, no one had any ideas about how to go about it, until Hermione spoke up tentatively.

"I have a thought." She said quietly, causing everyone to glance at her. "We could use Dobby. He knows the house better than anyone. He could go there, grab them, them take them to wherever."

"Dobby won't go near them." Salazar said with a sigh. "He's terrified of them, buuuut..." he said slowly as he tilted his head to the side. "He might take one of us to Malfoy Manor. He can get past the wards because technically, he is still bonded to them, even if Merlin obliviated him from their minds. Using Dobby somehow is a good idea though Hermione, thank you." He said, causing her to smile broadly.

"Well, I have been thinking about taking them to twelve Grimmauld Place. It's the Ancient Home of the Blacks. It's in bad disrepair though and Kreacher is still there." Sirius said, curling his lip in disgust. "I hate that insane deranged elf, but he will take care of them. However, there are many, many, many dark objects in that house that need to be cleaned out. I don't want anything to do with anything in there, so if Narcissa wants it, she can have it, sell it, or whatever, but the dark stuff I want to get out of there, so they can't use it against us."

"I think it's an excellent location. Phineas Black, a past Headmaster, has a portrait there and he can keep an eye on them as well." Albus nodded.

"We could also put it under a Fidelius." Godric said. "It will keep them safe from Voldemort, and with one of us as secret keeper, it would ensure their cooperation."

"Blackmail!?" Minerva gasped.

Godric shrugged. "I'm not above it. I feel sorry for the position they are in, but I don't trust them."

"I'll be secret keeper." Salazar said with a nod. "It may set their minds a little bit at ease if it is me."

"There is a problem that I have been thinking about." Severus suddenly said. "Towards the end of last year, Draco's 'friends' abandoned him because Lucius lost all his influence when he lost all his money. If Draco goes back to school, and he needs to because it's his OWLS year, he will be in danger from the sons and daughters of Death Eaters. I have no doubts that the Dark Lord will order the Malfoys to be killed, and that includes Draco. Since none of them will willingly step foot in Hogwarts with the Headmaster and Roffin there, in order to get to Draco, they will tell their children to do it."

"Oh my goodness!" Molly gasped loudly. "Unfathomable, unfathomable."

"I had not thought about that, but I agree he needs to go back to school because of OWLS." Salazar said with a loud sigh. "It is a very important time for all fifth years, and he can't miss this opportunity."

"He will need to be kept safe from the other Slytherins." Minerva said gravely.

"We can put him in the Snake Pit." Godric said, causing Blaise to wrinkle his nose slightly. "Salazar won't be there, so Draco can use his room."
"He can't get past the door." Salazar said with a sigh. "He can't understand Parseltongue."

"Since when are you above blood magic?" Godric asked with a chuckle.

"Good point. I'll key his blood into the door so that it will open for him, but he will have to be discreet about pricking his finger to get in, because if they figure out it takes his blood, they may try to obtain it." Salazar said.

"We will figure out a better way." Merlin said, causing Salazar to glance at him and nod.

"What about classes and in the hallway though?" Hermione asked. "I mean at meals and things Draco should be fine because Gordy will be there. If word spreads among the Death Eaters about who Gordy really is, their children are unlikely to mess with Draco while Gordy is present. That doesn't extend to classes and general walking around the school though."

"We can bump Mr. Roffin up from fourth to fifth," Flitwick offered. "Since all of us Professors are here, we all know why. We can use the excuse that Mr. Roffin is very gifted, and we felt that bumping him up would do him better good. It's not unheard of really, because it's happened before. That way Mr. Roffin will be there for all of Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Zabini's classes, especially walking with them to and from each class."

"I agree that is an excellent idea Filius." Albus said with a nod.

"As do I." Godric replied.

"And what of getting them out of the house to begin with?" Remus asked. "How do we go about it?"

"I have to admit that I have been thinking about it a lot, but I think we can use both my idea and Hermione's, because getting past their wards was giving me a fit." Salazar admitted.

"What's your plan Salazar?" Merlin asked.

Salazar chuckled. "Well let's just put it this way, it involves another chat with my idiotic heir, and it will give the illusion that I can do exactly what I said I could in the graveyard." He said with a grin.

"Which is?" Godric laughed.

"That I can find him anywhere." Salazar smirked.

"As long as it doesn't get me killed Potter." Severus snapped.

"It won't." He shot back, then he began outlining his plan.

Chapter End Notes

Pierre Robillard? At least we know what Salazar is going to be doing! LOL. I actually had every intention of having Salazar pose as a new pet snake for Voldy, but so many of you wanted to see him as Defense Professor, so I kind of switched gears for it. Sirius was suppose to take over for Remus as Defense, but I think it will work out better with him as Creatures Professor, especially since Sirius has claustrophobia, which I really do think he had in canon.
I was actually not going to rescue the Malfoys, but I can't really see everyone sitting back and letting Draco go through all of that, so we shall see how that goes and what it holds for the future. However, something tells me Draco won't really like having to be babysat by Godric!

The next chapter will feature the rescue, 'Pierre Robillard's' interview with Albus, and other things. I know I said this last chapter, but the next chapter will be the last 'summer' chapter, and I don't care if it ends up being 30,000 words long! LOL I know it seems like I'm dragging the summer out, and I'm sorry about that. I just need to get everyone in position for the start of school, so I hope you all aren't mad at me.
A Summer Dance

Chapter Notes

This part answers a few reviews from my readers on 'the other site' but im going to put this here for you all as well, just in case you have the same questions.

To answer some of your questions, Merlin's cottage is in Ireland, Camelot is in Wales. Merlin didn't live in Camelot until it officially became Order Headquarters, so that's why Godric found him and Sirius in his veggie garden. Sirius is NOT giving the Malfoys Grimmauld Place. He is just letting them use it for now because they have no place to go. He's doing this because he doesn't care about the house. (In his mind, he thinks they deserve it because its in such a bad state.) About the Burrow, elves aren't construction workers. Besides Hogwart's elves don't really answer to Salazar, they answer to Albus, however they will do small things for Salazar. As for the 'small mountain' I guess it could be a hill, but the highest point in the Cambrian Mountains is Plynlimon, which is 2,467 ft. That's a really big 'hill', so that's why I called it a small mountain.

A few of you have also mentioned that Cedric was a seventh year in canon. That is actually not true. Cedric was two years ahead of Harry, which puts him in the same year as the twins. Cedric was born in either Sept. or Oct. 1977. (Which allowed him to enter the Triwizard Tournament as a sixth year.) He has the weird birthday cutoff thing that makes him one year older than his classmates. In order for them to get their letter at eleven, they have to actually be eleven on or before Sept 1st. This is also true in 'our' world. Many people have that weird birthday cutoff thing that says they cant start school at age five for kindergarten (here in the US anyway, I'm unsure about the UK.) My own daughter has this weird birthday cutoff thing as well, because she started kindergarten at age 6. She wasn't 5 yet when school started in Aug. that year.

A few of you have also mentioned parents being concerned about Sirius being a 'drunk'. Honestly, I dont think they would. In canon there was a Professor with Voldy sticking out of his head, a fraud, a death eater posing as a crazy auror, a psycho in pink, and finally, another death eater, who is also a very huge bully. They only protested Remus because he's a werewolf. They wont bat an eyelash at a 'drunk' Sirius.

To the reviewer who got slightly upset at me for redeeming Lucius, even though he did all those horrible things. Who said anything about Lucius being redeemed? He's only being rescued, not being redeemed. They rescued him for Draco and Narcissa's sake. He's Lucius Malfoy, trust me, I still have plans for him.

Sorry that was a bit long, so now...on with the chapter!

Chapter 53

A Summer Dance

"Hermione, I need your help!" Salazar cried out desperately as he walked into the kitchen at Camelot.
I was the morning after the first meeting of the Order, and all the Weasleys and Merlin looked up in alarm, and Hermione looked slightly startled as they all stopped eating their breakfast to gaze at him. However, they chuckled a bit and relaxed when Salazar sat down heavily with a pouty look on his face.

"With what Harry?" She asked as she resumed eating.

"I need to go shopping in muggle London for a very specific item, and you are the only one who can help me."

"What is it?" She asked curiously.

"I can't tell you here because it is both a surprise and an embarrassment, so not only do I have to ask for an oath after we are done, I will also need to place a tongue tying curse on you, and maybe even obliviate you." He said with a slight whine, causing Merlin to chuckle loudly.

"That bad Salazar?" He asked.

"Indeed."

"That must mean he needs your help shopping for knickers for a lady friend." Fred said with a snort.

"Fred!" Molly scolded, but she chuckled a bit while doing it.

"No it's not knickers, though I wish it was." Salazar laughed. "Shopping for knickers for a lady I can handle on my own, shopping for what I need, I cannot."

"So you admit that you have given knickers to a lady friend." George said with grin.

"Over the last thousand years, I have given quite a few frilly knickers as gifts to lady friends." He said with a sly grin and a devious glint in his eyes.

"Oh my goodness!" Molly gasped, as she turned bright red in the face and attempted to swat Salazar with a napkin. "Perenelle said you were a devil!"

"And I do not pretend to be anything otherwise." Salazar laughed, but then he sighed miserably and glanced to Hermione. "I realize that I am going on about this in a silly sort of way, and I know that when you find out what it is you will laugh at me, but I tried shopping for it on my own last night and I was highly confused by it all. I really do need your help."

Hermione giggled as she wiped her mouth. "All right Harry, I will help you."

Relief flooded his face as he bowed his head and grasped her hands tightly. "Thank you my dear. You are a lifesaver. I must ask you though, please, please, please DO NOT say anything about it to Godric, Sirius, Remus, or those two." He said, waggling his fingers in Fred and George's direction as they grinned deviously. "Especially Godric, because two thousand years from now, I will STILL be hearing about it."

"I promise." She said softly as she chuckled. "You want to go right now?"

"As soon as you're finished with your breakfast, though there really is no rush." He replied.

"It's not bad, is it Harry?" Molly asked with slight concern.

"Oh no, I assure you. In fact..." He said, getting out of his seat to walk over to her.
He leaned down to whisper in her ear, and after a minute or so Molly burst out laughing, causing Salazar to scowl playfully.

"Oh my goodness." She chuckled as she sipped her juice. "I understand now. Well, at least it's not knickers."

George grinned at his mother, but then turned to Arthur. "Hey Dad, have you ever given Mum a pair of knickers."

"George!" Molly screeched at the same time Ron yelled, "Some of us are trying to eat you know!"

Everyone else burst out laughing, but Arthur just grinned.

"That's between your mother and me." He said, winking at Molly, causing her to blush a deep red.

Ron looked slightly green, but Ginny just snorted as the twins laughed even harder.

"All right no more talk of knickers." Molly chuckled. "You all need to finish eating so we can go help Sirius clean up Grimmauld Place."

"After we are done in muggle London, Hermione and I will meet you there." Salazar said, but then he turned to the children. "If Sirius says there is a lot of dark objects in that house, then I want you all to wear your dragon hide gloves as you go about your work. Do you three remember when we inspected the golden egg?"

"Yes sir." Hermione, Fred, and George chorused, causing Salazar to nod.

"Good, remember what Godric and I taught you, and use that darkness revealing charm we showed you."

"If it glows bright red, put it aside and let an adult look at it, right?" Fred asked.

"Right. Don't even worry about inspecting it further. Just put it aside and either Merlin, Godric, Moody, or I will look at it further."

"An excellent suggestion." Arthur said, nodding with approval.

"What charm is it?" Ginny asked.

"We will show you both." Fred said, looking at her and Ron. "It's not hard to learn, so don't worry."

"Just be careful." Molly warned. "The Blacks were a nasty family, and you could come across anything. If it weren't for the shortage of people not being able to help Sirius, you children wouldn't be doing this."

"I agree." Arthur said. "But we need to get this done rather quickly, so work fast, but be careful. I will join you after I get off work. Speaking of…" He said, getting up with a sigh. "I best be off."

"Have a good day dear." Molly said, kissing his cheek.

It was shortly after that when everyone finished eating and began getting ready. Salazar had pulled Hermione aside and told her to grab her dragon hide gloves, so that she could leave them in his flat, seeing as they needed to stop by there so he could change back into his adult form.

It was after leaving his flat and arriving at a small boutique on Charring Cross Road that Hermione finally understood why Salazar had been so confused and embarrassed earlier.
Apparently, he needed muggle make-up.

Salazar told her that since 'Pierre Robillard' was in fact him, he needed a way to cover up his scar so that it wouldn't give him away. She had asked about all the magical ways of covering it up, but he explained that because it was a dark, cursed scar no magical means could get rid of it or cover it up. Since he was bald and didn't like wearing hats while teaching, it would stand out very clearly.

Hermione giggled through the whole ordeal, which caused Salazar to scowl playfully through most of it, but she let loose with loud laughter when Salazar picked up a very light shade of lipstick and asked if that was what he needed.

Needless to say, she felt very sorry for him.

After a lot of odd looks from the muggle sales girl, and after Hermione got him settled with a bottle of concealer and a bit of powder that matched his skin tone, they finally arrived back at his flat so that he could change back into his Harry form.

"If you say anything about that to anyone, I will curse you." He warned playfully, as he came out of the bedroom.

She snorted loudly. "I promise I won't, but if you need my help with applying the make-up when the time comes, I'm more than happy to help."

"I'm sure you are." He said sarcastically as he rolled his eyes, causing her to giggle.

"Do you think the rest of us who know the real truth have figured it out yet?" She asked, as they got ready to apparate to Grimmauld Place.

"They may have, but maybe not." He said with a grin. "Just keep it a secret just in case. I want to surprise them if they haven't."

"All right Harry, I promise." She chuckled, just as they popped away.

"Blood traitors! Filthy half-breeds! All of you get out! Get out, get out, GET OUT!"

"What in the name of Merlin…" Salazar asked with confusion, only to get cut off as Sirius starting screaming.

"SHUT UP YOU BATTY OLD SHREW!" He bellowed.

"You are no son of mine, and I will not have my house disgraced with such filth! Get out! Don't look at that you blood traitor! Bow down to me you filthy werewolf, then GET OUT!"

Salazar and Hermione stood in the foyer of Grimmauld Place staring around in horror as Sirius stood on the landing, apparently yelling at a painting of an old woman who looked highly deranged and mad.

The Weasleys, Remus, Merlin, Moody, Tonks, Blaise, Neville, Augusta, and Godric, who was scowling fiercely at the painting, stood around behind him. Most of them looked affronted, but the children looked downright terrified.

"Walburga, I told you to stow it with your nonsense! You're going to embarrass me if you don't!"

"Shut up Phineas!" She screamed. "Since when have you ever allowed such FILTHY ANIMALS INTO OUR NOBLE HOUSE!? I swear on Slytherin's name that I have never been so repulsed in
"EXCUSE ME MADAM!" Salazar bellowed, causing everyone to whip around with their wands in their hands.

"Salazar Slytherin!" Phineas shouted happily. "Welcome to the Ancient and Noble House of Black!"

"Noble?" Salazar asked crossly, after canceling the voice amplifying charm. "I hardly call that woman a lady, much less noble!" He cried, causing Sirius to burst out laughing.

Phineas bounced from painting to painting until he came into one that was right next to Salazar, and he looked at him very apologetically.

"I'm sorry sir. Very sorry. I tried to tell all of them to knock it off with the blood purity mania, but Walburga is being rather difficult." He said fretfully as he gazed towards the snarling woman.

"Perhaps I should speak with her. Does she know of me?"

"I tried to tell her, but she doesn't believe me I'm afraid." Phineas replied as he clasped his hands together tightly.

"Hmm, then perhaps a well-placed threat will cause her to at least keep a civil tongue in her head." He growled.

Salazar nearly stomped up the stairs towards the painting, who seemed to be glaring at anyone that moved, and stood in front of her.

"Be careful Salazar, she's deranged." Godric said coldly.

"And who do you think you are!?" Walburga asked icily, as Salazar glared at her. "Just by looking at you I can tell you're a blood traitor at the very least, and you dare to be called Salazar?"

"Walburga, that really is Salazar Slytherin, play nicely or you will regret it." Phineas said nervously.

"You should listen to your ancestor woman." Salazar snarled. "For if you don't stop this nonsense and screaming, I will personally see to it that your offensive nature is permanently removed from my presence. In the last one thousand years of my existence, I have forgotten more dark magic than the entire Black family combined has ever learned, but I promise you that I will not honor your removal with dark magic. Instead, I will add insult to your injury by heading straight down to the local muggle paint shop and buy some muggle paint thinner and remover. From there, I will personally proceed to erase your pitiful existence in a purely muggle fashion. Do I make myself clear?" He asked, jabbing the end of his wand into her canvass.

"Oh my." A gangly looking wizard in the next painting said, as he stared at Salazar in shock.

"I told you. He is Salazar Slytherin." Phineas said. "Do not trifle with him."

Sirius's mum huffed loudly, but bowed her head slightly. "Fine, but I don't have to like any of what is going on in my house."

"I didn't ask you too." Salazar replied, still glaring at her. "But you will keep a civil tongue, or I will do as I threatened."

"Of course she will, won't you Walburga?" Phineas asked with slight warning.

"Of course." She said with a huff, as she turned her back on everyone and began mumbling to
herself.

Salazar sneered at her, but then he turned to Sirius. "You were right about this house. Where do you want us to start?"

Sirius smirked at his mother, who had turned her head sharply to glare at him, but then he grinned. "We can start at the top and work our way down. I'm hoping to have the house cleared by the end of the week. The library is where we really need to concentrate our efforts though. There is a lot of books in there. Some of them I know are cursed, and a lot of them contain really dark magic."

"Salazar and I can tackle the library." Merlin offered, causing Salazar to nod.

"Well we need to work quickly." Molly said. "The sooner we get done, the sooner we can get the Malfoy's here. I still don't know about rescuing Lucius, but that poor child at the very least needs to be kept safe."

"I agree." Godric said. "Each child is to work with an adult. Remember the charm Salazar and I taught you, and never take your gloves off." He warned, causing the children to nod.

"I've been scanning everything and I want to warn you all that there is a lot of doxies everywhere, and there is a boggart in a writing desk, so be careful." Moody announced, causing them all to sigh heavily.

"About the house's deplorable condition, I don't care about it. If Kreacher wants to do his job and clean it for the Malfoys, then that's on him." Sirius said. "We are only here to get rid of the dark objects. We are not here to make it livable. If the Malfoys want it to be nice, then they will have to make it that way."

"Have you spoken to your elf?" Salazar asked.

"I have, and while he hates my guts, he has agreed to care for them. He's actually looking forward to caring for 'proper and worthy wizards'." He said, rolling his eyes. "I ordered him to obey only me, but he is allowed to take orders from them, as long as they are household related things, such as cleaning, food preparation, and general well-being."

"Did you close all the loopholes?" Salazar asked with a raised eyebrow. "Because if this elf hates you, he will try to betray you and get around your orders in any way he can think of. Especially if he likes the Malfoys more than you."

"Maybe you should talk to him. I hate him. I really do Harry. You have no idea how much I hate that elf." Sirius said as he shook his head.

"I'll talk to him, but you need to be with me because I'm not his Master."

Sirius sighed heavily. "All right. You all get started, and we will be along later." He said, looking to everyone, but then he glanced back at Salazar. "We can talk to Kreacher in the kitchen."

Salazar nodded and followed Sirius down a nearby narrow dirty hallway. When he stepped into the kitchen, Salazar was surprised to find that the kitchen was in a better state than the rest of the house. He glanced curiously at Sirius, who seemed to shrug.

"Kreacher must be cleaning now that someone 'proper' will be living here." He said, then he scowled. "Kreacher!"

"Unworthy Master that broke Mistress's heart called for Kreacher?" A croaky, gravely voice asked
with as much loathing as it could.

Salazar raised an eyebrow at a very old elf, who stood off to the side as he and Sirius sat down at the kitchen table. The elf was wearing such a filthy rag, that Salazar had a hard time telling a part the rag and the elf's skin.

Kreacher glared at Sirius who grunted and scowled back, but Salazar cleared his throat.

"Hello Kreacher. How are you this morning?" He asked, causing Kreacher to briefly glance at him before continuing to glare at Sirius.

"Kreacher is fine." He finally replied curtly.

"Well I'm glad to hear that." Salazar said, despite knowing that the elf was far from fine. "I want to talk to you a minute. Would you like to sit down so that we can?" He asked, pulling out a chair for Kreacher to sit on.

The elf's eyes widened just a bit, but he finally nodded and climbed up. Then he glared at Sirius again, before glancing back at Salazar.

"I know that you know the Malfoys are coming to live here, but has Sirius told you why?"

"No. Nasty Master has only said that they are coming." Kreacher replied. "He said you will be stealing from my Mistress's house as well."

"I did not!" Sirius yelled, but Salazar motioned for him to hush.

"Is that what he said, or is that how you look at it Kreacher?"

"Unworthy Master said you will be getting rid of all the dark objects in Mistress's house." The elf replied as he glared at Sirius, who continued to scowl at him.

"Getting rid of something is not the same as stealing it." Salazar explained kindly. "Draco Malfoy is just a child, and he might get hurt if he touches a dark object. We are bringing the Malfoys here to keep them safe from Voldemort. He is treating them very unkindly at the moment, and we feel that their lives are in danger. We just want to make sure that the house is safe for them. You understand that, right?"

Kreacher looked at Salazar suspiciously, but he finally nodded. "Yes, Kreacher understands now."

"If I tell you exactly what we plan to do, will that make you feel better?" He asked, causing Kreacher to nod as he stared at the wizard. "Very well. All of the dark objects that we find are going to be destroyed so that they can't hurt Draco, or his mother and father. Then we are going to rescue them from Voldemort, and bring them here. Once they are here, it is up to you to protect them while they are in this house. We are going to place it under a Fidelius charm, and only Godric, Sirius, and I will know where they are after that. Voldemort will not be able to find them as long as they remain here. They will need your help for a lot of things though, such as preparing meals and cleaning. Are you prepared to do this?"

"Yes, because they are proper wizards." Kreacher said, causing Sirius to roll his eyes.

Salazar ignored it though and continued.

"We must warn you that Lucius Malfoy is a Death Eater, and we are afraid that he will place your Mistress's family, meaning Draco and Narcissa, in danger should he try and return to Voldemort. Are
you willing to do what it takes to keep Narcissa and Draco safe?"

"Nasty Dark Lord killed Kreacher's favorite Master. Kreacher will protect the child and Miss Cissy from danger." He said, gazing up at Salazar.

Salazar looked at Kreacher curiously. "Who was your favorite Master?"

A look of pain and longing crossed Kreacher's face and he looked up at Salazar with tears in his eyes.

"Master Regulus." He said. "Master Regulus died horribly. Kreacher was not able to stop it because Kreacher was ordered by Master Regulus to leave him."

"Kreacher, we know that Voldemort thinks of Regulus as a traitor. If you know what happened to him, will you tell us?" Salazar asked, as Sirius stared at the elf in shock.

"Kreacher cannot because he was ordered by Master Regulus not to tell anyone what he had done, but Kreacher can say that Master Regulus died by deifying the nasty Dark Lord."

Salazar's mind whirled for several minutes, and he got up to pace. He knew from Severus's memory that Regulus had something to do with one of Voldemort's horcruxes. After several minutes of trying to form a plan to get around Kreacher's orders, he kneeled in front of Kreacher and gently took Kreacher's hands into his own.

"I will not ask you to defy your Master's orders, but it is very important that I know the answers to the questions that I have. Did Regulus know anything about a very, very dark object that may have belonged to Voldemort?"

Kreacher looked at Salazar a bit startled, but he nodded slightly. "Yes. Master Regulus did. Master Regulus told Kreacher about it."

Salazar's eyes widened. "Do you know where the object is? Voldemort made lots of very dark objects like that one, and we have been trying to find them all and destroy them, so that we can finally kill him. If you know anything about an object like that, I need you to tell me."

"You can destroy it?" Kreacher asked as his face suddenly took on a look of pure hope.

"Yes, we can destroy these objects."

Kreacher started breathing very heavily and tears began to flow down his cheeks. "Kreacher knows where it is. Kreacher can't destroy it. Kreacher doesn't know how. Kreacher tried! Kreacher has not been able to fulfill Master Regulus's last wish! Kreacher has failed!" He wailed loudly, as great sobs racked the old elf's body.

It took several minutes for him to calm down, but Kreacher finally did and he looked up at a completely shocked Salazar and took a deep breath.

"It's here in this house. It's a foul, dark, evil thing. Kreacher has never felt anything so vile in his life." He said with a slight hiccup as he shook his head sadly.

"Will you bring it to me?" Salazar asked hopefully.

"Kreacher will get it." He said, before popping away.

Salazar quickly turned to Sirius, who sat in the chair looking at him in shock.
"Sirius, go get Godric please, and hurry."

Sirius jumped up out of his seat and ran out of the room, just as Kreacher popped back in with a gold locket with a green snake in the shape of an 'S' on its front.

Salazar stared at it for several moments, before he suddenly burst out laughing. Kreacher stared at him in confusion, but then the kitchen door burst open as Sirius, Godric, Merlin, and Moody came hurrying in.

"Rowena's fake diadem and my fake locket." Salazar said shaking his head. "It makes me wonder if he found Helga's fake cup and turned into one also."

"Is that what I think it is?" Moody asked, staring at it with wide eyes.

"Oh yes." Salazar said with a nod as he waved his wand over it. "Godric, do you have your dagger?"

"Yes Salazar, I always have it." He replied, making it sound as if it were a stupid question.

Salazar just chuckled and took the dagger from him, but then he looked at Kreacher, who had placed the locket on the table.

"Anyone can destroy it, but would you like to do it Kreacher? It may help bring you a sense of peace knowing that you were able to carry out Regulus's final wish."

Kreacher stared up at Salazar with wide, hopeful eyes and nodded. Salazar handed him the dagger with a small smile, and nodded encouragingly.

"Be careful with that dagger, because you will get very, very hurt if you cut yourself with it. Then you won't be able to keep Draco and Narcissa safe. I need to open it by using Parseltongue, but once I open it, you need to stab it quickly."

"Just stab it?" Kreacher asked in shock.

"It is a special dagger that has a very important substance within it. That dagger is the only thing that you can use to destroy it, but Kreacher, you must be very quick to stab it, or else the dark magic inside it will try to hurt you. Do you understand this?"

A fierce determination clouded his face and he nodded. "Yes Mr. Salazar, Kreacher understands."

"Very good. The rest of you stand back." He said, then he turned to the locket. "Open."

The locket sprung open to reveal a set of eyes looking back at them, but Kreacher jumped onto the table and let out a furious cry. The eyes narrowed for a moment, but Kreacher quickly brought the dagger down hard, which shattered the glass inside. A moment later, a loud, evil cry filled the entire house, causing it to shake violently from its foundation to the rooftop, before its echoing cries disappeared.

Kreacher dropped the dagger immediately and sat down heavily as he began to cry tears of relief and joy. Then he picked up the locket and cradled it to his chest as he began to rock back and forth.

"Kreacher did it Master Regulus. No more worries, no more worries. Kreacher finally did it." He mumbled softly as tears ran down his cheeks, but then he looked up at Salazar, who smiled at him.

"You did very good Kreacher." He said, just as the kitchen door burst open.
All the children were looking around with wide eyes, while Molly looked to be on the verge of hysteria. Merlin was able to shuffle them all out, and no doubt began to explain what happened. Kreacher however, looked at Salazar and stood up on the table to face him.

"Kreacher will do all that Mr. Salazar asks." He said, clutching the locket tightly. "Kreacher will keep the child and Miss Cissy safe from the nasty Dark Lord. Kreacher will tell Mr. Salazar if Mr. Lucius tries to harm them, and he will tell Mr. Salazar if Mr. Lucius tries to return to the nasty Dark Lord. Kreacher will help find all of the dark objects in the house, and he will bring them to Mr. Salazar."

Salazar smiled and gently patted the elf's thin shoulder. "Thank you, and as a reward for your help, if you desire it, you can keep that locket to help remind you that you helped us in our quest to destroy Voldemort for good."

"You will let Kreacher have it?" The elf asked in total shock.

"That locket was originally mine Kreacher, and I am free to give it to whomever I wish. Yes, you can have it." Salazar replied.

"Kreacher thinks Mr. Salazar is a great wizard. Much better than nasty Master. Kreacher will do whatever Mr. Salazar says." Kreacher said excitedly.

Sirius glared at the elf, but Salazar only chuckled. "For now Kreacher, you should rest. I think it has been a long time since you have had peace, but tomorrow, will you start cleaning up this house so that it is somewhat livable?"

"Of course, of course! Kreacher will rest, and tomorrow he will start work."

"Thank you." Salazar replied as the elf bounced off into a nearby cupboard.

"I wish he would have told us what happened to Regulus." Sirius said as he shook his head.

"Well, just know that whatever it was, it was in defiance of Voldemort so he likely died a hero. You should be proud of your brother." Salazar said, causing Sirius to smile broadly.

"Five down two to go." Godric said with a happy grin, and Salazar nodded slightly.

"Yes, but I'm afraid we have gotten lucky with the others. The last two will likely be very difficult to find."

"Do you really think Helga's cup is one of them?" Godric asked.

"I don't know, but it's possible." Salazar replied with a tired sigh.

"I guess we will find out." Moody said. "But we need to get to work. It's a big house."

"Indeed." The rest said, and they all headed out of the kitchen.

The next four days were a whirlwind of activity at Grimmauld Place, but between Kreacher actually cleaning and the others busy doing their work, time seemed to fly by. Merlin and Salazar had a tough time with the library though, considering the amount of books that were stuffed in there. Once the others had cleared the rest of the house, they helped with the library which made the process go much faster.

After all was said and done, over fifty dark objects were destroyed, and over two-hundred books
were confiscated from the library. Kreacher was working hard to get the rest of the house clean, and while it proved to be a big improvement, it was still in a shabby state of disrepair.

Salazar knew the Malfoys were not going to be happy living in the house, but after all Lucius and Draco had done over the last few years, they were lucky to be afforded the house to begin with.

Salazar firmly intended to clearly state that fact to them.

It was Thursday afternoon when Godric and Salazar left Grimmauld Place, after having placed it under the Fidelius Charm. They met Albus, Merlin, Moody, Sirius, and Severus back at Camelot, where they began to make the final preparations to get the Malfoys to safety.

Moody had a brilliant idea of taking them to a special location before Salazar and Sirius escorted them to Grimmauld Place, which caused Salazar to grin wickedly at him. That's when Sirius, Moody, Albus, and Merlin left for that special location to ensure that the Malfoys arrived safely.

Godric left for Grimmauld Place to await Salazar and Sirius's arrival with the Malfoys, and to let Kreacher know to expect them soon.

It was in that moment that a very nervous Dobby, who had been watching the goings on at Malfoy Manor all day, took a disillusioned Salazar's hand, and apparated him right into the room outside of Malfoy Manor's drawing room.

The place was deserted when they silently landed, and Dobby immediately left with a slight whimper, leaving Salazar standing there in the cold by himself. He quickly charmed his clothes and the door hinges to remain silent, then he very carefully opened the door and snuck in.

Voldemort was seated in his throne, clearly studying something, seeing as he had parchment spread out over the table. Lucius was sitting on the floor next to him, just as he had been in the memory. Narcissa was still sitting with Draco in the very back corner, and all three of them looked worse than they had in the memory. Salazar shook his head, and with careful, silent steps, tip-toed past the table in order get closer to Narcissa and Draco. He knew he had to get them out first, should things go badly.

The plan was simple really. He would stand in a corner to wait for Voldemort to leave for whatever reason, then he would quickly reveal himself to the Malfoys, and get them to safety. He already had three portkeys on him to aid in their escape. One for Draco and Narcissa, one for Lucius, and one for himself.

Salazar stood silently and watched, but he had to hold his tongue a few times when Voldemort took a break from his studying to belittle them. He mostly aimed his vile words at Lucius, but he also singled out Narcissa and Draco by mocking the shabby state they were in.

At one point Salazar really had to restrain himself when Narcissa pleaded on Draco's behalf. Apparently the boy had to go use the restroom, and Voldemort gave him a choice. Go to the loo and have his father tortured, or soil himself. Needless to say, Draco chose to save his father and soil himself, which still earned Lucius a cruciatus curse.

Voldemort cited the 'stench of urine' as the cause.

Standing in the corner proved to be amusing though, because sometimes Voldemort would began 'talking to Nagini’ which caused Salazar to chuckle silently to himself, seeing as all of it was nonsense blabbering. He had hoped that maybe his Heir would talk about the horcruxes more, but no such luck happened.
Salazar had been standing in the corner for nearly four hours when his chance finally came though, and he grinned as the man finally stood up.

"Do you think you can follow the simple order of staying put New Wormtail? I need to go to the library and retrieve a book. I'm afraid if I sent you to do it, you'd mess it up." He hissed.

"O-of c-c-course My L-L-Lord." Lucius stuttered as he visibly tensed up.

"Good." Voldemort replied, as he kicked Lucius in the side, before he strode out the room.

Once the door was shut, Lucius turned quickly toward his son.

"Don't worry Draco, it wasn't your fault."

"Father I'm so sorry." He whimpered.

"I won't let that happen again."

The foreign voice caused them all to jump a foot in the air, but as Salazar removed the disillusionment charm, they all stared at him in shock.

"Quickly, come here." Salazar said, motioning to them.

Unfortunately, they didn't move as they continued to stare at him.

"Potter!" Draco gasped quietly. "How…"

"There's no time for that right now. I'm sending you someplace safe." Salazar said, quickly making his way over to Narcissa and Draco. "Take this. It's a portkey that will take you to a safe spot before we can get you to your new home. Take it!" He hissed, as neither of them made a move to grab it.

"Lucius…" Narcissa croaked.

"He will be right behind you…now go!"

Narcissa glanced at Lucius, then back to Salazar as he shoved the portkey into her hands.

"The password is 'rescue'. You have my word that Lucius will be right behind you, but if you don't hurry up, I may not get him out safely. Go now!"

"Go Narcissa." Lucius pleaded in a raspy voice, as Salazar made his way quickly towards him. "Go."

"Rescue." Narcissa whispered, and she and Draco portkeyed out.

"You're not getting me out, are you Potter?" Lucius asked, looking up at Salazar.

"Take it." Salazar said, as he handed him the portkey with a stern look. "I am a man of my word, especially when that word is given to a woman. The password is the same, and you will all be together."

"Why?" Lucius said, staring at the old sock in his hands in shock. "Why are you doing this?"

"Because I don't like to see a child suffer. Go and be with your wife and son. I want to have a chat with my miserable heir before I join you all."
Lucius glanced up at him and nodded. He whispered the password, and Salazar breathed a large sigh of relief as Lucius portkeyed away. Then he smirked as he caught sight of the pieces of parchment that littered the table. He casually sat down in Voldemort's throne, and began riffling through them as he chuckled quietly.

He looked up and grinned as he heard quiet footsteps coming down the hall. Then he leaned back in the throne, and propped his feet up on the table. Voldemort strode in and nearly fell over from the sudden stop he came to as he caught sight of Salazar sitting there nonchalantly.

"Very amusing thing your studying here." Salazar said, motioning to all the parchment. "It's a shame that you'll never find the answer you're looking for. I told you already, I can't die until old age."

"Ancestor." Voldemort hissed with loathing as his eyes scanned the room. Then he turned to glare at him when he realized the Malfoys were gone, but tensed up as Salazar shifted in his seat.

"Heir." Salazar replied with an amused grin. "Don't worry. Your pets are long gone, but to ease your mind, I am quite alone. Why don't you have a seat and let's talk." He said, kicking a chair away from the table.

Voldemort didn't move, but he did reach for his wand which caused Salazar to outright laugh.

"Get out of my seat Ancestor."

"No, simply because you want me to." Salazar replied, as sat forward in the throne. "To answer your unasked questions, no, you will never find the Malfoys, and no you still can't kill me. The reason I was able to gain entrance into this little house is because back in my second year, the Malfoys ticked off their house elf and a friend of mine came here to obliviate his existence from their minds. As I told you in the graveyard, I can, and will always find you. Incidentally, through this elf I have been watching you for many weeks now, and while I don't approve of your treatment of Narcissa and Draco, I do somewhat find your actions towards Lucius amusing." Salazar said with a laugh.

"However, I do have to inform you that you will have to find another New Wormtail. Might I suggest McNair?"

"No." Voldemort said with a huff. "But you will get out of my seat."

"Is this chair the only thing you care about at the moment? I would have thought you'd like to know about my latest adventure. I found another horcrux. I laughed when it turned out to be my locket because you seem to have a taste for useless junk. First Rowena's diadem and now my locket. It makes me wonder if Helga's cup will show up. It's a good thing Godric left his sword at Hogwarts's, or I would have to think you found that too." Salazar grinned, as Voldemort's eyes flickered just a bit when he mentioned Helga's cup. "Ah! So it is Helga's cup!" He cried.

Voldemort's eyes became cold and hard, and once again Salazar chuckled.

"Crucio!" Voldemort yelled, just as Salazar conjured up a stone wall in front of him.

In that same moment, Salazar disappeared in a massive ball of flame as the curse hit the wall, which caused it to shatter. He leapt up out of the chair, vanishing it as he did, then he reappeared next to the fireplace.

"At least you got me out of your chair." He snorted, as Voldemort turned sharply towards him. "Pity that you'll have to find another one though."

"Why are you still here Ancestor?" Voldemort asked as he glared at him.
"Because I can be." Salazar replied with a sigh. "And because I know the sight of me sets you on edge because you can't kill me, and I'm much faster at casting spells than you are. The only reason you gained the upper hand in the graveyard is because I was losing blood and poisoned."

"You won't catch me off guard again." Voldemort said, as he continued to stand there and glare at him.

"I look forward to proving that statement wrong, but I must go because the Malfoys are waiting for me. Remember, no matter where you go or where you hide, I will always be watching you. Until we meet again Tom." Salazar said with the tiniest of bows, then he looked at Voldemort.

"Merlin's house." He grinned, then he portkeyed away.

Salazar missed the completely shocked state he left Voldemort standing in, and the slew of curses that shortly followed.

Salazar didn't land at Merlin’s though, instead he ended up in a place that made him sigh with sorrow.

Godric's Hollow.

He quickly made his way into the house, where he knew the Malfoys, Sirius, Albus, Moody, and a disillusioned Severus were waiting. He knew he had to be careful though, it had been fourteen years since the house was destroyed, and it was in a very bad state.

The last time he had been here, there had been rubble blocking the door, but it had been cleared by Albus, who had visited the house earlier to ensure that it was going to be safe to have so many people in it.

As Salazar entered the moldy and decrepit living room, he spotted everyone standing around waiting for him. He chuckled at Moody, who eyed him carefully as if he weren't sure who Salazar appeared to be.

"It's me Mr. Moody, I promise." He said with a grin, causing Moody to huff loudly.

"How did he take the news?" Sirius asked.

"He's mad, as is to be expected, but he provided me with information that I gleefully brought his attention to."

"And your portkey password?" Merlin asked with a chuckle.

"Shocked, but I assume he will be calling all of the Death Eaters to him soon. He was very angry that I vanished his throne. He will probably demand another one."

"He won't stay there." Albus pointed out.

"Oh I'm sure he won't, but we can track him easily enough. Just before I left, I wandlessly placed a very old, obscure tracking charm on him. It's nearly four-hundred years old and was actually the first of its kind. I admit that it is primitive, but it's undetectable." Salazar replied with a grin. "He won't think to look for it."

Sirius burst out laughing, but the Malfoys stared at him with wide eyes.

"You don't fear him, do you?" Lucius asked.
"No I don't Mr. Malfoy." Salazar said with all seriousness. "But I do fear what he is capable of. If I can keep him paranoid and afraid, he might end up doing exactly what I suggested, which is to find a cave, and hide there."

"Just don't tick him off Potter." Moody warned.

"I'll try not to, but I may have already done that. I don't think he will make a move just yet though. The Ministry will have to acknowledge his return if he does, and he won't be able to quietly get organized."

Lucius suddenly hissed loudly with pain, and just off to his left, Salazar heard Severus also hiss, though his was soft enough to go undetected by the Malfoys.

"Well it seems he is calling for his followers." Albus said, turning his gaze to Lucius. "It is up to you whether you go or not because you are not a prisoner, but be warned, we will not come and rescue you again."

"He will kill me if I don't go." Lucius said with fear in his eyes as he hissed again.

Salazar knew Severus already left, and he hoped that by using Dobby, who Voldemort would never find, as a scape goat that Severus wouldn't be suspected. Salazar knew that Voldemort would ask his followers, Severus especially, if they knew just how he had been found, but Severus already knew to say that he would 'find out.'

"He will kill you even if you do answer his call." Albus went on to say. "It is a choice you have to make. Do you go and die, or do you stay here and try to fight for your life?"

"Is that why you rescued us? So that we have to fight to live?" Narcissa asked with a hint of anger.

"No Narcissa, we didn't." Albus said calmly. "The reason we rescued you is because we didn't want young Mr. Malfoy to experience any more of the horror Voldemort was putting you through."

"There was a bit of debate on whether or not to save all three of you, just you two," Sirius said, pointing towards Draco and Narcissa, "or just Draco. You should thank your lucky stars that we chose for Draco to not have to grow up without his parents."

Narcissa's eyes widened slightly, but she nodded.

"But where are we to live?" Draco asked quietly, finally finding his voice. "Is this the place?" He added, looking around with a bit of fear in his eyes.

"No Draco." Salazar said. "We are in Godric's Hollow, can you guess the house?"

Their eyes widened in shock as they stared around them in silence, but Salazar continued.

"You see the stairs through that hole in the wall? That is where the body of my father lay after Voldemort killed him. The room above our heads, see that crib through the hole? That is where I sat, and just a few feet in front of that is where my mother was killed. We brought you here so that you can get a sense of what happens when Voldemort finds you."

"We don't trust you, but we will keep you all safe for Draco's sake." Albus said. "It took a lot of effort for us to put aside our dislike for your family and do this, but I will remind you, you are not our prisoners. You are free to make your own decisions. Sirius has offered you a house, which Harry and Sirius will take you to. That house is under a Fidelius Charm, and Harry is its secret keeper."
"This house was also under a Fidelius Charm, but we were betrayed by Pettigrew." Salazar added in a voice laced with heavy warnings. "If you betray us, I will tell Voldemort where to find you. If you come against us in anyway, I will tell Voldemort where to find you. Do you understand?"

Lucius glared at him a bit, but he nodded. "Yes." He said simply.

"Good. The only three people who will know where you are is Sirius, Godric, and myself. No one else knows, not even the Headmaster." Salazar said with a nod towards Albus.

"I don't necessarily agree with blackmail, but I was over ruled in this matter." Albus said with a weary sigh.

"I think it fits." Sirius said as he glared at them. "It's like Albus said, we don't trust you."

"We will do all that you request of us." Narcissa said. "And we thank you for your mercy."

"Mercy that you never showed any of your victims Lucius, so keep that in mind." Moody growled. Lucius glared at him, but Narcissa placed a hand on his shoulder, which caused Lucius to grind his teeth in order not to make a snappy remark.

"If you are ready, Harry and Sirius will take you to your new home." Albus said as he stood up. "I must head back to Hogwarts. I have to oversee this year's choices for fifth year prefects."

"Sirius and I will meet up with you later Headmaster." Salazar said, as he nodded at Albus.

"Very well." He replied, and he apparated.

"Salazar, Mr. Moody and I will meet you back at Headquarters." Merlin announced as he stood up.

"All right. It might take us a while to get them settled though."

"I understand." Merlin replied, and he and Moody also left.

Now that it was just the five of them, the Malfoys glanced at them fearfully, but Salazar nodded at them.

"Lucius goes with me, and Narcissa and Draco go with Sirius." He said.

They all glanced at each other, but with a nod from Narcissa they split up and apparated.

"Welcome to number twelve Grimmauld Place, the Ancient home of the Black family, and now the Malfoy family." Salazar said.

Narcissa gasped loudly and Draco stared in awe as the house finally showed itself to them, but Salazar quickly ushered them inside.

"Since mother died the house has fallen into a bad state of disrepair, but Kreacher has been doing what he can to get it clean." Sirius explained as they walked into the sitting room. "This will be where you live. An elf friend of Harry's has kindly taken all of your clothes from Malfoy Manor and brought them here. He also located your wands, which have been placed in the kitchen. Narcissa knows this house, so you should find your way around easily."

"We also know that you don't have any money, so the three of us have come together to provide you with fifty galleons a month." Godric said as he leaned against the door frame. "It will allow you to
buy food and other basic necessities. We will bring the galleons to you, and Kreacher has agreed to
do your shopping, seeing as it will be dangerous for you to go out."

"What of school supplies and things? Will I even go?" Draco asked as he glanced around the room.

"Yes, you will go, and since you are of my house I will take the responsibility of providing you with
your school supplies." Salazar replied. "You will have to stay in the Snake Pit though, because you
will not be safe in the common room."

"The Headmaster has decided to move me up a year as well, seeing as most of your former friends
are likely to be told by their parents to kill you. In a sense, I'm your babysitter."

"Way to break it gently Godric." Salazar said, rolling his eyes. "I swear, you're about as subtle as a
battering ram."

"Rowena always said I had that problem." He said with a grin.

"Bloody Gryffindor." Salazar said with a loud sigh. "Anyway, this is for your protection as well as
Blaise's. However, while you're in the Snake Pit, I suggest you keep a civil tongue in your head
when the Gryffindors go to visit. Emerald will likely try to bite you if you don't. She is especially
fond of Hermione, so watch what you say to her. As you know, the door to the Snake Pit is only
accessed by a snake speaking Parseltongue, but seeing as you don't understand it, I will need to take
some of your blood so that I can key you into the door. You will have to prick your finger every time
you want to go in. As a precaution, you will need to take the summer and learn the disillusionment
charm, so that your former friends don't figure out that it takes your blood to get in."

"We don't want them to try and obtain it, and we are assuming that your parents can teach the charm
to you." Godric said, glancing towards Narcissa and Lucius, who nodded. "Professor McGonagall
has already agreed to give your letter straight to me, so I will bring it to you, that way an owl won't
mysteriously disappear." He added.

"And when the time comes to buy school supplies, we will figure out a plan to get you to and from
Diagon Alley safely. I know you're going to need new robes, so however we disguise you, your
height and weight cannot be changed." Salazar said.

"Thank you for taking so many precautions to keep our son safe." Narcissa said as she breathed a
sigh of relief. "We were worried, because the Dark Lord was going to make Draco go back, and we
know that he was going to order Draco's former friends to ridicule him."

"Well with your escape, that is likely to change into something much worse." Salazar said with a
sigh. "We know it's risky, but because of OWLs, Draco has to go or he will miss them and likely not
be able to carry on into sixth and seventh year."

"You have my word that I will do everything in my power to keep him safe, but a lot of it is up to
Draco as well." Godric said, then he turned to Draco. "I can't protect you if you wander off and
attempt to do things on your own. Remember, your former friends are just as cunning as you are. If
they see an opportunity, they will take it."

"Indeed." Salazar agreed with a shake of his head. "It bothers me to no end at how my house has
turned out. I can't begin to list what all is wrong with it, but once this is all over, I will see to it that it
gets straightened out."

"You could always go the Gryffindor route and just knock some sense into everyone."

"Shut up Godric. I would never stoop that low." Salazar said with a chuckle, causing Sirius to burst
out laughing.

"Insulting slimy reptile." Godric grumbled.

"I honestly don't understand how you two coexist." Sirius chuckled. "It's mind boggling really."

"He's my best friend, so what can I do really?" Godric said, waving his hand in Salazar's direction.

"Not act like the Gryffindor that you so clearly are." Salazar laughed, causing Godric to grin at him.

"That would go against my nature."

"So it would." Salazar replied.

Sirius continued to laugh, but shook his head as he glanced at the Malfoys, whose eyes had been bouncing from one Founder to the other.

"All right." Sirius chuckled. "Getting back to why we are here. Narcissa, I know you know this house very well so you don't need a tour. I just want to let you know that I don't care about it, nor do I want anything in the house. If you want to keep something you see, that's fine. If you want to sell something to have a bit of extra money, I don't care. I hated this house when I was young, and I still do. I know I threw you out the family because of your husband's actions, and trust me, it goes against my better judgment to even help you, but I'm not that much of a heartless bastard. I'm only doing this because I don't want to see a child go through what he has been, even if that child is a snot nosed brat."

"We aren't going to try to change your way of thinking, nor are we going to force you to accept our beliefs on blood." Salazar said. "We also aren't going to make you fight for us, but my warnings from earlier still stand. Betray us, come against us, or get in our way, and you will not like the consequences."

"In all honesty, we are not worried about the two of you." Sirius said, pointing at Narcissa and Draco. "We are mostly concerned about you, Lucius. You're the kind of man that would kill a, seemingly, fourteen year old boy, as well as a twelve year old child, who both at the time were the same age as your own son. Lucky for us, Harry can't die and he was able to control the damage you caused with that stupid diary."

"As Slytherins, I know it is hard to place your life and well-being into the hands of another person, but you're going to have to trust me if you want to live." Salazar added, but then he glared at Lucius. "I know that in the graveyard I promised to kill you Mr. Malfoy. However, I now find myself having to eat those words, and trust me when I say, they are very bitter tasting." He said, curling his lip in disgust. "But I will still kill you if you betray our generosity. Make no mistake, I am a dark wizard, just not a Dark Lord, and I know how to kill you and dispose of you quietly without rousing suspicion or concern. Please remember that, and do not ever think you can trifle with me."

"With a thousand years comes not only life experience, but knowledge as well." Godric warned. "We are very good at what we can do."

"Is that why you can cast spells without them being seen?" Draco asked, looking at Godric curiously, and causing both his parents to raise an eyebrow at Godric in surprise.

"It's one of the reasons." Godric admitted with a smile. "But we should be off. Do any of you have any questions?"

"Yes." Narcissa replied. "How do we get in touch with you if we need to?"
"Just have Kreacher get Harry." Sirius replied.

"And I advise you to treat him with kindness." Salazar warned. "He is not a slave, he is a living being. Treat him well, and he will treat you well. Treat him horribly, and you deal with me. Isn't that right Sirius?"

Sirius let out a loud sigh. "Yes. I never want to sit through another lecture like that again though. I honestly felt like I was a little kid in trouble."

"You were. I am first, and foremost, a Professor. It's my job to teach, but I'm glad my lesson was, somewhat, well received." Salazar replied with a smirk, causing Godric to snort and Sirius to glare at him.

"Slytherins." Sirius said, rolling his eyes. "They always have to be a kill joy."

Salazar shot a stinging jinx at him, but Sirius leapt off the table he had been sitting on in order to avoid it. This caused Godric to laugh, and in the next moment, Sirius yelped as Godric nailed him in the leg with an unseen one.

Sirius glared at both Founders, who just stood there grinning. "Double teaming is not allowed." He said, causing Salazar and Godric to snort.

"Anyway, we best be off. If you need anything, just let us know. Oh, and I almost forgot. Nilrem has given us potions and instructions to leave with you, seeing as Mr. Malfoy has been placed under the torture curse many times. They will help with the after effects, and I suggest you get some rest." Godric said, looking towards the Malfoys, who nodded.

"Thank you all. Your mercy and generosity is more than we could have ever expected." Narcissa said with relief. "Thank you."

"You're welcome Mrs. Malfoy." Godric replied with a small smile.

And with that, Sirius, Godric, and Salazar apparated out, leaving the Malfoys alone.

"I don't trust them." Lucius announced immediately. "I don't like this, and it seems fishy."

"Lucius please don't do anything." Narcissa pleaded desperately. "I would rather they have our lives in their hands, than the Dark Lord. Please just don't do anything. Just let it all go. They have a reason to warn and threaten us. Your actions have been…"

"For the good of this family, as always." Lucius hissed. "I don't like the situation we have been forced into. No one does anything out of the goodness of their hearts."

"They do." Narcissa said with tears in her eyes as she motioned to the spot Sirius, Godric, and Salazar was just standing in. "We have to believe that."

"They want something. I know they do."

Narcissa shook her head, took a deep breath, and wiped the tears off her cheeks as she turned towards Draco.

"Come Draco, let's get washed and dressed properly. We need to find a room that you can make your own, and then you need to eat something. I'll have Kreacher start dinner soon, but you need a snack because we have hardly eaten anything in the last few weeks."
"Yes Mother." Draco replied, glancing nervously at his father, who they left standing there glaring around the house in disgust.

"What is this infernal spongey thing for?" Salazar grumbled, as he mashed the make-up sponge between his fingers.

"It's to smooth out the concealer so that it blends in." She replied, as she grinned at his reflection in the mirror. "I realized that we forgot them, and we also forgot to get make-up remover, and a good make-up brush too. Mrs. Weasley took me to get them yesterday while you were busy with the Malfoys."

It was late Friday morning, and they were in Salazar's flat, sitting at his desk with a large mirror placed in front of them. Hermione was patiently trying to explain the basics of applying muggle make-up, but Salazar was being rather difficult about everything.

However, 'Pierre Robillard' had a meeting with Albus in thirty minutes, so he needed to quickly get a handle on this because he was already running late this morning.

"This is too much." Salazar moaned as he glared at his reflection. "I did not think this all the way through."

"Oh stop being a baby Harry. You just need to learn how to do it right, that's all. Once you get the hang of it, it will go much faster and smoother. Here, take the concealer and place a very tiny bit on the sponge. Remember, a little goes a long way."

Glaring at himself again, Salazar sighed with exasperation and began to blend it all in, as per Hermione instructions. He still wasn't done though, and sighed as she handed him the make-up brush and powder.

"You don't want to use the powder puff because…"

"Powder puff?" He groaned.

"Just hush." She scolded. "Here use this brush to rub a little bit of powder on it. You don't want to use the puff because you will end up rubbing the concealer off if you use a heavy hand."

"What is the point of this powder?" He asked. "I don't see the need for it."

"You want to use the powder because the concealer makes your forehead look all shiny." She replied. "The powder will make it look more natural."

With more groaning, grumbling, and complaining, Salazar finally managed to get the powder blended in, and Hermione let him stand up, after doing a few touch ups to make sure that it was completely covered.

She studied him a bit as he stood there fidgeting, but after a moment she smiled.

"It looks good and you can't see it at all. Just remember, muggle make-up will wash and wear off, so keep checking it during the day, especially if it is hot and you start sweating. You should be fine today though, seeing as it's just an interview and won't take long. Just remember to not rub your forehead. You do that a lot, so you will have to break that habit."

He scowled a bit, but nodded. "I may have to invent a charm that will keep in place, unless I do some research to see if one has already been invented. I admit, beautifying charms are not something
I have spent any amount of time paying attention to."

"If you want I can spend some time in Flourish and Blotts looking for one while you're gone. I just need you to pop me down there."

Salazar shook his head. "No, it's too dangerous, and you will be alone. I don't want you snatched, cursed, or anything of the sort. I ticked Voldemort off yesterday, and I have not been able to get with Severus to see what the meeting was about after I left Malfoy Manor. We will go together after I get back though."

"Ok, but if Gordy or someone comes by, I'll see if I can get them to take me down there, so if I'm not here, I'll be there with them."

"That sounds fine." He grinned. "In the meantime, make yourself at home, and let's hope this infernal make-up stays put."

"I think you will be fine." She giggled. "Stop fretting."

"I also hope no one recognizes me in my adult form. That's something else I've been worried about too. There are paintings of me at Hogwarts you know." He said with a loud sigh. "I really didn't think this plan through."

"Oh for goodness sakes." Hermione chuckled, causing him to glare at her. "I really don't think they will. In your paintings, you are young, have black hair, and a long beard. Now you're older, bald, and have a short grey pointy beard. No one will make the connection. Gordy is the one that needs to be careful because he hasn't changed a bit from his paintings. You on the other hand, will be fine."

"Now I know why you ended up in Gryffindor, instead of Ravenclaw." He grumbled.

Hermione chuckled again. "You're going to be late for your interview Professor Robillard." She said with a cheeky grin. "You best be off."

Salazar scowled playfully at her, but then he chuckled, winked, and apparated.

When Salazar landed at the front gates of Hogwarts, he just had to chuckle. Godric had long since called off the lions, but the Aurors that had been assigned to watch Hogwarts were standing around the gates, checking everyone who came and went.

Apparently they were a tad bit skittish about entering the grounds.

After stating who he was and why he was there, the Aurors let him through with no problems, and Salazar began the long trek up the path to the castle. He grinned when he finally got to the front doors and stepped through them.

_I know you feel me my dear._ He thought. _I promised you that I would one day walk through those doors in my true form, and now I have._

He smiled as a slight wave of magic brushed against his cheek, but his breath nearly hitched in his throat when he recognized it as Helga's. Trying to fight back the tears that threatened to fall, he took a deep breath, steadied himself, and began making his way to the Headmaster's Tower.

When he knocked on Albus's door, he entered with a smile as Albus stood up and greeted him warmly.
"Mr. Robillard, I assume." He said, standing up and offering his hand.

"Indeed Mr. Dumbledore. It's a pleasure to meet you." Salazar replied just as warmly as he shook Albus's hand.

He took the offered seat, and gazed around the room in slight 'awe' as Albus studied him for a moment. Salazar finally focused his attention back on Albus though, and smiled once again.

"Please forgive me sir, I've never been to Hogwarts, and I must admit that it is breathtaking." He said with a slight smile.

Albus nodded as he glanced around his office. "Indeed it is. It often boggles my mind when I take the time to step back and actually appreciate it." He said with a twinkle in his eye. "I was going to ask about you and Hogwarts, because I must admit, I searched through our records and never came across your name, or the name Robillard. Can you tell me a bit about your background?"

Salazar smiled gently and nodded. "Of course sir. My mother was a muggle born, and my father was a muggle, but we never had the money to send me to school. My father did his best just to put food on the table, but during that time it was very hard because muggle World War II was taking place. My mother never attended Hogwarts either because her family also didn't have the money, but she taught me what she could. It wasn't until I met Salazar in my late teens that I really started to learn magic. I took all that he taught me to heart, and just fell in love with it all. I decided to become a tutor and teach those who were less fortunate, especially those who are in the same state as I was. I don't charge hardly a thing, seeing as my student's families don't have much to begin with, but I make do."

Albus nodded thoughtfully as he gazed at him for a moment. "And what made you agree to teach here this year?"

Salazar sighed heavily and shook his head. "Because of my firm stance on You-Know-Who's return, wizarding families don't want me to teach their children because they don't want me to make their children afraid. It seems the wizarding world is in denial over his return." He said shaking his head again. "If Salazar hadn't brought your predicament to my attention, I would have taught in a muggle school, which I have done in the past to make ends meet when there was work in the wizarding world for me. I am well versed in their mathematics and history, so I tend to lean towards those subjects when I work in the muggle world. I do prefer teaching magic though, because I love it so much. That is why I opted take Salazar's suggestion and apply for this post." He said with a smile.

Albus looked at him in amazement. "Very interesting. I've never had a Professor who has worked in both worlds before, and your explanation has set my mind at ease. In these perilous times we can't be too careful. Knowing that you have no aversion to teaching muggle borns, or muggles for that matter, makes me feel better. Do you have any Masters in any field of teaching?"

Salazar shook his head sadly. "No, I'm afraid that I don't, but I do have references from past families who I have taught, as well as letters from some of the muggles schools I have taught in. They of course, don't know about magic and thought I was applying to teach at a different muggle school." Salazar explained, as he reached into his bag and pulled out some forged pieces of paper that he and Merlin had worked on that morning.

He handed them to Albus, who took a few minutes to glance over them. All that Salazar had said really wasn't a lie though. In the past, he had in fact taught children who couldn't afford to go to Hogwarts, and when he had needed a change of scenery, he had taught history and math in muggle schools. Granted, it may have been a long while since he had actually taught in a muggle school, but it still made for a good cover and he was not above taking that advantage, even if the timeframe was a bit…fudged.
Once Albus was finished he glanced up at Salazar and nodded approvingly.

"These do seem to be in order." He said with a genuine smile. "I am more than willing to hire you Mr. Robillard. After all, you do come highly recommended by Salazar himself. However, despite that fact, and I do beg for your forgiveness, would you mind rolling up your left sleeve for me?"

Salazar was honestly shocked and surprised, but he did as Albus requested. He didn't blame Albus though, in fact, he was actually pleased Albus was making him do that.

Upon seeing that there was no Dark Mark on his arm, Albus breathed a small sigh of relief and nodded.

"Thank you so much. I do beg for your forgiveness if that seemed a little forward." Albus said.

"No forgiveness needed sir." Salazar replied truthfully. "If it set your mind at ease, then I'm happy to oblige."

"Well I do thank you, and I want to say, welcome to Hogwarts Professor Robillard." Albus said with a smile, causing Salazar's face to brighten happily. "Has Salazar told you anything beyond the fact that Voldemort has returned?"

"He has told me a little bit. I was curious about what life he landed in this time around, and he gave me brief details. I can't imagine having to kill off your own family line, or what toll that must take on him. I do think he's slightly insane to be honest, but I trust him, and Godric as well. If they say they can get it done, then I believe them." Salazar said, causing Albus to chuckle.

"I see." Albus nodded with a smile. "Has he told you anything about the Order?"

"A little, and I must say that I don't think it's for me because I really do prefer to concentrate on my students. However, I am more than willing to provide assistance if needed, and I will certainly support your endeavors with the project."

"I can respect that." Albus replied with a genuine smile. "I must tell you though, the Ministry will be here this year watching us closely, and they will be watching Defense against the Dark Arts even more so." He said with a weary sigh as he shook his head. "You may encounter a bit of hostility from the Ministry official, is that going to be alright?"

"Salazar warned me, and I am up to the challenge. I personally don't think it is right that they are sticking their nose in Hogwarts's business, but it's the Ministry, so what can we do except to play along?" Salazar said, rolling his eyes.

Albus outright laughed at that. "Indeed." He said with a smile. "Well Professor Robillard, how about I show you to your classroom and quarters? You can began moving your things in as soon as you're ready."

"That sounds lovely sir." Salazar said as he stood up.

"It's Albus." Albus said with a chuckle, causing Salazar to smile and nod.

"Then please call me Pierre."

"Certainly." Albus smiled.

He led Salazar down to the Defense classroom, which Remus had already cleared out, but thankfully had left behind information about where each year was in terms of lessons and the student's
individual abilities. Then Albus gave him a complete tour of the castle, while pointing out several common areas such as the great hall, the other Professors' classrooms and offices, and the hospital wing.

It was in there that caused Salazar to grin broadly behind Albus's back, seeing as both Poppy and Minerva were in there eating lunch and just chatting about things. They played their part well when they were introduced to 'Pierre Robillard', but Salazar knew he was going to get an earful from both witches later on.

They didn't run into anyone else though, and as the tour ended in entrance hall, Albus told him of several upcoming staff meetings that they hold over the summer holiday in order to be ready for the next term.

As Salazar left Hogwarts to begin getting himself ready to start this new 'dance', he sighed wearily. He had a lot on his plate. He was posing as two different people, leading three separate lives, and he desperately hoped he could keep it all straight, while trying to hold his sanity together in the process.

*A/N* Yes another one. I am very sorry. Before anyone yells at me about Salazar's cavalier attitude towards Voldy, trust me it will have its consequences. The reason Salazar was able to sneak around him was because Voldy was focused on his research and not paying attention to his surroundings. He also didn't think anyone would dare do what Salazar did, which is why there were no spells and things to alert him to intruders. (Malfoy Manor does have several protective enchantments on it after all.) Voldy will be more cautious in the future though, especially now that he knows Salazar can pop up at any moment.

Next chapter will be the summer wrap up and school will start. There isn't much more to say about summer, so it will be a half and half chapter. Umbridge will finally make her 'official' debut and Salazar's reaction should be pretty funny, so I hope you stay tuned!
A Dangerous Start

Chapter 54

The next five weeks were a whirlwind of activity at Camelot with everyone coming and going. Salazar spent most of his time with Godric teaching all the children everything they could. They managed to teach them to apparate safely, although Ron, Ginny, and Blaise managed to splinch themselves a few times. They weren't hurt badly enough to warrant a trip to St. Mungo's, but Poppy had a fit when Ginny lost three fingers and Blaise lost a foot. Ron only lost part of an eyebrow, some of his hair, and the tip of one of his fingers. With the help of Poppy though, the three of them were able to heal fairly quickly. Salazar and Godric didn't really need to teach Cedric to apparate, seeing as he already had his license, so the young man volunteered to continue working with Blaise, Ron, and Ginny on apparition, as the others moved on to other things.

They did not teach the children the Unforgivables because everyone felt like it was going a bit too far. Molly, Remus, and Minerva, who had been totally against it when the subject was first brought up, still held firm with their feelings on it, so Godric and Salazar finally let it go.

However, that didn't stop them from teaching the children two of Salazar's curses that he had invented. He taught them his own beheading curse and leg vanishing curse, as well as the bone crushing hex, knee reversal hex, instant scalping hex, finger removing jinx, impediment jinx, entrail expelling curse, conjunctivitis curse, and the blasting curse. All of these were practiced on transfigured rocks though, so that no one got hurt.

Godric worked with them on dueling, but before they started that, Salazar and Godric set up a duel between themselves to demonstrate exactly what they expected from the children. The whole Order had shown up for that one because it was one of their nastier duels. Merlin had temporarily charmed the front walls of Camelot to be see through, so everyone could watch them safely while they dueled outside.

It lasted for a full hour and Godric won the duel, but only just barely. They had started out with wands, only to finish the last fifteen minutes without them, much to the awe of everyone in the Order. However, they were so beaten up from the damage that they had inflicted on each other, that Poppy threw another fit and ordered them to bed for the next three days.

After Salazar and Godric healed, they got right back to work with the children. The children didn't use any of the nastier hexes they had been taught previously, but they used the stinging jinx and stunning spell to work on their dueling speed and techniques. Sirius helped a lot with this, as did Moody, Tonks, and Merlin.
Speaking of Merlin, Albus had proposed a friendly duel to the seventeen hundred year old wizard, and everyone showed up once again to watch it. That duel only lasted twenty minutes before Albus found himself on his bum, but he had grinned at Merlin and graciously admitted defeat. Everyone, including Albus, suspected that Merlin had put on a good show and had let Albus nail him with a few hexes, but he denied it.

After that, everyone, including the children, wanted a go at the ancient wizard, who graciously and humbly wiped the floor with all of them, but it was enough to make everyone grin and laugh.

They had, after all, dueled the Merlin Ambrosius.

It had been a grueling last five weeks of summer, but the children worked hard and practiced every waking moment. For Salazar though, it wasn't filled with just teaching. He had managed to find time to get his classroom and quarters arranged to his liking, and he found time to talk with the Potters via the mirrors.

Harry was disappointed that Salazar and Godric couldn't visit for his birthday, but the lad understood why. Harry had grown up so much though, and since he was fifteen now, it seemed he had changed almost overnight. He was no longer the eleven year old who sat staring starry eyed as he listened to stories about Hogwarts and days gone by, instead he wanted to talk about girls and pranks. Salazar listened to him talk and couldn't help but chuckle.

Harry seemed disappointed though. He had hoped to one day be able to come home to the U.K. and go to Hogwarts. He loved The South American School of Wizardry, but according to Harry, it wasn't the same as the stories he had been told over the years. He liked his friends, but all the stories about Hogwarts just made him want to come back where he belonged. He wanted to roam the halls and play pranks there just like his (very) great grandfather, father, godfather, and 'uncles'. He also wanted to get to know Blaise, Hermione, Neville, and the twins better. He was tired of living a secret life where no one really knew him, and he just wanted to be normal for a change.

Salazar's heart went out to the lad, because he told Harry that that may never happen, seeing as the lad only had three years of school left. However, Salazar told him a lot could happen in three years. They had found five of Voldemort's horcruxes, and maybe if they could pinpoint and destroy the last two, they could kill him and get the whole thing over with. Then Harry could come home to where he belonged.

Harry admitted that he hoped so.

It was three days until school started, and everyone had gathered for the last Order meeting of the summer holiday. Amelia was reporting that Fudge had been disappointed that Potter had not been spotted and captured during the back to school shopping days, but he was optimistic that the boy would be caught soon.

This made Salazar chuckle as he remembered that day. He had wandered around Diagon Alley in his adult form as everyone went about their shopping. He even stopped to talk to a few Aurors about why they were there, which had only made him grin as he wished them luck in their endeavor.

The shopping had gone off without a hitch though. Salazar had given money to Minerva, who had escorted Draco around to get his things. They had disguised Draco as best they could, considering his height and weight couldn't be changed due to having to buy robes. They did change his hair and eye color to brown, and this seemed to work out ok. Minerva had polyjuiced herself to look like a random muggle, so that helped them blend into the crowd better.
Seeing as her parents were off to wherever Perenelle and Nicholas had sent them, Hermione had no money for her supplies either, so Godric took care of that by giving her galleons. Hermione had been a bit embarrassed because that was the one thing she had not thought about, but Godric assured her that it was fine.

Salazar was suddenly snapped out of his thoughts as Godric lightly nudged him, and whispered that he needed to pay attention.

"We just want to thank you all for the funding." Fred was saying with a happy grin. "We are done with the headless hats, and they should hold up in battle situations just fine."

"These are really interesting Mr. Weasley." Albus said with a smile, as he put the hat on.

Everyone grinned as the hat and Albus's head disappeared, and when he pulled it off, everything reappeared again.

"Very unique and ingenious if I may say." Albus continued with an even bigger smile. "It will help our members in battle, and they won't be recognized by the Death Eaters, which should limit their ability to threaten our families and friends."

George grinned at him. "We are also working on importing Peruvian Instant Darkness Powder, but we need to get paperwork drawn up and signed by the proper people in the Ministry. We are thinking this could help with an escape, should it be needed."

"We are also working on shielded clothing too, such as gloves and cloaks. It will work in the same manner as the headless hats, but instead of being invisible, you'll be shielded." Fred said. "We know that everyone can cast the shield charm, but in battle there is always someone trying to curse your back, so these items should help defend you against that. They will work just like a normal shield though, and won't protect against nastier things like the Unforgivables and such."

"We just need to work out all the details." George added. "We were going to do that first, but remaining anonymous seemed to be more important, especially since, as Fred said, we can all cast pretty decent shield charms."

"That's very interesting." Amelia said with an approving nod. "What made you think of shielded clothing?"

Fred and George grinned at her. "Constant vigilance!" They shouted together, which caused everyone to glance at Moody and burst out laughing.

"Well, I'm glad my harping about that finally paid off." Moody said with chuckle. "Good work lads."

Albus looked around at everyone and smiled happily. "Very good everyone. I am pleased that everything seems to be working out rather well. With that, I do believe that this meeting has concluded. Term starts in three days, so if you need anything from those of us who are at Hogwarts, just let us know."

"Any word on who the Ministry official will be?" Salazar asked, looking around the table.

Everyone shook their heads, but Amelia spoke up. "I think Fudge is purposefully keeping it tightly under wraps. My guess is we will not know until the day term starts. All we have been told is what has already been said. Which is, that there will be someone there watching you closely."

Albus sighed with disappointment. "Very well. All right then. Until next Sat..."
Severus suddenly hissed loudly with pain, and grasped his left forearm. All eyes shot towards him, and everyone looked slightly nervous.

"Tell him whatever you need to lad." Merlin said calmly. "It will be alright."

Severus nodded and glanced at Salazar, who nodded very slightly. Salazar knew that Voldemort wanted to know if Severus had found out anything about the Malfoys. The meeting he called shortly after they had been rescued mostly consisted of Voldemort shouting about meddlesome ancestors, but he had also asked Severus specifically about Salazar's password portkey, though at the time, Severus had told him he wasn't sure.

However, just as Severus stood up to leave, an elf appeared with a sudden violent crack.

"Nasty Master, Mr. Salazar, we have a problem." Kreacher said, as he wrung his hands together tightly.

"Severus go, and please bring back word as soon as you can." Albus said as he jumped up.

"Godric and I will go to the Malfoy's hide out. Sirius you stay here incase it's a trap." Salazar said as he jumped out his seat.

"If this is what I believe it to be," Merlin said as he stood. "We need to bring Draco and Narcissa to Camelot immediately. I feel they are in grave danger."

"Is this something you have foreseen?" Trelawney gasped.

"I believe so." Merlin said with a nod. "Go quickly, all of you."

"Dobby!" Salazar yelled, just as Severus hurried out the door.

Dobby appeared with a crack, but as soon as he saw Salazar's worried face, he stared at him without saying his usual happy greeting.

"Dobby, Kreacher, I need you to work together. Get all of Draco and Narcissa's things out of their safe house, and bring it all here please."

Dobby nodded and vanished, but Kreacher turned to look at Sirius, who also nodded.

"What Harry said, and hurry." He said, with slight panic. "Winky!"

With a nod, Kreacher disapparated, along with Godric and Salazar, just as Winky popped in.

"Yes Master Sirius?" She asked looking around with wide eyes.

"I know you getting everything settled at Hogwarts after the move, but I need you to do something else. It's an emergency." He said, and explained that he wanted her to help Dobby and Kreacher.

After she left, Albus looked around the table. "Perhaps we should all stick around for a while." He said, which caused everyone to nod.

"Do we really want Mrs. Malfoy and Draco here though?" Blaise asked nervously.

Merlin smiled at the young lad. "Narcissa is not innocent of her past actions and feelings, but I believe she has had a true change of heart. Draco, I feel, is learning, but he's not quite there yet. In the future however, they both may become very valuable, so please treat them kindly while they are here."
"So why didn't we bring them here to begin with?" Hermione asked.

"Because Hermione, some things have to happen in order for certain things to come into play in the future." Merlin said mysteriously, causing her to furrow her brow in confusion.

Perenelle chuckled. "My dear, if it is one thing we have learned, it is...you'll never get a straight answer about the future from a seer." She said, causing Merlin to laugh and Trelawney to look slightly insulted.

As Severus landed at the place he was called to, he chuckled slightly. Apparently Voldemort had decided to take up residence in the Parkinson's house. It wasn't as big as Malfoy Manor, but it was still a decent size house. He was greeted at the door by a delighted looking David Parkinson, and shown to a large dining room by his daughter, Pansy, who also looked equally pleased about their current state. Severus's heart filled with disgust though, as Pansy grinned up at him.

"It's such an honor for the Dark Lord to be here Professor Snape. We are truly happy to be counted so worthy." She said happily.

Severus only nodded at her as he entered the dining room, but as his eyes scanned the room, he was slightly startled to see Lucius bowing down before Voldemort, who looked murderous as he glared at the blond headed man.

As everyone took their turn to bow, Voldemort's eyes never left Malfoy, and it was only after everyone had settled in that he spoke.

"Lucius, you dare to come so freely? I thought you had switched sides." He said coldly.

"My Lord," Lucius said bowing his head. "I was held prisoner just after we were kidnapped from your presence. It has only been since this formal call for all of us to appear before you that I have been able to come."

"And your wife and spawn Lucius?" Voldemort hissed.

Lucius scowled fiercely. "Over the last five weeks, Narcissa has proven herself to be unworthy of me. She has adamantly demanded that I switch sides, but I told her that was never an option. I refuse to obey those meddlesome, muggle loving fools, and I do not wish to take part in their schemes against you. I despise everything they stand for, work towards, and I refuse to obey their orders and threats."

"And where is the dead body of your wife Lucius? Did you bring it to me?"

Lucius hesitated a moment, but then he shook his head. "It did not occur to me to kill her, but if that is what you wish me to do in order to prove my undying loyalty, then I shall do so."

"And your son?" Voldemort asked.

"He is his mother's child, and over these last few weeks has showed signs of his disloyalty as well. If you wish me to kill them both, I shall do so. I can find another, more worthy wife, and birth a worthy heir." Lucius said firmly.

Voldemort leaned back in his seat and studied him for a moment. "Very well Lucius. Bring me their dead bodies, and I shall forgive you."

"Absolutely My Lord."
"Did anyone see you leave your safe house Lucius?" Severus asked coldly as he tried to refrain from killing the man where he sat. "Because I know for a fact that the elf has been watching you."

"I ordered that stupid elf not to say anything." Lucius spat.

"You are so foolish Lucius. You didn't take into account that the elf doesn't answer to you. You are not its Master." Severus replied calmly, but then he turned to Voldemort. "My Lord, I have been able to uncover the fact that it was Black's elf that had been watching the Malfoys." He lied, knowing that he needed to protect Dobby. He knew that if Lucius caught on that Dobby had been obliviated from his mind, that he could still call out for 'my elf' and Dobby would be forced to appear to Lucius. Severus continued though, and chose his words carefully.

"The elf, Kreacher I believe, was ordered by Black to spy on the Malfoys, which is how Potter was alerted to their situation to begin with, and how Potter was able to get past Malfoy Manor's protective wards. Despite being thrown out of the family, Narcissa still has direct Black blood running through her veins. Which, as any of you with elves know, still allows family elves to gain access to those family members."

Voldemort's eyes bounced around the table as everyone muttered that he was correct, but then he nodded at Severus. "And you believe that Narcissa and Draco have already been moved."

"I am fairly certain My Lord. I was told by Dumbledore that they were under a Fidelius Charm with Potter as secret keeper." Severus said as he bowed his head. "As soon as Lucius left, I'm sure that elf hopped right over to Black and Potter to tell them that Lucius answered your call."

"Very well." Voldemort said with a nod. "I will recant my earlier order to kill Lucius, but the order to kill his wife and son still stand. Bring me their dead bodies, and you will be rewarded."

"Should be easy for Severus to kill Draco." Yaxley laughed.

Severus rolled his eyes. "Not under the watchful eye of Dumbledore and Roffin, but yes, let's have Severus kill him and get thrown out of the Order." He said sarcastically.

Voldemort chuckled. "Your sarcasm is always amusing Severus. However, you are correct. You are not to make a move against Draco, for I am certain that you will lose your place in the Order if you do."

"Of course My Lord." Severus said, as he breathed a small sigh of relief.

"Have you uncovered anything else? Anything about Potter's portkey password?" Voldemort asked.

Severus nodded. "I do have something. I know for a fact that Potter loves mind games. It was my first instinct to believe he was trying to…shall we say…mess with your head My Lord."

"Mess with my head? He dares." Voldemort hissed, as he fingered his wand and stared at the ceiling.

"Yes My Lord. Potter takes great pleasure in messing with people's heads. He will say and do little things to make you doubt yourself and those around you. However, despite that, I believe that he was being direct in that instance." Severus said, as he kept his eyes alert and on the man's wand.

"His portkey password was Merlin's house." Voldemort said as he glared at Severus. "Are you telling me that was true?"

"I believe so. I was told by Dumbledore, without Potter and Roffin present, that there is a man that Roffin and Potter go to and get advice from, and that this man is centuries older than both of them. I
went ahead and took the liberty to look into it further. We already know that Merlin was taught at Hogwarts and that he was a Slytherin, but what we all fail to realize is that Merlin would have been around six or seven hundred years old by that time. I had to greatly lower myself and actually go into a muggle library to find the information that I needed. I found out that the muggles claim that Merlin fought with the muggle King Arthur centuries before Hogwarts was ever created. Merlin would have had to be immortal himself by that time, and he likely came to Hogwarts as a reincarnated child during the Founders' time."

