**To Have and to Hold**

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**To Have and to Hold**

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**Summary**

After the war, one chance tryst could provide the Man-Who-Conquered just want he needed: love, home, a family, and a future worth living for.
“To Have and To Hold”

“Harry!” Hermione shouted breathlessly, dashing out the back door of the newly renovated Burrow and across to the quidditch pitch where he and Ron were fooling around with a quaffle. “Ron! They’re here! They’re real! They’re really here!” She waved the three envelopes in her hand like a banner before her charge.

The wizarding world was a mess, but life went on. Even during the dark year of terror, life had gone on. In the aftermath of the final battle, some lives were drastically changed, but for many of the wizarding world, daily life continued on. That was the nature of society. Life went on, dealing with the day to day.

Harry and Ron pulled up on their brooms, the quaffle loosely tucked into Ron’s side, as they heard Hermione’s shout. With nary a glance at the other, they both tipped their broomsticks forward and swooped down low to the ground, a drop of nearly twenty meters, before landing at a run to meet up with her.

The baker man woke early to start his ovens, the same as the day before. The shopkeepers went about tidying their wares and fineries for display. The everyday folk of the island nation went about their business, keeping their heads down and mouths shut, just like the day before. Just how they planned to do for the day ahead, and the day after, and the day after that.

“I guess it’s for real, then, huh?” Ron asked as he took the offered envelope hesitantly.

Harry wasn’t nearly so hesitant. He snatched his envelope up and ripped it open, before flipping the enclosed letter open with shaking hands.

And then the special edition of the Daily Prophet arrived, half past ten, and they discovered they’d woken up to a new regime in power, yet again. This time, unlike that hot August day, they rejoiced. Voldemort was dead; the majority of his Death Eaters killed or captured. Harry Potter was alive and victorious. Kingsley Schacklebolt was their new Minister for Magic…pending a proper election in the Fall.
“Dear Mr. Potter,” he read aloud.

“We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted to attend a special eighth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Due to varying difficulties, we request that you attend a special evaluation seminar to be held on 4 August, at the hour of ten ante meridiem, through 8 August. The Hogwarts Express will be made available for your use, ticket enclosed, or you may choose other means of transportation. During this time, a course schedule and booklist for your upcoming school year will be determined.

“Sincerely,

Minerva Aileene Subhan McGonagall, Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and

Severus Tobias Snape, Deputy Headmaster”

Celebrations broke out across the British Isles with little to contain or restrict the peoples’ enthusiasm. Ministry employees were run ragged in the following weeks, trying to clean up the results. Workers were hired for the rehabilitation of government buildings and the school. Magic completed the work efficiently, but it couldn’t compensate for everything. At the Ministry, Kingsley was at work with his chiefs of staff, struggling to put into place a working government that could combat the poison that Voldemort’s infection had allowed to spread. At Hogwarts, McGonagall was working with a slowly recovering Snape to accomplish much of the same thing.

“Bloody Hell, they’re keeping Snape around?” Ron gaped incredulously. “After everything he did last year?”

“He helped keep the students alive,” Hermione reminded him.

“He let those blood-sucking bastards torture kids! My sister! Neville and Luna and—“

“And they’re still alive,” Harry cut in. “They could have just as easily just off and killed them, and Voldemort would have just laughed. Probably even have praised them for it. No, Hermione’s right, Ron. I might not like him all that much still, but I trust him, and I trust he did what he could to protect the other students.”

Ron grumbled some but didn’t say any more about it, letting the matter pass.

In the first weeks after the battle, it seemed near impossible that anything would recover, but slowly,
normalcy crept its way throughout the land, and by the last week of July, Hogwarts letters were sent awing.

“I can’t believe we’re really going back,” Hermione breathed, hands still shaking as she stared down at her own open letter.

“And soon, too,” Ron huffed glumly. “We just got back to England last week. Hardly much of a holiday, is it, if we have to go back to school in less than a week.”

“And for tests, too,” Harry groaned. “You’d think being the bloody ‘Boy-Who-Conquered’ would let one off the hook or something.”

Ron snickered, and Hermione chuckled, wagging her head reproachfully. “I’m sure they’ll give you a bye on Defense, at the very least,” she assured him before threading her arms through theirs. “C’mon. Your mum’s just about finished with lunch and wants us to get washed up.”

“Food!” they cheered before tearing away from her and scampering back on to their brooms to race back to the Burrow.

Hermione rolled her eyes at their antics. “Boys,” she muttered, hiking back towards the Burrow at a much more sedated pace than that in which she’d left.

Harry exhaled deeply as he settled back into the conjured cushy easy-chair. Around him the sights and sounds and smells of the Burrow permeated the air, making him relaxed and at ease for the first time in really a week. It had been a long, hard, stressful week.

Not that being back at Hogwarts wasn’t…nice… Just… difficult. So many memories, both recent and old, made being there difficult at times. It still felt like a home, though, and Harry was a little surprised by that. Surprised and grateful. After nearly a year on the run, and then… the battle. So many people—hurt or…gone. Hurt or dead. So many nearly lost. Harry still had difficulty dealing with it all, and if he allowed himself to think on those who were gone … It had happened a few times while the three of them had been off in Australia searching for Hermione’s parents.
Originally it was only supposed to be Ron who went with Hermione, but after Harry’s and Ginny’s failed attempt at a reunion after the battle… He felt a little bad about intruding on his mates’ chance for private time. It was selfish of him, especially after all the time they’d spent together this last year, or maybe it was because of it. All Harry knew, in those first few days after the battle, was that he needed Ron and Hermione. Even if it was at times awkward, it was nothing compared to the awkwardness that was that one night spent with Ginny—Her tears soaking into his sweater, her fists beating against his chest, her words accusing him of not caring about what she’d been through, and the crowning horror of that night—

No. Better to not even think about that.