"It's just stupid muggles." Crabbe scoffed. "What do they know?"

"In this instance, a lot." Severus said as he glared at the man. "They claim its myth and legend, but what they say is true."

"I have to agree with Severus." Voldemort said. "While I dislike muggles and everything they do, they oftentimes have information that we do not. I have actually read their stories about myths, legends, and magic. In most cases, what they pass off as myth and legend ends up being true. It's what makes muggles so dangerous. If they were to ever find out that magic is real, they would start looking into their myths and legends, and we would be even more vulnerable. It's why they all must die." He hissed with loathing.

"So which child at Hogwarts is Merlin?" Parkinson asked in disbelief.

"He's not a child at Hogwarts, he's a fully grown man." Severus corrected. "My Lord, do you recall the book Potter 'found' in the Slytherin common room during his first year?"

"I do," Voldemort said, looking at him curiously.

"In that book, Salazar Slytherin said he was looking for a way to live forever. While it doesn't say how he achieved it, it did mention Merlin quite a few times. If Merlin was already immortal when he came to Hogwarts, it's safe to say that Merlin himself still lives, and that could be the man that Dumbledore said they look up to."

"I want your copy of that book Severus. You still have it I assume?"

"Of course My Lord." He nodded.

"Merlin, Salazar Slytherin, and Godric Gryffindor?" Lucius asked in disbelief, as he paled drastically.

"Yes, I believe we are dealing with all three of them." Severus said as he glared at Lucius.

"Find out for certain Severus. If we are dealing with Merlin, I want to know for sure."

"Yes My Lord."

"My Lord! I just thought of something!" Yaxley exclaimed suddenly.

"What is it?" Voldemort said, looking highly annoyed with the wizard.

"That Nilrem fellow. Dumbledore's letter about Potter that was printed in the Daily Prophet said that Nilrem was Merlin spelled backwards." He answered in a great rush.

Voldemort stared at the man for a moment, then he nodded. "Indeed, I now recall that tidbit of information. Severus, have you have seen this man?"
"Yes I have my Lord."

"As have I." Lucius said with wide eyes. "He was there the day we were kidnapped from your presence. They took us to the house in Godric's Hollow. Dumbledore, Black, Nilrem, and Moody were there, and Potter arrived shortly thereafter. They threatened us, and said that the damage we saw is what happens when you find someone. Potter even pointed out where the body of James Potter lay on the stairs, and he showed us where that mudblood died. He also said that he would tell you where to find us if he went against his wishes." Lucius scoffed.

"Did it ever occur to you that you have done exactly what Potter wanted you to do?" Severus asked as he glared at the man. "Potter knows that Narcissa and Draco can be swayed. He knows the love Narcissa has for the boy, and he knows that Draco will follow his mother everywhere. You on the other hand, he doesn't care about, and you have likely fallen into a trap." He said with loathing.

"Don't be daft Severus!" Lucius spat, but then he smirked as he turned to Voldemort, who was watching them both carefully. "My Lord, I am pleased to inform you that while we were in Godric's Hollow, Potter let slip that he placed an old, obscure, out of date tracking charm on you. Its four hundred years old, and he smugly said that you would never find out about."

"You fool." Severus said as he shook his head. "Potter plays mind games. What part of that do you not understand? If he said that in front of you, he did it for a reason. You're not being tracked My Lord, Lucius probably is, and he has likely led them right to us." He said, trying to remain calm.

"Someone find me information about that tracking charm!" Voldemort shouted as he leapt out of his seat.

David Parkinson paled and instantly jumped out of his seat to go search his library, while everyone else began murmuring loudly.

"Lucius, if there is a tracking charm on me, then you are spared, but if it's on you..." He said, letting his voice trail off in warning.

Lucius paled even more. "P-P-Potter said it was undetectable." He stuttered, causing Voldemort to glare at him.

"I find it suspicious that even after the treatment I formally bestowed upon you that you would return to me so freely. Do you take me for a fool?" Voldemort asked, as he paced back and forth, and caressed his wand.

"N-No My Lord. I know that I deserved to be punished for what I did." He said, bowing his head low. "I returned to you on my own free will. I am not here to trick you, I am here to serve you."

"I find that hard to believe." Voldemort said, but then he turned to Severus. "You know Potter better than anyone here Severus. Tell me how he operates."

"He is a master at mind games, misdirection, and deception. For four years I have watched him run circles around Dumbledore. He had the man doing and believing one thing, and Potter would be doing another. All that happened in first year was Potter. It wasn't a spy, it was Potter. The hole in the castle's walls, the golden pillar, the Cerberus, and just all of it. In second year I watched him run more circles around the man as they dealt with the diary. Nilrem was a big part of second year, as was Roffin. Potter tamed the basilisk, because it was his basilisk, and because of the events of second year, in third year The Ghost of Ravenclaw Tower went right to him with information about the diadem. Fourth year he was able to thwart Lucius and his ill thought out plan to kill him. My Lord, the boy, man, or whatever he is, is very cunning indeed."
Voldemort stopped his pacing and looked at Severus closely. "You sound like you admire him, Severus." He said coldly.

Severus took a deep breath. "My Lord, I would be lying to you if I said I didn't." He said causing Voldemort's eyes to flicker with anger. "He is Slytherin. He is the very man we all have tried to mold ourselves after, but he's not you My Lord." Severus added, as he kept his voice steady and respectful. "You My Lord, have no weakness. You are not afraid to do what needs to be done. Potter the other hand, has a weakness, and he gets advice from Roffin, this Nilrem or Merlin, and Dumbledore. He listens to them. Potter has a weakness, we just need to find that, and exploit it."

Voldemort studied him thoughtfully for a moment. "Perhaps you are right Severus." He said, as he sat back down in his seat. "But are we doing what Potter wants us to do, or is this something he doesn't expect?"

"That I do not know My Lord." He said, still trying to keep his voice calm and even. "With Potter, anything is possible."

"So it is. I suspect that he wants me to do something drastic. He wants me to show myself to the world, so that he is able to walk about freely. I know the Ministry is doing everything they can to find him, but something tells me their efforts will fail because he is able to hide very well."

Voldemort said as he stood up and began pacing again. "He is using my own temper against me, that's why he keeps popping up at random moments to tease me. I must not give into that though. I must not." He mumbled, then he glanced at Severus. "What do you think Severus?"

Severus thought carefully before answering. "I think you are right My Lord. Potter enjoys humiliating those he opposes, and it would give him great pleasure if he were able to provoke you, and make you do things he wants you to do. Take Lucius for example." He said, motioning to the man. "He thoroughly enjoyed knowing that you called him New Wormtail. He found it hilarious, and he didn't care about how you treated him. He admitted that to me. He said, and I quote, 'I hope he kills Lucius, so that we don't have to worry about the idiot'."

"Then I must not do anything at all that will jeopardize my semi-quiet return, but we need to get our friends out of Azkaban. We just have to." Voldemort said as he, once again, sat back down. "I need more followers as well, and I don't know how to go about getting them without alerting the Ministry to my return."

"My Lord, I could help with Azkaban." Yaxley said. "We could use the Ministry against itself. We could whisper about Potter being the one who broke them out by using Dumbledore's own actions against the boy. Dumbledore told anyone who would listen that he was dark and dangerous. Potter escaped, so why shouldn't he be able to get the others out too? We could say that it's a ploy to try and get everyone to believe that you have returned."

"And the Ministry will believe that because they still wish to deny reality." Voldemort said with a nod. "I like that plan." He added as he gazed around the table. "Here is what we are going to do. Severus, I want you to find out for certain if this Nilrem man is Merlin. Yaxley, start getting Fudge to believe that Potter is capable of anything, and the rest of you find me something about that tracking charm. In the meantime I will think up ways of gaining more followers." He said, but then he glared at Lucius. "Burn down your Manor, go live in the woods, and forage for food Lucius. Do not come to me until I summon for you. I don't trust you, and I don't want you anywhere near me until I find something about that tracking charm."

Lucius gulped and paled. "Yes My Lord."

Voldemort scoffed at him. "You're lucky Potter wants me to kill you, or else you'd be dead already."
Hopefully you starve." He added as he turned to face the others. "I want Draco and Narcissa's dead bodies brought to me. Do this, and you will be rewarded. Now go and leave me to think."

Everyone murmured as they stood up to leave, but suddenly, a ball of flames erupted right in front of Voldemort. Nehum squawked loudly before dropping something off, then he disappeared as quickly as he had arrived. Everyone backed away from the object as it stood up to face a shocked Voldemort. Severus gritted his teeth, and bit the inside of his cheek as he tried to hold back his laughter.

It was a tiny animated pink Voldemort that was wearing red and gold stripped robes.

"Hello!" It exclaimed happily in a very high squeaky voice, as it waved vigorously at Voldemort. "I'm your friendly Voldemort, but you can call me Tom! I'm here to spread cheer and good tidings!"

Voldemort glared at the offensive thing with murder in his eyes, then he raised his wand and cried, "Bombarda!"

The tiny Voldemort skidded down the length of the table, but then it stood up and began to cough. Tiny Voldemort glared at a stunned big Voldemort, placed his hands on his hips, and began tapping his foot.

"Now that wasn't very nice Big Me!" It shouted as it waggled its finger at him. "You and I are going to be lifelong friends!"

Voldemort began doing everything he could think of to get rid of the nuisance, including hitting it with the killing curse and cruciatus curse, but nothing worked and it kept coming right back to him.

"Now why on earth would you try and get rid of your better half?" Tiny Voldemort said as it grinned up at Big Voldemort. "You are powerless against my good nature!" It cried happily, causing Voldemort to glare at him and grind his teeth with loathing.

Despite their Master's current bad mood, every Death Eater at the table fought to keep straight faces. However, when Tiny Voldemort tried to hold Big Voldemort's hand, Goyle Sr. snorted loudly.

"Crucio!" Voldemort shouted.

Goyle Sr. began screaming loudly, but tiny Voldemort began waving his arms frantically.

"Don't hurt him, don't hurt him!" It shouted as Voldemort stopped and glared at it. "How could you hurt someone who thinks I'm funny? Godric made me this way on purpose. He's a right friendly fellow, did you know that? It's one of the reasons why I have on wonderful red and gold striped robes!" He cried happily as he twirled around in circles.

"Get…away…from…me." Voldemort said through gritted teeth.

"I can't." Tiny Voldemort said with a shrug. "I'm bonded to you. It has something to do with blood magic, and Godric did something, but I don't really know what it was. All I know is that I love you!" It cried, throwing his arms wide open. Then it launched itself at Voldemort and latched onto his arm. "I go where you go, and you can't escape me. Isn't that wonderful!?"

"NO!" Voldemort roared as he began trying to fling the infuriating thing off of him. "Get out! All of you get out!" He screamed.

Every Death Eater promptly apparated.
Severus landed at Camelot and as soon as he made his way inside, he let loose with loud laughter. Albus, Merlin, Godric, and Salazar were standing in the foyer talking to Narcissa and Draco, and they all stared at him in confusion as Severus leaned against the door frame trying to regain his composure.

However, Fred and George came thundering down the stairs with shining eyes and grins plastered on their faces.

"Did he like our gift Professor?" They asked in unison.

Severus snorted as he tried to straighten up, but Fred looked at his brother. "Tiny Voldemort must have hit him with a cheering charm."

"Probably." George grinned, as Narcissa and Draco watched everything with wide eyes.

"That…was…you?" Severus gasped.

"Yeah." They said together as they grinned.

"What is going on?" Albus asked in confusion as he stared at Severus, then to Fred and George.

"Here Headmaster…just here." Severus gasped, pulling the memory out of his head and placing it in a jar Salazar quickly summoned.

Thirty minutes later every member of the Order emerged from Merlin's pensieve with tears of laughter pouring down their faces.

"Explain." Godric grinned, as Sirius continued to laugh hysterically.

"Well," Fred began as he wiped tears off his cheeks. "George and I just couldn't let go of the idea of a pink Voldemort, so we came up with this. It's why we kept asking you about the magic you used for the lions at Hogwarts."

"We studied everything we could find in Merlin's library about animating charms and how to make objects talk and stuff, and we finally came up with Tiny Voldemort." George said with a grin.

"He is the exact opposite of Big Voldemort." Fred snorted. "He only knows one spell though, and it's the cheering charm. Which is why we thought Professor Snape had been hit with one."

"We hope you can forgive us for using your name Gordy, and the fact that we used Nehum. We didn't know if Nehum would take it to him, but we took a shot and asked him. He grabbed Tiny Voldemort and off he went." George laughed.

Godric shook his head. "I'm not mad at all. In fact, I think it's hilarious." He chuckled.

"Well, he certainly knows we are trying to provoke him into making a drastic move. No doubt he thinks this is part of that." Salazar laughed.

"How can he get rid of it, and what was that bit about blood magic?" Molly asked with a slight scowl.

"It's nothing really." George admitted. "It's only a diversion to make Voldemort think that. It's actually a spell we found in Merlin's library that bonds objects to certain wizards."

Merlin chuckled as he nodded. "Yes, I'm familiar with that spell. It's not bad Molly, I assure you. Voldemort will not be able to get rid of Tiny Voldemort unless he starts to love it. To break that
spell, one must love the object that is bonded to them. The spell is a very old prank spell that was invented nearly eleven hundred years ago. It's quite ingenious really."

"And I am going to have to tell him all this." Severus said as he shook his head. "I'm going to get tortured."

"Only if you can't keep a straight face." Salazar chuckled, causing Severus to glare at him.

Molly huffed loudly and turned to the twins. "You should have cleared this with the rest of the Order!" She scolded, as he waggled her fingers at them.

That seemed to sober them up a minute, but Godric only laughed. "I think it will be alright Molly. We can say that I felt sorry for him because he's talking to a dead snake, so I wanted to give him a friend."

Salazar shook his head. "Only a Gryffindor." He said, causing Sirius to burst out laughing again.

Albus chuckled. "I agree that it should have been cleared with the rest of us, but what's done is done. Severus be careful when you explain it to him." He said, causing Severus to sigh loudly. Then Albus turned to the rest of the Order. "It is very late, and I think this night has concluded. I must see that Draco and Narcissa has settled in, and I'm afraid I will have to tell them the news about Lucius."

Everyone nodded a bit sadly at that statement, and they all began to leave. However, Salazar, Godric, and Merlin followed Albus out the room, and headed up the stairs to the rooms Draco and Narcissa had been shown to by one of the elves.

When they entered the already open door to Draco's room, Narcissa instantly stood up, while Draco looked at them fearfully from the bed.

"Narcissa," Albus began gently. "I'm afraid we have something that you need to be aware about." He said as he set the pensieve down on the nightstand.

"Is Lucius dead?" She asked with a hint of uninterested coldness in her voice.

"No," Albus said gently. "But what you need to know concerns yourself and Draco, and we feel you need to see Severus's entire memory of the meeting, so that it helps you better understand."

"Draco can see it as well?" She asked with a slight quiver.

"We think he should." Godric said softly. "Although I must warn you that one of your classmates' father gets tortured."

"Whose?" Draco asked in a quiet voice.

"Goyle." Salazar answered.

"I can do it Mum." He said with a nervous nod.

She nodded slightly and once again, they dived into the memory. When they all emerged again, Godric was trying to keep himself from laughing, while Salazar watched the two Malfoys carefully. Narcissa and Draco looked to have a mixture of amusement and fear on their faces. However, Narcissa look a deep shaky breath and sat heavily on the end of Draco's bed.

"I was afraid of this. I knew if he went back that our marriage was over. For the last few weeks he has done nothing but yell about being held prisoner. I told him we weren't, but he wouldn't listen. I
tried so hard to hang on to him, and persuade him to see my side of things, but he just wouldn't. When he answered the call tonight, I knew I'd never see him again." She said softly, as tears welled up in her eyes. "And now Lucius admits to loathing Draco and I, and the Dark Lord has officially ordered our deaths. He's after my child." She whispered in anguish, as the tears fell.

It was in that moment that the full weight of the situation fell on her, and she began sobbing loudly. It took a few minutes for her to calm down, but finally she looked at Salazar and continued.

"I know now, that this is how your mother felt. I'm so sorry Mr. Potter. I never understood what it meant to have the Dark Lord target you, and if your mother felt anything like I do right now, I'm so sorry that I wished him success. I'm so sorry that I felt such hatred towards you and your family. I'm so sorry." She sobbed, as she collapsed onto the floor in front of him. "Please forgive me. Please forgive Draco. I beg you."

Salazar bent down and gently took her hands. "I do, Mrs. Malfoy."

"As do I Cissy." A soft female voice said from the doorway.

They all turned around as Andromeda entered the room and rushed to her sister's side.

"Andy, Andy, Andy!" Narcissa sobbed as she clung to her older sibling for dear life.

"We will keep you and Draco safe Cissy." Andromeda whispered. "I promise. I never liked Lucius. You know I didn't. He cares for only himself. Lucius put on a good front and pretended to care, but now we know what kind of man he really is. He chose Voldemort over his family to save his own skin. I just want you to know that you have a home here, and later after school starts, you and I will go shopping together, just like we used to. We can disguise ourselves. It will be easy. You will be safe here, and Draco will be safe at Hogwarts. You'll see." She whispered fiercely, as she wrapped her arms tightly around Narcissa and tried to comfort her.

"I'm terrified to let Draco out of my sight." Narcissa sobbed, but then she looked up at Albus. "Can you really keep him safe?"

"We can." Albus said as he kneeled down next to her. "We have been doing many things this summer, one of which is working on the protective wards. Merlin has invented an anti-portkey ward, so no one can toss one at Draco, or any of the children for that matter. It has since been installed. Nicholas and Perenelle Flamel have created a stone that is tied to the wards. It will alert Godric, Salazar, and myself to any person who happens to turn into an animagi on the grounds. I admit it's not perfect because it doesn't stop animagi transformations, but it would hinder Minerva's teaching if we made one that stops it completely."

"And we already told you of the other precautions that we are taking." Godric said gently.

"I have also worked it out to where all fifth year Gryffindor and Slytherins will have the same classes. The reason for that is because every Professor will be able to keep an eye on all of the children, and so that Godric can also protect them. Older Slytherins will not hesitate to curse them if they are caught unawares." Albus explained. "I know that seems awkward, but the children in fifth year are less powerful than those in sixth and seventh year."

"It makes sense." Draco said quietly as he nodded. "Crabbe and Goyle aren't that intelligent, Pansy is a drama queen, Millicent is just as bad as Crabbe and Goyle, and Theo has always been the quiet one. He's really not into the whole blood thing, and I think he hates the fact his father is a Death Eater. He might be a closet neutral. The rest of our year is neutral though, like Daphne. It's the older ones like Montague we have to worry about."
"Can all the Professors be trusted though?" Narcissa asked. "What about Severus?"

"There are two new Professors this year, one of which is Sirius." Andromeda said. "He will teach Creatures, and one who Salazar himself recommended, and his name is Pierre Robillard. He will teach Defense. All of them can be trusted Cissy."

"As for Severus, we can't explain the situation, but we ask you to trust us about him. He is trustworthy." Salazar said, causing her to glance at him with wide eyes.

"The decision to send Draco back to Hogwarts is entirely up to you Narcissa." Albus said with a sympathetic smile.

Narcissa glanced at Draco, who nodded nervously. "Mum, I need to. It's OWLs year, and if I don't get my OWLs done, I can't move on to sixth and seventh. I'll need good grades in order to get a good job in the future."

"What about your life Draco?" She asked in a pleading tone.

"If we live through this Mother, what life will I have if I don't go back to school?" He asked quietly, as he stared at the bed covers.

She sighed heavily, but nodded. "All right Draco, but you do everything that Mr. Roffin and the Headmaster tells you to."

"Yes ma'am." He nodded, as he glanced at both of them.

Albus nodded. "All right then. It is very late, and I suggest that we all get some much needed rest."

No one disagreed with him as they all filed out, but they were slightly surprised when Narcissa said she would like to stay with Draco for the night. Salazar understood that she didn't want to leave Draco just yet, but he was slightly surprised when Narcissa asked Andromeda to stay with them. Andromeda did without hesitation though, which seemed to make Narcissa feel much better.

When Salazar arrived at his flat in Diagon Alley, he nearly collapsed onto his sofa with exhaustion. Dobby informed him that he, Winky, and Kreacher managed to get all of Draco and Narcissa's things out of Grimmauld Place, and to Camelot safely. Dobby also told him that Sirius had asked Kreacher to stay at Camelot and help look after the Malfoys, which Salazar admitted was a good idea.

The last thing they needed was for Lucius to go back to Grimmauld Place and kill the cranky elf.

The last two days of summer was slightly tense at Camelot due to Narcissa and Draco's presence, but Salazar knew that it was going to take time for everyone to adjust. After all, Narcissa and Draco were former enemies of just about everyone there.

Everyone attempted to make the best of it though.

Draco asked Merlin straight up if he was the real Merlin, and both Draco and his mother were shocked speechless when Merlin admitted that he was. It seemed to bring some sort of calmness and reassurance to Narcissa though, who finally seemed to relax a little bit.

It was tense between Molly and Narcissa, but Molly did her best to make Narcissa feel welcome, which Narcissa seemed to appreciate. They were friendly towards each other, but were not actual friends.
The only one Narcissa opened up to was Andromeda, which was understandable, seeing as they were sisters, but Andromeda told Salazar that Narcissa was coping as best she could. Narcissa was saddened over the fact she had lost Lucius, but Andromeda said Narcissa could handle it. Nothing was going to keep her from protecting Draco, and if Lucius ever made a move to kill her son, Narcissa would kill Lucius herself.

And Salazar knew she would, if given half a chance.

The day term started finally arrived, and Camelot was a flurry of activity. Trunks were stacked up in the foyer, and redheaded whirling dervishes were running around the castle grabbing last minute things.

It made Salazar chuckle just watching them.

Everyone had decided to leave for King's Cross from Camelot, so Cedric and his parents, along with Neville and his Gran, and Blaise and his mother were all standing around looking highly amused at the sight.

"Fred!" Blaise shouted. "Nora just said she's going to bite you if you don't hurry up!"

"That's right!" Nora shouted. "If you run past me again, I will bite you! Now get it together Minion!"

Salazar chuckled as he patted her head. "My dear, are you sure you're going to be all right this year?"

"I think so Speaker." She replied as she gazed up at him. "I can spend time pretty much wherever I want. If I want to stay in the Snake Pit with Jolly, Zabby, and Puny, I can, but if I want to stay in Gryffindor Tower with Bushy, Bottom, and the Minions, I can do that too. Are you sure YOU can cope without me?"

"I think I can manage." Salazar said with a smirk.

They had decided that Nora would split her time with the children, seeing as it would be highly suspicious if 'Professor Robillard' was seen with Nora hanging around him. Salazar knew it was going to be a slightly lonely year without her constant companionship, but he knew it was going to be all right. Besides, he knew he'd see her in class, seeing as the children were planning to do what Salazar had always done, which was allow her to sit on their desks.

"I'm sorry Nora." Fred gasped as he came to a stop in front of her. "I had to grab my potions kit."

She eyed him carefully. "You should have packed last night like the Banshee told you too." She scolded.

"I did." He grinned, as she flicked her tongue at him.

After Nora threatened to bite them again, everyone finally managed to gather together in the foyer and waited for last minute instructions.

"All right everybody, listen up!" Godric shouted over the noise, causing everyone to hush and listen. "If I don't make her priority number one, Nora will bite me. So with that said, whose taking her?"

"ME!" They all shouted together, making Nora lift her head proudly.

"I feel special, but I think I should go with Bushy. She could be a bigger target if someone should
"get...ideas." She announced.

Hermione grinned at her, and gently took her from Salazar.

"You have my full permission to bite anyone you need to Nora." Salazar said. "Just make sure to keep a sharp eye out."

"I will Speaker." She assured him, as she settled herself under Hermione's robe sleeve.

"Nora going with Hermione will work out the best anyway, seeing as she and Neville are Prefects." Merlin said with a nod. "Don't forget to keep a sharp eye out when you are walking the train. Send for Godric if you need too."

"Yes sir." Hermione and Neville chorused.

"Who are the Prefects for our year?" Draco asked curiously.

"Well, Neville and Hermione for Gryffindor." Salazar replied. "Susan Bones and Ernie Macmillan for Hufflepuff, Padma Patil and Anthony Goldstein for Ravenclaw, and because Severus has to play his part, Pansy and Theo for Slytherin."

Draco groaned and shook his head. "Of all the people, why Pansy? Why not Millicent, she's just a duffer." He said with a loud sigh. "At least Theo can somewhat reign Pansy in though. He doesn't like her much, and he only puts up with her."

"You think so?" Salazar asked, causing Draco to nod.

"Train is leaving soon." Moody growled impatiently.

"All right with that done," Godric said with a nod, "let's get going. Fred, George, and Cedric can apparate themselves, but Blaise, Hermione, Neville, Ron, and Ginny need to be seen with an adult. It would not be good if someone were to see you apparating there on your own. I'm going ahead with Nehum, so give me a ten minute head start. If you don't get a patronus from me, you all start heading in. There is probably going to be Aurors on the platform, so no one panic. Draco and Narcissa will be escorted by Merlin, and they will be the last to arrive."

"I'll be on the platform too, you just won't see me." Salazar announced. "The train leaves in thirty minutes, so you all come in at slightly different times."

"Constant vigilance!" Moody shouted, causing everyone to grin at him and nod.

"I'll see you all there!" Godric laughed, as he and Nehum left in a ball of flames.

Salazar disillusioned himself, and left in the same moment. When he arrived at King's Cross, he immediately began to scan the crowd. Godric was right though, the place was once again crawling with Aurors, but he saw Amelia seeing Susan onto the train. After her niece was safely on board, she began barking orders to Aurors and telling them to keep a sharp eye out for 'Harry Potter'.

Salazar chuckled, this hadn't been planned by the Order, but he was glad Amelia had taken it upon herself to do this.

Ten minutes later, Moody arrived with Hermione in tow and Godric ushered her on the train quickly. After that, one by one they all arrived, with the Weasleys arriving all together in a big group. Everyone's eyes were alert as they scanned the crowd, but and encouraging nod from Moody set their minds at ease instantly.
Salazar knew Moody could see him standing in a corner, but when an Auror went up to him, Salazar saw Moody shake his head. After the Auror walked away, Moody looked in Salazar's direction and smirked. Salazar only laughed, and was once again thankful that the old Auror was on their side.

Pretty soon it was time to leave, and as the train blew it's whistle and began pulling away from the platform, Salazar sighed heavily and silently wished them all a safe trip.

"Well that was highly uneventful." Hermione said with a relived sigh, as she plopped down in her seat.

"Yeah well, I've spelled the doors shut so no one can pop in without me undoing them." Godric said as he leaned against the door, watching everyone walk by.

"Are you going to stand up the whole time Gordy?" Blaise asked as he pulled a game of exploding snap out of his pocket.

"I'll split my time between this and sitting." He replied, as Fred passed the carriage and nodded.

"I still don't think it's safe for them out there." Hermione said with frown as she watched Fred head down the train.

"Fred, George, and Cedric have never sat with us before, but I think they will be all right." Godric said with a slightly worried expression. "Besides, with all of us stuffed up in here, there's no room for them anyway."

"Are they coming in after Neville and I leave for our Prefect meeting?" Hermione asked.

"I don't know." Godric said, as he narrowed his eyes at Montague, who stopped outside the doors.

He spotted Draco sitting in the compartment and glared at the blond, but Godric blocked his view and stared the seventh year down. Montague backed up a few steps, but then sneered at him before heading off down the train.

"Idiot." Ron said as he glared at the retreating Montague.

"One would think they'd know who you actually are Gordy." Ginny said.

"They probably do, but they are still going to test me." Godric replied. "Nora, I want you to sit on Hermione's shoulders when you are outside this compartment. That way you can watch her back. I don't want to take any chances. Neville, you walk in front of her at all times."

"Ok Jolly. I will watch Bushy's back. If I yell 'shield' be ready to turn and cast one."

"I will Nora." Hermione replied, as Nora began winding her way up to her neck and shoulders. "Oh my goodness you are heavy." She giggled, as Nora settled down and gently wrapped her tail around her neck.

"Speaker feeds me well. I'm not the little worm I was in first year." Nora replied with a bit of pride. "Speaker says I'm twenty-five inches long and very round for my species."

"If I said you were a bit fat, would you bite me?" Neville chuckled, causing Godric to laugh.

"No, because to a snake, being fat doesn't matter. I still have a deadly strike range and quick reflexes."
"Well that's good to know." Blaise grinned.

"What did she say?" Draco asked as he kept his eyes on Nora.

Blaise translated what she said, as Hermione and Neville got ready to leave. Godric finally opened the door when the coast was clear.

"If you see heat signatures, let them know. Someone could be disillusioned." Godric said, and Nora nodded.

"Wow, you guys really are paranoid." Draco said when Godric closed the door.

Godric grinned. "Better to be paranoid than dead."

"You sound like Moody." Blaise snorted, causing Godric to laugh and shake his head.

As Hermione and Neville made their way to the prefect cabin, they kept their eyes peeled. They made it there safely, but were met by a sneer from the Slytherin Prefects.

"That's Potter's snake Granger." One of the older Slytherin prefects announced. "Perhaps we should alert the Ministry that you have been in contact with him."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Harry gave Nora to Neville just before he was arrested last year. She's been with him ever since. This is the first time I've seen her all summer."

"Shut up you stupid girl." Nora warned, as she hissed loudly and glared at the prefect.

"Nora just warned you not to get to close. She's actually feeling a bit cranky today." Neville said.

"A mudblood with a snake protecting her. It's a bit odd, don't you think?" Pansy sneered.

Nora hissed loudly and lunged at the girl causing everyone to shriek, but Pansy was just a hair out of Nora's striking range. Pansy still jumped backwards though, and nearly landed in Susan's lap.

"Get off me Parkinson!" Susan snapped, pushing her back towards Nora, who hissed again as she got to close.

Pansy finally jumped up and moved to the other side of the compartment, but glared at everyone who snorted and laughed.

"A snake that doesn't like a Slytherin. It's a bit odd, don't you think?" Padma said with a smirk, causing everyone to laugh again. Then she turned to Nora. "Long time no see Miss Nora, how are you really feeling today?"

"Very well, I just wished I could have gotten her. It would have made my day." Nora replied, as Hermione laughed and translated.

The laughter was broken up by the entrance of the Head Boy and Girl, who were slightly startled by Nora's presence, but chose to ignore her, seeing as Nora was just as well known as Emeralda.

The meeting went fine after that, and all the new prefects were introduced. They were given schedules for their shifts, but apparently Albus had the good common sense to change things around this year. The Ravenclaw prefects were to patrol the dungeons during their nighttime shifts, while the Slytherins were to patrol the first floor only. Gryffindor was to patrol around Ravenclaw Tower, while Hufflepuff was to patrol around Gryffindor Tower.
Why this was suddenly mandated, no one knew, but most of them agreed that it was a good idea. It only made the Slytherins grit their teeth and glare at everyone, but one of the older Ravenclaws laughed and said it's because on one trusted them, to which everyone agreed.

After the train left, Salazar apparated to his flat, changed into his adult appearance and teaching robes, and apparated to Hogwarts in a somewhat good mood. Upon walking in the front doors however, he was instantly thrown into a bad mood as he caught sight of Albus, Minerva, Severus, and her standing in the entrance hall.

"Albus, I'm not sure I can allow a one thousand year old, sixty foot long basilisk to roam around the school." A high, sickly sweet voice said.

"Madam Umbridge, I assure you that Miss Emeralda will not cause trouble, with those who don't start trouble." Albus replied ominously, as Severus and Minerva glared daggers at the offensively pink cladded witch.

"It is Salazar Slytherin's basilisk." Severus said, upon seeing Salazar standing in front of the doors. "If you should make a spectacle of trying to remove it, I dare say there will be more than a few people who would disapprove."

Umbridge's eyes flicked to Severus and she smiled sweetly. "I shall let the matter go, for now." She said, as Emeralda, who was coiled up behind Albus, Minerva, and Severus, hissed loudly.

"Oh Pierre, there you are." Minerva said through gritted teeth, as she tried to maintain her composure. "You need to meet Madman Umbridge. She's the Ministry official that will be here this year."

"I see." Salazar replied, as his sharp grey eyes bored holes into Umbridge's head. "You're the woman who tried to murder a fourteen year old child, if I remember correctly."

Umbridge's eyes flickered with anger as Albus looked on with amusement.

"The boy was already a murder." Umbridge said.

"Unlikely." Salazar replied, causing Umbridge's eyes to narrow slightly.

Salazar knew that she knew that was the exact word 'Harry' used at his farce of a trial, but right now it was somewhat amusing to watch her squirm under his glare.

"And just who are you?" Umbridge asked sweetly as she tried to defuse the tension in the air.

"Pierre Robillard. I teach Defense against the Dark Arts. It's my first year here at Hogwarts." He said curtly.

"Oh please, please somebody let me eat her." Emeralda hissed softly, causing Albus to chuckle, and Salazar's lips to twitch in amusement.

It was all right though. 'Harry' had already told Albus that 'Pierre' could understand Parseltongue.

"I see, well you and I need to talk Professor Robillard because the Ministry wishes to discuss the seriously lacking standards regarding Defense."

"I assure you Madam," He sneered, causing Severus to smirk a bit, "that I am perfectly capable of teaching Defense. I don't need any help from the Ministry."
"Yes but…"

"But nothing." Salazar said, cutting across her. "If you wish to see my lesson plans, I shall happily give you a copy."

Umbridge glared at him for his insolence, but then she smiled again. "The Ministry wishes you to teach Defense a certain way." She said, pulling a stack of parchment from her ungodly pink bag. "Please look over this, and get with me if you have any questions. I realize that you already had the children buy their own textbook, but the Ministry has taken the liberty to provide textbooks of their own, and we wish you to teach from those instead. They are on your classroom desk."

Salazar took the stack of parchment from her and nodded curtly. "I'll look them over."

"See that you do." She said with a slight huff, and turned to walk off down into the dungeons.

"Perhaps I should escort her around." Albus said, giving Salazar an amused smile.

They watched him walk off, but Minerva sighed with irritation when they were out of earshot.

"Are you going to be ok?" She asked, looking at him with slight concern.

"I'll be fine, but she'll be lucky if I don't kill her before the year is over."

"Can I eat her Master?"

"If I kill her my dear, I will need your assistance to dispose of her remains." Salazar replied, as Severus translated for Minerva, who looked at him with wide eyes. "I want you to watch her as best you can, and I also want you to listen to conversations going on in the Slytherin common room."

"I understand Master."

"Are you really going to teach that nonsense?" Severus asked, motioning to the parchment in Salazar's hand. "She explained to us that the Ministry doesn't want the students to be taught practical defense, only theory."

Salazar looked revolted at the very thought. "Why would they do that?" He asked in shock.

"Because they think we are breeding an army to take over the Ministry." Minerva replied as her lips pressed into a thin line.

"That is the stupidest…" Salazar began, only to be cut off as Albus and Umbridge swiftly made their way back into the entrance hall.

"That so called 'Snake Pit' needs to go Albus. The Ministry can't condone such a secluded place. Who knows what those children will be up to down there." Umbridge said with a slight whine.

"Madam Umbridge, Harry and a friend built the Snake Pit last year, and I'm afraid Hogwarts herself sanctioned the work. I cannot get rid of it. As for 'what they are up to', I suspect that is why Harry and Mr. Roffin made the ceiling see through." Albus said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Yes well, Harry Potter is not here this year and I demand it be discontinued. Roffin, Malfoy, and Zabini will have to go back into their proper rooms in Slytherin House."

"Good luck getting Gordy Roffin to agree with that." Minerva said with a huff.

Umbridge scowled at her. "I see no reason for those children to be down there."
"With Voldemort back, those children are targets and they need to be kept safe." Salazar said, instantly causing Umbridge to glare at him.

"You-Know-Who is not back Professor Robillard, and I will not stand for such lies being spread. If you keep that up, I will have to write you a reprimand. I should warn you that three reprimands will have you losing your job." She said seriously.

"We shall see who is right about Voldemort in the end." Salazar replied nonchalantly, as he dismissed her threat with a wave of his hand. "Albus, Minerva, Severus, I will see you all at the feast. Apparently I have papers to toss in the rubbish bin." He said, waving the stack of parchment around.

Severus nodded, but Minerva and Albus smiled.

"Until this evening Pierre." Minerva said with a grin.

Salazar nodded, and headed up the main staircase as Umbridge glared after him.

"I can see now that Professor Robillard will be very difficult." Umbridge said as she turned to Albus. "Do remind your staff why I'm here."

"Of course." Albus said with a gentle smile that caused Minerva's lips to quirk slightly. "But I'm afraid I must warn you, Pierre has been taught by the best Defense against the Dark Arts Professor Hogwarts has ever seen. He is not likely to take kindly to anything the Ministry forces him to teach."

"And who would this Defense Professor be?" Umbridge inquired sweetly.

"My dear Madam Umbridge, you wouldn't believe me if I told you." Albus answered with a grin. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I must see that everything is ready for tonight."

And with that, Albus, Minerva, and Severus walked off in different directions, leaving Umbridge alone with Emerald. She hissed very loudly, which caused Umbridge to cry out in fright, and hurry off out the front doors.

When Salazar got to his office, he scowled at the foul papers in front of him, and shoved them roughly into his desk.

_Theory only. They are barmy._ He thought as he shook his head.

He knew this year was going to be tough, but with _that_ woman here, he was going to be hard pressed to keep his temper under control.

He chuckled to himself, but realized he needed to form a plan…and quickly. He knew he was likely to lose his job by the end of the year, and Godric was likely to get expelled, but they were just going to have to work around that. It's not like Salazar needed the money, or Godric needed the grades, but if the both of them could split Umbridge's attention, it would keep her focused on them instead of the other students and Professors.

It was a tentative plan at best, but it was the best he could come up with in such a short span of time, and he knew it was likely to change as the year wore on.

When the evening rolled around, Salazar finally came out of his office and entered the great hall. The train had just arrived, and he knew that soon the students would be entering the castle. He knew that
Godric and the children made it through the trip without incident, because they would have gotten a patronus if they hadn't.

However, as Godric entered with the children, Salazar knew something was terribly wrong. Godric was scowling fiercely, and the others looked less than pleased themselves. He glanced at Sirius and Severus, who were seated on either side of him, and down the table towards Albus, who seemed to be puzzled as well.

"What do you suppose is wrong?" Sirius whispered as he glanced at Salazar.

"I don't know." He replied.

"Perhaps we are about to find out." Severus said, as he very slightly motioned to the Creevey brothers who had just entered.

They did not look happy either, and Dennis was having a hard time restraining his older brother.

"HARRY POTTER IS NOT A LIAR OR A MURDERER YOU IDIOT!"

"YES HE IS, NOW SHUT UP CREEVEY!" A fourth year Ravenclaw bellowed.

"Well that explains everything." Sirius muttered darkly. "I wonder how wide spread that belief is?"

"We will find out one way or the other." Salazar sighed, but then he glanced at Severus, then back at the Creevey brothers. "Severus, Sirius and I are new here, perhaps you should…" Salazar said, just as a Hufflepuff boy jumped into the fist fight that had just broken out.

Severus sneered at him, but that only made Salazar chuckle. They had agreed on a professional, if not slightly friendly relationship. It would be a nice change of pace for the both of them, seeing as their past public relationship had been downright hostile.

Everyone at the staff table looked slightly amused as Severus swooped down like a bat on the fighting fourth years, who instantly broke apart and scattered after someone shouted 'Snape'. That however, didn't stop Severus from rounding them all up and hauling them out of the great hall.

They came back several minutes later looking on the verge of tears, but Severus had a smirk planted on his face, and that made both Sirius and Salazar snort loudly.

"Creevey had the audacity to yell at me about you being innocent, so I gave him detention every weekend this month." Severus whispered.

"You shouldn't be so hard on him." Salazar whispered back, causing Severus to smirk slightly.

"I wasn't." He drawled. "I could have made it until Christmas."

Salazar tried to hide a grin, but he failed as Sirius snorted once again. They quieted down and became somewhat serious as Minerva led the first years in.

Like she did every year, Minerva sat the stool and the Sorting Hat down, and backed away with a smile as the brim opened up. Only this time it didn't sing a song, instead it spoke a poem.

"Of the four there are the two of whom you must take heed,
Best friends they were, and brothers in arms, they went to whoever in need.
Ravenclaw would always say 'they can never be torn apart'.
And then one day Slytherin left, and it broke poor Gryffindor's heart.

When the snake returned, the lion sprang up, and they stood tall once more,

But it wasn't against each other, despite the myth and lore.

To those of you who are confused, just note this next fair warning,

For two of Hogwarts own are here, and they will be watching.

With lion claws and basilisk fangs, they are ready to catch their prey,

They will find out your secrets and disrupt your plans, no matter what others may say.

Hufflepuff would tell you, if she were here and standing,

'If you mess with the lion, the snake will strike, but you will never see him coming.'

For those of you who are innocent, you have nothing to fear or worry,

But beware Dark Lords and Ministry, for you will be truly sorry.

To those of you who think you are smarter, you better guess again,

They built this castle together, and know its secret whim.

I press upon all of you who dare to cast this aside,

Hogwarts has a motto, and it bodes ill for the coming dark tide."

The great hall was still and silent as everyone stared at the hat with wide eyes and shocked faces, but then they all jumped as the great hall's doors flew open. Emeralda came slithering in with Nehum and Fawkes perched on top of her head.

The poor first years looked absolutely terrified that they would be eaten, but Emeralda slithered towards the Gryffindor table in order make her way to the front, where she stopped and stretched out her large body in front of the head table. Fawkes and Nehum took a good look around the great hall, then they burst into a song full of harmony.

It didn't last long, but when they were done, both phoenixes took flight and circled the great hall in opposite directions, before disappearing in a ball of flames. Then they instantly reappeared on the shoulders of their respective companions.

Godric was grinning like the fool he was, and Albus's eyes were twinkling like mad as he stood up with Fawkes still perched on his shoulder.

"All hail the Shrew and Peacocks!" Nora suddenly shouted from the Gryffindor table, breaking the silence and causing those who understood her to burst out laughing.

Albus looked at her and chuckled loudly. "Well said Miss Nora. Now, I must say that was most unusual, but thank you to Fawkes, Nehum, and Miss Emeralda for that wonderful display of friendship and solidarity. To the Sorting Hat, thank you for your excellent and timely words of warning." He said with a smile, as Hat bowed its top in acknowledgement. "Minerva, I do believe we are ready to sort our first years now." He added with a nod as he sat back down.

She smiled and nodded at him, then she began to call out names from the parchment in her hand.
Despite that though, whispering broke out among all the tables, including the staff table.

"I think the hat basically just told everyone that you two are still alive." Siriu whispered.

"Yeah, but I think it will be alright. They don't know who we are exactly." Salazar said with a grin.

"I suppose that's true." Severus smirked. "But I guess I better look displeased at this news." He said, as he glared around the great hall, causing Salazar to chuckle lightly.

Once the sorting was finished, Minerva left with the stool and hat and when she arrived at her place at the head table, the feast started. Most were still talking about the hat's poem though, because Salazar could hear snatches of conversation coming from those students who were sitting closer to the head table.

"I think Slytherin is the basilisk, and Gryffindor is Dumbledore's phoenix. I bet they are animagi." One Ravenclaw said smugly.

"I heard a rumor that Slytherin lives below the school in a secret chamber. They say he is very old and frail." A Hufflepuff mentioned.

"What about what the hat said about Dark Lords and the Ministry? Could Potter be telling the truth?" A Gryffindor asked nervously.

On and on it went and Salazar couldn't help but chuckle, because none of the new rumors about him and Godric were true. It was really quite amusing to listen to. Once the feast was over, Albus stood up once again, and the great hall hushed instantly as all the food disappeared.

"Now that we have all enjoyed the feast, I must make the yearly announcements. I would like to remind all students that the Forbidden Forest is just that, forbidden. Also please be aware that there is no magic allowed in the corridors, and Mr. Filch, our caretaker, has a list of all banned items listed on his office door, should you find yourself inclined to take a look at it. With that said, there has been two changes in staffing this year. Hagrid had to go away for a short time, so in his place for gamekeeper, and Care of Magical Creatures Professor is Sirius Black!" Albus exclaimed happily, as Sirius stood up to take an over exaggerated bow, which caused Salazar to shake his head and grin.

The children and Godric let out loud whoops and whistles from their tables, while the other students clapped politely.

Albus chuckled and continued. "Next, I would like to say that Professor Lupin had to take some personal time off, so I am proud to introduce you to your new Defense against the Dark Arts Professor, Pierre Robillard!"

Salazar stood up with a crooked grin, and winked at each of the children as they stood up to cheer loudly. Albus started talking again though, as Salazar sat back down.

"I must warn you all that we have a new addition to our staff this year. She has been sent by the Ministry to make sure you are all learning as much as you can. Please welcome Madam Undersecretary to the Minister, Dolores Umbridge." Albus said, though he had lost the jovial tone he had carried before.

Salazar kept his eyes on Godric during this introduction, and he was not disappointed. Godric's head snapped angrily to Umbridge, and even at this distance he could see the fire blazing in his best friend's dark green eyes. Godric was at his trial, so he already knew who Umbridge was, but to have Albus announce it and make it official, seemed to set Godric on edge as he snarled in Umbridge's direction.
“Let me go Bushy! I'll bite her, I'll bite her! She tried to kill Speaker! Eat her Shrew! Get her!” Nora yelled, causing Salazar to jerk his head in her direction.

"Nora, NO!” Hermione screeched loudly, just as Nora managed to wiggle out of her grasp.

She fell with a flop onto the table and made a mad dash for the floor. No one tried to stop her though, seeing as Neville already tried and nearly got bit because of it. Nora however, wasn't about to be stopped.

Slithering faster than Salazar ever saw go before, he sat there in shock as she streaked around Emeraldal's tail, and headed right for Umbridge, who had stood up when she had been introduced.

Umbridge was standing in front of the head table now, and was glaring at Hermione, who had interrupted her when she yelled, but Umbridge caught sight of Nora barreling her way towards her. She yelped loudly and tried to back pedal, but slipped and fell on her bum.

Then she did the unthinkable as Nora continued to streak towards her.

"Avada Kedavra!” Umbridge yelled.

"NO!” Salazar bellowed, as the green light left the tip of Umbridge's wand. He jumped out of his seat, which sent his chair crashing to the floor, and vaulted over the head table.

Nehum was there in a flash though, and took the full brunt of the killing curse. Then he exploded into flames, and was reduced to ashes in an instant.

Nora stopped still in shock, but then she turned a murderous glare on Umbridge.

"You killed the Peacock!” She shouted, then she darted for Umbridge again.

Salazar was trying to get to her as fast as he could, but between Emeraldal thrashing this way and that, he slipped and fell on the end of her tail.

But panic gripped his insides as Umbridge frantically raised her wand again.

"Avada Kedavra!” She shouted.

Salazar was slipping and sliding all over Emeraldal trying to get to Nora, but it was Godric that caught the killing curse that time. More than a few people began screaming as he baseball slid between the curse and Nora, who had almost reached Umbridge.

Salazar could see the horror on everyone's faces the moment the killing curse hit Godric, but in the every next moment, Godric had twisted himself around, so that the killing bounced off him, and shot over everyone's heads and crashed into the back wall.

"Stupefy!” Salazar shouted, instantly stopping Nora, who was still trying to get to Umbridge.

The great hall fell silent as everyone stopped to catch their breath a moment, but when Godric stood up, and everyone's jaw dropped.

Godric was seething as he towered over a wide-eyed, trembling, and babbling Umbridge. Every window in the great hall began rattling ominously as Salazar, who had already scooped up Nora and put her in his pocket, began backing away from Godric slowly. In that same moment, everyone 'in the know’ took it as their cue to do the same.

Umbridge was still on the ground staring up at Godric, just as every window in the great hall
exploded outward when Godric started yelling at her.

"A KILLING CURSE? IN A ROOM FULL OF CHILDREN!? HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND YOU STUPID WOMAN!?" He bellowed. "Why didn't you have the good common sense to cast a stunner? Why would the killing curse be the first thing that pops into your stupid little brain!? ANSWER ME!"

"You...you were...you were..."

"HIT WITH IT? YES I KNOW! THANK YOU FOR POINTING OUT THE OBVIOUS!" He roared. "Is this what the Ministry has come to? They send sniveling, whining, murdering, crooked politicians to a school, where at the first sign of trouble their first instinct is to cast a killing curse!?"

"I-I thought that snake w-was..."

"Going to bite you!? Great conclusion you hideous woman. Nora is a snake! She would have bitten you, but you wouldn't have died! You have got to be the stupidest person I have ever seen in my life! It's no wonder why you wanted to murder Harry the first chance you got!"

Umbridge's eyes narrowed as she scrambled to her feet, and she suddenly took on an expression of pure loathing as she tried to straighten her robes and regain her composure.

"Now see here Mr....?"

"Roffin! And don't forget it you stupid witch!" Godric shouted, as he stood there with clinched fists.

"So you're Mr. Roffin." She said with deadly seriousness. "Well I think..."

"Shut up." Salazar suddenly said, causing Umbridge's eyes to snap to him. "You fail to see the real problem here, so don't get mad at him. You were the one stupid enough to cast a killing curse in a room full of children, not once, but twice. Luckily for Miss Nora, she has several friends who are willing to take one for her, but you fail to understand something."

"And what is that Professor Robillard?" She snapped.

"Your killing curse bounced off this young man." Salazar replied, as he stared right into her eyes.

The entire room became quiet, and in the next moment several people gasped, including Umbridge herself.

"I guess killing curses do bounce!" Godric shouted as he glared at her.

"I told you Harry was innocent!" Colin shouted from the Gryffindor table.

"Madam Umbridge, I think you should take what you have learned here tonight and alert the proper people. My Godson, if he isn't dead, should have his trial relooked at." Sirius said through gritted teeth as he glared at her.

Umbridge's eyes bounced all around the room. Most of the students were still staring around in shock, but the other Professors glared at the woman.

"I see what this is." Umbridge gasped, as she carefully inched her way around Salazar and Godric.

"This is a plot. Yes, this is a plot. You all confounded me and forced me to cast that curse."

"Are you mad!?!" Blaise suddenly yelled in disbelief.
"Stay quiet boy!" She snapped. "I was just set up. Yes, that's what it was. A set up! I'm going straight to Cornelius with this. Oh you better believe it. I will tell him you all tried to trick me!" She announced just as she ran out of the room.

"THE NERVE!?" Minerva suddenly shouted with rage, but she tried her best to calm down when Pomona nearly trounced on her foot.

"This concludes our Start-of-Term Feast. Prefects, see that your houses get to the common rooms. You are all dismissed." Albus said, somewhat angrily as he glared at the great hall's doors Umbridge had just dashed out of.

Nearly everyone stood in unison, and mumbling could be heard as everyone shuffled out the door. Godric got Draco and Blaise out of the great hall, but all of the Professors stood around and stared at each other in shock and anger.

Albus took a deep calming breath, and a part of Salazar felt like he should apologize on Nora's behalf, but he knew it wouldn't look right if 'Pierre' did it.

"Is Miss Nora all right?" Albus inquired with a tired sigh.

"Yes sir." Salazar replied. "She's stunned at the moment, but I'll try to bring her around and talk to her. Hopefully she'll listen to me and clam down."

"Very well." Albus said with a nod. "I don't know how well this is going to play out now, but we need to try and keep our heads this year. I do admit that Godric had a very valid point though. A stunner, not a killing curse, should have been her first thought. Let's keep our eyes and ears open this year, and we need to watch that woman closely."

Everyone nodded in agreement, and then they too, began shuffling out of the great hall.

Chapter End Notes

I am posting the next chapter right after this one, so refresh your page for it to show up, if it doesn't already! There is a reason and an explanation for everything.

The school year has officially begun, so we shall have to see how it plays out in the coming chapters. I know some of you might be angry with me about Tiny Voldemort, but I can honestly see the twins trying to prank him like that, and I hope you all can too.

Next chapter will feature a snippet of how Voldy is coping with Tiny Voldemort, so that should be pretty funny. Also it will have everyone's first class with Salazar as a Professor, and more reactions from Umbridge about the Start-of-Term Feast.
After what happened in the great hall, Albus called an emergency meeting of the Order. Everyone was raging mad over what happened, but no one was more upset than Amelia. She exploded at the stupidity of Umbridge using that curse in a room full of children, and literally had to be restrained as she attempted to leave and go arrest the idiot woman.
Unfortunately for Amelia though, stupidity was not a valid reason to arrest someone. While Umbridge's actions were extremely horrendous, she could not be arrested for them. According to the law, as long as the curse wasn't cast *at a human*, you couldn't be hauled off to prison, but wizards *could* still use it on animals, although it was highly frowned upon. Seeing as Nora is a snake, Umbridge couldn't be held accountable for trying to kill her with the curse, but as Hermione clearly pointed out, a human *was* hit.

This is where it got tricky though. Amelia couldn't arrest Umbridge for that because Godric wasn't dead, so there was no *evidence* that he had actually been hit. Not to mention, Umbridge was yelling about being tricked, confounded, and set up, so there was also that.

And of course, the fact that Umbridge was nearly untouchable because of who she was. There was no way Fudge was going to allow Umbridge's wand to be searched, so trying a reverse spell on it wasn't likely to be ordered.

There was also another problem too. Despite the many, many witnesses in the great hall that saw Godric get hit, he didn't die, and because of that, there were many ways in which the Ministry could spin what happened. The best Albus and the Professors could do was be the first to explain what happened, before the Ministry came up with an excuse.

Salazar was in a very bad mood when he woke up the next morning. He hadn't got much sleep the night before, due to the emergency meeting, and the fact he was nursing a wounded hand. Nora had bitten him when he woke her up, but thankfully he had the good common sense to get some anti-venom and bandages from Poppy, before he actually revived her.

When he woke Nora up, she was furious that she didn't get a chance to bite 'the pink toad'. Salazar talked to her and explained that she could *never* do that again, because Umbridge was not someone Nora wanted to play around with. The woman could, and probably would, order Nora to be killed. Nora grumbled a lot after that, but said that she would still find a way to bite her. Salazar threatened to lock her in the owlery if she did, and that is when he got bit.

Needless to say, it had been a dumb thing to say to the already cranky snake.

However, when Salazar walked into the great hall that morning, he was thrown into an even worse mood. Umbridge, Fudge, two Aurors, and Amelia, who looked to be on the verge of cursing Umbridge, was standing in front of the head table. An angry Albus and Minerva were there too, and both were desperately trying to keep their anger under control.

"As you can see Minister," Umbridge said with a sickly sweet smile, "when Mr. Roffin cast the shield charm, the curse bounced, sailed over everyone's head, and hit the back wall near the left side of the doors. You can see the mark from here." She said, pointing to the mark on the back wall.

"Ah yes I do see it now Dolores, thank you." Fudge said as he nodded vigorously.

"And what about the fact that it was a *killing curse*?" Albus asked angrily.

"Killing curses DO NOT bounce Dumbledore!" Fudge shouted.

"Yes they do! We all saw it!" Colin shouted from his seat at the Gryffindor table, where he had just sat down to eat his breakfast.

"No they don't!" Umbridge shouted, then she turned to address all the students. "In fact, we don't think it was the killing curse at all." She said smugly.
"WHAT!?!" Minerva shrieked loudly, nearly snapping her own wand in half as she tried not to hex the woman.

"You all set me up!" Umbridge said, as she pointed a stubby finger in Minerva's face. "I was set up. I was confunded to say the words, but we have concluded that what I really cast was the curse of the bogies. That hex is also the same color as the killing curse. That was the curse that really hit Mr. Roffin, then he cast a shield charm to make it bounce."

Salazar stood there opened mouthed and in shock, as was every other Professor in the great hall.

"How in the bloody hell can that pitiful excuse even be conceivable!?!" Salazar suddenly shouted. "You cannot confund someone to say one thing, and then have them cast something else entirely! The confundus charm does not work like that! Are you seriously THAT stupid!??"

"NOW SEE HERE!" Fudge roared, as he glared at Salazar. "I am the Minister for Magic…"

"I know who you are." Salazar sneered. "You're the idiot who threw a fourteen year old child into Azkaban. You're the arse who is putting our entire world in danger because you refuse to face the fact that VOLDEMORT IS BACK!"

"ENOUGH!" Umbridge cried. "I have already warned you once Professor Robillard, and I will NOT do it again. Such lies cannot be allowed to spread!"

"Listen up everyone! Can I have your attention please!?!" Fudge suddenly shouted, as he clapped his hands together to get all the students attention. "I am the Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, and we are here today to get to the bottom of the unfortunate events that took place last night. We know that you are very curious young people, so we are going to tell you right now the results of our investigation. Madam Umbridge was set up and forced into a very ill thought out plan devised by the Headmaster, and several of your Professors, to try and discredit the Ministry."

If it hadn't been for the fact that Albus grabbed Minerva's wand hand, Salazar was pretty sure the Minister would have received a stinging jinx to the face. As it was, Salazar himself stood beside Minerva, clenching and unclenching his fists in anger.

"We have concluded two possibilities." Umbridge said with a sweet, smug smile. "In both instances I was confunded, because I would never cast the killing curse under any circumstances, much less in a room full of children." She said with a huff, trying to draw herself up to her full height, which wasn't that much to be honest. "One possibility is that I was confunded to cast the first killing curse, which hit the phoenix, and then I was confunded again to cast it the second time, which MISSED Mr. Roffin completely, and hit the back wall." She said, once again pointing to the mark on the back wall.

"Now the second possibility, which we believe is the most likely because of the many eye witness statements that say the curse bounced off of Mr. Roffin. Fudge went on to say. "Is that Madam Umbridge was confunded to say the killing curse incantation, but actually cast the curse of the bogies, which is the same exact color of the killing curse. For example…Mucus ad Nauseam!" Fudge cried, sending the curse sailing towards the back wall, where it landed next to the killing curse mark, and caused a slightly smaller mark. Then he continued.

"The first green curse hit the phoenix, which conveniently had a Burning Day in that very moment to sell the curse as a killing curse, and…"

"WHAT!?!" A very loud, angry voice shouted. "A phoenix DOES NOT have a Burning Day whenever they desire!"
Salazar cringed, because Godric looked to be on the verge of casting his own killing curses at Fudge and Umbridge. Fudge glared at the red face Godric, but he continued as if he were never interrupted.

"...then the second green curse, which again was actually the curse of the bogies, hit Mr. Roffin, who cast a shield charm and MADE it bounce off of himself, and hit the back wall."

"As it was stated before," Umbridge said as she glanced triumphantly around the room. "This was all a set-up thought up by the Headmaster, who is trying to discredit the Ministry. He is trying to get you all to believe the LIE told by Harry Potter that a killing curse bounced off of him and hit Peter Pettigrew. They are trying to scare you into believing that You-Know-Who is back, but I say again...it is all lies!" She stated firmly, as she stomped her foot in anger.

"To me it sounds like the Ministry is trying to cover their arses with this stupid story. We know what we saw and heard!" Cedric shouted, as he stood up and glared at Fudge and Umbridge.

Salazar smirked as Fudge grew red in the face, but before he could say anything, Salazar thought of something.

"That young man is right!" Salazar suddenly shouted, as he pointed at Cedric, who grinned at him. "I encourage you all to read about the confundus charm, which is a very difficult and advanced charm. Read about what can and cannot be achieved with it. Then, I want you all to remember exactly what you saw happen last night, and then make up your own minds about who to believe." He said, causing Umbridge and Fudge to glare at him.

"An excellent suggestion!" Flitwick shouted. "If you desire, write up a six inch essay on what can and cannot be achieved with the confundus charm for extra credit. If you wish to receive this extra credit, have it on my desk no later than next Friday!"

"That killing curse bounced off of Gordy! We all saw it! Don't let them try to trick you!" Colin shouted. "Harry is innocent!"

"I have a question!" A Ravenclaw stood up to say. "I saw that curse bounce, and I did not see a shield go up. So if that was a killing curse, and it did hit Gordy, how did it bounce?"

*Good question.* Salazar instantly thought, as his eyes bounced from Godric to Albus.

Albus however, smiled as Fudge and Umbridge smirked at him.

"Miss Edgecombe, that is a very astute question, but I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to supply you with the answer. If ever the time comes when Harry and Mr. Roffin choose to divulge their secret of making the killing curse bounce, I can only hope it satisfies your curiosity."

"Dumbly, there might be some Slytherin in you after all. Next time I see Speaker, I will tell him what you said. I know he will laugh." Nora said, poking her head out of Salazar's pocket and causing Umbridge to scream loudly as she caught sight of her.

"That's the snake they tried to scare me with!" She yelled, jumping behind Fudge in order to use him as a shield.

"Yes I am you stupid fat toad, but I was not used in any way!" Nora hissed with loathing. "And one day I will bite you. You killed the Peacock!"

"Now Miss Nora, let's not have a repeat of last night. Do be careful." Salazar said as he glared at her. "And behave."
She hissed loudly, and turned her head away from him. "Careful, or I'll bite you again. Now, give me to Jolly because I don't want to talk to you anymore."

Salazar rolled his eyes, but handed her to Godric, who looked slightly amused at the tension between the two of them. Albus however, just kept on smiling.

He started to say something, but was cut off by Colin, who looked at Godric with pleading eyes.

"Gordy, please tell us. How did you make that killing curse," he emphasized as he glared at the Ministry officials, "bounce off of you?"

"Yes, do tell." Umbridge said with a smirk.

Godric glanced at her sharply, but then looked at Colin and softly shook his head. "Colin, I can't say. All I can do is promise you that one day you will know the truth, but it's not going to be today. Please trust me. Yes, Harry is innocent. Yes, that stupid woman and the entire Ministry is full of dragon dung, but the best we can do right now is let them hang themselves." He said as he smirked at Fudge, but then he continued.

"Do what Professor Robillard and Professor Flitwick suggested. Study the confundus charm and familiarize yourself with what it can, and cannot do. When the truth about Voldemort finally comes out, the Ministry, and all those who believe their rubbish, will be seen as the fools they are. So let them make up their harebrained excuses, let them tell their lies, and let all those who are stupid enough to believe them look like dumb arses. When the truth comes out, and it WILL, they will all be sorry that they didn't listen to us." He said firmly as he glared at Fudge again.

"Do you even know how you did it?" Luna asked as she stood firmly beside Colin, who looked so frustrated that he was nearly on the verge of tears.

"Yes I do Luna." Godric replied softly. "But I cannot tell you right now."

Luna looked at him for moment, but then she smiled. "Does it have anything to do with the fact that you are really Godric Gryffindor?"

Nearly everyone was thrown for a loop by that statement. Salazar stared her in shock, Albus's eyes were twinkling like mad and he was grinning, Severus stared at the girl with a sneer, Minerva gasped loudly, Fudge and Umbridge glared at her with narrowed eyes, and all the other students began whispering among themselves.

Godric, on the other hand, looked like a deer caught in headlights.

"Wha..." Godric started to say, but he was waved off by Luna, who smiled serenely at him.

"It's all right if you can't say, but it makes sense, doesn't it?" She said with a dreamy smile. "You call Harry Salazar, and he calls you Godric. Last night the Sorting Hat said that Slytherin and Gryffindor were here, and that they are watching out for us. I suspect that Harry is roaming around the castle somewhere, and we just can't see him. He did help build Hogwarts after all, so he knows all the secret hiding spots." She said as she gazed at him. "It's like the hat said, 'Hufflepuff would tell you, if she were here and standing, if you mess with the lion, the snake will strike, but you will never see him coming.' So that means Harry is here...somewhere. As for the bouncing killing curse though, I bet you two are immortals, and that's why it bounces off of you."

"Young lady that is the biggest load of tosh..." Fudge started to say, but he was cut off as Colin sharply glanced in his direction.
"Gordy, is what she said true?" He asked. "Please tell me something. Please. Are you really Godric Gryffindor?" He begged.

"Colin…I can't…please…" Godric stuttered, as he looked into the highly distraught face of the lad.

"Colin listen to me." Luna said calmly, as she took his face in his hands. "They can't say much because it will ruin everything. They have plans that they can't talk about. Come on, we need to finish breakfast, and after classes today, let's see if we can find Harry. I bet he's somewhere on the second floor. My guess is that he hangs out with Emeralda in the Chamber of Secrets. Let's you, me, and Dennis make it an adventure. Let's see if we can find the real entrance to the Chamber. We already know it exists because Emeralda uses the tunnel from the Snake Pit, but let's find the original entrance."

"An adventure." He said with wide eyes, but then he brightened up a little. "Yeah, let's find the real entrance to the Chamber. I really need to talk to Harry and see if he's ok. Do you think he is really Salazar Slytherin, and that Gordy is Godric Gryffindor? It does make sense though, just like you said."

"I think so." She said with a smile. "And maybe if we find Harry, we will find the dragon that's here too. Maybe it's in the Chamber with Emeralda and Harry."

"Dragon!?!" Colin exclaimed.

"Well yeah, you heard the hat. 'Hogwarts has a motto, and it bodes ill for the coming dark tide'. Hogwarts's motto is 'Never Tickle a Sleeping Dragon'. I suspect it's an enchanted sleep though…"

Their voices faded out as they began whispering to each other, but they left the adults, and every other student in the great hall, in a flabbergasted state of shock. However, Fudge turned to Albus, who was smiling as he gazed at the two fourth years, and glared at him.

"For those two children to believe that load of nonsense, makes me very suspicious about what you are teaching at this school Dumbledore." He said with a low dangerous voice. "Immortal Founders, bouncing killing curses, enchanted sleeping dragons…it's a load of tosh."

"It's more believable than the crap you came up with!" Cedric shouted, causing a few Hufflepuffs to nod in agreement.

"I really must say that I agree with Mr. Diggory." Albus said with a gracious smile. "However, I do believe that we have breakfast to be getting on with, and schedules to pass out. It has been a rather exciting start to the year, but now it's time for us to settle down and start learning. Shall I see you out Minister? I'm sure Madam Umbridge can fill you in on what happens next."

Fudge started sputtering loudly at being dismissed in such a fashion, but the Professors took that as their cue to scatter. Minerva, Severus, Pomona, and Filius began passing out schedules, while the others returned to their breakfast, or headed off to their classrooms.

Salazar chose the latter, seeing as he wasn't very hungry. As he walked towards his classroom though, he couldn't help but agree with what Godric had said.

Let the Ministry tell their lies, and let all of those who believe them look like fools in the end, because when Voldemort makes his move, they would be sorry. Salazar and the others would do everything in their power to convince as many people they could of the truth, but in the end, if they didn't have enough common sense to protect themselves, then Salazar wouldn't feel sorry for them if they died.
It's what they would get for being lemmings, and sticking their heads in the sand.

"...you take one down, you pass it around, there's forty-three bottles of butterbeer on the wall! Forty-three bottles of butterbeer on the wall, forty-three bottles of butterbeer, you take one down, you pass it around, there's forty-two bottles of butterbeer on the wall! Forty-two…"

"SHUT UP!"

"You know Big Me, it is such a shame that you have mutilated your soul to the point that cheering charms can't even work on you. You shouldn't have done that. It's not very healthy you know." Tiny Voldemort said, as he glared disapprovingly at his much bigger counterpart.

Voldemort gritted his teeth and tried to ignore the blasted thing. He was pretty sure that if his eyes weren't already red, that they would be blood-shot by now because he had spent the last few days trying to find a way to get rid of the infernal thing, and he had not slept at all. The Parkinson's library had not been very useful on how to get rid of it, but he had made them pay for that.

He had tried everything to get rid of it though. He tried apparating, only to find that it would show up a few minutes later. He tried running, only to find it running at an unnatural rate of speed next to him. He tried locking it in a room, only to have that fail because it somehow got out. He tried once again to blast the thing to smithereens, only for it to start laughing and cry, 'that tickles'.

Not even Fiendfyre worked on the bloody thing, and that was saying something!

In Voldemort's entire life he had never seen something so infuriating, insolent, aggravating, disrespectful, and cheeky. It mocked him, scolded him, talked back, and there was nothing he could do about it.

It had to go, it just had to, but he couldn't do anything to make it go away. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, he could find, and it was maddening. He couldn't kill it, couldn't torture it, couldn't out run it, and he hated it with a passion.

He was supposed to be planning an Azkaban breakout, thinking up ways to quietly gain more followers, and finding out how to kill his meddlesome ancestor, but this thing had come into his life and had disrupted all of that.

It…needed…to…go!

"Now look at what you made me do," Tiny Voldemort huffed. "I have forgotten where I was at. I guess I'll just have to start over." It said as it took a deep breath. "One-hundred bottles of butterbeer on the wall…"

Voldemort glared at it, gritted his teeth, and tried to ignore it once more.

"We can't let them get away with this." Hermione said with a scowl as she sat down at a study table in the Snake Pit. "How can they just come in here, make up blatant lies, and pretty much demand that we all believe them?"

It was late in the evening on the second day of classes, and she and Neville had just come in from their first official prefects meeting with all the Heads of House and Albus. Hermione was hopping mad though, because Umbridge had been there too, and she kept interrupting the Headmaster to give him ideas that the Ministry deemed to be better.
"Because they are the Ministry, and can pretty much do whatever they want." Godric said with a sigh, as he looked up from the book he had been reading.

"It's going to be so different without Harry here this year." Blaise said sadly.

"He's here." Godric said with a knowing grin. "We just can't see him, like Luna said."

"I still think you are Godric Gryffindor." She said offhandedly, as she worked on her extra credit charms essay.

"I am Luna."

Colin gasped loudly as he stared Godric. "Really!?" He exclaimed with wide eyes.

"Yes, I am, and I am so very sorry that I had to keep that secret from you, and I hope that you can forgive me." Godric replied as he looked at the young man sadly. "We couldn't tell the two of you because we need it to be kept very quiet, and the more people that know a secret, the more likely a chance the secret gets out. I really do hope you can forgive me."

"I'm friends with a Founder." Colin whispered, as his brain tried to process it.

"You're friends with two Founders Colin." Neville said with a grin.

"Harry is Salazar?" He asked, as his head snapped in Neville's direction.

"Yes, my friend. Harry is Salazar." Godric confirmed. "And I do hope you can forgive us."

"This is brilliant! Harry was always good at doing everything, and you are too!" The young man exclaimed happily as he gazed at Godric, who chuckled lightly.

"So is that why you were moved up a year?" Luna asked.

Godric nodded, and began telling them about everything, though he felt bad because he had to tell them the reincarnation rubbish. He even explained why Draco was with them now, but he left out a lot of the 'torturing the Malfoys' details.

Draco, who was also working on his extra credit charms essay, looked up from his parchment.

"Roffin, I don't get it. If the Dark Lord knows who you and Potter are, why not just come out with it? I mean, the hat pretty much told the whole school you both are alive."

"I do see your point Draco, but who besides all of us is going to believe it?" Godric asked. "Rita's on the run, and even if she agreed to write an article, the Daily Prophet isn't going to print it anyway. They have clamped down on all forms of mass communication, and are blocking the truth about everything. If they can't bring themselves to admit that Voldemort is back, claiming that Salazar and I are immortal Founders certainly isn't going to fair much better. You heard Fudge yesterday morning."

"Not to mention, if anyone did believe that you are who you say you are, then people are more likely to believe what Harry and Dumbledore have been saying all along, and that will make the Ministry look bad." Blaise said. "The Ministry won't stand for that."

"Besides, it's like Mr. Nilrem once said, if the public knew about Harry and Gordy they would become distracted." Hermione said. "They will want to know all about the two of you, and not pay attention to the real problem, which is Voldemort."
"But shouldn't we at least try?" Neville asked, looking around at everyone. "I mean, if even one person believes that Harry and Gordy are the Founders, and then becomes convinced that Voldemort is back, they will take precautions. That's a life saved."

Godric studied the young man for a moment, but then he nodded. "You're right Neville. If coming out with the truth about Salazar and I will save even one life, then it should happen."

"But there is still the issue of getting the word out." Hermione reminded them.

"Daddy will print it." Luna said as she gazed around at everyone. "They haven't silenced him."

"Yeah but your dad is the editor of The Quibbler." Draco said distastefully as he rolled his eyes. "No one is going to believe it if it's printed in there."

"Hey, it's not our fault that no one believes Crumpled-Horn Snorkacks are real." Luna said dismissively.

"That's because they aren't." Draco shot back.

Godric sighed as he leaned back in his seat. "It's still a way to get the truth out."

Draco looked at him in shock. "You can't be serious. No one will believe it if it's in The Quibbler. Her dad thinks Fudge is kidnapping goblins and is turning them into meat pies!" He cried.

Luna chuckled and shook her head. "It's a simple solution silly, just don't have Daddy write the article. Have someone whom people trust write it."

Draco stared at her for a moment in disbelief. He had just insulted her dad, and he couldn't understand why the girl had only laughed and not defended him. Some people's actions were simply baffling.

"Rita." Hermione said. "People believe her, and she does a good job with what Harry wants her to write."

"If she will do it." Blaise pointed out.

"I'll talk to Salazar and Albus to see what they think." Godric said.

"But how do we find Rita?" Neville asked.

"Nehum can find anyone, but he's not big enough to travel right now." Godric said, as he looked towards the phoenix, who was sitting quite happily in the tray of his perch, surrounded by his still warm ashes.

"That stupid woman killed the Peacock." Nora grumbled.

"Nora, I already told you, Nehum isn't dead." Godric said, picking her up off the floor so she could see him sitting in his ash pile.

"That does not look like the Peacock." Nora said a bit sadly. "That woman killed him. Thankfully Pigeon wasn't around, or she might be dead too."

"Nora, phoenixes grow quite fast." Godric said as he patted her head lightly. "I assure you that in a week or two, Nehum will look like his old self. See here, he's cooing at you. Listen to what he is telling you."
Godric placed Nora on Nehum's perch and helped her to get situated around, so that she was laying around the ashtray. Nehum raised a small little wing, and gently cooed at her as he rubbed his wing against her side.

"Peacock?" Nora hissed softly, as Nehum began to sing softly. "Peacock! It is you!" She cried happily. "Ok listen up everyone. The Peacock is very small right now, so it's up to us to protect him. Zabby, go move Pigeon's perch over by the door. Pigeon, I want you to keep a sharp eye out for that stupid woman. If Toad comes down here, peck her eyes out. Shrew you eat her, and I'll stay here so I can protect him if she gets passed the two of you. I'm the deadliest snake in the world, so she won't be getting passed me. Don't worry Peacock, we can handle this. Zabby, get moving!" She shouted, causing Blaise to snort loudly.

He did as she told him though, even if it was only to humor her. Hedwig, who had been sitting on the back of Luna's chair, took flight and settled down on her perch, and Emeralda shifted her position a bit so that she was facing the entrance tunnel.

"Good." Nora said with a satisfied nod as she looked around the room. "Don't worry Peacock, we will protect you." She said again, which caused Godric to chuckle and Nehum to coo loudly.

"All right, now that Nehum is well protected, we don't have to worry about him." He said with a grin, which caused the children to laugh loudly, but then he looked at Luna. "Do you think your dad will be willing to help us get the truth out?"

"I'll talk to Daddy and tell him everything, and I know he will do it." Luna said with a smile. "I'm glad that we are able to help you with this. Daddy will be honored to work alongside you, Harry, and Merlin."

"Merlin?" Colin said, looking a bit startled.

"Nilrem is Merlin spelled backwards." Luna simply replied, as she continued to write her essay. "Don't tell me you didn't know Colin. It's quite obviously really."

"Is that true?" Colin said, as he once again stared at everyone in disbelief. "Is Merlin alive too?"

"Colin, I cannot confirm, or deny, that Nilrem is the actual Merlin." Godric said with a smile. "You'll just have to trust me."

"Wicked." He said, as a grin appeared on his face. "You-Know-Who doesn't stand a chance." He added, causing everyone to burst out laughing.

It had been three days since school had started, but Severus actually sighed with relief as Voldemort took the book Salazar 'found' in first year from his hands, and praised him for his good work. He had been worried that Voldemort would be angry at him for not bringing it sooner, but that didn't appear to be the case.

With everything that had happened lately, Salazar hadn't had a lot of time to scrub it clean of the things he didn't want Voldemort to know, but he had finally finished it last night. Salazar had taken out the recipe for the walking-through-walls potion, and replaced it with a semi-complicated healing potion. He had also taken out all the nasty hexes he didn't want Voldemort to get his hands on, and replaced them with either prank spells he had invented, or more healing spells. He did leave a few of the nasty hexes though, simply because he didn't want Voldemort to become suspicious.

However, the beheading curse and the leg vanishing charm was thankfully not in there.
"Hi Sevie!" Tiny Voldemort said, as he waved to Severus.

Severus glared at the thing, but it took every ounce of will power not to laugh, because it was sitting on Voldemort's right shoulder.

And the Dark Lord did not look happy about that.

"Shut up you pitiful thing." Voldemort snapped. "If you are going to address my Death Eaters, then you will call them by their proper names."

"Oh hush Mr. Grumpy Pants. Where's the fun in that?" Tiny Voldemort said, as he patted the dark wizard lightly on the cheek.

Voldemort swatted the thing off his shoulder and kicked it across the room, but Tiny Voldemort just ran back to him, latched onto his leg, and climbed into Voldemort's lap. Severus could see its tiny head poking up just above the table, and he once again just barely managed to hold back a snort.

Voldemort looked murderous as he glared at the thing in his lap, but then he turned to Severus.

"Is there any word about Merlin?" He asked through gritted teeth, as he plucked Tiny Voldemort out of his lap, and tossed him onto the table.

"Yes, my Lord." Severus said with a nod. "Dumbledore confirmed it. Nilrem is the actual Merlin."

"Sucks to be you!" Tiny Voldemort laughed, as it sat on the edge of the table and swung its legs back and forth. "Two Founders, one of whom is your own blood, and Merlin. Tsk, tsk Moldybutt. Whatever shall you do now?"

Voldemort took several deep breaths, but he ignored Tiny Voldemort as he focused on Severus.

"Make it die!" He hissed.

"I can't die because I'm not alive, too da loo da loo!" It sang happily, as it got up and began dancing on the table.

"My Lord, Roffin is being tight lipped about this…thing." He said, casting a distasteful glare at it. "But he did admit that he sent it to you, and said that he felt bad that you were…forgive me My Lord…talking to a dead snake. He wanted you to have another…friend." Severus said, glaring at Tiny Voldemort who had suddenly stopped dancing.

"You lost a friend?" It asked quietly, then it burst into tears. "I'm so sorry!" It cried, as it ran to Voldemort and threw its tiny arms around his wrist. "You poor thing. Your friend died. You can talk to me. I love you!" It sobbed.

Voldemort clinched his fist and flung Tiny Voldemort to the floor.

"Stay off me!" He shouted.

"No wonder you're in such a bad mood all the time. Poor, poor fellow." It sniffled. "Grief is a terrible thing, but I'll always be here. You can count on me."