Two days later, when Hermione made mention of going to Australia to find her parents, Harry offered to go along. Ron had looked like he might protest, but he didn’t. Kingsley had gotten them a portkey out of the country, and in less than forty hours they found themselves in the land down under. It had taken them the better part of a week to track down Hermione’s parents, and another to corner and convince them that magick was real and Hermione was really their daughter. There was no easy way to reverse a memory charm. It was a long process, but by the beginning of July, they were beginning to break through the charm. That didn’t solve anything, though. In fact, things became slightly worse. To say Hermione’s parents were upset was to put a nice spin on things. There were loud arguments and bouts of crying, all wound tight around the choking feeling of hurt from both ends.

Two weeks later, things weren’t resolved by any means, but they were quite possibly on the mend. The three had returned to Britain then, leaving Hermione’s parents in Australia for the time being. Hermione had been in a funk after that—not even the gift of books had drawn her out of her depression. But with the news of Hogwarts reopening in September and the possibility of being invited back, her spirits had rekindled.

Harry sighed. And they really were returning to Hogwarts, he thought—as students no less. Something Harry had honestly thought would never happen after his sixth year had completed. But now… He sighed again.

What a week it had been. A completely exhausting week filled with theological tests that had left his brain hurting and numb in a vicious alternating cycle. Oh, but that wasn’t enough, no. They’d had practicums, too. Hours of endless hours of demonstrating what skills they supposedly knew. Harry could honestly say that at the conclusion of McGonagall’s special “evaluation seminar” he had a new and quite possibly unhealthy fear of NEWTS. Harry might have survived the week, but just barely. He wasn’t sure yet if he would survive the year.

McGonagall and Snape had gathered all the returning eighth year students into the Transfiguration classroom that first evening and explained their intentions for the year. Harry would admit, they were very ambitious. With the extra money that had poured in from donations, they were hiring extra
teachers and offering additional courses. That news threw Hermione into an orgasmic fit that had Ron and Harry sharing a snicker or three at her expense. Still, the new curriculum did sound interesting, even if he wasn’t so sure about the idea of teacher aides and apprentices. Well, that wasn’t exactly true—Harry thought the idea of having teacher aides and apprentices to help run study groups was a great idea. What he wasn’t so sure about was using the newly dubbed eighth years—himself, included—as those aides.

Still, in the end, all the returning students had agreed—and they were even receiving a special discount on their tuition as compensation. The eighth years wouldn’t be the only TA’s running around. McGonagall had assured them that several seventh years were also being singled out for the distinction, automatically leveling many of the students to equal status as the prefects.

Whatever, Harry thought with another sigh. Things would work out. They always did for him after all.

“That’s an awfully heavy sigh for someone who’s got the whole world for the asking,” a cheerful voice noted. “Butterbeer, Harry?”

He squinted up through the glaring sunshine at the grinning man. “Yeah, thanks, Charlie.”

“Not a problem, mate,” the older man replied, plopping himself down on the ground next to Harry’s conjured easy chair. “So what’s weighing on your mind? Not as enthused about going back to school as our lovely Ms. Granger?”

“Watch it,” Harry mock-growled. “That’s my best mate and your brother’s girlfriend you’re making eyes at.”

“Really?” Charlie asked with unconcealed delight. “He finally got around to asking her out then, did he? Good for him. Knew he could do it. Eventually.”

Harry snorted. “Actually, I think Hermione finally just told him what for. Don’t know why she didn’t just do it sooner, really. Would’ve saved us all some load of grief.”

“Ah, well, insecurities, you know. They do run rather thick in the Weasley blood, not that you would know it by some,” Charlie added just as a loud, popping explosion sounded from the other side of the yard. Harry looked as well as colorful lights splashed into the air.
“How’s he doing?” he asked after the show had died down amongst laughter.

“About as good as can be expected, I suppose. Perce’s really stepped up,” Charlie continued, pulling another swallow from his bottle. “Surprised a few of us, really, but he really stepped up and took George in hand. Hasn’t been easy, of course, but it seems to be getting better. At least, some.” Now it was Charlie’s turn to sigh deeply and frown a bit as thoughts of his missing brother came to fore.

“Sorry,” Harry mumbled, hastily pulling another swallow.

“Nothing to be sorry about. We all miss him; we always will. Not going to just stop talking about him or remembering him because he’s dead,” Charlie told him. “If things had gone differently maybe Fred would still be alive, but at what cost? If not Fred, then who else? Or maybe it could have been Fred and George and Percy all who were taken out by that bloody wall. You’ve got nothing to be sorry for, Harry. You did what you had to do, and so did we.”

“I know,” Harry whispered. “But it doesn’t mean I don’t wish things had happened differently.”

“I know,” Charlie sighed. “Have you been by to visit Lupin since you’ve got back?”

“I—uh, no. No, I haven’t. He’s out of the hospital then?”

“Wouldn’t keep him, would then?” the second Weasley son groused. “Gave him the boot just as soon as they possibly could. Tonks’s mum took him in, has been seeing to his recovery personally since, oh, about a week afterwards.”

Harry was quiet for another moment, struggling with the thoughts and words. “I’m… glad he’s alive. It’s good that Teddy will at least get to know his father, even if his mother’s dead.”

“Yeah. I’ll miss her. Went to school together, did you know?”

“No. I mean, I guess, if I’d a-thought about it, yeah, sure. Makes sense. You’re about the same age, right?”

Yep. Hell, I even invited her out on a date to Hogsmeade one weekend.” Charlie snorted. “Tonks
was a fun old bird.”

“Did she go changing her hair and appearance all throughout school?”

“Not too much so. The professors would yell at her for it. But, then again, back then, she didn’t have as fine tune of control over it.”

They lapsed into another period of silence, just sitting there, pulling from the bottles, nursing their thoughts.


“What’s that?”

“You happy to be going back to Hogwarts?”

Harry sighed again. “Yes… and no. It’s… complicated.”

“Isn’t it always?”