Voldemort huffed and glared at it, as Severus fought hard to keep a straight face.

"My Lord, there is something in the book that…may…help." Severus said slowly. "Apparently Roffin didn't know that Slytherin invented this…spell…" He said, motioning to Tiny Voldemort, who had climbed back into Voldemort's lap. "Or either he didn't care, because I think the solution to
this problem is in there." He said pointing to the book.

Voldemort had never looked so happy in his life. "Where? Show me."

"I don't remember where it is exactly, but I think the blood bonding information was misleading. It's a prank spell." He said distastefully.

"It was." Tiny Voldemort said with a mischievous grin. "He can't get rid of me until he loves me. Love is the only thing that can break the spell." It said, then it turned to Voldemort. "It's a shame that you can't love, too da loo da loo!" It sang, then it burst out laughing. "And it has to be real love. It can't be faked, so even if you try to fake love me, it won't work! Hahahaha!" It shouted, as it pointed to Voldemort. Then it began dancing again, only this time on Voldemort's knee. "Can't fake love, too da loo da loo! Can't fake love, doo da doo!"

"Severus, leave. Leave right now." Voldemort said as hateful vengeance entered into his eyes. "I don't wish to kill such a valuable asset. Get out now."

Severus apparated immediately.

"That thing is going to get me killed." Severus chuckled, as he took a sip of whiskey and leaned back in the chair he was sitting in.

He had just got back to Hogwarts, and was in Salazar's private quarters telling the man about the meeting he just had with Voldemort. Needless to say, Salazar was howling with laughter. However, at Severus's comment, he somewhat sobered up.

"Yes, that is a big problem that has been worrying me greatly. If you so much as crack a smile at that blasted thing, you will get tortured, or worse. It's why I have been working on a humor dampening potion." Salazar said, walking to his wardrobe and pulling out a stack of parchment. "The theory is that it will dampen your emotions that cause laughter, smiles, and that sort of thing. It won't get rid of them entirely, but you won't have to work so hard at keeping those emotions back. It won't affect your other emotions though, and it should last for roughly two hours. Just make sure you drink it right before you go to him." He said, as he handed the stack of parchment to Severus.

Severus glanced at the parchment and chuckled. "This is the stack of parchment Umbridge gave you."

"Yes, I thought I'd turn it into something useful." Salazar said with a smirk. "All of my ideas and ways of working with the potion are written on the back of the parchment. Those are copies, so if we work together on the creative brewing process, we might get it done faster. You're always brewing something in your lab, but I can work on it in here as well. Albus has no need to come in here, so it should be all right and not seem suspicious."

Severus mumbled in agreement as his eyes scanned Salazar's ideas for the potion, which caused the older wizard to smile. Salazar knew how much Severus loved inventing new potions, so he was not surprised when Severus suddenly stood up.

"I think I can get started right away." He said as he grinned at Salazar. "With any luck we can have it done in a few days, a week at the most."

Salazar grinned back. "I figured you would want to do that. I can't start it right now because I need to get my lesson plans for tomorrow straight. I have my first class with the fifth year Gryffindor and Slytherins first thing in the morning, and rumor has it that Umbridge is going to pay me a little visit."
Severus laughed. "Should be interesting."

"Indeed, but I don't think she will be able to get into the classroom. I absolutely refuse to teach that rubbish they want me to teach. They want me to have them read Defensive Magical Theory by that absurd and insane Wilbert Slinkhard." He said as he rolled his eyes. "That man is barmier than anyone I have ever seen, and how that trash actually got published, I'll never know. It actually discourages the use of defensive magic." He added with a loud sigh.

Severus curled his lip in disgust. "I've read that book, and your right, its rubbish. How are you going to keep her out of the classroom though?"

"It's a surprise." Salazar said with a wicked grin. "But I'm sure you'll hear about it."

Severus chuckled and shook his head. "I'm looking forward to it." He said, then bid Salazar goodnight.

It was the fourth day of classes and it had been a relatively calm morning, but right now Salazar was seated at his desk, and grinning at his classroom door. He could hear the students on the other side, debating on how to get through it.

He had actually taken the door off its hinges and covered the opening with emerald green flames that very much resembled floo flames. He had been working on this ever since he got the Professor's job, and perfected it a few days before the start-of-term. He chose to finally unveil this now, because he knew that Umbridge was going to throw a fit because she couldn't enter the room.

Simply because she didn't have the keys to enter, which, indecently, was the books he had assigned to each of his classes.

He had keyed each book to the door, so all the students had to do was make sure they were prepared for class. He had struggled over what to use as a key though. He had thought about quills and parchment, and other common supplies that the students would have on them, but when the Ministry mandated he teach from that stupid book, he knew exactly what he would use.

It made the spell a lot more complicated because of all the different books for each year, but it had been worth it.

"What the bloody hell Hermione? How are we supposed to get in?" Salazar heard Ron ask, as Godric burst out laughing.

"Are those floo flames?" Dean asked.

"What does that wooden sign even mean?" Lavender asked.

"Gryffindors are brave to try, while Hufflepuff's may be shy, but Ravenclaw's have their books, and Slytherins have their cunning looks. Do you have your key?" Hermione read loudly.

"What does that mean, 'do you have your key'? Does it mean your Gringotts key?" Millicent asked.

"I ain't giving no one my bank key!" Goyle shouted.

"He's not asking for a bank key Goyle!" Draco shouted. "Don't be stupid!"

"Listen to me you stupid blood traitor, we don't listen to you anymore, so shut up!"

"Don't tell me…"
"I got it!" Hermione cried. "Come on Draco."

"Wait…aaarrrggghh!"

They both appeared in the classroom as a swirl of green flames surrounded them. Hermione had a hold of Draco's robes, but they both blinked rapidly as they looked around the classroom.

"Let go of me Granger!" Draco suddenly shouted, as he swatted her hand away.

"Good morning." Salazar said with an amused grin.

"Ravenclaws have their books'. Our textbooks are the key." She said, as she ignored Draco and grinned at Salazar.

"Correct Miss Granger, and five points to Gryffindor." Salazar said, just as Neville entered the classroom with a grin.

"Hermione! Neville!" Ron yelled frantically. "Are you ok?"

"Yes!" They called out.

They can't hear you. The door has a one way silencing charm, of my own invention, on it. "

"Blaise!" Ron yelped, just as Blaise appeared through the door.

"Slytherins have their cunning looks'. That means we watch and wait to see what others are doing, but textbooks are the key." Blaise said as he started laughing.

"Five points to Slytherin." Salazar said with a grin.

"Gordy don't push me…aaarrrggghh!" Ron cried, just as he and Godric appeared through the door.

"Clever fool." Godric grinned. "That's not going to go over well with Umbridge."

"I know, and hello Godric." Salazar chuckled.

"Wait, you know each other?" Draco asked.

"I'll explain it later Draco." Godric said, just as the tardy bell rang.

"Wish me luck everybody!" Seamus called out loudly, and he too appeared in the classroom.

One by one all the students filed in, with the Slytherins all being the last to enter.

"It feels kind of like flooing." Lavender said, looking at the doors curiously. "How did you do that Professor?"

"It's a secret." He grinned. "Now, please take a seat everyone. I normally don't tolerate tardiness, but I'll let it slide today. Just make sure you always have your key, for if you don't, you won't be able to get through the door." He chuckled, as they looked at him in confusion.

He waited for them to all find seats, but they finally settled in and looked at him expectantly.

"As you all know, my name is Pierre Robillard, but what you don't know is that I never attended Hogwarts as a child, so in a sense, I'm neutral when it comes to houses." He announced as he got up and began walking around the classroom. "Now, I'm going to be perfectly honest with you, the
Ministry wants me to teach you Defense theory only, without teaching you the practical aspect of the
spells, but that's not going to happen. While theory itself is very important when learning new spells,
Defense is all about learning how to cast those spells. Not to mention, the theory they want me to
teach you is complete rubbish anyway, and it will not help you at all."

"Theory only won't get us far in our OWLs." Godric said, causing Salazar to nod. "Especially the
wrong kinds of theories."

"Correct Mr. Roffin, and five points to Slytherin for having common sense." He said, causing Godric
to laugh. "I am very impressed with what Professor Lupin has done with this subject, so I will
continue with what he started. In Defense against the Dark Arts, I mostly believe in a practical
approach, but I do give theory based assignments as homework. Essays will be written with each
new spell we study, and I expect them to be at least eight inches long, or longer if you desire, and do
not think big fancy, loopy writing is going to get you by, because it won't. I will mark it as a 'T' and
you will not have the chance to redo it." He warned, as he glanced mainly at the girls in the class,
specifically Lavender and Parvati. "Each essay will consist of advantages and disadvantages for each
spell, as well as who made it, and why. Extra credit will be given if you can give me specific famous
instances on when the spell was used successfully. This can be famous duels, wars, or anything of
the like. I expect all essays to be complete and turned in, in a timely manner. Do any of you have any
questions?"

When no one had any questions, he smiled at them all and continued.

"Very good. During class we will practice wand movements, casting, and incantations, but I want
them done silently." He said, and paused for the protests.

He wasn't disappointed.

"We aren't supposed to learn silent casting until sixth year…we can't do that…why make us do
that…" Several people began asking all at once.

Salazar glared at them, folded his arms across his chest, and stood there with a raised eyebrow,
which caused all the students to quiet down immediately.

"Are you all quite finished?" He asked, causing them to shuffle around uncomfortably. "The reason
for this is because it will help you when you get into sixth year where all your Professors will require
it. It's always good to have a head start." He said, glancing at them all individually. "I will allow
whispering for the first month or so, but by Christmas I expect you all to be able to cast silently.
You're fifteen years old, so I know you can handle it." He said with a smile.

"What is the meaning of this!?!" A loud, angry voice asked.

Salazar glanced at the door and grinned. "Ignore that. She apparently doesn't have her key." He said
with a smirk, which caused a few in the class to chuckle.

"Hello! Professor Robillard!? Can you hear me?" Umbridge cried. "I'm afraid I don't know what this
sign means. I need you to undo this door!"

"Not going to happen." Salazar muttered under his breath, but then he smiled. "I'm afraid we
probably won't get much done today, because I do believe we are going to have to put up with
Madam Umbridge screaming…"

"Let me in!" She cried, as she pounded on the wall. "Let me in I said!"

"…throughout the entire class…"
"Let me in!"

"...so we are just going to have to settle for..."

"LET ME IN!"

"...some morning entertainment." Salazar finished with a grin.

"LET ME IN RIGHT NOW!"

This went on for several minutes, which caused the Gryffindors to snort loudly, but some of the Slytherins appeared to be trying to hold back their amusement. Salazar however, sat behind his desk and smirked at the door, but then he looked around.

"Well, you can all at least pretend you're doing some work." He laughed. "We are going to be learning the shield charm, so everyone turn to the fourth chapter in your book, and start reading about it."

"This is the most disrespectful thing I have ever encountered in my..."

"Madam Umbridge, may I ask why you are screaming in the middle of the corridor?"

Salazar actually burst out laughing because he could picture Albus on the other side of the door. If Salazar had to guess, his eyes were twinkling with amusement.

"You really don't like her, do you Professor Robillard?" Daphne asked with snort.

"No I don't, and I am not afraid, or ashamed, to admit it." He replied. "That stupid woman cast two killing curses in a room full of children. She could have easily stunned the snake, but instead, she chose that. It makes me wonder how dangerous that woman really is."

"She's the one that tried to kill Harry at his farce of a trial. She's the one that suggested that they cast a killing curse at him to see if it would bounce." Neville growled, which caused everyone to gasp loudly.

"That was her?" Parvati asked, and Neville nodded.

"So you all can believe that lie she and the Minister concocted about her being confunded if you want too, but as for me, I'm not buying it." Blaise said firmly. "Voldemort is back, and Harry is innocent!" He cried, raising his fist in the air.

"This is a hindrance to learning! I demand to know why there are green flames in this doorway! I can't even get through them!" Umbridge shouted, which drew the students attention back to the door.

"My dear Madam Umbridge, it clearly states that you need a key. Do you have yours?" Albus asked calmly.

"I have my Gringotts key, but it's not letting me in!" She yelled, which caused Neville to burst out laughing.

"Well then I'm afraid that you don't have the correct key to get through the door." Albus replied.

"Well what other key then?" She asked angrily. "Wait, floo powder maybe?"

"I'm afraid I do not know."
"How do we know that Professor Robillard and the children are in there? I need to sit in on this class to make sure he's teaching the correct subject matter." She stated firmly.

"Perhaps I should go see." Albus said, then a short second later he appeared in the classroom.

"Ah Headmaster, how can I help you?" Salazar said, looking up from his own book he was reading.

"Just checking that everything is all right." Albus said with a smile, as he glanced absentmindedly around the classroom.

"Dumbledore! Dumbledore! Let me in! How did you do that? Let me in! I don't have any floo powder!"

Salazar noticed that Albus had the first year's textbook in his hands, and he couldn't help but chuckle. He wasn't really surprised that Albus had known what to use though. After all, this year all the portraits in the castle actually wanted to help the Headmaster, seeing as the past four years they had been rather...angry...with him.

"Yes Headmaster, we are just catching up on some reading. We will be learning the shield charm come next class." Salazar said.

"Very good then, very good. Well, everything seems to be in order, so I shall reassure Madam Umbridge. Good day to you all." Albus replied, as Godric snorted loudly.

Just before he walked back through the door, Salazar couldn't help but grin as the book in Albus's hands shrunk so that he could hold it in a closed fist.

"How did you do that?" Umbridge demanded.

"I'm unsure. Apparently I have the key on me somewhere. Perhaps it is this quill, or ink pot maybe?" He said. "I can assure you though, that all the students and Professor Robillard are in there, and they are reading."

"Oh, well all right then, but I expect them to be reading the proper material."

"I assure you that they are." Albus said, which sent the Gryffindors into fits of giggles.

Salazar and the students didn't see her suspicious narrowed eyes, but then she went on to ask, "Did he say what these flames are?"

"No, but I suspect it is some sort of defense. This is, after all, Defense against the Dark Arts."

"Well, I'm afraid that it is a bit unorthodox to have this sort of...defense...in a doorway, so it has to be jotted down and taken to Cornelius."

"I'm sure it does. Can I offer you some lavender tea? I hear it's a wonderful stress reliever."

Salazar heard them shuffle off, but he snorted as all the Gryffindors began howling with laughter. The Slytherins look highly amused too, but a few of them, namely Pansy, Goyle, Crabbe, and Millicent glared at everyone with narrowed eyes. Nott on the other hand, appeared to remain indifferent.

Salazar knew this was going to be the first of many battles to come, but he was determined to make sure that the only way Umbridge could get into his classroom, was over his dead body.
*A/N* Alrighty! I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. Many of you said you wanted to see more of Tiny Voldemort, so I happily obliged. I know that Tiny Voldemort singing '99 Bottles of Beer' is pushing it a bit, since the song is mostly popular here in the US, but I couldn't help it. I thought it was hysterical. I actually thought about using 'The Song That Never Ends' from Lamb Chops Play-Along, or the 'I Love You' Barney the Dino's song. (Google them if you dont know what they are...**snort**...just dont let them get stuck in your head!) However, I couldn't justify the twins knowing of those two, since they are on US children's TV shows. '99 Bottles of Beer' just seemed more believable to me. (Remember, the twins made him, so how Tiny Voldemort acts is all because of them.)

Anyway, to the reviewer, (not anyone here on AO3, just leaving this up in case you have the same questions) who said that they wanted to see how I 'dug myself out of this' I hope my explanation's were good enough! LOL The reason I didn't have Salazar or anyone stun Umbridge, is because Umbridge WOULD have demanded that they be arrested for 'attacking a Ministry official'. Besides, I have plot points that required Umbridge to remain wake and in control of her own actions. Those plot points will show up later though, so I hope you stay tuned to find out why!

Next chapter will have a more in depth look at Salazar's real teaching methods with the fifth years, but after that, actual class time will be sporadic. You've all read how Professors handle Defense in other fanfics, and there is not a whole lot of originality left in those scenes, so they have actually become very boring for me to write, (and read). I usually find myself skipping over those parts now. We will also see what Fudge and Umbridge are up to at the Ministry, and I have something planned for the children. Since this year is different from the last four years, Salazar, Godric, and the rest of the Adults are going to somewhat take a back seat this year, and the children are going to be in the forefront. To some extent, the children are going to be running Umbridge ragged, and the Adults are just going to sit back and smile. Pranks will be heavy this year, and led by the twins, but there will be seriousness in this year as well. Please remember, there is a method for the madness!

Suggestions for pranks are welcomed and encouraged!
Before I get yelled at, I just want to say that I know Educational Decrees 22 and 23 are backwards. LOL I did that so it could fit my story better. Also, I just want to warn you all that I changed 23 (the original 22) slightly in order to give Umbridge more power. The rest of the decrees will pop up soon, but unlike 22 and 23, they will all remain the same.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 56

Umbridge’s face had a hard pinched look about it, as she sat across from Fudge in his office at the Ministry. She had just given him her first week findings, and needless to say, neither of them were surprised at what she found.

"As you can see Cornelius," she said gravely, "there needs to be some drastic changes made at Hogwarts."

"Oh I agree, I agree." He said, as he nodded vigorously. "Fire in doorways, students running amok and doing as they please, lies being spread, and rumors of a murderer being helped and hidden in the castle." He said with a sigh. "So what do you propose Dolores?"

"Make these two educational decrees official. It will give me more control at Hogwarts, and it will make it so that the staff and students are forced to listen to me, because right now, they don't take me seriously."

"Let's see, educational decree number twenty-two…creation of new staffing post…High Inquisitor. This post gives Dolores Jane Umbridge the ability to dismiss teachers that are of low quality standards." He said, as he read aloud from the parchment he was holding.

"Yes." Umbridge said with a firm nod. "There are a few that are already giving me problems. That Pierre Robillard won't even let me in his classroom, which makes me believe that he is not teaching the proper material that we asked him too. Minerva McGonagall is downright hostile and hateful towards me, and the others simply ignore me." She said with a huff. "I have threatened that they will lose their jobs, but because it's not really official, they just don't take me seriously."

"I agree. You do need more control then." Fudge replied as he signed the bottom of the parchment. "Now what about this one? Educational decree number twenty-three…gives only the High Inquisitor the right to appoint suitable Professors to vacant posts with or without the Headmaster or Headmistress's consent." He read, and Umbridge nodded.

"This one will take control of the hiring process away from Dumbledore so that he can't put substandard teachers back into the vacant posts." She clarified.
"Another good one." Fudge said as he signed it without hesitation. "Very good. You are a very smart woman Dolores, so I put my full trust in you to handle this as you see fit. If you think you need anything else, just come to me and I will sign whatever you need."

"Thank you Minister." She said with a smug grin. "I will make sure I do just that. Now, what of the rumors about Potter being inside the castle?"

"If he is in this so called Chamber of Secrets, then I want him found." Fudge said firmly. "Those two children the other day said there is a tunnel to that place from this so called 'Snake Pit', which also needs to be done away with, but before that we need to get into that area to access this tunnel."

"Yes we do, and I have tried. Unfortunately though, you need to answer an educational question."

Fudge looked slightly startled. "Then what's the problem Dolores?"

She sighed and shook her head. "It's asked in Parseltongue, and it changes to a new one each time one question is answered. Those children that are down there know how to understand Parseltongue. According to my sources, Potter taught them how to understand it in his first year."

"Oh." Fudge said. "Yes, I can see how that's a problem. Those children that live down there, Roffin, Zabini, and Malfoy, see if you can get them to talk."

"I'll try, but it will be difficult. Gryffindors are also frequently seen down there as well. The Snake Pit sits right below the Slytherin common room, and the floor/ceiling is see through. My sources tell me that the Weasleys, that Granger girl, Longbottom, Creevey, and that weird girl from Ravenclaw are also down there quite a bit. I'm told they mostly study, but I have a hunch that they are talking to Potter."

"Well, see if any of them will talk." Fudge repeated.

"I will Cornelius, but Roffin is the ringleader for that group, and he is a foul boy." She said in disgust.

Fudge scoffed. "Yes, the one they think is Godric Gryffindor. Such lies, and so many students are willing believe that rubbish. My guess is Potter and Roffin thought this whole thing up to gain power. Dumbledore was right when he said Potter was dark and dangerous, and personally, I think they have done something to the man."

"You think Dumbledore is an unwilling pawn?" She asked in slight surprise.

"It makes sense." He said, leaning back in his chair. "For nearly two years straight he warned me over and over again about Potter being dark and dangerous, then all of a sudden it was touted that Lucius had imperiused him. Now Dumbledore is all buddy, buddy with Potter, and they have teamed up to take out You-Know-Who? It's just not adding up. It's all lies, and I want to get to the bottom of it. It's like a I said, I think Potter has made the whole thing up, and he is trying to use everyone's fear of You-Know-Who against us, but what he's really doing is building his own power base. By using Dumbledore the way he's doing, he can gain people's trust, and when he has it, he can take control of the Ministry, and he will probably kill a bunch of people in the process."

"So you think that by taking out Dumbledore, Potter's support base will crumble?"

"I do, but just in case I'm wrong, I want Dumbledore watched closely. If he is working with Potter on his own free will, then together, they are very dangerous. You-Know-Who is not back, but they are using people's fear of the man against them to throw suspicion off themselves. We need to let the public know that they are in danger, not from You-Know-Who, but Potter."
"I think you're right Minister." She said with a nod. "But even if Dumbledore is an unwilling pawn, we still need to get rid of him. Hogwarts has clearly fallen into substandard practices under his leadership."

"Oh I agree with that fully. The man is getting on in years, and I think his age is starting to catch up with him. Especially if we can prove that he is working with Potter on his own free will. That will give us the evidence we need to fully take over control of Hogwarts."

"I agree." Umbridge said.

"Dolores, just be careful. Potter is a Slytherin, and he is very dangerous."

"Minister, I'm a Slytherin."

"Yes I know, but you're one of the good ones." He said, reaching across the desk to pat her hand fondly. "We will need your Slytherin cunning to outwit Potter. He is just a boy, and he is going to make a mistake sooner or later."

Umbridge smiled sweetly. "And I will be there to catch him." She said, as she narrowed her eyes in determination.

The rest of the meeting they talked about how to go about catching 'Potter'. Fudge decided that having more Aurors at Hogwarts would be best, and he also said that he would take a trip down into the Department of Mysteries. He had an idea that he wanted to pitch to the Unspeakables.

Salazar's new classroom door was an instant hit among all the students. Some had figured out what the 'key' really was, while others were still a bit befuddled on how they were able to gain entrance. It was no surprise to Salazar that all of Ravenclaw had figured it out, but a few in the other three houses had also. Salazar was worried that some of the Slytherins who had figured it out would tell Umbridge, but that appeared to not be the case because every class saw her at the door, yelling to be let in.

Salazar eventually had to replace his one way silencing charm with the standard one just so he could properly teach.

Umbridge tried asking several, several students on how to get inside the classroom, but they all said they didn't know how they were doing it. Salazar, and a few other Professors, suspected it might have something to do with what Umbridge and the Ministry wanted him to teach in Defense. The running theory was, since Salazar warned every class about what the Ministry wanted him to teach, the students that had figured out the 'key' were keeping quiet, especially the ones in fifth and seventh years, who would otherwise fail their OWLs and NEWTs if the Ministry had their way. They also thought that the others didn't want to spill the beans either, simply because they didn't want to be stuck in a stuffy classroom room reading a worthless book.

The surprising thing however, was the fact that the students took it upon themselves to encourage each other to study Defense in either the library, or their own common rooms so that Umbridge wouldn't catch wind of what was really going on in the class. In Salazar's sixth year Ravenclaw class, one of the students had supplied the idea of him passing out Slinkhard's book to all the students, so that they could switch the covers in case Umbridge saw the books. Salazar thought it was a brilliant idea, and promptly did so.

According to the Hogwarts rumor mill, some students where actually afraid to switch the covers because they feared getting into trouble with other Professors, but others pointed out this was ok to
do, seeing as Professor McGonagall was teaching her first years the switching spell first, as opposed to matchsticks into needles like she always did. That small bit of logic seemed to quell their fears, but according to the rumor mill, if anyone were to outright ask Professor McGonagall if this was why she had suddenly switched up her lesson plans, they would only be answered with a smirk.

That only made the students giggle, and shortly after, another rumor cropped up. The rumor was that Professor Robillard and Professor McGonagall were secretly dating.

Salazar was pretty sure Godric had started it though.

**Because of the Falling Standards at Hogwarts-Ministry Issues Educational Decrees!**

Salazar sat fuming as he glared at the morning paper that had just been delivered. All along the house tables, people began whispering about educational decrees twenty-two and twenty-three, and what it could mean for their life at Hogwarts.

Albus looked outraged, Minerva looked ready to explode, but everyone cried out in shock when the temperature in the room suddenly plunged to freezing, and the enchanted ceiling began to form dark angry clouds. When a smug and smiling Umbridge walked into the room, a loud thunderous boom sounded as the enchanted ceiling exploded into a full-fledged thunderstorm. Umbridge shrieked loudly, as several students cried out in shock and dove under the house tables, but Salazar glanced at Godric, who was near about to murder the woman where she stood.

"GORDY!" Fred shouted over the noise from the ceiling. "GORDY!"

"GORDY!" Colin yelled, as he banged on the table.

"GODRIC GRYFFINDOR!" Hermione bellowed, causing a momentary lull in the chaos as Godric's eyes snapped to her shivering form. "Please, you're really scaring us." She said nervously, as she canceled the voice amplifying charm and looked towards the ceiling.

"Can you make not so cold too?" George asked, looking a bit apprehensive as he shivered against the freezing temperature.

Godric took a good look around the great hall and grunted, but then, as if nothing had happened, everything returned to normal.

"Bloody hell, and I thought Potter's exploding house tables and windows were crazy!" Lee Jordan shouted from across the room at the Gryffindor table.

"No, no! Potter did the same thing in first year during Christmas Holiday while everyone was gone!" Ron corrected loudly, as he sat at the other end of the table.

"That's because you almost killed Nora!" The twins replied, as they swooped over to the Slytherin table where Godric was sitting.

"He got that trick from me." Godric said, as he stood up and threw the paper to the floor.

"Are you all right Mr. Roffin?" Albus asked, glancing at the still irate Godric, who had just set his paper on fire.

"Yeah I'm fine." He growled, then he glared at the shaking Umbridge. "Just so that you are warned woman," he said as he pointed at her. "I'm watching you closely."
"I don't care who you pretending to be Mr. Roffin," She said angrily, as she stood there with a scowl on her face, "but you are just a student, and you have no authority here!"

Godric stared her down, and drew his wand. Salazar was quick to stand, but he never took his eyes off Godric, who brought his wand to the palm of his hand.

"Hogwarts! Activate Gryffindor security enchantments! By the blood of…"

Salazar took no chances and shot a stunner at Godric, who seemed to have expected it, and managed to turn at the last second to cast a shield. He glared at Salazar, but Salazar stood firm as he returned the glare.

"Salazar's not here to stop you Godric, but I am. Now, cool your temper." He said as Godric stood there seething. "You know I'm right, so just stop and think about what you are doing. Under normal circumstances, I could care less if you called forth your enchantments, because I would love to see how that woman would react, but let's not give all of Hogwarts's secrets away just yet. Voldemort needs to be kept clueless about some things. He knows about Helga's badgers, because Salazar called them forth in first year. He also knows about Emeralda, and Rowena's enchantments, but let's not give him yours. There are some people in here who will run right to Voldemort, and they will blab. Now calm down."

"Besides Gordy, you can always make more lions to run Umbridge down!" Colin, who had already been told the story about the Aurors and lions, shouted.

"A Gryffindor is not above pulling the same trick twice!" Neville yelled.

Blaise snorted loudly at this, but Hermione bit her lip nervously as she slowly came up behind him.

"Gordy, Professor Robillard is right. You know he is. Don't let the stupid Ministry get to you. You and Harry are better than this." She said, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. "Don't sink to their level."

Godric however, ignored them all as he continued to glare at Salazar.

"You're not perfect you know."

"I never said I was. I've made many mistakes, and have lost my temper too." Salazar replied calmly. "I know that I'm not as old as you are. I haven't lived for a thousand years in one form or another, but I'm also not afraid to stand up to you. I was taught by Salazar in his former life, and I was taught by you as well." He added, as he looked into the eyes of his best friend. "It's like you said the other day, let the Ministry make fools of themselves because in the end, it will be all right. We know it will."

"Is that something Merlin has seen? I know he's a seer because I read a book about him!" Colin asked loudly, causing Neville to face palm himself.

"That boy has no filter on his mouth." He groaned.

"Colin!" Blaise shouted. "Be quiet!"

Colin paled drastically and clamped his hand over his mouth, but it was enough to make Godric snort loudly.

"It's all right Colin, thanks to Lucius Malfoy, Voldemort already knows about Merlin." Godric said.

Salazar's eyes snapped to Godric in surprise, but since Godric wasn't on the ground screaming in
pain because of the unbreakable vow, he guessed that Merlin was ready to make his presence in the wizarding world known.

He really needed to keep up with that old man's plans.

"This is all lies!" A formally shocked and speechless Umbridge suddenly cried. "You, Mr. Roffin, are not Godric Gryffindor, and Harry Potter certainly isn't the great Salazar Slytherin. And now you want to throw MERLIN into all this?"

"Merlin created a ritual that gives him, Salazar, and myself immortality." Godric said, as he calmly glanced at her. "Every one-hundred and fifty years we die, only to be reborn into another child. We grow up, attend Hogwarts, and continue on in one form or another. It's what we've always done. We keep our knowledge of who we are all during our childhoods, but when we get our Hogwarts letters, that is when we get all of our real power, spell knowledge, and abilities back. It's why the killing curse bounces off of us. We are safe from all forms of death, until the age of one-hundred and fifty. I would volunteer a demonstration, but I'm not one to shoot off killing curses in a room full of children." He sneered, causing Umbridge to narrow her beady eyes. "Voldemort found this out the hard way when he attacked the Potters all those years ago. It's why Salazar survived. Salazar knew what was going on at the time, but because he was so little, he couldn't tell his parents that everything was going to be all right. He couldn't warn them to save themselves. He knew the killing curse would bounce back and hit Voldemort. Voldemort tried to kill him again in the graveyard, and when the curse bounced, it missed Voldemort and hit Pettigrew."

"Lies. All lies. This is just all lies!" Umbridge sputtered loudly.

"It's not lies!" Hermione shouted. "Everyone knows that Merlin was a Slytherin, and everyone knows that Merlin is famous for what he did with the muggle King Arthur, and how he defeated Morgana! All of that stuff happened centuries before Hogwarts was ever created! Merlin is immortal, and so are Salazar and Godric!" She cried, which instantly caused a stir among the rest of the student population.

Ravenclaws were already putting their heads together to discuss this latest bit of news, Hufflepuffs were shocked speechless, as were the Gryffindors, but many in Slytherin looked hopeful at this news, while the rest looked downright fearful and angry.

"Lies, lies, lies!" Umbridge shouted frantically.

"You sound like You-Know-Who Dolores. He said the same thing when Potter told him who he was in the graveyard." Minerva said offhandedly. "I know that because I saw Potter's memory of the encounter. What was that potion You-Know-Who used to regain his body Mr. Roffin?"

"It was invented by Morgana, so it was hardly original." Godric said with a scoff. "Trust me, Merlin was a bit miffed about that, because he has spent the last seventeen hundred years trying to track down all of her works, so they can be kept out of children's hands, and by children I mean witches and wizards like Voldemort." He said with a smile.

Salazar grinned at the both of them and shook his head, but knowing that Godric had finally calmed down, he felt his muscles relax just a bit and he sat down with a chuckle.

"Gordy, are you sure Harry isn't dead? Because I still do think the Ministry somehow killed him. I have not seen him at all." Sirius said, looking at Godric with pleading eyes that nearly made Salazar snort.

"I told you Sirius, Salazar is here. That's why I kept encouraging you to take the job." Godric said
with a smirk. "He'll probably sneak into your cottage in the middle of the night to prank you. I suspect that right now, he's biding his time."

"That sounds like Harry!" The twins shouted as they grinned.

"Madam Umbridge," Albus said with a twinkle in his eyes. "When you go to tell the Minister about all this, do make sure you tell him to let the Aurors, who are sure to show up, know to watch Sirius's cottage closely. I do think that if he turned up in class with bright purple hair, it would cause a large distraction. We simply can't have that because the children shouldn't have to put up with such horrendous things while they are trying to learn."

That did it.

Salazar burst out laughing.

"Sirius with purple hair is a horrendous thing to think about." Salazar said, causing Sirius to grin.

"At least I have hair."

"I told you all before, being bald is a personal choice." Salazar said dismissively.

"I bet you lost it all to a prank!" Neville shouted.

"Twenty points from Gryffindor Mr. Longbottom!" Salazar shouted, causing the Professors to chuckle.

"Twenty-one points to Gryffindor, for Mr. Longbottom's excellent comeback!" Sirius shouted, causing all the Gryffindors whoop and cheer, and the rest of the students to burst out laughing.

"This is preposterous!" Umbridge shouted as she looked around in complete and utter disgust. "You are Professors! You should be conducting yourselves in a professional manner!"

"There is nothing in the rule book that says we can't have a sense of humor." Flitwick said calmly, causing Umbridge to glare at him.

"But according to what you just said, as High Inquisitor, you shouldn't be screaming like a mad woman in the middle of the great hall." Hermione snapped, turning to face Umbridge with anger flashing in her eyes.

"You watch your mouth girl." Umbridge said, jabbing her stubby finger at Hermione. "Or I will…"

Albus stood up so quickly that he turned his chair over.

"You may have some power here Umbridge, but you will NOT threaten my students." He said with barely controlled anger.

"I'm in charge here Dumbledore, and I will do as I see fit. I will get rid of whom I feel is unfit to teach! Even if it means getting rid of you!" She said with loathing.

The twins, Cedric, Blaise, Neville, Hermione, Ron, Ginny, Colin, Dennis, and surprisingly, Luna instantly jumped up and/or rounded on her as they drew their wands. Umbridge looked at their furious faces, and shuffled backwards as she glanced at them fearfully, but before they could say or do anything, Dumbledore put his hand up to stop them.

"Children, I know you want to defend me and I thank you so much for that, but there are other ways to handle this." He said, looking at each of them individually. "I do believe Harry would be most
displeased if you got involved with this fight. This is between Godric, Salazar, myself, and the Ministry. It's not your fight."

They all nodded, but then a wicked gleam flashed in Godric's eyes and he instantly grinned.

"Yes it is. However, according to that slippery, slimy reptile, being a Slytherin is the greatest thing of all, so use your heads and let Harry handle this in the best way he knows how, with cunning. There is absolutely no need for any of you to be involved with anything that is going to happen here. You have OWLs and NEWTs to worry about, so you need to concentrate on those. However, as Salazar always says I'm a bloody Gryffindor, so I can't help what I'm about to do." He said with a wicked grin.

Salazar glanced at Godric sharply, and instantly became nervous because of the look on his face. Godric now had a manic grin plastered on it, and it made Salazar a tad bit uneasy.

"Attention all Hogwarts's ghost. May I have your attention please? Would the Friar, Baron, Sir Nicholas, and Helena Ravenclaw please report to the great hall? Peeves, you have exactly twenty seconds to be here as well, and if you don't show up, Salazar and I will banish you. You have been warned."

The ghosts must have been listening in the entrance hall, because no sooner had the words left Godric's mouth, they came floating through the back wall. Peeves on the other hand, waited exactly twenty seconds before he lazily floated into the room, much to Godric's irritation.

However, he looked at them all and nodded. "I mainly called the four of you here so you can be witnesses, but I also want confirmation. I know that Salazar is in here listening right now, and he is watching Umbridge threaten this school, and all its residents. He, nor I, approve of any of this nonsense. To the best of your ability, are you willing to assist Salazar in all that he wishes to accomplish here?"

"I speak for all of us when I say, yes Godric, Uncle can count on us." She said, as a small smirk graced her lips. "You and Uncle always drove Mother crazy with your silly stunts and pranks, so whatever Uncle decides to do to Umbridge will be supported by us. This…woman…" She said distastefully as she motioned to a furious Umbridge, "is a complete disgrace. Whatever Uncle does to drive her right out of your school, we will support with pride." She said, then she turned to Umbridge. "You and your Ministry picked the wrong school to mess with. You and your cohorts will pay dearly, and when Uncle is through with you, I hope you suffer." She hissed, then she deliberately swooped through Umbridge, causing her to visibly shiver.

"And what does Lord Gryffy wish ol' Peevsie to do?" Peeves asked as his beady little eyes shone brightly.

Godric grinned at the poltergeist. "This will be the only part I play in this Peeves, after this, I wash my hands of it and will let Salazar do what he sees fit. With that said, Peeves, I want you to do what you do best. I, Godric Gryffindor, give you free reign. Make that woman's life hell." He said, as he pointed right at a white faced Umbridge.

Peeves nearly quivered with glee as he turned to face her.

"With pleasure Lord Gryffy!" He cried, as he began slowly advancing towards her.

Salazar took the opportunity to cast a quick notice-me-not charm on himself, and then he grinned as he cast the voice amplifying charm.
"I, Salazar Slytherin, do hereby declare war on Umbridge. Hogwarts, do you acknowledge?"

**BONG!**

Just as the bell in the bell tower finished its ominous sound, all the children jumped to their feet.

"HARRY!" They all cried with happy faces.

"You really are alive!" Sirius said, jumping up from his seat as he stared around the great hall with wide eyes. "Someone tell me what he said!"

Hermione grinned at him. "He said, 'I, Salazar Slytherin, do hereby declare war on Umbridge. Hogwarts, do you acknowledge?' and the bell tolled!" She exclaimed, as all the others grinned happily.

"Harry is innocent!" Colin shouted.

"War!?" Umbridge shrieked as she nervously glanced around the great hall.

"Yes, war." Sirius said as he grinned maliciously.

"Perhaps I should make it a bit clearer." Albus said, as he stood up with twinkling eyes. "While Harry Potter might be the reincarnated soul of Salazar Slytherin, he is still James Potter's son. As I understand from Miss Ravenclaw's words a moment ago, Salazar was a brilliant prankster. It seems fitting almost, that a brilliant man and prankster like him would be born to one of the greatest pranksters of our day, James Potter. In other words Madam Umbridge, Harry Potter, also known as Salazar Slytherin, has declared a one sided prank war. I do feel most sorry for you."

"And Peeves is here to help you Lord Slytheryness!" The poltergeist shouted.

"This is madness!" Umbridge screamed. "Complete madness! I'll have Harry Potter arrested by the end of the day! I swear I will, and as for you Dumbledore, the Minister was willing to believe that you were being controlled by Potter, but I see here and now that you are doing this under your own free will! Only the Headmaster can control the ghosts and the castle, so this is your doing. You put these ghosts up to this. It was you who asked them to go along with this nonsense so that you and Potter could keep spreading the lies you all have been spewing! There is no immortal Founders or Merlin, and You-Know-Who is not back! This is a plot to take over the Ministry, and you're all involved in it!"

"And you call us mad!" Cedric said as he burst out laughing. "Oh I can't wait to see what Harry does to you!"

"You can expect a team of Aurors to be here by sundown." Umbridge hissed, as she ignored Cedric completely. "I will warn you only once. Anyone caught aiding the convicted known murderer Harry Potter, will also be arrested."

"Harry doesn't need our help in any way, shape, or form." Hermione said with a bit of snootiness. "He's perfectly capable of taking care of himself. Just because you keep denying it doesn't make it not true, but Harry helped build this castle. He knows it's every secret, and you will never find him."

"Oh we will see about that you nasty little girl." Umbridge spat, as she began marching out of the great hall with her head held high.

Umbridge didn't get far though, because Peeves dropped a whole bowl of oatmeal on her head, which caused the entire great hall to burst out laughing. She started screaming again, and ran out of
the room.

Hermione narrowed her eyes as she watched the woman leave, and even from his seat, Salazar could see Hermione's nostrils flare with determination. From the look in her eyes, Salazar knew exactly what she was thinking.

The children were going to spear head a campaign to get rid of that woman.

This was all misdirection, that to him, was plain as day. 'Harry Potter' was a good scape goat, seeing as no matter how hard the Ministry tried, they would never find him. It must have been something that they and Godric had come up with, and Salazar was willing to bet all of his galleons that Albus was on board with the plan, and if he wasn't, he soon would be.

It was genius really.

It would put all the suspicion on 'Harry' and it would leave the children free and clear to carry out all of 'Harry's' pranks. It also shielded all the Professors as well, and hopefully, if all went right they would all still have their jobs at the end of the year.

It was Saturday night, and it was the second regular meeting the Order had held since term started, which had only been in session for two and a half weeks. They had already discussed several things, one of which was alerting the rest of the wizarding world to the Founders and Merlin's presence. Merlin said was a good idea, after listening to Neville's reasoning about it being worth it if one life was saved.

Godric informed the Order about Luna's father, and they said it was a brilliant idea, so everyone signed off on getting the story to *The Quibbler*, especially now that Nehum was back to normal. If Rita agreed to everything, Albus was going to offer her shelter at Hogwarts so that she would be safe. As an added bonus, since Salazar had told everyone about her animagus form, Amelia said that when all was said and done, she'd be willing to waive the fee if Rita helped.

Now it was all up to Rita.

The children notified everyone that they were going to get started on the pranks soon, but they just wanted to give Umbridge a false sense of security before they actually started. The twins announced that they had been elected as the 'Presidents of Chaos' and any and all pranks and suggestions had to be ran by them before they were ok'd. Apparently Hermione was vice president, and Blaise and Neville were advisors, while Cedric, Ginny, Ron, Luna, Colin, and Dennis were 'troops'. They said that they were looking into getting more 'troops', but they wanted to clear everything with all the Professors before they actively started recruiting.

Albus's twinkling eyes and grin were all that was need as far as permission went.

Minerva said that if they needed anything to not hesitate to ask, but if it looked like they were going to get caught by Umbridge, or any of the Aurors that were currently wandering around the school, then they needed throw either herself, Albus, or Godric 'under the bus' in order to save themselves.

This didn't go over well with the children, but both of the Professors and Godric were firm about it. It was better for them to be dismissed, than for the children to be expelled because if they did get expelled, they would not be able to take the OWLs and NEWTs. Hermione tried to point out that Godric needed his OWLs and that he needed to be around to protect Draco, but he only glared at her and she finally gave up the fight.

It was after that Amelia when dropped a bombshell in their lap.
"Just be careful, because I have been told something that is going to give us a ton of trouble." She said gravely as she glanced around at everyone. "Fudge has gone to the Unspeakables in the Department of Mysteries, and asked them to look into making glasses that work exactly like Alastor's eye."

This caused everyone to stop and stare at her with wide eyes, but Minerva looked at Moody in shock.

"I thought your eye was one of a kind?" She gasped.

"It is." He said with a nod. "But everyone knows how it works, and the Unspeakables are good at creating spells. I have no doubts that the Unspeakables can pull it off."

"How far can you see through a wall?" Salazar asked.

"Roughly three meters, or ten feet if one was more inclined to say." He said gruffly.

"So if I'm running around helping the children with their pranks, and I disappear down a shortcut, they can see me?" Salazar asked.

"Yes, and they will know where every shortcut is located." Moody replied.

"But they won't know to access them." Hermione pointed out. "We do, and if they happen figure one out, Harry or Gordy could change it."

"That is true." Salazar and Godric said together.

"Not to mention, they won't know where we are. We have the map, so we can work around them." George said.

"Is there a way to make more copies?" Blaise asked, looking at Sirius with hope. "Because we are all going to need one."

Sirius tilted his head to the side and thought for a moment. "I can try to make more copies, but James and Remus were the ones who did most of the work, and with James... anyway... and Remus off with the werewolves, it will be difficult. You can't just make copies like you would a book, because the charms on the map won't replicate."

"But you could still make copies of the map and charm it accordingly, right?" Hermione asked.

"I think so, but I can't promise anything." Sirius said, causing her to sigh loudly and nod in understanding.

"You do have one advantage over them that you don't have with me." Moody said. "If they are getting glasses then obviously they can't see behind them. My eye can spin three-hundred and sixty degrees, but their glasses won't be able to do that."

"So always stay behind them." Blaise said with a nod.

"We can do that." Fred said.

"Remember, I can see through disillusionment charms, invisibility cloaks, wood, metal, fabric, anything."

"Is there anything you can't see through?" Godric asked.
Moody sighed loudly. "There is a...few...things I can't see through."

"Like what?" All the children asked eagerly, which cased Moody to glare at them.

Albus chuckled. "It is up to you whether you want to tell us Alastor."

"I can't believe I'm about to do this." Moody grumbled, but then he sighed loudly. "I can't see undetectable charms such as the undetectable extension charm, Fidelius Charms, and unplottable locations. I also can't see through any physically transforming abilities such as polyjuice, animagi, and metamorphmagus."

"Hmm, polyjuice." Fred said as he rubbed his chin. "We will need to disguise ourselves as random muggles, so that they can't recognize and identify anyone."

"I can help you there." Merlin offered. "I'll go into London and pluck hairs from people who are about your sizes."

"Thank you so much!" Neville said with a grin.

"We just need help with the potion." George said.

"I can make some, if I had the recipe." Hermione said, as she grinned sweetly and batted her eyelashes at Severus.

"No."

"Oh come on! Please Professor Snape!" The children begged.

"I just need the recipe, and help getting the rare ingredients." She said, causing Salazar to snicker.

"No." He repeated with a smirk.

They all scoffed and rolled their eyes, but then they grinned innocently at Salazar, Godric, and Merlin, who all laughed.

"Yes." Salazar said, causing them all to cheer. "But I will brew it, so that I know it is done right." He added, causing Hermione to huff loudly, but she was grinning none-the-less.

"You'll need to leave it for us somewhere when it's ready." Neville pointed out.

"The Room of Requirement." Hermione said instantly. "It's unplottable, and it gives you almost anything you need."

"It creates tunnels too, but be careful if you need to ask for one because if you don't ask for one big enough, you'll get one where only an ant can get through." Godric warned.

"So if we needed a tunnel to the Gryffindor common room, we could make one?" George asked with wide eyes, which caused Salazar to nod.

"You can make one to anywhere. It's how I got into the underground chambers to get the stone in first year." Salazar said.

"Oh dear, I don't like the sound of this." Minerva said nervously.

"Professor McGonagall," Fred said as he stood up with a bow, "you have our word that we will not use our knowledge of the castle for nefarious purposes, other than to prank Umbridge or the Aurors."
"And the sons and daughters of Death Eaters." Blaise added with a smirk.

She glared at him and huffed, but didn't say anything as George began to speak.

"We also won't disrupt class time, although we can't promise not to cause a *slight* disruption to the calm and tranquility of normal school hours, but we will do our best not to." George grinned.

Once again, she only raised her eyebrow at them and huffed slightly, but Albus and the other Professors chuckled lightly.

"I better not wake up one morning to find my common room pink." Severus warned.

"Whose common room?" Salazar asked with a grin. "If anything happens to Slytherin house, you can bet your last galleon that I will be responsible for it." He said, causing the children to burst out laughing.

"Then nothing better happen to *me*." Severus emphasized.

"It won't." Fred said, and for once he was being serious. "None of you have to worry about being pranked, unless we ask you beforehand in order to cover our tracks, or something like that. This can be pranking your person, classrooms, or offices, but if you say no, we won't do it."

"Don't worry Professor Snape, we won't bother you." Blaise snorted.

"See that you don't."

"That doesn't apply to me though." Salazar grinned, causing Severus to glare at him.

"Snape has purple ha-ir!" Sirius sang, causing Severus to shift his glare to him.

"Don't Sirius, just…don't." Neville said, shuddering at the thought.

Moody cleared his throat loudly, which caused them to sit up and pay attention again.

"Right…Fudge…Unspeakables…glasses." Fred muttered.

"How soon will they have them Amelia?" Moody asked.

"They will be given to *all* Aurors and myself, which I think is good because we can study their limits here. However, I don't know when they will have them ready. All of the Unspeakables have been pulled into this project, so it could be a week, or six months. It just depends on how fast they get them created." She said apologetically. "I will let you all know as soon as I know something, and I will keep you updated on their progress."

"It's all we can ask for." Albus said with a sigh. "All right everyone, I do believe this concludes our meeting. Have a good night."

They all got up to leave, but Salazar ran to catch up with Moody just before the man apparated way. The wind was howling fiercely so there was no danger of them being overheard, but Salazar cast Severus's 'Muffliato' spell anyway.

"I know it's visible right now, but I need to ask…"

"If I can see through the notice-me-not charm on your forehead when you are in adult form?" Moody asked with a twisted grin.
"Bugger." Salazar mumbled. "Hermione couldn't find a beautifying charm that suited my needs, so I went with this classic one. It was the best I could come up with, without spending a few weeks creating one. I just didn't want to take the chance the muggle make-up would wear off, or smudge."

"I don't blame you, but yes, I can see the scar."

"What do you suggest?" Salazar asked, looking at him hopefully.

"Wear a hat and keep your head down when you walk by the Aurors, but even then it's not a guarantee because they may be able to see it through your skull." Moody said with a sigh. "They may not think about it because they are looking for a boy, not a man. However, that scar is so well known, they may put it all together."

"Damn. I hate hats." Salazar grumbled. "If I could put the scar under a Fidelius I would." He said with a chuckle.

"You and I both know that can't be done." Moody snorted.

Salazar shook his head miserably and sighed. "All right. Thank you. I'll try and figure something out."

"Good luck Potter." Moody said, patting him on the shoulder just as he apparated away.

Salazar sighed and stared off into blackness of the dark sky. He didn't know what he was going to do about this situation, but he knew he needed to find a solution…and fast.

He sighed again and shook his head, but then he grinned as he remembered that he needed to discuss something with Merlin. He had an idea for a prank that could start the children off right, and he needed Merlin's help to do it.

It was Sunday morning, and Salazar grinned as everyone calmly ate breakfast in the great hall. Aurors were patrolling all over the castle and grounds. There were also a few in the great hall, but he knew those could be dealt with fairly easily.

He hadn't expected to be able to do this prank so soon, but when Merlin told him he had already brewed a slew of potions, Salazar was delighted to discover that one of them was Polyjuice. He looked up at Merlin somewhat apologetically though, as the man sat next to Sirius at the head table. Merlin had to drink Polyjuice made from Salazar's fingernails, seeing as Salazar was bald and didn't have any hair to offer. He wrinkled his nose on instinct just thinking about it, but he was grateful his friend had done it.

Right now Salazar was using the Polyjuice rock to look like Harry, and he was standing disillusioned in the very back corner of the great hall. He was surveying where all the Aurors were, and looking for the best way to escape. He grinned to himself as he thought of everyone's soon to be shock faces because no one besides he and Merlin knew what was about to happen.

Sneaking up the side of the great hall next to the Gryffindor table, he was careful not to bump anyone as he made his way to Sirius, who was happily chatting with Merlin, or rather…Pierre. Salazar could barely hold back a snort as he stood right in front of the man.

This is going to be funny. He thought.

With one swift motion, he cast a flame freezing charm over himself, and then in the next second, surrounded his body in a large ball of flames.
Sirius yelped loudly and jumped backwards, almost knocking over his chair and falling to the floor, but just as the flames began to die down, Salazar reversed the disillusionment charm, and grinned at Sirius.

There was a moment of stunned silence as everyone in the great hall stared at him in shock, but Salazar snorted loudly.

"Oh look, bacon!" He cried happily, as he swiped the bacon from Sirius's plate and began munching on it.

"HARRY!" Several happy voices cried out together, which broke the silence in the still stunned great hall.

"Harry Potter! Aurors! Aurors! Seize him! Seize him!" Umbridge screamed frantically, as she jumped up from her seat.

"Well, gotta go!" Salazar shouted, as he waved to all the children, who were close to dying with laughter.

Sirius still hadn't recovered yet, and he just stood there opened mouthed, as Merlin laughed at him. Salazar quickly disappeared in another ball of flames, and ran around behind the head table. Merlin took it as his cue to fire several unseen banishing charms at nearby goblets, plates, and platters of food in order to give off the illusion that Salazar was running for his life.

The Aurors and Umbridge bought it hook, line, and sinker.

Salazar stood off to the right of the head table, far back against the wall to survey the chaos, but he couldn't believe it when Susan Bones suddenly jumped up out of her seat.

"He just bumped into me!" She shouted, and began furiously trying to grab the air around her, as if trying to catch ahold of him.

"Get him! Get him!" Umbridge screamed, as the Aurors swooped down on Susan, and Salazar saw her shoot a grin at a laughing Cedric, who nodded approvingly.

"Run Harry, run!" Colin and Dennis screamed frantically from the Gryffindor table, as they jumped up and began hopping around in order to see what was going on.

Salazar clamped his jaws together to keep from laughing as the Aurors literally ran around in circles, tripping over each other in their haste to try and grab him. Three-quarters of the great hall were nearly in tears because they were laughing so hard, and the Professors were chuckling and smiling, but Minerva, Poppy, and Severus were looking at Pierre in slight confusion. Sirius's bark like laugh was easy to pick out above all the others though, because he seemed to have finally come to his senses.

"I haven't seen you in three months, and the first words out of your mouth when I do see you is, 'oh look, bacon'?!" He shouted happily as he wiped tears of laughter from his face. "It's brilliant Harry!"

"Well I hope you didn't expect an hour long conversation Sirius. I mean, I am a wanted man after all." Salazar said with a snort.

This made all the Aurors pause in their tacks as they stared around with wide-eyes, hoping to spot him. Umbridge was seething, and even from this distance, he could see the spittle flying out of her mouth. Giggles were heard all over the great hall, but Godric burst out laughing.
"I told you he was a slippery, slimy reptile!"

"Thank you for those kind words Godric. I take them to heart and wear them proudly."

"Where are you!?" Umbridge screamed furiously as she stomped her feet.

"Why I'm over here, or over there maybe. I don't know, I seem to be lost. Why don't you ask Nora? She can see me." He laughed, as Merlin banished a couple of platters of food in different directions.

"Speaker, you better not get caught!" She yelled from the Gryffindor table where she was sitting with the twins.

"I won't my dear, I promise." He replied, as the children burst out laughing. "Hogwarts my lady, if you would be so kind as to drop the anti-disapparition jinx on the great hall only, that would be lovely. I do need to make my escape after all."

BONG!

"Thank you my dear. Now, if you will all excuse me, I have to escape. Hogwarts, please replace the jinx when I have left. For those of you who are wondering, I'll arrive at the front gates. I will of course, double back and reenter the castle. Until next time my friends!"

"Salazar, you SNAKE! Stop teasing them!" Godric laughed.

"I can't help it Godric. It's just who I am. Gotta go now. Bye, bye!"

Then with a purposely loud unmistakable crack, Salazar apparated, and left the great hall in complete chaos.

"NOOOOO!" Umbridge screamed with fury. "Find him! Find him! Head to the gates now! Go! Go!"

They too tried to apparate, only to find that they couldn't because Hogwarts had already replaced the ward.

"Give me your wand Dumbledore!" Umbridge demanded, as she rounded on him and stomped up to the head table. "I know you just replaced it!"

Albus chuckled. "I assure you Madam Umbridge, I did no such thing, but please feel free to search my wand. Although, I'm afraid what you find may be slightly boring to be honest."

She glared at him, but snatched it out of his hands and handed it to a nearby Auror, who looked furious at being out smarted by a fifteen year old.

They did find boring spells though. One was a tooth brushing charm, a hot air charm, a cleaning charm, and a water charm. Umbridge finally snatched the wand out of the Auror's hand and threw it back to Albus in disgust.

"Well Potter couldn't have lifted the anti-disapparition jinx!" She screamed.

"Yes he can. He's a Founder. Hogwarts will allow both Harry and Mr. Roffin to control the wards, especially now that they have told everyone who they are. They have just as much control as I do." Albus said calmly, which only made Umbridge glare at him.
"Head to the gates! We are wasting time!" She barked, and she and the Aurors ran out of the great hall.

"They will never find him." Godric muttered, as he chuckled loudly.

"Why?" Draco asked.

"Because he didn't go to the front gates." Blaise said, as he shot a knowing grin at Godric.

They both knew Salazar landed in Godric's house in the forest.

"He's bloody brilliant!" Fred cried as tears poured down his face.

"Totally wicked!" Colin exclaimed.

"Did you see the look on Umbridge's face?" Blaise asked as he grinned.

"It was epic!" Dennis laughed.

"I don't think we've laughed this hard in a long time." Neville said, as they all snorted.

Draco watched them all with wide-eyes, but he couldn't bring himself to join in on their fun, because he was still very uncomfortable around them. Godric had already warded off several threats against his life, and Draco was grateful, but he didn't feel like he really belonged to the group. He still considered himself above most of them, but wasn't about to voice his opinion on the matter. Draco wasn't exactly happy having Godric as a babysitter, but he had made a promise to his Mother and he wasn't about to break it. Besides, he liked the safety, seclusion, and luxury of the Snake Pit, and he wasn't about to do or say anything to get thrown out of it.

They had already figured out that Montague was someone they needed to keep a close eye on, as well as several other sixth and seventh years, who were trying to gain their places at Voldemort's side. In their own year, they quickly learned that Pansy was all talk, while Millicent, Crabbe, and Goyle were just too stupid to really do anything. Nott appeared to be indifferent, but they decided to keep an eye on the boy just in case.

"I'm still a bit miffed at Harry though." Hermione said with a slight frown, causing Draco to scoff silently at her. "He promised to show us that disappearing in a ball of flames thing last year, and he never did."

Godric laughed. "It's not that hard honestly. Salazar came up with that to give off the illusion that he could come and go like a phoenix does."

"Really?" They all chorused.

"Yeah, all it is, is the flame freezing charm, the fire charm, and the disillusionment charm combined together. It's nothing more than smoke and mirrors." He said, and they all stared at him in shock.

"That's brilliant!" Colin exclaimed. "Man, I have so much to learn."

"We've been learning from him for four years Colin, and we still don't know all his tricks." Blaise laughed.

"That's good to know." Colin grinned, but then he laughed. "You know what's funny though?"

"What?" They all chorused.
"If the Ministry had a theme song, it could be 'Symphony of Destruction' by Megadeth, because they are going to get us all killed."

Dennis burst out laughing. "Just like the Pied Piper, led rats through the streets. We dance like marionettes, swaying to the symphony of destruction.

"Swaying to the symphony…of destruction." Colin echoed with a grin.

"The earth starts to rumble, world powers fall. A'warring for the heavens, a peaceful man stands tall. That would be Harry." Hermione said, causing the Creeveys to stare at her in shock. "What?" She asked, throwing her arms up in the air. "My Uncle listens to heavy metal, and that's one of his favorite songs."

"I never pegged you for knowing something like that Hermione." Colin said as he grinned at her.

"Look at the two of you!" She cried. "I never would have thought it either!"

"I'm confused." Neville said.

"Sorry you guys." Dennis chuckled. "That is a song by a muggle music band."

"Oh, I just had an excellent idea for a prank." Colin said, looking at the twins with a grin. "Dennis and I could do it every morning at breakfast. We could get up and sing muggle songs, then accuse Harry of confunding us."

"Yeah, she can't punish us for that." Dennis laughed. "It worked for her."

"That's excellent my friends!" George said with a grin. "But what songs?"

Colin started off into space. "I don't know."

"Enter Sandman by Metallica." Hermione said, causing them to stare at her again. She only glared at them though. "It talks about nightmares, and should give Umbridge a heart attack because of the lyrics."

"But it might scare Professor Dumbledore too." Colin snorted. "We could do…"

"Oh, I have a good one!" Dennis cried, cutting off his brother. "'Season of the Witch' by Donovan. Then we could shout about it being a muggle song, and watch Umbridge go into shock thinking the muggles know about witches and wizards."

"'Magic Carpet Ride' by Steppenwolf would be a good one too." Hermione offered. "But we could also do 'We Will Rock You' by Queen. Everybody knows that song, and all the muggle borns and everyone else could get in on it too."

"That would be brilliant!" Dennis cried. "We can do pretty much anything by The Rolling Stones and Beatles too. That would go over real good with Umbridge." He snorted.

"I have no idea what any of those songs are." Blaise said, looking at them all oddly.

"They are all muggle songs and bands. Don't worry about it Blaise." Hermione grinned.

"I tried to do 'We Will Rock You' during the first Gryffindor Quidditch match that I saw, but only Dean sung it with me." Colin said with a snort, which caused Hermione to giggle.

"All right." Fred grinned. "We will let you handle all that because we are totally lost, but we give it
the go ahead."

"Thanks." Colin said with a grin. "I think we should do 'Magic Carpet Ride' tomorrow though. That should throw Umbridge off. We can build up to 'We Will Rock You' because by then, everyone would have caught on and they can join us."

"Good idea." Hermione grinned.

Draco watched them all continue discussing their plans, but he only shook his head. He just didn't understand why these people were willing to draw attention to themselves. If it were him, he would be doing exactly what he had been doing since school started nearly three weeks ago.

Which was keeping his head down.

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"I know you're hiding something from me Professor Robillard." Umbridge said, as she struggled to keep up with him in the corridor.

He was headed back to his quarters after lunch that day, but Umbridge had caught up with him. Merlin had already left to go back to Camelot, but he told Salazar what happened after he apparated out of the great hall.

It made Salazar laugh loudly.

There weren't any students around right now though, so Salazar just rolled his eyes at the annoying woman.

"How do you mean?" Salazar asked innocently, not bothering to slow his pace.

"Why else would you have green flames in your door?" She wheezed. "I can't get in to evaluate you, so that leads me to believe that you aren't teaching what the Ministry deems appropriate."

"You can think what you like Madam Umbridge." He said dismissively, has he sharply turned the corner and headed up the next set of stairs.

"I read your application." She suddenly hissed from the bottom step. "You're the son of a muggle born and a muggle. Your less than a half-blood, and shouldn't even be here teaching the more respectable witches and wizards here at Hogwarts. You should go back to teaching the filthy muggle trash in their schools."

Salazar stopped in the middle of the staircase and turned around to give her a nasty grin, which caused her to curl her lip at him.

"A bit prejudiced are you?" Salazar asked. "It's hypercritical, considering who your mother and brother are. A muggle and a squib I believe, and dear old Daddy mops floors at the Ministry. Tsk, tsk." Salazar said with a smirk, as her eyes widened in alarm. "Amazing what a person can learn with the proper motivation and resources. Tell me Dolores," he sneered, "how much is Voldemort paying you to keep Fudge clueless? I could be wrong, but it seems to me that you might be working for Voldemort, giving you...unique view on things. It also would explain your blood lust for Harry Potter. Do you want to be the one to turn Potter over to Voldemort?"

"Lies." She hissed. "And I won't even bother acknowledging that question. Potter is nothing but a boy who will be caught soon and sent back to Azkaban, where he belongs."

"Be careful." Salazar warned. "I studied under Salazar, and whether you believe it or not, Potter is
Salazar Slytherin. Tread carefully, because he is not to be trifled with."

"We will see about that." She said with a glare. "Don't threaten me, because I will see to it that you are removed from your position."

"Good luck with that." He whispered with a feral grin.

Then he turned and continued up the stairs, leaving Umbridge snarling as she watched him walk away.

Chapter End Notes

Im sorry I didn't get to Salazar teaching in this one, but I had so much to fit into it and couldn't work it in. I'll try to get to it soon though. In case you all are wondering, no I will not have the Creeveys doing a song in every chapter, but I will more than likely write out 'We Will Rock You' because that one should be funny. Stomp, Stomp, Clap-Stomp, Stomp, Clap anyone? LOL! I'll wait a few chapters before I do it though.

In the next chapter, we will catch up with dear old Lucius, and we will touch base with Narcissa as well. I will also have Rita's answer, and her reaction to everything. I will also have another prank lined up for Umbridge. We will also find out how the Parkinsons are doing, considering they are living with Voldy, who is being driven crazy by his mini-me!

Please keep the suggestions for pranks coming! I have already gotten several suggestions that I like and will be using, so please keep them coming!
"James its madness! They come knocking on my door at all hours of the day! A third year even brought me biscuits with a love letter tied to them!” Sirius exclaimed as he looked into the mirror at his laughing best friend.

"It appears some things never change. Just make sure you keep your curtains shut tight, so that none of the females can have a look see when you step out the shower.” James snorted, causing Sirius to groan and shake his head.

"It's the Black charm Sirius.” Lily grinned, as she fluttered her eyelashes at him and made kissy faces.

Sirius laughed. "You're my best friend's wife Lil, you don't count."

"Well I don't know whether to be relieved or insulted." She laughed, just as a knock sounded at Sirius's door.

"I swear that better not be another female trying to hand me biscuits." He grumbled, as he threw a blanket over the mirror.

"Would it be better if they were dog biscuits?!" James shouted, though it was awfully muffled.

Sirius snorted, but he went to the window by the door and peaked out, then sighed with relief. He opened the door and grinned at the two red-heads that were standing on his doorstep.

"Thank goodness. I thought you were more girls trying to douse me with love potions.” He said, as Fred and George snorted loudly.

"There may have been talk in the Gryffindor common room about that very thing happening. Just watch yourself.” George grinned.

"Oh dear. That's never good.” Lily murmured, though it wasn't heard by Fred, George, or Sirius.

"What's up?” Sirius asked, as he closed the door, and double checked all of his windows to ensure the curtains were closed tightly.

"We need your help." Fred said, as Sirius walked over to the blanket and pulled it off the mirror.

"And that it what we needed your help with.” He added with a grin, as he caught sight of Lily and James in the mirror.

"Is everything all right?” Lily asked in a concerned tone.

"Oh yeah, everything is fine.” George assured her quickly as he pulled a book out of his bag. "Did Sirius tell you what Harry did this morning?"
James burst out laughing. "Yes he did. I wish I could have seen the look on that woman's face."

Fred snorted. "So you know all about Umbridge too then?" he asked.

"Of course." Lily said with a disgusted scowl. "Between Sirius and Salazar, we are well informed, and that woman is lucky I'm nowhere near her." She hissed.

"We were hoping that was the case." George said, as he laid a book on the table.

"It that what I think it is?" Sirius grinned.

"Yep!" George said proudly. "The Complete Compendium of Marauder Pranks." He grinned as he held it up high.

James, George, Fred, and Sirius bowed slightly in respect as the book was laid out before them on the table, but Lily only rolled her eyes.

"James," Fred said seriously, as he looked at him. "When you gave this to us, we made you a promise that we would never use it to target a specific individual. However, we have to ask you if we can break that promise."

"We want to use this book, and all of it glorious wonders, to target Umbridge." George added.

James and Sirius grinned at them. "Go get her." James said, causing the twins to high five each other.

"Thanks." George laughed. "We figured you'd say yes, but we just kind of wanted to make it official. We did make you a promise after all."

"Well I do appreciate you asking." James said with a nod. "But I'm curious, what have you used from it?"

"Truthfully, not a whole lot, but we have pranked a few of our friends, one or two enemies, and a few have been used on the whole school. Harry was our test subject when we wanted to see what one of the pranks actually looked like. He didn't mind though, he always thought it was funny." Fred said with a grin, as James burst out laughing.

"Chaos will start tomorrow, although Peeves has already been doing his part. He throws food at her in the great hall, steals that awful pink hat of hers, and he loudly mocks her when she's walking down the hall." George added.

"Like George said though, tomorrow we start our part. The Creevey brothers are going to get us started. Every morning for the foreseeable future they are going to stand up in their seats in the great hall and sing muggle songs, then accuse Harry of confunding them. It should be pretty funny."

"What muggle songs?" Lily asked, as she laughed loudly.

"I think they are going to start out with some song called 'Magic Carpet Ride'. I'm guessing that because of the title, it involves something magical." Fred said.

James, Sirius, and Lily burst out laughing.

"That song was popular in the late sixties, early seventies." Lily said. "We actually know that one."

"Lily used to sing it all the time, and that's how James and I know it." Sirius snorted. "It's a shame that electronics can't be used at Hogwarts. There are some muggle songs out there that would be so funny to have blaring in the great hall."
"Howlers!" Lily exclaimed. "All you do for a howler is set up recording quill and record yourself screaming. Recording quills will pick up anything, even music. I have a muggle tape deck here with all kinds of music and songs that James has bought over the years, and we can use the mirrors to record howler songs!"

"Lily, that is brilliant!" Sirius shouted gleefully. "Whatever song the Creeveys do at breakfast, we can have the real song blaring during dinner. I can tell you what song and who sings it right after breakfast, and then you can find it in your tapes, or go and buy it, and we can record it after lunch."

"Wait, won't it explode and go off right away though?" George asked. "And why not just use the mirrors to play the songs?"

James grinned. "Doing it through the mirrors won't work because the music won't be loud enough. However, howlers are charmed to explode after the recipient gets them, but they don't have to be. All Sirius has to do is walk into the great hall with it in his pocket, open it, then it will go off. After that, it just ends up like a normal letter." He explained, causing the twins to grin at him.

"It's brilliant." Fred laugh. "We will tell the Creeveys what is going on, and we know they will die laughing."

"Tell them to pick good songs." Lily grinned. "But what prank are you going to do tomorrow."

"Well, that is the second reason why we came here this evening." George laughed. "We need Sirius's help with one of the pranks." He grinned, then he began outlining his plan.

The next day was Monday, the start of a new week at Hogwarts, and the Professors thought it was calm and quiet, until the great hall began to fill with students, who were all walking backwards.

This had Fred and George written all over it, and apparently what had happened was, Godric snuck into all the dorms in Slytherin house, and charmed everyone to walk backwards for the whole day. Seeing as he was a Founder, he could get into the girls dorms without the stairs going wonky on him.

Hermione and the twins got everyone in Gryffindor, while Luna and Terry Boot, a new 'troop', charmed everyone in Ravenclaw, and in Hufflepuff, Cedric and Susan, who was also a new 'troop' were to blame.

The Professors didn't know it yet, but Sirius had walked behind the entire head table charming all of them, except Umbridge, to do the same.

The entire great hall was talking about everyone walking backwards, and they were either laughing about it, or grumbling. Hermione however, finally stood up with an angry scowl on her face.

"Harry! This is absolutely insane! How are we supposed to get to class walking backwards?" She scolded, as she walked backwards beside the Gryffindor table with her hands on her hips. "We are going to fall up a stair and break our necks!"

Her question was met with silence from Harry, but that did not stop everyone from giggling. Umbridge though, looked ready to explode, until Minerva stood up. To her complete surprise, she also started walking backwards, causing everyone to burst out laughing.

"Oh dear. Whatever shall we do now?" She asked, looking to Albus.

He got up, and with more laughter from the students, he too began walking backwards.
"Well it seems Harry has come up with a prank, though I am unclear on what the joke actually is." He said, as he calmly sat back down in his seat. "Just make sure you are all careful when walking to class." He added, as Minerva sighed loudly and sat back down.

"Severus, don't get mad at Fred and George." Sirius whispered, as he leaned across Salazar, who was grinning like a fool. "I was the one who charmed the Professors."

Severus glared at him, but chose to remain quiet, as Salazar snorted.

"This ought to be an interesting day." He whispered, which only made Sirius grin.

Salazar was about to say something else, but was cut off as Umbridge finally exploded in anger.

"What is the meaning of this!?" She suddenly cried, as she got up and inched her way around the table.

"Hey look Umbridge is the oddball out!" Fred called out loudly, causing everyone at the Gryffindor table to snort loudly.

"I guess she is so rotten that she doesn't know how to have fun!" George said loudly.

"Either that or Harry couldn't be bothered by getting her. Hey Hermione, maybe that's why he didn't answer you. He's been running around the school all night charming people. He's probably asleep." Fred said.

"Serves him right!" She said sternly, as she tried to keep the grin off her face.

"I demand this be fixed at once!" Umbridge demanded. "This is not proper or orderly! This is nonsense! This is a school and we are here to learn!"

"Something tells me Harry doesn't care!" Neville exclaimed. "And we are learning. We are learning how to walk backwards and not kill ourselves!"

"You be quiet boy!" She shouted, just as Colin and Dennis suddenly stood up on their seats.

They began singing a good a cappella rendition of 'Magic Carpet Ride', which surprised many people because, who knew the Creevey boys could actually sing? When they were done, they stared around wildly with their hands covering their mouths. Umbridge tried to protest their performance, but an unseen silencing charm from Godric hit her in the back, causing her to rant silently. When the boys were done though, Godric reversed it, and Umbridge glared around the room, then at Dennis and Colin.

"You two, what was that nonsense!?" She yelled.

"Harry confunded us!" Dennis immediately cried, causing Umbridge's face to darken into a scowl.

"It's a muggle song though. We recognize it!" Colin announced.

"Muggle!" Umbridge shrieked. "How do the muggles know about magic carpets!? Who is violating the statue of secrecy!?"

"I don't know." Dennis said nonchalantly, as he sat back down and started eating again.

"Mr. Potter, stop confounding people." Minerva halfheartedly scolded.

"Aaarrrgghhh!" Blaise suddenly shouted from the Slytherin table, as he jumped a foot in the air.
"Harry don't do that! Wait, what?" He asked, and then he nodded. "He says he's going to bed now. His work here is done."

"Harry Potter, you get back here and set me right!" Hermione demanded, as she tried not to laugh.

Nothing was done though, and Umbridge immediately began screaming for the Aurors, who thanks to Godric's unseen spells, were now also walking backwards.

"This is madness." Draco said in disbelief, as he looked around the laughing great hall.

"That is what makes it so great Draco, because it is madness." Blaise snorted. "We are just trying to drive her insane."

"Why would you do that though?" Draco asked, as Blaise shrugged.

"Number one, we don't like her. Number two, she tried to kill Harry at his trial. Number three, she lied about being confunded, and we want to make her pay for it. Number four, she tried to kill Nora, and number five, because we can." Blaise said with a grin.

"This year is going to be a lot different Draco." Godric said, as he snorted when Umbridge started screaming again. "Just go with it. We aren't asking you to take part in anything, but if you have an idea, feel free to share."

"Between Fred and George, I don't think you're going to need my ideas." Draco said quietly.

"That's not true. We can always use more ideas. Everyone is welcome to pitch in, but if you don't want too, that's fine. Just remember, when we do these big pranks like this, we are going to get you to cover our tracks."

"I know, but this walking backwards thing is bloody annoying." Draco grumbled.

"It'll be gone by the end of the day lad." Godric chuckled. "Don't worry."

Draco sighed and shook his head. "All right. I just don't understand you people." He said, causing Godric and Blaise to burst out laughing.

The rest of the day passed by fairly easy, with the exception of the whole school walking backwards, which caused Umbridge to scowl and yell about it not being proper. However, when dinner rolled around, everyone thought it was going to a quiet meal, until Sirius opened the howler.

Having 'Magic Carpet Ride' blaring in the great hall caused everyone to stare around in awe, but no one was more surprised than the Creevey brothers, who were stunned speechless. Hermione however, got up, danced (backwards), and sang along, then accused Harry of confunding her. No one figured out where the song came from, but Fred and George explained it to the Creeveys, who thought it was 'just so wicked'. Umbridge started another round of yelling, which caused everyone to grin. Then she shouted about muggle devices not working at Hogwarts, and demanded to know how this had happened.

Sirius only grinned, and kept quiet.

When Umbridge stormed out the great hall yelling about muggles, magic carpets, and the statue of secrecy, nearly everyone broke down with laughter. Well, except a few Slytherins, who glared at everyone. They seemed to be insulted by having been forced to listen to something muggle.
The Forest of Dean was a dirty, disgusting place if you once lived in luxury, and Lucius Malfoy hated it with a passion. He had been forced to use fiendfyre to destroy his Manor, but he managed to salvage a few things before he did. He grabbed a few books, paintings of old family members, and the tent he and his family used during the Quidditch World Cup, but other than that, there was nothing left to salvage.

Everything worth anything had already been sold to that they could afford to eat after Black kicked Narcissa out the family, but Lucius had managed to scrape together what little bit of food was left to take with him.

However, he had no one to cook it for him.

He had ordered the last two of his elves, the ones the Dark Lord hadn't killed for being slow or incompetent, and ordered them to come with him to care for him.

To say they declined was an understatement.

They severed their own bonds and scowled at their foul Master, before saying they chose to die with dignity. Then they apparated away, leaving Lucius to fend for himself.

He hated the foul beasts that left him to rot in the forest, because he had no idea what he was doing. He burned all the good food trying to cook it himself and had been forced to throw it all away.

Now Lucius had nothing.

No clean clothes were left for him to wear, and he didn't know how to clean them. He had no knowledge of cleaning charms, because he considered them useless to learn. Lucius had always had someone doing it all for him, and he had no money to buy books to learn them.

Lucius scowled as he looked around his meager camp. Sure his tent was ok, and at least it provided a roof over his head, but it did little else. His small, protected camp looked like a jail cell to him, and the only living things he encountered was a few animals that he killed for his meager, burnt, and tasteless meals. He saw muggles every once in a while when he was out hunting, but he didn't dare to mess with them. Lucius knew that if the Ministry caught wind of muggles dying mysteriously in the Forest of Dean, then Potter would somehow get wind of it, and come looking for the cause.

No, it was best to leave the filthy muggles to themselves, least Potter find him. Lucius wanted to stay alive, because he wanted to get revenge.

Revenge on his traitorous wife and son, and revenge on Potter and Dumbledore. Lucius fully believed that his current state of affairs was all their fault, and he needed to find a way to get back into his Master's good graces. It was the only way to gain some of his decency back, and if he pleased the Dark Lord by bringing him the dead bodies of his wife and son, Lucius would at least be forgiven. Then he would be clothed, fed, and clean.

He had nothing to lose and everything to gain, so he sat in his tent and plotted his revenge.

It had been three days since the twins did the walking backwards prank, and so far nothing else had really happened, with the exception of Dennis and Colin singing and Sirius playing the real version of the song at dinner.

So far they had done 'Symphony of Destruction', which caused Umbridge to yell because of the lyrics and the topic, especially after Dean shouted about it being the perfect song for the Ministry.
The day after that, they sang 'Youth Gone Wild' by Skid Row, and when Sirius played the official version at dinner, it caused Umbridge to freak out thinking 'Harry' was planning a school rebellion. That morning though, the Creeveys took a lighter tone with 'Jeremiah was a Bullfrog', and this song surprisingly made Umbridge angrier than the other ones.

She started yelling about students calling those with authority names and promised to throw everyone in detention if they were caught humming the song. No one really understood her behavior at first, but then Hermione said it was because of the word 'bullfrog' and looked at them pointedly. That sent the rest of the conspirators into a fits of laughter, but no one really understood how Umbridge came to that conclusion, seeing the song was about spreading 'joy' and the word 'bullfrog' was only mentioned once.

However, it was because of this morning's antics that Umbridge was stomping through the school with a feral grin on her face, as she headed towards the Defense classroom.