“Hogwarts… it was my first home,” Harry softly confided. “The first place I remember that really felt like home. Even if it wasn’t always safe and there are some really crummy memories, it’s still… it still feels like home. So, yeah, I’m glad to be going back, because it’s like I’m going back home, you know?”

“But…?”

“But,” Harry huffed another sigh. “But, I’m not the same kid that used to live there anymore. I’m… different, you know? Things have changed. It’s still home. It just… doesn’t quite feel like my home anymore.”

“Yeah,” Charlie agreed. “It’ll always be home, because that’s where you grew up, that’s where your family lived and loved. But we change. We get older, we grow apart, learn different lessons, and
suddenly home isn’t quite the same home we remember,” Charlie shared, staring back towards the home he and his brothers and sister grew up in. “That’s about how I feel about the Burrow. I love it, it’s home. It’s where my parents are, where me and my brothers and Ginny grew up, but…”

“But it’s not your home anymore,” Harry said softly.

“No, no it’s not.” Charlie shared a little melancholy smile. “It’s good to visit, good to remember and see everyone, but I’ll be happier when I get back home again.”

“So you’re returning to Romania?”

“Yeah. Just about finished doing what I can here, so, yeah. I’ll be returning to Romania, probably by the end of the month. Sent an owl off to my old boss. Hoping to hear back from her soon.”

“Your mum won’t be too happy about that. Think she was thinking you’d all be staying.”

“Yeah, well, mum won’t be happy until we start giving her babies to distract her with. Which,” Charlie continued with a sly wink, “I understand Bill and Fleur are underway on?”

“Really? Wow! That’s great! I mean…” Harry blinked. “Uh, didn’t Fleur say earlier that they’re planning to return to France?”

“Yeah, but that’s to be expected,” Charlie told him. “Most creatures prefer to be in their home environment when expecting. See it in dragons all the time. The mothers will return to the same cliffs they were hatched on to lay their own clutches. Humans aren’t so different. Lots of women prefer to have their mothers close by when expecting. Some kind of bonding experience, I think. I remember Grandmum Prewitt used to visit loads of times when I was little before, well. Before,” he finished a bit lamely.

“She died?” Harry asked tentatively.

Charlie huffed. “Yeah, well, I’m pretty sure she was killed. It was literally right before Ron was born. Mum was crying all the time and, well, things were a bit of a mess. I mean, Bill and I were kind of old enough to understand that she had died, but she hadn’t been sick and she wasn’t really all that old—maybe about Dad’s age now, although at the time, you understand, the thought of someone in their eighties or nineties seemed positively ancient, but… And we know there was a fight, but…”
Charlie shrugged. “Mum won’t even talk about it. Doesn’t help that she lost her brothers around that time, too.”

“So many deaths…”

“Yeah. It’s pretty crappy. Entire family trees were killed off in just this century alone. It’s kinda sad when you think about some of those families having been around even before the Founders’ time, and now, poof! They’re gone.”

Harry thought about that. He didn’t know much about history or about the families of the wizarding world. He didn’t even know how long the Potters had lived in England… he didn’t know much of anything, he realized. But… but he knew he needed more than one hand to count the number of people he knew personally who had died in this most recent war… and it disgusted him.

“Some of the families will try to continue, of course, through second or third inheritance lines.” Charlie sighed again. “I know that’s what Mum is hoping for the Prewitt line.”

“What?”

“Mum, well, not that she’d ever try to force it on any of us, but, well, it’s not hard to figure it out from some of the comments she’d sometimes make.”

“I don’t…?”

“Mum was a Prewitt before she married Dad,” Charlie explained. “She and Auntie Muriel are actually the only blooded Prewitts left, and us kids ‘cause none of Auntie Muriel’s children survived the war, either. Mum’s always kind of hoped one of us kids would take up the Prewitt family mantle and carry on the family name.”

“Oh. Can you do that?”

“You could, sure, but it’s a lot of work being the head of a family line,” Charlie put out before remembering himself. “Sorry,” he added with a sympathetic look.
“I wouldn’t know.”

“You do know you’re the head of at least two families, don’t you?”

“What? Since when?”

“Well, officially, since your seventeenth birthday.”

“Why didn’t anyone tell me about this?”

“Don’t know. Haven’t you been to Gringotts to visit your family vaults?”

“I’ve, uh, been avoiding Gringotts, actually. Don’t think they’d be too happy to see me anytime soon.”

“Ah, well, yes. About that whole… thing,” Charlie said. “You should probably talk to Bill before he leaves and get him to join you in negotiations with the goblins. It’s no good to be on bad relations with the folks who are in control of all your money, you know.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“They’ll probably try and heap you with a dragon-sized dung pile of fines, but with Bill there, you should probably be able to finagle something. Maybe get a solicitor, too. You’ll probably need one after you formally claim your inheritances, anyway.”

Harry grimaced, but Charlie just laughed at him. “Try not to worry about it too much, eh? You’ve got three weeks before you have to return to Hogwarts for your final year, your NEWTS year. What are you going to do with yourself?”

Harry and Charlie stayed up talking late into the night. The next day, Harry approached Bill with a
request for his help with the goblins.

“I’d been wondering if you were going to say something. I didn’t want to offer and offend you or anything.”

“No! No, really, I… I really don’t know what I’m doing with any of this, so any help or advice would be honestly appreciated.”

Goblins honored warriors… daring stunts to achieve seemingly impossible goals, but even Bill thought Harry would be best served by retaining a solicitor first. Whether it was Potter Luck or something else, Harry soon discovered that the late Edward Tonks had been a partner in a legal firm that straddled the invisible boundary of muggle and magical law. It was upon Andromeda’s suggestion that he met with Elliot Nickelhorn, who then helped him navigate his way through the meetings with the goblins.