"You all have done excellent work over the last few weeks." Salazar said, as he smiled approvingly around at his fifth year Gryffindors and Slytherins. "I am convinced that you all have a firm grasp of the shield charm and the reviving spell. However, you all need to work on your silent casting. Some of you are still shouting out the spells, while others are whispering loudly. With that said, I am pleased with most of you all's essay work on the stunning spell, so we are going to start that today. Who can demonstrate for me the wand movement, and incantation?" He asked.

To no one's surprise, Hermione's hand shot in the air, but Salazar decided to call on Nott. The boy stood up and faced Salazar with a determined look.

"I'm ready when you are." Salazar smiled.

The boy took a deep breath and raised his wand. "Stupefy!" He cried, as he made a jabbing motion with his wand.

The red light burst forth from his wand, and Salazar nodded approvingly as he easily brought up a shield charm.

"Very good Mr. Nott. Ten points to Slytherin. However, you need to work on the strength of your spell, as well as silent casting. If someone were to be hit with that one, they would wake up on their own within a few minutes."

"Yes sir." Nott said, but he still looked pleased with himself.

"All right, we are going to do something different today, so here is what I want you all to do. Pair up with a person of your choice, and you all are going to practice the shield charm, reviving spell, and the stunning spell. Godric, no unseen spells." Salazar added with a grin, which caused Godric to roll his eyes.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." He laughed. "I'm a duelist though. It's natural."

"I don't care. No unseen spells, or I will put you in detention." Salazar chuckled, causing the students to giggle, and Godric to laugh again.

"I'd like to see you try."

"And I'd like to see you try and get out of it. I hear lions don't like to be caged." Salazar responded with a wicked grin, causing the students to giggle again. They had gotten used to the playful bantering of their Professor and 'Gordy'.

"You all have done excellent work over the last few weeks."
Godric grunted his response, but grinned as he stood up and nudged Draco in the arm. The rest of the students paired up, as Salazar banished the desks to the side of the room.

"This should be easy for Longbottom, seeing as he cast a wandless stunner last year." Pansy sneered, as she glared at Neville, who had paired up with Ron.

"Yeah, let's see you do that again Longbottom." Crabbe snorted.

Ron paled as he glanced nervously at Neville, but Neville only rolled his eyes. Godric however, glanced sharply at Pansy.

"He did it out of fear and desperation. Salazar and I held that little demonstration to show that it was possible for anyone to do that in those types of circumstances. Doing it consciously with a wand is something totally different though." Godric said, as Salazar nodded in agreement.

"It's impossible to do that consistently though." Pansy said with a snooty flip of her hair. "Even for you."

"Do you want to find out? Go stand over there, and you and I will face off." Godric said, pointing to the back wall.

Pansy narrowed her eyes at him, but huffed. "No thank you, I wouldn't want you to make a fool of yourself...Gryffindor." She snarled.

Nearly all of the Gryffindor students glared and pointed their wands at her, but Godric held his hand up to stop them from doing anything.

"Don't worry about it. She's only afraid to be proven wrong. Let her continue on with her ignorant arrogance. She'll likely pay for it one day." He said, causing the Gryffindors to smirk at the furiously scowling girl. Then he glanced at Salazar, who stood beside his desk watching the situation with amusement. "Sorry about that Pierre."

"Not a problem. Now remember, I want you all to do this silently, so off you go." Salazar said with a nod, then he motioned for them to get started.

The room became a flurry of activity as everyone set about trying to stun each other and shield themselves. Salazar knew that Ron, Hermione, Blaise, and Neville already had a firm grasp on the stunning spell, seeing as that was taught to them over the summer, but having to do it silently somewhat made up for the advantage they had over the other students.

Salazar was pleased with what he was seeing from his, admittedly, favorite students, but both Ron and Blaise, who was paired up with Hermione, needed to work on their silent casting. There was a lot of whispering going on, but every once in a while someone would shout 'protego' in a moment of desperation.

They had been practicing for a good fifteen minutes, and Salazar was busy helping Lavender and Parvati when he saw a sudden flicker of movement out of the corner of his eye. He stopped and turned to the back wall of the classroom, and felt his stomach drop to the floor.

"Stop!" He commanded in a loud voice, which stilled everyone's movement instantly.

The students followed his gaze to the back wall, and behind him Salazar heard several gasps, and a few breathless 'uh ohs'.

Umbridge had charmed the back wall of the classroom to be see through, and she was grinning like a
cat who had just caught a mouse. She grinned even wider when she caught the stunned looks on all of the students' faces, but waggled her stubby finger in an 'I told you so' manner, before she bolted down the corridor.

Salazar just stood there stunned trying to process what happened, but Godric shoved him roughly from behind.

"Get after her you fool!" He shouted, and Salazar bolted out the classroom door.

He knew which direction she went, but he couldn't see any sign of her at all, and given her size and short stature, he knew she wasn't very fast.

_Damn! She under a disillusionment charm!_ He thought wildly to himself.

He knew he needed to catch her, so that he could obliviate her and the incantation for see through charm from her mind, but he couldn't do that if he couldn't find her.

He needed help. Lots of help.

He immediately cast a disillusionment charm on himself, an in the next moment, he cast a voice amplifying charm.

"Emeralda, your assistance is needed in the entrance hall. Get there as soon as you can. Umbridge has caught Pierre teaching, and she is under a disillusionment charm, so you are the only one who can spot her. DO NOT LET HER LEAVE THE CASTLE!" He roared, as he made his way towards the entrance hall.

He knew Umbridge was probably headed that way to apparate off the grounds, and he was already on the first floor, when another voice boomed through the castle.

"Speaker, the Minions say she's in the second floor corridor, and just turned towards the staircase. Now she is speeding up the staircase towards the third floor. Wait, what? Damn! How did she know that shortcut?!" Nora said.

Salazar nearly stopped in his tracks, but then he remembered that Nora was with Fred and George, and they had the map. There was no doubt in his mind that they had cast a voice amplifying charm on her, and was telling her to repeat everything they said. He cursed though, because he was going the wrong direction, so he turned around and ran as fast as he could towards the third floor.

"Speaker, you need to hurry. Aurors are coming from every direction because of our language, and believe it or not, a team of them are headed right for you.

"I'm disillusioned, they can't spot me."

"Good to know." She replied. "Ha! Speaker, she either didn't know that shortcut led to the fifth floor, or she didn't care, but it looks like she is starting to panic now. She's running back and forth looking for a way out. Keep going because that team of Aurors is behind you now."

Salazar grinned to himself as he sped down a nearby shortcut that led to the fifth floor, but he cursed and turned around when Nora's slightly panicked voice blurted out, _"She's headed for her office! Fourth floor!"

He raced back down the shortcut he was in, which was on the third floor. This was because the stairs to the fourth floor were right beside the exit, and he knew this would be the faster way.
"Stop Speaker!" Nora shouted. "More Aurors are right in front of you at the end of that shortcut!"

Salazar screeched to a halt, and waited with baited breath until Nora gave the all clear, then he cautiously exited the shortcut, and made a beeline for the stairs to the fourth floor.

"Hurry Speaker, Dumbly appears to be distracting those Aurors. She is coming down the opposite way you are!"

He sped up his running, and skidded to a halt on the fourth floor, then narrowed his eyes. He was trying to spot any movement he could, and hoped that Umbridge wasn't proficient with the disillusionment charm.

Luck wasn't with him though, because he couldn't see anything.

"Where is she from my position?" He asked, trying to control his breathing.

"Running fast towards her door Speaker. Hurry!"

There! Halfway down the corridor he spotted her office door open, and raced towards it. He was almost there when it slammed shut, and he crashed into it with a sickening crunch.

"I just broke my arm!" He shouted, as he winced with pain, but then he blasted the door off its hinges.

He raced inside, but heard Umbridge yelp loudly as pieces of the door flew everywhere. Then to his complete horror, her fireplace erupted in green flames.

"The Ministry!" She screamed frantically, and then she was gone before he could hit her with a stunning spell.

"Speaker! She's gone! Where did she go!?" Nora cried.

Salazar winced in pain, and sighed in defeat.

"SON OF MORGANA!" He roared in English to let everyone know it had all went horribly wrong, then he blasted her office desk apart. "She flooed out my dear. She's gone."

"Don't worry Speaker, I will bite her, and then we can feed her to the Shrew." Nora replied, causing Salazar to shake his head and sigh again.

"I've broken my arm, so I'll need some time to heal it. Don't worry about me though, I'll be fine." He said, and ran out of the office and headed towards the fifth floor, just as Aurors rounded the corner from the third floor. He needed to get to Poppy fast, so that she could heal his arm quickly. It wouldn't look good if Pierre showed up anywhere with a broken arm.

"I knew it! I knew it!" Umbridge shrieked to Fudge. "I knew that worthless man wasn't teaching the proper material."

She had just spent an hour telling him what she saw in the Defense classroom, and the resulting chase that followed, and she was not happy about any of it.

"Apparently Potter was trying to protect that Robillard fellow, but lucky for you, your floo is the
only one operational in the castle." Fudge said. "I hate to think about what would have happened if Potter had caught you." He added with a shiver.

"How dare that blasted Potter chase me all over the castle! I'll make him pay, you watch and see!" She shouted.

"Calm down Dolores. I'll sign this order of dismissal for Robillard. You said he was teaching the students how to fight, and we can't have that." Fudge said with a scowl. "As for Potter, when we catch him, we will add the charge of endangering a Ministry official. I'm confused though, you said there was two sets of voices speaking Parseltongue?"

"Yes." She hissed through gritted teeth. "One was Potter's because I recognized it, but the other leaves me baffled. I don't know who it could have been, but it sounded feminine. I can't be sure though, because who really knows with that awful, evil language."

"Could it be Potter's pet snake Cora, or whatever its name is?" Fudge asked, looking at her curiously.

"I don't know how she could cast a voice amplifying charm herself. She's a snake." Umbridge snapped.

"Unless someone did it for her, which means Potter has help." Fudge replied irritably. He didn't appreciate her current tone, but was willing to let it slide, considering what the poor woman had just been through. "Potter was able to find you, even if you were running around under a disillusionment charm. That implies he has help. We need to find out who is helping him."

"It could be anyone in that castle. Nearly the whole school believes this immortal Founder and Merlin nonsense. There are only very few people who thinks its rubbish."

"And who are they?" Fudge asked curiously.

"My sources in Slytherin house. The Montague, Crabbe, Goyle, and Nott boys, along with the Parkinson, Bulstrode, and Carrow girls." She replied.

"Yes, yes, all good upstanding families." Fudge said, as he nodded vigorously. "Well, here is what we do. Tonight at dinner I'll go with you so that we can dismiss Robillard. We will take Amelia and some more Aurors. We only have fifteen at Hogwarts right now, but we can afford to add a few more. It will be all right Dolores, you will see."

"Why dinner?" She asked curiously.

"Potter is less likely to try anything dangerous in the great hall when it's filled with children, so we can fire Robillard relatively safely." He answered. "Not to mention, it will make a public statement that we are not afraid to get rid of those Professors who are substandard. Maybe the rest will think twice about crossing you."

"An excellent idea." Umbridge replied. "But I want guards outside my office and living quarter doors at all times. I don't feel safe there, especially after what just happened."

"Very well, and who do you have in mind to replace Robillard?" He asked.

She smirked at him. "Me." She said, as her eyes glittered dangerously.

"How did she know to do that charm!?" Hermione demanded, as she threw her books down onto a study table in the Snake Pit.
Classes were over for the day, and 'Pierre' had seriously looked worried all day long, which translated into 'I don't know what the hell to do now' to all of those 'in the know'. The rumors were flying all over the school about what happened, and no one knew for sure what was going to happen next.

"It's not really that hard Hermione, and the charm is in the library. My guess is, she got the idea from here," a worried Godric said, as he pointed to the ceiling, "and decided to use it on the classroom wall."

Hermione scowled and started to say something, but was cut off by Blaise.

"What is going to happen now? What is Harry and Professor Robillard's plan?"

"I don't know." Godric said, as he shook his head nervously. "I don't know what's going to happen now."

"He's probably going to get fired, and when he does, we will be stuck reading that stupid Slinkhard book." Neville grumbled as he leaned back and crossed his arms.

"Where does that leave us though?" Draco asked. "I mean, we can't learn what we need to for our OWLs, and you can bet Umbridge will replace Professor Robillard with someone who will teach what the Ministry wants them too."

"We have to ramp up our efforts to get rid of her." Colin said with determination.

"I'm sure everything will be fine in the long run. We will think of something." Luna said, as she looked at everyone with an encouraging smile.

"I hope you're right Luna." Godric said with a sigh. "I really hope you're right, and Colin you are right. We need to double our efforts in, not just getting rid of that woman, but getting the truth out. I'll talk to Salazar about writing that letter to Rita, but right now, something tells me he has other pressing matters on his mind."

Everyone nodded knowingly, but they were scared, scared about what may happen next.

As Salazar walked into the great hall for dinner, nearly everyone present began whispering and pointing in his direction. He knew that they knew his time was short, and Salazar fully believed that they were right. Umbridge's hatred of him because of 'Pierre's' blood status pretty much guaranteed that his role as Pierre was quickly coming to an end.

If Salazar was right about Umbridge, she was going to make an example out of him by displaying the power she now had to fire Professors. Unfortunately however, there was nothing Salazar could do to prevent it.

But he did have a plan.

Admittedly, it was a crappy plan, but he still had a plan.

It was a plan to make her doubt herself, but more importantly, her eyes. If he could make her doubt her eyes and become paranoid, he might just cause her to breakdown in the long run.

To say that he hated this woman was an understatement, and he wanted her to suffer. He didn't care what it took, he was going to bring her down off her high horse. She may have won this battle, but she would not win the war.
It pained Salazar though, as he sat down in his seat and looked out over the great hall at all the sad faces that were gazing at him. These children were going to waste a whole year learning rubbish while a real war was quietly beginning outside the gates of Hogwarts.

He knew he needed to do something, but right now he didn't know what. However, if it took 'Harry' bursting into common rooms at random times to teach these children Defense, well then by Merlin Salazar was going to do it.

"Are you ok?" Severus whispered quietly, making a point to not look at him.

"No Severus, I'm not. I don't really know what to do right now, and I'm still pissed off that she got away."

"Well according to Fred and George, she hasn't come back to the castle all day." Severus replied. "They had potions as their last class."

"I'm grateful for their quick thinking. Do you know where they were when it all happened?"

"They were in Herbology. Apparently Pomona cast a quick notice-me-not over them, and they got to work."

"I'm grateful." Salazar said with a nod, as Sirius sat down next to him.

"What's the plan? I'm up for anything."

"I have a plan, but you all need to stay far away from it. It's a crappy plan and I'm not happy with any of it, but it's the best I can come up with on such short notice." Salazar sighed.

"What are you going to do?" Severus asked nervously.

"You're about to find out." Salazar said, as the great hall's doors opened.

Umbridge walked in with Fudge on one side and a scowling Amelia on the other. They were surrounded by six Aurors, and the ones that were already in the great hall, stood up at once and joined them as they approached the head table.

Umbridge looked smug as she stood there smiling sweetly at all the Professors, who glared at her in return. Then she turned to Salazar, and her smile changed into a smirk.

"Pierre Robillard, it is my right and my duty as Hogwarts High Inquisitor to inform you that you are hereby fired from your position as Defense against the Dark Arts Professor." She said, as she stood there with a triumphant gleam in her eye.

Salazar stood up and glared at her. "On what grounds?"

She looked slightly taken aback, but she smugly smiled. "On the grounds of not teaching properly approved Ministry material."

"And what material would that be?" He asked calmly.

"There is no need to be teaching practical defense when theory is all they need to pass the class." She answered.

"And what is the exact theory you, Madam Umbridge, and the rest of your colleagues wish the students to learn?" Salazar asked, not taking his eyes off the woman.
He saw her jaw set, and she ground her teeth together slightly. "That magical defense is not necessary. You should try to reason with opponents rather than engaging them in a fight." She answered with a smug smile.

"Just so that we are clear, you wish to start breeding a generation of weak and defenseless witches and wizards." Salazar said with a nod. "I understand now. Thank you for clarifying."

She stared at him with a calculating gaze, but then she tilted her head to the side. "Well Mr. Robillard," She said with a slight sneer. "You may leave now. You are no longer needed. Perhaps you should go and apply to a muggle school. You have after all, taught them before."

"Yes I have, and I do not deny it. However, you seem to be confused Madam." He snarled. "Just because you're firing me, doesn't mean I'm leaving Hogwarts."

He immediately saw her, Fudge, and the Aurors stiffen in alarm.

"What do you mean?" She asked nervously.

"You can fire me, but you can't make me leave Hogwarts." He said simply.

"You are fired Mr. Robillard. You will allow these Aurors to escort you to the Defense classroom, you will pack your things, and you will leave." She demanded with a stomp of her foot.

"No I won't." He said with a sly grin. "Merlin now!" He suddenly shouted.

Instantly, Umbridge, Fudge, Amelia, and the Aurors were surrounded by a golden cage, and Merlin lifted his disillusionment charm. They cried out in shock and fear, and tried to fire spells or flee, but they found themselves rooted to the spot, unable to move.

"That's not Merlin, that's not Merlin!" Umbridge screamed.

"Oh, but I assure you woman, I am." Merlin replied with deadly seriousness, causing Fudge to pale drastically, and Umbridge to loudly deny it again.

*Hogwarts, quietly lift the anti-disapparition jinx from the great hall, and the anti-apparition jinx in the defense classroom please.* Salazar thought, as he glared at those trapped in Merlin's golden cage.

"You see Umbridge, I must make a confession." Salazar said with a smile. "I'm not who I say I am."

"Then who are you?" She demanded, as a panicked look appeared on her face.

"I find that every once in a while I must shed my skin." He said cryptically, as he smiled evilly at her. Then reached up into his robe sleeve to cut the flesh in the crook of his arm. "Just like a snake."

He inserted the Polyjuice rock, and quickly healed the wound. Then he watched with glee as a look of horror appeared on all their faces as he began to change, but he smirked at Umbridge.

"Harry Potter!" She screamed.

"Just like a snake, I must shed my skin. I must discard the old one, and embrace a new one. Who shall I become next? A random muggle off the street, Minister Fudge, or perhaps an Auror. Maybe even you, Madam Umbridge?" He said, as a look of horror and understanding appeared on all their faces. "Pierre Robillard doesn't even exist. He is someone that I made up. Merlin and I forged the credentials so that I could hide in plain sight, but whose skin should I wear next?"

"I vote random muggle Salazar. They can't be identified." Merlin said with a smirk.
"I agree, I agree." He said, but then he turned to Albus, who sat there in shock. "Forgive me Headmaster. I lied to you in order to get the job. I hope you can forgive me."

"Very clever Harry, and very cunning." Albus said with a gentle smile, as his eyes twinkled merrily.

Salazar bowed slightly, but then he turned back to Umbridge and Fudge. "You can't make me leave Hogwarts. You can try to capture me, but just like I told Voldemort in the graveyard, you will always fail. You may have gotten me out of the teaching role, but I can always assume other roles." He said, as he tapped the side of his nose thoughtfully. "Yes, yes, perhaps a new hire at the Ministry. Merlin, you and I can forge the needed documents for that, can't we?"

"Of course we can. Need you ask?" He laughed, as Fudge's eyes widened in alarm.

"A new Auror perhaps, or even an existing one. A student here maybe, or an existing one. Yes, yes, just like a snake, I must shed my skin. I could be anyone, and do anything!" Salazar cried happily.

"And they will never know who, what, and where you are Salazar. It's brilliant you know." Merlin said, as he tried not to laugh.

"Indeed my old friend. Indeed." Salazar said. "Well, I guess I better start planning then. Good luck getting into the Defense classroom. I'll leave the flames in door, along with your little see through wall. You may even see me in there from time to time, because that is where I plan to stay. However, when you look in there and see me sitting, reading, or whatever I feel like doing, ask yourself this, is it really me, or is it Merlin posing as me? It's up for you to decide." He said with a sly grin. "All of you who can understand this, meet me in the defense classroom after dinner under a disillusionment charm. We will talk then, and form a better stinking plan than this crap. The new key to get through the door has been placed in all your pockets by Dobby." He said, as Umbridge, Fudge, and Amelia began screaming for more Aurors.

Salazar apparated out first, then Merlin lifted his cage, and quickly followed him. Umbridge let out a scream of rage, and Amelia, who was trying not to grin, began barking orders at the Aurors to start searching the castle. Fudge was white faced with shock, and could only stare at the spot Salazar and Merlin disappeared from.

Meanwhile, Albus laughed loudly, while Sirius grinned like a fool. Severus was sneering, and the rest of the Professors were whispering excitedly. Half of the students were in shock, while others cheered and began talking among themselves.

Godric on the other hand, laughed and fell out of his seat because Sirius had just opened the howler, and 'Jeremiah was a Bullfrog' began blaring in the great hall.

"A better stinking plan? Harry, it's a brilliant plan!" Hermione's disembodied voice cried, as she sat in the defense classroom. "You're going to make her paranoid, and Fudge too. Maybe because of what you said about infiltrating the Ministry, Fudge will tighten security. They might even catch a few Death Eaters."

"I did not think about that, but you are right Hermione." Salazar said, as he gazed out of the open classroom window. He was doing his best to make it appear that he wasn't talking to anyone because Umbridge was watching him.

"I'm sure Amelia will let us know what's going on in the Ministry at our next meeting. I have no doubts that she will have lots of information." Merlin chuckled, as Salazar nodded, but then he sighed.
"I'm so sorry I couldn't tell you all about all this, but I felt it best if you not know. I wanted to protect you all from any backlash. Albus, I really do hope you can forgive me for deceiving you like that." Salazar said, as he and Dobby vanished all the desks and began replacing them with couches, tables, and other furnishings that Dobby had brought from Salazar's flat.

"I do forgive you Harry, so don't worry. I shouldn't have been so surprised, truth be told." Albus's disembodied voice said with chuckle.

Salazar grinned in his direction, but then turned to Dobby. "Be careful when you bring in the potions lab, and please put it next to the back wall. Half of what I'll be brewing Umbridge and the Aurors likely won't be able to recognize, but I plan to start brewing polyjuice soon. That's unmistakable, and will only give credence to what I said tonight."

"Yes sir, Mr. Harry Salazar Potter Slytherin sir!" The elf cried happily, and popped away.

Umbridge was glaring at him from the other side of the wall, but Salazar only waved merrily at her, then turned to ignore her.

"So what do we do now Harry?" Neville asked. "Without you teaching us, we aren't going to learn anything."

Salazar sighed and shook his head. "I don't know Neville, but we will think of something."

"I wonder who our new 'Defense' teacher will be." Blaise said.

"Umbridge, more than likely." Albus sighed.

"Well she certainly can't use this classroom." George snorted. "Professor, see if you can't give her the crappiest room in the castle. It should make her angry."

Albus chuckled. "We will see Mr. Weasley."

"So Harry, you're just going to flaunt yourself in here?" Blaise asked in disbelief.

"Yep, right under their noses. They can't get to me in here, but I must caution you all. If you come in here to visit, make sure you are under a disillusionment charm."

"Until the Aurors get their glasses that is, then we can't be in here at all." Godric pointed out.

"That's true." Salazar said with a nod, as Dobby popped back in with some potions equipment.

"It's too bad Rita wasn't here to see all that." Neville snorted.

"I know, but speaking of... Godric, I have written a letter to her. It's in my office, so you can give it to Nehum whenever you like." Salazar said, as he finished arranging his personal books on a nearby bookshelf. "I wrote it yesterday, but haven't gotten a chance to give it to you."

Salazar heard Godric shuffle up the stairs, but then he turned to Neville.

"There is a reason why I asked Umbridge all those questions. If Rita agrees to work with us, I plan to show her that memory. She can write about what the Ministry is trying to teach, so that when Voldemort comes out of the shadows, they can't deny that they were trying to make you all defenseless."

"Question Harry." Blaise asked. "What is the plan now? I mean obviously you aren't going to work at the Ministry, so what do you plan to do?"
Salazar sighed and shook his head. "I don't know Blaise. Help you all with pranks I suppose, or just
give Umbridge a hard time. She can see me, but she can't get to me and it will eat away at her." He
said, as he grinned towards the window.

Umbridge was still there, but now Fudge had joined her, along with Amelia and a few Aurors, and
they began trying to blast holes in the wall. Amelia looked afraid at first, but after they realized that
their attempts were failing, and the fact that Salazar looked unconcerned and even laughed at their
efforts, she began to relax a bit.

"Well, at least you can get in and out by apparating, because I have no doubt she will have Aurors
stationed by the door." Albus said. "Especially since they can't get in."

"I know." Salazar grinned, as he began to arrange the potions lab to his liking.

"I can't believe that Umbridge got one over on you of all people." Hermione said as she shook her
head.

"I know and that irritates me to no end. I had no idea that she'd think of charming the wall to be see
through, but I have to hand it to her, it was clever. I was hoping I'd last until at least Christmas, but I
didn't even last a mouth. Rest assured though, I will not let it happen again." He said, and he glared
in Umbridge's direction.

The sudden fierce scowl aimed at her caused Umbridge to look a bit startled, but she smirked and
said something to Fudge, who nodded vigorously. It made Salazar a little uneasy, but Amelia was
there so we wasn't that badly worried.

Umbridge glared back at him, then lifted her wand and wrote in fiery letters, 'Where is Dumbledore?'

Salazar grinned and wrote back, 'ʍ ou ʞ ʇ,uop I, and laughed when she had to tilt her head to the
side so that she could read the backwards and upside down words.

She stood there for a full minute trying to work them out, but then she glared at him.

'Yes, you do.'

'ʇ,uop I 'oN' He replied, and grinned as she glared at him.

Albus only laughed. "Well, perhaps I better go, so that I can see what they want. You all should be
head back to your common rooms."

"How to do we get out?" Fred, who laughed at the upside down words, asked.

"Apparate into the Gryffindor common room. I've already asked Hogwarts to lift the wards there, in
the Headmaster's office, and the Snake Pit." Albus replied.

"Yes sir." The children chorused.

"Harry, just get us if you need to. We can still use patronuses." Hermione giggled, as Fudge stared at
the upside down letters that were still burning in midair.

"I will." Salazar grinned.

They all said goodnight to each other, then Salazar heard several pops as they apparated out.

"My dear, are we alone?"
“No Speaker,” Nora replied. “There is still one left.”

"It's me." Severus said with a chuckle. "You really don't have a plan though, do you?"

"No Severus I don't." Salazar sighed, as he began to get the rest of the potions lab situated, as Dobby popped back in with more equipment and ingredients.

"You'll think of something, I'm sure." The young man replied.

"I hope so. I really do hope so." He said, then Severus apparated out as well, knowing Salazar had lifted the ward in his personal living quarters.

Deep in the heart of Oxford, in an old abandoned warehouse surrounded by protective enchantments and muggle repelling charms, Rita Skeeter sat in a rickety wooden chair pouring over the latest *Daily Prophet*, and shaking her head in disgust.

She just couldn't believe the nonsense being spewed by those in the Ministry.

Truth be told, she never believed anything they said really, simply because she knew how those people could be. They were corrupt, wicked, and downright delusional. Granted she herself wasn't much better, seeing as she tore people down in her interviews, articles, and writings, but at least she had some common sense. She believed Harry's story and she knew that times were changing, but those in charge of the Wizarding World were going to get people killed if they kept denying the truth.

It is why she was hiding in the middle of Oxford.

She left the blurb in her last article about moving to a different country, but she was a journalist and needed to be where the action was, even if it was nonexistent at the moment. In her heart though, Rita knew that one day, if she lived through the war, she could write a book detailing everything that happened with all of the Ministry cover-ups, and who was responsible for all the truth denial.

That would be a big money maker, and it made her smile at the very idea of watching all those people tumble from power.

She sighed as she looked around her dusty abode though. How was she ever going to accomplish her goals if she kept hiding in the middle of muggle Oxford? She truly needed to be somewhere else, maybe muggle London, but she couldn't risk it. She just knew that if You-Know-Who ever found her, she'd die because of some of the things she published about him.

Not to mention, she'd be killed because of her fondness for Harry Potter.

But it was still a choice she had to make. Should she pack up and leave her safe spot in order to get the story of a lifetime? She had a roof, a bed, some clothes, and she had turned a number of galleons into pounds so that she could eat from the local muggle cafés and restaurants.

It was still slightly depressing though, because the warehouse was dirty, damp, and smelled strongly of mold, but it kept her safe. Still though, she wanted to be in the middle of it all.

She sighed again, looked around, then back down at the latest copy of the paper. Apparently, Aurors had been sent to Hogwarts to capture Harry Potter, who was running around the school giving the Ministry grief, and according to Fudge, possibly planning to take over the Ministry with Dumbledore.
It made her laugh.

Something told her that Potter wanted nothing to do with the Ministry, but Rita wasn't surprised that Potter had aligned himself with Dumbledore, especially now that You-Know-Who was back.

She was glad for that really, because it meant they all had a chance to make it through the upcoming war alive, and with any luck, Potter and Dumbledore could bring down You-Know-Who for good.

Rita continued to read the paper, and was lost in the fashion section when a burst of flames in the corner of the warehouse caught her eye. She cried out in fear and instantly transformed into her beetle from, then flew under the chair she had just been sitting in.

Her small ears and eyes tracked the sound of rushing wind and wings as her feathery visitor landed on the small table she had just been sitting at. She dared not make a move though, least the bird spot her and try to eat her.

Her breathing became quick and panicky though, as the bird hopped down onto the floor. From her vantage point under the chair, she tried to make herself as small as possible when she caught sight of the deadly looking golden talons of the bird. Then, her heart nearly stopped when a large black eye peered under the chair, and looked directly at her.

She looked at it curiously when she caught sight of a letter clutched in its golden beak, and her heart leapt in her throat when the bird began to sing softly. However, it began to comfort her as she sat there watching it watch her, and that is when she realized that the bird was a phoenix.

Roffin's phoenix to be exact.

Rita remembered the bird from her interview with Harry, so she decided to take a leap of faith that the phoenix wasn't going to make her a snack, and flew out from underneath the chair. She landed on the seat so she could look at it properly, and it was then she realized that the letter in its beak was addressed specifically to her.

Tilting her small head to the side, she quickly glanced around, then transformed back into her human form. With a shaking hand, she took the letter from him, causing the bird to thrill softly, take flight, and once again land on the table. She stared at it in awe for a moment, but then smiled as she opened the letter.

*My Dearest Rita,*

*I hope you weren't to terribly afraid when Nehum showed up, and if you were, I deeply apologize for scaring you. I'm writing to you with a plea for help. I know that you are in hiding so I'm unsure if you have been keeping up with the news, but the Ministry is denying the truth and blocking it at every turn.*

*We need your help with spreading the truth, and we know that the Daily Prophet is not going to print it, but we have another solution. A friend of mine is the daughter of the editor of The Quibbler. Now before you wrinkle your nose, (but don't worry, I'll understand if you do), he is the only independent source we have of getting the truth out, and we are hoping that you will write the articles that we plan to publish. People know your name, and we are hoping that because you're so well known, that they will believe the truth, no matter what source it's published in.*

*I understand that you are in hiding for a very good reason, and I understand if you're hesitant to do this, but we can offer you safety at Hogwarts. Albus has already said that he is willing to offer you room here if you are willing to do this. The Ministry woman Umbridge is here though, and reports*
everything back to Fudge, so if you do come, you will have to snoop around and spy on her in that lovely little beetle form of yours.

I know that may come as a shock that I know that, but if you knew who I really was, it may not come as such a surprise that I figured it out.

What do I mean by that?

Well I'm afraid that I haven't been very honest with you in the past, but last year my friend Gordy Roffin and I couldn't afford to spill the beans on who we really are. He is really Godric Gryffindor, and I am actually Salazar Slytherin. I know that's hard to believe, but it's true. We are immortal and it's time the world knows about us, and the one who helped us to achieve immortality.

Merlin.

I know you are shocked, and a part of you probably doesn't believe it, but that's ok. However, while the students and Professors at Hogwarts know about us, the rest of the wizarding world doesn't, and that is just some of the truth the Ministry has been denying.

It all needs to be told. Voldemort knows who we are, and even though the majority of the wizarding world believes the rubbish being spread by the Ministry, there will come a time when Voldemort makes his move, and they will be proven wrong. We are hoping that by telling the wizarding world of our existence that it will help quell their fears, and give them some measure of hope.

Not to mention, we hope it will save lives.

That's why we need you Rita, and I hope that you will come to Hogwarts, listen to Merlin, Godric, and my story, write it, publish it, and get the truth out in front of everyone.

If you agree to help us, please let Nehum bring you to Hogwarts. He will drop you off in the living quarters we have setup for you, and from there we will setup a meeting in the Headmaster's office with Albus, Godric, Merlin, myself, and a few others who are on our side.

If you need time to think about it, please send a note back with Nehum, and if you decide at a later date to do this, just call for him. He has been asked to listen for your call.

I hope we can work together on this, and I know it is asking a lot, especially in these dangerous times, but I hope you will agree because we really do need your help.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely Yours,

Harry James Potter

Also known as

Salazar Slytherin.

It took Rita nearly five times to read it through before all its contents sank in. When they did, she sat back in her seat and let out the long, deep breath she had been holding.

She couldn't believe it. It just seemed so unreal, but as she gazed at the phoenix something made her pause as she thought about some of the things Harry Potter had told her last year.

"It makes better sense for an immortal Founder to build onto Hogwarts instead of two teenagers. It
also makes better sense for an immortal Godric Gryffindor to have a phoenix bonded to him, verses a random Slytherin boy. Not to mention how someone like Harry could control Slytherin's one thousand year old basilisk." She said, as she looked at Nehum.

He thrilled softly and nodded as if he understood her, which only made her smile.

"You truly are a beautiful bird." She said softly, as she gently stroked his red feathers. "But can they really keep me safe if I do this?"

Nehum nodded again, and a sense of calm and peace filled Rita as she kept stroking him.

"I guess I can always escape if there is trouble." She chuckled. "Will you give me a few minutes to pack my bag?"

Nehum nodded once more, and Rita began packing. A part of her still didn't believe any of Harry's claims, but if this were true, it would be the story of a lifetime.

Chapter End Notes

I swear this story has a mind of it's own. I tried so hard to fight this chapter, but it wouldn't let me write it the way I wanted to. To those of you who only read, you might not understand how that is possible, but to those of you who write, I'm sure that you do. I had every intention of letting Salazar catch her, but she still got away.

I hate that woman.

Anyway, we will see what Salazar comes up with next. I'm sorry I didn't get to Narcissa, the Parkinson's, and Voldy in this chapter, but we will see them in the next one, along with more Tiny Voldy. Peeves has a few things going on that I want to share, and there will be more songs mentioned as well. If you have any good ones to throw my way, let me have them, but please keep in mind the dates for when the song was released. I still want it to be somewhat believable, so no songs that were released after 1995. I almost ran into that problem myself because I was going to have the Creeveys sing 'The Game' by Motorhead, but realized just in time that it came out in 2002. I could have sworn that song came out way before then. It would have been the perfect song for Salazar.

Anywhoo, next chapter will have the above mentioned, along with a few pranks, and Salazar's new plan on what to do, as well as more from Umbridge. I hope you all stay tuned! Remember, please keep those prank ideas coming! Thanks everyone!
Salazar sat and seethed, and sat and seethed some more. For nearly two days he hardly slept or ate anything as he tried to think up ways to either get back into a teaching role, or kill Umbridge quietly, and without anyone noticing.

None of the plans he came up with for either idea were any good though.

He couldn't kill Umbridge because it would be highly suspicious if she suddenly disappeared, and since it had been announced that Umbridge herself would teach the Defense class, he couldn't kidnap and hold that person hostage while he polyjuiced himself to look like them. He briefly thought about using the imperius curse on her, but decided against it, seeing as she would be acting completely out of character and someone would notice and suspect it.

The only thing he could do was shake his head, learn from this mistake, and press on. He hated to lose, but if there was one thing he had learned over the years, it was that you can't win at everything.

The one bright spot in this whole mess was the fact that Rita was now on board. When Nehum brought her to the castle, she must have transformed into her beetle form because Albus, Salazar, and Godric picked her up through the animagus ward.

They sat down to talk to her, along with Amelia, Moody, and Sirius, and explained everything to her. She still couldn't hardly believe it, so they swore oaths to prove it.

After that she finally believed them.

She got started on her first article right away which would go into detail about who Merlin, Salazar, and Godric were, along with everything the ministry was trying to suppress. Rita even said she would double check her facts and spelling in her articles, because she knew how important this was.

Salazar however, had an idea because of the oath Rita made them make, and he couldn't believe that he hadn't thought about it before. He knew that most of the students believed them, but there were a few who did not. However, if all three of them took oaths in front of the whole school, then Umbridge couldn't deny their claim, and the students would write home about it.

He just hoped he could pull it off without getting arrested trying to do it.

"Oh Harry, you can't sit in here all the time." Hermione said as she rolled her eyes. "You need to be out there. Besides, how can we accuse you of confunding us if you're stuck in here sulking?"

It was Saturday, a week since he got fired, and he had been working on a number of potions for the children to use. The polyjuice wouldn't be ready for a month, seeing as it needed thirty days to brew, but he had a large cauldron full of the walking through walls potion that he planned on giving to the
children. He had also been in talks with Merlin and Godric, and they loved the oath idea, but Godric wanted to take it a step further, which Salazar thought was brilliant.

They had decided to carry out their plan tonight, seeing as it was the weekend and it would give the students time to write to their parents.

"I'm not sulking Hermione. I've just been busy in here." Salazar chuckled, as he looked towards the sound of her voice. "Godric, Merlin, and I have a plan that we are going to do tonight."

He didn't see her grin, but he could hear it in her voice. "Good, because Colin and Dennis sang the theme song to the Ghostbusters movie this morning, and like always, Sirius is going to play it at dinner. It freaked Umbridge out, and she started yelling about ghosts haunting the muggle world. Then she ran out the room saying she needed to go speak with the Spirit Division in the Department for Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures."

Salazar burst out laughing. "I wish I could have seen that, because I actually remember Dudley watching that movie a few times. That's a funny song. I can imagine she has the Ministry running everywhere trying to figure out how all these magical things are making their way into the muggle world, and if she keeps it up, people are going to start thinking she's barmy." He said.

Hermione laughed. "Well you should know that the ghosts are loving this. The Bloody Baron has been roaming around the school all day, bursting into common rooms and dorms shouting 'who you gonna call?!' at random times, and waiting for people to shout 'Ghostbusters!', before he leaves. Even Peeves has picked up on it and is now singing it whenever Umbridge is around." She giggled.

"Oh dear, I can't imagine what else Peeves is going to do with that." Salazar laughed, but then he looked at her thoughtfully. "You know, if you really want to see her running scared, you all could do a song that I remember hearing on my travels long before Voldemort came along. It's called 'Love Potion…"

"Number Nine!' Hermione finished excitedly, as Salazar laughed and nodded. "Oh my goodness Harry, that's perfect! Why didn't I think of that? I'll mention it to Colin, and if he and Dennis don't know it, I'll sing it. I don't care if it's about a guy falling in love with girls, I'll sing it anyway." She laughed.

"Umbridge will probably run right to the Ministry with that one too."

"Probably." Hermione laughed. "But you should know that Umbridge is fuming because she can't get to you in here, and she warned the whole school a few days ago about coming near here. She said you're a dangerous murder who is plotting to kill us all in our sleep."

"I'm not surprised actually." Salazar chuckled. "But as I said, Merlin, Godric, and I have a plan. Just be ready for it tonight, and tell Sirius that we will do our part after he's played the song."

"I will." She replied, as she hopped up from the couch she'd been sitting on. "I best go because we have tons of studying to do. At least we don't have to worry about Defense against the Dark Arts though, seeing as its all rubbish. Honestly Harry, we need to do something because we aren't learning anything. I've even told people not to do anything in that class. I think it's better to not learn anything in there, verses someone learning that rubbish and actually trying to use it."

"It's a good plan, because it would get someone killed if they tried to reason with a Death Eater who throwing curses at you." He said, rolling his eyes. "Just be careful and don't get yourself suspended because you can't afford that."
"I will Harry." She replied, then she carefully made her way out the door and past the Aurors.

Salazar watched the Aurors to make sure she got passed them safely, but then he grinned and began singing under his breath as he tended to the softly bubbling potions that were displayed in front to the see through wall. "I took my troubles down to Madam Rue, you know that gypsy with the gold-capped tooth. She's got a pad down on thirty-fourth and Vine, sellin' little bottles of…love potion number nine."

When Salazar entered the great hall under a disillusionment charm that evening, he nearly laughed out loud at the sight of all the students chatting happily with excitement over what the Ghostbusters song really sounded like. Colin, Dennis, Hermione, Fred, George, and Neville were sitting at the Slytherin table with Blaise, Draco, and Godric for the first time since the start of school, and Umbridge was yelling at them to get back to the Gryffindor table.

They were of course, ignoring her completely, which only made Umbridge even angrier.

Salazar just leaned against the back wall, and took note of everything going on. He saw Merlin enter, which seemed to cause an excitement of a different sort as the students craned their necks to get a look at him. He sat at the Slytherin table, which caused Umbridge to start yelling at him to leave, but Godric loudly told her to shut up because Merlin was his guest for the evening.

Umbridge glared at him before loudly proclaiming that Merlin wasn't Merlin, then she stomped off towards the head table, where she sat down with a loud huff.

That's when Sirius opened the howler.

As the song began playing, every ghost in the castle streamed through the back wall, drenching Salazar with an icy coldness that caused him to shiver horribly as they passed through him. He didn't mind though, seeing as they were all dancing wildly to the music. The muggle borns who knew the song got up and began singing and dancing with them, which caused Salazar to grin.

It was the first time the rest of the school had willingly taken part in the singing prank, and Salazar couldn't have been happier. Baron looked like he hadn't had this much fun in years as he danced with Daphne, Blaise, and several others on top of the Slytherin table. Helena was dancing with a muggle born Ravenclaw, while Friar danced with several Hufflepuffs of various backgrounds. Sir Nicholas led all of Gryffindor in a completely off rhythm dance that they had clearly been working on all day, but no one seemed to care that it wasn't in time to the actual music.

The rest of the school was on their feet singing and shouting at the top of their lungs, while the Professors just sat back and smiled. Salazar even caught Dumbledore tapping his feet in time with the music. Severus looked ready to give out detentions and take points, but Salazar knew it was all an act because he could see the lad trying not to sway back and forth to the music. Sirius was dancing and yelling with the song as well, which caused several students to point and laugh at him. Godric and Merlin were nearly in tears because they were laughing so hard, and Umbridge looked ready to explode at any moment because Peeves kept throwing dinner rolls at her head during the whole song.

Needless to say, the Ghostbusters theme song had been the best song prank thus far.

Everyone seemed a bit disappointed when the song ended, but they all sat back down in their seats, began eating again, and pretended nothing ever happened.

Helena however, floated high over everyone's head and placed her hands on her hips. "Uncle
Salazar!" She cried loudly. "Please give us an explanation on why you confunded nearly the entire school to sing and dance to this song? I should be angry, but I must admit, it was lovely. Thank you Uncle." She said with a large grin.

"Har-ry! Har-ry! Har-ry! Har-ry!" Colin chanted, and laughed when several others began chanting as well.

Salazar only laughed. "Well my dear Helena, I do what I can." He said, causing the Umbridge to instantly become alert.

"Mother would normally be dismayed with everyone's behavior, but under the circumstances, she would certainly cheer you on." Helena chuckled. "Well, now that we have all recovered from being confunded, I suppose all of us ghosts better go." She added, as the ghosts began to leave.

"No Helena, I actually have something that I wish everyone in the castle to bear witness to, so if the ghosts would kindly stay, it would be beneficial." Salazar said, causing Umbridge to jump up in her seat.

"Aurors, keep a sharp eye out!" She cried, causing everyone to roll their eyes.

"There's no need, they've already been placed under the full body bind so they can't move. They can however, still see and hear, so that's good. Now with that done..." He said, as he lifted the disillusionment charm to reveal that he was standing at the end of the Slytherin table. Then he canceled the voice amplifying charm. "I know that there is still some that doubt who I am, so I am going to swear an oath to prove it. An oath, as you all know, can be very disastrous if you are lying." He added, causing everyone to stare at him in shock. Then he raised his wand. "I, Salazar Slytherin, do hereby swear on my magic that I am THE Salazar Slytherin, one of the four Founders of Hogwarts, and of Slytherin House. So shall it be."

Everyone watched with wide eyes as the magic swirled around him, but he only smiled. Then he waved his wand in a big circle over his head and loudly cried, "Expecto Patronum!" And everyone watched as his patronus erupted out of his wand.

All of the students' jaws dropped, but then Godric stood up. "Let there be no more doubts about who we really are." He said, then swore his own oath, which caused the Gryffindor table to cheer wildly for their Founder.

Then Merlin stood up.

"No! This is a trick! A trick! Don't listen to them!" Umbridge screamed loudly as she tried to run towards Merlin, who calmly flicked his wand at her and stuck her to the wall as if she were an annoying fly. When she started screaming again, he cast a silencing charm on her.

The great hall seemed to take a collective breath as they looked at the ancient wizard, who raised his wand.

"I, Merlin Ambrosius, do hereby swear upon my magic, that I am THE ACTUAL Merlin Ambrosius, creator of the Order of Merlin, and who, according to the wizarding world, is the greatest wizard who ever lived. So shall it be." He said with a gentle smile, then he too cast his patronus.

A stunned silence filled the air as Merlin's falcon patronus flew around the great hall, but Godric smiled at all the students.

"As I said, let there be no more doubts. Now, please continue eating, but Salazar, Merlin, and I wish
to share a few memories with you. Some of these memories are very old and some are not, but I hope they will give you a sense of understanding about some things, as well as make you laugh. Now, without further ado…” He said, and began shooting white lights into the enchanted ceiling. "Do not be afraid!" Godric shouted as the room became black as night. "The memories will start soon."

Once the ceiling finished readying itself, the first memory started.

They were in the unmistakable Hogwarts library, though it was much, much smaller than it was in the present. The whole great hall stared in awe as they caught sight of two young men. One was very muscular with long, untamable red hair, and the other was a bit smaller with long black hair and a black beard.

They both were seated at a table, with two bottles of whiskey between them, and appeared to be laughing and humming a tune as they studied a piece of parchment.

The red haired man suddenly stood up, hiccupped, and began to sing very horribly and loudly.

"Hogwarts, Hogwarts, Hoggy Warty Hogwarts, teach us something please! Whether we be old and bald, or young with scabby knees!" He sang, as the black haired man laughed and covered his ears.

"Godric, that's not the tune we agreed upon!" He shouted, as he hiccupped slightly and swayed a bit.

"Well go on then you slippery reptile! Let's see you do better!" Godric laughed, as he sat down heavily. "Oh my head. Salazar, why is the world spinning around?"

"Because you are drunker than a hippogriff. Now shut up and let me show you how it goes." He said, as he hiccupped again. "Our heads could do with filling, with some interesting stuff! For now they're bare and full of air, dead flies and bits of fluff!" Salazar sang equally as bad. Then he hiccupped again, and shook his head as he grinned. "That bit is for Helga. With her as our potions Mistress, she always running after flies to use in potions." He said, with his words slurring as he spoke.

"She will love that! Now, we will sing the last verse together!" Godric said as he jumped up, but he had to grab onto Salazar, who laughed and lost his balance.

They both went crashing to the floor in a jumbled heap, but they laid there together as Salazar held up the parchment up so they could sing the last verse together.

"So teach us things worth knowing, bring back what we've forgot. Just do your best, we'll do the rest…and learn until our brains all rot!" They sang, but they shouted the last few words loudly.

Then they began laughing as they laid on the floor, still tangled together with their chairs overturned and resting on their legs.

Suddenly the doors to the library opened with a loud bang and a beautiful woman with long black hair entered with a wild panicked look about her.

"What is going on here?!" She screeched.

"Not so loud with the screeching Rowena!" Salazar cried, as he grinned at her. "We are…"

"...studying." Godric said quickly, as he hiccupped loudly.

She glared at both of them. "It's only three days into summer holiday, and you two are already
"drunker than a couple of…"

"...hippogriffs!" Salazar exclaimed.

"Hush!" Rowena yelled, causing them to wince. "This is a library not a PUB! Why are you singing and shouting in here!?” She demanded, as she watched them try to untangle themselves from each other.

"We are writing a school song." Godric said, just has he fell over when he tried to straighten up his chair.

Salazar pointed and laughed, but he also found himself flat on his bum when he tried to stand. Godric laughed at him, but they helped each other into a sitting position on the floor, and leaned on each other for support.

Rowena eyed them carefully, as they sat there grinning madly at her. "What school song?" She asked.

"This one!" Godric cried, then he held up the parchment. "Hogwarts, Hogwarts, Hoggy Warty Hogwarts…"

"No, no, no, no!" Rowena shouted. "No singing. You two sing horribly when you're not drunk, and even worse when you are. Give me the parchment and I'll read it."

"But that's no fun. We have to sing!" Salazar whined, as Godric handed over the parchment with a slight burp, which caused Salazar to snort loudly.

Rowena sighed loudly and shook her head, but then her eyes scanned the paper. Her eyes got bigger and bigger as she read, then she scoffed loudly.

"This is NOT our school song."

"Yes it is!" Salazar protested. "It's a brilliant song."

"You're drunk, and it's clear to anyone with half a brain that whoever wrote it was drunk." She said, as Godric chuckled evilly. "We are not using this for a school song."

"Using what for a school song?" A soft voice asked from behind Rowena.

They all looked past Rowena to see a plump witch with honey blond hair, and a sweet looking heart shaped face.

"Helga!" Salazar and Godric cried happily from the floor.

"You've come to save us from Rowena!" Salazar added, causing Rowena to roll her eyes.

Helga took one look at Salazar and Godric, then at the over turned chairs and the whiskey bottles, and giggled.

"What have you two got yourselves into now?"

"We were just having a bit of fun..." Salazar began, but then he was cutoff.

"...in the library." Rowena said with a huff. "Which they have clearly turned into a pub."

"...and we wrote a school song." Salazar continued as he grinned at Helga, who giggled again.
"Look at this rubbish Helga. We can't have this for a school song." Rowena said, as she handed the parchment over.

Helga read it to herself, but then she grinned. "I think it's a catchy sort of thing. The children would love this."

"WHAT!?" Rowena exclaimed, causing Salazar and Godric to cover their ears.

"Not so loud!" They cried.

"You two hush!" Rowena scolded. "You're making more noise than I am!"

"Oh Rowena, think about it. It's like I said, the children will love it. It's catchy. Besides, I think it's fitting that we have a school song." Helga said.

"But not this Helga." Rowena said despondently. "Anything other than this."

"You're out voted!" Godric laughed. "Three against one. That's our school song!"

"I agree!" Salazar cried.

Rowena narrowed her eyes at them, but then they lit up with a wicked gleam. "All right. We will make it our school song, but I warn you Salazar, you will regret it when you sober up. I know you will. Godric, you on the other hand, will likely still find it funny."

"I'll never regret it!" Salazar protested with a slur, as he hiccupped again. "It's brilliant!"

"Cast the spell then." Godric said, as Helga giggled.

"Fine." Rowena said, and she cast a spell that made that song the official Hogwarts song.

Everyone in the great hall burst out laughing as the memory finished, but even in the inky darkness someone shouted, "Harry, did you end up regretting it?"

"I did actually!" He laughed. "When I sobered up the next day I tried to get Rowena to reverse it, but she refused. It was my punishment for acting like a drunk idiot."

"I still like it!" Godric yelled, which caused the great hall to burst into more laughter. "The song actually grew on Rowena after a while, and she could often be heard humming it when she walked through the halls."

Everyone laughed again, but the Ravenclaw table cheered loudly.

"A cherished memory!" Albus shouted happily through the darkness. "We should be honored that they chose to share it with us!"

"Is there more?" Someone else asked.

"Oh yes." Godric replied. "This next one is Merlin's memory, and even though it is quite recent, I think you will all find it educational as well as entertaining."

The next memory started shortly after that, and everyone caught a look at Merlin as he walked into the kitchen of his small cottage in Ireland. (Though no one but those 'in the know' knew that was where he was.) Merlin's elves, Choppy and Whimsy, were humming softly as they went about their work, and Hermione was seated at the kitchen table, munching on biscuits with a glass of milk in front of her. She had a book in her hand, and was absentmindedly dunking the biscuit into the milk
as she read.

"You should be outside on a beautiful day like this." Merlin said, and chuckled lightly when she jumped in surprise.

"Oh I can't think of being outside in the bright sunshine when Harry is stuck inside a Ministry holding cell." She said with a sigh. "I'm only reading to try and take my mind off it all."

"Well Salazar wouldn't want you moping around on his account. There is no harm in reading outdoors." Merlin replied as he sat across from her, but then he chuckled as he caught sight of the book she was reading. "That is an interesting one you found."

She blushed. "I've read it before when I was nine. I've always had a fascination with King Arthur. I'm just surprised you'd have a muggle copy...considering..." Hermione said, but trailed off as she smiled shyly at him.

"I've said it many times before my dear Hermione. Arthur may have been a muggle, but he was a wonderful man. However, as for that book, I find that the muggle books about him are very detailed." He said with a smile.

Hermione seemed to squirm in her seat, but Merlin only laughed.

"I know your brilliant mind is swimming with questions. Please, ask me anything."

"Is Excalibur real?" She blurted out breathlessly. "Do you have it? If you do, can I see it? I won't touch it, but can I look at it?"

Merlin chuckled. "Ah yes, Arthur's legendary sword. It was forged from metal struck by a wonderful muggle blacksmith named Tom, Queen Guinevere's father. Then it was taken by me to the great dragon of the day, where is was seared by the dragon's fiery breath. I then took it and charmed it with many charms of my own making. I remember the day when Arthur pulled it from the stone. No other muggle of the day had such a weapon, but it was fitting for the king to have. It truly was a work of art."

Hermione's eyes shone brightly. "Does it still exist?"

"Oh yes. I don't have it here, but I know right where it is, and it hasn't been disturbed for nearly fifteen hundred years."

"But where is it?" She asked curiously.

Merlin chuckled again. "You should know the answer to that." He said, as his eyes danced merrily.

She frowned slightly. "But...but legend states that you took it back to Avalon after Arthur died."

"I did, and there it has rested all these many years." Merlin said, as Hermione's eyes grew large.

"Avalon is real!" She exclaimed.

"Oh yes. Shall I take you there? It might depress you though, seeing as we will be outside in the bright sunshine."

She giggled. "It's as you said, Harry wouldn't want me moping about."

Merlin laughed. "Indeed. Shall we go? I'll apparate us."
“Yes! Please!” She cried, jumping up out of her seat.

Merlin chuckled once more, and offered her his arm. The memory swirled around, almost making everyone dizzy as the two apparated, but suddenly bright sunshine filled the room as Merlin and Hermione landed at their destination. Everyone gasped in awe, right along with Memory Hermione. She then squealed loudly and nearly began hopping with excitement as she looked off into the distance, where there stood a large grassy hill that was surrounded by trees.

“Welcome to Avalon Hermione.” Merlin said with a large smile.

“Glastonbury Tor!” She squealed. "Oh my goodness! I can’t believe it! The muggles are right! Merlin, the muggles are right!” She exclaimed, as she danced in a small circle with happy tears flowing down her cheeks.

“Oh yes. The muggles are right." He said with a laugh.

“Sweet Merlin!” She whispered breathlessly as she calmed down enough to take it all in, but then she blushed. "I'm so sorry, that was the expression everyone uses.”

Merlin chuckled. "It's all right. I'm used to it. Shall we take a closer look? I can tell you about it."

“Oh yes please!”

He apparated them again, but when they landed they were a bit closer to the Tor, and they quickly made their way to the pathway that was built for the use of reaching the top.

“In Arthur's time, all of this was underwater.” He said, as they began the long walk to the top. "The muggles claim that the Tor is a reclaimed fen, and that is true...for the most part. The Tor itself is the island, but where we are standing now was all under water in Arthur's time. This part made up the actual lake, while the outlining parts were the actual fen.”

“Do you know how the Tor's terraces were formed?” She asked, as she gazed at the steep sides that almost looked like steps. "The muggles are mystified as to how they were created. Some say farmers made them. Others say it was once a spiral that people used to get to the top, while still others believe they were created as a defense.”

Merlin sighed, but chuckled. "Well I'm afraid none of them are true, and the actual truth is a bit boring to be honest. You see, the muggles don't believe there was an actual real lake here, but tell me Hermione, if there was a lake, what happens over time when water meets the shore?"

“Oh my!” She cried. "It erodes away!"

"Correct." Merlin said with a smile. "Obviously the lake has long since dried up, and even in Arthur's day it wasn't very deep, but yes, the gentle lapping of the lake against the side of the island is what created the terraces. It took many, many hundreds of years for this to happen, and even back then, the four uppermost terraces were visible, though they were more prominent than they are now. As time moves forward, the island shrinks and the terraces become smoother. However, it got its step appearance from when earthquakes struck. This has happened a lot in the nearly two-thousand years I've been alive. It's why the Tor has a step like appearance. An earthquake would strike, and the lake drained rapidly into the surrounding fen because of the type of ground that is here. I once watched it do this very thing. That is when the fifth terrace was created. It was a very large earthquake, and frightened the muggles of the day very badly."

“So the last two terraces were created after King Arthur's time then.” She commented.
"Oh yes, quite so." Merlin replied. "As the lake grew smaller, the fen grew bigger. The lake was nothing more than a large pond, which was situated on the south side of the island, when the earthquake of 1275 struck, and in that day it disappeared completely."

"That was the year when St. Michael's church was destroyed, and it was destroyed because of that earthquake." She gasped, as she gazed at the remains of the tower that sat atop of the Tor.

"And once again, you are correct my dear." Merlin said, as he gave her an approving nod.

"This is so unbelievable. So, I take it the fen dried up after the lake drained because there was nothing left to feed the fen."

"Indeed." Merlin said wistfully as he gazed around the surrounding countryside. "Time changes everything my dear. Sometimes it can happen in the blink of an eye and other times the change is slow, but nevertheless, time changes everything."

"What about the rumor that King Arthur and Queen Guinevere's remains were found by the monks at Glastonbury Abby? That is not far from here. Is any of that true?" She asked.

"Yes it is, but I'm afraid I'm the reason for all the confusion." Merlin confessed. "You see Hermione, I vowed that I would protect Arthur forever. They were both buried there after they died, and when the story broke that year, I believe that was in 1191 I think, I came immediately. I didn't want Arthur and Guinevere's bodies to become something people gawked at, so I confounded the monks and took Arthur and Guinevere's bodies. I reburied them in a place no one will ever find. I then started the rumor that the abbey needed money, and that they made up the claim. That is the story that is retold today because there are no bodies to show for their efforts." He said.

"Where did you bury them?" She asked.

"Ah, perhaps someday I will show you, but for now, let's leave that be." He said with an apologetic smile.

"It's all right, I understand." She said, just as they reached the top of the Tor. "It's so beautiful from up here."

"Is it the first time you've been here?" Merlin asked.

"Oh no. I begged my Mum and Dad to bring me here after I read the book at age nine. I wouldn't let up for weeks after I realized that the Tor was part of Arthurian legend. We came that summer." She replied with a smile.

"Well now you can look at it with the fresh knowledge of what I have told you today." Merlin chuckled.

"I'm so lucky." She whispered, as she gazed up at him. "To learn all of this, and from you of all people. I am just so...honored." She added sincerely.

"I am honored that you are willing to learn my dear." He said, as he patted her shoulder and gave her a gentle smile. "But now, on to the reason we are here."

"Excalibur!" She said, as a wide grin spread over her face.

"Indeed." Merlin replied, as he began leading her to the northern most edge of the Tor. "It was from here where I threw it into the lake. It sailed end over end, until it was just about to hit the water, then that is when The Lady of The Lake caught it. She took it to the bottom, and buried it in the ground."
"And you know where it is." Hermione grinned.

"Of course." He smiled, as he offered his arm to her.

They once again apparated to the ground below, and Merlin smiled as he took out his wand.

"Revelio." He said softly, and Hermione gasped loudly.

There, sticking out of the earth with just its golden handle visible, was Excalibur. Merlin smiled gently as he looked at Hermione, who was starting at it with an open mouth.

"Go on my dear."

"M-me?" She stammered. "You want me to…"

"…pull it out the ground. Of course." He chuckled.

She stuttered a bit more, but she looked up at him and nodded slowly. She grasped the handle tightly and gave it a mighty tug, then the sword broke free. It came up out of the ground just as clean as it was the day it was made. Hermione looked at it with tears in her eyes as she watched the sunlight dance across the blade.

"It's so…amazing." She said quietly, as she held it high in the air. "I can't believe that I am…that I just…I…me…a plain and simple muggle born witch. I just…I can't…"

Merlin smiled at her loss of words, but he patted her shoulder gently as she brought the sword close to her chest.

"My dear, it's not every day that anyone gets to pull that sword out of anything. It's the least I can do."

"Thank you for letting me do that." She whispered, but then she suddenly chuckled. "I can almost hear Mr. Moody yelling 'constant vigilance' in my ear. I can imagine him yelling at me about yanking strange magical objects out of the ground without checking it for unfriendly spells first. I'm glad I trust you so much."

Merlin burst out laughing. "Indeed. I'm not about to hurt you though."

"I know." She said with a smile.

"Well, I suppose we better head back. It's getting late." Merlin said has he laughed. "I need to get Excalibur to safety. I have a feeling it may be useful in the future."

Hermione looked at him oddly, but nodded. "Well you best take it then. I'm liable to stab myself, or you, with it when we apparate."

Merlin laughed again, and tucked the sword safely in his robes. Then he once more offered a grinning Hermione his arm, and the memory ended as they apparated.

The great hall was silent as the darkness pressed in around them, then from out of nowhere someone shouted, "Excalibur!"

The great hall broke out into loud cheers and whoops, and it lasted for a good five minutes before everyone settled down.

"Hey, maybe Harry can use it to kill Voldemort!" Someone shouted.
"No, I think Merlin will use Excalibur in battle. I have my own sword, should it be needed." Salazar cried, causing everyone to laugh.

"Please tell me there is more!" A voice yelled.

Godric laughed. "There is one more. The first one was my memory, but this one is Salazar's. You should all find it amusing."

Everyone settled down and grinned as the new memory started. This time they found themselves in the very room they were sitting in, the great hall. Helga had just walked in, and caught sight of Salazar sitting at the lone table in the middle of the room, surrounded by parchment, an ink pot, and a quill.

"All twenty of the students are outside soaking up the sunshine." She said gently as she sat down in front of him. "May I ask what you are working on?"

He looked up and smiled. "It's a charm I just invented."

"Oh, Rowena will be happy to hear that!" She exclaimed.

"No, it's not that kind of charm, this is for the Dark Arts class."

"Ah, I see." She chuckled. "Is it like the killing curse dark, or the knockback jinx dark?"

"Somewhere in the middle I think. I'm in the final testing phase to make sure it works correctly." Salazar replied, just as the doors to the great hall burst open.

"Salazar Slytherin!" A furious Rowena yelled. "What have you done to my living quarters!? Everything, and I do mean everything, is floating all on its own, and when I step in there, I float too! I can't even place my feet on the ground!"

"My dear Rowena, I have no idea what you are talking about." Salazar said, as his eyes danced with mischief.

"Don't you dare hand me that rubbish." Rowena said, as Helga giggled loudly. "What did you do to my room!? I can see it in your eyes. You've done something."

"Salazar, Salazar!" Godric exclaimed gleefully, as he too burst into the great hall. "You should see what I did to Rowena's bedroom!"

"Godric!"

"Rowena!" He exclaimed, coming to a dead stop.

"I am going to hex you into oblivion!" She yelled, and proceeded to do just that.

Godric however, yelped as a rapid series of different hexes caught him off guard, and he ran out of the room. Salazar and Helga laughed loudly as Rowena chased Godric out the great hall, but when Salazar finally got himself under control, he glanced at Helga.

"I consider that a successful spell creation." He said, and grinned madly at her.

"All right, what did you do you sly little devil." She giggled.

"Well, I created two spells actually. One was the floating room spell, which I cast on Rowena's bedroom. Then I used my other newly created spell, which I have named the confundus charm, on
Godric to make him think he cast the room floating spell in Rowena's bedroom." He grinned.

Helga burst out laughing. "Salazar, whatever are we to do with you." She asked as she shook her head. "Tell me though, how did you create it?"

He laughed loudly. "I broke down the imperius curse and used its basic properties for the confundus charm. It won't let you take over another's mind like the imperius, but you can use it to plant ideas into another person's mind. It can be blocked, if one is aware that they are having it cast at them, but it's mostly undetectable. I created it because it will work on muggles better than the imperius curse. They won't know, or remember, that they have been confunded. That's the beauty of the confundus charm. No one knows that they have been confunded. They might suspect something was off in their actions or thoughts, but they will not be able to trace it back to being confunded."

"But that's good though!" Helga exclaimed with excitement. "We use the imperius curse on attacking muggles, but when we release their minds after they have gone, they always remember and they almost always come back! Now they won't, and they can stay away from the school forever!"

"Exactly my dear." Salazar said with a nod. "I should also mention that one will not be able accuse someone of confunding them, because they won't know they have been confunded in the first place."

“What else does it do?” She asked happily.

“That's it. You just use it to confuse people. It's why I'm teaching it in the Dark Arts class, verses Defense. It's not bad, but it's not altogether good either."

“Oh yes, I can understand why.” She said with a nod. "Salazar, you are a sly devil, but I'm glad we have you.” She laughed.

"I plan to let Rowena and Godric know about the confundus charm in the morning, but can we keep the room floating spell to ourselves?"

"Of course.” She grinned.

The memory ended as Salazar winked at Helga.

The great hall was once again silent, and it took everyone a moment for their eyes to adjust as the enchanted ceiling went back to normal. However, as soon as that happened, nearly everyone began whispering amongst themselves.

"You slippery, slimy, evil, little snake!” Godric suddenly shouted. "I never knew you confunded me! Rowena hexed me all through the castle!"

"I know. Isn't it great?!" Salazar replied as he grinned at Godric, who glared playfully at him.

Everyone in the great hall burst out laughing, except Hermione, who just grinned at him.

"Harry! You created the confundus charm?!” She yelled.

"That's right!” He said happily, as he grinned like a shark at a still silent and stuck to the wall Umbridge. "That's why I know exactly what it can and cannot do."

"You taught the Dark Arts here? At Hogwarts?” A sixth year Hufflepuff asked nervously.

"And did I hear right?” A third year Hufflepuff asked with a loud squeak. "Did Helga really use the imperious curse?"
Godric and Salazar looked at the two lads and smiled.

"You have to understand," Godric said, "that in our day they weren't named the unforgivables. In fact, they were used quite a lot."

Everyone looked at him in shock, but Godric went on to explain about the killing curse and imperius curse's everyday uses, and Salazar told them how they were beneficial in those days.

"Now, that does not mean that we advocate to have them made legal, because nothing good can come from the cruciatus curse." Salazar said, looking at all the curious faces in the great hall. "But to us very old people, we sometimes don't understand what the fuss is all about."

"It's like Salazar said last year in his interview with Rita Skeeter." Merlin said. "Magic is magic, it depends on the castor's intentions which makes it light or dark."

"Exactly." Godric nodded. "Today, dark magic is very frowned upon because for the last one-hundred years or so, we have had not one, but two dark wizards running around. First Grindelwald and now Voldemort. It's good that you all are so cautious about dark magic, but not all dark magic is bad."

"In our day, we used the dark arts for self-defense, which is why I taught it here." Salazar explained. "The muggles in our day were actively hunting us. We didn't have muggle repelling charms in those days, and the spells to make a portkey was primitive so they complicated to make. Apparition also hadn't been invented yet, so getting away from the blood thirsty muggles was difficult. Shield charms don't do much against their weapons."

"We did what we had to do to survive." Merlin said gently. "Today however, muggles aren't a threat, and haven't been for many centuries. As such, there is no need for us to be killing them because they really aren't a threat to our well-being. In fact, most muggles could care less about witchcraft. There are some out there who would, out of fear, hunt, vilify, and advocate to have us wiped out, but they won't get far in their efforts because the muggles have come a long way since those days."

"They are better educated now." Salazar said with a gentle smile as he looked around the great hall. "Muggles are actually quite fascinating if you take the time to look at how they do things."

"You sound like our Dad!" Fred exclaimed.

"Well, your dad has the right idea about studying them." Merlin said with a grin. "We all could take a few lessons from Arthur Weasley about muggles. It's why muggle borns are so important to our world. They bring new ideas to us from the muggle world, which in turn allows us to create spells based off their work."

"Try telling that to the Ministry." A seventh year Ravenclaw said bitterly as she glared at Umbridge.

"Well the corrupt Ministry is a whole other ball of wax." Salazar said with a large sigh as he rolled his eyes. "But I agree with Merlin, we can learn things from muggles and muggle borns. I have actually created spells based off some of their technological findings."

"Like what spells?" Roger Davies, a sixth year Ravenclaw, asked.

"Well, some aren't that good and could be considered 'dark', but others are ok." Salazar said with a sly smile. "I invented a charm that uses electricity to shock the daylights out of someone. It's how I got away from Voldemort in the graveyard last year. Ask a muggle born what sticking your fingers in a light socket will do to you. Then multiply that by five times and you will know what happened to Voldemort." He explained, causing the muggle raised and born to burst out laughing.
"I bet he wasn't very happy about that!" Dean exclaimed.

"No he wasn't. I expect that it took him a good ten minutes to regain his senses." Salazar said with a satisfied smirk, causing more people to laugh.

"Can we see it? Can we see what you did to him?" Angelina asked, causing the room to suddenly get quiet.

Albus, Merlin, Salazar, and Godric looked at each other, but finally Albus shook his head.

"No Miss Johnson, I'm afraid we won't do that. There are younger children in here who would likely be very scared. You have to understand, what happened to Harry in the graveyard was not pleasant. I have seen his memory of the event, and even I was disturbed about the things that happened."

"I was hit with the torture curse and bitten by a very poisonous snake. I was losing blood rapidly and was very weak at the time. Not to mention, the ritual that Voldemort used to regain his body is an old form of magic that is not only very dark, but very brutal." Salazar explained. "I will however, swear an oath to shed any doubt about Voldemort's return."

Once he was finished making the oath, silence descended on the great hall and Salazar could see many of the students trying to remain calm. Poppy actually had to run to the hospital wing to fetch a few calming draughts.

When she was finished passing them out, Albus looked out across the great hall and smiled. "Just us explaining it all to you was enough I think." He said gently. "Imagine if we had shown you the memory."

Everyone nodded in understanding, but Ernie Macmillian, a fifth year Hufflepuff raised his hand. "I have a question." He said. "Harry, why didn't you tell Professor Dumbledore who you were before this year? Clearly he didn't know who you and Gordy were."

Salazar sighed and shook his head. "At the time Ernie, I didn't trust him for various reasons that I will not speak of. However, looking back, things probably would have gone a little easier if I had, but since Voldemort's rebirth, we have been working through our various issues and have agreed to work together on this problem. I will admit that most of our animosity during my first three years could have been avoided if I had just explained the situation to him, but as I said, I didn't trust him."

"What about last year?" Someone asked.

"I really don't count last year, seeing as the Headmaster's actions weren't his own. Lucius Malfoy had him under the imperius curse. You can't blame someone for something they did while under its spell." Salazar replied gently, causing Albus to give him a sincere smile.

"Are there any more questions?" Albus asked, only to have a few people from Ravenclaw raise their hands. "Yes Miss Chang?"

"How did You-Know-Who regain his body in the graveyard, if Harry killed him when he was a baby?"

"A very good question." Merlin said, and everyone noticed that the other Ravenclaws lowered their hands. "I won't go into details, because the ritual Voldemort used is very dark and not pleasant, but Salazar really didn't kill him in 1981. He just stopped him temporarily."
"Even as a child, I knew who I was because I had all my memories, but I couldn't tell Lily and James to flee for their own safety." Salazar explained. "I knew Voldemort couldn't kill me because the killing curse bounces off of me. When Voldemort pointed his wand at me as I sat in my crib that night, I thought it was the end of him because he would not expect the killing curse to bounce, and I was right. However, what I didn't count on was a ritual he used to keep himself attached to this world, so I only succeeded in delaying his plans. I only bought us time that night."

"Since then however, we have been working on a way to, let's say, reverse the ritual he used to keep himself attached to this world." Merlin said. "The next time he dies, he will stay that way."

"But how come it's taken you all so long?" Someone asked desperately. "I mean, it's been what, thirteen years."

Albus sighed heavily and shook his head. "It's my fault, and its one of the reasons why Harry didn't trust me. If I hadn't placed him with his magic hating muggle family, we would have been a lot farther along than what we currently are."

"Voldemort used the ritual many times and used many trinkets to ensure his survival. We have to find and destroy the trinkets, and once we do, we get closer to killing him permanently. Ever since I returned to the wizarding world, we have destroyed four of these trinkets, which only leave us few more to go." Salazar said.

"The trick is finding them all because the trinkets can be anything and hidden anywhere." Godric elaborated. "But we are close to finding the remaining few."

"And I take it you aren't going to tell us what these trinkets mean." Seamus laughed.

"No." Albus, Salazar, Godric, and Merlin replied simply, causing everyone in the great hall to chuckle.

"Are there any more questions?" Albus asked again, but no one raised their hand or spoke up. "Very well then." He continued. "I ask you all to understand this, while Voldemort is a threat to our world, things are being taken care of, despite the Ministry denying his return. I will not sit here and tell you not to worry, but I will say that things are looking good in our favor."

"Of course things are in our favor!" Fred shouted gleefully. "We have you, Merlin, Harry, and Gordy! What do they have? A madman who throws torture curses around like candy at his own followers! If they are stupid enough to follow him, well here is hoping he just kills them all so we don't have to worry about the Death Eaters!"

The Gryffindor table burst into cheers and applause, while everyone at the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tables smiled nervously. Most at the Slytherin table glanced at each other with hopeful smiles, while others glared at around the room.

Once the noise from the Gryffindor table died down, Albus looked out over the great hall once again.

"Just do your best to remain calm when Voldemort finally moves into the open, and please keep your heads about you. You will live longer if you do." He said calmly. "Since you are here ten months out of the year, if you see anything suspicious, please let the nearest Professor know about it. Now, what I'm about to say the Ministry will not like, but if during the summer holiday you and your family find yourselves in danger, have your parents make a portkey and get yourself somewhere safe. Should you feel the need, you can come here, but I will warn you, Merlin has created an anti-portkey ward so if you do come here, you will land somewhere in Hogsmeade. I suggest when that happens, you
and your family apparate to the front gates and get yourself inside them immediately. If you choose not to come here, just make sure you're safe, and send a message to myself, Harry, Mr. Roffin, or Merlin. I realize these will be illegal portkeys, but it's better to make them and live, verses being dead. Voldemort and the Death Eaters don't know what it takes to make anti-portkey wards, and the spell is extremely complicated. Rest assured, I know that this information will likely find its way back to Voldemort, but there is no chance that they can use this information to attack you here when you flee." He said with a mysterious smile. Then he looked towards the Slytherin table, where some of the members were glaring at him. "So I advise you not to try."

At this point, the still silenced Umbridge was thrashing around wildly as she tried to unstick herself from the wall, but no one, except those closest to her, paid her any mind.

"I want to issue a warning," Salazar said, as he glanced around the great hall. "To those of you who sympathize with Voldemort, be warned. Things will not end well for you or your families because you are staring into the face of death or Azkaban, so I suggest you choose your side very carefully. I will not speak for the Headmaster, but I can say this for Godric, Merlin, and myself, we do not care what the Ministry thinks, and we do not care how people perceive us. We will kill you in self-defense if you are foolish enough to cross our path in a battle. Know this," He continued in a threatening tone, "I am a dark wizard, and I am not afraid to use my knowledge of the dark arts against you. I am older, stronger, and far more competent than you, your family, or my wretched Heir could ever hope to be. It will be a hard fought battle on both sides, and we, 'the light side', will probably lose some very good people along the way, but in the end we will come out the victors, and you will be dead or rotting in prison. Think about that." He said, eying all of Slytherin as he leaned against the house table. "You have now been properly warned, so I suggest you spread the word to your families." He finally added.

"You're a dark wizard?" A first year Slytherin squeaked as he looked up at Salazar.

"I am, but know this, not all dark wizards are created equal. I don't go around killing, torturing, and maiming for the fun of it. Truth be told I'm actually a fluffy bunny rabbit compared to Voldemort, but do not dare think that makes me weak." He said with a smirk, which caused the Gryffindors to burst out laughing.

"Salazar is a fluffy bunny!" Godric cried loudly, causing Salazar to hit him with a stinging jinx.

"What was that for?" He grinned, as he rubbed his arm.

"You annoyed me."

"So?"

"You're a bloody Gryffindor." Salazar replied dryly.

"Yes we know that, but I find that picking on you is a very good stress reliever." Godric laughed as everyone stared at them and giggled.

"Oh shut up Godric."

"No." He replied, casting a spell at Salazar, which caused his hair to turn gold and his skin to turn red.

Salazar glared at him as flashbacks of this very same thing happening in second year flitted across his mind, but then he turned around. It was a Marauder prank, and clearly Fred and George had taught it to Godric.
"Sirius!" He yelled, as the man burst out laughing. "Undo this now!"

"Sorry Harry, I'm partial to the color choices. I'm not helping you." He said as the whole room burst out laughing.

Salazar tried to glare at everyone, but he couldn't help but laugh.

"Payback is going to be horrible for you." He said as he smirked at Godric.

"Looking forward to it." Godric laughed, as Fred and George finally regained control of themselves.

"Hey Harry, what was that room floating spell all about?" Fred asked eagerly.

"Oh yes, that's what it was named for a long time, but when the muggles discovered gravity, I renamed it. I now call it the anti-gravity charm. I use it as a prank spell, and yes, I'll happily teach it to you, if you promise to sneak into Sirius's bedroom and cast it in there." He answered as Sirius burst out laughing.

"Yes! We promise!" George exclaimed as he and Fred began dancing around the end of the Slytherin table.

"Oh dear. Mr. Potter, please don't. I'm afraid that it won't be limited to Professor Black's rooms." Minerva said, as she glanced nervously at the dancing twins and the grinning Sirius.

Salazar only laughed. "I did just give my word Professor." He winked. "Well, we have been here for a while, but I must go so Merlin can release the Aurors and that woman." He said, merely waving his hand in an unconcerned manner towards Umbridge, who was still stuck to the wall and silenced. "If anyone needs me, you know how to get in touch with me. I'll see you all in the morning." He added, but just as he walked out the room, he turned around and grinned at Colin and Dennis. "I told her I was a flop with chicks. I've been this way since 1956. She looked at my palm, and she made a magic sign. She said, what you need is…love potion number nine!" He sang loudly, and then disappeared out the door as Colin and Dennis burst out laughing.

"Tomorrow Harry!" Dennis shouted gleefully. "Remember to confund us like you have been doing!"

The entire great hall could hear Salazar laughing all the way out of the entrance hall.

"If you're happy and you know it clap your hands! If you're happy and you know it clap your hands! If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it..."

"SHUT UP!" Voldemort bellowed. "I'm in the middle of a Death Eater meeting!"

"And I'm trying to lighten the mood! Everyone's all grim and scared looking." Tiny Voldemort shouted back, as he continued to dance on the long table and clap his hands. "...if you're happy and you know it clap your hands!" He finished, then took a deep bow. "Thank you, thank you!"

It was very late in the evening that Saturday, and nearly every Death Eater looked constipated as they tried to keep a straight face. Most of them had already been tortured a number of times for laughing or cracking a smile at the dratted thing. Severus, who had to leave an Order meeting, was one of three who had been spared thus far, and he was so glad that the humor damping potion was working as it should.

If it had not been, he would be among those who had been tortured.
Tiny Voldemort was on a roll tonight though. He'd told jokes, and even informed them that their Master farts quite frequently, which bought Yaxley a torture curse when he burst out laughing. David Parkinson looked worse than the rest of them though, seeing as he had to live with the extremely cranky Dark Lord.

The Parkinsons' house was nearly in ruins because of Voldemort's temper. The library had been blasted to bits because it lacked giving Voldemort answers to any of his questions on how to get rid of his infuriating companion, and to kill his ancestor. All the house elves had been slaughtered, simply because Voldemort no longer trusted them, so there was no one to clean anything, and the Dark Lord refused to allow them to clean up.

To make matters worse, and what worried the Parkinsons the most, was the fact that Voldemort had killed the family owl, so they had no way of sending Pansy any letters. They wanted to warn their daughter not to come home for Christmas, but the Dark Lord forbade them from writing anything to anyone, including Pansy. They were also prisoners in their own home and were not allowed to go anywhere, so they couldn't go to Hogwarts to warn her.

Mrs. Parkinson pleaded with Severus to warn Pansy, but seeing as Voldemort maliciously mocked the Parkinsons, saying the girl was going to be delighted to come home for Christmas, Severus couldn't risk telling her.

That actually made David cry, but Severus didn't feel sorry for him. He did feel bad for Pansy because she was a child, but he hoped that because of the current state her family was in, that it would be a wake up call for the girl.

"Shut up, shut up, shut up!" Voldemort screamed, as he glared at the still dancing and singing Tiny Voldemort.

"I love you Big Me. You're so funny when you're angry, but all right. I'll be quiet for five minutes so you can have your stupid little meeting." Tiny Voldemort said as he rolled his eyes. "And that five minutes starts…NOW!" He shouted, then proceeded to sit at the edge of the table and stare at Voldemort's head.

Voldemort gritted his teeth, but chose to ignore the damned thing.

"I have been thinking a lot about our friends in Azkaban, and I have finally decided on the best time to get them out. I have also figured out the best way to get it done." Voldemort said, as he tried to ignore Tiny Voldemort, who was humming softly.

"My Lord this is wonderful news. When are we to carry out this plan?" Mcnair asked eagerly.

"When I tell you to." He replied coldly, as his red eyes narrowed in suspicion. "I cannot afford to divulge my plans to anyone, because my meddlesome ancestor is likely to, somehow, catch wind of it and will try to stop me. I have no doubts that he has some kind of spy watching me at this very moment." He said, as he glared at Tiny Voldemort, then around the room as if he thought that Salazar was going to jump out at any moment. "No, I must keep my own plans to myself from now on. Just be ready to go when I tell you."

"But My Lord, surely Potter has more pressing matters at hand. He was fired from Hogwarts and…"

"Shut up Yaxley." Voldemort said in a warning tone. "Don't question me. Nagini and I have talked about it and we feel that this is the best course of action."

Severus's eyebrows shot up for the briefest of moments, but thankfully no one noticed.
"My Lord, if I may, who is Nagini?" Crabbe asked curiously.

"None of your business Crabbe!" Voldemort snapped. "Now unless you want to be tortured some more, I suggest you stop questioning me. I do not need advisors, I need an army. I have decided that my time is better spent planning, while your time is better spent doing what I tell you to do!"

"Yes My Lord." Crabbe squeaked as he tried to make himself smaller and less of a target.

"My ancestor has popped up out of the blue one to many times, and he has foiled a number of my plans in the short time since my return. He has attempted to get me to show myself by using my temper against me, and he has tried to get me to do things he wants me to do, but I will not bow to his wishes. I refuse to say anything about my plans out loud anymore. You all are only here because I want updates from you and to give you orders."

"TIME'S UP!" Tiny Voldemort suddenly shouted, only to be grabbed and flung across the room. He burst out laughing, but ran back to Voldemort and quickly climbed into his lap. "Aww, is Moldybutt in a bad mood? Poor little thing is so paranoid that he can't even speak out loud anymore. Are you scared?" Tiny Voldemort asked with an evil grin. "Are you scared that Salazar is more cunning than you? Poor, poor Big Me. I'll always love you."

"Shut up." Voldemort growled.

"You know, if I were your Death Munchers, I'd run and hide because when Salazar gets ahold of them…he won't be afraid to kill them." Tiny Voldemort said in a sing-song voice.

"My ancestor is weak. He is just as much a fool as Dumbledore." Voldemort hissed he glared at the thing.

"Keep telling yourself that Voldypants." Tiny Voldemort laughed, as he began dancing to a tune that only he seemed to be aware of.

"My ancestor will pay for all that he has done, and I will take away everything he holds most dear." Voldemort said with loathing as he glared at his tiny pink look alike.

Tiny Voldemort laughed loudly, but ignored him in favor of dancing, which caused Voldemort to huff loudly, but then he turned to Severus.

"Severus, do you have anything else to add, other than Dumbledore babbling about my…trinkets?"

"I do My Lord. Potter, Roffin, and Merlin made oaths in front of the whole school. It's the only thing they have done, other than Potter getting caught and being fired from his teaching position." He said with a pleased smirk.

"Serves the fool right for being over confidant, but what did the Ministry official do when they made the oaths?" Voldemort asked.

"She claimed that Potter, Roffin, and Merlin tricked everyone somehow, but those claims are falling on deaf ears because of the memories and the oaths. The Umbridge woman claims the memories are false, but as I said, no one is listening to her anymore. The more the Ministry continues to deny it, the more students and staff are looking to Dumbledore, Potter, Roffin, and Merlin for the truth." Severus said, as he ignored Tiny Voldemort, who was jumping up and down in the air, trying to get his attention.

"It matters not what the students, staff, and their families believe." Voldemort said in an unconcerned manner. "Just as long as the Ministry stays in denial because that will allow me to gather strength and
followers relatively unchallenged. Dumbledore and Potter's attention is currently being…will you stop that!” Voldemort suddenly shouted, as Tiny Voldemort began stripping down to his underwear, which Severus happily noted, the twins had actually put on it.

"NO!" It shouted back. "I'm a sexy beast."

Tiny Voldemort began twirling his red and gold stripped robes over his head in a rather…provocative…fashion, and swaggered over to Yaxley with his robes slung over its shoulder and a devilish grin on its face. Yaxley recoiled in disgust, but Voldemort grabbed the thing and once again threw it across the room.

"My clothes!" Tiny Voldemort shouted as it sailed through the air and hit the wall with a loud thud.

A few moments later it was climbing up Voldemort's leg and back on the table, but only this time it was completely naked. Severus thanked Merlin, Morgana, Salazar, and most importantly, the twins, for actually leaving off a certain part of the human anatomy. Truth be told, it looked like one of those plastic fashion dolls he remembered Petunia playing with, back when he used to visit Lily at her house.

"Dancing naked on the table, look at my butt!" It sang. "Dancing naked on the table, look at my butt!"

Goyle burst out laughing because Tiny Voldemort actually had a flabby butt and, much to Severus's dismay, he was shaking it at everyone. That only earned Goyle another torture curse though. Voldemort ordered Nott to crawl under the table to find its tiny underwear, then he picked up its robe, snatched the underwear out of Nott's hand, grabbed Tiny Voldemort around the neck, and chucked it and its clothes out of the room, while slamming door behind him.

Voldemort glared at everyone, as if daring them to laugh, but the only one who didn't manage to keep a straight face was Montague Sr., which earned him a long torture curse as a consequence.

Once again, Severus was thankful for the humor dampening potion, because all he did was glare around the table.

"Now, as I was saying," Voldemort said through gritted teeth, as a still naked Tiny Voldemort appeared out of nowhere and sat on his right shoulder. "Dumbledore and Potter's attention is currently being taken up by the fools in the Ministry, so as long as they focus on that, I should be all right. I know most of you have been tasked with finding me information about the tracking charm, but I have come to believe that it doesn't exist. It seems that was another one of my ancestor's head games." He snarled.

"What about Lucius then?" Rowle asked. "My Lord, I did as you asked and Malfoy Manor has been reduced to ashes."

"Well at least the stupid fool can follow some orders, but just leave him in the woods. I don't trust him. He has no money and no influence so he's useless. There is absolutely nothing that I can use him for, except maybe an extra body when the time comes."

"Of course My Lord." Rowle said, as he bowed his head.

"As for now, I want all of you to keep your eyes and ears open. I want reports on…"

"When you poop and fart…"

"…everything that you can…"
"...so that I know my own poop and farts are normal..."

"JUST GET OUT!" Voldemort screamed. "You all know what to do!"

Severus had been so happy to leave that particular meeting.

As Dolores Umbridge stalked through the halls of Hogwarts on Sunday afternoon, she glared at everyone she passed. They only ignored her though, which made her angry. She had just gotten back from an emergency meeting with the Minister about the disturbing things she had been learning recently.

Apparently the muggles knew about love potions, and according to the Creevey brothers, a witch who lived on 'thirty-fourth and vine' had been giving love potions to muggles, in addition to casting spells in full view of them. The Statue of Secrecy was being flouted left, right, and center, and she vowed to get to the bottom of it. Fudge had been very concerned about it all, and called for an investigation, which led to an arrest warrant for the mysterious 'Madam Rue'.

Back at Hogwarts, Umbridge was trying desperately to reign in the out of control student population. None of the other Professors were lifting a finger to try and help restore order because they said there was nothing they could do to any of the students, since they all claimed to be confunded.

Dolores was not stupid though. She knew what was going on. There was no way any of these students were confunded. They were doing all of this on purpose, and were attempting to get back at her for her actions during the start-of-term feast. She knew the false memories that Potter and Roffin played yesterday were rubbish, and she had already made her feelings on the matter known. There was no way that Potter was Salazar Slytherin, and there was no documentation that said Slytherin had ever created the confundus charm.

As for their oaths, she claimed that everyone's pumpkin juice had been laced with a confusing concoction, and said that they had all been tricked. No one appeared to believe her though, and to make matters worse, even the Aurors at Hogwarts were beginning to believe all of the drivel that Potter and the others were spewing. Umbridge couldn't have that, so last night she called each of the twenty Aurors into her office one by one, and obliviated them of the recent revelations. There was no way she was going to let them start believing the lies being spread around the school.

In her heart she knew that this was all a plan to take over the Ministry.

She scowled at a group of second years as they giggled when she passed by them, but she turned her nose up at them and continued her silent parade around the school in search of rule breakers.

That was something else she was beginning to tire of.

She was sick of being laughed at because of that bloody poltergeist, and the pranks that were happening to her. She had threatened Roffin with expulsion if he didn't call the ghost off, but all the insolent brat did was laugh in her face and walk away.

So far that blasted ghost had pelted her with food in the great hall, stolen her belongings, disrupted her class, and hid in suits of armor so that he could grab her as she walked by. The first time that happened, the suit of armor pinned her to the floor and held her there for an hour as she yelled and screamed to be set free. Dumbledore finally saved her by kindly asking Peeves to release her, and the grinning poltergeist rose out of the suit of armor, blew a raspberry at her, and flew away cackling like mad.

Since then the attacks on her person had steadily grown worse.
She knew she was being pranked by the students too, but the problem was, she didn't know exactly who they were. Of course she had her ideas, but she couldn't prove it.

The kitty plates that hung in her office had all been smashed to pieces, but when she repaired them the cats were gone and were replaced by a copy of Potter's pet snake. They hissed and glared angrily at her every time she ventured into her office, and no spell seemed to get rid of them.

On top of that, her whole office had been changed from her favorite color of pink into a hideous mix of red, gold, yellow, black, blue, and bronze. It made her head hurt just to be in there, but she had no other choice because Dumbledore refused to move her, saying that there was nowhere else to put her.

Dolores scowled as she thought about that. She knew he was lying.

She glared at yet another group of giggling students, but just as she rounded a corner on the third floor near the library, she suddenly let out a loud, ear piercing scream as a heavy kitchen pot was dropped on her head.

After cackling madly, Peeves proceeded to take a large metal spoon and bang on the side of the pot, causing the witch to become disoriented because of the loud pounding in her ears. Then he shoved her towards a very large stack of pots and pans he had nabbed from the kitchens, causing her to stumble into them. They fell with loud resounding clangs, bangs, and booms as the metal pots and pans hit the stone floor.

The library emptied almost immediately to find out what the commotion was, and the students howled with laughter as they caught sight of the pink cladded witch rolling around on the floor with a pot stuck on her head. She struggled to get the heavy pot off her head, but no amount of tugging and pulling seemed to work. Peeves cackled loudly at Umbridge's muffled screams and shouts as she tried to stand up, but it was useless, seeing as she kept tripping over all the pots and pans.

Madam Pince swooped out of the library and began yelling because of all the commotion, but Severus, who had been on the second floor, heard all the ruckus and came to investigate. He took one look at the scene and clamped his jaws together to keep from laughing. However, his stern glare was enough to cause the laughing students to retreat back into the library.

"Peeves!" He shouted, as he began to make his way towards the now frantic Umbridge. "What have you done now!?"

"Nothing Your Greasiness!" He said with an innocent tone, as Severus scowled and vanished the pot from Umbridge's head. Then he zoomed off down the corridor cackling madly.

Umbridge sat on the floor snarling and seething amongst all the pots and pans, then proceeded to throw a mini temper tantrum right there on the floor. Severus huffed loudly at the display, but stalked away, biting his lip as he tried not to laugh.

Umbridge however, continued to sit on the floor and seethe with hatred.

No one makes a fool out of me and gets away with it. She thought, as she glared around the now deserted corridor. I will make them pay.

Narcissa smiled as she walked down the halls of Camelot to her rooms. She had just spent the entire day with Andromeda, and it was nice to get out, walk around, and go shopping. Of course she had to use polyjuice to disguise herself, and while walking around as someone else didn't set well with her, she was thankful to be allowed to come and go as she pleased.
When she first got to Camelot, she figured she would be a prisoner and wouldn't be allowed to step out of her rooms, but she quickly learned that wasn't the case. Merlin, for the most part, allowed her free access to anywhere in the castle, and only asked to let him know if she was leaving for a day of shopping, or whatever other plans she had that day.

She wasn't part of the Order so she never attended meetings, but her life, as it stood, was comfortable and she could handle the changes, considering the circumstances surrounding it.

Narcissa had been notified of Malfoy Manor's destruction, and while it pained her to lose all the things that were inside, especially her private book collection, she handled it with grace and a cold aloofness that everyone who lived at Camelot had grown accustomed to.

She wasn't actually snooty towards Camelot's other residents, but she did hold them at arm's length and didn't allow herself to get to close. Her opinions about the Weasleys hadn't changed much, but she did try to understand their position and ways of thinking on some matters, especially about blood.

Molly was a friendly woman, and tried her best to make Narcissa feel comfortable and included. Narcissa, for her part, was grateful, but at times she felt Molly was a bit unrefined and slightly annoying because of her mothering and protective instincts.

As for Arthur, she had to admit that she respected the man. He worked hard for what little bit of money he earned, and given her current position, she was beginning to understand what hard work was really all about.

She had talked to Merlin about possibly getting a job somewhere, but he advised against it, given her current predicament. She knew he was right, but she was desperate for money. She wanted to earn and save as much as she could, so that after the war was over, she and Draco could live somewhat decently. She was still getting a total of fifty galleons a month from Sirius, Salazar, and Godric, even though they were no longer at Grimmauld Place, and she had been saving as much of it as she could.

Thankfully it was easier to do now that Draco was at school and she was at Camelot, where almost everything was provided for them.

Narcissa had spoken to Andromeda about her current situation within the Black family. She had expressed her concerns about being cast out, and was worried what it would mean for Draco in the future. She also expressed concern over where she and Draco were to live after the war was over, and how they would survive with little to no money. Andromeda said that she would broach the subject with Sirius and find out his feelings on the matter. While Narcissa hadn't heard what Sirius had to say yet, she just hoped that he would show them mercy and allow them to live comfortably until she and Draco could find jobs.

At this point in her life, it was the best Narcissa could hope for.

So much about her and Draco's future was uncertain, but as Narcissa entered her lavishly decorated and comfortable bedroom at Camelot, she sat down on the edge of her bed and smiled as she looked around.

She was grateful for the mercy that she had been shown so far, and she wasn't about to bite the hands who had shown her that mercy. She was smart enough to swallow her pride, switch sides in the war, and except the help that had been given to her. She also had already made up her mind to do anything they asked of her, if it came to the point where they needed her help. She knew she was safe at Camelot, and Draco was as safe as he could be at Hogwarts.

Narcissa wasn't about to jeopardize the position they were in, but there was one loose end that she
needed to tie up. There was only one person who could possibly ruin it all for her and Draco.

Lucius.

But how to go about getting rid of him?

She would need a plan.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* Hmm, I wonder what Narcissa is going to do about her little problem? *Cackles madly* I want to thank the reviewer who suggested the Ghostbusters Theme Song. I was looking for a song that was really fun, and this one fit the bill nicely. I will still do 'We Will Rock You' at a later date, but the Ghostbusters was really cool, and I couldn't pass it up. I also want to thank those of you who suggested 'Love Potion Number Nine', (there were about three of you who did), because I hadn't thought about that one either. Despite all of that though, this chapter was actually hard to write, but I hope you enjoyed it. As I said before, please don't yell at me because of what Merlin told Hermione. I know its not all true! (Or is it?) LOL

Moving on, in the next chapter we will catch up with Rita, and while I won't do a full article because it will just be a rehash of what we already know, I will have the characters talking about it in passing. Also, it will be Halloween, and we always know something bad happens on Halloween. Until next time... :)
"Have ya heard!? Have ya heard!? Have ya heard the news!?!" Dedalus Diggle cried loudly, as he rushed into the very busy Leaky Cauldron with the latest issue of *The Quibbler* in his hands.

The pub became quiet as he leapt on top of a table, while Tom, the owner, looked at him and chuckled quietly.

He had been waiting for this.

"What are you on about Diggle?" Tom asked as he glared at his fellow Order member. "And get off my table!"

Dedalus ignored him as he happily hopped from one foot to the other. Then he proceeded to dance a little jig on the table just to annoy Tom.

"The news! From *The Quibbler*!" He shouted, causing everyone to groan and roll their eyes.

"No one cares about that rag! And get off my table!" Tom shouted again, but Diggle kept right on going as if he hadn't heard him.

"There's a front page article written by Rita Skeeter!" He shouted.

That got everyone's attention.

Dedalus cleared his throat loudly and held his copy up to read the headlines on the cover. "Salazar Slytherin and Godric Gryffindor return to Hogwarts! Merlin walks among us! Read about the oaths they took in front of the entire student population in the great hall! Ministry cover-ups! Harry Potter is Slytherin reincarnated! Read about his oath saying You-Know-Who is back!" He shouted, as he frantically waved *The Quibbler* around. "Skeeter goes on to write a very detailed article about pensieve memories that Gryffindor and Slytherin showed in the great hall, as well as Merlin! It says ask anyone if it's true, and goes on to say that the students have already written home about the events!"

"I thought Skeeter said she was going into hiding?" A witch asked as she made her way towards Diggle.

"She came back and gives reasons why!" Diggle shouted.

"Let me see that!" An old wizard, who was sipping on some tea called out.

"Get your own copy, this one's mine!" Diggle cried, as he made to protect his precious copy. "Oh, happy day!" He continued as he jumped off the table. "Imagine, hope for our world! I told you all Potter and Dumbledore weren't barmy! I told you all You-Know-Who is back!" He shouted, as he rushed out the pub, but he turned around just as he got to the door. "Why would Merlin, Slytherin, or Gryffindor for that matter, lie about something like that!?"
The others in the Leaky Cauldron stared after him, but his words had an effect as the pub emptied
and the patrons ran to grab their own copies of The Quibbler.

Tom chuckled to himself and pulled out his own copy from underneath the bar. He knew where Dedalus was heading next, and he hoped that Fortescue wouldn't hex his friend if Diggle jumped on top of his table.

"When he gets to Hogsmeade, Rosmerta will kill him if he tries that." He chuckled softly.

Just then, the floo in his pub sprang to life as another customer made an appearance.

"Have you heard the news!?" Tom asked, lying his copy on the table. "Merlin, the greatest wizard ever, walks among us! Rita Skeeter wrote all about it in The Quibbler!" He exclaimed, as the old witch's mouth dropped open. "Swore an oath that he was really himself. Go get a copy for yourself and see! Then come back here, order a cuppa, and settle down for a read." He urged.

The old witch who flooed in nodded slowly, then rushed out the back towards Diagon Alley.

Tom grinned as he watched her go. It was going to be a good day for business.

It was Wednesday, a few days before Halloween, and Hermione was standing in the Gryffindor common room, glaring at two notices that had appeared on the bulletin board overnight.

"Oohh, that foul woman!" She exclaimed as she stomped her foot in frustration. "How can she get away with something like this?"

Neville shook his head. "I don't know, but that Educational Decree Number Twenty-Four is nasty."

"I know. It bans all groups, clubs, teams…oh my, you don't think that means Quidditch too?" She asked as her eyes widened in alarm.

"If it does, Fred and George won't like it, but it does worry me. It defines a group, club, team, etc., as three or more students. What's that going to do to Gordy, Blaise, and Draco in the Snake Pit?"

Hermione shook her head and sighed loudly. "I don't know, but it says they will be expelled and something tells me she won't make an exception for them."

"Same here, but Educational Decree Number twenty-five makes me nervous. She now controls all punishments." Neville said, shaking his head once again. "That woman could come up with anything."

"I think she did this because the other Professors aren't doing anything to us because of the pranks we have been doing. When Daphne Greengrass got up to sing 'Bad Reputation' by Joan Jett the other day, I think it threw Umbridge for a real loop."

Neville snorted. "Yeah, who knew that a pure-blood like her knew a muggle song like that? I'd say that floored more than a few people."

"I thought it was funny." Hermione giggled, but then her serious expression was back in a flash. "We need to head to breakfast. I don't think Gordy and Harry know about this yet."

Neville nodded in agreement and the two of them headed for the door, but just as they reached it, a sudden shout made them stop.

"Oi!" Colin cried loudly, as he stood at the top of the stairs leading down from the dorms. "Who here
recognizes this? Ooh eeh, ooh ah ah, ting tang, walla walla, bing bang!?” He cried with a grin.

Hermione, Dean, and several others burst out laughing.

"Witch Doctor!” Seamus cried.

"I thought so. Dennis and I will need your help at the appropriate moments for the greatest effect. When we get to breakfast, you all spread that around. We are going to try and do this right.” Colin laughed.

"Colin, you need to be careful!” Hermione exclaimed loudly. "Have you seen this new Educational Decree?"

Colin scowled. "Yeah I saw it. I already spoke to Harry early, early this morning, and he said to be careful as well." Then he looked around. "You all don't have to help us, especially since that punishment decree came out, but as for Dennis and I, we are still going to do it. Just let everyone in the other houses know that it's their choice."

Colin disappeared back up the stairs with Dennis in tow, but Hermione glanced at Neville.

"Well at least Harry knows.” She sighed.

"Yeah, but Gordy might not. Come on, let's get to the great hall.” Neville said, leading her out the portrait hole.

When Hermione and Neville got to the great hall, they noticed that Daphne was sitting with Godric, Blaise, and Draco, and judging by the look on Godric's face, they already knew about the new decrees. Hermione glanced at Neville, who nodded, and they both decided to go on and sit at the Gryffindor table. They had tried sitting with the Slytherins many times, but quickly learned that Umbridge didn't take kindly to that. She took it out on them in class by giving just them more homework than they could ever hope to accomplish.

The great hall was calm for the first part of breakfast, but as was customary, Colin and Dennis got up to sing about halfway through. Umbridge glared at them throughout the whole song, but smirked as their little display came to an end.

"Well, I'm sure the Ministry will like to know that there is yet more breaches of the Statue of Secrecy, but I must let you know that you all have detention for your hideous behavior."

"We were confunded.” Colin said loudly as he sat back down at the table.

"No you weren't.” She said with a sickly sweet smile.

"Yes we were!” Dennis shouted back, causing giggles to break out across the room. "Harry confunded us!"

"Mr. Potter isn't even here Mr. Creevey.” She replied sweetly.

"Yes he is!” Colin insisted.

"No he's not, and would you like to know how I know that?” She asked, pulling what seemed to be invisible glasses off her head. "It's because of these wonderful new glasses that have been provided to the Aurors and me by the Department of Mysteries.” She added as she tapped the invisible glasses with her wand, thereby making them visible. "They let us see everything, and they work just like
Alastor Moody's magical eye." She smirked.

Albus, Minerva, Severus, and the rest of the Professors' eyes widened in shock because there had been no warning about the glasses being ready from Amelia. This knowledge caused Godric to swear under his breath, and Blaise to narrow his eyes at the woman. At the Gryffindor table, Hermione and Neville moaned slightly and shook their heads, while Fred and George scowled at her. After he was done swearing up a storm, Godric conjured his hawk patronus and sent it off in a hurry.

Hermione breathed a sigh of relief, seeing as it was likely a message to Salazar warning him about the glasses.

"And when did you get these glasses Professor Umbridge?" Albus asked calmly.

"They were issued first thing this morning." She said, glaring at Godric, who was boring hateful holes into her head. "And they are to help us catch the murderer Harry Potter and anyone who we see aiding and abetting him." She declared, as she gazed at the rest of Salazar's friends. "We were the first to get them, but even if Mr. Potter decides to leave Hogwarts, we will catch him. The rest of the Aurors and the Department of Magical Law Enforcement will get them tomorrow."

"Good luck catching him." Hermione mumbled.

"Well at least that explains why Madam Bones couldn't warn us." Neville whispered, causing her to nod. "She probably doesn't even know about them yet."

"There is a leak in the Department of Mysteries!" George suddenly shouted, as he jumped up from his seat at the table. "Harry knew about the glasses, so last night he snuck into Gryffindor Tower to confound Colin and Dennis. Go ask him if you don't believe us!"

"Yeah! He confounded us too, that's how we know!" Fred added, causing Umbridge to scowl at them. "You can't prove it's not true. If being confunded works for you, it works for us. Who cares about your stupid glasses!?"

"I'm under the Imperius curse!" George shouted, causing Hermione to groan loudly and shake her head.

"So am I! Goyle's dad did it!" Fred yelled. "So we can't be held responsible for our actions." He added smugly, then he sat down with a loud thud. "All hail The Dark Lord!"

Across the room at the Slytherin table, Blaise couldn't help but face palm himself, but the twins' declaration made Godric snort loudly. Goyle on the other hand, glanced around stupidly, simply because his name was mentioned.

"There is no way anyone is going to buy that." Draco said, as he looked at the twins who were now babbling about how great the Dark Lord was.

"That's not really the point Draco." Blaise laughed, as Fred and George proceeded to bow in front of a suit of armor and declare it their Dark Lord 'Voldypants'.

The rest of the great hall didn't know whether to laugh or not, but snorts and giggles could be heard throughout the room. Umbridge glared at everyone, while Albus's eyes twinkled in amusement as Fred and George fawned, praised, and gibbered loudly about the suit of armor they claimed was their 'Dark Lord'. Severus, of course, was glaring at them with pure hatred.

"Albus, are we really going to take this lightly?" Minerva whispered as she eyed the twins warily.
"What has been said, cannot be unsaid Minerva. However, I will be speaking with Messers. Weasley about their poor choice of claiming to be under the imperius curse, and I will certainly notify Molly and Arthur, though I think I will attempt to discourage any howlers from Molly. As for 'the Dark Lord' business, they aren't talking about Voldemort himself. I think they made it quite clear that they are referring to that particular suit of armor." He replied, as he glanced at the twins, who were trying to 'entertain' their 'Lord' by juggling bright pink balls they had conjured.

"Yes, but claiming to be imperiused by Goyle Sr.?' She asked breathlessly.

"They didn't accuse a student, and Goyle Sr. is hardly innocent of the crime, I'm sure, so there is no harm there." Albus said with a chuckle as he continued to watch them. "I find their creativity and quick thinking amusing actually."

Minerva shot him an exasperated look, but giggled slightly as Peeves swooped over to Fred and George and confiscated their pink balls. Then he proceeded to lob the balls at Umbridge's head, forcing her to make a hasty retreat out of the great hall.

By this time the whole room was laughing at her expense, but Fred and George just grinned at each other and took a big sweeping bow, causing everyone to cheer loudly.

The rest of the day was a nightmare for the students and Professors of Hogwarts. Umbridge lorded her newfound power over all of them, and banned nearly every club and student organization there was. She did reinstate Quidditch for the Slytherin, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw teams, but purposely refused to reinstate the Gryffindor team. This caused Fred and George to put their heads together while in the common room, and no one felt sorry for the hell that was about to befall Umbridge because of it.

Patronuses were flying all over the castle for the better part of the day, much to the High Inquisitor's confusion. However, when she asked Albus what they meant, he just smiled and told her that some of the students must be practicing the advance defensive charm. Umbridge got so angry about it that she made an announcement at dinner, after Sirius's song howler, that all patronus charms were now banned on school grounds.

This only caused the members of the Order to scowl at her.

Salazar, for his part, was taking the news about everything as best he could, but due to all the restrictions and the Aurors new glasses, he was pretty much on lockdown. He couldn't go anywhere and do anything inside the castle because he'd be caught.

He was beginning to think that taking over the Defense classroom as a living space was a bad idea, and thought briefly about moving into the Chamber with Emeralda, who had been ordered there because Umbridge threatened to kill her on more than one occasion. However, due to all the many potions he was brewing, this was unfeasible.

The polyjuice potion still needed a bit of time to brew, and the small cauldron of Felix Felicius had to simmer for six months before it could be used or moved. He was also brewing a number of potions for the hospital wing, seeing as he had much more free time than Severus did.

Salazar sighed as he absentmindedly stirred the headache potion for the final time, but a flash of pink appeared in his peripheral vision and he looked up.

Umbridge was standing there with the four Aurors who had been instructed to never leave his door. She raised her wand, and using the flagrate charm, wrote fiery letters in the air.
'Give up. You can't go anywhere or do anything now that we can see every move you make. We will catch you!'

Salazar rolled his eyes and shook his head. 'We will catch you!' He wrote back with a smirk, knowing it would take her a minute to read the upside down and backwards words.

She stood there for a good three minutes or so, trying to make heads out of his writing, but she finally scowled.

'We will see about that. I'll get you Potter!' She replied.

He asked with a chuckle, knowing full well she wouldn't get the offhanded reference to the classic muggle movie.

She furrowed her brow in confusion, but finally huffed, said something to the Aurors, and stomped off.

When she was gone, Salazar saw that one of the Aurors was grinning and trying not to laugh.

'Nice one Potter. I doubt that she even gets that reference, but 'Wicked Witch of the West' sums her up nicely.' He wrote.

'Are you a muggle born?' Salazar asked, causing the Auror to nod. 'Well there is nothing wrong with that.' He continued with a smile. 'I was on a trip to America and in Las Vegas when 'The Wizard of Oz' came out in 1939. I saw it on the silver screen the day it came out, and trust me, I was pretty impressed with it. It was a good bit of acting and directing…for its time.'

The Auror smiled and nodded, but seemed to sigh heavily before writing out another response.

'Listen Potter, some of us believe you, but some of us are still on the fence. Please understand that we have a job to do, and please don't take anything that we, the Aurors, may have do personally. We don't want to lose our jobs.'

Salazar stared at the young man and his colleagues, who all nodded their heads in agreement, but then he nodded his own in understanding. These Aurors were in the same tight position that Amelia, and the rest of the Ministry workers in the Order, were in.

Amelia had already told the Order that Fudge was giving the Auror department the orders, not her, and with his lackey at Hogwarts, Salazar knew that these Aurors had to take orders from Umbridge.

He smiled sadly at them through the see-through wall, but nodded once more. 'I understand.' He wrote. 'Don't endanger your jobs by trying to help me in any way, because in these uncertain times, we need all the Aurors we can get. If you're caught trying to help me, you will be fired. Just do your jobs like you are asked to, so that you don't get into trouble. I won't ask for special favors. If I get caught, I get caught, but I'm not worried. I think we all know I can get out of Azkaban rather easily.'

They all stared at him with shocked expressions, but they finally smiled at him.

'How did you escape?' Asked another, older Auror.

'Ah, that would be telling secrets my friend.' He laughed.

'Alright, you win.' One of the young female Aurors said, causing Salazar to grin and wink at her.
'Know this though, if you can catch me, you'll go down in history as being the one who caught and arrested THE Salazar Slytherin, so good luck.' He smirked, causing them to double over in laughter.

'You're on Potter!' One of them wrote as they grinned. 'I was a Gryffindor you know.'

'Godric would love you then.' Salazar laughed, as the Auror shook his head and grinned again.

Salazar only chuckled, and began ladling the headache potion into phials so Dobby could take them to Poppy. He felt a little better knowing that the Aurors weren't mindless sheep doing the Ministry's bidding, so he tried to put it all out of his mind and focus on his other potions.

"We are so dead, we are so dead!" A brown haired girl, who appeared to be a third year, yelled as she and her friend ran away from Umbridge's office on the fourth floor.

"Keep running!" Her blond friend cried as they ran to the end of the corridor.

"Get them! Get them!" Umbridge screamed as she fired curses at the two students. "They used that stupid floating room spell on my classroom and office!"

"What are you doing!? We are going to be trapped!" The brown haired girl yelled, just as they got to the end.

The blond haired girl pulled a green potion out of her pocket and drank some. Then handed it to her friend, before turning to face the enraged witch.

"So!?" Umbridge cried, as she and the two Aurors cornered them so they couldn't run anymore. "You didn't think I would get back from the Ministry so quickly? Luckily for me, I forgot something and had to return. Well, I'm going to make an example out of the two of you. What are your names?" She demanded.

"Uh-Uh…Edward Cullen!" The blond blurted out, earning her a weird look from everyone, even her friend.

"And I'm…uh…Bella…Bella Swan." The brown haired girl said.

"I doubt that." Umbridge said through gritted teeth as her eyes bounced back and forth between the two. "Now tell me your real..."

"Sorry, we gotta go!" 'Edward' said, then she turned to her friend. "Conscious decision. Remember, it's a conscious decision or it won't work!"

"Are you crazy!?" 'Bella' shrieked. "We are on the fourth floor!"

Umbridge tried to stun them, but both 'girls' threw up very quick shields just before they jumped…through the outside wall of the castle.

Both screamed as they dropped like stones out of the sky, but with a quick cushioning charm at the ground and a charm to slow their decent, both landed with soft thumps on the chilly ground.

"Did we really just do that? Did we really jump from the fourth floor?" 'Bella' asked with a groan as she rolled over and stood up.

"Yep!" 'Edward' said with a lopsided grin. "That was brilliant! Too bad we missed Umbridge's reaction, but remind me to thank Harry for the walking through walls potion."
The brown haired girl rolled her eyes, but then chuckled. "Edward Cullen? Seriously Cedric, you're supposed to be a *girl.*"

"Well excuse me!" He laughed. "I've been a male for the last seventeen years, and I've only been a girl for what, ten minutes!? Pardon me for forgetting. Besides, I just threw a name together that I knew no one at school had. I made it up. What's your excuse Susan? Bella Swan? You should have just blurted out 'Mary Sue'."

"Well at least I had a good excuse for choosing it!" Susan cried. "There was a painting of a bell tower and a pond with swans in it behind Umbridge's head, and at least I used a girl's name!"

Cedric rolled his eyes, but grinned. "Come on, we need to move. Umbridge can probably see us because of those glasses of hers, and we need to report to Fred and George." He said, grabbing her hand and pulling her towards the solid stone wall of the castle.

They both closed their eyes and took a deep breath as they walked through the wall, and ended up on the first floor near the hospital wing. It took a bit of wandering, and a few close calls with the Aurors, but eventually they made it back to the seventh floor, and inside the room of requirement.

Fred and George were there, commanding the attention of nearly three-quarters of the school. The room itself was just as big as the great hall, but instead of long tables, the room had provided stadium like seating.

"Sorry we are late, but we did it!" Cedric called out loudly. "Umbridge actually came back and we were caught applying the charm to her office. We tried to run, but we ended up having to jump out of the fourth floor wall that led to the outside."

"We're ok though." Susan assured them. "Cedric had the walking through walls potion on him, so we didn't climb out of a window or anything."

"You jumped!" Hermione exclaimed in horror.

"It was fine. A cushioning charm and slowing our descent caused us to land softly, but Umbridge is not happy." Cedric replied.

"I bet she isn't." Blaise said with a smirk.

"You should know," Susan said with a chuckle, "that we called ourselves Edward Cullen and Bella Swan."

Fred nodded and began adding those names to a list of names already written down on a large chalkboard that was situated behind him and George.

"Good, that prank will hopefully keep her busy long enough so that she won't notice that practically the whole school is missing." Fred said with a grin, as George laughed and looked at the two polyjuiced students.

"Those are good names though, and we don't know anyone else who has them. For those of you who are going to be pulling pranks, if you are caught by the Aurors and Umbridge, just pick one of these names to give to them." George said, pointing to the chalkboard. "Hermione suggested Mickey and Minnie Mouse, and several others suggested James Bond, Mary Poppins, The Doctor, Sherlock Holmes, Simon Templar, Bilbo Baggins, Robin Hood, Nancy Drew, Arwen, Galadriel, and Eowyn."

"All of these names are popular muggle fictional people, so if you are caught pulling a prank, please
don't give out your real name or anyone else's name." Fred added. "Not only will this protect your identity, but it will make it impossible to identify your real family. Umbridge is not above targeting your parents for your rebellious behavior, especially if they work in the Ministry." He added, causing most of the assembled students to nod in understanding.

"We need to remain consistent though, so use names from the board. It will just tick Umbridge off even more because she won't be able to identify you. If you are going to pull a prank, always, always, use your polyjuice potion and have your phial of the walking through walls potion on you. A small sip of the potion, according to Gordy, will last about an hour, so don't gulp it down like pumpkin juice." George said as he stood up.

"How does that potion actually work?" Lisa Turpin asked. "Won't it cause us to sink into the floor?"

"No. It won't." Godric stood up to explain. "It's a conscious decision you have to make to make to walk through the wall. As you know, all potions require a spell from a wand in order to produce them, otherwise any muggle will be able to brew them. The spell Salazar uses to finish it off is what allows you to make the conscious decision to actually walk through the wall."

"That makes much better sense." Lisa nodded. "I was afraid that I'd fall through the floor." She chuckled, causing Godric to laugh and shake his head.

George grinned. "All right, with all of the pranking business out of the way, let us get to the main reason we are all assembled here tonight. Take it away Fred."

"Right George." Fred said as he began pacing the stage they were standing on. "It's not often that the two of us are serious about something, but in this case we are. All of you are here tonight because you are trustworthy. I know some of you are eyeballing the Slytherins that are here, but we can assure you, these Slytherins are either from light families or neutral ones and they will not rat us out or try to kill us. As you can see, over half of Slytherin is missing so you can guess where the loyalties of the missing ones lie. All of Gryffindor is here tonight, and only about twenty from Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff chose not to participate."

"It's their loss really." George said with a grin. "Now, it has come to nearly everyone's attention that we aren't learning anything in Defense against the Dark Arts, so we are here tonight to form a student taught Defense class." He announced. "This class is very important, especially now that there is a war brewing outside the walls of Hogwarts. You are all here tonight to better yourselves in this class, and hopefully whatever you learn in here will help you stay alive out there."

Murmuring erupted throughout the room as everyone began talking amongst themselves, but a few looked at George curiously.

"And who is going to teach it?" A third year Slytherin asked.

"Well," Neville said as he stood up. "We have planned for everyone to be broken up into year groups. The first and second years are one group, third and fourth are another, and fifth through seventh is the last group. We have drawn up a rough schedule," he continued as he waved around a few pieces of parchment, "so that we don't over lap the year groups. Teachers for first and second years will be Ginny Weasley, Blaise Zabini, and Luna Lovegood. Teachers for third and fourth years will be Hermione Granger, Terry Boot, Daphne Greengrass, and Colin Creevey. We say Colin because he's best at Defense for his year."

"What about the rest of us?" A seventh year Ravenclaw asked.

"I'm getting there." Neville said with a patient nod. "Now, since fifth through seventh is a very large
group, we are going to have a few more teachers. They will be Cedric Diggory, Susan Bones, Draco Malfoy…"

At the mention of Draco's name, many in the room started protesting loudly, but a few bangs from Fred's wand caused it all to die down.

"Listen…!" Fred shouted, but Draco stood up before Fred could continue.

"Look, I know I used to be a major prat, but I'm trying not to be that anymore." Draco said as he glared around the room. "Yes, my father is a Death Eater, but I'm not. I really cannot go into details, but suffice to say that my father wants to kill me and my mother because we switched sides." He emphasized. "My old friends also have orders from their parents to kill me if they get a chance because they will get some kind of reward from the Dark Lord." He said, as looks of horror appeared on all of the assembled students faces. "I know you all hate me, but all I ask for is the chance to prove that I've changed." He said.

"Gordy and Harry trust him, and so do we." Hermione announced, as she stood up and faced the crowd. "If you trust us, then give Draco a chance. He's really good at Defense and he knows what he is doing. We need his help to teach."

A few people grumbled under their breath and more than a few scowled at Draco, but most agreed to give the boy a chance.

Neville looked around the room with a raised eyebrow, but then he continued naming names. "Right then, as I was saying. Cedric, Susan, Draco, Adrian Pucey, Roger Davies, and myself." He said as he glanced around the room.

"Question!" A sixth year Hufflepuff shouted. "Why not just have Harry and Gordy teach us? They are Slytherin and Gryffindor after all."

Fred stood up and cleared his throat. "They were our first choice, but Gordy needs to keep his nose clean so that he can protect those of us who are direct targets of Voldemort and his goons." He said, sending a shudder throughout the room at the mention of the name. "If Umbridge finds out that he had anything to do with this, he will be expelled and we will be free game for the sons and daughters of Death Eaters. As for Harry, he has enough going on at the moment and we didn't want to burden him with something else. He does know about this though and both he and Gordy will be our advisors, but they won't be attending the classes."

"Yeah, Salazar needs to concentrate on not getting arrested!" Godric shouted, causing several people to start laughing.

Hermione grinned. "Please know that this class has to be kept secret." She said. "There is no way Umbridge, the Aurors, or even the students who are not here can know about this. It will be shut down quicker than you can say 'expelled'."

"She's right." Neville said with a nod. "With that new educational decree going up yesterday, what we are doing is 'illegal' now, so if we are caught, we will get in trouble."

"Especially with Umbridge running the detentions now," Godric added. "I want to stress to everyone that you are free to leave and not participate if you wish, but you will be placed under a tongue tying curse so that you cannot talk about these classes. If you wish to leave, you may do so now." He said, and a door leading out of the room appeared right behind him. "But you have to go through me first so that I can curse you."
Several people burst out laughing, but no one moved. Hermione took out a long sheet of parchment, and placed it, a quill, and ink pot down on the table.

"Ok, listen up everyone!" She said, clapping her hands to get everyone's attention. "We need everyone to sign this piece of parchment so that we know who all will be participating in these classes. This parchment is to help us know who you are, and what year you are in. You may know who we are, but that doesn't mean we know who you are. Please write down your name and year so we know how to sort you, and so that we can use this for scheduling purposes. Once we have ironed out all the details, you will be notified by an elf on when classes actually start."

"There is one more thing you need to know about this parchment, and as a former Professor, I feel it is my duty to warn you that there is a hex on it." Godric said. "The hex will activate if you choose to rat us out to Umbridge, or anyone associated with her. Know this though, this hex will not strip you of your magic, nor will it kill you, but it will cause a very public prank charm to activate. This hex will let everyone know you have tried to betray us. It was debated to make this nasty hex permanent, but I overruled that. It does have a counter curse, so you will have the opportunity to explain your actions, but if we find that they weren't justified, the hex will remain. If you don't agree with signing this parchment, you cannot partake of this class and I will place you under the tongue tying curse."

"Why not just place us under the tongue tying curse to begin with?" A first year Hufflepuff asked. Godric smiled at the lad. "Because the tongue tying curse won't allow you to talk about it at all, and you will likely need to discuss your lessons with your year mates."

"Oh." He said, blushing as giggles sprang up in the room.

"It's very simple." Fred said. "Don't talk about the class to people who don't already know about it, and you will remain hex free."

"What about the Headmaster and the other Professors?" A seventh year Ravenclaw asked.

"In order to protect them," Blaise stood up and said. "We have chosen not to clue them in. If they find out about this, then it is likely that Umbridge will fire them and we will be in a worse position than we are already in."

"It's called plausible deniability." Hermione added. "If Umbridge were to force them to admit that they allowed this class, then they could get into trouble themselves. Since they don't know about it, they can't get into trouble with her." She said as she shrugged her shoulders.

"Is there any more questions?" Fred asked, but no one had any. "All right then, line up and sign your names, then walk through the door that leads into your own common room. You will have to go through a long tunnel, but just keep following it until you reach the end. If you are questioned about where you came from when you get to your common room, just shrug your shoulders, smile, and walk away."

"Then hex them if they keep bugging you." George added with a grin, as everyone laughed.

Everyone started 'oohing and ahhing' as four doors with the respective house crest began appearing behind the table at the front of the room, but soon a long line of students was formed and they all began signing the parchment.

Godric, Blaise, Neville, and Draco kept watch to make sure everyone signed it, while Hermione, Ginny, and Luna answered any last minute questions. It took nearly forty-five minutes for everyone to sign the parchment and the room to clear out, but finally it was just Blaise, Neville, Hermione,
Colin, Luna, Draco, Fred, George, Ginny, Ron, and Godric left in the room.

"Are you sure you're going to be ok doing this Draco?" Fred asked. "You said you were only going to keep your head down and go with the flow. Now you're getting actively involved."

Draco sighed and nodded his head. "Yeah, I'm sure. I'm tired of just sitting around waiting for something to happen. If I'm going to die, then at least I know that I did something for the 'light side'." He said. "Even if it's just helping to teach my peers defense."

Godric smiled at him. "It's a very brave thing to do lad. I'm proud of you, and I know Salazar is too."

"Brave?" Draco asked in mock disgust. "It seems I have to work on that."

Everyone burst out laughing, but Draco only smirked as he glanced around at all the laughing Gryffindors.

"You're going to be fine mate." Blaise chuckled, clapping a hand on his shoulder. "You'll see, but I must caution you, getting involved with activities that are ran by Gryffindors often leads to rash behavior, recklessness, and moments of uncharacteristic Slytherin behavior, so be very careful." He warned.

Draco looked around as all the Gryffindors protested loudly, and began smacking Blaise with the nearest soft objects they could find. He couldn't help but smile at their antics though, and he found himself quickly coming to his housemate's defense.

Is this what it means to have real friends? He thought, as he laughed and shielded himself from a tickling charm sent his way by Ginny, and sent one back at her.

"Well I have news." Luna announced loudly, before the ruckus turned into a friendly free-for-all. "Daddy says that the issue of The Quibbler with Rita's article sold out six times. That's more than any other issue by far. Daddy says he has been getting inquiries from lots of people in the wizarding world, and they are wondering if it is a Halloween prank or if it's real. He plans to have the next issue retouch on some of what Rita wrote, and make a public claim that it is in fact, all real. With Rita, and not Daddy, writing the articles, people are taking it very seriously."

"Well that's good news." Neville said with a relieved sigh, as he and Blaise untangled themselves from the headlocks they had placed each other in. "If even one family either leaves the country for their safety, or gets better prepared for the coming war, then it was all worth it."

"I agree." Fred said with a happy grin, as he cancelled the full body-bind that Colin and placed Ron in.

"Is Rita still here at Hogwarts, or is she moseying around the wizarding world getting the scoop on what people are saying?" Hermione asked.

Godric cocked his head to the side for a moment, but then he nodded. "She's here. The animagus ward tells me she's in her beetle form."

Fred reached into his pocket and pulled out the map, then he burst out laughing.

"She not showing up on the map, which means…come out Rita…I know you're here!" He said loudly.

"Tut, tut Mr. Weasley." An amused voice from right behind them said. "But that's a very interesting map. Mind if I take a look at it?" Rita asked, appearing in lime green robes that matched her quick
She quirked an eyebrow at him and smiled sweetly, but Fred only laughed.

"It's fine." He said, showing it to her. "The map shows all of Hogwarts and everyone in it, except for this room because it's unplottable. That's how I knew you were in here."

"I see." She grinned, as she studied the map. "It's simply fascinating."

"It helps us know where Umbridge and the Aurors are at all times." Neville explained.

"Rita, I don't need to tell you…" Godric began sternly, but she waved him off.

"It's fine Mr. Roffin. I know, and I don't plan on spilling the beans about this class. I was just curious about the rumors, so I hitched a ride on a Hufflepuff who brought me here unknowingly. I know how important this class is." She said with a serious expression. "And truth be told, I agree with it."

Godric nodded, but then Rita turned to Hermione. "As for your comment my dear, I think I'll take that idea. I've been concentrating on what the students and staff are saying about the article I wrote, but perhaps it's time for me to…what was that…mossey about the wizarding world?" she said with a shark like grin. "As for you Miss Lovegood, please do tell your father that I'll have another article for him come time for publication."

"I will." Luna said with a nod.

"Now, how do I get out of here?" Rita asked, looking around the room.

Godric chuckled. "Would you like a window?" He asked, and an open one appeared behind them.

Rita chuckled. "What an ingenious room. Thank you Mr. Roffin."

"Thank Rowena, it was her idea. Rita, stay out of site, and be safe. We need you my dear."

"I know, and I will." She said sincerely as she nodded. Then she took to her beetle form once again, and flew out of the window.

"Do you think she will be all right?" Hermione asked nervously, chewing on her bottom lip as she watched Rita's small form disappear into the night sky.

"I think so." Blaise said. "She's good at hiding."

"I hope you're right." Hermione said. "But what is going to happen to you three?" She asked, changing the subject, and looking at Godric, Blaise, and Draco. "With Umbridge's new decree, how are you all getting away with being in the Snake Pit?"

"We're not." Draco growled. "She said we have until the end of the week to break up our 'little group', or else she's going to expel all three of us. She cornered us this morning before breakfast, and with these new decrees, there is nothing that Dumbledore can do to stop her."

"She was waiting by the entrance to the Snake Pit." Blaise said with a scowl.

"We have a plan though." Godric added with a smirk. "I'll stay in my house in the forest, and just apparate into the entrance hall each morning to wait for Draco and Blaise to come up. We will study in a warded classroom, and Nora will be our lookout for people hiding under disillusionment charms trying to ambush us." He grinned.
"It's not a perfect plan, but it's doable." Draco said with a sigh. "She can't say anything if Roffin isn't seen in the Snake Pit, since its only Blaise and I in there."

"What does Nora say about being your guard?" George asked with a snort.

"She doesn't know yet since she's with Salazar, but we think she will be up for it." Godric laughed, but then he looked up at a clock that appeared in one corner of the room. "Well, it's getting late, and you all better get back to your common rooms." He said, nodding to the doors that were still viewable in the room.

"We need one for the the…oh, nevermind." Draco said, and shook his head when a door with a large basilisk appeared on it.

Godric grinned at him. "You'll get used to this room before long Draco. Don't worry."

"It's crazy." He admitted.

"It's brilliant, but what else would you expect from THE Ravenclaw?" Luna said with a dreamy expression, as they all laughed, said goodnight, and headed for their respective houses.

"…but Arthur, we don't have that much money. As great as this plan sounds, we just don't…"

"Molly, we will be fine. Salazar gave us enough to do the…"

"But he only gave us one-hundred galleons." Molly said, as she looked up from the rough sketch of The Burrow's new design.

It was lunch time on Halloween and they were sitting around the kitchen table at Camelot, discussing on how to build and expand The Burrow. Narcissa was sitting a few places down from them, while Merlin sat at the very end of the table. He looked up at Arthur in confusion though, because he could have sworn Salazar had given them much more than that.

"Molly," Arthur said with a sigh. "Salazar gave us more than a hundred galleons. I didn't want to tell you just how much more, because I was afraid of how you would react."

"How much…"

"Ten thousand." He said with a sigh, as Molly's mouth fell open in shock. "I tried to talk him down to one-thousand, but he wouldn't hear of it and gave us ten. The goblins have already moved the money into our vault, and have been asked not to transfer it back under any circumstances. We have enough money to do the expansion and build bigger rooms than what the kids already have. Plus, we have more than enough to get new furniture and whatever else we want to get. Especially since Bill, Charlie, and I will be doing the actual construction ourselves. I built the house to begin with, so I know most of the spells, and Bill and Charlie have picked up a few new spells because of their jobs. All we needed was the money to buy materials."

Despite her still shocked state, Molly understood everything Arthur just said, but two words stuck out more for her than anything else.

"Bill and Charlie?" She asked.

Arthur sighed, but smiled. "It seems I have slipped up and ruined the surprise. I do hope the boys will forgive me, but yes, Bill and Charlie. Bill has taken on a job at Gringotts and will now be stationed here in the U.K., and Charlie has taken an extended leave of absence from the dragon
reserve. Both are coming home to help me to, not only rebuild our home, but because of the war. They want to help us fight, and I couldn't deny them that. Both of them will be here by the end of the week."

"Oh Arthur!" Molly exclaimed as she jumped up and showered her husband with kisses. "Our boys are coming home!"

"Yes." He said simply, as he grinned at his wife's happiness.

"Oh, I thought I'd never say this but," She said, gearing up for a rant, "they need to stay away. With the war…"

"Now Molly, you aren't going to discourage them." Arthur said somewhat sternly. "We are their family, and we are going to be in the middle of the war. You can't ask them to abandon us to save themselves."

She seemed to deflate a little and some of her anger disappeared, but her worry was plain to everyone there as she softly sat back down in her seat.

"I suppose you're right." She sighed. "We didn't raise cowards."

"No, we didn't."

"All right." She said, sighing again.

"Now, let's finish talking about the house. I know you don't care for grand, luxurious things, but instead prefer comfort and homey surroundings. Know this Mollywobbles, it will still be our Burrow, but it will just be a bit bigger than what we are used to." Arthur said, pulling his somewhat distraught wife into his arms.

She nodded, and held onto her husband tightly. "I don't care how we live, what we have, what we don't have, and how nice our things are, I just want us, our family, to live through this war."

"I know my dear, I know." He said, rubbing her back as she sobbed into his shoulder. "Percy has also expressed a wish to learn how to build a house using magic, so he will be there as well."

It took her a few minutes to calm down, but she finally dried her eyes and sighed heavily.

"I'll leave the building and construction up to you, Percy, Bill, and Charlie. Ginny and I will see to its furnishings. Oh, and remind me to give Salazar a scolding. Ten-thousand galleons is way too much!" She exclaimed, bringing a smile to Merlin's lips.

"And here I thought Salazar might have escaped a scolding." He said, causing Molly to blush.

"Well, maybe not a scolding, but…"

She trailed off as she giggled, but Narcissa couldn't help but smile a bit. As a mother, she understood Molly's position on her family, but Narcissa just didn't understand how the woman could prefer living a simple life. However, given her current state, perhaps Narcissa could learn a thing or two about shopping for thrifty items.

Narcissa was about to open her mouth to ask Molly if she could accompany her on her shopping trip, when the time came for that, but stopped short when Merlin went stiff as a board in his seat. His breathing became ragged and heavy, and everyone looked up in alarm.
"Choppy! Whimsy!" Narcissa cried, and the two elves appeared with small pops. "Your Master needs help!"

The two elves took one look a Merlin, and Whimsy popped away and came back with a fresh piece of parchment and a recording quill, as Choppy began patting his hand in a comforting manner. Narcissa was about to say something about this strange behavior, but finally Merlin's breathing evened out a bit, and he began to speak.

"Death makes an appearance at Hogwarts tonight, and will mark the one who dares to hold the innocent hostage. It will be the marked one's final mistake, and he will not live to see the next full moon."

As Merlin came out of his trance like state, everyone stared at him in horror.

"Sorry, what…"

"Master, you must rest a moment." Choppy said, interrupting him before he could began to speak. "You spoke a prophecy sir, and we have recorded it like always."

"A prophecy?" He asked with wide eyes as he looked at the elf, who motioned towards the parchment and the recording quill.

"Yes sir. Now, regain your senses and when you are ready, we will show it to you."

Everyone was still staring at him in horror as Merlin shook his head to clear it. It took him a few more moments, but he finally nodded and Whimsy handed him the parchment.

"Oh dear, this doesn't bode well." He said in a concerned manner as he stared at the parchment.

"We must warn Albus." Arthur said with a quivering voice, as he tried to comfort a terrified Molly.

Narcissa was pale with worry, and stared around unsure of what to do now, but she pushed back her chair and stood up.

"Please excuse me, but I must send word to Draco."

"Today is Halloween Narcissa, an owl can't possibly reach him in time." Arthur said, but Molly shushed him.

"That may be true Arthur, but we can send messages a different way. Narcissa, can you cast a patronus charm?" Molly asked, only for Narcissa to shake her head. "All right, don't worry dear, we will make sure that Draco is properly informed."

"I'll send word to Salazar, and he will warn the others that something may happen tonight." Merlin said, as he stood up and cast his patronus. "With it being lunch time, we can't send any messages to Godric and Albus because that Umbridge woman has banned the patronus charm. However, with Salazar holed up in the old Defense classroom, he should be able to get the message without Umbridge knowing. I trust Salazar to get the message out that we need to meet. Once we have gathered in Albus's office, we will try to make heads out of the prophecy. Please keep in mind, that as it is with all prophecies, it's very vague. Prophecies are never cut and dry, and many never come true." He said, looking towards the two distraught women.

"I will let you both know what we find out." Arthur added.

Narcissa and Molly nodded, but Narcissa glanced at Arthur. "Please have someone tell Draco to be
careful. I worry for him."

"I will." Arthur said, patting her hand in a comforting manner.

Normally she would have recoiled from the gesture, but she smiled a bit and nodded.

"Thank you."

Arthur nodded. "You're welcome."

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The great hall was silent, except for the sounds of eating. The students glared up at the head table with loathing at Umbridge, who sat up there smiling down on all of them. She had grown tired of all the commotion that happened when the school had gathered for meal times, so she had instated a rule that no one was to talk, or make any noise of any kind, while they were in the great hall.

This caused, under the threat of expulsion, the Creevey brothers' daily routine of singing and Fred and George's 'imperiused' antics to cease immediately. She also said that the 'I was confunded and imperiused' excuses would no longer work with her, because she was now 'on to them and their little game'. However, all of these new rules didn't prevent Sirius from letting loose with the song howlers, and because the Creeveys weren't singing in the morning anymore, Sirius now played a song howler at every meal.

This ticked Umbridge off to no end, because she still couldn't figure out who was doing that, even with the Moody glasses, because the howler only needed to be opened to do its job. Not to mention, it looked like a normal piece of parchment sitting in Sirius's pocket.

It only made the Marauder grin at her frustration.

At this moment though, all eating came to an abrupt stop when the sound of Parseltongue penetrated every wall of the castle.

"To everyone who can understand me, Merlin spoke a prophecy just a little while ago and it stated thus... 'Death makes an appearance at Hogwarts tonight, and will mark the one who dares to hold the innocent hostage. It will be the marked man's final mistake, and he will not live to see the next full moon.' To Albus and Godric, Merlin and Arthur wish to speak with us in the Headmaster's office as soon as afternoon classes resume. To the children, do not be alarmed. We don't know what this could mean, and it could mean anything. Godric, Narcissa wishes Draco to know of this and she wants him to be careful today, so please inform him. Albus, I feel we need to have Professor Trelawney at our meeting, but that, of course, is up to your discretion. With the prophecy being about tonight, Halloween, and the mention of a 'marked man', it could pertain to the original one about me, but I'm unsure. It's best to err on the side of caution because it might have something to do with Voldemort."

As Salazar finished speaking, all those who understood him began glancing at each other nervously, but Umbridge smirked and stood up.

"You, Mr. Nott! What did he say!?” She demanded with a triumphant gleam in her eye.

Everyone's eyes widened in fear and shock, but Theo sat at the Slytherin table with a pale expression on his face. However, in a flash, his face took on a blank look, and he stood up and looked her squarely in the eye.

"Professor Umbridge, it was nothing more than Potter trying to coordinate a Halloween prank on Slytherin, and he was warning Roffin, Zabini, and Malfoy," he sneered, "so they wouldn't be caught
up in it. If I may be so bold as to make a suggestion, you should concentrate all of your Auror efforts
in the great hall for the rest of the day and into the evening, because he said that this is where the
prank will happen."

She stood there with a smug smirk, but her eyes flashed with anger.

"Did he say what the prank was?"

"No ma'am, he didn't. Potter just warned his friends." Theo replied as he glared at the three
Slytherins, who were sitting at the end of the table staring at him in shock.

"Very well then. We will do just that. Auror Franklin, get all the Aurors together, except for the ones
guarding the door outside Potter's room, and place them on the first floor and the entrance hall. Let's
see him try and get passed all of you this time. Oh, and Mr. Nott, good work. I knew your...skill...
would come in handy. Fifty points to Slytherin." She said with a wide smile, then sat back down and
resumed eating her lunch.

Theo glared around the great hall at the ten or so people who understood
exactly what Salazar had
said, but then he went back to his lunch and began ignoring the bombardment of questions from his
friends. Pansy was demanding to know if he just understood Parseltongue, or if he could speak it too,
while Montague tried to ask him why he never told anyone about his 'skill'.

Blaise was staring at him in shock, while Draco gave him a calculating look. Godric, Albus, and
Severus were eyeing the lad closely, but over at the Gryffindor table, Hermione and Neville had
already put their heads together.

"Harry has always taken divination with a grain of salt, so do you think he actually believes this
prophecy?" Neville asked, looking at her with worry.

"I don't know." Hermione replied as she shook her head. "It did come from Merlin, and I expect he
will. They will talk it out, and I'm sure they will let us know what conclusion they come too. The
more important thing is...how did Nott know what he said? Does he speak Parseltongue, or does he
just understand it?"

"But how could he speak it? Voldemort is the last Heir of Slytherin, and Harry can't have children
because of the immortality ritual. Unless Nott is very distantly related and inherited the gift of
Parseltongue from the Slytherin line, there is no way he can..."

"Unless his family line didn't come from the U.K." She interrupted. "You have to remember, witches
and wizards from different countries, like India for example, can also speak it. Remember what
Professor Dumbledore said? He learned to understand it from a family in India. It's possible that
Nott's family comes from a long line of 'speakers' who came to the U.K. from there, or some other
country."

"But why hide it? And how did Harry not know about it? And why, of all people, would Nott
tell Umbridge that he knew it?" Neville asked.

Hermione shrugged her shoulders. "I don't have the slightest idea why he would tell her this, but
about the other, given how our society looks down upon the language, it makes sense that Nott
would hide it. Harry doesn't care what people think, so he made his gift known right away. Nott and
his family are all Slytherins, so it makes sense that they would hide it and use it to their advantage."

"That makes sense, but if Nott can speak it, then he has known from day one that Harry is really
Salazar Slytherin. Same goes for if he can only understand it. Either way, Umbridge just 'outed' him
in front of the whole school. That wasn't smart on her part." Neville said as he shook his head.

Hermione nodded in agreement. "And remember what Draco has been saying, Nott may be a closet neutral. If he has known all along who Harry is, then he knows the reincarnation bit is rubbish. This might be why he is a closet neutral. He'd rather not tangle with, and get in the way of, the Founder of his own house."

"You think he's spying on the Death Eaters? His father is one."

"Maybe." Hermione said thoughtfully. "But it's hard to know for sure because he hides it so well. What worries me is, if Nott has known the truth all along, what does that mean for the Potters?" She whispered frantically.

"What should we do?" Neville asked, looking over to the boy, who was still ignoring his friend's questions.

"Watch him closely. That's what we need to do." Hermione answered, as she too began watching Nott from across the room.

As lunch came to an end, everyone calmly went about their business, but after Godric made sure that Draco, Blaise, Hermione, and Neville were safely in transfiguration, he apparated directly into the Headmaster's office. He found that Albus, Salazar, Merlin, and Arthur were already there, along with Severus, who apparently had a free period at the moment.

"Where is Trelawney?" He asked, looking at Albus and Salazar in confusion.

"After thinking about what the prophecy said, I chose not to include her." Albus said as he leaned back in his chair. "The prophecy said that 'death' will make an 'appearance' at Hogwarts 'tonight', and will 'mark' a man who takes an innocent hostage. Then it went on to say that the 'marked man' will make his final mistake, and that he will not live to see the next 'full moon'."

"Looking at it logically, we don't think Trelawney's presence is needed." Severus added. "And with the next full moon only a week away, this is going to happen very quickly."

"I do suppose you're right about that." Salazar grumbled. "But divination is a load of…"

"Yes, yes we know." Merlin teased, but then he glanced at Albus. "So what do you think?"

"Well, obviously it's real, for I highly doubt you'd make up something like this for your own entertainment." He said with a chuckle. "So I think we should take whatever precautions we can."

"You don't think that an actual black robed, skeletal figure with a scythe is going to appear somewhere in Hogwarts tonight, do you?" Arthur asked, looking around skeptically.

"No, I think it may have been figurative with that detail." Severus replied. "However, this man is obviously very real, and will likely take a hostage, probably a child given the 'innocence' bit."

"I think Severus is right." Albus agreed with a nod.

"And the marked business is just figurative as well?" Salazar asked.

"I think so. I don't think it has anything to do with you, or the mark on your forehead." Merlin replied.

"So basically, stay alert tonight because the only time this man will be able to find his target,
whoever it may be, will be at the feast." Godric said, but Albus sighed.

"I do think you're right, but I don't want to cancel the feast because we don't know what will trigger this prophecy, and..."

"Therein lies the problem with those bloody things." Salazar griped, causing Merlin to roll his eyes. Albus chuckled. "And if we were to have the children eat the feast in their common rooms, this man may get in there, and we Professors won't know about it until it's too late. At least if we are all in the great hall, the 'innocent hostage' will be well protected."

"Bait." Arthur said simply.

"Not necessarily." Albus said, tiredly rubbing his eyes. "But by changing our routine, we could trigger it."

"And if it happens anyway?" Salazar asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Well, due to Theo's surprising lie to Umbridge, all the Aurors will be in the great hall as well, so hopefully, because of those glasses, they will spot whoever it is and we can be properly alerted." Godric said with a sigh.

"What is that all about?" Salazar asked curiously.

"Nott apparently either speaks Parseltongue, or understands it." Severus said.

"Or he's outright lying." Godric added. "Which is what I believe may be the case."

Taking note of Salazar's clueless expression, Albus clarified.

"He lied to Umbridge about what you said. He said you were planning a prank, and advised that all the Aurors should be in the great hall tonight. However, the fact that he may be lying is not something I have thought of, but it's something to consider. Severus..."

"I will find out. I will question him and have an answer for you at the next Order meeting."

Albus nodded, but Salazar looked at him sharply. "Be careful how you approach him. If Draco is right and Theo is a closet neutral, then you being a 'trusted' Death Eater may put him on edge. On the flip side of that, you may inadvertently 'out' yourself."

"I know how to be a spy Potter!" Severus snapped, but Salazar only smirked.

"Well, what I want to know is, whose side is Theodore Nott really on?" Albus said. "The boy may need our protection."

"His father is a firm supporter of the Dark Lord, so if Mr. Nott is neutral, then he is neutral of his own accord." Severus said. "However, he may be spying under his father's orders to find out who is weak in Slytherin house, and his 'quiet and indifferent' demeanor could be an act."

"There are many possibilities it seems." Albus sighed, causing Severus to nod. "All right, just find out for sure."

"I will."

"Thank you Severus. As for tonight, there isn't much we can do except remain alert. Harry, can you polyjuice yourself to look like a random muggle, and sit with the Hufflepuffs tonight? That will put
you in the great hall should something happen."

"I can." Salazar nodded.

"I'll stay at Headquarters and try to do my best to keep Molly and Narcissa calm." Arthur offered. "They are both pretty upset about this whole thing."

"What about you?" Godric asked, looking over at Merlin curiously.

"With all of you in the great hall, plus the other Professors and the Aurors, I feel my presence may be overkill, but if you wish it, I'll be there." He replied. "Albus is right though, we don't know what will, and will not, trigger the prophecy to come true, but as you all know, prophecies are self-fulfilling in some form or another, and this one pertains to the 'marked man'. It's his actions and decisions that will make it come true, not ours. Even if you all canceled the feast and had the children stay in their common rooms, it's likely that it will still come to pass."

Salazar sighed and rubbed his face in his hands. "I don't like any of it. It's putting the students, and the 'innocent hostage' in danger, but I have to agree with you all. It's better for the great hall to be filled with Professors, Aurors, Godric, and myself so they are well protected."

"I have to agree." Godric said with a depressing sigh.

"It's settled then." Albus nodded. "Merlin, it's your choice to be here or not."

"I think I'll stay with Arthur at Headquarters. If you do need me, send for me and I'll be here." He replied.

The meeting broke up shortly after that, seeing as Godric needed to get back to transfiguration, but everyone was worried about what may unfold at the feast that night.

Salazar sat in his living quarters, staring at the small phial of polyjuice potion warily. He knew the Aurors couldn't see him at this distance, because Amelia had informed them that the glasses could only allow the Aurors to see up to ten feet in front of them if they were looking through a solid wall. This was good news and would help the children when they disappeared down the shortcuts to get away from the scene of their 'crimes'.

But that wasn't important right now.

This was the first time Salazar had contemplated using polyjuice since that Halloween night exactly fourteen years ago, and considering what happened then, he was a little leery about using it.

The polyjuice rock that Nicholas had made for him was one thing, but the actual potion left Salazar a bit nervous. Of course, he couldn't use the polyjuice rock while using the potion, so at the moment he was in his adult form.

He sighed heavily and shook his head. I might as well get on with it. He thought, and took a small sip. The random muggle he changed into had brown hair and blue eyes, and looked to be about seventeen. Salazar, quite literally, thanked Merlin that the boy looked somewhat normal.

He placed the polyjuice rock safely inside a trinket box he had picked up from his many travels, and grabbed his school robes from the wardrobe. After enlarging them just a bit so they would fit, Salazar changed the Slytherin colored tie to yellow and black and charmed the house crest into Hufflepuff's.

Salazar sighed heavily as he took one last look in the mirror to ensure that he looked proper, then he
apparated straight into the seventh year Hufflepuff dorms.

"Ouch! What in the…get off!"

Salazar groaned in pain as he rolled off the unfortunate young man he had landed on, and stood up somewhat shakily.

"Mr. Timble, I am so very sorry about that. I hope you can forgive me." Salazar said as he helped the boy to his feet. "Do you require anything? I can heal what I can, or we can get you to Madam Pomfrey if needed. I should have been a bit more careful about my landing spot."

Mark Timble rubbed his neck, and checked himself over before glancing at Salazar.

"No, I think I'm ok. Just a bruise or two. Um, may I ask…who are you?" Mark asked.

"Oh, forgive me, the name is Bond, James Bond, and I'm your new roommate."

A snort from someone nearby caught their attention, and Salazar looked over to see a grinning Cedric.

"Brilliant Harry, but you'll have to try that again."

"Bugger." Salazar said, returning his grin, but then he turned back to Mark. "Are you sure you're ok?"

"Yeah Harry, I'm fine. Just watch those apparition landings." The boy said with a chuckle.

"I will." Salazar said humbly.

"So what's up?" Cedric asked. "Does it have anything to do with what was said this morning?"

Salazar knew he could speak freely in front of Cedric's roommates, seeing as all of them had been in the Room of Requirement that night, and right now they were all staring at him curiously.

"Yes it does, and since you are all seventh years, I will clue the rest of you in. Despite what Nott said this morning about a prank, rest assured that there is no prank." He explained in all seriousness, as he glanced at Cedric's roommates. "There was a prophecy made by Merlin this morning, and it wasn't good. The Headmaster asked me to polyjuice myself to look like a random muggle and sit with the Hufflepuffs tonight so that there was more protection in the great hall."

After seeing their stunned expressions, Salazar continued.

"If something should happen tonight, do me a favor and keep your heads down." He emphasized. "We don't know exactly what will happen, or even if it will happen, but do your best to stay safe and help protect the younger years. I have no doubts that they will be very frightened."

"He is being serious you guys. Tonight may get rough." Cedric commented as he looked at his still stunned friends.

"Cedric is right. Also, please do not spread this around, because we don't want to panic the other students. Just remain alert and mention anything that seems out of the ordinary."

Cedric and the other boys nodded, but in that moment Susan stuck her head in the doorway.

"Hey Cedric, we are getting ready to head to the feast." She said, but then she caught sight of Salazar
standing there and furrowed her brow in confusion. "I'm sorry, please don't think I'm rude, but... who are you?"

"He's Bond, James Bond." Mark chuckled, causing Susan to nod.

"Enough said." She said seriously. "Hermione told me everything."

Salazar nodded, knowing that the children would likely tell only the ones that they trusted not to spread it around the school.

"Let's go then. Is the rest of the house ready to go?" Cedric asked.

"They are." She replied.

"Good." Cedric nodded, then he turned to Salazar. "Fred and George decided that, under the circumstances, a prank is in order to help lighten the mood a bit. We, along with Gryffindor and Ravenclaw, will enter the great hall together as a united front, and we are telling those that don't know what is going on that it will show Umbridge that we stand united as a school. Adrian Pucey says some of Slytherin is doing it too, but the rest of Slytherin are, unfortunately, on their own."

Salazar nodded sadly. "When all of this is over, I hope my house fares well, but I'm afraid most will be dead, or in Azkaban."

"It could be worse Harry. It could be all of them." Cedric said softly, patting Salazar's shoulders.

"That is true." He sighed. "I should be thankful that not all of them are horrible, but... if you all are ready, we should go."

Cedric nodded and motioned for Susan to lead the way.

Watching the houses file into the great hall as one united front shocked the Professors, but it made them smile. When Hufflepuff entered, they remained standing until the other houses had all gathered, then, as one, every student from all the houses shouted, "We are three or more! Hogwarts stands united!" in unison before taking their seats.

Albus's eyes were twinkling merrily and Minerva could barely contain a giggle, as Umbridge sat in her seat and fumed. She knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that they were thumbing their noses at that particular educational decree.

Umbridge stood up to address the great hall with a frown. "Due to this repulsive display of defiance, Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw will lose every house point they have acquired thus far." She said, but frowned when the students remained unresponsive. "As for Slytherin, since some of you showed, by your facial expressions, that you respect authority and want no part of this nonsense, I will not take all your points. However, those that willingly defied my authority will face the consequences."

"We don't care about house points." The entire great hall chorused as one. "Take them away all you want. It matters not!"

"Now see here!" Umbridge yelled.

"No you listen you toad faced bit...hey...don't say that word...some of us will get into trouble with the real Professors. Yeah, I guess she can't be counted as a real Professor. She's horrible. I hate Umbridge." The whole great hall said, causing Sirius to snort loudly.
He knew exactly what was going on. This was a prank straight out of the Complete Compendium of Marauder Pranks. He also knew that Fred and George must have cast the spell in all the common rooms, or at least taught it to those in the other houses. It was funny though, seeing as the ones in Slytherin who didn't agree with what was happening, were forced to participate anyway.

Salazar, who was in the common room when Cedric cast the spell, chuckled when he saw that Godric was grinning like a loon, but he worried what this could mean if the 'marked man' were to appear.

"This is Potter's doing!" Umbridge yelled. "Aurors, be on alert!"

Salazar grinned when he noticed that more than a few of the Aurors rolled their eyes, but they kept them peeled anyway.

The feast started after that, but it was quiet except for the sounds of people eating. No one talked because it would just cause everyone else to start speaking the same thing, but it didn't stop nearly everyone from breaking out into giggles.

Children, Salazar knew, would always find ways to circumvent authority. Especially if that authority was highly disliked.

"I hate Umbridge." The great hall said, causing all the students to break out into giggles.

"I haven't learned anything in Defense since Harry was fired."

"Yeah, it's because the Ministry wants us to be weak. Imagine, the muggles will be stronger than us by the time that stupid woman is through with her agenda."

"We want Harry to teach us again!"

"We were learning stuff!"

"Voldemort is back, Harry is innocent!" They all cried, causing each other to grin wildly.

Umbridge was so angry that she looked ready to explode at any minute, but even she knew that she couldn't expel the whole school, or put everyone in detention.

Salazar was looking straight at Umbridge when one of the Aurors standing behind her bent down to whisper something in her ear. She smirked, nodded, and her eyes flew towards the Slytherin table, as if she was watching something closely. As Salazar glanced around the great hall, all the other Aurors were doing the exact same thing, only they seemed a bit more relaxed and amused with whatever they were seeing.

As he continued to watch, Salazar felt the hair on the back of his neck stand up, and he reached for his wand at the same time he gripped Cedric's forearm.

'Look at the Aurors.' He wrote, as his eyes scanned the general direction in which they were all looking.

He felt Cedric stiffen beside him, and notice that the young man had slipped his own wand into his hands.

However, just before Salazar could motion to Albus that something was amiss, he heard Nora shout, "Jolly, behind you!"
Godric however, was too slow, and from out of nowhere a jet of red light hit him squarely in the head. He slipped out of his seat and hit the floor with a loud thump, and in that same moment, Draco let out a strangled cry as he was hauled out of his seat by an unseen person.

Blaise, along with those around them, jumped out of their seats with their wands at the ready, but not being able to see who, or what, had Draco, there was nothing they could do.

"Activate!" A voice loudly said, as a look of panic crossed Draco's face.

He knew that voice.

"Activate! Activate! Activate!"

The great hall was silent as everyone watched with shocked wide eyes, but Albus, who was looking murderous, stood up quickly.

"Lucius, you will find that portkeys won't work here due to an anti-portkey ward made by Merlin. Now release your son this minute!" He thundered, as the house tables rattled violently.

The entire Gryffindor table stood up with scowls on their faces as they all trained their wands towards Draco. Hufflepuff quickly followed, but Ravenclaw stayed seated, seeing as they were right beside the Slytherin table. However, the Ravenclaws that were nearest to Draco did stand up, but Albus raised his hand as if to tell everyone to stop moving. Daphne, who was closest to Draco, pointed the tip of her wand behind him, and nailed the loudly swearing Lucius with a disillusionment reversal charm.