Oh, they fined the pants off him for damages to infrastructure and security, and then turned around to offer him a retainer for sharing his infiltration strategy with them—so that they could better protect from future would-be thieves they said. Then, with a little back-working of paper… the majority of his would-be problems with the goblins, disappeared. As Lord Black, he nullified the marriage contract between the Lestranges, declaring the contract breached, and thereby confiscated all Black heirlooms and moneys from the Lestrange vault, as well as several Lestrange family heirlooms and moneys as penalty for the breeched contract. Meaning, Harry simply “stole” from “himself” when he took the cup.

Between enacting Sirius’s will—which had been held because Harry strangely enough never received his summons to the will reading—and retrieving his parents’ wills from the Potter Family Vault, participating in a few inheritance tests, and even donating a good portion of blood to start his own family tree, ancestral and descendants, Harry and his solicitor spent a full week on Gringotts business alone.

Then there were meetings with the Malfoys, namely Narcissa and Draco who were still Black Family members and therefore his responsibility he discovered. A heart-to-heart with the new Minister for Magic, and Kingsley helped push the Malfoy trials along. It was decided, that due to Narcissa’s contributions, a geas would be placed on both Lucius and Draco to prevent any future support of dark uprisings, a slap on the wrist fine, and the family was released.

Harry was dragged into several tea sessions with Andromeda, even before he met with the goblins and became the Black Family Head, allowing him to reinstate Andromeda and her blood into the family. And he met his godson for the first time. At four months old, Harry thought the baby rather odd looking—not that he’d ever been around any other babies to compare the boy to—but he rather enjoyed playing with Teddy, if not so much cleaning up after him. No creature so small should be
allowed to produce such noxious odors, Harry thought. Remus he didn’t get to spend too much time with, as he was still recovering from his horrible battle wounds, the healing of which were debilitated by his monthly transformations. Andromeda assured him that the old wolf was healing, though.

Two weeks pass with all this hubbub—trying to avoid most of the public and all of the press while still getting things done and not just hiding away. Meeting with friends and old acquaintances… the Creeveys… Meetings with the goblins and his solicitor, trying to bring order and understanding to his accounts and portfolio. He had thoughts at one point of hiring Remus to deal with all this…as his steward, but Remus just wasn’t well enough, and Andromeda had simply laughed at him when he’d tried to enlist her help. She had patted his cheek and told him he’d do fine.

The Eighth Years’ Hogwarts letters arrived with their new class schedules and book lists, along with their tutorial sessions, only ten days before they were to board the train back to Hogwarts. It wasn’t much time to get their shopping completed, but Molly Weasley was a professional wrangler of children and she lumped Hermione and Harry among her brood without discrimination. Harry was secretly glad to let the woman do his shopping for him.

Or, he would have been if it hadn’t of meant the opportunity for Ginny to accost him again.

“That seemed a bit worse than usual,” Charlie quipped, coming up behind him and joining him in the cusp of trees behind the house, away on the other side from the marshlands.

“I should go, I would go.”

Arms wrapped around his middle as a warm body pressed up against his back and a chin propped itself atop his head. And it felt good. It felt scarily good. To be touched, to be held, to have that contact with another human being…

“No, you wouldn’t. I know things are… rough right now, between you and Ginny, but that doesn’t mean you should go. No one wants you to go, not even Ginny, no matter how mad and angry she is right now.”

“I don’t know what I’m doing.”

“What do you want to do?”
“I don’t know, that’s just it!” Harry shouted, shaking free from Charlie’s friendly hold with pent up frustration, ranting and raving. “I don’t know what I want, or what I’m doing. I don’t know what I’m going to do. Everyone’s telling me this or that, and… and it’s all just too much! I don’t want to think about what I should be doing, what I need to do. I don’t want to think about responsibilities and family lines and marriage contracts and business contracts and-and-and-“

Charlie kissed him. Honest to goodness, lips pressed to lips, kissed him. Harry struggled for a moment longer… and then… it was like all his strings were cut, and he just let go and relaxed. A hand skimmed up and down his side, another snaked up to his neck and squeezed the tight muscles bunched there. He released a little grunted moan as Charlie continued to knead at his neck. And then a tongue swept past his lips and into his mouth, sweeping over his teeth and swiping at the upper palate before twirling around his tongue, and Harry thought he might gag at first before Charlie pulled back just enough to nibble on his lips.

“Bit of better now?” he asked, warm breath puffing across Harry’s face.

“Uh, yeah?”

“Good,” Charlie said, before swooping back in to kiss him again.

This time Harry was a bit more prepared, wrapping his arms around Charlie to hold the older man to him and kissing him back. Tongues wrestled and wrangled, and Harry even garnered up the courage to follow Charlie’s tongue back into the other man’s mouth and explore. He wasn’t sure who pulled away first this time. Harry only knew that he and Charlie were standing there, still holding on to each other, foreheads pressed together as they panted.

“All right?” Charlie asked after another moment.

“Bit more than all right, yeah?”

“Hell, yeah,” Charlie proclaimed, popping more kisses against Harry’s lips. “You want me to stop, just say, alright?”

“Fuck, don’t stop,” Harry demanded, causing Charlie to huff another laugh before diving back for his mouth. Hands wandered, on both sides, and somehow—though Harry wasn’t quite sure, he suspected some magic must have been involved—clothes became disheveled, and soon fingers were dancing along bare skin, shoving cloth and coverings out of the way.
“Fuck, don’t stop,” Harry repeated whenever he got the chance, in between burying his face against Charlie’s throat, tasting and sucking on the salty skin, running his hands up under his shirt, fingers digging in to his muscular back—and, damn! Was Charlie muscular! Hands gripped his hips, hard enough to surely leave bruises, but Harry didn’t care because those hands were holding him, moving him, rubbing him back and forth and grinding him into and against Charlie in such a delicious way, he cried out, sure he was going to come just from the friction alone.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” he chanted against Charlie’s shoulder, biting down just to stop himself from shouting. It was too hot, too tight, too much, and he fumbled at his fly, shoving his pants down off his hips for the brief semblance of freedom and relief as his cock sprung free only to be grasped tightly and squeezed. He didn’t quite manage to muffle his shout then, which turned into a low groan when he felt something smooth and hot pressed up against him and looked down to see two naked cocks bobbing and sliding against each other, and Harry realized Charlie was mostly naked and rubbing off on him.

“Fuck,” he hissed as his body rolled over into the inevitable and globs of cum spit up out over onto Charlie’s cock and stomach.

“Yesssss,” Charlie hissed, tugging on him several more times before reaching over to rub Harry’s cum into his skin. Harry whimpered and huffed, his hand wrapped around Charlie’s cock and tugging desperately. It wasn’t long before he was rewarded by a hot spray of cum landing on his own stomach and cock, and he felt his balls tighten again at the knowledge that this was someone else’s cum covering him.

“Fuck, that’s hot,” Charlie whispered, staring at him with burning blue eyes. “Still all right?”

“Better than,” Harry gasped.

“Good.” And with a wicked grin, Charlie dropped to his knees before Harry, having to bend a little further to reach his cock with his mouth, before licking.

Harry gasped, hands flying to Charlie’s head, clenching in ginger hair as his knees threatened to buckle and he swayed. Charlie’s hands held him steady, but it was a precarious measure. “Easy, there,” he cautioned, searching for his pants and the wand tucked safely in its holster. “Here, let me just… Accio,” he called, summoning his wand to his hand and then with a casual flick and twist, Charlie conjured up a blanket beneath them. “Here, lay down. This part isn’t nearly as much fun if you fall over and crash.”
It took little maneuvering—mostly because Charlie helped shuck Harry’s pants, which had been bunched up just above the knees—but it was worth it, Harry thought moments later when he was lying flat on his back, legs hitched up over Charlie’s shoulder’s, and Charlie’s face buried in his crotch. Harry writhed and moaned wantonly as Charlie continued to lick and suck at his privates, lavishing his cock and balls with wet, slurpy kisses and sucklings, occasionally even humming against the sensitive nerve clusters.

“Shit, fuck, Charlie, please, stop or I’m gonna cum again,” Harry gasped.

“Feel free,” Charlie murmured, rubbing a scratchy cheek alongside the shaft before swallowing him again. Harry cried out and let go, stopped trying to hold back his climax and just free-fell into the moment, allowing Charlie’s attentions to take him to his second climax.

He thought he might have blanked out a bit that time, because when he was aware again, he realized he was completely naked now, and Charlie was, too, and the older man was cuddling up beside him, staring at his body as he trailed his fingertips up and down along his skin. It took Harry a moment to realize the fingertips were marking the different scars that littered his body, testament of his ability to survive and that magic couldn’t always heal everything…

Harry shifted, more than a bit uncomfortable suddenly, and blue eyes snapped up to look into his face.

“Er, thanks,” he blurted, and then winced. “I mean, I… it was good,” he finished lamely.

Charlie grinned and leaned over to pop another kiss against his lips. “Glad you enjoyed it. I did, too,” he admitted huskily before deepening the kiss. He pulled back languidly. “You’re delicious,” he said, licking at his lips. “And your magic… it’s a bit intoxicating.”

“Urm…” Okay, nothing to say to that but, “Thank you?”

Charlie laughed—its warmth seemed to penetrate Harry’s skin and bury deep into his bones—and rolled over onto him, kissing him again. It took Harry only a moment to realize Charlie was still hard, and his cock was rubbing tantalizingly against his thigh and up over his softened balls and cock. Harry’s hands skimmed down Charlie’s back—and damn, did he have to be so muscular? Really!—and lower, over his bum, which incited a harder thrust of Charlie’s pelvis against Harry, leaving the younger man mewing. Which he would never, ever admit.
“You didn’t,” he tried. “You’re still… Did you want me to…” He hesitated, sneaking a hand between their squashed bodies to reach Charlie’s cock.

“Want you,” Charlie murmured, rubbing his scratchy cheek over Harry’s face and down his throat before biting. Harry gasped and his body jumped in reaction. “Wanna feel you cum again.”

“Don’t think that’ll be a problem,” he gasped, already sensing his body’s valiant effort to rise to the occasion again.

“Wanna feel you from the inside out.”

“What?”

“You ever have sex with a bloke before, Harry? Penetrative sex?” Charlie asked, pulling back slightly to be able to look him in the face. “Full on, bodies joined, sex? When you can feel him moving inside you, joined to you, and your magic mingles, and everything is all tingly and sparkly and good. So, so good.” He swooped down and kissed him again, stealing away whatever immediate answer Harry might have given.

‘Penetrative sex?’ Harry’s mind screamed. As in, a dick up the bum? That wasn’t really done, was it? Surely that was just bawdy locker room stories and gossip and… But then, how else would two men have sex? Wouldn’t it hurt? And… and it was dirty, wasn’t it?

Even as his mind raced, his body was moving pliantly in the manner directed—a leg hitched up over Charlie’s shoulder again, splaying him wide, arms wrapped around Charlie’s neck and back as he undulated against the redhead. He felt the slide of wood against his thigh and briefly recognized it as the presence of a wand before he felt the sizzle of several spells wash over him. A warm cocoon of soothing overtook him, easing his nerves even as he felt something press against his nether opening.

“Cleansing charm,” Charlie explained. “Lubricating charm, and a relaxer.” He kissed him again, still fingering around his hole. “Not as good as the potions, but I wasn’t planning for this, so… the charms will have to do.”

And without any other warning, Harry suddenly found himself writhing on Charlie’s hand as he finger-fucked him. He’d started slow, with one finger pressing in and out of him, but it had quickly proceeded to two, and then three, and now four fingers shoved up his bum, stretching and teasing him as he bounced and tried to hump Charlie’s hand, begging to cum again. Several times Charlie’s
fingers had touched something inside of him, the Very Good Spot, that sent sparking bolts of lightning through his veins, but it still wasn’t enough. He wanted—no, he needed more. He needed to cum.