He shimmered into view, and everyone saw that he was cowering behind Draco, who he was using as a shield. He was dirty with torn robes, and his hair was tangled and matted as it hung limply down his shoulders.

The image brought to mind Draco's boggart from second year, to all those who had attended that class.

Lucius, who had his back against the wall scowled at everyone with red rimmed, bloodshot eyes.

"This is family business Dumbledore, you will let me walk out of here with my son, or else." Lucius hissed, but then he quickly pointed his wand at Blaise, who bent down to revive Godric. "Don't move!" He shouted. "I better not see any wands raised, or any spells cast, or I will kill him." He added, putting his wand to Draco's throat. "Nor will I tolerate any of the Founder's protections." He spat.

Draco, who had already been disarmed by his father, glanced around wildly and whimpered loudly as Lucius tightened his hold around his wrists. Everyone in the great hall lowered their wands, and most sat back down in their seats, but a few of the older Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs remained standing.

Salazar was one of them.

For what it was worth, he thought it was a clever idea on Lucius's part to take out Godric, seeing as Godric was the only one in the great hall who could cast unseen spells.

But it only made Salazar hate the man even more.

"Lucius, you have nowhere to go. Release Draco at once." Albus said, trying his best to remain clam.
"Enough of this!" Umbridge cried jumping out of her seat and causing Albus to stiffen immediately. "I will not tolerate this a second longer! Mr. Potter, you will stop this stupid prank right this minute, and you will release Mr. Malfoy at once. Aurors, you will take him down now!"

Before the Aurors could move, Salazar did the only thing he could do in a situation like this. He jumped up on top of the bench seat and loudly shouted, "That's not me!"

He was grateful that Fred, George, or maybe even Sirius, had canceled the prank charm, because he was the only one who shouted it.

"We have a real situation right now, so please, let's just everyone clam down." Albus said, as Lucius pressed the tip of his wand harder into Draco's throat. The Aurors in the room glanced around, unsure of who to believe, but Salazar put any doubts to rest as he began to speak.

"Nora, where are you?" He asked, causing all the Aurors eyes to land on him.

"I'm over here by Jolly, Speaker. Do you wish me to bite the filthy Clown?"

"Yes, but only after he lets Draco go." Salazar replied.

"I understand. It's too bad The Shrew isn't here, she could eat him."

"I agree, but that doesn't mean we still can't feed her his corpse." He said, causing Nora to hiss loudly in agreement.

"Stop this!" Lucius shouted. "You will let me leave, with my son, or there will be consequences. You know what I am capable of Dumbledore. Let's not push your luck."

"There is nowhere for you to go Lucius." Albus reiterated. "And we certainly aren't going to let you walk out of here with Draco. It's best if you just…"

"He is not going to kill his own son Dumbledore." Umbridge said with a scoff, as she glared at Salazar, who had not moved from standing on the bench seat. "This is clearly some kind of family ritual to test young Mr. Malfoy's Slytherin instincts. We have no right to keep Mr. Malfoy from his son. Aurors, you will do nothing to the Malfoys, but you will grab Potter!" She shouted.

Salazar knew this was bad. They were in the middle of a hostage situation, and the idiot woman was just making it worse!

However, he noticed that none of the Aurors made a move towards him, and kept their eyes firmly on Lucius. He didn't know what was going on in their minds, but he was grateful that they had some measure of sense over the matter.

Umbridge though, let off a furious huff and began stomping her way over to Salazar with her wand drawn. Lucius had a kind of amused, manic gleam in his eye as he watched closely, but Salazar could see the terrified look on Draco's face and he knew he couldn't let that woman get near him.

"I will kill you where you stand if you take one more step towards me." Salazar growled, causing her to come to a halt. "We are in the middle of a dangerous situation and your delusional babbling is becoming increasingly irritating. Know this woman, I will not tolerate any more of your meddling. You will sit down, or I will make you sit down. Is that clear?"

Umbridge gritted her teeth, but because Cedric had his wand firmly planted between her shoulder
blades, she didn't dare move.

"Watch her." He said, causing the boy to nod.

Salazar's eyes immediately shifted to Lucius's scowling face.

"Release him." Salazar snarled. "My patience with this evening is about to end very quickly."

"As is mine." Albus added with barely controlled rage.

Lucius was quickly realizing that there was nowhere for him to go. Between the hundreds of wands pointed at him, and the students, Aurors, and Professors who held those wands, he knew it was over. Lucius hadn't known about all of the new protections around the school, or the Aurors because he had been living in the woods for months!

He knew he wasn't going to get out of this alive, but if he had any say in the matter, and it was clear that he did, neither was his worthless, blood traitor of a son.

"Avada Ked…"

"Stupefy!"

The red light lit Lucius up, and he, and Draco, crumpled to the ground. Draco quickly scrambled back to his feet and kicked his father in the head for good measure, before snatching his wand out of Lucius's limp fingers.

Albus was already on the move, but Salazar stood frozen in his spot.

Draco had wandlessly stunned his father.

The great hall was in chaos as the students let out a collective breath and began cheering. Cedric placed Umbridge in a full body bind to keep her incapacitated, while the Aurors moved in on Lucius. Blaise woke Godric up and was explaining what happened, as an otter and two weasels scampered out the back wall of the great hall. Minerva began shouting for all the students to return to their houses.

By now the polyjuice was starting to wear off, seeing as the hour was up, and Salazar immediately apparated into his living quarters. He quickly replaced the polyjuice rock, shrunk his robes so they would fit his fifteen year old size, and apparated back into the great hall.

When he arrived, the room was cleared of all students except for Blaise, Hermione, and Neville, who were all sitting beside the somewhat stoic Draco. Godric stood over Lucius with a furious scowl, while Minerva and Severus stood close by. Umbridge was still laid out between the Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw tables, while the Aurors and Albus discussed what to do next.

As he approached the group, Salazar couldn't only hear a faint buzzing noise, but Minerva elbowed Severus and pointed in Salazar's direction. Severus glanced at Umbridge, then back at Salazar, but he quickly lifted the muffliato charm and replaced it once Salazar was nearer to the group.

"Other than the fact that he was clearly going to use the killing curse, we really can't take him in without Fudge or Umbridge trying to spin this as Potter's fault. If that happens, Malfoy will be out quicker than you can say 'framed.'"

Albus sighed heavily. "So you truly believe that they will blame this on Harry, and just let Malfoy go?"
"I have no doubts Headmaster." The wizard, who appeared to be the Head Auror for those stationed at Hogwarts, replied.

"Then we will take him to ensure that he will not escape." Salazar said, causing them all to look his way. "We can put him in the dungeon cells. They are well protected, and I doubt Umbridge even knows where they are."

"Hogwarts has prison cells?" One of the other Aurors asked in disbelief.

"Oh yes." Godric replied. "We used them to house the muggle that we caught wandering the grounds. Then we wiped their memories and sent them on their way."

"Only the Headmaster and obviously the Founders, know where they are." Albus added, causing the Aurors to nod.

"We can tell her," another Auror spat, "that we simply let him go…"

"Where is my son!? Where is my son!?" A sudden, frantic voice cried out.

Narcissa's sudden interruption caused Draco to snap out of his stupor, and he suddenly jumped out of his seat. Narcissa spotted him, and quickly made her way to him.

"Are you all right Draco?" She asked, trying in vain to maintain her composure as she grabbed him in a hug.

"Yes Mother, I'm fine now." He replied, trying his own best to also maintain his composure.

"What happened?" Narcissa asked, looking around at everyone as Merlin came up behind her.

As Albus recanted the story, Narcissa's furious gaze never left Lucius's crumpled, dirty form. However, when Albus said that Draco had wandlessly stunned his father, she gasped.

"Draco? How did you…"

"It was something I remembered from last year." He said, looking up at her as he straightened up to his full height. "Potter and Roffin were fighting with muggle swords and stuff, because Potter didn't know what to expect from the Tournament. At the time, I thought it was stupid because of the muggle weapons, but then they changed tactics and Roffin 'attacked' Longbottom and disarmed him of his wand. Potter then turned it into a lesson on wandless magic. Longbottom was able to wandlessly stun Roffin after that." He said, as everyone glanced at Salazar and Neville questioningly, but Draco continued.

"While father," He spat, "was holding me hostage, I knew that there was nothing anyone could do without father hurting me, or any other student. I had to do something, so I remembered what Potter said that day. Fear, panic, and desperation can help fuel wandless magic. When father," He scowled, "started to say the incantation for the killing curse, I knew it was then or never. If it didn't work, I was going to die anyway, so I knew I had to try. I felt the fear, panic, and desperation fill me up, and I shouted 'stupefy' with all that I had in me. It worked." He finished, pointing, but not looking at, his father.

"You are a powerful wizard, and I'm so proud of you Draco." She said, fondly reaching out to touch his face, but then she instantly began projecting a cold aloofness.

"As am I." Salazar said as he carefully watched the boy.
"What happens to Father now?" Draco said, mimicking his mother's cold aloofness as they both stared at Lucius.

The Head Auror sighed. "We can't take him in because we fear that Fudge and Umbridge will let him go in order to, somehow, blame Potter for this."

"So we are going to take him." Albus said hurriedly, because it looked like Narcissa was going to hex someone. "We are going to put him in the dungeon cells until we can figure out something better to do with him."

Narcissa's eyes shifted a bit, and she gave him a haughty nod. "That is agreeable, but once he has been properly detained, I wish to speak to him...alone."

Albus nodded. "That is your right Narcissa."

She nodded again, but then Blaise spoke up.

"What do we do with her?" He asked, jerking his head in Umbridge's direction.

"Leave her, and I'll deal with her." Albus said, but then he turned to Harry. "Did she see you come back in?"

"No, I don't think so. Cedric placed her in the body bind, and I hope for his sake that she didn't know it was him."

"At this point I'm not above making her forget that little instance, but if she didn't see you, you weren't here. You escaped in all the confusion." Albus said, looking at both Harry and the Aurors, who nodded.

"Because of the circumstances Potter, you escaped just this once, but next time you know what we have to do." The Head Auror said.

"I understand, and I thank you." Salazar replied, as Godric reached down and hauled the unconscious Lucius to his feet.

"Wait! Speaker, you promised!" Nora shouted as she slithered out from Neville's robe sleeve.

"So I did." He replied with a smirk, then he turned to Narcissa. "Nora has expressed a wish to bite Lucius. Is this ok with you?"

Narcissa smirked just a bit also, and looked to Nora. "Be my guest Miss Nora."

"I like this woman Speaker." She said, nodding in approval.

She slithered off of Neville and over Godric's shoulder, so that she would have a better shot at Lucius. Then she sank her fangs deep into his exposed wrist, and hissed with glee.

"He tastes like chicken Speaker." She said, as everyone who understood her snorted. "Nothing like the dirty rat I expected him to taste like."

Salazar laughed and shook his head, but then he apparated out of the great hall, just as Godric and Albus began hauling Lucius out of the room.

Chapter End Notes
*A/N* Sorry to all the Twilight fans for taking a cheap shot at that series, but I couldn't pass that up. It was too perfect. I hope you all aren't too mad at me.

Anyway, next chapter will feature more of Rita and her finding's as well as more about Excalibur. It has it's purpose, so please don't think I threw it into the story for no reason, or because it seemed cool at the time. The next chapter will also feature the aftermath of what happened, and we will find out what fate awaits Lucius.

Until next time my loyal readers!
As a sick, dizzy, and nauseated Lucius sat in the cold, dark, dank cell, he fumed over his current predicament. He wondered why he was here (wherever 'here' was) and not in a Ministry holding cell, but he wouldn't put it past Potter to manipulate the situation in his favor.

It was just like Potter to sweet talk the Aurors into letting him take over Lucius's imprisonment.

However, another question that was on Lucius's mind was, how did his son manage to stun him? The traitorous boy had been wandless, and the whelp is weak! He should have planned this whole scheme better. All he wanted to do was present the whelp's dead body to the Dark Lord and he would be forgiven, but it was too late for that now.

He knew his life was over because there was no way Potter was going to let him out of here alive.

"What are you waiting for Potter!? Come kill me now and get it over with!" He shouted, grabbing the bars on the cell door and rattling them loudly. The action only caused him to dry heave onto the floor, seeing as he had no food in his stomach.

"You're pathetic Lucius." A cold voice said from the darkness outside of his cell. "You're a poor excuse for a wizard, and I should have listened to my sister."

Lucius glared hateful holes towards the voice, but as Narcissa stepped out of the shadows and into a thin beam of moonlight, he tensed up.

"Go away Narcissa." He said, as he wiped the drool off his chin.

"Feeling sick?" She asked with a haughty smirk. "I must thank Miss Nora for making you even more miserable. Don't worry though, she's only a common adder and her venom won't kill you. It will only make you sick."

"So you're here to kill me then." He snarled as he clutched his stomach. "Blood traitor. You're not worthy of me."

"No, I'm too good for you." Narcissa corrected coolly. "But no, I'm not going to kill you. I am a lady, and I do not wish to get my hands dirty."

"So what then?" He asked with a glare, as he stood up to face her. "Are you going to have your whelp kill me? The boy is useless."

"Draco is man, unlike you." She hissed, as Lucius groaned and sat heavily on the floor.

"Why don't you trod off Narcissa." Lucius said with an unconcerned wave of his hand. "Go crawl to Black and get reinstated back into the family so you can enjoy wealth once more. It's all you really care about."

Narcissa narrowed her eyes at the man, but smirked. "I've been learning Lucius, and I have come to
the realization that there are more important things in life than money and influence."

"Well good for you." He spat as he glared at her from the floor. "You can teach an old bitch new tricks."

She clenched her jaws together, but then she smiled and tilted her head a bit. "But you do have one thing right, I am a Black. I may be an estranged Black, there is Black blood running through my veins."

"What of it?" Lucius scoffed. "Are you going to tell me that the Blacks are ruthless and cunning? That they seek vengeance on those that have wronged them? Save it Narcissa, you don't have the guts. You're are only successful at looking pretty." He said as he gave her a loathing glare.

Narcissa once again clenched her jaws and narrowed her eyes. "You tried to kill my son, and that was the last straw."

"So kill me then." Lucius hissed. "Stop playing your little games, and kill me."

Narcissa actually chuckled. "You don't listen Lucius. I'm not going to kill you, but I know someone who will."

"Who? Black?"

"No." She said with a haughty smirk. "But you will find out…Imperio." She whispered, then she tossed his wand back to him.

"Goodbye Lucius." She said in a cold uncaring voice, as he once again began dry retching onto the floor.

Then she turned and walked back up the long dimly lit tunnel that led to the main part of the castle.

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"Batty, why do I have to be here again? I don't understand why you just can't talk to Notty."

Severus sighed loudly and glared at Nora as she slithered back and forth across his desk. Salazar was right, talking to a snake sometimes reminded him of talking to a thick headed child.

It was Friday, a few days after Halloween, and there was an Order meeting the next day so he really needed to get to the bottom of Nott's situation, and fast.

"Because you and the others are going to help me find out if Mr. Nott can speak and/or understand Parseltongue." He replied. "I needed you here so I can explain exactly what I need you to do. The others already know, but I wanted to make sure you did."

"And how is your plan a cunning one?" She asked, flicking her forked tongue out in an attempt to inspect a jar full of newt spleens that was sitting on his desk.

"It will work, if you do what you are supposed to do. I just want the truth from Mr. Nott, and you are going to help us get it." He said a bit impatiently.

"All right." She replied with a huff. "Keep your wings on Batty."

Severus rolled his eyes again. "You've been hanging around the Weasleys too much." He grumbled, causing Nora to hiss loudly in response.

"I still don't see why I am required to be here though. My presence makes no sense to me."
"Nora…" He said with an exasperated tone, only to be cut off by an amused hiss.

"You're my brother Batty. It's my job to annoy you. It's what families do." She said, as she fondly rubbed her head against his hand. "Don't worry, I do know why I'm here, and I will help uncover the truth about Notty."

Severus looked up at her in a mixture of shock and confusion. "What did you say?"

"Oh don't act all surprised. Speaker is like a father to you and I consider you my brother." She said, looking him squarely in the eye. "You don't really think I'm delusional, do you? I just like to make people laugh. Speaker takes care of both of us and that makes us siblings. You are a snake, are you not?"

Severus chuckled a bit. "I suppose I am in a way."

"Well there you go." She replied, as she investigated a stack of parchment. "Pigeon is part of the family too, even though she's just a haughty feather duster, but you will learn to love her in time. She can be useful on occasions."

Severus outright snorted this time, but then Nora turned to the door where noisy shuffling could be heard coming from the other side.

"You know what to do Nora." Severus said, causing her nod.

She slithered off the desk and slipped into a darkened corner of the room to await the student's arrival. When she was safely situated, Severus finally opened the door to allow the students to enter for class.

He waited somewhat patiently for them to get settled, but just as he opened his mouth to announce what potion they would be brewing that day, the classroom door opened once again.

"Forgive my intrusion Professor Snape." Umbridge said with a sweet smile. "But since it is my free period, I have come today to conduct a surprise evaluation of your class and teaching methods. It's required by the Ministry that I do this."

Severus's face was unreadable, but he was seething with hatred internally. Leave it up to this meddling woman to ruin his plan for the Nott boy. Scoffing slightly, he did the only thing he could do in this situation.

He nodded curtly.

"Very good." Umbridge replied, as if he were a small child. "I shall take a seat in the back of the room, and you will never know I'm here." She said, as her eyes slid over to Godric, Blaise, Draco, Hermione, Ron, and Neville. "As for you all, I will be watching you closely." She added with a glare.

Godric only rolled his eyes, but he and the children smirked when a soft hiss came from the darkened corner.

"I will bite you Toad, maybe not today, but one day I will. Make no mistake, you will pay for your treatment of Speaker."

Neville snorted, while Hermione and the others tried to hide grins, but before Umbridge could ask what they were laughing at, Severus started the lesson.
"Today we will be brewing the Draught of Peace. You will find instructions on page fifty-eight in your books on how to prepare the ingredients. Once you have prepared the ingredients, which should take you thirty minutes, I will inspect them to ensure they are properly prepared. After that you may begin the brewing process. Begin." He said, then began his usual routine of prowling around the classroom.

With Umbridge there, the plan to get Nott to reveal his 'skill' was quickly falling apart, but Nora was a wild animal with a mind of her own, and it only took five minutes before the class started falling apart.

Very carefully and silently, Nora slithered up the table leg and onto the underside table supports. When she spotted her target, she silently slithered over to it, then lunged.

"BOO!" She cried with an accompanying loud hiss.

Pansy was so startled, and she screamed and jerked so suddenly, that she sent empty potion phials crashing to the floor.

"There's a snake between my legs!" She cried, causing more than a few people to snort loudly.

"Something we ought to know Parkinson?" Seamus asked with a grin.

"Quiet!" Severus snapped, although he too found the girl's poor choice of words amusing.

"It's Potter's bloody snake Professor!" She said with an angry growl. "It scared me."

"I highly doubt Potter's snake would want to get between her legs." Lavender whispered loudly, causing the class to snort and giggle loudly.

"I said quiet!" Severus shouted.

"Hello Greeny." Nora said with an amused hiss as she slithered over Daphne's knees. "Just passing by, don't mind me."

Daphne didn't understand what Nora said of course, be she knew what was slithering over her knees, so she didn't make a sound. Pansy was nervously checking around her seat for the snake, but Nora was sitting in the darkness, coiled around the table supports above Daphne's legs.

"Pansy, I think you're hallucinating, there is no snake." Daphne said calmly.

"I saw it Greengrass!" Pansy exclaimed. "It jumped right out from under the table between my legs."

"Snakes don't jump." Blaise corrected.

Pansy just glared at him as she continued checking around her area, but Severus had enough and stalked over to her.

"Sit down Miss Parkinson. I'll look for the snake." He said, as he bent down to check under the table.

"Careful Professor, Parkinson's snake might bite you." Ron said, disguising his voice so he couldn't be identified.

This remark caused the class to crack up laughing, and Severus to jump slightly as he realized the position he had placed himself in. He hit his head on the bottom of the table and quickly extracted himself from underneath it.
"Who said that!?" He snapped as he glared around the room.

No one said anything, but Umbridge narrowed her eyes.

"Hem, hem. Detention with me tomorrow morning right after breakfast Mr. Weasley." Umbridge said with a sickly, gleeful smile. "Maybe it will teach you to keep your inappropriate comments to yourself. As for the snake, I'll look for it." She added with a deadly smirk.

"Jolly, quick! Turn me into a potion phial! I'm still under the table!"

Godric, who was sitting right in front of Pansy and Daphne, stuck the tip of his wand behind his back, and concentrated on where the hissing came from. Thankfully, he nailed Nora with an unseen transfiguration spell just as Umbridge made her way over.

She ducked down and lit the tip of her wand so that she could see into the darkness.

"There's nothing under here except an empty phial." She said, as she summoned it to herself.

"Oh that's mine Professor." Daphne said. She felt the phial hit her knee and roll down her legs a second ago. She wasn't sure exactly what just happened, but she knew that's where Nora had been. "Pansy must have knocked it over when she jumped."

"Very well Miss Greengrass." She said in a biting tone, as she thrust it at her. "I'll check around for the snake dear." She added, turning towards Pansy. "I'll find it."

The class continued on, but after about twenty minutes, Umbridge cleared her throat again.

"Hem, hem. I don't see the snake. I think it may have slithered off into the mouse hole that's behind the ingredient cabinet. No need to worry now." She announced.

No more incidents happened after that, but as soon as class let out and Umbridge and the other Slytherins were out of sight, Godric took the children back down to the potions classroom.

"So what do we do now?" Blaise asked, as he looked to Severus and Godric.

"I have a question. Is this Nora?" Daphne asked, holding up the phial.

"Yes it is." Severus said, nodding his head. "Why?"

"I have an idea. Let's change her back, but I'll explain my idea later when classes are over for the day."

"Tell us your idea right now." Severus said, taking out his wand and returning Nora to normal. "That way I know if there is anything I need to do. The Headmaster, and the rest of us for that matter, want to put this matter to rest."

Daphne took a deep breath as she looked at Nora and the others. "Ok. My plan is to let Nora herself find out if Nott can speak and/or understand Parseltongue. She can say she was on a mission for Harry or something. If Hermione is right, and Nott can speak and understand it, then he has known about Harry being reincarnated since day one. If he's neutral, he might tell Nora for Harry's benefit. We can do this tonight, in the dorm room, after everyone has gone to sleep. Nora can wake him up if she needs too."

"Without biting him." Neville added, before Nora could suggest it.

"And if he's not neutral and tries to kill her?" Severus asked with a raised eyebrow.
She furrowed her brow in thought for a moment. "One of you who can understand her can be in the room under a disillusionment charm. That way you can prevent any harm coming to her."

"It's not a bad plan really." Godric said as he looked to Severus, who nodded.

"You should be the one in the dorm room, just in case." Severus added. "He may not take kindly to my presence. If it's you, and the boy is neutral, you may be able to talk to him."

Godric nodded. "Sounds like a good plan, under the circumstances."

"I did try to go with our original plan anyway, even with the Toad there, but she ruined it. I didn't get a chance to prank the Nott boy in order to see if he will speak to me. He's young, and a young Parselmouth will always speak Parseltongue to a live snake that is talking to them. Or so Speaker says." Nora said as she slithered around Blaise's shoulders. "But I had fun scaring the Pug."

Everyone laughed, but Severus rolled his eyes. "Just be careful Nora." He said, shaking his head.

"I will, and don't worry. I know just what to say to him." She said gleefully, which made everyone nervous as they left to hurry to their next class.

As the day wore on, nearly everyone tried to get Nora to tell them what she was going to say to Nott, but she wasn't telling anyone anything. In a moment of desperation, Godric even apparated into Salazar's living quarters to try and get him to get Nora to talk, but she still refused to tell them.

It was a long, nerve-racking day, to say the least.

It was late that night when Godric and Nora finally slipped into the fifth year Slytherin boy's dorm. Since Draco and Blaise were in the Snake Pit, Godric was sleeping in his house, and Salazar was holed up in the Defense classroom, Crabbe, Goyle, and Nott were the only three left in the dorm.

Godric really wasn't worried about Crabbe and Goyle, but just as a precaution, he asked Dobby to put the latter two boys into a deep sleep. When that was finally done, he set Nora on the ground and began inspecting Nott's curtains.

"He's warded them well Nora." Godric whispered. "And there is a charm to wake him if someone tries to tamper with them."

"I'm the deadliest snake in the world, wards don't matter to me." She replied, causing Godric to roll his eyes in the darkness.

She slithered up the bedpost and onto the curtains with no problem, and Godric breathed a sigh of relief when he heard a soft flump as she fell onto the foot of the bed.

"He's asleep Jolly. You know what to do."

Godric grinned, but then he conjured a large glass vase and threw it hard onto the stone floor. There was a loud startled snort, and a sudden rustling of covers as Nott sat bolt upright in his bed. Godric could see a soft beam of light coming through the edges of the curtain, and he knew the boy had his wand on him.

"Good evening Notty. Sorry for the rude awakening, but I'm here on Speaker's request. Can you understand me?"

Godric couldn't see anything through the curtains, but considering there were no spells cast, he knew
Nora had either shocked the poor lad speechless, or the boy was listening.

"No answer, but from the look on your face, you know exactly who I am, and you're not afraid of me. Good, good. I'm not here to bite you, as I would gladly do to your dorm mates, so you can relax. Tell me Notty, what is your plan? As you know, Speaker is a very clever and cunning wizard and he believes that a clever boy like you would not tell the Toad, of all people, what 'skill' you possess without knowing she would tell the whole school. Is this your way of getting Speaker's attention? Are you in danger? Speaker can help you if you are." She said in a soothing manner, as she slowly slithered over to the boy.

Theo stiffened as Nora wound her way up his arm and onto his shoulders, but he went slightly cross-eyed when Nora placed her snout right up to the tip of his nose. He tilted his head back in order to look at her properly, but he flinched when Nora absentmindedly flicked her tongue out.

"Judging by the way you are clamping your jaws shut, you are trying not to answer. So that tells me you understand perfectly what I'm saying to you, but can you speak to me?" She hissed softly, as Theo continued to eye her carefully. "Still no answer?" She asked. "Well, I must say, you are a stubborn one. You must already know what happens when a young speaker is faced with a live snake. It happens on instinct. However, I sense your fear. What is it you are afraid of? Is it because you think you know things you aren't supposed to know?"

At this, Theo's eyes widened slightly and he started to tremble a bit.

"So that's it. You're afraid of Speaker. You think he will harm you because you know things you aren't supposed to know. After all, Speaker wasn't shy about talking to me in the middle of the common room, especially during our first year. You knew who Speaker was long before Bushy, Bottom, the Minions, and Zabby did. Perhaps even before Batty?"

At the mention of Severus, Theo's eyes widened even further in fear, but he bit his bottom lip hard to keep from saying anything.

"That's it, isn't it?" Nora asked. "You're afraid of Batty, and you know Speaker is secretly his friend, but you also know Batty is a Death Eater. You are afraid that Batty will tell your father if you seek help from Speaker." She stated simply, as she continued to eye the boy.

Theo stared at Nora in shock, but she only hissed in amusement.

"You don't need to worry. Speaker can handle Batty. He knows were Batty's loyalties lie, so you don't have to be afraid. Speaker can keep you safe, if you wish." She said, as she slithered down off his shoulders and back onto the bed. "You are a closet neutral, as Puny calls it, but that is understandable. You don't wish to fight for Dumbly, but neither do you wish to fight for Morty. Is it because of Speaker? Or do you just not care either way?"

"No one can be neutral."

The reply was so soft that Nora herself almost missed it. However, a small triumphant gleam appeared in her eye, and she flicked her tongue rapidly with excitement.

"Do explain." She encouraged.

"It just what I said. No one can be neutral." Theo replied. "The Dark Lord doesn't care if you're neutral. He thinks that if you are not for him, you are against him. All these Slytherins who claim to be 'neutral' are only saying it because they are scared. If it came right down to it, and the Dark Lord appeared on their door step and asked them to join him, they would have to pick a side. If they chose
not to join him, he'd kill them, and if they chose to join, they'd still die, or be thrown in Azkaban. Being ‘neutral’ is only a Slytherin’s way to avoid being labeled as outright ‘dark’.

Nora raised her head up and cocked it to the side as if in thought.

"An interesting way of looking at it, and perhaps you're right, but where do you stand?" She asked in a soft tone.

"I don’t know." Theo confessed with a sigh. "My father will try to kill me, just as Mr. Malfoy tried with Draco. I have nowhere to go, because unlike Draco, I have no mother or rich relatives to protect me."

"Speaker can help you though. He has his ways." Nora said, silently encouraging the boy to keep talking.

"I'm sure he does, but I'm afraid of him too. I know things I'm not supposed to know. How am I to know he won't wipe my memories? I know about the Potters, I know this reincarnation bit is rubbish, and I know exactly who Salazar is. How do I know…"

"Speaker would never harm a child. Surely you must know that by now." Nora said with confusion.

"Yes I do, but I know about the Potters…"

"So does Bushy, Bottom, Zabby, and the Minions, but that hasn't stopped Speaker from wiping their memories. In fact, he has taken precautions about their knowledge. Grey Beard, and his wife Lovely, have secured their minds with family magic, and they can't talk about the Potters except to those who already know about them. You having this knowledge is not the problem, but having the knowledge and it being unguarded is. What would you do if your father took you to Morty, and he used legilimency on you? He too would find out about the Potters, and that would not be good for anyone."

Theo gasped, and even in the soft wand light, Nora could see how fast he paled.

"I hadn't thought about that." He confessed sadly, then he sighed loudly. "I also did not know that the others knew about the Potters too. I thought I was the only one, except Godric of course."

"Well there you go." Nora replied. "Besides, it's not like you know where they are. If there's one thing Speaker has been careful about, it's their location. Only three people, four if you count myself, knows where they really are."

"Let me guess, Merlin, Salazar, Godric, and you." Theo said with a slight, sad smile.

"Correct. Not even Paddy, Wolfy, and all the others know where they are because Speaker will only let them see each other in a special location." She added.

Theo chuckled. "So I suppose I don't have anything to really fear then."

"Not unless you count Morty using legilimency on you." Nora stated matter-of-factly.

Theo sighed again. "I guess that's true."

"So where do you stand Notty? Are with us, or against us?" Nora asked.

"I don't know yet." He admitted truthfully. "There is still a lot of uncertainty with my life. I know Salazar can keep me safe. I see it the precautions everyone has taken with Draco, but I'm not Draco,
and my situation is different. My father is loyal to the Dark Lord, and unlike Mr. Malfoy, my father is in the Dark Lord's good graces. However, I am taking Salazar's warning to heart. I don't want to be on his bad side either.

"I would fear Speaker more than Morty, but it's not for me to decide for you. However, I can tell you straight up that Speaker will not allow you to run around with your knowledge unguarded any longer. He will take steps to ensure that knowledge stays safe."

"What do I do then?" Theo asked.

"I don't know, but I will talk to Speaker. We may have another conversation like this soon, so be ready for it. In the meantime, get some sleep."

"I will Nora, and thank you. Some of my fears and doubts have been put to rest, but I'm still not sure."

"These things take time Notty." She said, as she slithered to the end of the bed. "Don't worry about it."

"Nora, one more thing before you go. I know you're not here alone, so please tell me who else is here?" Theo asked, looking around nervously as if he expected someone to shove a wand in his face at any moment.

"It's Jolly, so don't worry." Nora said, then she slipped out of the bed onto the floor when Theo smiled and nodded at her.

It wasn't until Theo heard the dorm room door softly close that he finally fell back onto his pillows. Then he let out a long sigh of... relief?... desperation?... hope?... He wasn't exactly sure, but what he did know is that Salazar had gotten the message, and it had been well received.

Yes, it was true. He told Umbridge of his parseltongue abilities in the hopes that she would tell the whole school, and she did not disappoint him.

But what concerned Theo the most right now is, what to do? He was firm in his belief that one cannot remain 'neutral', and his time was growing short. He knew he'd have to pick a side soon. He knew he didn't want to be a Death Eater though, because of all the stories his father would tell him of the killings and torture.

They always made him cringe, and when he was younger, he'd often have to visit the loo in order to be sick. His father took great pleasure at remembering the way muggle women would scream in terror and plead for the life of their children, but Theo would always think of his mother when his father would mention the crimes he'd placed upon these innocent women.

What would his mother do? Would she scream also? Would she plead for her son's life like the mothers in his father's stories?

Theo was sure she would.

He didn't remember his mother, but in his mind he was sure that she would not want him to follow in his father's footsteps.

And he wouldn't.

So with his mind made up, even if he was still a little unsure how Salazar could be secret friends with Snape, he decided that his best bet lay with Salazar. Now he just needed a plan. A plan that would
ensure his father wouldn't find out what all he'd done.

After all, no one, including the Dark Lord, was supposed to know they were Parselmouths.

It was Saturday morning, and Dolores Umbridge sat up at the head table with a smug smirk on her face as she looked out over the calm and quiet great hall. She was rather enjoying this new development of peaceful meals, and wondered why she hadn't thought about this in the first place, but then she looked down at her colleagues and frowned.

They had been less than helpful of late and didn't support her changes and decisions a bit, and truth be told, she was getting tired of it.

She eyed each one individually as she thought about them.

To her, it was obvious that Dumbledore needed to go. The man was old, senile, and let the little beasts get away with too much mischief. He wasn't fit to be Headmaster, and she couldn't wait until she could hatch a plan to get rid of him.

As for McGonagall, Umbridge wished she could say the same about her, but the truth was, she was a good Professor. She was stern, and didn't let the students get away with much of anything. Besides, replacing her would be a nightmare because there were very few people who could teach Transfiguration as good as she could.

However, as far as McGonagall being Deputy Headmistress, that would have to go.

The same things could be said about most of the others, and for the most part, Sprout, Flitwick, Babbling, Vector, and Sinistra were very good teachers and Umbridge had no problems with them.

Black, Burbage, Trelawney, and Binns needed to go though. That was unquestionable.

In her opinion, Black was irresponsible, dirty, rude, arrogant, and hateful. He also didn't respect her authority one bit, which he had made plain as day when she inspected his class, and he let the students get away with too much. Besides, on more than a few occasions she had observed him giving students advice on pranks, life in general, and told them stories about his own time at Hogwarts.

This was unacceptable.

As for Burbage, well, Umbridge had a plan to do away with Muggle Studies so she would no longer be needed, and the same could be said about Divination, so Trelawney would be gone as well.

Binns on the other hand, just put the students to sleep with his constant droning, and she would replace him with someone alive who could not only teach the students, but also keep them awake.

As her attention turned to Snape though, she nodded in silent approval. Yaxley, who was Head of the Department of Finance, spoke highly of the man and she had to agree with him. Snape could keep the filthy little beasts under control with a single glare, and to top it all off, he hated Potter, Roffin, and their little band of friends with a passion.

And that was good enough for her. The fact that he was the best Potions Master in the U.K. was just a plus.

Umbridge smirked again as she fingered the piece of parchment in her robe. It was another Educational Decree that she had thought up, and it had been approved by Cornelius just this
morning. It was certainly going to put a stop to any extracurricular advice that any of the Professors, particularly Black, were giving to the students.

"Hem, hem!" Umbridge said, as she stood up with a smug smirk. She thought it was best to announce this new decree before the mail came, that way there would be no distractions. "I wish to make an announcement." She stated, but frowned when nearly everyone glared at her. "It has come to my attention that some of the Professors have been giving you all inappropriate advice about some things, so I have a new Educational Decree Number twenty-six." She said, throwing a glare towards Sirius, who only glared back. "This new decree states thus…teachers are hereby banned from giving students any information that is not strictly related to the subjects they are paid to teach."

Everyone's glare deepened, and more than a few of the Professors gritted their teeth, but none more so than Godric. He opened his mouth to say what he was thinking, but Albus beat him to it.

"If I may Professor Umbridge, what are the students supposed to do if they need help or advice about sensitive topics? For example, what if a young couple should break up and one of the individuals is upset by it and they wish to talk about their experience in such matters? Who would they go to?"

"Their friends." Umbridge said with a haughty tilt of her head.

"Ah yes," Albus replied as he nodded. "But children oftentimes can be a bit…rash. One might say 'forget about it, move on', but another will likely say 'curse them while their back is turned'. Where is the wisdom of an adult in those situations?"

"Then they should talk to their parents." She said through gritted teeth.

"While that does seem like a good idea, this is a boarding school and owl post can take days, especially now that you are having all incoming and outgoing post searched." He replied with twinkling eyes.

There was a collective gasp throughout the great hall, and angry mutterings instantly sprang up as Umbridge glared at the still twinkling Headmaster. However, Albus wasn't done yet.

"So where are the students supposed to get instant answers for their questions about life, love, wisdom, and morals?"

"They can come to me." She said with a glare, only to hear several snorts come from the house tables.

"That, Professor, is unlikely to happen."

"Listen here Dumbledore!" Umbridge shrieked. "This is my Educational Decree and I expect you all to comply with it!"

"As you wish, but I must warn you, without us being able to talk to the students about things like this, you may find out that more children will likely go astray. Especially the more…mischievous ones." He said with a gentle smile.

Umbridge stared at him in confusion, but the meaning was not lost to most of the students. In particular, Fred and George, who were grinning at Albus like a couple of lunatics. This action was seen by Minerva, who only groaned.

"Not good." She muttered, causing Sirius to snort.

"This is good." He mumbled, only to have Minerva shoot him a disapproving glance.
"Twenty galleons says the pranks will get worse." Pomona said with a sly grin.

"Yep, and this time we don't have the authority to tell them 'no', since it doesn't pertain our jobs." A gleeful Flitwick said, only for Minerva to moan slightly.

"They know not to disrupt classes Minnie." Sirius grinned. "Besides, other than causing chaos at meals, when have the pranks ever really bothered us?"

"I suppose your right. They do know better, but it worries me." Minerva replied, as she eyed the twins carefully.

"It will be all right." Flitwick said, patting her hand. "You'll see."

She sighed loudly, but before she could say anything else, the morning mail had arrived. However, due to the screaming headline from the *Daily Prophet*, things only got worse.

**Dolores Umbridge Revolutionizes Defense Against the Dark Arts! All is well at Hogwarts!**

"All is *NOT* well at Hogwarts!" Hermione shouted, causing several people to look at the normally self-controlled girl in shock. "We aren't learning anything expect useless crap!"

"Hermione!" Neville hissed, but Hermione wasn't listening.

"You cannot reason with the Dark Arts! Harry said so himself! We cannot pass our OWLs with the utter crap that woman is teaching! I don't know about you all," she said, as she glared around the great hall, "but I'm officially canceling my subscription to this clearly biased rag!"

"Miss Granger!" Umbridge shouted as she stood up. "You know the rules…"

"To hell with your blasted rules, decrees, and insanity!" Hermione shouted, as she set her copy of the paper on fire. "I've had enough…"

"DETENTION!" Umbridge screamed furiously, causing Hermione to narrow her eyes at the woman. "And if you say another word you filthy little girl, I will expel you without a second thought. As a matter of fact, you can join Mr. Weasley during his detention this morning. I do believe it is right after breakfast." She said with a disturbing smile that immediately set everyone on edge.

Hermione's nostrils flared and she took on a stance as if she were getting ready to dual the woman, but Neville thought quickly. He silenced Hermione, then placed her under a mild compulsion spell before telling her to gather her things and head for the common room.

She complied immediately, but it was only when they were halfway back to the common room that Neville finally lifted the charms. However, Hermione didn't yell at him for it. She knew he just saved her from getting expelled, and she was grateful for it.

They walked along in silence, but when the two entered Gryffindor Tower, Hermione finally sighed and looked at Neville.

"I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me." She said, flopping down into the chair by the fireplace.

"Don't worry over it. Everyone knows you take your education very seriously, and you getting angry over that is not all that surprising." Neville said as he patted her shoulder. "We know the paper spews rubbish, but Rita will eventually set it all right. I suspect this just gives her more ammo for her next article in *The Quibbler.*"
Hermione suddenly jumped up out of her seat, and to Neville's utter astonishment, she nearly bowled him over when she threw her arms around him.

"Thank you." She whispered as she clung to him. "You and Blaise are my best friends and I don't know what I would do without you both half the time. I would have gotten myself expelled just now if it wasn't for you."

Neville smiled and hugged her tightly. "You'd do the same for me."

"Darn right I would!" She exclaimed as she let go of him, but then she sighed again, wiped the tears off her face, and quickly changed the subject. "How are you doing with the schedules for the SLDA?"

Neville grinned. "The Student Lead Defense Association," he emphasized, "schedules are good to go. We just need to ask Dobby, and Gordy's elf Peaky, to distribute the schedules. First and second years will meet from ten to twelve on Saturdays, then we break for lunch. After that, from one to three the third and fourth years will meet. Then on Sundays fifth through seventh will have their class from two to five."

"But that's in the middle of the day though!" She exclaimed. "Umbridge will…"

"No, no. It's actually perfect." Neville interjected. "I've asked Fred and George to learn Umbridge's schedule by using the map. She's here on Saturdays, but she won't really notice that the two smaller groups are missing because she mostly stays in her office grading papers or doing whatever. However, on Sundays she always gone from the castle in the afternoons. Fred and George think she's secretly hooking up with Fudge, but…" Neville made a face and shivered, and Hermione shook her head to clear away the mental image.

"The point is, she won't notice that the fifth through seventh years are missing." She said, confirming her suspicion.

"Right." Neville nodded.

Hermione chewed on her lip as she stared off into space, but Neville chuckled as he sat down and began flipping through a nearby seventh year Herbology textbook. They remained silent for the better part of thirty minutes, but when the portrait hole opened and the other Gryffindors started trickling in, they both knew breakfast was about over.

"Hermione!" Fred cried as he, George, and Ron came bursting through the portrait. "We have something to tell you."

"Umbridge was talking quietly to Snape, and she called you a mudblood." George said.

"Yeah but that's not all." Fred said breathlessly. "She was telling him that you and Ron were going to be getting the punishment you deserve. We just don't know exactly…"

"Wait, wait, wait." Hermione interrupted, throwing up her hands. "How do you know this?"

"We put a listening charm on her chair in the great hall." Fred replied, causing Hermione's mouth to drop open. "But before you ask, Professor Flitwick taught it to us. We also want to put one in her office, but we haven't been able to."

"Yeah she keeps it locked up tighter than the goblins lock up Gringotts vaults." George said. "Anyway, she was talking to Snape about brutal punishments for you and Ron."
"The way she was going on about it, it sounds like she going to whip us with spiked chains or something!" Ron exclaimed with a pale, frantic look about him.

"Surely she can't get away with something like that?" Hermione said nervously.

"She's in charge of punishments now." Neville said as he shook his head. "That woman is capable of anything."

"Snape tried to get her to tell him exactly what she meant, but he suddenly tensed up and flinched." Ron said, shaking his head. "Then he said something about a dunderhead trying to break into his office and he wanted to catch them, but the way Snape was rubbing his left arm as he left, we think You-Know-Who called him."

"Well that can't be good." Neville muttered.

"Look, we just want you and Ron to be careful." George said seriously. "Tell us everything when you get back."

"I will. You can count on that." Ron said. "But we better go Hermione."

"Yeah, being late won't help us a bit." She replied.

Hermione and Ron quickly left, but not before they all exchanged uneasy glances.

Umbridge was sitting behind her desk when Ron and Hermione entered her office. Ron looked around half expecting to see spiked chains hanging on the walls, but he seemed to relax a bit when he didn't spot any. Hermione on the other hand, narrowed her eyes, causing the older witch to just smile sweetly at her. This made Hermione's stomach to flip flop, and she was on her guard more than ever.

Umbridge motioned for them to take seats at opposite ends of her long desk, which they did, though very reluctantly. Two long black quills, which seemed to have unusually sharp tips, and six sheets of parchment sat in the middle, but Umbridge took a quill and three sheets and gave them to both Hermione and Ron.

"You will be writing lines for me today, but first, you will surrender your wands." She said sweetly.

Ron seemed to relax even more at hearing they only had to write lines, but Hermione gasped.

"Our wands?" She asked, staring at the woman in disbelief.

Umbridge narrowed her eyes at Hermione. "Yes, your wands." She confirmed.

Both Hermione and Ron glanced at each other, but there was nothing they could do about it. They both handed them over, and Umbridge practically snatched them away from the two teens.

"Now, Mr. Weasley, you will write, 'I will keep inappropriate comments to myself', and as for you Miss Granger, you will write, 'I will not argue with those who are my betters'."

"Excuse me?! Betters!?" Hermione exclaimed jumping out of her seat, but Umbridge had her wand out and pointed it at her.

"You will do as I say, because I'm in charge here." She hissed, causing Hermione to glare at her even more.
Hermione had little choice but to comply, so she sat down gruffly.

"You haven't given us an ink pot." Ron growled as he gritted his teeth. He knew what Umbridge meant by 'betters', and he was positive Hermione did too.

"These are...self-inking...quills, so you won't need any. You will write until both sides of the three pieces of parchment are filled, and don't try to write big, or you will regret it." She said with a smirk.

Both teens shot loathing glares at her and began to write, but it wasn't long before they realized that something was not right about the quills. They could feel sharp stings beginning to plague their non-writing hand, and as they kept writing, they also began to realize that it was their own blood that they were using as ink.

"You think you've gotten away with this?" Hermione asked as she stared at her parchment and continued to write. "Wait until Harry gets ahold of you. If he doesn't kill you..."

"Then Gordy will." Ron finished, even though he was in terrible amounts of pain.

"You won't tell those children anything, and even if you did, there is nothing they can do about it. Now shut up and keep writing." Umbridge said with a satisfied smirk. "I run this school, and no one else."

"For now." Hermione said through gritted teeth as she tried to keep the tears at bay.

"Tell us Professor," Ron spat. "How much is You-Know-Who paying you to keep Fudge in denial? You think you've gotten away with this, but you have another thing coming. When You-Know-Who finally shows himself, you'll find yourself in Azkaban for this and all your other crimes against us."

Umbridge glanced at him sharply, but Hermione interrupted her before she could say anything.

"And by us he means the whole school." Hermione added breathlessly as another stabbing pain shot through her hand. "That is, if Harry doesn't kill you first."

Umbridge just smirked at the two pain filled, red faced teens and scoffed. "He's just a boy pretending to be a man. He's all talk. I'm not worried about him, or you, or whoever you think can try to stop me from running this school the way I want. Not even your precious Dumbledore, because I aim to see him out the doors soon."

"Drink it up." Hermione said. "Because there is a curse on the Defense position and it was placed there by Voldemort himself. No one has ever survived it, except Professor Lupin, who is the only one that knows how to get around it."

"That means you'll be gone by the end of the year." Ron added, only for Hermione to smirk.

"Whether it's under your own power, or in a body bag is still up for debate."

"Or as basilisk shit." Ron spat, causing Umbridge's face to contort with fury.

"You've just bought yourselves another detention!" She shouted with barely controlled rage. "You will be here tomorrow evening, or you will be expelled!"

"Not if you're dead." Hermione said with loathing.

"Shut up you filthy little mudblood and know your place!" Umbridge screamed, as she slapped Hermione hard across the face, causing her lip to split open and start pouring blood.
That was the last straw for Ron. He jumped out of his seat, grabbed the back of his chair, and in one smooth motion, he slammed it upside Umbridge's head. She hit the floor hard, and spit out a few teeth, but Ron kicked her in the face, grabbed their wands out of the desk drawer Umbridge had placed them in, and seized a stunned Hermione's hand.

"Run!" He shouted, as he pulled her towards the door.

"You attacked a teacher!" Hermione screeched as they bolted out the door.

"Yeah, well, she's not much of one. MOVE!" Ron shouted, shoving her out the way as a curse few over their heads.

"ARRESTED! AURORS! I WANT THAT BOY ARRESTED!" Umbridge bellowed.

"How in the hell is she not unconscious?" Hermione cried as they breathlessly ran into the nearest shortcut.

"I don't know, but she does have a fat, hard head. We need to keep moving and find a real teacher."

"Or Harry or Gordy." She said.

"No, we can't get to Harry because he's too far away, and Umbridge is between us and Gordy. Blaise, Draco, Luna, Colin, and Dennis are with him in the warded classroom on the second floor studying. We'd never make it." He said as he clutched his side and slumped against the wall.

"Your hand is bleeding badly." Hermione said, as she cut two pieces of fabric off her robes and tied them around each of their hands.

"It's all right." He mumbled. Then he stood up straight, and looked around. "We can't stay here. We need to be on the move. She'll have the Aurors looking for us, and we don't have the map so we are running blind."

"This shortcut exits out right in front of the hospital wing. Madam Pomfrey will be there." Hermione said as they began running full tilt down the passage way.

They didn't burst out of the exit though, instead they slowed to a stop about fifteen feet from from it.

"I'll go." Hermione said, as she glanced at Ron. "They don't want to arrest me, and if I get caught I'll say we split up."

Ron nodded in understanding, but Hermione carefully walked forward, poked her head out, and then pulled it back in.

"The corridor is empty. It's alright."

They both shot out of the exit and straight into the hospital wing, but they were not the only ones there.

"So predictable. Umbridge sneered. "Pomfrey isn't here, and I don't know where she went, but I have you now!" She shouted, then began firing curse after curse at them.

Ron and Hermione immediately went on the offensive, and began firing curses back at her. Hermione had to admit though, Ron had done a number on the woman. Umbridge had blood all down the front of her pink robes, three missing front teeth, and a large black eye. Her hair was all out of sorts, and truth be told, she looked completely deranged as her face twisted and snarled as she
tried to take the two teens down.

They fought for about a minute or so, but Hermione and Ron were now backed into a corner with no way out and no time to take a sip of the walking through walls potion, so Hermione did the only thing she could think of.

"DOBBY!" She screamed frantically, trying to shield both herself and Ron, who just got hit with a purple hex she was pretty sure was borderline illegal.

"Miss Hermy called for…OH NO YOU DON'T!" Dobby yelled, and blasted Umbridge into a wall, where she finally fell unconscious.

"We…need…the…nearest…Professor…" Hermione breathed, as she dropped to the floor beside a loudly moaning Ron who was clutching his chest.

"Right away. Dobby knows where they are," The little elf said, as he grabbed them both.

They disappeared with a loud crack, and landed hard on top of a wooden table, which all the Professors were sitting around. Minerva screamed because it startled her so badly, but Poppy was up and moving the second she saw blood. Albus was shocked at the sight of the two teens, but everyone else just gasped and stared wide eyed at them.

Dobby had deposited them right in the middle of a secret staff meeting.

"Ron! Ron! Are you ok? Ron!" Hermione cried, as she tried to shake the boy, who was now screaming in pain.

"Out of the way Miss Granger!" Poppy barked as she climbed onto the table and began running scans.

"We can't take him to the hospital wing because that's where Umbridge is! Dobby knocked her out when she attacked us! Ron hit her with a chair…she made us write lines in our own blood…we were in detention…"

"WHAT!?" Dumbledore shouted as he rose out of his seat.

The windows in the staff lounge began to rattle violently, but it quickly ended as Hermione dissolved into a mess of tears, snot, and blood.

"Miss Granger, I have no doubts that you have just been through a lot." He said trying to get his anger under control. "But can you please start at the beginning?"

Hermione absentmindedly wiped her nose with the back of her injured hand, which got even more blood all over her face, seeing as it a seeped through the piece of fabric. She started sobbing even harder because of all that she had just been through, and was in no condition to speak.

Dumbledore turned to Dobby. "Will you fetch Harry please? Tell him to bring a calming draught."

"Right away sir." Dobby said, as he threw Hermione a concerned glace.

He was only gone for about thirty seconds when Salazar apparated into the room, with Dobby right behind him.

"What happened?" He immediately asked, as he helped Hermione to drink the calming draught.

"We don't know." Dumbledore said gravely, but then he turned to Poppy. "What is Mr. Weasley's
"It's grave Headmaster." She said, looking over at him. "He was hit with a dark curse that has caused his lungs to constrict to the near point of collapse. I've never seen anything like it before."

"I've never heard of a curse like that. It might be homemade." Salazar said, as he glanced at the now still and silent Ron. "We need to get him to the hospital wing."

"NO!" Hermione yelled, causing them all to stop and stare at her. "That's where Umbridge is." She said, as she took a deep breath.

"Can you tell us what happened?" Albus asked again.

She nodded slowly, but tears once again began pouring down her cheeks. "We were serving detention with her, but she made us write lines with some kind of quill that used our own blood as ink." She said as she unwrapped her hand and showed it to them.

"I'll kill her." Salazar said through gritted teeth, as he read the sentence Hermione was forced to write.

"Go on." Albus encouraged as his eyes grew dark with fury.

"We endured it for as long as we could," Hermione said as she began to hiccup. "But then we started saying things to her so that we could take small breaks. I don't know if Ron picked up on the fact that I was trying to do that, but he kept talking too. We told her she wasn't going to get away with making us write with those quills, but she didn't care. Ron finally got her really mad, and she issued us more detentions, but we just kept her talking. I guess me telling her that she was only going to leave here in a body bag was a bit much, because then she slapped me across the face. That's why my lip is busted. Ron lost it when she called me a mudblood and told me to 'learn my place'." She said as a new round of tears began forming, but she continued.

"He stood up quickly, grabbed his chair, and swung it. He hit her in the head, kicked her in the face, and was able to grab our wands, which she had taken before we started writing lines."

"She did it to keep you defenseless." Salazar breathed in disbelief, as he scowled.

Hermione nodded. "I think so. Well, as you can imagine, we ran. Umbridge started screaming about getting Ron arrested, but we didn't stop. We ran into the nearest shortcut, but we stopped to catch our breath and sit a few moments. We came out of the shortcut that ended right in front of the hospital wing and ran inside, only she was there. We started dueling her, but she had backed us into a corner with no way out. She hit Ron with that curse and he went down, then I screamed for Dobby. He came, blasted her into the wall, and then he brought us here." She said, but then dissolved into tears again.

"It's all right." A horrified Minerva said, as she pulled Hermione towards her. "It's all right."

"Dobby is not sorry for what he did." The scowling elf said, as he narrowed his eyes at the memory. "That bad nasty woman got what she deserved. Dobby was protecting Mr. Harry Salazar Potter Slytherin sir's Miss Hermey and Mr. Weezy."

"No one blames you Dobby, and you did well. Thank you." Salazar said, which caused Dobby's face to light up with a brilliant smile.

"Well, Mr. Weasley can't stay here in the staff lounge. We need to get him somewhere safe." Poppy said, as she began to look Hermione's injuries over.
"Camelot." Salazar said simply, which caused Albus to nod.

"I agree." He said. "Poppy get Mr. Weasley and Miss Granger ready for transport. We'll take a portkey out. This meeting is, obviously, adjourned as I expect Umbridge to come straight here when she can't find anyone when she comes to. Filius, if you will round up the Weasleys and explain what has happened to their brother, I would appreciate it. Tell them we took him to Camelot. With their mother there, they shouldn't worry too much. Harry, find Gordy and meet us there. Minerva, you're with us."

All three of them nodded, and Albus summoned a nearby potted plant, which he immediately turned into a portkey. The other teachers began filing out of the room, but Sirius held back a moment.

"Hermione, did you or Ron happen to grab the parchment with your blood on it?" He asked gently.

Salazar immediately jerked his head up and stared at him, but Hermione shook her head no.

"Ok, I'll get." He said as he patted her shoulder. "We don't want Umbridge trying to do anything with it. There are a lot of curses that are bad that uses another person's blood."

"I agree. Get it anyway you can Sirius." Salazar said gravely, and Sirius nodded.

"I'm going to go get it right now. I'll see you all at the Order meeting tonight."

Sirius left, but Albus nodded to Poppy and Minerva, who grabbed hold of both Ron and Hermione, then they left, just as Salazar went off to find Godric.

Camelot was a flurry of activity for the next few hours. Merlin took over looking after Hermione's injuries, since Poppy was busy looking after Ron. Molly was a mixture of a frantic mess and an angry momma bear as she flitted from one child's room to the other. She wanted a piece of Umbridge in the worst way, and no one but Arthur could calm her down.

Hermione had finally calmed down enough to provide her memory of the entire event, so they used Merlin's pensieve to find out exactly what happened. To say the least, this set Molly off again, but she finally cried out loudly before rushing out the room and back towards Ron and Hermione's respective bedrooms.

Between Poppy and Salazar they were able to stabilize Ron, but he was still very weak from the curse and wouldn't be able to get out of bed for at least a week according to Poppy. Molly said she'd make sure he stayed there, much too Poppy's satisfaction.

Merlin quickly healed Hermione's busted lip and stopped the bleeding on her hand, but he sadly informed her that there was no way the scar would ever heal. Poppy finally ordered the very exhausted girl to her room, and told her to get some much needed rest.

Hermione didn't argue.

However, to make matters worse, Sirius showed up around lunch time and announced that Umbridge had been taken by Godric down into the prison cells, but there was a problem.

Lucius had escaped.

No one knew how or why he had escaped, and no one knew how long he had been gone, but Godric asked his elf Peaky to keep a sharp eye on Umbridge, who was screaming like a mad woman and saying she had been kidnapped, and render her unconscious if she became a problem.
No one cared about her though.

However, as evening descended upon them, members of the Order began trickling into Camelot for the weekly meeting. They seemed to sense that something horrible had happened, but most had the good common sense to wait for the meeting to find out what it was.

When it was finally time for the meeting, it was a very somber Albus who stood up and began addressing everyone.

"As you all can see, three of our members are not here tonight." He said with a despondent shake of his head. "Miss Granger and young Mr. Weasley were in an altercation with our 'esteemed' High Inquisitor this afternoon." He said with loathing. "Both students were gravely injured, and I invite you all to enter the pensive so that you can be properly aware of what has taken place."

"Where is Professor Snape?" Salazar asked, not missing the fact that he hadn't seen Severus all day.

"Severus was called by Voldemort early this morning during breakfast, and that is another thing that has concerned me today. No one has seen him since." Albus replied gravely.

Salazar felt his blood run cold and he exchanged a nervous glance with Godric, who simply nodded.

"If he's not back by the end of this meeting, Godric and I will go look for him. We will start at the Parkinson's and I will get answers as to his whereabouts."

"Subtly of course." Godric added when it looked like Albus was going to say something.

"Of course." Salazar agreed. "We've had Lucius in our custody for a number of days, and I can tell that wretched boy I gleaned information out of him."

"And why has Lucius been in your custody?" Amelia asked, looking at Salazar in confusion.

Albus sighed loudly. "That is something else we need to discuss, but first, the memory of what happened today. This will be followed by the memory of what happened in the great hall on Halloween."

One by one the members of the Order entered the pensive, and those who had no idea of what happened on both days, stared in horror at all they were witnessing. When both memories were finished, everyone sat around the table in stunned silence.

"Well that answers my question about Malfoy." Amelia said with a sigh, but then the she glanced around at everyone. "From now on I want all of our prisoners to be held at Hogwarts."

"Well, there is a problem with that." Godric said shaking his head. "Normally I would say yes, because they are more secure than Azkaban, at least in my opinion, but Lucius has escaped."

"WHAT!?" Several people shouted.

"Narcissa was the last person to see him, with the exception of the elves who have been bringing him meager rations of food." Salazar said. "But we still don't know how he escaped."

It was at this point when Merlin loudly cleared his throat, thereby bringing everyone's attention to him.

"Since this pertains to the Malfoys, I spoke with Narcissa today after we learned about Lucius's escape. She told me that she already knew that he had escaped, but that everything is under control.
She would not give me details, but she did tell me that he is already dead. She also said that Severus should have all the answers we are looking for."

"Narcissa helped him escape?" Salazar asked in disbelief.

"Yes, though she assures me that he is dead." Merlin repeated.

Godric chuckled darkly. "It makes me wonder exactly what she did." He said, causing Salazar to glance at him sharply.

"And if she said that Severus has the answers, then it may explain why he hasn't been seen all day." He said.

"That would make sense." Albus agreed. "But Narcissa didn't say what she did?" He asked, looking towards Merlin who simply shook his head. "Very well then." He sighed.

"Well as it stands, since we now know that Lucius had some manner of help in breaking out, I still want all of our, meaning the Order's, prisoners to be held captive in Hogwarts's prison cells." Amelia said as she looked right at Godric, Salazar, and Albus. "Can you all assure me, that this will never interfere with day to day school activities, and more importantly, the student's safety?"

"We can." Godric said with a nod. "With the elves looking after the prisoners, they will have nothing to do or see. In fact, they won't know they are at Hogwarts at all. The prison portion is designed in such a way that the prisoners will have no human contact with each other, or anyone else unless we give permission to family to see them. As was the case with Narcissa, though to be honest, whether that was a good decision or not remains to be seen."

"If Lucius is dead, then it probably was." Aberforth muttered darkly, causing Salazar to chuckle.

"To sum up our prison system at Hogwarts, think Azkaban, except elves replace the dementors." Salazar added.

"Sounds like paradise." Sirius joked, causing most of them to chuckle.

"The students will never know they are there and only the Headmaster, Salazar, and I know exactly where they are." Godric said. "Even Narcissa was placed under a blinding hex and led down there, and back, by myself."

"Very well then." Amelia said with an approving nod. "Albus, is this agreeable to you?"

"It is."

"Alright then. I'm guessing our next order of business is what to do with that deplorable woman." Amelia said as she looked around the table. "These crimes cannot go unpunished, however…"

"Fudge." Albus growled, which made Amelia nod.

"Right. Fudge." She said with a sigh as she shook her head. "As far as he is concerned, the sun rises and sets with Dolores Umbridge. Nothing bad can be said about her because she is, and I quote, 'getting things done right.'" She said through gritted teeth. "Any evidence we submit against her will be immediately dismissed as fabricated, somehow blamed on Mr. Potter, and completely thrown out."

"So what do we do? That woman hurt two students, used a dark object on them, attacked them, and called Hermione, at least, horrible names! This cannot be tolerated!" Molly shouted. "I want her head
on a silver platter!"

"Mum, clam down." Fred said, as he patted her hand. "If I know Harry, he has that look in his eye that says she will get what's coming to her."

Salazar actually burst out laughing. "He's right. However, the less you all know what I'm thinking of doing to that woman, the better. That way if you are questioned you can truthfully say, you had no idea." He added with a smirk.

"Plausible deniability," Blaise said with a grin.

"Exactly." Salazar said as he grinned back. "I will say though, that Ron posed a question to Umbridge that made me very curious. As you all recall, Ron asked her, 'how much is You-Know-Who paying you to keep Fudge in denial'. I aim to see if there is anything to that. I plan to break her mind open like a walnut."

"Interesting." Godric said with a nod. "Do be sure to let us know what you find out."

Salazar shot him an 'of course I will, you idiot' glance that made Godric laugh, but Albus only nodded.

"Whatever you do to her, I especially don't want to know. I will admit that a part of me wants to take part in whatever it is you plan to do, but the other part doesn't."

"Headmaster, with all due respect, some people don't have the stomach to carry out certain… punishments. You are one who doesn't." Salazar said as delicately as he could.

"And that's a good thing." Merlin said quickly, looking right at Albus. "In times of war there are people who are needed to carry out such…atrocities…in order to gain important information. While some would argue that we shouldn't stoop to their level, some would argue about treating them humanely, while others would say that they are already horrible people who would not think twice about doing to you, what you are doing to them. Despite common belief, there is not a blanket action of 'what is the right thing to always do'. Instead, it comes down to what is the right thing to do…for the circumstances you are faced with." He emphasized. "This is war, and there are no absolutes. I know that this particular war doesn't pertain to Voldemort, but it is a war with the Ministry and that woman is our number one enemy. If we eliminate her in whatever form or fashion is suitable, then that is what we must do."

Albus seemed to ponder over this statement for a moment, but then he nodded in agreement.

"I must say that makes sense. I will admit that I would be in the camp that says treat them as kindly and humanely as possible, but I have to say that I have come to realize that doesn't always work. While it makes me uneasy, I will say, Harry, do whatever you feel is the right thing to do." He said, causing Salazar to nod.

"Even if all you do is put the fear of…well…Salazar…into her." Sirius said. "I would normally say Merlin, but Salazar seems to fit better."

Despite the delicate topic at hand, this caused everyone to burst out laughing.

"The muggle saying, 'you can catch more flies with honey than you can vinegar' is fitting in most cases, but not in times of war." Salazar said. "Rest assured, I will get answers, and I will straighten her out."

"How intriguing." Arthur said as he sat forward in his seat. "What exactly do muggles mean by that
saying? Muggles are simply fascinating and I wonder…”

"Arthur!" Molly said with exasperation, causing her husband to chuckle.

"Right…later."

"Thank you." Molly said, shaking her head.

Albus chuckled and smiled at the muggle infatuated wizard, but then he glanced around the table.

"Do any of you have anything to add?" He asked.

"I do actually." Cedric said as he looked around. "I have been thinking about the shield cloaks and gloves that Fred and George have been working on lately."

"What about them?" George asked, sitting up a bit more in his chair.

"We are almost done with them, and hope to have them distributed out to everyone soon." Fred added, looking at Cedric curiously.

"Well, I have been reading a lot about the supersensory charm, and I was wondering, is there a way to incorporate that into the cloaks and gloves? If we are in a battle and no one is watching our back, we can still take a killing curse to it. The cloaks and gloves will protect us from minor hexes and jinxes, but if we have the supersensory charm added to them, we will know when something nastier is headed our way."

Fred and George glanced at each other and nodded.

"Interesting Cedric old boy!" Fred said with a grin.

"An absolutely splendid idea! We will get to work on that straight away!" George added, causing Ginny to giggle at their antics.

Cedric grinned at them, but Amelia smiled at him.

"I would love to get my hands on you Mr. Diggory. Is there a way I can talk you into joining the Aurors perhaps?"

Cedric chuckled. "Actually ma'am, no. I'm sorry, but ever since the Unspeakables came out with the Moody glasses I have been…"

"The what?" Mad-Eye asked, looking at him closely.

"The Moody glasses. It's what we have all nicknamed the glasses given to all the Aurors in the express interest of catching our very own convicted murder." Blaise said with a laugh, causing Salazar to grin.

"I'm honored really." He said, causing everyone to chuckle.

Moody only rolled his one good eye, but then he scoffed. "What about them lad?"

Cedric grinned. "Anyway, ever since they invented the Moody glasses, I have really taken an interest in possibly joining the Unspeakables. Granted the glass are a menace to us, but the idea of creating things like that intrigues me. I like puzzles, and I like figuring out ways to make things work the way I want them too. The Unspeakables, at least that department, seems to be right up my alley."
"Very interesting." Amelia said as she pondered over all that he said. "I have contacts in the Unspeakable department, so once you have gotten your NEWTs, we will talk some more."

Cedric's eyes lit up. "Thank you Madam Bones! I must admit that I have no idea how to even approach them for a job, but I hope you can help me."

"I'll see what I can do." She grinned, but then she turned to Fred and George. "What about you two? The Auror corps could use your brilliant ideas, or have we lost you to the Unspeakables as well?"

"Actually no, but we have other ideas." George said.

"You've lost them to the world of jokes and pranks." Molly said, rolling her eyes.

"We are planning to start a joke shop right after we graduate." Fred said with a grin. "We already have the funding and have began making our own brand of jokes and pranks, we just need a location."

Salazar eyed them suspiciously. He had a feeling Sirius, and probably James too, had something to do with the funding, but if the boys were looking for a location…

"To be successful, you'll need a great location. I would advise it being in Diagon Alley, or Hogsmeade. Diagon Alley would be preferable, since it's the main wizarding shopping district, but Hogsmeade will work as well."

"We know." Fred said shaking his head sadly. "We have thought about it and we really want to get into Diagon Alley, but there are no open shops to buy or rent. We thought about Hogsmeade, because that's where Hogwarts students go on the Saturday day trips, but those are few and far between. We'd never make ends meet."

"At first anyway. It's an idea that we have been thinking about. We want to get a second location once we have established ourselves in, hopefully, Diagon Alley." George added. "But as Fred said, there are no open shops for sale or rent."

"Is that right?" Salazar smirked. "I happen to own a three story building in Diagon Alley. It has two flats. One I live in, and one that is vacant. The bottom portion is an old, closed up potions shop that went out of business when Slugs and Jiggers opened up their apothecary many years ago."

Fred and George stared at him almost pleadingly, but Salazar chuckled and continued.

"I could be talked into letting two fellow pranksters rent both the vacant flat and shop portion of the building, in the hopes of starting their brand new shop, but I don't know." He said uncertainly, as if he were having a hard time deciding if he should do it or not.

Fred and George were nearly bouncing in their seats, but Godric burst out laughing.

"Salazar stop teasing them!" He cried, as he continued to laugh loudly.

Salazar chuckled. "Pass your NEWTs with respectable marks, and then we will talk." He said with a nod, causing the twins to whoop and holler.

"Where exactly in Diagon Alley is this building?" Molly asked, eyeing both her boys carefully.

"Number 93 Diagon Alley is the address. It's been under a Fidelius for many, many, many years, so you would have never noticed the building. Once Fred and George have everything they need to get started, I'll lift the Fidelius on the building so it can be visible."
"We love you Harry!" The twins cried, causing Salazar to chuckle, but then he took on a more serious tone.

"I'll do this on one condition though." He said, causing both boys to go quiet. "I'll rent the shop out to you, and give you the vacant flat for free, IF, you let me place the vacant flat under another Fidelius."

"Why?" Fred asked curiously.

"Because despite Voldemort's inactivity, we are at war with him. The shop portion of the building can be replaced, along with the products inside it, however your lives cannot. If Death Eaters should attack the Alley, you head for your flat, and thereby safety. Don't try to defend your shop. I won't tell you not to join the fight outside in order to save innocent lives because that's not for me to decide, but don't focus on defending the shop. It can be replaced." He repeated.

"We understand." They said together, causing their mother to nod approvingly.

"We will talk more about this later though, because now really isn't the time to do so." He added. "However, I am serious about your NEWTs."

"Always the Professor." Neville said with a grin, causing Salazar to chuckle.

The twins nodded again, but Albus smiled at all of them.

"Is there anything else anyone wishes to add?" He asked.

There were a few more things others had to contribute. Percy mentioned that he was working on gaining information about Fudge. This made Amelia, in particular, sit up and closely pay attention, because apparently, Fudge had been keep Percy very busy doing meaningless tasks, so he had to stay late every night. Percy went on to explain that he had been searching Fudge's office and had found evidence that showed just what kind of man Fudge really was. This consisted of everything from taking bribes, to outright murder.

This didn't shock everyone nearly as much as one would expect, but Percy said that he would have all of the information available by the next meeting. Amelia was nearly frothing at the mouth to get her hands on this evidence, and Percy gladly told her that he'd give it all to her once he had everything he wanted to get.

It only made Molly nervous.

The shop keepers that owned places in Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade reported hearing rumors about various suspicious activities. Aberforth told everyone that since his patrons were more of the surly kind that he had heard rumors of plans to carry out Death Eater activities, but he wasn't sure if this was just talk, or the work of something bigger. Albus asked him to keep his ears open and inform him immediately if anything concrete were to be said.

Madam Rosmerta, Fortescue, and Tom reported that things in the wizarding, as a whole, were split on what to believe as far as 'Harry' being Salazar. Some didn't believe it all, some believed it simply because Rita wrote it, and some believed it no matter what.

This made Salazar laugh, but as long as people were believing it, he didn't care how or why they believed it.

More importantly than 'Harry' being Salazar though, they said that most of the population believed that Voldemort had returned. Talk was overheard in all the pubs about plans being made to shore up
house wards, secure emergency money, and make plans for safe houses. This not only pleased everyone more than one could imagine, it was also encouraging.

As the meeting wound down, talk turned to other things. Neville and Blaise wanted to go see how Hermione was doing, so they headed up to her bedroom, while the Weasleys children left for Ron's. Everyone was slowly standing up to make their way home when a sudden awful racket sounded throughout the lower part of Camelot.

It actually sounded like someone had knocked over a dozen suits of armor.

Nearly everyone darted for the foyer, but everyone stopped and stared in horror at the sight before them.

Severus lay on the bright polished white floor, with actual suits of armor laying haphazardly around him. No one had any idea where they came from, but no one cared. Severus's robes were torn and dirty, there was blood all over him, and he was spewing blood out of his mouth, as if it were some kind of gruesome fountain.

Salazar actually screamed and knocked Albus aside in his haste to get to the man he looked at as a son, while Godric and Merlin did the same. Albus was right behind them though, as Poppy came flying down the stairs from having heard the commotion from Ron's room, where she had been checking on him.

Salazar grabbed Severus's hands and stared at him in horror as tears filled his eyes.

"Who did this?" He whispered, staring right into Severus's eyes.

With what little was left in him, Severus lowered his occlumency shields to let Salazar in. He saw brief flashes of a fight to the death, duels, Lucius, and an inferius that looked exactly like Narcissa.

Salazar stared at Severus in confusion, but Severus only had enough energy left to speak a few words.

"Is…Narcissa…alright?" He gasped, then he shuddered violently and fell still.
Severus was mad. Actually he was more than mad, he was downright pissed off to be honest. How long had he been trapped inside his own mind now? Days? Weeks? Months? Years?

He shuddered at the thought.

"No, not years. Salazar would have found a way to get me out of here before then. He thought, as he lit the stove in the tent he had conjured.

"A week at most, I hope." He muttered as he set about making his own breakfast.

He knew that it was all in his mind and that he wasn't really eating anything, but he did it out of desperation and to have some sense of normalcy. In fact, everything he had conjured to make this... stay...more pleasant wasn't real. He knew what was going on though. The Dark Lord had cast a spell that caused him to become trapped in his own mind.

It was a spell he'd seen the Dark Lord use many times during the first war, and Severus knew it was a spell of the Dark Lord's own making. He'd trap people in their minds, then cause their worst fears to plague them, so he could gain information from them, and only when he had them begging for death, then he would finally kill them.

It was a tactic he had seen over and over.

"Petulant child." Severus growled, as he cracked a few eggs he had conjured out of nowhere. "He got mad because I was on the verge of beating him in the duel. Even if he had hit me with the blood boiling hex! Twice! He knew I had reversed the first one, then he hit me with it again! It's the only reason he cast this mind trapping spell!” He yelled, as he waved around the whisk he was using to beat the eggs with.

I'm beginning to lose it. I'm going crazy. He thought, as he placed the eggs into the frying pan, but then he sighed and shook his head. I've been reduced to waving kitchen utensils around like a madman, but I guess it beats going outside.

Severus shuddered and glanced towards the tent door. He didn't like going outside. It was dark, with nothing around but rocks and a steep cliff overlooking a cavern full of thick, dense fog. He knew this was part of the spell though, and not his actual mindscape, but it did nothing to improve his mood and it was the main reason he had conjured this tent in the first place.

But nothing had changed since the spell had taken hold of him, and if he didn't already know that he was safe at Camelot, he'd be a bit more afraid of what was going to happen next. He would be watching his back, waiting for the Dark Lord to invade his mind and use anything and everything against him.

It was a thought that made him shiver.
But I escaped. He thought with a smirk. And according to the Dark Lord's own dueling rules, if you can escape, then so be it.

"Even if you conjured the suits of armor to attack me!" He yelled. "Ha! Ha! Take that!"

But I'm now his second in command. He thought with a satisfied nod. I proved myself worthy, at least in his eyes, and no other Death Eater can question me.

It was actually a good position to be in, because he didn't answer to anyone except the Dark Lord himself, and while that might not seem like a good thing, it actually was. According to the Dark Lord, if you can make it to the top spot, and duel him, you had earned a measure of his respect, and by extension, a few free passes on any screw ups you may have.

The duels for second-in-command were nasty though, because it was anything goes, with the exception of the imperius curse and killing curse. The Dark Lord considered it bad form and cheating if you used the imperius curse, and because 'they were all on the same side' the killing curse was not to be used at all, or you'd instantly receive one from the Dark Lord.

Severus simply thought it was just a way to keep the inner circle from killing each other off, seeing as there was so few of them to begin with.

He had spent all day dueling Crabbe, Rowle, Goyle, Nott, Amycus Carrow, Parkinson, Montague Sr., and Yaxley-and he bested all of them.

Yaxley and Montague were the two he had been most worried about though. The others, at least in Severus's eyes, were brainless idiots who could barely hold a wand the right way, but Yaxley and Montague were two people to watch out for.

Yaxley had conjured nearly a hundred knives and sent them sailing at him, but Severus was only able to vanish about half before the rest got through his shield and began stabbing him. The man had also conjured dirt and blinded him when he created a mini tornado of sorts.

Montague had used the torture curse on him, coupled with the cutting curse and Severus had a hard time getting out of that, but in the end he had managed to defeat them both and go on to duel the Dark Lord himself.

And as one could imagine, that had been a nasty, near death duel, and it was one Severus hoped not to have to repeat anytime soon.

But he knew it may come, especially when the others were fetched out of Azkaban, and the very thought of having to face Bellatrix was not a pleasant one.

"Severus? Can you hear me dear?" A soft, feminine voice asked, which caused Severus to unconsciously look up.

"Yes Molly, I can!" He shouted, though he knew that she couldn't hear him.

"They have figured out what's wrong. Merlin is going to try something different dear. If you can hear me, hang on, it may get rough."

"I want to monitor his vitals while this is happening. I don't want him to start convulsing or anything of the sort. Perenelle, you'll have to move to the other side of him." Severus heard Poppy say.

"Severus, if you can hear me at all," Salazar said. "You need to try and lower your occlumency shields again. I think you unconsciously put them back up when you passed out."
"I can't though! I'm trapped!" Severus yelled, but he was starting to get excited.

He knew they had been trying different ways to reach him, because he could hear everything going on around him. Molly had come to sit with him on many occasions, as had Poppy, Perenelle, Albus, Merlin, Godric, and Granger, who was there for a little while, much to Severus's confusion. Narcissa had also come to talk to him, much to his relief, but the one person who never left his side was Salazar.

Severus could feel the old wizard's presence at all times of the day, and he could often hear the man singing to him, as bad as it was, but through it all, Salazar was always there, and he never left.

Even when Poppy threatened him physical harm if Salazar didn't get some rest.

However, there seemed to be a renewed sense of urgency that passed from his visitors to Severus, and hope blossomed in his chest.

*Maybe this time it will work.* He thought as he vanished the rest of his breakfast and stood up.

"Merlin is going to create a way out, but I have to come in and get you just in case you don't understand what's happening." Salazar said. "Perenelle is going to hold your eyelids open, so don't panic if you feel that. Albus is here as well, and he has to hold my own eyelids open, because if either of us blink, we will lose the connection. If you can't lower your occlumency shields, I'm going to have to break them down, so try not to panic."

"Do what you have to do!" Severus shouted, even though he knew it was pointless. "I can fix them later!"

"Poppy, are you ready?" Merlin asked.

"I am."

"Salazar?"

"This has gone on long enough, and I want my son back." He replied with a fierce determination.

That comment almost made Severus break down into tears, which was uncharacteristic for him, but it also made him wonder about it, especially since Albus was there.