“Please,” he gasped, clenching Charlie’s arms and back. “Please!”

“Gods, fuck, yes,” Charlie panted, sweat dripping off his face and splashing onto Harry’s. “So hot, Harry. So fucking hot and sexy and…” he groaned, sinking into the younger man’s body with one steady push. It was electrifying. Exhilarating. Rejuvenating. Beneath him, Harry continued to pant and whimper and plead, but for that one moment, Charlie couldn’t move, couldn’t do more than stare down into those lust-blown green eyes and marvel. And then he drew himself back… before thrusting forward, and Harry cried out, back arching, and Charlie was gone-for, lost in the heady slap-stick of bodies and magics crashing into one another, forcibly merging, mingling, mashing together.

It seemed to last hours. It was over much too soon.
Return to Hogwarts

Chapter Summary

Harry & co return to Hogwarts... and Harry is faced with some life-changing realities.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The Hogwarts Express, despite having eight years of students on board, seemed… almost empty, Harry thought as he stared out the window at the passing landscape. The ride was smooth—filled with chocolate frogs and exploding snap and various stop-ins from former DA members and other survivors.

Despite the relatively smooth journey, Harry felt himself discomforted—almost antsy—and unsettled. He wished they could just speed up time and be at Hogwarts already, the welcoming feast over and done with, and everyone tucked up safe and snug in their dormitories.

“You okay, mate?” Ron asked after heaving his trunk back up into the rack and falling onto the bench seat across from his best mate with his robes bundled up on the seat beside him.

“I already said I’m fine,” Harry snapped.

“I know you did, it’s just… I don’t know. You don’t seem fine,” Ron said, staring at his best friend who was busy staring out the window at nothing. “You’ve been off for the last month or so.”

Harry sighed. “Just a lot on my mind, you know that.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Ron conceded. “Any way, it’ll be good to get back to Hogwarts. Mum was beginning to drive me barmy. I mean, first with Charlie getting called back to the reserve and taking off like that, and then Fleur announcing she and Bill are heading back to France to have a baby. Blimey, that could’ve gone better. And Percy’s all moved in over the shop with George… Mum’s
It had been a rather tense week. It didn’t help that Harry couldn’t seem to get that one afternoon out of his mind—the sweet, sweaty kisses and fumbling touches and the tingling achy feeling that stuck with him throughout the following day. Harry couldn’t quite believe it, still. Did he really have sex with another man? Charlie Weasley? His ex-girlfriend’s brother? His best mate’s brother? Nearly two hours—stolen moments, glorious moments, mind-blowingly awesome moments.

They’d helped clean and redress each other before cuddling in a patch of soft grass in the shade of one of the trees. And they’d talked. Charlie was so easy to talk to—sometimes he made everything seem so simple. It felt like all the stress and unease he’d been feeling for the last month just melted away into nothingness while he laid there against Charlie, quietly talking about everything and nothing.

And then Mrs. Weasley had returned from her shopping trip and called everyone back into the house. Harry hadn’t had another opportunity that night to steal some quiet time alone with Charlie to talk about anything, let alone process what had happened—he’d had sex, for the first time!—and when he woke up the next morning, he discovered there wouldn’t be another chance. Charlie had been called back to Romania early, and had left without even a personal word of goodbye.

Harry wasn’t sure what to feel. Sad, depressed, annoyed, pathetic… wistfully longing… but that was ridiculous. Charlie was a dragon keeper—Harry already knew he was planning on returning to Romania just as soon as his boss contacted him. And it wasn’t like they’d talked about what was going on between them. Because there wasn’t anything going on between them, Harry told himself fiercely. Sex was just sex. It wasn’t anything more, and he didn’t need to be thinking like a girl, trying to complicate things.

“Really, Ron, you should be more supportive of your mother,” Hermione huffed, pulling her own robes on before settling back into her seat with her book. “She means well.”

“Yeah, well, you were singing a different tune when she was insisting you learn how to cook and clean properly, weren’t you?” Ron retorted, causing his girlfriend to blush furiously.

“It wasn’t the instruction so much as the insinuation that it was my duty and obligation to learn so I could take proper care of you,” she sniped back. “I don’t care if we are dating, Ron, I am not your mother, and I am not responsible for making sure you eat or are wearing clean pants!”
“Yes, well, the first has never been a worry and the second,” a voice drawled from the doorway. “Well, I’d rather not know, thank you all the same.”

“Malfoy,” Ron began growling before a hand from Harry stopped him.

“Draco,” Harry greeted.

“Lord Black,” Malfoy return with a slight nod, retrieving two letters from his coat pocket. “Mother and Father asked that I pass these on to you. One, I believe, is another invitation to tea to discuss Black Family matters. The other, I would suppose, would be another business expenditure. Father is ever so fond of his schemes.”

He held both missives out, and Harry took them. “I’m glad to see you decided to return.”

“Yes. Well. Last year was sort of a mess, wasn’t it? And the extra elective classes being offering this year looked… promising. Lord Black, Granger, Weasel,” the blond quipped in parting.

“Mangy ferret,” Ron growled at the closed door. “Ugh. How you can manage to be even civil with him, I don’t get.”

“Technically, we’re family,” Harry pointed out. “Besides, his family owes me several life debts, so…” He shrugged.

“Yes, well,” Hermione started with a huff. “I want to go find the Head Boy and Head Girl. There were some things I wanted to discuss with them before we arrive at Hogwarts. You boys will be here when I get back?”

“No plans on leaving,” Harry told her before adding with a muttered breath as he looked back out the window, “No plans at all.”
Classes resumed the next day and some semblance of normalcy took up place in the school. The routine of daily life, of classes and study groups and meals and trips to the library to complete homework assignments and tutorial groups and... Harry was exhausted.