"Very well." Merlin said gently. "We will begin."

The sound of beating drums began almost instantly. Severus knew that was his defenses trying to alert him to a foreign presence in his mind, but then the earth suddenly started to shake beneath his feet and the tent vanished on its own accord.

When the cliff started to fall away, Severus let out a yelp and began back peddling to try and keep ahead of the crumbling rocks, but between the shaking and drums, it was nearly impossible.

The drums were so loud that it was almost painful, but then he heard the shattering of glass and images started flashing before his eyes. It was at that point he knew Salazar had succeeded in breaking through his defenses. He cried out in shock when he slipped and fell, but he managed to scramble back to his feet, and ran smack into Salazar, who was trying to maintain his own footing.

"There you are! It's really me so don't panic." Salazar cried with a happy grin. "All this is because Merlin is shattering the mindscape. I think we did it this time, now we just need to find Merlin's way out."
"I know it's really you, because I could hear you, I just couldn't do anything. But do you mean to tell me that you don't know what Merlin's way out is!?" Severus cried, as more of the cliff face fell into the fog below.

"We didn't know the condition of your mind, so we couldn't plan for an exact way out." Salazar managed to say, before he also slipped and fell.

"Where do we go?" Severus asked, as he hauled Salazar to his feet.

"There!" Salazar shouted, pointing into a vortex that had formed in the fog.

"What!?" Severus cried.

"Or has that always been there?" Salazar asked.

"No it hasn't."

"Then that's where we go. We have to jump." Salazar said, as wind from the vortex began whipping everything into a frenzy.

Severus gave him a dubious look, but then he nodded.

"If I didn't trust you..."

"If I didn't trust Merlin." Salazar said with a small chuckle, but then they grabbed each other's hand, and jumped.

The mindscape Severus had been trapped in shattered the second they hit the foggy vortex, but in the next instant, there was a great gasp that escaped from Severus and he sat bolt upright in the bed.

Salazar had just enough time to fall to the side, for if he had not, their foreheads would have collided and the action probably would have knocked them both out.

"Finally." Severus said with a relieved sigh, as he laid back down. "I could hear you, you just couldn't hear me. I couldn't lower my own shields though, because I was trapped in my own mind. It's how the Dark Lord created the spell. No one is supposed to be able to get out of it once the spell has taken hold of them, unless he lifts it of course."

"What happened to you Severus? You had so many stab wounds and cuts that it looked like you had been used as a muggle voodoo doll. The images you gave me before you passed out left more questions than answers. A fight to the death and duels!? We know about Narcissa and Lucius, but what happened to you?" Salazar repeated desperately, as he grasped both sides of the young man's face.

"The story can be told later." Poppy scolded. "The important thing is we have him back, now he needs to rest."

"Poppy, I'm ok now, really." Severus said, as he shifted around a bit. "And surprisingly I feel really good."

"Harrumph!" Poppy scoffed, as Salazar chuckled loudly.

"I told you so." He grinned, only to be met with a scowl as Poppy trounced out the room.

Merlin, Molly, Perenelle, and Albus started laughing, but Severus looked at them in confusion.
"What?" He asked with a furrowed brow.

"You've been out of it for three weeks and…"

"Three weeks!" Severus exclaimed, causing Salazar to nod.

"Nicholas has been using polyjuice potion and posing as you for your classes because we wanted everything to appear normal to the students, but yes, you've been out for three weeks. It's nearly time for Christmas Holidays." Albus replied.

"So what's wrong with Poppy then?" Severus asked.

"She lost a bet." Salazar grinned. "In order for you to eat proper meals and get exercise so that your muscles wouldn't be sore, I used a dark curse on you that was created a long time ago. It's called the marionette spell."

"What does it do?" Severus asked.

"It allows a person to control your every action, only it lets you keep your mind as your own. It's a very old, crude spell, similar to the imperius curse, but unlike the imperius curse, it lets you keep your own mind."

"You were walking around here like a…well…expressionless marionette puppet." Molly said with a shiver. "It was rather creepy to tell you the truth."

"She's right." Salazar added. "I had you eating at the dinner table, walking around so your muscles wouldn't become sore, and going to the bathroom properly, among other things. I did it so you wouldn't waste away laying in the bed. Poppy was against it because she didn't know if it would cause you problems, but I told her it wouldn't. I didn't want to use the actual imperius curse though, for obvious reasons."

"I understand." Severus said with a nod, but then he sighed and looked around at everyone, who was staring back at him. "I really am ok."

"We are still wondering what happened." Albus said quietly.

"Severus?" A voice from the doorway called softly.

"Narcissa." He acknowledged calmly, as he shifted around and sat back up.

"Severus, if I caused…" She said with a ting of fear in her voice, only to be interrupted by a wave of Severus's hand.

"Whatever you did Narcissa, you didn't cause this. I was called to him that morning because the Dark Lord wanted to have a second-in-command 'competition'." Severus said, only to have Narcissa gasp.

"Oh my Merlin! Severus I had no idea!" She cried, as she clutched ahold of the door frame.

"We were already in progress when Lucius burst into the room with a dead person who looked just like you. I was in the middle of a duel with Crabbe, so it was hardly anything to worry about, but I became so distracted by your dead body that I almost lost."

"Severus I'm so sorry." She said again, only for Severus to wave her off once more.

"It's as I said. You didn't do this, but I am curious to what you did do."
Before she could answer though, Molly spoke up.

"I don't understand. What is a second-in-command competition?" She asked hesitantly.

So Severus briefly explained to her what it was all about and how he ended up with all the injuries he had, but then he nodded.

"And I won." He said, only have Salazar sigh loudly.

"Not exactly what I would have wanted for you, because you'll end up being watched more closely by not just Voldemort, but everyone."

"It's actually not a bad position to be in, but it likely won't last long. As soon as the others are out of Azkaban, Bellatrix will challenge…"

"They already are." Salazar said with a despondent sigh, which caused Severus to stare at him in horror.

"What!?"

"Azkaban was raided a week ago." Albus said with a disgusted sigh. "Every Death Eater was taken, and Fudge in his epic stupidity has blamed it all on…"

"Let me guess." Severus said, rolling his eyes.

"He thinks I taught them all how to become animagi, for the total of twelve hours I was imprisoned, so they could escape." Salazar said. "If the situation wasn't so dire, it would be hysterical."

"Don't tell me people are buying that rubbish." Severus commented.

"They aren't." Albus replied. "Rita has set everyone straight with her articles in The Quibbler. Word has it that many people are fleeing the country."

"Many shops in Diagon Alley have shut down, but a few are still open. Fudge is screaming that 'all is well', but its falling on deaf ears now." Merlin explained. "With this Azkaban breakout, people who didn't believe that Voldemort was back are starting to see the truth. Fudge doesn't have much time left though. Percy was able to get ahold of some evidence showing Fudge for what he truly is, and Amelia is ready to go public with it. The only reason she hasn't is because we have been preoccupied with your situation, but now that you are back with us, we can go forth."

"I want to ask, 'what about Umbridge', but first I want to know what Narcissa did." Severus said, looking towards the doorway where she was still standing.

Salazar started chuckling. "Now that I know that what she did didn't cause your situation, I find it all rather funny, and very cunning my dear." He said as he looked over at her.

Albus sort of grunted with disapproval, but even he couldn't help but laugh as Narcissa fully entered the room with a grin.

"When I spoke to Lucius after you all had locked him up at Hogwarts, I placed him under the imperius curse, gave him back his wand, kept him in his cell, and waited. Through the link of the curse, I felt the dark mark burn him that morning, and I knew it was time. I had him escape out of the cells, though I must admit it took a while before I was able to find the real exit. He came out into the dungeon, and then I sent him out of Hogwarts through a secret passage that I had discovered during my time there."
"Turns out it was my own personal tunnel which I built to get on and off the grounds without having to traipse all through the castle to the front doors." Salazar clarified with a grin. "Again, clever girl."

Narcissa smiled at the praise, but then she continued.

"When he was off the grounds I made him apparate to McNair's place because I remember Lucius always complaining about the man being a bit late to meetings. I met Lucius there to give him some polyjuice potion that I had, admittedly, swiped from Merlin. Thankfully that knowledge of McNair paid off because he was still there, taking his time in getting his mask and robe together, among other things. I had Lucius burst into his place, imperius McNair, make him drink the polyjuice, and then kill him when he had fully changed into me."

"Because with polyjuice, you don't change back into your original form if you die." Severus commented as he began to somewhat understand what happened. "The Dark Lord wondered why McNair had not shown up, and there was talk of someone finding him and bringing him to the Dark Lord once it was all over."

Narcissa just smirked at him, but then she continued with her story. "After that I had Lucius take McNair to the Parkinson's, because through the imperius curse, I knew where the meeting was to take place when the dark mark burned."

"And that's when Lucius burst into the room." Severus chuckled.

"Right." She grinned. "The rest, to me, is a little fuzzy because Lucius actually started to panic and began to earnestly try and throw off the curse, so maybe you could take over."

Severus actually laughed, which filled Salazar's heart with joy to hear. He was finally coming to terms with the fact that Severus was going to be ok. However, despite Severus's claims that being second-in-command was a good thing, Salazar still had reservations.

"Well, at first I was shocked, because as I said before, I was dueling Crabbe, but when Lucius burst through the door looking like a deranged madman, everything came to a halt. He began explaining how he escaped from his prison, though he didn't say what or where this prison was, through the use of his animagus form, which no one knew about apparently."

"It's because he was ashamed of it." Narcissa explained with a smirk. "And I didn't want him to mention he was at Hogwarts, so I left that part out."

Severus shook his head in an amused sort of way, but then he continued. "The Dark Lord wants to know about all our abilities, so finding out Lucius was a secret animagus really didn't set well with him, so he made Lucius show off what it was."

"It was a chicken." Narcissa said with a girlish laugh. "More specifically, a hen and not an actual rooster." She added, much to the amusement of everyone there.

Severus chuckled darkly. "After Lucius showed the Dark Lord that, he couldn't help but laugh, and I mean truly laugh. It was almost scary, but Lucius went on to explain how he had caught Narcissa out shopping, and he killed her. That's when he produced what I thought was Narcissa's body. The Dark Lord actually praised Lucius for a job well done, invited him back into the inner circle, and offered to allow him to take part in the second-in-command competition." Severus said, but then he sighed and shook his head. "That's when things got out of hand. The body came to life and attacked the Dark Lord. It caught him off guard, and actually bit him on the shoulder."

"I made Lucius turn McNair into an inferius just before we walked into the door." Narcissa said with
Severus just shook his head and chuckled again, but he continued telling the story. "The Dark Lord let out a furious yell, set the inferius on fire, and then turned to Lucius. Lucius started spouting about how he hated the lot of us because of his circumstances, and drew his wand on the Dark Lord. That's when the Dark Lord killed him with the killing curse." He finished.

"I knew he was dead because the imperius connection was cut. That's why I kept telling you all he was dead when you learned he had escaped. When Lucius burst into the room, I didn't know what was going on. I saw Severus and Crabbe standing before the Dark Lord with their wands drawn, but I thought it was just a normal scuffle that had broken out, and the Dark Lord was handling it. When you showed up in the condition you were in, I couldn't help but think that my actions caused the Dark Lord to go on a rampage and you bore the brunt of it somehow." She said, shaking her head, but then she looked at Severus and spoke directly to him.

"I told them," She said, pointing to Salazar and the others. "What I did, but after Lucius was killed, the connection was cut. I didn't know what had happened to cause your situation, and that's why we all thought that what I did caused it."

"Well it didn't." Severus said reassuringly. "He did go on a rampage, but it was aimed at Lucius. I'll spare you the details of what happened to his corpse though. After he was done with that, the competition resumed."

"What I don't understand is, why did he place that curse on you?" Molly asked in confusion. "If you had won this competition thing, why punish you?"

"It wasn't a punishment. He would have lifted it had I not portkeyed out when I did. He conjured the suits of armor, then had them attack me, but in the next instant, he hit me with the blood boiling hex and the mind trapping spell. Had I not simultaneously turned one of the suits of armor into a portkey, he would have lifted it." Severus repeated. "The final duel with Dark Lord is always a nasty one, but to him it symbolizes that you have earned that place at his side, so he won't kill you, or injure you to the point where you can't be healed."

"It's barbaric." Perenelle said with a scoff.

"It is, but it's your 'reward' for winning the top spot. You can't win against him, even if you think you can, because he won't let you."

"He doesn't want to appear weak in any way." Salazar said with a growl.

"Correct." Severus nodded. "There are only three ways to end the final duel. One way is for you to be knocked out and unable to continue, or you submit by verbally saying you quit, or you escape. He had placed anti-disapparition wards up, hence the suit of armor I turned into a portkey, though I think the rest of them ended up coming with me."

"They did, and we vanished them after checking them for tracking charms and various curses." Merlin added with a chuckle.

"Why have this though?" Molly asked, still utterly confused. "I just don't understand."

Severus sighed, but it wasn't an impatient one. Instead, it was one of pondering.

"I think he does this so that we can mostly prove ourselves worthy, but he also conducts them when fighting amongst the Death Eaters start. I think this one was actually brought on by Yaxley, who has been vying for the top spot, which I have held since the Dark Lord returned. He's apparently been
trying to undermine my authority, and this is the way the Dark Lord puts a stop to that sort of thing. It's the 'final say so'."

"It's still barbaric. Competing in a competition like this just to prove your worth to him." Perenelle spat. "He probably enjoys watching you all tear each other apart just for the chance of kissing his arse with the hope that you will remain his 'second'." She said with a loathing growl. "It's sickening."

Salazar nodded in agreement, but then he looked at Severus. "You need to get some rest now. You've talked a lot, and after your ordeal, you really should already be resting, but I just had to know what happened." He added quietly as he grasped Severus's hand. "I hope you can forgive me for carrying on with this questioning."

"I do forgive you." Severus whispered. "I heard you just before you came to get me. 'I want my son back'." He said, as he glanced from Salazar to Albus, who only stood there with a small smile on his face.

Salazar nodded. "I wouldn't leave your side for anything, so there was no point in continuing the 'we hate each other' charade any longer. I explained the whole thing to Albus."

"I, for one, am happy for you both. Even if I don't understand it, because Harry does have the body of a fifteen year old."

"And he looks like Potter." Severus said, causing everyone to chuckle softly.

Salazar gave Severus a wink that only he caught, but he squeezed Severus's hand before letting it go.

"Still though, you need to rest. Or else Poppy will come charging back in here and kill us all." He said, causing everyone to smile, knowing it was probably true.

"But what about Umbridge? If Fudge is done, what's to be done about her?" Severus asked.

"I will fill you in later because there is a lot to explain. Today is Thursday, so take tomorrow and the weekend to rest up before we go back to Hogwarts."

"Yes sir." Severus said with a nod, but it was in that moment that the adrenalin from the whole ordeal finally wore off. He sighed heavily, rubbed his eyes, and laid back down.

Salazar cast one more look at him, before they all slipped out of the room.

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**You-Know-Who RETURNS!**

**Fudge Ousted as Minister! Amelia Bones Takes His Place in Emergency Vote by the Wizengamot!**

**State of Emergency Declared! Ministry Says to Prepare for WAR!**

**Harry Potter, Also Known As Salazar Slytherin, Cleared of All Charges!**

*By Rita Skeeter*

*In a shocking emergency weekend gathering of the Wizengamot, spearheaded by Albus Dumbledore himself, Amelia Bones, former head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, presented concrete evidence of bribery, theft, conspiracy, and murder on the part of the former Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, age 75.*
In a shocking revelation, the newly elected Minster, Amelia Bones, uncovered evidence of a ledger, written in Fudge's own hand, of backdoor deals and bribes taken from known Death Eaters and common criminals to cover up their atrocious crimes, in exchange for no prison time. In addition, facts were uncovered for multiple conspiracies ranging from theft of Ministry funds for Fudge's own private use, to murder.

Several cases that had been ruled as 'accidental deaths' of Fudge's political opponents and enemies, were cast into sharp light and evidence was uncovered that Fudge himself had hired 'hit men' to do his vile deeds for him.

After Madam Bones made her case in front of the entire Wizengamot, Cornelius Fudge was, unsurprisingly, voted unfit to be Minister and he was taken directly into custody immediately following the Wizengamot's unanimous guilty verdict.

With the Minister's spot now vacant, names were immediately submitted by various parties. Albus Dumbledore's name was included, but he declined by saying that he only wished to be reinstated as Chief Warlock, which was granted instantly.

Other names were put forth as well, but none more shocking than that of Merlin Ambrosius, who was on hand for all the previous courtroom drama. The very shocked and humbled ancient wizard was stunned speechless, but he eventually declined by saying he was once head of the Wizard's Council for many, many years, and wasn't interested in doing it again. The Wizard's Council, if you know your history, was the Wizengamot's ancient predecessor, so this did not come as a great shock to the Wizengamot itself. Several people still tried to convince the greatest wizard of all time to take the Minister's spot, but Merlin still declined the job.

However, everyone seemed to be satisfied when Merlin suggested that he could become an unofficial advisor, of sorts, to whoever was elected. This seemed to please the gathered body, and after several more debates, Amelia Bones herself was finally sworn in Saturday night.

However, things were far from being over.

As Sunday dawned on the wizarding world, the Wizengamot gathered once more to clear up a few lose ends. Amos Diggory replaced Dolores Umbridge as Senior Undersecretary to the Minister, while former retired Auror, Alastor Moody, was asked to take over the Head of Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

Harry Potter's name and unfair trial this past summer was mentioned a lot as well, especially by Albus Dumbledore and Minister Bones. The Wizengamot agreed to take one more look at the case, after it was decided that Mr. Potter was going to be placed under veritaserum.

Mr. Potter was then fetched from Hogwarts, where he has been, laughably, residing in plain sight of both Aurors and Fudge's former lackey, Dolores Umbridge, for some time. Mr. Potter allowed himself to be questioned under veritaserum, where he was instantly asked the question 'who are you?'

His answer of 'Salazar Slytherin', sent the Wizengamot into a frenzy, but with Minister Bones, Albus Dumbledore, and even Merlin himself, who was later confirmed by Mr. Potter's veritaserum testimony to actually be THE Merlin, all doubt about this claim was put to rest.

During the questioning, Mr. Potter gave testimony of Peter Pettigrew's murder, and it was concluded that the killing curse, cast by You-Know-Who, did in fact bounce off of him and strike Pettigrew. As you can imagine, this led to questions about You-Know-Who, and it was confirmed, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that You-Know-Who has in fact RETURNED!
The Wizengamot went on to dismiss the charges against Mr. Potter, and he was free to go.

However, business for the day was far from over. The Wizengamot immediately voted for a State of Emergency to be declared, and preparations began for open war!

After this was settled, we reporters, along with visitors and guests, were ushered out of courtroom ten as preparations got underway.

My dear readers, I wish I could say I knew what happened after that, but I'm afraid that even if I did know, I would not tell you.

I do not need to really say that fighting You-Know-Who is a though job, because as you all know, it is. Whatever the Wizengamot decided after that remains a mystery, however, Me, Myself, and I can tell you that there was a very big shake up, and the Wizengamot WAS CUT BY NEARLY HALF ITS MEMBERS!

Details are sketchy, but it was revealed that members of the Wizengamot took oaths about their loyalty and allowed themselves to be questioned under veritaserum!

As shocking as this is, unsurprisingly there was opposition to this, but it was later found out that this opposition was, in fact, supportive of YOU-KNOW-WHO!

Those who were found to be loyal to You-Know-Who, which I can tell you turned out to be about twenty of the fifty members of the Wizengamot, were immediately placed under arrest and taken away by Aurors, who are now under the command of Alastor Moody.

With the head of our government effectively cleaning itself up, there are no plans to replace those lost members...for now.

Once the war is over, and You-Know-Who is destroyed, elections of the vacant posts will resume as normal, but for now, the law says that in a State of Emergency, the government is allowed to cancel elections for open Wizengamot posts.

I must admit, my rabid readers, that I don't understand this law to its fullest declarations, but it's the law and it allows the Wizengamot to, unquestionably, and in my opinion, rightfully so, carry on with this. Especially since we don't know who is, and who isn't, a supporter of You-Know-Who. If the Wizengamot didn't take this necessary action, we could elect supporters of You-Know-Who right back into those open Wizengamot posts!

And that is not something anyone wants to see happen.

Whatever preparations the head of our government is taking, you can rest assured that the Minister for Magic, Amelia Bones, Chief Warlock, Albus Dumbledore, Unofficial Advisor to the Minister, Merlin Ambrosius, and the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Alastor Moody, will ensure that the fight against You-Know-Who will be handled in the best way possible.

On side note however, I posed a question to Albus Dumbledore later Sunday evening about the safety and security of your children who attend Hogwarts, and this was the Headmaster's reply.

"We certainly can understand if families wish to pull their children out of school, especially if they are thinking about moving out of the country, but I can assure you that our children are safe. I am working closely with Minerva McGonagall, our Deputy Headmistress, as well as our two Founders, Harry Potter, or Salazar Slytherin, and Gordy Roffin, or Godric Gryffindor, if one is more inclined to say, to ensure our children receive the best education they can, while still remaining safe and
It was Monday morning, and the great hall was silent as everyone devoured Rita's article. Whether it was in The Quibbler, or the Daily Prophet was of no concern to anyone though. The paper had undergone an overnight about face, once Amelia got ahold of them, and they now were reporting proper news and events.

It made Hermione smile just a bit.

However, as the silence droned on, an undignified shriek came from the head table, and one Dolores Umbridge jumped out of her seat and ran for the doors. This action was met by loud boos, hisses, and unsurprisingly, food being thrown her away as she hightailed it out of there.

However, a few students at the Gryffindor and Slytherin tables didn't take part in the display, as one might have imagined.

"Poor Perenelle." Hermione said with a sympathetic glance cast at the retreating woman. "I feel so bad for all the stuff she's had to endure."

"Yeah, but she played Umbridge perfectly these last three weeks." Neville said, as Blaise, Draco, Daphne, and Godric stood up and made their way over to them.

Daphne had become a good friend to them over the last several months, so they decided to trust her with more of the inner details about the things that were really going on around them. The fact that she was Blaise's date for the ball last year, and had always been somewhat friendly with Salazar and company, didn't hurt in the slightest.

However, she didn't know about the major things though, such as the Potters, Salazar and Godric not being reincarnated, and things that were said in Order meetings.

And she probably never would. They trusted her, but not that far.

"Well at least she doesn't have to put up with all the pranks, insults, and minor death threats being sent her way anymore." Ron said with a sigh, as he continued to eat without missing a moment of the conversation.

"Oh look! We can actually sit with you all now!" Draco said, as he plopped down beside Neville.

"And vice versa." Hermione added, as she passed him the pumpkin juice.

"Too true." Draco admitted as he began filling his goblet. "And even though it pains me to say this, I feel safer over here than I do over there." He added, as he eyed his former scowling friends with distaste.

"Yeah, and I can now move back into the Snake Pit without worrying about being expelled." Godric
said as he rolled his eyes.

"Ten galleons says Harry will take great pleasure in blasting those stupid Educational Decrees off the wall." Blaise said with a grin.

"We never make a fool's bet!" Fred and George said in unison as they joined them.

Cedric, Susan, and Luna wandered over from their tables, and the Creevey brothers also took the opportunity to move closer to the core group of friends. The other Gryffindors had to shuffle down and make room for all the new people, but no one seemed to mind, seeing as they were lost in their own conversations about what was going to happen next.

"So what's to happen now?" Colin asked. "I felt sure one of the other teachers would have stopped her from escaping. Especially after what she did to the two of you." He continued as he pointed to Hermione and Ron.

Those 'in the know' exchanged a discreet glance, but Godric just laughed.

"Why bother?" He asked. "Dumbledore practically shredded her to bits, and threatened her with everything but death if she ever tried that again. So let her go, she is of no concern anymore. She's lost her place at the Ministry, and by extension, here as well. Why worry over it?" He asked, with an unconcerned wave of his hand.

"A good point." Hermione agreed, as Ron nodded vigorously.

The fact that the real Umbridge was locked away in the prison cells somewhere below their feet, where she had been for the last three weeks, made the decision to dismiss the incident that much easier for both Ron and Hermione.

"So," Dennis said with a laugh as he looked up at the head table. "Who wants to bet that the Snape who is sitting up there now is the real Snape?"

"Hmm." Fred said as he eyed the man closely. "Judging by the hateful glares and scowl, I'll bet five galleons that it's the real one."

Hermione elbowed him hard in the side, but Fred just grinned at her.

"We don't make fool's bets either." Daphne said with a giggle. "You can look at that man and tell he's the real Snape."

The others just looked at each other and grinned. This little ploy had been cooked up by Salazar when Severus was at Camelot. Nicholas had made a polyjuice rock and used it to take Snape's place, and since no one knew about the invention of the polyjuice rock, it was simply believed to be the actual potion.

However, the plan was for Nicholas to try, and miserably fail, at taking Snape's place as Potions Professor. This was to ensure that word got back to Voldemort that there was an imposter Snape running around, and that Severus wasn't intentionally ignoring any calls to appear before him. It was also to protect Severus when he eventually went back to him.

Thankfully, the students of Hogwarts saw right through the imposter, and for the last three weeks everyone tried to guess who it actually was. Those that didn't know Severus had been laid up at Camelot thought that he had had a horrible potions accident, and that Dumbledore was covering it all up by allowing the imposter to take Snape's place.
Those that knew the truth, helped fuel this rumor, and so far it had been a complete success. Now the only thing left was to see if Voldemort had been told of the imposter by the Death Eaters who had children here, and who had not stopped talking about the imposter since he had appeared.

And, of course, whether Voldemort bought the entire ruse.

No one would know if this was the case, until tonight when Severus planned to go to him. Excuses for his absence were solid though, and everyone just hoped that Voldemort would buy them without question.

But that remained to be seen.

"I still think the imposter was Harry himself, since he hasn't been seen here at all." Colin said proudly.

"I keep telling you it isn't him." Godric said with a grin.

"Yeah, but I don't believe you, and neither does anyone else." Colin said, giving Godric a mock scowl, which caused everyone to laugh.

"Well," Ginny said as she plopped down next to Ron with a copy of The Quibbler grasped firmly in her hand. "This is the best news I've heard in a long time! Harry is finally free to return to classes!" She exclaimed, as her starry eyes lit up with excitement. "Now he won't be stuck in that stuffy old classroom day in and day out!"

Everyone groaned slightly and rolled their eyes, but Hermione finally sighed and looked right at Ginny.

"Ginny, I hate to tell you this, but you do realize that Harry has the mind of a one-thousand year old man, right?"

"So," Ginny said, suddenly scowling at her.

"So," Hermione said slowly. "I really don't think he's interested in seeing fourteen year old school girls, or any school girls for that matter."

Ginny's scowl deepened to a full on snarl, which kind of took everyone by surprise. "So? What of it? He's still a fifteen year old boy. He has to grow-up like the rest of us do. He's the last Potter, and he has to have relationships, get married, and have kids at some point."

"But he has the mind of a one-thousand year old man." Hermione repeated, looking at the girl as if she were thick headed.

"He still has needs." Ginny said, with a haughty flip of her hair.

This comment nearly made Draco, Godric and Blaise, and not to mention, and perhaps even more so, Fred, George, and Ron, choke on their breakfast.

"Needs!" Ron exclaimed, nearly showering everyone with half chewed bits of toast.

Ginny leveled her gaze at him. "Yes, needs." She repeated, causing her brothers to start mumbling and sputtering incoherently.

A very red faced Godric uncomfortably cleared his throat, which caused everyone look over to him.

"Ginny, um how do I put this delicately? Hermione is right. Salazar, and myself for that matter, have
one-thousand year old minds. I can speak for Salazar when I say, he and I both prefer older witches. Much older witches. If, and when, Salazar does decide to have a relationship with anyone, he will be around fifty years old, and at that point you will likely already have a family of your own."

Even though Ginny was slightly pink around the ears, she still leveled her gaze at Godric, who was a little taken aback by it.

"I bet I can change his mind." She said, before getting up and stomping off.

She left a very stunned group of people behind her, but Ron whimpered a bit and mumbled something under his breath. This caused a very panic stricken Fred to look right at Godric.

"Someone warn Harry." He said with wide eyes.

"Someone tell Mum. She will set Ginny straight." George added with equally wide eyes.

"Salazar already knows about your sister's infatuation with him." Godric said as he shook his head and sighed. "However, yes I agree, someone needs to alert your mother."

"Don't take this the wrong way." Daphne said. "Harry is very handsome, and has caught the eye of more than a few witches around here, but unlike Ginny, we have realized exactly what Hermione said. Once we found out that he really is Salazar Slytherin, it's kind of been weird to think of him, and you too Gordy, as anything but…well…old."

"And that's a good thing." Godric said quickly. "Keep that in mind, and everything should be all right."

"Don't get me wrong, I like Harry, but I don't see what all the fuss is about." Luna said, in her usual dreamy tone, though her face showed one of confusion. "Cho and Cedric broke up the other day, and ever since then Cho has talked nonstop about Harry. I just don't get it." She said, causing Cedric to uncomfortably shift around, as everyone glanced at him awkwardly.

"It's true, we broke up, but Merlin, I didn't think she'd immediately set her sights on anyone else this early." He said, causing everyone to keep their eyes firmly planted on their plates.

"Well," Blaise said, finally breaking the uncomfortable silence. "With the witches looking at goody-two-shoes Potter and his best friend Roffin as old men, I think there is actually hope for the rest of us!" He said happily, as he glanced at Daphne and waggled his eyebrows at her.

Daphne giggled, but proceeded to throw a napkin at him, which caused everyone to burst out laughing.

"Not on your life Zabini, now Weasley, you on the other hand…" She said, making a kiss face at Ron, who just stared at her stupidly, unsure of what to say or do.

Then she went to lean over the table and kiss his cheek, but Ron yelped, slipped off his seat, and landed hard on the floor, causing everyone around them to crack up laughing.

"You're pathetic Weasley." Draco grinned as he helped the red head up. "When a girl does that, you're supposed to let her."

"I was joking Ron, but I do admit you are cute when you blush." Daphne said, causing Ron to go an even deeper shade of red.

Then he ran off.
"Brilliant!" Fred and George cried. "We get to tease him for running away from a girl...for life!"

"See what you did." Hermione hissed playfully, causing Daphne to snort.

Godric just grinned and shook his head, but then Minerva began shooing students out of the great hall so they could get ready for their classes.

"You're lucky Hermione." Daphne whispered with a grin, as they all got up to head towards their common rooms in order to grab their books. "Because I was going to mention something about you and Longbottom next."

Hermione turned red in the face and mumbled something that sounded like a cross between 'not true', and 'if you do I'll kill you', which made Daphne giggle, but then she grinned again and ran to catch up with her other friends in Slytherin.

"Don't tell me she's going to start playing matchmaker." Draco grumbled, causing Godric to laugh.

"I wouldn't put it past her." He said.

"Yeah, knowing Daphne, she will try to set you up with Ginny, Malfoy." Blaise laughed.

Draco paled and sort of took on a greenish tint, but everyone else just laughed again and headed off in different directions.

They had potions first period, which put any doubt to rest about the nature of Severus being back, but second period gave them all pleasant surprise.

They had Defense, which caused everyone to wonder about who was going to take over the class. Some said Dumbledore might do it, until either Remus came back, or until the Headmaster found a replacement, but others hoped Salazar would return.

When they got to the classroom Umbridge had been using, nothing had changed from when she was there. The door was already open, so they found their seats and waited somewhat patiently for class to begin.

"Good morning everyone." A calm, sort of amused voice said from behind them.

They all turned around in their seats, and everyone started cheering so loudly that Godric was pretty sure Trelawney heard them all the way up in her tower.

"All right, all right. Settle down, and yes, I'm happy to be here too." Salazar said with a grin, as he walked towards the front of the class.

"What's with the Robillard costume Harry?" Dean asked, looking at him curiously.

Salazar turned around and shrugged. "I felt it would be easier for you all to accept an adult teaching you, versus someone who looks the same age you do. I have tons of polyjuice potion already made up, so I thought, why not. Better to use it than let it go to waste."

"But what do we call you?" Lavender asked.

"Well, obviously not Professor Robillard. If you want to call me Harry, I suppose that's fine, but I'd prefer Salazar, or Professor Slytherin. I'm not that picky to be honest though, so whichever is fine."

Everyone grinned wildly at him, but there were a few in Slytherin who didn't seem happy about this
"There is no way you all are going to get away with any of this." Pansy spat. "You all think you've won by taking over the Ministry, but you haven't."

"Ignorant words from a child." Salazar said as he shook his head. "Just ignore them, and rest assured, everything is well in hand."

"For now." Pansy said with her eyes flashing dangerously.

Salazar pointedly glared at her, but then began addressing the class. "Professor Dumbledore asked me just this morning, after Umbridge ran out of the great hall, to resume my role of Defense Professor, and of course, I jumped at the chance. For now, this classroom will do, but after Christmas Holidays we will be back in the original classroom, so keep that in mind. I don't need to repeat my expectations for this class, but I will say that I still expect you all to comply with them." He said, causing everyone to nod in understanding, but then he grinned at them.

"Now, when we were rudely interrupted by that stupid woman we were working on the stunning spell by partnering up. I want to continue what we started that day, but keep in mind, I still expect every spell to be cast silently. I know that I said I want you all to be able to do this by Christmas, but seeing as the last few months have been…interrupted…I will change that date to Valentine's Day. Is there any questions?"

No one had any questions, so Salazar nodded and continued.

"Very well then. I want you all to partner up, and resume practicing the shield spell, the reviving charm, and the stunning spell. Remember to do them silently."

The students all grinned and stood up, eager to be getting on with proper Defense classes.

The news that Salazar had returned to teaching spread through the school faster than 'guess who's dating who now' gossip. Some didn't want to believe it, but when they saw Salazar sitting up at the head table between Severus and Sirius at lunch, the entire great hall let out very loud cheers. Salazar just grinned at them, bowed slightly, and sat back down, much to the amusement of Albus.

However, it was in that moment when a sudden…lightness…settled over the great hall, and it was in that same moment when everyone realized that things were going to return to normal. Some students looked around a bit sadly, but that was only because they still had more pranks they wanted to pull, and they quickly realized they wouldn't get away with that sort of thing anymore.

But the overwhelming feeling of 'doom' Umbridge had put in place was now gone, and everyone smiled as they began chatting with their friends, whispering, and enjoying all the things that had been stopped while Umbridge was in charge.

Salazar and the rest of the Professors felt this change take place and they all looked out over the great hall with small smiles, but Sirius was the only one grinning like a lunatic.

He stood, and as he did so, he scraped his chair loudly across the floor and stood up on it, which caused everyone in the great hall to stop and stare at him curiously.

"I know that as a Professor, what I'm about to do is completely unprofessional." He said, causing Minerva to narrow her eyes at him. "But as a prankster, I find it to be hysterical and quite fitting." He added, causing more than a few of the students to grin at him. "Now with that said, would Colin and Dennis Creevey please stand."
The Creeveys looked at him in confusion, but they stood up, which caused Sirius's grin to become even bigger.

"I just want to say that your singing prank was a stroke of genius, and it is not something I would have ever thought of. However, I will admit that I took your idea of the singing prank, and went a little bit further with it. Now it's time for me to confess that...by pulling another prank!" He shouted, causing everyone to burst out laughing. "With Umbridge gone, I only find it fitting that Colin and Dennis lead us in this charge. For those of you who know the song, feel free to join, for those of you who don't, you'll get the hang of it." He said mysteriously. Then he reached into his pocket, pulled out an ordinary looking envelope, held it up high for all to see, and grinned.

"To the demise of the Reign of Umbridge!" Sirius shouted, then he broke the envelope's seal.

An old familiar rhythm, to all of the muggle raised and born, immediately began blaring out into the great hall, causing them all to jump out of their seats with large grins. Some of the half-blood also jumped up, but the pure bloods who had no idea what it was, soon learned.

Stomp, Stomp, Clap
Stomp, Stomp, Clap
Stomp, Stomp, Clap
Stomp, Stomp, Clap
Stomp, Stomp, Clap
Stomp, Stomp, Clap
Stomp, Stomp, Clap
Stomp, Stomp, Clap
Stomp, Stomp, Clap

The Creeveys didn't miss a beat, and as soon as the words started, so did they.

"Buddy you're a boy make a big noise. Playin' in the street gonna be a big man someday! You got mud on yo' face, you big disgrace. Kickin' your can all over the place! Singin'!

"We will, we will rock you!" Shouted almost everyone that knew it, causing more and more people to get in on that old familiar rhythm. "We will, we will rock you!"

"Buddy you're a young man hard man, shouting in the street gonna take on the world someday. You got blood on yo' face, you big disgrace, wavin' your banner all over the place!"

"We will, we will rock you!" Everyone shouted.

"Sing it!" Dennis shouted, as he grinned madly.

"We will, we will rock you!" Everyone cried, as they still kept up with the rhythm, much to the awe of Albus, who was watching the whole thing with pride.

"Buddy you're an old man poor man, pleadin' with your eyes gonna make you some peace some day! You got mud on your face, big disgrace! Some body betta put you back into your place!"

"We will, we will rock you!"
"Sing it!" Colin shouted above the deafening noise that threatened to bring down the ceiling in the great hall.

"We will, we will rock you!" Everyone roared.

"Everybody!" Sirius and Dennis cried, as they grinned at each other.

"We will, we will rock you! We will, we will rock you!"

"Alright!" Sirius whooped, as he started playing the air guitar, which sent more than a few people into fits of laughter.

They still kept up with the rhythm though, right down to the very last *clap*. Almost everybody was red in the face, but they all had grins a mile wide.

However, it wasn't long before all of the muggle raised and born, including a few half-bloods, linked their arms around each other and began singing an entirely new song.

"I've paid my dues, time after time. I've done my sentence, but committed no crime. And bad mistakes, I've made a few. I've had my share of sand kicked in my face, but I've come through!"

"And we mean to go on, and on, and on, and on!" Dennis shouted, as tears of happiness fell down his cheeks.

"We are the champions - my friends!" Everyone sang as they began to sway back and forth. "And we'll keep on fighting till the end. We are the champions! We are the champions! No time for losers! 'Cause we are the champions…of the world!"

On and on the song went, and as Salazar sat there listening, the meaning and impact of those words were not lost on him. The hatred and blood lust to kill the muggle borns, and anyone Voldemort and the Death Eaters saw as unworthy, was what this war was all about and they aimed to kill each and every one of those children, and those like them, who were now singing that song.

But as he sat there watching them, Salazar actually started to cry. Yes, even if this war somehow, some way, killed him, he would make sure that these children had a fighting chance. He would make sure they would come out…as champions.

He was speechless as they finished their song, but even though he had tears streaming down his face, causing his vision to become blurry, he caught movement out of the corner of his eyes.

Albus stood up, and Salazar noticed that he too had tears streaming down his face, but Albus was smiling at everyone, who was now taking their seats. He sniffled just a bit, and wiped his eyes and nose with a napkin, and glanced around the great hall.

"Five hundred points to Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and yes, even Slytherin for your unique showing of courage, creativity, loyalty, and cunning. I will admit, I do not know, and have not ever heard that song, but it speaks volumes to the trials that you all are facing at this time. I make a vow right here and now, that I will do my very best at making sure that all who are in danger because of Voldemort and his supporters, will come out as champions."

Salazar smiled at Albus. It seems that he had come to the same realization as well, and he couldn't blame the Headmaster, because he too felt the same way. Salazar had not thought about giving out points, and he was grateful that Albus had done it.

However, there is always those that don't feel the same way, and as Montague, Pansy, Crabbe,
Goyle, Millicent, and all the other Voldemort supporters, gritted their teeth and glared at what they considered appalling, revenge and hatred raged through their hearts.

They didn't like this at all, and their Master will be hearing about it…soon.

No one in the great hall caught these looks of loathing though, except one.

Theo nervously sat in his seat trying to blend in with those who felt contempt at this display of victory and celebration. He had not had a chance to talk with Nora since that one night, but he suspected that it had something to do with Snape's absence, seeing as Salazar had been nowhere to be seen.

He had decided to play along with the Voldemort supporters though, hoping he could be a spy, of sorts, and let Salazar and the others know if the students were planning anything. It seemed like a good place for him to be.

He just hoped Salazar would allow him to do it.

It was later that Monday evening when Severus apparated to the Parkinson's house, and the moment he did, he cringed in disgust. He could hear yelling coming from the drawing room where all the meetings were held, and he absolutely loathed the owner of that voice.

"How dare you!? How dare you!" Bellatrix shouted with rage.

"Half-blooded son of a muggle! Half-blooded son of a muggle! Hahahaha!"

"Crucio! Crucio! Avada Kedavra! Crucio!"

"What's the matter Belly Button!? Can't handle the truth!? Hahaha! You can't hurt me, you can't hurt me! Nanny, nanny, boo, boo! Dancing on the table, whoop de whoop! Dancing on the table…"

"Shut up you disrespectful, loathsome, maggoty worm!"

"Awe, you say such nice things Belly. I might just come to love you too!"

"ENOUGH!" Voldemort bellowed, just as Severus made his way into the room.

The room was in shambles, considering Bellatrix had been on a rampage the moment she set eyes on Tiny Voldemort. Severus was thankful for the humor damping potion right now though, because Tiny Voldemort was grinning at the severely enraged witch, who was leaning across the table trying to strangle it.

It just kept laughing at her though.

Voldemort, on the other hand, actually seemed to look out of sorts as he sat in his new throne, with one long slender finger resting against his temple. He was glaring at Bellatrix and Tiny Voldemort, but he suddenly looked up when Severus fully entered the room. Truth be told, Voldemort actually looked relieved to see him.

Or it could have just been a welcome distraction from all the chaos.

"Severus." He said, as he looked at the approaching wizard carefully. "I had almost given up hope."

Bellatrix immediately let Tiny Voldemort go, and she turned around with a sneer aimed right at Severus, who ignored her completely.
"Sevie Poo! I love youuuuu!" Tiny Voldemort said happily as he jumped up and down. He tried to make his way over towards Severus, but Bella backhanded him, which sent him flying into the wall.

Tiny Voldemort just laughed as he ran back towards the table, but everyone ignored him when he started hopping around with excitement.

"My Lord." Severus said, as he bowed low and kissed the hem of Voldemort's robes. "It has been too long."

"Indeed." Voldemort replied. "I heard about the imposter that fool replaced you with. Whoever it was didn't do a very good job. Parents have said their children mentioned that he was good at impersonating you, but he didn't quite get it right." He chuckled.

"Figures." Severus said with a disgusted snarl. "Dumbledore won't tell me who he replaced me with, but rumor has it was Potter." He spat.

"I'm not surprised." Voldemort said with disgust. "But tell me, how did they break my mind trapping spell?" He asked, as his red eyes practically bored holes through Severus's head.

"Merlin's expertise is mind magic, and it was something he did My Lord." Severus replied smoothly. "They won't say what he did, but one moment I was trapped, then the next I was waking up on a cold table that had been placed right in the middle of the Chamber of Secrets. They kept me there the whole time and had that basilisk watch over me. I had portkeyed away from our duel, trying to make it to the front gates, but that blasted anti-portkey ward had me land right in the middle of Hogsmeade. Someone found me laying in the street and summoned Dumbledore. Apparently that bastard Black came and got me." He finally finished, as he gashed his teeth together.

He heard a low growl just behind him, and knew that Bellatrix wasn't happy about hearing that name.

"It seems my ancestor still doesn't trust you." Voldemort chuckled. "But it's no matter. You're here now, and that is what counts."

A scoff sounded throughout the room, causing Voldemort to look up sharply.

"Is there something you wish to say Bella?" He asked with an icy coldness that sent shivers down Severus's spine.

"No My Lord." She replied with a bow.

"Then leave us." He growled.

"At least I get to stay." Tiny Voldemort said as he waved bye to Bellatrix, who backhanded him again. "Bye-bye Belly!" He cried loudly, then he burst out laughing and disappeared, only to reappear on Voldemort's shoulder.

Bellatrix hatefully glanced at Severus and Tiny Voldemort, but she did as she was told. When she was gone, Severus let out a small sigh of relief, but turned his attention to the Dark Lord, who looked less than pleased to have his counterpart sitting on his shoulder.

"As you can see Severus, we have finally fetched all our friends from Azkaban. No doubt they told you this when they brought you out of my spell." He said, as he swatted Tiny Voldemort off his shoulder. Then he stood up and walked over to a small table that was sitting along the wall.

"They did My Lord." Severus replied. "But what of the news this morning? They woke me up last
night, and this morning they sent me right back to my teaching post."

"They probably kept you like that so you couldn't warn us. I have no doubts that my ancestor was behind that idea. We was probably hoping I'd kill you for not being able to send me word, but rest assured Severus, I have no such intentions. I spotted what this was the moment I was told of the imposter."

"Potter will likely be disappointed My Lord." Severus scoffed, causing Voldemort to chuckle.

"Probably."

"Or, Salazar is just making you think that! Its sooooo confusing when someone is more cunning than you are." Tiny Voldemort laughed, causing Voldemort to grit his teeth.

"Shut up and go bother Bella!" He snapped.

"An excellent idea Big Me! I don't think the sitting room has been properly destroyed yet!" Tiny Voldemort said as he laughed gleefully, but then he disappeared again.

Severus looked at Voldemort in surprise because he didn't think Tiny Voldemort would follow that order, but the Dark Lord just waved it off as he placed a book down on the table in front of him.

"Better it bothers her than me." He said with disgust.

Severus scoffed and nodded. "What would you like me to find out about this morning's news My Lord?"

"Nothing. I have others working that front, but Amelia Bones won't be alive long enough to enjoy her new post. Rest assured we have it all in hand." He said dismissively, which caused Severus's insides to churn with worry. "I actually have something else I wish you to do."

"Anything my Lord." Severus said as he sat forward eagerly.

"When word reached my ears about the memory Merlin showed in the great hall several weeks ago, an ancient sword was mentioned. I did some research about it, because I had heard stories in my youth about its powers. It is said that Excalibur can kill anything." He said, looking right at Severus as he pointed to a picture of the sword in the book.

Severus's blood immediately ran cold, but his face remained expressionless.

"Anything." Severus said with a fake gleam of awe in his eyes. "Do you think it could possibly…?"

"Kill my ancestor." Voldemort hissed, as a twisted smile appeared on his thin lips. "Yes Severus, this may be the answer I have been looking for. The legend states that Excalibur can kill anything living and non-living. It was once used to kill a wraith, which is what I was before my triumphant return."

"My Lord this is excellent!" Severus exclaimed with false excitement.

"Indeed it is, but I want you to find out if it's true. Give that Granger mudblood veritaserum, and ask her questions about it. I am told she apparently has a fascination with Merlin, so she probably has asked the questions and been given truthful answers."

"Then I'll obliviate her." Severus said. "An excellent plan My Lord, because they won't tell me anything about it. Merlin has taking a liking to the girl, so she probably knows all about it."

"That's what I'm hoping." Voldemort said with a nod. "Once you find out this information I want
you to tell me. Then, I want you to figure out a way to steal it."

"Steal it?" Severus breathed, as he stared at the Dark Lord with wide-eyes.

"Yes Severus, is that a problem?" He asked sharply.

"Of course not My Lord." Severus replied, as he bowed his head. "My mind automatically began trying to find ways to carry out this task. I just need to find out where it's kept."

"Well I'll leave that to you." Voldemort said. "Get this sword for me Severus, because I plan to ram it right into the heart of my ancestor, and his meddling reincarnated friends."

"Absolutely My Lord."

Suddenly they heard several loud booms that shook the entire house, followed by lots of shouting and spell fire. Voldemort growled, gritted his teeth, and stood up.

"You may go Severus."

"Yes My Lord." He said, as he bent to kiss the hem of his Master's robes, but Voldemort didn't even give him the chance.

He was already out the door, yelling at Bellatrix and Tiny Voldemort because of the noise.

Severus cast a quick desperate look around the drawing room, but sighed as he looked at the ceiling. His only thought before he apparated out was, if Excalibur could kill them, why did Merlin make mention of it?

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all can breathe a sigh of relief now! Severus is fine! LOL. I know it was evil of me (as several of you said) to leave you all hanging like that, but I couldn't help it. I haven't left you guys with a cliffhanger in a while, so I felt one was due! *snorts*

Anyway, I just want to say that more things about Excalibur will pop up in the next chapter, so don't worry. I've said this before, but I'll say it again. I have never seen the BBC Merlin show, but I have read about it on its wiki page. The Merlin page for Excalibur is what I'm basing my Excalibur off of, so for those of you who are confused, that is where this is coming from.

With that said, I turn my attention to Umbridge. She's gone, but I'm undecided on what to do now. Should I have Salazar give her what is due to her? Or should I just leave it be? I've had him say over, and over, and over again that he is a dark wizard, but I have never actually SHOWN him being dark. Do you all think it's time I did? Please weigh in with your thoughts. I will show everyone what he is capable of, but I was mainly waiting for a battle scene that I have planned. (Which will be coming up in the next few chapters.) I really am torn about this, so please let me know.

Next chapter will deal with Christmas, so we will hear more from Lily, James, and Harry. Also, we will catch up with Remus and Hagrid to see what they are doing, as well as more about Nott, and of course, whatever I decide to do with Umbridge.
Until then my lovelies!
An unearthly scream ripped through the prison portion of Hogwarts, but Salazar only grinned at the sound. It had been six weeks since Godric had placed Umbridge in one of the cells and by now Salazar's anger towards the woman had abated somewhat, but a part of him still burned for revenge. He wanted that woman to suffer.

"I knew it! I knew it! You all wanted to take over the Ministry!" She screamed, as the copy of the *Daily Prophet* with Rita's article was thrown out of her cell.

Salazar grinned as he stepped in front of her cell door, which caused her to shrink back against the back wall.

"Yes, though not for the reasons you think. We just don't want Voldemort putting his people in key positions. At least with us in charge, and the Wizengamot effectively cleaning itself up, we are in a better position to fight him."

"LIES!" Umbridge screamed. "You'll never get away with this!"

"Oh but we already have you stupid woman." Salazar hissed maliciously. "But now that it is the Christmas Holiday, I have more free time on my hands, and I think its time for you to pay for your treatment of Ron and Hermione. Not to mention the damage you've caused since you came to Hogwarts."

"But you're one of the good guys." She said with a smirk. "You're all talk Potter. You don't have the guts…"

"Crucio!"

The scream that ripped through the prison portion was loud and filled with pain, but Salazar watched
the woman writhe and squirm as he held his wand on her. He let up after a moment or so, but he burst out laughing when she threw up all over the cell floor.

"Still think I don't have the guts?" He hissed. "Now get your arse up woman. I'm not done with you yet."

She whimpered and choked on some of her vile as Salazar ripped open her cell door, but she tried in vain to scramble out of the way of his hands. He reached down and hauled Umbridge to her feet, and promptly apparated into the one place Umbridge didn't want to be.

"Hello Toad." Nora said with a silky voice, even though Umbridge had no idea what she said.

"Welcome to the Chamber of Secrets." Salazar said, as he roughly shoved her to the floor.

Umbridge screamed again when Emeralda made a snapping motion in their direction, but Salazar only burst out laughing, along with the other person that was there.

"Was she predictable Salazar?" Godric asked, as he stood up from a small desk that had been placed inside the Chamber.

"Of course. She also said I didn't have the guts to carry out any torture, but I put that doubt to rest." He said with a grin, as he once again hauled the shaking woman to her feet.

"You're not going to kill me." She spat, as she nervously eyed both Emeralda and Nora.

Nora was sitting on the little desk watching them with glee, but she wasn't the only thing on it. A bunch of blank parchment and a familiar sharp black quill was also sitting there.

Godric caught her eyeing it and grinned. "Recognize that quill?" He asked with a chuckle. "You should."

"Lines with my own quill?" She scoffed. "I thought you'd come up with something better than that."

Salazar burst out laughing. "She thinks that is the only thing…"

"Apparently." Godric interrupted with a smile, as he grinned at her.

Umbridge scoffed again, but a malicious gleam sprang up in her eye as she looked at Godric.

"Godric Gryffindor," she said with a sickly sweet smile, "is nothing more than a man who tortures an unarmed woman. Oh what your house would say to this." She hissed, causing Godric to chuckle.

"You have no idea, but what the students don't know, won't hurt them now will it?" He said, shoving her down into the tiny uncomfortable chair. "Let me tell you something about me woman. I have a very dark past. You know all those rumors about Salazar? About how he was a blood thirsty monster who hated muggle borns, half-bloods, and the like? I started those, because at the time I was mad at him. I'll spare you the details, but I will say that I became the monster I painted him to be." He hissed.

"I'm still an unarmed woman." She said, spitting into his face.

Godric chuckled darkly as he wiped the spit off his face, but then he got right in her face.

"I had a feeling you were going to say something like that, but I'm here to tell you, that doesn't matter to me." He whispered, as Salazar looked on with a smirk.
"Showing your true colors Gryffindor?" Umbridge asked with a snarl.

"Nope, I'm just allowing you to see the man I once was." He said, pulling out an extremely old envelope containing some muggle pictures.

One by one he laid grotesque photos down in front of her. Umbridge's eyes widened as she caught sight of five different women who had been brutality murdered and mutilated, but as Godric showed her the last crime scene photo, she threw up again.

"Five different woman, all muggles, all prostitutes. They were innocent of any real crime, but I just fancied them. They were convenient, and I decided to play with them. I wanted to see the fear in their eyes, and I just wanted to hear them scream." Godric whispered in her ear, causing her start shaking. "They called me Jack the Ripper." He whispered again, as Salazar glanced at him in complete shock.

He had not expected that.

Umbridge however, whimpered loudly.

"Lies." She said whispered in terror.

"Oh, so you have heard of me?" Godric said in a silky voice.

"Even we know of Jack the Ripper." Umbridge said looking up at him in horror.

"Yes, we do." Godric said with a sick sadistic smile. "It was a time of terror in the Whitechapel District. The Daily Prophet was even broadcasting the murders of the savage muggle who was murdering innocent women. Little did they know, it was a wizard!" He suddenly cried, bringing his fist down hard on top of the desk.

Umbridge let out a terrified scream, but Godric only laughed.

"Scream for me Dolores." He said, as he looked her right in the eye. "Scream for me."

And she did, simply because Salazar cast another cruciatus curse on her.

"Cutting curse." Godric said, pointing towards the last photo of a woman sprawled out on a bed. "Simple, effective, precise, and to the point. I can still hear her screaming." He whispered, causing Umbridge to begin dry heaving. "They were innocent women, so what do you think I could do to you?" He asked. "You dared to raise your sadistic hand to mere children UNDER MY ROOF!? Not even I was that kind of monster."

"I'M SORRY!" She cried, causing Godric to chuckle darkly.

"Too late." He hissed, as he sent a cutting curse to her arm.

It didn't do anything more than create a mild cut on her arm, but it was enough to make her scream again. Then Godric scoffed at her and turned to Salazar, who was eyeing him with worry.

"She's pathetic Salazar. Break her mind open like a piñata, then feed her to Emerald." 

"No please." Umbridge whimpered, as she cast a worrying glance to Salazar. "I'm sorry. Please." She begged, as tears ran down her face."

"I'm not going to kill her Godric. Death would be too easy on her. I want her to suffer." Salazar said
with a smirk, even though internally he was worried about his best friend.

"I'll be over here then, relishing her screams." Godric replied with a gleam in his eye Salazar had never seen before.

Salazar watched him walk a few feet away and conjure up a squishy armchair, but then he looked backed at Umbridge, who had tears pouring down her face.

And he smiled at her.

"Now you deal with me." He whispered, causing Umbridge to start another round of screaming as he cast yet another torture curse at her.

This went on for about ten minutes or so, but eventually Salazar stopped. Umbridge was now nothing more than a shivering sack of tears, vomit, and blood, but Salazar didn't care. He made her get up off the slimy stone floor, and plopped her down into the tiny uncomfortable chair, and handed her the blood quill.

"You will fill up four pieces of parchment, back and front. You will write, 'I must not piss off Salazar'. Begin." He hissed, causing a very shaky Umbridge to pick up the quill.

Her screams began again when she was about halfway through the backside of the first page, but Salazar kept glancing nervously towards Godric, who only sat in the chair with his eyes closed and a small smile on his face.

Umbridge kept screaming from the pain in her hand, but she wasn't even able to complete one of the pieces of parchment, much less four of them. Salazar scoffed at her again.

"And you were going to make Ron and Hermione write three pages." He said, holding up the said amount of fingers in front of her tear streaked face. "What's the matter Dolores, can't take what you dish out?"

"Please." She begged, causing Salazar to chuckle darkly.

"I'm not done with you yet." He said, raising his wand and causing her to whimper. "Legilimens!" He cried, and dove into her mind.

Salazar was actually not expecting Umbridge to have substantial occlumency shields, but she did. It took him a few minutes to break them down, even after everything she just went through.

When he did get into her mind, he found nothing of any real use, much to his disappointment. Umbridge was not in league with Voldemort at all, but to his complete disgust, he discovered that she had believed that he was back all along.

He also discovered plans she wanted to implement should Voldemort ever take over the Ministry, and something called the Muggle Born Registration Commission was extensively planned out.

It only made him hate the woman even more.

Once Salazar was finished pilfering through her mind, it took everything he had not to kill the woman right then and there. Death was too easy on her, and he wanted her to suffer for everything she had done, and everything she would have done.

"Nora," he said, looking over at her, where she had been coiled up on the stone floor the whole time. "Bite her."
“With pleasure Speaker!” She cried, and proceeded to sink her fangs into the wrist of the passed out woman lying on the floor.

Once Nora was done ejecting every last bit of venom she had into Umbridge's wrist, Salazar scoffed at the woman in disgust. Then he turned towards Godric.

To Salazar's complete shock, he was no longer sitting in the chair, and he had no idea how long Godric had been gone.

"Watch her." Salazar said, as he looked at his two beloved snakes. "And make sure she doesn't move. I have to find Godric. I'm worried about him."

"As you wish Master." Emerald said with a nod of her large head. "I doubt she will be getting up anytime soon, but Fish Bait and I won't let her escape."

"I know you won't." He said, then he apparated out of the Chamber.

Salazar actually found Godric in the first place he looked, which was Godric house in the Forbidden Forest. When Salazar entered, he found Godric sitting at his small kitchen table with a large glass of firewhiskey sitting next to him, and his head buried in his hands as he stared at the top of the table.

"Godric?" He asked cautiously as he moved to sit down next to him. When Godric didn't reply, Salazar placed a hand on his shoulder. "Godric?"

"I had to go." Godric whispered quietly. "I was enjoying her screams much more than I should have been. I had to get out of there."

"I'm sorry." Salazar replied. "I shouldn't have asked you to be there."

"It's not your fault." Godric said as he shook his head, but then he looked right at Salazar. "Are you disgusted with me?"

Salazar furrowed his brow in confusion. "No. Why would you ask that?"

"Because I would be." Godric replied as he looked back down at the table. "Being Jack the Ripper is only one example of what my past was like."

"I know that we have never talked about your past Godric, but I truly see no need…"

"No need!?” Godric cried. "Salazar, after learning what you just learnt about me, how can you sit there and pretend…?"

"I'm not pretending anything Godric!" Salazar exclaimed. "I truly don't see the need to dredge up literal ancient history!"

"But…"

"No!" Salazar shouted. "No." He repeated more calmly. "Now you listen to me, and you get this through your thick headed Gryffindor brain. You are my brother. I love you. NOTHING will ever change that. We all have dark pasts. We all have done horrible things, but tell me, why should I crucify you for your sins, when you are already doing that to yourself? If you ever need to talk about all the things you have done, I'm here to listen and help you if you want me to."

Godric opened and closed his mouth several times, but then he sighed loudly and shook his head.
"Salazar, it's not that. Merlin helped me get through all of that. I just don't understand why you can dismiss…"

"There is nothing to understand!"

"Will you shut up and let me finish!" Godric cried, causing Salazar to blink rapidly at him in shock. "I'm sorry." Godric said as he looked at Salazar. "I'm sorry, but please let me finish. I just don't understand how we were able to pick up right where we left off. It's been almost nine hundred years since I last saw you, and I just don't understand how we were able to do that. I don't understand how you were able to forgive me for what I did to your good name. I don't understand how you can't hate me for my past. Killing the occasional wizard in a pub fight, or causing someone to be killed accidently is one thing, but being Jack the Ripper…its madness. I don't understand how you can just look past all that." He said with a frustrated sigh.

"Do you really want to know?" Salazar asked, causing Godric to nod as if it were a stupid question. "I'll put it in a way that is easy to understand. I can forgive you for trashing my name, being Jack the Ripper, and everything else…for the same reason Nehum could."

Godric stared at him for several long minutes, but after a while, Salazar grasped Godric's hand tightly.

"You changed Godric." He whispered as he gave his best friend a small smile. "You changed." He repeated as his voice cracked a little. "Yes, it is true that nine hundred years separated us, but that night almost three years ago, I saw my best friend. I saw Godric Gryffindor. I didn't see Jack the Ripper. I didn't see the man who trashed my name. I didn't see the man you wanted to kill me. I saw my…best…friend." Salazar said, as tears streamed down his face. "I saw my brother. I saw the man whom I have wanted forgiveness from for the last nine hundred years. I heard the words I had longed to hear. I heard you tell me 'I told you so'. You changed Godric. So I will ask you this one more time. Why should I crucify you for your sins, when you already crucify yourself? Who in the hell am I to judge you?"

Godric stared into Salazar's tear streaked face, and he too began to cry.

"You really do mean that, don't you?" He asked.

"Yes, I do." Salazar whispered in a desperate attempt to make him understand. "Godric, I love you. You're my brother and my best friend. You were always there for me when I needed you the most. You don't know this, but you reentered my life three years ago when I desperately needed you." Salazar said, as he began to outright sob. "I needed you, and you came." He said as he began to sob even harder. "I was alone. I was scared, and I was beginning to doubt myself. I didn't know how much strength I had left in me to carry out this barmy arse plan of mine. Yes, I had Nicholas, yes I had Perenelle, yes I had Merlin, yes I had Severus, but dammit Godric, I didn't have you!" Salazar cried, as he slipped out of his seat and crumpled to the floor, where he totally broke down into tears.

Godric was out of his seat in an instant, and they both sat on the floor as they held onto each other tightly.

"I didn't have you." Salazar repeated, once he found his voice again. "But then, there you were. You came charging back into my life in all your bloody Gryffindor glory." He said with a quiet laugh, causing Godric to chuckle slightly as they both sat on the floor and rocked back and forth.

"I think we were both able to pick up right where we left off nine hundred years ago, because it was what we both wanted to do. Otherwise, we wouldn't have been able to do that." Godric said softly, as Salazar nodded.
"It was like the last nine hundred years never happened. We had each other and that's all that mattered." Salazar said in agreement. "I don't care about your past Godric. I truly don't. My selfish nature won't let me. I got what I wanted, so damn the rest. I don't care." He said firmly.

"Simply for my own sake, I'm grateful for that damnable selfish nature of yours." Godric whispered, as he continued to hold Salazar in an upright position. "I understand now my friend. I truly do. I understand. I understand." He said in a reassuring whisper, as he laid his cheek against the side of Salazar's head.

They both started to cry again, but they stayed like that for a long time. Just the two of them sitting there on the floor, holding onto each other for dear life, but it was in that moment that they both realized that neither of them was going to go anywhere.

Ever.

It truly was Salazar and Godric again. Gryffindor and Slytherin, Slytherin and Gryffindor. They were one fluid, cohesive unit. If one was going in a single direction, the other would follow. If someone messed with one, the other wouldn't be far behind. They were side by side, and neither of them would do anything to change that.

The silence stretched on for several hours, but neither of them moved. They just sat there lost in their own thoughts. It was a comfortable silence though, and they sat there until the sun began to set.

As darkness over took Godric's small house, they finally let out a small sigh at the same time, which caused them both to chuckle quietly. However, a silent, soft burst of magic seemed to pass through the small house, and right after that, they both felt two different magical sensations wash over them.

It was as if two people had softly caressed their faces.

Tears once again began to fall from Salazar and Godric's eyes as they stared into the darkness, hoping to see the hands that had touched them.

"Helga." Salazar whispered softly.

"Rowena." Godric also whispered.

_We love you both._

It wasn't a whisper, it wasn't even spoken words. It was simply something Salazar and Godric knew, as if it had been spoken straight into their hearts.

"We love you too." They whispered together.

That sat there for several long minutes before they helped each other off the floor, where they had been sitting on for hours, but then Salazar looked at Godric and nodded.

"I guess I better go put Umbridge back in her cell." He said with a tired sigh.

"Wait, what?" Godric asked, looking at him in confusion.

"She was unconscious when I left her in the Chamber. She isn't going anywhere." He said.

"But you left her with Nora and Emeralda." Godric said with a chuckle.

"Yeah so?"
"You left that woman with two wild animals, who have minds of their own and with a woman they despise." He said.

It suddenly dawned on Salazar what Godric was saying.

"Son of Morgana!" Salazar cried, causing Godric to burst out laughing.

Then they apparated straight into the Chamber.

Chapter End Notes

I know this was a hard chapter to read, and I understand if you all feel the need to drop it, but I hope you will still stick with it.

I know that this is probably the shortest chapter I have written for this story, but I felt the need to make this its own chapter. This is a topic I have been building towards ever since Godric made his appearance in this story. I have been trying to work this in for a very long while, but I finally found the perfect place for it to fit into.

I'm an emotional wreck right now because of this chapter, and I hope that doesn't sound stupid to you all, but its true. I think I need to write something majorly off the wall and funny now, so I'm going to go work on my next chapter of Boredom is Deadly. It's a crackfic that I started not too long ago, and its the perfect way to let off the emotional steam I've built up because of this chapter. I will have an update for C&C after I've gotten that chapter of Boredom is Deadly up though, so dont think it's going to be a long wait, because it wont be.

I will have the Potters, Remus, Hagrid, and everything that I promised in the last chapter, in the next chapter, but this one needed to be on it own.

I hope you all understand.

I haven't said this in a while, but thank you to everyone who has commented, bookmarked, kudo'ed! It really does mean a lot to me! Thank you so much, and i hope you continue to enjoy this story!

I will have the next chapter up soon!
A Deadly Mistake

Chapter Notes

*A/N* I'm baaaaack! I am SOOOOOOO sorry it has taken me three years to update! I wont make excuses but I hope this chapter is good enough to make up for my absence. There is a lot going on, and yes it is sort of a filler, but its a jumping off point so I can get this 5th year portion where I need it to be. Things are getting darker in the wizarding world and this chapter proves that. If you have been paying attention, after the Christmas Holidays (in the story) I usually have things pick up at a rapid pace and this 5th year is no different. Now, without further ado, I present the long awaited chapter...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 63

A Deadly Mistake

When Salazar and Godric got back to the chamber that night, it came as no surprise when they couldn't find any trace of Umbridge. When Salazar glared accusingly at his two beloved snakes, the only thing Emeralda and Nora would say was that 'she moved'.

And they refused to elaborate further.

Salazar was extremely upset because he really hadn't wanted Umbridge killed. He actually wanted her to suffer for the rest of her life by staring at the words 'I must not piss off Salazar' which she had been made to write with the quill.

And now she never would.

After thoroughly scolding the two snakes, who only glared at him, and ranting and swearing up a storm for nearly two hours, he finally sighed with exhaustion and plopped down on the floor.

Godric chuckled, picked Salazar up, and sat him down in a conjured chair.

"Feel better?" He asked, looking at his friend with concern.

"No." He answered solemnly. "Because now I feel awful."

"Why?"

"I feel absolutely horrible for what we did to that woman. She was unarmed, and honestly, she had no information that was useful to us. She only knew that Voldemort was back, and she had plans to create something called The Muggle Born Registration Committee, which, admittedly, was foul in itself, but I think we went too far."

Godric sighed and nodded as he sat down next to him. "Yeah, I think we did. I feel rotten, dirty, foul…"

"Dark, disgusting..."
"Exactly." Godric sighed.

"But Master, isn't that a good thing?" Emerald asked. "If you didn't feel bad I would be concerned for you. I would fear you would turn into something foul. The fact that you do feel bad is comforting."

"Are you saying Speaker would turn into something like Morty? Cause if you are Shrew, I'll bite you. Speaker would never turn into something like Morty." Nora said with an angry glare.

"Fish Bait, I'm not saying he will end up like Voldemort. I'm just saying that if Master didn't regret his actions I'd be worried." Emeralda replied with a bit of impatience.

"Do you regret your actions Shrew?" Nora asked in a silky voice.

"Of course not." Emeralda replied haughty tone. "That woman hurt my Hermione."

Salazar and Godric glanced at each other and sighed quietly, but neither of them spoke. They didn't need too though. They both felt horrible for what they had done to Umbridge.

They didn't get to dwell on it much further though, because a bright silvery doe patronus sailed into the Chamber a moment later.

"Sir, we have a very complicated situation. Can you come to Headquarters immediately?" It asked, then promptly disappeared.

Salazar sighed heavily. "And here I was thinking I could go home and get some rest."

Godric chuckled. "No rest for the weary Salazar, you should know that by now."

"Indeed." He replied, as they both got ready to apparate.

"Master wait!" Emeralda called out just before they left. "Does this mean I can wander about the castle again?"

Salazar smiled and nodded. "Yes my dear, so long as you don't eat anyone else, unless I say otherwise." He said, giving her a stern glare.

"Yes Master." Emeralda replied, causing Nora to hiss loudly.

"Aren't you forgetting someone?" She asked with warning. "If I don't get to go, I will bite someone. I promise."

Salazar rolled his eyes. "Fine, come on."

Nora hissed triumphantly, but Emeralda let out a hiss that sounded almost like a 'humph', which caused Nora to look at her smugly.

"You're just upset because you're too big to come along. Maybe you should lose a bit of weight Shrew."

"Just wait Fish Bait, I'll get you back for that little remark." Emeralda said, as she made her way out of the Chamber.

Salazar and Godric just shook their heads, and apparated to Camelot.
They landed in the foyer at Camelot and quickly made their way into the room that housed Order meetings. They were a bit surprised to see that Molly had herded the children into a far corner, while Dumbledore, Snape, Merlin, Moody, Amelia, Arthur, and Mundungus stood around The Round Table, eyeing a small wooden crate suspiciously. When they approached the table, both Salazar and Godric noticed that the crate was filled with short clear tubes that were glowing with an ominous killing curse green color.

Salazar raised an eyebrow as he looked from the crate to everyone else.

"What is…?"

"Mundungus saw a chap selling these things in Knockturn Alley." Moody said before Salazar could even finish his question. "Said he calls them Bottled Killing Curses."

"We have arrested the young man, who claims he got them from a muggle born who didn't give his name." Amelia said. "We questioned him under veritaserum, and he said that he was told by the muggle born that if you throw the Bottled Killing Curses at someone, they will explode and kill the one who was hit."

"He said it was good defense for those who can't cast the curse." Mundungus added, causing Moody to glance at him and huff loudly.

Salazar looked at them, then at Merlin, before looking into the corner where all the children were huddled. He caught Hermione's eye, causing her to snort, which made him burst out laughing.

"I'm guessing you have tried…"

"Yes, I tried Harry. I really did, but they said that there is a stasis charm on each of them. They really don't want to take any chances." She said, trying to hide a giggle, which caused Moody to glare at her.

"Well Hermione is right." Salazar said with a grin. "The killing curse itself is not able to be 'bottled'. These truly are nothing more than a muggle invention called a Glow Stick. They are harmless, and it's my guess that the stasis charm was placed on them so that they wouldn't fade out, which these are known to do after a day or so. The lad you arrested was scammed by the muggle born, who was likely betting on the lack of knowledge the average wizard has of the muggle world."

"How can you be sure?" Amelia asked, looking at him with narrowed eyes.

Salazar chuckled again. "It's simple," he said, as he plucked one out of the wooden crate, causing them all to gasp and back away. "If you look closely you will notice that there is a smaller glass tube inside it. It's very brittle, and when the outer tube is bent, the brittle tube is broken and releases a chemical which is then mixed together after you shake it. Glow Sticks actually come in all different colors such as red, blue, purple, orange, yellow, green…" He said, as he waved his hand at the crate. "The chemical inside is virtually harmless, and you can even get it on your skin and nothing will happen, though some people have been known to have an allergic reaction, so it's best not to get it on your skin or in your eyes, just in case. I know I'm not allergic because Dudley actually poured one on top of my head when I was eight."

Then to the horror of everyone, save Hermione, he used the severing charm to cut the top off the Glow Stick he was holding, and poured the contents onto his hand. He then dimmed the lights in the room, causing everyone to gasp when they caught sight of Salazar's green glowing hand.

"That is…"
"…wicked!" The twins cried.

"Fred, I just got an idea."

"I'm right there with you dear brother. If we can invent a potion that works like this stick glow thing…"

"Glow stick." Hermione corrected.

"Whatever, we can launch it at the death eaters then turn out the lights. We would still see them…"

"…but they wouldn't see us. Brilliant plan ingenious brother."

Molly groaned lightly, but as Merlin relit the lights around the room, nearly everyone shuffled to the table. Fred and George grabbed a couple and began examining them, as Arthur stared at them with a happy grin on his face.

"The things muggles come up with. It's fascinating, isn't it?"

Molly simply rolled her eyes at her husband, but everyone else chuckled.

"Well Alastor, I know I'm not the head of the DMLE anymore, but I would advise you to let the young man who you arrested go with a warning. Still though, keep a watch for this muggle born and if you find him, bring him in for questioning and a warning."

"Will do Amelia." Moody said, but then he turned to Mundungus. "Never thought I'd say this, but good work. Let us know if you see anything else out of the ordinary."

"I will do me best Mad-Eye. Those things gave me the willies, they did. Didn't want one of them to hit me." Mundungus said, then he promptly apparated out, causing George to start chuckling.

"Too bad Umbridge isn't around. We could have had fun with her and the 'Bottled Killing Curses'." He said, causing the children to start giggling and laughing.

Salazar and Godric, on the other hand, sighed loudly.

"Speaking of Umbridge." Godric said. "I have to admit that she is dead."

"Dead!?" Half of those assembled cried.

"Yes." He admitted. "Salazar and I took her from her cell and interrogated her in the Chamber of Secrets. With Emeralda in there, we figured that we could use Umbridge's fear of snakes to get her to talk." He said, as he glanced at Salazar, who simply nodded. "Salazar used legilimency on her and found out that she knew Voldemort was back, and she even had plans to enact some foul legislation, should he take over the Ministry."

"She wanted to round up every single muggle born in Britain, accuse them of stealing magic, and throw them into Azkaban after snapping their 'stolen' wands." Salazar offered, causing everyone to scowl at that bit of news. "After that, I left Umbridge with Nora and Emeralda, with instructions for them not to let her move. It was one of those offhanded warning types of things and I really didn't think anything of it at the time. Godric and I left, so we could discuss what to do with her, but by the time we got back Umbridge was nowhere to be found. All Nora and Emeralda would say was that 'she moved'."

Hermione gasped as her hand flew to cover her mouth. "Emeralda ate her." She simply stated,
causing Godric and Salazar to nod.

"Yes, she did." Salazar admitted with a sigh. "I should have never left them with her. They are, after all, wild animals and they hated her with a passion. I am very sorry."

It was half-truth, half lie, and both Godric and Salazar knew it, but they figured it was best to leave it at that. They really didn't feel like going into details. They still felt horrible about what they did to the unarmed woman, but the others didn't need to know what really took place.

Amelia sighed heavily. "Well, what's done is done." She said, as she shook her head. "You really can't be blamed for what they did. However, is Emerald going to become a problem? We can't just have her going around eating people she doesn't like."

"I made that clear to her." Salazar nodded. "I don't think she will though. Nora goaded her into admitting that she only did it because Umbridge 'hurt her Hermione'."

"That's right, I did. I don't feel bad for the toad though. She got what she deserved, as far as I'm concerned." Nora added, as she stuck her head out of Salazar's robe sleeve.

Everyone glanced at Hermione, who had a sad, but somewhat peaceful, expression on her face.

"I guess she did what she felt she had to do." Hermione said quietly. "Truthfully though, after what Umbridge did to Ron and I, I can't feel bad for her. I just hope Emerald doesn't suffer from indigestion."

That got a few chuckles out of most of the kids, but the adults simply nodded.

"Very well then." Amelia said as she rubbed her tired eyes. "It's been a long tiring evening for all of us, so I suggest we all get some rest. With it being just a few days before Christmas, I expect Voldemort to pull something, so we should be ready."

Everyone just nodded, before splitting up and heading off their rooms, or homes. When Salazar arrived at his flat in Diagon Alley, he fell into a fitful sleep filled with disturbing dreams he'd rather not remember.

"Belly Button, Belly Button, I poke you! Belly Button, Belly Button, why so blue?" Tiny Voldemort sang at the top of his lungs as he danced around Bellatrix, who looked less than pleased at being called 'Belly Button'. "Don't you know that Voldy loves you?! He just can't admit it 'cause he's so cruel! Not to mention that you are married! Ohhhhhh, Belly Button, Belly Button...."

"SHUT UP! Bombarda!" She screamed, blasting a hole in the dining room floor, and causing Tiny Voldemort to go flying through the air. He landed on the dining room table, coughed cheekily, and grinned.

"What? You don't like my song? Anyone with half a brain knows you love Moldy Voldy, and wish he loved you back." He said with a laugh, but then he whispered loud enough for the whole room to hear. "He just can't admit it because you're married to Doofus over there." He added, as he pointed to Rodolphus. "You should kill him and get him out of the way. Then Moldy Voldy will love you."

Rodolphus gulped audibly and glanced at his wife, then at his Master, who simply scowled at his tiny counterpart.

"I do not love anyone." He hissed angrily.
"So says you." Tiny Voldemort said with a dismissive wave of his hand. "I know better."

"My Lord, any word on how we can get rid of this foul thing?" Bellatrix asked, as she sent a loathing glare at Tiny Voldemort.

"I can't go away until the half-blood loves me," Tiny Voldemort replied.

Bellatrix screamed with rage, and backhanded Tiny Voldemort so hard that he went flying into Pansy Parkinson's dinner plate. She whimpered slightly and visibly tensed up, but Tiny Voldemort stood up, shook the mashed potatoes from his red and gold stripped robes, and hopped back over to Voldemort like some demented hyper bunny rabbit.

Then Pansy whimpered in fright again.

Since she had gotten home for the Christmas break, her life had been turned upside down. She couldn't believe the destruction of her once beautiful and comfortable home. Her own bedroom and been taken away from her and was now being used to house Bellatrix and a few of the others who had escaped from Azkaban. She was now forced to sleep in a small room with her parents, which was barely big enough for a house elf.

The house was nearly in ruins though. There wasn't a wall that didn't have a massive hole in it somewhere, due to the Dark Lord and Bellatrix's tempers. The library was littered with books that had been blown up, burnt, and/or ripped apart when they proved to not hold information that was useful, and the general over all feeling of depression, anxiety, and doom permeated through the entire house, and there wasn't a dementor in sight!