It was the end of October. Only two months into the school year; only seven months to go until their NEWTS, and the professors were relentless. Oh, practicals weren’t bad, and the tutorials turned out to be a really good thing. And many of the new classes were a big hit with the student populace. But even taking an ‘easy’ class load and not on the quidditch team this year, Harry was always tired. Several times, the fatigue had actually lead into a dizzy spell—and wasn’t that a fun trick when you’re six stories up on a moving staircase! Twice Hermione had been there for it and demanded he visit the Infirmary. When he’d groused and grumped, she’d actually had the nerve to try guilting him into a visit, citing how he had been hit by the killing curse and it was only reasonable that he should continue to be checked over regularly and what would they all do if he were to die now because of something stupid or silly that could have been preventable, and...

Harry got better at hiding his dizzy spells.

“Loo again?” Ron asked as Harry turned off away from the Great Hall and lunch.

“Yeah, I’ll catch up with you in a mo’, all right?”

“You just went not even two hours ago,” his best friend complained. “And we’re already late ‘cause Hermione had to ask so many questions.”

“Well, excuse me for wanting to know—“

“I didn’t say you had to wait for me,” Harry cut their other friend off. “Go on ahead. I’ll meet up with you, yeah?”

“Sure, fine. I’ll try and save you something, but don’t take too long,” Ron groused. Hermione looked ready to scold him as the two walked off, but Harry caught the worried glance she shot back at him.

He was fine. So what if the beans this morning made him queasy or if the mushroom gravy turned his stomach. It didn’t matter. It was just a phase. It wasn’t like he was sick with some terminal disease or something. He’d survived a killing curse before. More’s like, it was just his magic or something adjusting to life without Voldemort. Although, granted, he’d been mostly fine until school started. Well, except for the occasional nightmare, but really, those were old news for him. And sure, his magic seemed better than ever, super responsive, easy to direct, if not quite control.
“Is it true?” someone hissed from around the corner, causing Harry to pause in midstep.

“Shh,” another girl hissed. “We can’t talk about it out here! Someone might hear!”

“Everyone’s at lunch!” the first girl hissed back. “I want to know. You both went up to Hospital Wing before breakfast and she never showed up to class. So, is it true? Is she really… pregnant?”

The last word was hissed so lowly Harry barely made it out, but once he did, he knew he did not want to be hearing this.

“Yes,” the second girl huffed. “But you already knew that. Isn’t that why you had us go up there this morning?”

“I knew it! Ha!” the first girl crowed. “I recognized the symptoms. Same as my sister. Oh,” and suddenly her boasting tone turned darker. “She’ll have to marry him, now. Her father won’t be pleased.”

“No, I imagine not,” the second girl sighed. “It’s a shame. She could have made a much better match.”

“What does it matter,” the first girl huffed before continuing mockingly, “She’s in love. See if love will do her any good when she has to leave school before she’s even taken her NEWTS! Why, I doubt she’ll even make it to the winter holidays the way she’s been sickness up all the time. I hope when I get married, I won’t get pregnant right away. That way no one will doubt that my baby is rightfully conceived.”

“I just hope they do get married. It would be just awful if her father tries to prevent it.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” the first girl snapped. “Her father would never allow a bastard. What was that?”
Harry shifted uncomfortably. He really did need to pee, but he didn’t want to admit to eavesdropping on the girl’s conversation.

“Doesn’t matter. Let’s just get to lunch?” the other girl entreated, and Harry gave a sigh of relief as they continued on in the opposite direction from him. He ducked into the boy’s loo to take care of business, the conversation he’d unintentionally overheard on his mind.

On the one hand, he guess he felt rather bad for whoever it was who was pregnant, and her boyfriend. It would suck to be as young as they are and having kids. Then again, he remembered his surprise when he realized how old Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were. He’d never really thought about it until Charlie had mentioned how his parents had waited until they were in their fifties and sixties to start having children, and yet their mum seemed to expect them all to go out right away and start having babies. It was a startling reminder of the fact that, as a wizard, Harry would have the ability to live a long, long time. That he had his entire life ahead of him.

A life, he now suspected, that wouldn’t have his own natural children in it. There were alternatives, he knew. He'd already put contingencies in place... But it wasn't the same.

His stomach twisted and soured.

He’d never dwelt much on his future. When he was little, he dreamt of his parents being alive and coming to take him home, or some nice stranger who wanted to adopt him and take him away from the Dursleys forever. By the time his Hogwarts letter had arrived, he’d given up those dreams, and instead he’d focused on just making it to his sixteenth birthday when he could legally leave the Dursleys…. Then, as knowledge of the magical world and his role in it came to be revealed, his dreams revolved around just making it to see his next birthday and possibly survive the war. He’d thought, maybe afterwards, he would get together with some girl, get married, have children…

It wasn’t until after the final battle was won that he’d discovered that probably wasn’t going to happen.

He shivered as he thought of that night again. The night Ginny had confronted him, trying to get back together. The night of failure, for both of them, as he realized, he just wasn’t attracted to her in that way. And wasn’t that a kick in the gut. When a good looking girl strips bare before you and tells you to take her, there’s supposed to be some sort of reaction other than embarrassment.

It was as close to being hit by the physical clue-trout as he was ever going to get, he figured. Yes, he could look at girls and claim this one as beautiful or that one possessing an excellent rack…but…it just didn’t do anything for him. And wasn’t that a pisser, he thought, washing his hands before
staring at his reflection in the mirror.

“You should try running a brush through that rats’ nest, dearie,” the enchanted glass suggested. He ignored it.

Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, the Chosen One, the Man-Who-Conquered, the Head of two Families… was just not…interested…in girls. As if that wasn’t bloody obvious from his reaction to Charlie Weasley, he thought with minor disgust. He felt like he was in fourth and fifth year all over again with a stupid crush on a rather unattainable person.