This wasn't how it was supposed to be, especially around Christmas.

Where were the elegant dinner parties? Where was the laughter, lighthearted chatter, and sense of entitlement that goes with the pure-blood way of life? Was this what it meant to be part of the Dark Lord's followers? If so, then it was highly disappointing.

Sure, some of the escaped Death Eaters dragged a family of muggles into the drawing room yesterday and spent all day hexing and torturing them before they were killed, but they were just muggles and didn't matter. However, when her Dad later spoke out of turn, the Dark Lord held him under the torture curse for nearly a minute!

That wasn't as much fun to see.

And even the Christmas Eve dinner they were currently eating wasn't up to standard. It was a tasteless, meager meal, and not even fit for a house elf, if they had any. According to her Mother, the Dark Lord had killed all the house elves because he didn't trust the little blighters.

Her own mother had to cook this meal!

But she knew enough not to say anything. When she got off the Hogwarts Express her mother had pulled her aside and warned her not to do anything drastic. She was warned not to speak unless spoken too, to not get in the way, and to make herself as scarce as possible. She was not to look the Dark Lord in the eye under ANY circumstances.

Pansy hadn't understood why at the time, but she did now and she wasn't happy about it. This wasn't the way things were supposed to be. Commoners were supposed to fear the Dark Lord and his inner circle, but it seemed that his own Death Eaters feared him too.

Why?
He was the Dark Lord. He was their leader. He was going to take over, and the mudbloods, blood traitors, and non-connected half-bloods would perish and/or grovel at the feet of the pure-bloods, like they were supposed to.

So why wasn't that the case yet? Why did the Dark Lord torture and kill his own people?

Pansy suddenly felt like someone was watching her and she looked up, only to find the Dark Lord himself staring right at her.

"Is there something you wish to ask me Pansy?" He asked in a cold, aloof tone.

"N-no My Lord." She replied meekly.

The Dark Lord simply smirked, but his attention wavered as round one-thousand five hundred and seventy-three began between Tiny Voldemort and Bellatrix.

"Oh pretty pure-blood princess, what is the matter?" Tiny Voldemort asked in a mocking tone, as Bella tried to stab him with her fork. "Is Belly-Button butt hurt over the fact that she bows to a half-blooded son of a muggle!?" He shouted gleefully.

Bella let out a vicious cry of rage and shouted a blasting curse at him, but Tiny Voldemort sidestepped it and caused the spell to hit a bowl of soggy green beans, which went flying everywhere.

"Crucio!" Voldemort bellowed, causing Bella to fall out of her chair, while she screamed loudly. He finally lifted the curse after a few moments, but he stood up and towered over the fallen witch as she twitched and groveled at his feet. "It is time you learned to control yourself Bella." He hissed maliciously. "Learn to ignore him." He added, as he plucked a single green bean off of his robes and dropped it on her head.

He turned to sit back down and smiled at everyone from his throne-like chair. Pansy narrowed her eyes as she watched him, but he looked at her and smirked again.

"Happy Christmas everyone." He said in a false cheery tone.

Pansy simply narrowed her eyes even further.

"So he wants Excalibur." Salazar simply stated, as Severus nodded silently.

The Order had gotten together to have its own Christmas dinner, which was spread out on the massive dinning room table that had been placed at one end of the grand ball room. The ball room had, like the rest of Camelot, been decorated for Christmas.

There was even a large multi-colored (curtesy of the twins) Christmas tree in the corner, which had been decorated by everyone. It had Hermione's favorite blue-bell flames for lights, green and silver baubles that Draco had created, conjured orange baubles so Ron could show his love for the Chudley Cannons, socks and knitted hats for Dobby, bouncing blubs for Neville, charmed nutcrackers which sung carols for Blaise, popcorn-on-a-string because Arthur had seen something like that in a window display in muggle London, and even a dead mouse or three was hung on its branches, because Nora and Hedwig had insisted.

It may have not been a traditional tree, but it was theirs and it made everyone chuckle, smile, and shake their heads at its ridiculousness every time they saw it.

However, right now the topic of conversation wasn't anything Christmas related. Severus had been
sitting on this information for about two weeks, and he knew he couldn't stall anymore. The Dark Lord was getting restless about getting his hands on Excalibur, causing Severus to finally breakdown and mention it to everyone.

"Yes sir, he does." Severus said with a sigh, before turning to Merlin himself. "Why? Why in the name of Merlin did you make mention of Excalibur, if it has the power to kill the three of you?" He asked desperately, causing Merlin to chuckle at his slip of the tongue.

"It is true that Excalibur has the power to kill myself, Salazar, and Godric," he said softly, "but Severus, do you honestly think a wizard like Voldemort has the ability to actually wield it? You are speaking about a wizard who relies so heavily on magic that he cannot possibly hope to successfully wield such a muggle weapon. He simply doesn't have the knowledge, or the practice."

"I suppose that's true." Godric said with a thoughtful nod. "Wizards using swords in battle went out of fashion centuries ago, and the only ones who actually know how to use a sword is the three of us." He added, as he pointed to himself, Salazar, and Merlin, who all nodded.

"I can't see him becoming good enough to defeat us in such a way." Salazar said.

"Not to mention, he's more than likely to injure himself with it, before killing one of us." Merlin said with a smirk, which caused Salazar to immediately narrow his eyes.

"You've seen something." He accused.

"Perhaps." Merlin said evasively.

Hermione, who, along with everyone else, had been following the conversation with rapt attention, gasped loudly. "You aim to make Voldemort injure himself so that he is weakened."

Merlin's beaming grin told them she had deduced the situation correctly. "More than that, anyone who sustains an injury from Excalibur will find that the wound does not heal." He quickly added.

"Well that's excellent news." Amelia said with a nod, as Susan, who had been brought to Camelot for safety, stared around the table in shock.

"So, how do we get Excalibur into Voldemort's hands without endangering Professor Snape's position?" Cedric asked curiously.

"Mr. Diggory has posed an excellent question." Albus said. "We cannot take the chance that Voldemort has a pensieve, so whatever we think of has to be completely foolproof."

"I agree." Salazar said with a nod. "But I think we should use veritaserum, like Severus has already suggested to Voldemort."

"Me too." Hermione piped up with a firm nod. "But like the Headmaster said, we can't take the chance of him having a pensieve. This could be a test of the Professor's true loyalty, and we can't take any chances. Him dousing me with veritaserum is fine by me, but to in order to sell the entire ruse, Professor Snape will have to put me under the imperious curse."

Her words sparked an immediate massive outcry, most notably from Molly, Amelia, and Minerva.

"He could make you do anything he wanted!" Molly cried.

"You'd be helpless!" Minerva added.
"As Minister for Magic, I cannot condone that!" Amelia shouted in disbelief.

"Listen! Please listen!" Hermione shouted over all the noise. Everyone quieted down, but most were still grumbling their displeasure under their breath. Hermione gave off an exasperated huff and shook her head, but then she continued. "We have already seen the damage the imperious curse can do, when Lucius Malfoy placed the Headmaster under it, but the imperious curse can be used for good as well."

"There is nothing good that can come from the imperious curse." Amelia said strongly.

"Minister Bones," Hermione said with a small smile, "what would you do if something happened to Susan?" She said, as she motioned towards the girl. "What if something horrible happened and Susan found herself in a severely distressed state of mind? What if she fell into such a depression that the only thing she could think of was to kill herself by throwing herself off of the astronomy tower at Hogwarts? Let's say you happened to be there and were desperately trying to get her away from the edge, but nothing was working. Talking to her wasn't working, trying to spell her away from the edge wasn't working, and nothing else you could think of worked. Now, what if your last resort was using the imperious curse? Would you let her jump off and kill herself because the curse is an unforgivable, or would you use it to save her life?"

That brought the grumbling to a complete halt, and caused Amelia to stare at Hermione with a gobsmacked expression.

"I would hope you wouldn't let me jump Auntie." Susan said softly, causing Amelia's eyes to flicker to her niece. "I would want you to use the curse for a good thing, the good thing being saving my life." She added.

Amelia visibly wilted before their eyes and let out a slow breath as she bowed her head, which caused Hermione to smile apologetically at her.

"I'm sorry to have used such a horrible hypothetical situation Minister, but I hope I have proved my point. I trust Professor Snape with my life. He is not going to make me do anything that will put my life in jeopardy, nor is he going to make me enter his living quarters and force me to do unspeakable acts of a sexual nature."

Severus let out a shocked, startled cry at that remark, which caused Salazar to snort loudly, but it was Merlin who outright laughed.

"I can honestly say that I agree with that." He said with a chuckle. "The imperious curse does not cause any pain to the one it is placed on, and if Hermione is comfortable enough with the idea to even suggest it, I think it's something we should think about."

"She's also right about it selling the ruse." Godric added. "How else is Severus supposed to explain how he was able to get his hands on Excalibur, when he gives it to Voldemort?"

Salazar and Albus both nodded, but the Headmaster looked towards Severus.

"And what is your thoughts about this plan Severus?" He asked, causing Snape to sigh loudly.

"I think that if Miss Granger ever again mentions the words 'me', 'Professor Snape', 'living quarters', and 'sexual nature' in the same sentence again, I will use her insides for potion ingredients. Barring that, I think it's a solid plan." He said, causing Salazar, Godric, and Sirius to burst out laughing.

"We will have to work out all of the details, of course, but I too think it's a good plan." Albus said with a twinkle, as he looked over to Amelia, who sighed heavily.
"I will allow Severus Snape to cast the imperious curse on a willing Hermione Granger, and he will not suffer any repercussions." She said formally, causing Albus to nod.

"Thank you, Amelia." He said happily. "Now, I suggest we continue our excellent Christmas dinner. Our pudding seems to getting cold."

"I agree Professor!" Ron said enthusiastically, causing a few people to chuckle loudly.

But Hermione, with a mischievous glint in her eye, suddenly glanced at Nora, who was happily investigating some whipped cream.

"Say Nora," she said with a grin. "What do you think about you and 'me' getting together to write an essay for 'Professor Snape' on the 'sexual nature' of snakes and slipping it underneath the door of his 'living quarters'?" She asked quickly, causing Nora to hiss with amusement.

"GRANGER!" Snape shouted as he jumped to his feet.

Hermione squealed loudly with laughter as she slipped out of her seat and onto the floor, crawled underneath the table to the other side, and ran out the door, just as a mild stinging jinx erupted from the potion master's wand. Nearly everyone burst into laughter as they watched the embarrassed, red faced man run after her, mumbling curses under his breath about 'cheeky know-it-all Gryffindor females'.

"Hermione pranked Snape!" The twins cried gleefully, as they fell out of their seats with laughter.

"Happy Christmas everyone." Albus said with a hearty laugh, as the kids giggled at Snape, who could be heard yelling for the girl all throughout Camelot.

Many of the adults laughed and wondered out loud what would happen to Hermione, if Severus actually caught her.

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Boxing Day was mostly a lighthearted and joyous day for everyone at Camelot. Salazar, Godric, Severus, Sirius, Remus, and the children who were 'in the know' spent several hours talking to the Potters via the mirrors, before the rest of the castle got up that morning.

The only dark spot in the day was due to Harry. It seemed that Harry was a bit depressed because he couldn't spend any actual time with them, and when Salazar asked James and Lily about Harry's solemn attitude, they explained that he just wanted the war to be over so that he could 'go home.'

Apparently, Harry was becoming less and less pleased with being stuck in Brazil. He was always complaining about how none of his South American friends knew the real him, since he never even used his real name at school. He wanted to go someplace where he could truly be himself without having to watch every little thing he said, least he slip up and say something that would put his family in danger. James told Salazar that Harry considered Neville, Hermione, Blaise, and the twins as his only real friends, since they at least knew who he really was.

This caused Salazar to sigh heavily, but he silently vowed to hopefully have the war finished so Harry could at least come home for his seventh year, but it was looking less and less likely that would happen.

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At dinner that same evening, Severus mentioned to the full-time residents of Camelot that Voldemort had several plans in place, but he didn't know any details of those plans. He had previously told them what Voldemort had said about Amelia being his top target, which is why she and Susan were now
living at Camelot full time.

"So," Amelia said with a sigh as everyone turned to look at her, "we don't know what he plans to do."

"No Minister." Severus said with a shake of his head.

"But Severus, you're his second in command." Molly said with a disgusted shiver over the thought of how that came to be. "Surely he has, at the very least, told you something."

Everyone looked at the young man hopefully, but he sadly shook his head.

"I wish it were true Molly, but The Dark Lord is planning everything on his own. Unfortunately," he said with a slight sneer, "his paranoia has grown so much that he is now convinced that his tiny look-a-like is a spy. He refuses to speak about his plans until the last possible second."

Molly heavily glared at her twin sons, who paled considerably at this news.

"We-we didn't think..." Fred stuttered, causing Molly to huff.

"No you didn't." She said angrily. "You didn't think, and now we have no way of knowing..."

"Molly, this is hardly the place..."

"I will NOT be swayed from saying what I have to say Arthur." She snapped, causing Arthur to glare at her as she turned her attention back to the twins. "We have no way of knowing what You-Know-Who is going to do now because of this little stunt of yours. I hope, going forward, that you actually THINK about the possible consequences your actions could have on the future of this war. What you have done is completely irresponsible." She scolded.

The twins hung their heads and nodded solemnly, as a heavy silence hung in the air. No one knew what to say now, until Draco tentatively spoke up.

"But this is a good thing too." He said in an uncertain tone, causing everyone to glance at him. "I mean, Professor Snape has a scapegoat now."

"I suppose that's one way of looking at it." Salazar said with an approving nod. "Unfortunately, though, Molly it right. If Voldemort is not speaking about his plans, that leaves us in a bind because we have no way of knowing what they could possibly be."

"Could Tiny V-V-...I'm sorry I just can't say it...You-Know-Who be spelled with a listening spell?" Draco asked, causing everyone to look his way again.

"It's a good idea in theory Draco," Snape said with a smile, "but The Dark Lord would find that spell in an instant and remove it. Also, there are no other spells like it that he wouldn't be able to detect almost immediately."

"Oh." Draco said quietly, as he glanced at the table and sighed, but Hermione smiled at him.

"It was a good idea Draco, so don't be discouraged. If you think of something, just speak up." She told him, causing him to smile back.

"I don't know what help I could really be. Besides, Mother and I aren't apart of the Order."

"That might be true," Hermione replied, "but we know the two of you pick up things that are said around here."
"If you don't outright listen at the door." Fred said with a wink, causing Draco to stifle a laugh.

"They work perfectly, you know." He said with a grin, as he pulled a long, thin, flesh colored string out of his pocket, but everyone gasped when an attached human ear popped out along with it. "Granger snores terribly in her sleep, Longbottom likes to pretend he's teaching a Herbology class whenever he's alone in his room, Bones likes to pretend she's a full-fledged Auror, your brother, loudly I might add, holds mock Quidditch games that star the Chudley Canons, and Mother," he said with a grin as he looked up at her, "I didn't know you had a thing for the Weird Sisters."

"Draco!" Narcissa cried, as she blushed a deep red, which only made her son's eyes glint mischievously.

"Excellent report, my good man!" George exclaimed gleefully, as Hermione, Susan, Ron, and Neville all started sputtering in denial.

George handed him five galleons, but when Draco went to hand him the ear, Fred waved him off. "All testers get to keep the products after successful trial runs. The Extendable Ear is now yours." He said with a large grin.

Draco immediately rolled the ear back up and stuck it in his pocket. Then he leaned back in his chair, crossed his arms over his chest, and smirked at everyone sitting around the table. Hermione, Neville, Susan, and Ron were now glaring at him, but Godric, Salazar, and Severus all starting chuckling.

"If it makes you feel better Mr. Longbottom," Severus said with a smirk, "I used to do the same thing when I was your age, only with potions. You'd be amazed at how much information you retain by doing that."

Neville turned bright red as everyone burst out laughing, but Molly glared at the twins. "What are those things, and you better not be trying to make anything else to send to You-Know-Who as a joke." She said sternly.

"We aren't Mum." The twins said in unison.

"These are for our joke shop that we plan to open after we graduate, and they are called Extendable Ears." Fred went on to add.

"You stick the ear under a door or window, then you place the string in your own ear. It allows you to listen to things you otherwise wouldn't be able to hear. It's just for laughs," George added, causing Molly to huff loudly.

"Very well then." She finally said with a frown, which caused the twins to breathe a silent sigh of relief.

However, at that moment, a silvery phoenix patronus sailed into the room.

"Severus," Dumbledore's terribly sad voice rang out. "Come to Hogwarts immediately. I'm afraid I have some bad news regarding a member of Slytherin house." It said, before vanishing.

Everyone stared at each other for a moment, before Salazar, Severus, and Godric sprang to their feet.

"I hope nobody's hurt." Hermione gasped, as they all watched the three of them apparate away.

Over the holidays, Albus had decided that it was beneficial to have a single small room, which was
located inside the hospital wing, left open for members of the Order to apparate in and out of should the need arise. So, when Severus, Godric, and Salazar arrived in that room, they quickly made their way into the main hospital wing.

They found Aberforth, Minerva, Poppy, and Dumbledore standing solemnly around a bed. Both witches were in tears, while the brothers watched them approach with a sad, despondent expressions on their faces.

"NOOOOO!" Godric cried, as he caught sight of the battered, broken body lying in the bed.

"Theo." Severus breathed in shock, as Salazar stared at the boy in horror.

Dumbledore shook his head sadly. "He passed away not five minutes ago. Poppy tried to save him, but he was too far gone. He did manage to convey a few words before he passed, however."

"Who did this?" Godric asked as he looked up at Dumbledore with tears in his eyes.

"His father." Aberforth replied with a dark look.

"Why?" Godric asked, as his eyes grew very cold.

"For letting their gift of Parseltongue become public knowledge." Albus answered in a hollow voice. "After the attack, and when his father had left, Young Mr. Nott said he was able to crawl over to their floo and make his way to the Hog's Head."

"He left him there to die." Salazar breathed in horror.

"When he arrived," Aberforth said, "he asked me to help him, because he knew I was Albus's brother. I brought him straight here."

"He kept slipping in and out of consciousness, but he managed to tell us who did it and why." Poppy tearfully added. "I did all I could, but it wasn't enough. I'm so sorry." She said, then she dissolved into fresh tears.

Godric began shaking with rage as he stood up, then he speared Severus with a deadly glare. "What is his father's name?"

Severus swallowed thickly, but replied immediately, "Thaddeus Nott."

"Where would he be right now?" Godric asked, as his fists clenched tightly.

"Godric…." Salazar began.

"Shut up." Godric snapped. "Theo was a child. This is no different than what we used to do back in the old days."

It was true and Salazar knew it, but as he stared sadly at Theo's broken body his eyes narrowed in anger.

"I have your back." He replied with a determined nod, as Severus's eyes bounced between the two of them.

"Sir, Nott is probably…his best friend is Rabastan Lestrange. He is probably at the Parkinson's house, but that's where The Dark Lord..."

Severus trailed off as Godric stomped towards the apparition room, but as Salazar followed behind
him, he glanced over his shoulder.

"Tell Mad-Eye we will be coming into Auror headquarters with Thaddeus Nott. Whether he is dead or alive still remains to be seen." He said coldly as they disappeared into the little room.

"I hope they kill the bastard for what he has done." Aberforth said, as two loud cracks echoed throughout the hospital wing.

Chapter End Notes

*A/N* As you can see, there are consequences to everyones' actions. Fred and George's Tiny V has its drawbacks, and we STILL haven't seen all the drawbacks to that. Salazar and Godric have made a huge mistake as well. They should not have let Theo go back home for the Holidays. The fall out from this will be felt, and it will be big. Let me know what you think! I wont be gone as long next time! The next chapter has already begun
Chapter Notes

*A/N* I just want to say that, at first, some of you may be angry or confused at how Voldemort acts in this chapter, but if you keep reading, it will be explained further into the chapter at a Death Eater meeting.

Chapter 65

Justice & War Wards

As Salazar and Godric landed quietly outside the Parkinson's once grand looking house, Godric instantly headed right towards the front door. Salazar grabbed his arm, which caused the irate Gryffindor to stop and growl at him.

"I'm just as pissed off as you are Godric, but there are a few things you need to stop and think about." Salazar whispered harshly. "One, you don't know what the man looks like. Two, we don't know what kind of wards are set up, and three, Voldemort is in there."

"One, I could care less about Voldemort at this point. Two, you know what Nott looks like and that's all that matters, and as for the wards, wizards have become nothing but lax, lazy, clueless, idiots!" He hissed venomously. "All we have to do is tunnel under the damn things." He added, before he stormed away.

Salazar sighed heavily as he watched Godric locate the ward line. He was just as angry as Godric, but he needed to remain levelheaded because Godric certainly wasn't going to. A parent killing their own child was something that neither had seen for a long, long time, and Theo's death had brought back a lot of bad memories. Out of the four Founders, Godric had always taken things like this the hardest though.

But this situation was different. This was not a muggle killing their magical child. This was a pure-blood killing his own magical child, and it was simply unheard of. Most pure-bloods held their Heirs in high regard because they were the ones that would carry on the family name and line. To kill off one's own Heir was a slap in the face to tradition. Though there were exceptions, as evidenced by Lucius, Nott, and Salazar himself.

However, as Salazar kept one eye on Godric to make sure he was alright, he narrowed his gaze in thought.

"Godric!" He hissed loudly. "Stop for a moment. I have a plan."

Godric, who had already managed to dig a chest deep hole in the ground just outside the ward line, looked up with a glare.

"What?"

"We get them to bring Nott out." He said, but Godric scoffed loudly and kept digging.

"I know where you are going with this Salazar, but those are Death Eaters in there. They aren't going
to give up one of their own, even if he did just kill his own child." He replied.

Salazar sighed again. He knew Godric had a point.

"Just disillusion yourself and keep a lookout. This won't take much longer." Godric said, as his head disappeared into the hole.

Salazar did disillusion himself and began studying the house. He knew there was no deterring Godric from his course of action. The man was out for Nott's blood and he was going to get it one way or another, and all Salazar could do was support him. It wasn't that Salazar didn't want Nott dead for what he had done, it was just that he was trying to look for a better way.

But unfortunately, it seemed they were going to be doing this the Gryffindor way.

As he studied the house however, he could faintly hear a woman screaming in rage and see flashes of spell fire in the front room. He didn't know who or what that could be, but he decided to keep an eye on it. From his many views of Severus's memories of recent Death Eater meetings, he was vaguely familiar with the layout of the house, but He didn't know where exactly in the house Voldemort was though, and that unnerved him.

Movement on the opposite side of the ward line caught his attention, then a second later, Godric's head popped up above ground. He watched Godric climb out of the hole, then climbed in himself once Godric motioned for Salazar to follow. When they were both on the other side, Godric turned around and flicked his wand at the ground.

"See, I told you, lax, lazy, clueless idiots." He stated triumphantly, as they watched the hole disappear before their eyes, while leaving behind no evidence that the ground had been disturbed.

Salazar glanced at him and rolled his eyes. "Front door?"

"Yep, and I want to be the one to knock on it." Godric replied, as he took off running.

Voldemort sneered at the quivering man that was kneeling at his feet.

"What do you have to say for yourself Nott?" He hissed maliciously. "I have to find out from Crabbe, who found out from his son, that your son can speak Parseltongue!" He shouted.

"M-M-My L-Lord please." Nott begged. "I didn't want you, or anyone, to think I was trying to compete with you, or think myself your equal. That is why I have hidden my gift from you."

Voldemort glared at the sniveling man, but nodded his head in mild acceptance of the excuse. "Where is your son Thaddeus? I wish to speak to him, for he may be able to give me information about my ancestor. He has known Potter ever since first year, and I know for a fact that Potter likes to confide in his pet snake. Perhaps your son has heard Potter speak of things he normally wouldn't say to anyone else."

Nott looked up at his Master and paled drastically. "M-My L-Lord. My son…he's…I killed him…"

"WHAT!?" Voldemort bellowed with rage. "You foolish simpleton! Crucio!"

Nott screamed as pain erupted all throughout his body, but a moment later, Voldemort ended the curse.

"You stupid fool." He hissed. "Your son could have been in possession of a wealth of information!"
He yelled, but as he raised his wand to curse the man again, the house was rocked by an explosion, followed closely by shouting and spell fire.

Voldemort glared at the door of the room, then glanced at Yaxley, who was standing beside Augustus Rookwood along the far wall.

"Go tell Bellatrix that I said LEARN TO IGNORE IT." He shouted.

"Yes, My Lord." Yaxley said as he made his way to the door, but he stopped suddenly when the sound of Parseltongue sounded all throughout the house.

Godric and Salazar burst through the disintegrated front door and immediately began firing off spells. The Death Eaters, who were lounging around the front room watching the nightly entertainment of Bellatrix vs. Tiny Voldemort, immediately leapt to their feet, but they were so unprepared and caught unawares that Salazar and Godric were quickly able to disarm and incapacitate them. Salazar vanished the legs of one, beheaded another, who did manage to fire off a killing curse, and laid another out with a simple stunning spell.

Bellatrix and Dolohov weren't as simple to subdue, but Godric was able to stun Dolohov with an unseen stunning spell, after trading several spells with the ruthless wizard. Then he brought down Bellatrix with a fire whip spell, which caught her around the legs and ankles and jerked her off her feet. She screamed painfully due to the major burns she received, but fell unconscious when Godric nailed her in the head with a concussion hex, which left her bleeding from the ears. The fight only lasted a minute or so, but as silence descended, both Founders remained wide-eyed and alert.

Though Tiny Voldemort received a stunning spell from a trigger happy Godric, but he just coughed and stood up with a grin.

"Visitors!" He shouted enthusiastically. "We never get visitors! Welcome, welcome!"

Salazar just looked at Godric and snorted. "He's 'your fault'." He said simply, as Godric smirked, then his eyes darkened as he surveyed the damage and the unconscious or dead bodies that littered the place.

"Do you see Nott?" Godric asked, causing Salazar to shake his head.

"No." Salazar replied, but then he narrowed his eyes and cast a voice amplifying charm. "Give up Thaddeus Nott, and no one else will get hurt or die. We only want Nott. He killed his own child and we want justice. Give up Nott, and we will leave quietly."

Meanwhile at the back of the house, Voldemort's head snapped up in shock.

"Potter!" He shouted in disbelief, as Nott began whimpering and crying loudly from his spot on the floor. "Shut up you pitiful fool! I have half a mind to give you to them!"

"What do we do My Lord?" Yaxley asked nervously.

"Grab that sniveling idiot and follow me." He said, as he jerked open the door and stalked out of the room.

The air in the front room of the house grew colder, causing Salazar and Godric to shift their positions slightly as they caught sight of Voldemort making his way towards them. They saw two Death Eaters on either side of him, with one of them dragging a whimpering frightened man behind him.
Voldemort stopped and looked around at all the fallen Death Eaters, before turning his furious gaze to the Founders.

"Is that Nott, Salazar?" Godric asked, causing Salazar to nod.

"That's him." He stated.

"Give the child murdering bastard to us, and we will leave quietly." Godric demanded.

"There is no reason why we can't reach a semi-cordial agreement here tonight. You can't kill us, and we can't kill you. The only ones who will die tonight is your own Death Eaters, and I think you are smart enough to realize that." Salazar added, as Voldemort caught sight of the severed head of one of his Death Eaters. "He killed his own Heir, give him to us so we can obtain justice for Theo."

There was a small startled gasp from the next room over, but no one paid any attention to it. Voldemort however, glared at Salazar.

"Killed his own child, his Heir, and you want justice? Bit of a hypocrite aren't you, Ancestor." He hissed.

"You're not an innocent child, nor are you my son. You are my many times great grandson, true, but you are also a rabid dog that needs to be put down for your crimes against the wizarding world. Give us Nott, and we leave quietly." Salazar repeated, as Voldemort seethed in anger.

"Or we start killing more Death Eaters." Godric added, as he pointed his wand at Bellatrix, who was starting to regain consciousness.

Voldemort carefully studied Godric, then looked at Bellatrix and her severe injuries, before once more glancing over at the severed head. Finally, he turned to Yaxley.

"Give the sniveling idiot to them."

"My Lord!" Nott cried out in shock, as Yaxley tossed him towards the Founders. "Please! No! Please don't! My Lord!"

"You have displeased me tonight Thaddeus, and your foolish actions have brought them right to my door. Why should I sacrifice my best Death Eaters because of your stupidity, when I can simply give my ancestor what he wants and avoid further conflict tonight? You should know by now that I don't tolerate mistakes." He replied coldly, as he turned around and walked away.

Nott screamed in pain when Godric's fire whip wrapped around his neck. He was then jerked backwards and dragged out of the house like a rag doll, as Salazar and Godric slowly backed out the door. Once they were in the front garden, they stunned Nott, disarmed him, and checked him for portkeys.

The last thing they heard before they apparated away was, "See, I told you all Godric was a friendly fellow. We should invite him over more often!"

Amelia and Moody sighed loudly and sat back in their chairs, after having watched the pensieve memory from start to finish. They were in Auror headquarters, but Nott had been taken to Hogwarts, where he was locked up the prison cells and awaiting trial.

"I almost wish you had killed the witch." Amelia said, as she took off her monocle and rubbed her eyes. "But then, it would have been in cold blood since she was already down and I would have to
charge you with murder." She added, as she looked over at Godric.

"Aye, true, but some parts of the law become a grey area in times of war." Moody said. "Lestrange is a Death Eater."

"Yes, she is, and I suppose you're right." Amelia said with a tired nod.

"I wish I had killed her. Now she's free to hurt more people. Neville is going to be angry at me." Godric said with tears in his eyes. "And if you're wondering why I reacted so strongly to Theo's murder it was because of guilt."

"Guilt?" Moody asked.

"We knew Theo was a Parselmouth. We found out at Hogwarts just before break, as you know." He said, causing Moody and Amelia to nod. "Nora told him that we could protect him, but we never had a chance to talk to him again, what with Severus's condition and all that happened afterwards. I forgot about Theo and then holiday break came, and…and…now…” Godric stuttered, as he started sobbing heavily. "I forgot about him, and let him go home unprotected. Theo trusted us to protect him, and we failed him." He sobbed.

Salazar, with tears in his own eyes, put his arm around Godric as the distraught man sobbed heavily.

"Take him home." Moody said softly. "We will move forward with Nott's trial and he will be given to the dementors for his crime. We just need to get our evidence together, take official statements from Poppy about Theo's injuries, and also speak, officially, to Aberforth."

"We understand." Salazar said quietly, as he helped Godric to stand. "Come on, my friend, let's get you home."

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Severus softly cried out in pain as the stray cruciatus curse caught him in the side, but he didn't dare move or bring attention to himself, as Voldemort stormed around the room in a rage. He had been called away to a Death Eater meeting that was now being held in the dilapidated Lestrange Manor. Voldemort had immediately moved his base of operations as soon as the two Founders had left the Parkinson's house.

"How did they find Nott? How did they know where he was!?” He shouted.

"My Lord," McNair spoke up, "perhaps there was some truth to the rumor of the tracking charm Lucius spoke about."

"Crucio!" Voldemort shouted, causing the man to cry out in pain. "Do not speak unless spoken to, and DO NOT speak that dead fool's name in my presence! That tracking charm is supposedly on me or the dead fool, not Thaddeus Nott!"

"My Lord, if I may?" Severus said softly.

"Speak Severus." Voldemort said somewhat calmly. "Do you have information?"

"I'm not sure, My Lord, but I have a theory on how they knew where he was."

"And?" The Dark Lord growled impatiently.

"It." Severus said simply, as he glared in Tiny Voldemort's direction, who simply waved at him from where he was sitting on Voldemort's shoulder.
Voldemort let out a cry of rage, before swatting his irritating look-a-like off his shoulder. Tiny Voldemort just laughed loudly as he was kicked into the wall.

"Do you have anything else to add Severus?"

"Aside from It," he said motioning towards Tiny Voldemort, "it is possible that Nott had a tracking charm on him, My Lord. It is very likely that we all do, that is, all of us who weren't in Azkaban. I was in the hospital wing, with Dumbledore, Madam Pomfrey, and McGonagall when Potter and Roffin were made aware of Theo's death. They entered the hospital wing, found out what Nott did to his son, and left after a brief spat between themselves, with Potter mumbling something about checking for Nott's whereabouts."

"So, either one is a strong possibility." The Dark Lord mumbled, but then he looked at Severus curiously. "What was their spat about?" He asked.

"Well, My Lord, Potter tried to stop Roffin from going after Nott, but Roffin told him to shut up, because the death of Theo at his father's hands was no different than the muggles killing their magical children in the old days. They sought justice then, and this was no different. That is what Roffin said."

"Seems funny, My Lord, that Severus knew they were coming, but yet didn't think to warn us." Bellatrix said, as she glared at Snape.

Severus glared back. "I was in the room with Dumbledore, the Mediwitch, and the Deputy Headmistress. A student from my own house was lying dead before me, Bella. I think it would have been most suspicious for me to run out of the room at the time and raise a warning. Besides, I had no way of knowing that Nott was at the Parkinson's house."

"Severus is right Bella." Voldemort said with an approving nod towards the Potions Master. "Dumbledore would have known right away what he was about to do, and an action such as that could have seen him thrown out of the Order. Even though I am majorly displeased with the death of two of my Death Eaters, it was no major loss overall and it could have been worse. Travers was beheaded, while Jugson had his legs vanished and bled out. Both were fools in the end. As for Nott, it was clear to me that it was either give him up or Bellatrix would die, and Bellatrix's current assignment is much more important than a stupid fool who does not think before he acts. His son could have held valuable information about Potter, since he talks to his pet snake in Parseltongue, but the stupid fool killed the boy before I could question him. I have no tolerance for incompetence. Also, Potter and Roffin are obviously not as soft as Dumbledore and his useless Order. They aim to kill, as evidenced by Travers and Jugson, so let that be a lesson to you all. However, Parkinson," Voldemort continued as he speared David with a glare. "You better find out how they breached my wards, or I'll kill you myself. Is that understood?"

"Yes, My Lord." David replied nervously.

"Now, this little stunt of my Ancestor's has proven one thing to me. He has a soft spot for children, which is a major weakness," he said with a with a cold smirk, "and it will be used against him. I will not let what they have done tonight go unpunished. I need to plan. Leave me to my thoughts. You are dismissed." He added abruptly.

It was with a heavy heart and a nervous sinking feeling that Severus apparated away with, but he made it a point to seek out Salazar and let him know that Voldemort never got his hands on Theo, or the information that the young man had been keeping safe the entire time. He also needed to warn everyone else that all the children were in danger, and mention that Bellatrix apparently had a secret mission, which seemed to imply something major was coming.
The entire Order was in a solemn mood for the next few days as word spread about Theo, but Godric was taking it the worst. The only thing that cheered him slightly was watching Thaddeus's guilty verdict being handed down by the Wizengamot, and him being kissed by the dementors shortly thereafter.

The day's leading up to Theo’s funeral was an especially trying time for everyone, but given the fact that no one knew where his mother was buried, Godric demanded that Theo be laid to rest on Hogwarts's grounds. He advocated hard for Theo to be laid beside Helga and Rowena, and Salazar wouldn't deny him that.

The day Theo was laid to rest was rainy, cold, and gloomy, but many people still attended the funeral. Among the mourners were Ministry officials, the Order, many students from different houses, who had come to pay their respects, the entirety of Slytherin house, who were there to say goodbye to one of their own, and even Emerald. Salazar nearly broke down in tears when a still grief-stricken Godric, in full view of everyone, blasted apart his own tombstone, dug up his own coffin, dumped the transfigured rock on to the ground, though no one realized that's what it was because he promptly vanished it, and loudly demanded that Theo's body be put in its place.

Everyone watched, with tears in their eyes, as Dumbledore himself lifted Theo's body out of the plain wooden coffin it had been put in, and gently laid it down in Godric's red and gold colored stone coffin. Then the Headmaster replaced the lid of the coffin and sealed it shut. Once Dumbledore had stepped away, Godric knelt down beside the coffin, placed his hand on the lid, and everyone watched as the red and gold colors slowly changed to green and silver.

"I'm so sorry we failed you. May Helga and Rowena protect you in death, seeing as Salazar and I, in life, could not. Rest in peace Theo." Godric whispered softly, then he stood up and watched as the burial magic activated.

Theo's coffin slowly lowered itself into the ground, and before their very eyes, the hole filled up with dirt, before smoothing out and leaving behind soft green grass, which was slowly turning white due to the soft snow that was beginning to fall. Shortly after, a Hogwarts house elf, dressed in a black mourning tunic, popped in with a granite tombstone which read:

**Theodore Nott**

**March 14, 1980-December 26, 1995**

**An Innocent Life Taken Too Soon**

**May Those In His Company Protect Him In Death**

Godric then stood up to face the mourners with a determined look on his face.

"I, Godric Gryffindor, Founder of Gryffindor House, do hereby decree on this day that any magical child, no matter their blood status, be allowed to seek sanctuary and comfort in the halls of Hogwarts at any time of the year, if they feel threatened by their family and friends." He stated loudly, then his eyes quickly found Salazar, who was standing in the front row. "Salazar Slytherin, as Founder and representative of Slytherin House, do you agree?"

"I do." Salazar stated loudly and without hesitation, causing Godric to nod.
"Pomona Sprout, as representative and Head of House for Hufflepuff, do you agree?" He asked, as he looked at the silently weeping witch.

"I do." She said with a choked sob, as Godric smiled slightly at her, before glancing at a solemn Flitwick.

"Filius Flitwick, as representative and Head of House for Ravenclaw, do you agree?"

"I do." The Charms master said as loudly as he could, causing Godric to nod at him, before turning his eyes to Dumbledore, who stood close by.

"Albus Percival Wulfric Brain Dumbledore, as current Headmaster of Hogwarts, do you agree?"

"I do." Dumbledore said without hesitation, causing Godric to give him a thankful nod.

Then he turned towards the castle, which was hidden by the forest trees.

"Hogwarts, the decree that I have set forth this day has been agreed upon by the four Houses and current Headmaster. Do you, yourself, agree to be bound by this decree and swear to uphold it to the best of your ability?"

All the mourners gasped loudly when, off in the near distance, a loud bell tolled.

"Thank you, My Lady." Godric said loudly, before glancing at Salazar once again, who was proudly smiling at him. "We should have made that decree a long time ago."

"Indeed." Salazar replied softly, before Godric turned to address those in attendance.

"Theodore Nott was an innocent child who was killed by the hands of his own father. Let it be known that myself, Salazar, and the staff of Hogwarts will not tolerate such horrible and vicious actions. We will seek justice for any child under our care who comes to harm for any reason. With that said, there is another out there who also threatens the children under our care, simply because he exists. That other is, as you all know, Lord Voldemort." He said loudly, causing nearly everyone there to flinch. "The wizarding world is at war, and by extension, our children are in danger. It is up to us as their parents and educators to protect them to the best of our ability, which is why I now will do what I'm about to do." He said, as he looked at Salazar, who nodded knowingly. "Unless, of course, you want to do it."

"I think you have this part perfectly under control." Salazar replied, causing Godric to chuckle lightly before turning once again towards the castle.

"Hogwarts, our world is at war and the children under our care are in danger from outside forces. My Lady, at this time and by my blood, I, Godric Gryfffindor, command you to…RAISE THE WAR WARDS!" He shouted, as he quickly cut the palm of his hand and smacked it on the ground.

A blast, which sounded like a cannon, echoed from the direction of the castle. Not a moment later, the mourners let out shocked cries as a forceful wave of magic rolled over the school's grounds, which caused nearby startled birds to suddenly take flight.

Then Godric turned to address the crowd once again.

"Now is not the time or place to be naming names or pointing fingers, but I will say this. There are representatives here today on both sides of the war, so I will warn you only once. Hogwarts is now in war mode. To attack her, or anyone under her roof, is perilous, for Hogwarts herself will show you no mercy. Our motto states 'never tickle a sleeping dragon', so perhaps you should think on
"I cannot stand before you today and say what Theo would have wanted the outcome of this war to be, because I'll be the first to admit that I didn't know him that well." Godric said in a grave tone. "I cannot say he was a supporter of the light, but nor can I say he was a supporter of the dark. All I ask of you today is that you remember this innocent young man who died needlessly. We failed Theo, but we will not fail anyone else." He added, before silently making his way back towards Salazar, who placed a comforting hand on his shoulder.

There was a moment of silence as everyone gazed sadly at the tombstone and thought about what all Godric had said and done. Then, slowly but surely, everyone formed a line and began to pay their last respects to Theo, before making their way out of the forest and back towards the castle.

The last few days of the Christmas Holidays were nerve-racking for everyone in the Order as they waited for Voldemort to make his move, but as the day arrived for everyone to return to school for the next term, Salazar found himself having flashbacks to the beginning of the year as everyone ran around Camelot gathering last minute things.

Finally, however, everyone gathered in the foyer for last minute instructions, but before Godric could open his mouth to give them, Neville spoke up.

"Are you going to continue avoiding me when we get back to Hogwarts?" He asked loudly, as he glared at Godric.

Everyone in the foyer suddenly stilled as they eyed the both of them, though Godric bowed his head and shook it lightly from side to side. Everyone knew Godric had been avoiding Neville since the night Theo died, and they had a pretty good idea why. Augusta, however, looked at her grandson in shock.

"Neville, mind whom you are speaking to!" She exclaimed, causing Neville to give her a level stare.

"I know perfectly well who I am speaking to, Gran." He replied calmly. "I am speaking to Gordy Roffin, who happens to be one of my very good friends. A friend who has been avoiding me since the night Theo died, which is cowardly in my opinion." He said, causing his grandmother to gasp.

"Neville, how dare…"

"I do dare Gran." He said without remorse. "I dare to call him a coward because if Gordy hadn't been avoiding me, he would know that I'm not angry over the fact that he didn't kill Bellatrix." He said, as he turned his attention to Godric, who did nothing but study the white marble floor. "I don't blame him because that night was not about me, you, Mum, or Dad. That night was about Theo. If he had killed Bellatrix, Voldemort may not have given Nott up. At that time, justice for Theo was more important than revenge for the Longbottoms, and rightfully so." He added, as Godric finally looked up at him.

"I'm sorry." He said softly.

"It's alright." Neville said with a forgiving smile. "I've been trying to tell you that for days, but you keep avoiding me every time I walk into a room. Dare I say, you've almost been Slytherin with how you've gone about avoiding me." He added with a smirk, which made Salazar let out a strangled cry of protest.

Hermione just rolled her eyes and smacked his arm. "Oh, stop overreacting Harry. It's not a crime for a Gryffindor to act like a Slytherin at times."
"Yes, it is!" He yelped. "Especially that bloody Gryffindor! Next thing you know, the sky will turn green and the grass will be blue!"

Hermione let out an exasperated huff and shook her head, but she giggled as everyone else in the foyer to burst out laughing. Neville and Godric shook hands and gave each other a friendly hug, before Godric cleared his throat loudly.

"Alright, just like the beginning of the year. I'll go ahead with Nehum and send a patronus once I know what's happening on the platform."

"Before you go Jolly, I wish to say something." Nora said as she poked her head out of Salazar's robe sleeve. "If Bottom ever again causes Speaker any distress by saying Jolly is like a Slytherin, I will bite him. Also, Minions, Speaker has given me a wonderful idea; blue grass and green sky. I want you to look into that for my amusement. If you don't, I'll bite you too." She added, causing everyone to snicker loudly.

"We will do our best Nora." The twins said with a grin, which caused her to nod.

"See that you do." She said, before sliding back into Salazar's sleeve.

Godric snorted before glancing over the group. "Remember, stagger your arrivals, and I'll see you all when you get there." He said, just before he and Nehum flamed away.

When Salazar arrived at the station, he raised an eyebrow in shock when he saw Albus himself standing on a raised wooden platform overseeing the boarding process. He quickly joined the Headmaster, who gave him a friendly smile.

"I'm sorry for not letting you all know I was here, but it was a very last-minute decision. I left the castle about ten minutes ago."

"Last minute indeed." Salazar chuckled.

"I told Minerva that I wanted her, Pomona, Filius, and Hagrid to remain behind at the castle just in case something happened in my absence. I'll also be on the train with you and Mr. Roffin, as will Sirius and Remus. The train is a very tempting and vulnerable target, and I know Voldemort has no objections to attacking a train full of students. Severus isn't here though. He has elected to inform Tom of this sudden development." Albus whispered softly. "I also received a patronus from Minerva just after I arrived here. She told me that, with help from Severus, Hagrid has removed the ever-present towels from Miss Emeralda's eyes and asked her to guard the gates while he and Aberforth stand watch on the Hogsmeade platform."

"That was a smart move Dumbly. The Shrew can't eat anyone trying to sneak in if her eyes are covered." Nora hissed quietly, causing Albus to chuckle while Salazar grinned at him.

"Hagrid's back?" He asked, causing Dumbledore to nod.

"He arrived back just this morning. Unfortunately, however, he did not arrive with good news. He and Madam Maxime were not successful. Voldemort's people got to the giants first, and they have sided with him."

"Bugger." Salazar swore softly.

"Indeed." Albus said with a grave nod, as they watched the Weasleys arrive.
They spotted Albus and Salazar immediately and waved heartily, which caused the two elder wizards to wave back.

"I'm actually glad you're here. This action will put a lot of people at ease. Godric and I were worried about attendance dropping for this term." Salazar said, as he looked up at Dumbledore, who smiled softly.

"Thank you, Harry. Coming from you that means a lot to me." He said, causing Salazar to chuckle.

"I think we are way past the 'Harry' part, Albus. Call me Salazar, and I know Godric won't care if you called him by his true name."

"I consider it an honor." Albus replied with a respectful nod.

"Actually, there is something that I've been meaning to apologize for, but before I do, Moody would hex me senseless if I did not make sure you are who you appear to be."

"I have no doubt that he would." Albus laughed. "Please, ask me anything."

"Alright," Salazar said thoughtfully, before grinning. "In your duel with Merlin, how long did you last?"

Dumbledore eyes lit up with a twinkle and he chuckled heartily. "About twenty minutes, but I still say he let me get in a few lucky shots."

Salazar burst out laughing. "He's adamant that he didn't and you did very well from what I saw." Salazar replied, but then he smiled apologetically. "Even if you didn't have the Elder Wand at the time." He whispered very lowly.

This caused Dumbledore to gasp loudly. "How did…"

"It's what I've been meaning to apologize for. I didn't know what it was when I snapped it in second year, but I later learned that's what it was. Had I known, I wouldn't have done that. I'm so sorry."

"Aberforth must have told you, because he is the only one that knew about it." Dumbledore nodded. "But I forgive you. Given its history, it's probably better off that you did."

"Indeed. Antioch was a fool and that wand had a bloody history because of him. Maybe it is for the best." Salazar replied.

"So, you know the legend then?" Albus asked curiously.

"I do, and that actually reminds me of something else I need to talk to you about, but now is not the place to be mentioning such things." He said, as he knowingly glanced around at the bustling crowd of parents and students.

"I understand perfectly." Albus replied. "Come to my office tonight, if you can. I also have things I've been meaning to share with you and Godric as well."

"We will certainly make time this evening." Salazar replied, just as the train's whistle blew.

"Attention students, may I have your attention please?" Albus voice boomed through the train, once it had started to move. "Due to safety concerns, I ask you all to quickly find your seats and get settled. For today, I regret to inform you that our Honeydukes trolley witch, will not be coming around." He said, instantly sparking backlash along with loud booing. "However," he rushed to say,
"I am happy to announce that several house elves are on board and they will be providing you with a small premade lunch from Hogwarts's kitchens." He said, causing the booing to suddenly turn into cheering, but then Albus continued with a small chuckle.

"I ask you all to remain inside your compartments for the duration of the journey, but if you do require something, please inform myself or Professors Black, Lupin, and Slytherin, along with Mr. Gordy Roffin, who will be patrolling the corridors this afternoon. Please be aware that I have asked the conductor to safely put as much speed into the engine as possible, and he has informed me that we should arrive at Hogwarts a good two hours ahead of normal schedule. Dinner will still, as always, be served upon arrival. Prefects, I wish to apologize for seizing your responsibilities today, but I only do so for your safety, so I hope you all understand. Thank you, and have a pleasant journey."

After the Headmaster's announcement, around twenty glassy-eyed students, who were spread throughout the train, stiffened as they heard a soft whisper echo through their minds.

"In light of this news and because of information I have been provided with, do nothing until I command you. Act normal."

"Yes, My Lord." They all whispered as one.

They were only three hours into the trip when Godric came across Sirius, who was leaning against the wall next to a girl's loo.

"Having fun?" He asked the unamused looking man.

" Loads. All I've been doing is escorting witches to the loo. One even asked if I wanted to join her." Sirius answered with a roll of his eyes, causing Godric to burst out laughing.

"I think you can handle it."

"A lot of the kids are asking if we are expecting an attack. I honestly don't know what to tell them." He said gravely, causing Godric to smile softly at him.

"Tell them the truth, like Salazar and I have been doing. Tell them if there is an attack to stay in their compartments with their heads down." He replied, causing Sirius to nod, but both of them turned to the door when it opened just a crack.

"Roffin? Is that you?" A voice whispered frantically.

"Pansy?" Godric questioned, then he moved slightly and looked at the crack, only to see the girl's eyes peering back at him.

"Yes, it is me. Is there anyone else around?"

"No." He answered as he narrowed his eyes suspiciously. "What do you want?"

"Look, I know that I have been a straight up horrible witch these last few years, but you need to listen to me. There are imperiused students on board the train, and they are under the command of the Dark Lord himself. I don't know how many or who they are though." She said, causing both Sirius and Godric's eyes to widen in alarm. "And before you ask, no I'm not one of them. My father lied to the Dark Lord and told him I was sick in bed and suffering from women's problems, so he didn't use me, though my father suffered for my lack of availability." She added bitterly.
"Why are you telling us this?" Godric asked.

"I don't know." She said with a frustrated sigh. "I guess I just want to thank you. The night you came and got Theo's father, the Dark Lord moved out of our house. My life, and my parents' lives, have greatly improved since then. Not to mention, I have respect for what you did for Theo, both in tracking down his father and at his funeral. You also didn't make Theo a poster boy for the light side, when you easily could have."

"You're welcome and I thank you for the information." Godric said. "I must find Albus and Salazar."

"Yeah, no kidding." Sirius said with an audible gulp.

"Wait Roffin, before you go, may I request a boon?"

"What boon?" Godric asked with suspicion.

Pansy's pleading eyes looked up at him through the crack in the door. "The night you and Potter came and got Nott, the Dark Lord threatened to kill my father if he didn't find out how you breached the wards the Dark Lord put around our house. My father has not been able to figure it out yet, and the Dark Lord is losing his patience. Please, will you tell me how you did it?"

Godric stared at the girl with narrowed eyes, but after a moment, he nodded slightly.

"The wards didn't extend underground, so I tunneled under them."

Pansy visibly sighed with relief as tears pooled in her eyes. "Thank you." She whispered with a sob, then shut the door quietly. "I'll be just a few more minutes." She called out loudly.

Godric glanced at Sirius, who nodded grimly, before he went off in search of Albus and/or Salazar. He finally found Albus, who seemed to be talking with some curious Ravenclaw students.

"I can't rightly answer your question Mr. Goldstein, for I myself do not know what all Hogwarts plans to do now that she is in 'War Mode'. I can tell you, however, that all of the statues have been brought to life, as have the suits of armor. They have been constantly patrolling the halls ever since. The ghosts, as well, have changed. They are now more solid than they have ever been. I asked The Grey Lady why this was and she told me that Hogwarts is feeding the ghosts a bit of her magic. They are now able to move solid objects." He replied, causing all of them, even Godric, to gasp.

"We don't even know what all Hogwarts plans to do." Godric added. "She's never been in War Mode. This is the first time ever that we have had to raise the war wards."

"Really?" Cho asked, as she blinked in surprise.

"Yes, but perhaps we will address that at dinner when we arrive. For the moment, I need to borrow the Headmaster."

"Is there a problem?" Albus asked with a troubled frown.

"Yes, Remus is having problems with a student." Godric replied, then lead Dumbledore away.

When they were out of sight of the compartment full of Ravenclaws, Godric stopped and threw up a privacy charm.

"I lied about Remus and the student, but we do have a major problem." He said, just as he caught sight of Salazar hurrying his way towards them.
He quickly canceled the ward, but then threw it right back up once Salazar reached them.

"Sirius just filled Remus and I in. Are you sure she's not lying just so she could get the information about how we got past the wards?" He asked.

"She could have been, but I don't think she was. She seemed really upset." Godric replied, before turning to Albus.

He quickly filled the Headmaster in, who nodded gravely.

"We cannot afford to question Miss Parkinson's claim. We must prepare. Do the war wards extend to the Hogsmeade platform?" He asked, but Godric and Salazar shook their heads.

"No." Salazar replied. "They only encompass the grounds around the castle. The black lake is protected, but where the lake ends, so do the wards. Same with the forest. The front gate is the boundary for that portion and as for the backside, it stops at the mountains. Hogsmeade, including the platform itself, is vulnerable."

"We must still consider the train itself as a target." Albus said, as he closed his eyes and sighed heavily. "I was afraid of something like this. He knows we won't hurt students, especially if they are imperiused."

"I know." Godric admitted. "But I guess we can safely bet that most of the students would be in Slytherin, though we can't bet that is where they all will be from."

"Indeed." Salazar agreed. "Well Godric, how about we introduce them to their new prefect, and see if we can't provoke them into giving us more information?" He asked, causing Godric to nod grimly.

"I just hate that I had to replace Theo."

"I know, but if they are imperiused, then this will allow us to get a good look at everyone."

"True, but keep in mind, they don't have the glassy look unless he is actively controlling them at that moment." Albus warned, causing the two founders to nod knowingly. "In the meantime, I'll send word to Minerva to be ready in all areas, and I'll have her alert Poppy to be standing by with medical aid."

"Let's hope we don't need it." Salazar said, as he and Godric began heading in the direction most of the Slytherins were gathered.

Hermione stared at Sirius in horror as he recanted everything that he had heard from Pansy.

"We need to alert the entire Student Lead Defense Association." She said, as she looked over to a grim looking Neville.

"But we don't know if any of the members are part of the imperiused kids. We may tip our hand." He replied.

"You guys are still running that?" Sirius asked curiously. "I thought with Harry back, you'd stop meeting because you didn't need it."

"Yeah, we are, even if Harry is back." Neville said. "It'll help reinforce what Harry is teaching us and we can still practice other spells that he's not."

"I suppose that's true." Sirius said with a nod.
"Well, in any case, you can bet that most of Slytherin is probably part of those who are imperiused, so they wouldn't be alerted, and even if one of the Slytherins who are a part of the SLDA, like Pucey, is sitting back there with them, he'd just pass it off as a joke. I'm not sure about the other houses though." Draco added. "But if we use our code system, it might just work."

"What code system?" Sirius asked with a raised eyebrow.

Hermione grinned, reached into her bag, and brought out a small wooden toad.

"Fred and George made these specifically for the SLDA. We set up a code system for dealing with Umbridge, but it will work in an emergency too." She said, as she waved her wand at it. "Hem, hem. I refuse to put up with any more of these shenanigans. If you all don't behave, I will have you all EXPELLED!" She cried.

Meanwhile, up and down the train, students glanced at their bags as hundreds of toads began ribbiting loudly, before repeating Hermione's words in Umbridge's own voice. This caused everyone with a toad to glance at everyone else.

"I WILL HAVE ORDER!" Neville said, as he waved his own wand over his toad.

"That phrase," Hermione informed a shocked Sirius, "is to let them know there is an immediate threat, and the word 'expelled' means we could get seriously hurt or killed. If we get to the castle unharmed, I will cancel it by saying 'order had been restored', but if we get to the platform and nothing has happened yet, one of us will repeat the phrase 'I will have order'." She explained.

"In other words, three-quarters of the school is now on high alert." Blaise added with a grin. "We all expect an attack anyway, what with all of you, not to mention Professor Dumbledore, on board. This just lets them know the threat is very real."

"Genius, simply genius." Sirius grinned. "I'll go let Remus know. I assume that Harry and Gordy know all this?" He asked, causing them all to nod. "Brilliant." He said, as he opened the door to the compartment and disappeared down the corridor.

"They made you prefect!" Pansy shrieked, as she glared at Godric.

"Well, Professor Snape was angry when the Headmaster overruled his decision to make Crabbe a prefect instead, but yes, I'm the new prefect." Godric said as he leaned against the wall with his arms crossed. "So, if you have a problem with that, Parkinson," he sneered, "take it up with him."

"It was a toss-up between the two of us, but since I'm Defense Professor, Godric stepped up." Salazar informed them.

"How are you going to carry out your duties Gryffindor, if you don't even live in the real Slytherin common room?" Montague asked snidely.

"For your information," Salazar said harshly, as his eyes snapped to the boy "I have sanctioned the Snake Pit as part of the common room, so technically, Godric does live in the real common room. When this war is over and peace has been restored, I plan to make it assessable to all Slytherin students, unless the Head boy or girl for that year is a Slytherin, but judging by you lot, that won't happen for a while."

Montague scoffed loudly, but sat back down with a glare.

"I guess Malfoy was too scared to take up the position." Hestia said with a smirk, as several others
"There is nothing wrong with self-preservation." Salazar said offhandedly. "If you don't think that we don't know about your orders to kill him, think again."

"And how would you know that Potter?" Montague asked with a sneer.

"Get your parents to tell you about Tiny Voldemort." He said with a smirk, causing most of them to glare at him.

Suddenly, a loud ribbiting from Pucey's bag could be heard, followed by Umbridge's voice.

"Hem, hem. I refuse to put up with any more of these shenanigans. If you all don't behave, I will have you all EXPELLED!" Which was immediately followed by, "I WILL HAVE ORDER!"

"Those Weasley twins!" Adrian Pucey said with gritted teeth. "I'm going to kill them. They stuck that in my bag on purpose! They know I hated that woman."

"Yeah, even we know that woman was useless." Pansy said as she rolled her eyes. "And her voice sounds terrible. As for you Roffin, you just stay out of my way when we are on rounds."

Godric just scoffed and glared at the girl, but given her warning, Salazar suspected that she wasn't as angry with this as she let on.

"Well, I just thought I should warn you about my prefect status before the Headmaster announced it a dinner. I felt it was only fair." Godric said as he pushed himself off the wall.

"How very Hufflepuff of you, Gryffindor." Montague said spitefully, causing Godric to draw his wand.

"Speak disrespectful about Helga again boy, and I'll cut your tongue out." He growled.

Montague smirked. "My, my what would Hogwarts do about you threatening a child?"

"You're of age, you big tosser." Godric replied with a sneer, causing Montague to glare at him.

Before anything else could be said though, Salazar grabbed Godric by the sleeve.

"Let's go. We've lingered here long enough. We have rounds to make." Salazar said, making a few of the Slytherins chuckle evilly.

"Yes, do go and protect the children. We wouldn't want any of them to get hurt, now would we?" Flora said with an evil smirk, causing Salazar to stop and study her for a moment.

"So, he is planning to attack the train. I figured he would, but thank you for the warning and confirmation Miss Carrow." He said with a grin. "Come on Godric, we got what we came for."

"Yes, we did." He said with a growl, as the two of them headed out of the compartment.

They didn't miss the absolute fury on the faces of some of the Slytherins, or the complete horror on the faces of others.

The rest of the train ride was quiet, but tense. When they were five minutes away from Hogsmeade though, Albus made another announcement.
"Students, in just a few minutes we will be arriving in Hogsmeade. Please be advised that the platform will be hosting a number of Aurors as well as Professors. Also, be advised that Miss Emeralda is moving around freely and that her eyes are uncovered. Normally this would mean that you could die by her gaze, since she is a basilisk, but Professor Slytherin has reminded me that she has what he calls 'blinders' on her eyes, so all she can do is petrify you. I suggest, if you don't want to spend the night in the hospital wing, that you not look at her. Please disembark in an orderly fashion and quickly make your way to the castle. Due to safety reasons, the slow-moving, tightly enclosed carriages will not be available, so keep running until you reach the front gates. We feel you will be faster on foot. There will be several people, including Merlin, keeping watch over you along the way. Leave all your belongings on the train, and they will be gathered by the house elves. Thank you."

The cry of, 'I WILL HAVE ORDER!', echoed loudly throughout the train, causing three-quarters of the students to palm their wands as the train made its way into Hogsmeade. When the train pulled up to the brightly lit Hogsmeade Station, everyone could see many Aurors on brooms hovering high above the train tracks, as well as many others on the platform.

When it finally came to a full stop, many people realized that they couldn't open the compartment doors.

"Precaution, I suspect." Hermione said as Draco frantically jiggled the locked handle. "And I highly doubt that a simple unlocking charm will unlock it."

"This has to be Harry's doing." Blaise said, causing Neville to nod in agreement.

"You think they are going to let us off by car?" Draco asked, as he turned around.

"Yes." Luna replied. "It makes sense really. Less people at a time for them to keep their eyes on. Less death overall, if something should happen."

"That was a bit morbid Luna." Ginny said anxiously.

"But she's got a point." Draco said as he nervously sat back down. "The Slytherins would be at the back of the train, so they'd be the last to get off, and from what Sirius said, this train car consists of us and a mix of Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs."

"I'm still worried though. It's not just Slytherins who support him." Blaise said just as nervously, as they watched the first car being unloaded.

They watched as those in the first car ran towards the castle along the brightly lit path, before those in the second car were released. The process was repeated for the third and fourth cars, but suddenly the train was rocked by an explosion and lurched slightly to one side, as loud screams instantly filled the air. Yelling and spell fire could be heard close by them, as Professors and Aurors began shouting commands at the students still on the platform.

Ron suddenly spotted a large blurry seventh year, who was outside the window, raise his wand at their car.

"Blimey! Get down!" He cried, as he threw himself on top of Ginny, who was sitting beside him.

The widow exploded, showering them with glass, but Neville and Draco instantly returned fire, as Hermione and Blaise shielded them all. The seventh year was struck by a banishing charm and was promptly thrown backwards into a bench seat that was on the platform.

"They're escaping, they're escaping!" They heard Moody yell. "Broom riders, push them back in the
car! Keep them contained!" He continued to yell, as more screams filled the air.

"NOOOO!" They heard Minerva scream. "She was just a first year! You bloody COWARD!"

"Dear Merlin, I have never heard McGonagall scream like that." Hermione whispered with tears in her eyes.

"Avada Kedavra!" Someone shouted nearby, causing them all to squeeze their eyes shut in horror.

"Pucey duck!" They heard Salazar shout frantically.

The train lurched again, causing Ginny to cry out in fright, but the car they were in lit up with a sickly green glow.

"Thanks Harry! Is he down?" They heard Pucey yell a second later.

"He's down!" Salazar confirmed.

Hermione and the others heard running footsteps above their heads, but kept their heads down seeing as they didn't know who it could have been.

"The Death Eaters have come!" Perenelle shouted.

"No, no, no, no!" Draco breathed. "We're still trap…"

"We have to get these kids out of here NOW!" They heard Godric shout. "There are still three cars full of students!"

The train lurched again, but a moment later Salazar's head popped up above the broken window.

"Apparate now! Go to the special room!" He commanded, causing Ginny to grab Luna and instantly vanish.

"Harry, I just had an idea! The house elves! Call for Dobby to get the others who can't apparate!" Neville shouted, then he promptly grabbed Colin and disapparated.

"Damn! Why didn't I think about that before!?" He swore, just as Hermione, Ron, and Blaise vanished with Susan, Dennis, and Draco in tow. "Dobby!

The little elf popped in right beside him, took one look around, and nodded.

"Dobby goes to get help!" He shouted, before disappearing again.

What happened next caused a lull in the fighting as everyone stared in shock at the fifty house elves who, with a tremendously loud crack, apparated onto the roofs of the remaining cars full of students.

"To the front doors!" Dobby commanded, then with an almighty crack, the remaining train cars simply vanished.

"Holy sweet Merlin!" Someone shouted in shock.

"I don't know how holy and sweet I am, but never underestimate a house elf!" Merlin called out, just before sending a blasting curse into a cluster of Death Eaters.

This sent them flying in all different directions and caused the fighting to begin anew. A few moments later, however, there was a large crash from up the path, followed by a Death Eater running
for his life.

"Retreat! It's the basilisk! Retreat…aaarrggghh!"

Thorfinn Rowle never spoke another word, because Emeralda squashed him flat then proceeded to swallow him whole. At that point the Death Eaters began to flee, but unfortunately, not before taking as many of their own unconscious and dead with them as they could.

Salazar stopped to survey the devastation, while also keeping a sharp eye out in case any Death Eaters were still lurking around. The platform was a destroyed mess. The train was damaged badly and half laying on its side, both from spell fire and the fact that the elves had practically ripped it in half when they apparated away with the cars. He saw several Aurors attending to the wounded adults, but by some miracle, he didn't see any dead students. There were some who appeared to be hurt, and noted that the few who were, were already being attended to.

There was one person who he didn't see though, and this caused his heart to freeze with worry.

"Where's Minerva!?” Salazar called out amidst the eerie silence that had descended.

"I'm over here!” She cried, causing him to sprint towards the slightly darker tree line. She was nearly invisible with her black robes on.

"Thank Merlin you're alright.” He said skidding to a stop next her, noticing she was crouched down over a student.

"You have no idea how literal that is. If not for Merlin jumping in front of a killing curse for me, I wouldn't be here.” She replied, causing him to sink down next to her with a shaky breath.

"Is she…"

"She's alive.” Minerva said with a relieved sigh, but then her voice turned cold. "It appears that one of the Carrow twins cannot cast a killing curse properly. Miss Edwards is only unconscious."

"Is that why you screamed 'coward'?” Salazar asked, causing Minerva to nod.

"Miss Edwards was running for cover and I saw Miss Carrow cast the curse at her back.” She replied with a shaky sob, as Hagrid's booming voice whooped with joy in the background.

"All righ' Miss Emeralda! Ya set them runnin' for the hills!"

"Indeed, my dear.” Salazar said, as he helped Minerva to her feet. "We thank you for your help."

"I just wish I could have gotten more of them Master." She replied.

"Why couldn't you have shown up sooner Shrew!?" Nora yelled from under Salazar's sleeve. "Speaker almost died at least twenty times! It's just like you to show up late!"

"Shut up Fish Bait! I had to wait until the little ones were safe so I wouldn't hurt them! And at least I was good for something! You spent the entire time hiding!” Emeralda replied with an angry flick her tail, which caused what was left of the train to fall over completely with a loud crash.

"Damn! Son of a…"

There was a loud thump, followed by Godric suddenly bursting out laughing.

"After all that, he gets himself petrified. Mad-Eye is gonna be pissed when he wakes up!” He
shouted, causing many of the Aurors to start laughing.

"Well," Nora said with what sounded like a flippant hiss. "I'll have that big fat Shrew know that I was just waiting for the perfect chance to bite someone."

Salazar couldn't help but shake his head and laugh.

A few hours later, Albus smiled gently as he stood behind the staff table and gazed out across the great hall at all of the scared, nervous, and fidgety students that sat before him.

"I am pleased to inform you all that, despite the attack tonight, the only casualty we suffered was the loss of the Hogwarts Express."

This caused a massive cheer to erupt in the great hall as relief spread faster than a juicy rumor.

"However, however," Albus said as he raised a hand for silence. "We have suffered many injuries, some of them very grievous, but Madam Pomfrey, along with staff from St. Mungo's, are tending to the ones who are hurt. If you are worried about your missing friends or housemates, please check with Madam Pomfrey in the morning, but please do not inquire about them this evening, seeing as she is very busy." He added, causing most of the students to nod in understanding.

"What about the students who attacked us?" Someone asked.

"All twenty of them have been detained by the DMLE." Albus answered immediately. "They are currently stating that they were under the imperius curse, but we will let the Aurors and the use of veritaserum determine if that is true or not. Once we have news, we will pass it along to you, so that you are properly informed."

"Will they be allowed to come back to school?" Someone else asked.

"At this point in time, we don't know. Once the investigation is complete, a decision will be made." He said calmly.

Salazar knew, since it had already been discussed, that those who were unwillingly imperiused would most likely be allowed back, but those who welcomed it eagerly would not. Merlin had elected to go to the Ministry to help break the curse on the imperiused students and everyone was just waiting for word if he had been successful or not.

"I saw several people hit by the killing curse." Someone said. "You mean to say those people are still alive?" They asked in shock.

Albus smiled at all of them. "In order to cast the Unforgivables correctly, you need to not only be focused, but also have the magical strength to carry through with it. Your classmates who were imperiused and used the Unforgivables, were not magically strong enough to cast them successfully."

"My sister is alive!? I saw her! She was hit!" One sixth year boy cried.

"Yes, Mr. Edwards, your sister is alive. I checked on her myself." Minerva replied with tears in her eyes. "The spell simply knocked her unconscious. She is now under the care of Madam Pomfrey."

"Thank you!" Edwards shouted, just before a gut-wrenching sob of relief escaped from the boy.

Several of his friends shuffled closer to the crying Ravenclaw, before helping him up and walking with him out of the great hall, though they nearly ran into Severus who was making his way in.
When Salazar spotted him, he sucked in a deep breath and quickly ran an expert eye over the man, as Severus simply glared at the Ravenclaws who continued on their way. He appeared to be fine though, which eased a great worry immediately.

Salazar saw him glance over the great hall. His eyes lingered on the half empty Slytherin table, before looking towards the Gryffindors. Salazar almost smiled when he caught sight of Severus eyeing Hermione, Neville, Ron, Fred, George, and Ginny, along with Draco and Blaise, in turn. It was almost as if he were assuring himself that they were alright.

"Tears of joy and relief," Albus said, causing all the students to focus on him once again, "such as the ones Mr. Edwards were displaying just now, are nothing to be ashamed of. However, since Madam Pomfrey is terribly busy at the moment, if you find yourself needing a calming draught I'm sure Professor Snape will be willing to give you one." He said, causing Severus to sneer at him as he swept over to the staff table and took his seat. "Though," Albus continued with a smile, "I'm sure Professor Slytherin or Mr. Roffin would also be glad to assist you."

"HA! Godric is pants at potions," Salazar laughed loudly. "You'd be better off asking the giant squid for one!"

"Shut up Salazar!" Godric yelled, causing the students to snort and chuckle.

"Did I ever tell you all about the time Godric was trying to brew a simple pepper-up potion?" He asked rhetorically, though still causing some of the students to snort and giggle. "Helga, who was our potions mistress and Professor, had gone on an extended outing to gather some ingredients that simply were not available in Scotland at that time. Well, one of our students fell sick and Godric decided that he was going to brew the poor lad a pepper-up potion. He brews it, then brings it to me because 'it didn't look right'. Now, keep in mind that the potion is supposed to be a bright, almost pinkish red, but this one was almost black." He said, causing the students to start chuckling. "He says to me, 'I don't know why it looks like this, but I've finished it.' I said to him, 'Godric, that's not a pepper-up potion, that looks like something you dug out of the loo.' He says, 'it is so a pepper-up potion. My hat may have fallen in the cauldron, but I fished it out.' Needless to say, we, meaning Helga, Rowena, and I, never let him near another cauldron." He finished, as those in the great hall burst into hearty laughter.

"Shut **up** Salazar!"

"And with that fun, light-hearted story," Albus said, as he wiped tears of laughter out of his eyes, "let us all enjoy our overdue dinner!"

It was a completely exhausted staff that gathered in the staff room later that evening, but once the door was shut, Salazar grabbed Severus by his robes, spun him around, and really looked him over.

"Are you alright? Do you need anything?" He asked.

Severus shook his head lightly. "No, I'm fine." He said quietly. "But I cannot say the same about the Carrow siblings. Amycus is dead, and after the Dark Lord killed him, Alecto attacked him with a vengeance. He tortured her into insanity." He said, addressing the room at large. "He did not expect so many Death Eaters to come back injured or dead though. He knew the students would be overpowered easily, so that's why he sent the Death Eaters in once you all had gotten them under control. I did not know he had placed the children under the imperius curse until I showed up to warn him that you," he said, looking at Albus, "were on the platform and would be taking the train back. I was not able to come back and warn you all, because he wanted me to stay and brew a few simple and quick healing potions, but it is clear to me that you all found out before the attack. Did the
students attack early or something? What happened on this end?" He asked in a great rush.

"We were warned by Pansy." Godric said, causing Severus's jaw to drop.

"Parkinson?" He asked in a shocked tone.

"Yeah, as surprising as it is." Godric replied, then he told Severus the whole story of how that came to be.

"That girl is more cunning than I give her credit for." Severus said as he leaned tiredly back in his seat.

"Indeed." Salazar agreed with a nod. "Though Godric and I confirmed it by going into the Slytherin compartment under the guise of letting them know that he is their new fifth year prefect. It was one of the Carrow twins who unwittingly confirmed the attack. I thanked her for the warning in order to protect Parkinson to some extent."

"Well," Severus said, as he looked around the room. "That explains why we went after the Carrows then. Their nieces aren't very bright to begin with though. I'm guessing, based on the light-hearted laughter in the great hall this evening, that we didn't lose anyone on our side. Though I must admit, I was thinking the worst when Mr. Edwards passed by me when I came in."

"You'd be correct in your thinking." Albus said. "We do have those who have suffered major injuries, but Poppy assures me they have been transferred to St. Mungo's and are on the mend. Those with minor injuries are still here in the hospital wing."

"The laughter started when Moody got himself petrified though." Godric chuckled.

"Petrified?" Severus asked with a snort.

"Yeah," Salazar said with a grin. "Nora and Emeralda were arguing, causing Emeralda to get mad. She knocked the Express, which was already about to fall, the rest of the way over. Moody, being the paranoid codger that he is, whipped around at the sound and well…"

"Petrified himself." Severus finished with a laugh. "He's going to be pissed when he wakes up."

"That's exactly what I said!" Godric exclaimed.

"That is actually something I've been meaning to ask." Minerva suddenly said in confusion. "How come Alastor can look at Miss Emeralda with his magic eye and not be petrified?"

This caused Albus to somewhat shrug. "I don't know to be honest. It's possible that since it is a magical eye and not his real one, that it doesn't count as really looking at her."

"It's a good theory and makes sense actually." Salazar said with a nod. "But we'd have to ask him to be sure."

"I suppose so." Severus said with a tired nod. "I also have something else that the Dark Lord mentioned to me today. He wants Excalibur soon and with school back in session, I've run out of excuses."

Salazar nodded. "I understand. I'll talk with Hermione tomorrow and let her know, so don't be surprised if you have to give the normally compliant girl a detention for back talking a Professor." He said with a chuckle, causing Severus to snort.
"I'll think up something particularly nasty to taunt her with." He said with a smirk.

"That shouldn't be too hard." Godric said with a laugh.

"Will the new wards even let you carry out your plan?" Flitwick asked nervously, causing Salazar to pucker his lips in thought.

"You know what Filius, I actually don't know."

"How can you not know!?!" Pomona asked in shock.

"We just don't know." Godric replied. "We've never had to raise the war wards before. These wards were created for war, not every little minor skirmish, and even in the old days, it was just small bands of muggles that came. Nothing really to raise them for."

"All four of us created the wards, so even if Helga and Rowena were still alive, none of us could tell you what they would do. This is all Hogwarts herself, and since she was created by all four of us, she has a bit of our personality. She's always been semi-sentient, but the war wards just give her that extra ability to do what she sees fit. Hogwarts herself is now in charge, not us." Salazar added.

"So, she could kill me if I carry out the plan with Miss Granger." Severus said nervously.

"I don't think she would go that far." Salazar said. "She knows you fairly well since you are a Professor and have lived here for the better part of fifteen years. She knows you're a bit crabby sometimes, but to actively hurt a child? I'd like to think she would give you the benefit of the doubt. It could be similar to what happened with Albus in fourth year. Though the eagles talking threw us for a loop. How she was able to do that, I still don't know."

"Nor I, but she could simply send a ghost to find out your intentions, or a suit of armor to escort you to Albus's office and let him deal with you. She could alert the nearest other Professor or Poppy, even Salazar and I, if we were closer. The worst she might do is stun you." Godric said with a shrug, causing Severus to glare at him doubtfully.

"Or she might not do anything at all simply because we all know about it." Salazar added.

"Might?" Severus asked with a raised eyebrow.

"What do you want us to say, Severus? We simply don't know what she will do. I highly doubt she will kill you though." Salazar replied. "Do you want us to tell her, 'Hey Hogwarts at some point Severus Snape will imperious Hermione Granger. We know about it, it's a plan to help us for the war. We trust him not to hurt her. Allow him to carry out this task?' I don't think she will understand exactly what we are talking about…"

**BONG!**

The single tolling of the bell startled them all, and caused Salazar to stop in mid-sentence. He raised an eyebrow as he looked towards the ceiling, but Godric chuckled loudly.

"My Lady, is that confirmation that you will allow this to happen, or not?" He asked, causing Salazar to glance at him dubiously.

"One question at a time Godric. She can't differentiate between the two. What do you want her to do? Bong once for yes and twice for no? I really don't think…OW!"

A white light had suddenly appeared from behind Salazar and struck him right on the back of his
arm, causing Godric to burst out laughing as the others stared around in shock. However, the bell tolled once, causing Pomona, Poppy, and Minerva to giggle loudly, as a voice behind Salazar suddenly spoke up.

"Potsy is sorry for stinging you Master Salazar, but Hoggywarts is directing her to do that." The little elf said with an apologetic smile, before promptly popping away.

"Remember that personality thing we were just talking about?" Godric asked with a snort. "Yeah, that was all Rowena." He said, as he pointed from Salazar to the spot where the little elf had been standing.

"Shut up Godric." Salazar said as he rubbed his arm.

"I guess Hogwarts really is in charge now." Pomona said with laugh, causing Salazar to glare at her.

"I almost can't wait to see what she will do next." Flitwick added, as he bounced excitedly in his seat.

Salazar just sighed loudly and shook his head, but Minerva giggled again as Albus looked at the Founders in confusion.

"I don't understand. Is it bad that she is acting like Rowena?" He asked curiously, causing Godric to laugh.

"It's bad for Salazar, because he always somehow managed to aggravate her."

"Whatever." Salazar said with a nonchalant wave of his hand. "I'm not concerned about aggravating mortar and stone…OW!"

"Potsy is sorry again, Master Salazar!" Came the slightly amused disembodied apology, which caused everyone in the staff room to burst out laughing.

"See?" Godric asked with a large grin, causing Salazar to huff loudly before standing up.

"Well I'm going to bed." He announced.

"Yes, go to bed before you insult Hogwarts again, thereby causing her to keep punishing you like a small child." Godric said causing the others to burst out laughing again.

Salazar just mock glared at him, before letting a chuckle escape as he headed for the Defense Professor's living quarters. He hadn't known what to expect by them raising the war wards, but if this was the end result, he certainly wasn't going to complain about it. It also, to some extent, provided a level of safety for Severus, because Voldemort, at some point at least, would want to know about the wards, and Severus couldn't tell him what they didn't know.