Only, this was worse, wasn’t it? Because this time, Harry actually had memories to fuel his fantasies, didn’t he? He had the memories of that sticky August afternoon, sweaty body moving against another sweaty body. Lips, mouth, teeth, tongue. Hands and fingers, and, oh gods, those fingers. He could still remember the sensations Charlie had worked over him. Still remember the sharp tang of pain when he was first breached, the nerves that were offset by the sheer feeling… that overwhelming feeling of being joined so intimately to another human being, to feel them literally inside you.

He groaned, fingers clenched into the porcelain of the sink until all the blood was chased away, as his body shivered in remembrance, his magic seemed to swirl up inside him, dance through his very veins before seeping out his pours, and he realized he was sweating seconds before the vertigo took him and he clocked his head against the sink.

“Bloody hell, Potter. If you wanted to take a lay-down, couldn’t you have chosen a better place for it then the boy’s loo?”

“Wha--?”

“Easy. Looks like you smacked your head something fierce. You going to be all right?”

Harry blinked repeatedly until the world came back into focus somewhat, and then reached for his glasses, which were thankfully being held out for him.
“Ernie,” he said, immediately recognizing the other boy once he could see.

“Well, not too far gone, now are we?” the Hufflepuff eighth replied. “Think you can try getting up now?”

“Yeah, yeah. Just, give me a moment, will you?”

“Sure, sure. Here for business of my own, you know, but saw you lying there on the floor. For a minute, I thought some Slytherin might have got to you or something.”

“No, nothing so sinister,” Harry snorted. He and the Slytherins, mostly through Draco’s lead, had formed a tentative truce this year, but no one else seemed ready to truly believe it wasn’t just some rouse to lure him in to leniency. “I just slipped like a real berk and managed to knock myself out.” Gingerly, he felt at his temple and winced.

“Well,” Ernie continue coming out of one of the stalls, “You’ve got a right nasty looking cut with a bruise to boot forming there on the side of your skull. Might be wanting to have Madame Promfrey work some of her magic on you.” Seeing Harry’s scowl, he pressed on, “That, or come up with a more impressive story to tell than you’ve knocked your own clock.”

“I hate going to the Hospital Wing,” he groused.

“Aye, don’t we all,” Ernie agreed amicably as he dried his hands off. “Tell you what, I’ll go up with you, if you like, and then let your friends know where to find you.”

“No, that’s all right. Thanks, Ernie. I’ll catch you later for Charms tutorial?”

“Nah, Mandy cancelled. Feeling a bit under-the-weather, I hear. Take care of yourself, Harry. A lot of people would be upset if you weren’t around anymore,” the other teen added before heading off, “and not just because you were the Chosen One, eh?”

“Yeah,” Harry found himself saying into empty space. He got up and gave himself a look over. The cut did look rather nasty, he thought, pulling his wand for a quick fix. “Episky,” he whispered, tracing the tip of his Holly wand along the cut. It wasn’t a perfect fix, as the line was still red and puffy, but at least it was closed.
Harry closed his eyes as he felt his magic tug and swirl again. Fuck, he thought. He was very much not fine.

He snuck into the Hospital Wing like a dog with its tail between its legs, nervously checking to make sure no one else was in. Luck was not exactly with him, as there was a boy, small enough to be a first or second year, covered in neon yellow fur sleeping away on one of the beds. At least he seemed asleep, Harry thought as he closed the door behind him.

“Yes? What seems to be the pro—Ah, Mr. Potter,” Madame Pompfrey huffed, coming out from one of the private rooms. “I’d wondered when I’d be seeing you again. And what now from? Were you in a fight?” she demanded, already waving her wand around him and frowning.

“Yes, well, there’s been that, and the tiredness…”
“Yes. You’ve been helping yourself to my Pepper-Up stash, don’t think I haven’t noticed.”

He squirmed. He’d tried making his own store of the potion, but the fumes had made him sicker than ever, so he’d resorting to filching a few bottles now and then from the Hospital Wing, it was true. Which reminded him, “And I’ve been feeling a little… off… around certain foods or smells,” he admitted.

Pomfrey frowned, waving her wand around in silent diagnostic spells ranging from sole to crown before she paused, eyes darting to the wall, as if looking at someone through the wall, before looking back at him with an expression Harry wasn’t sure he cared to examine. She cast one more diagnostic charm before wilting under the results.

A moment later, the dragon lady of the Hospital Wing was in full high-dungeon, growling and pacing. “That obstinate old fool! He wouldn’t listen to me, would he? No! Well, I won’t have it any longer! No, I won’t! I’ll—I’ll demanding the ruddy class this year, or I’ll walk! That’s what I’ll do! Minerva will surely see, surely! Sixth one this month! Thirteen! Thirteen! I don’t care if half of them are eighth years, they’re still our students, and—“

“What? What’s wrong with me?” Harry asked.

Madame Pomfrey wheeled back around, as if just remembering he was there. Her eyes narrowed a moment, lips pursed. “Nothing’s wrong with you, Mr. Potter. You are a perfectly healthy young wizard.”

“Then why have I… been having problems?”

“Because you’re pregnant,” the medi-witch announced.

Harry huffed out a weak, little laugh. “I’m sorry. I thought you said—“

“Yes, you’re pregnant, Mr. Potter. The thirteenth student this year, actually, and I’m sure I have you
much to thank for it. Children, off, acting almost as irresponsibly as adults after the battle,” she huffed. “Oh, sit down, Mr. Potter, before you fall over and hit your head again. Now, I’ll want to run a full diagnostic now that we know. Although, come to think of it, I’m beginning to think we should run a school wide diagnostic,” she huffed again. “Oh, Minerva will have to listen to me now!”

“But, Madame Promfrey, I’m—I’m a bloke!”

“No,” she corrected sharply, “You’re a wizard, a rather powerful one, and a pregnant one to boot. Now, sit, up on the bed.”

He did so, dazedly. It was… utterly ridiculous. Completely insane. He was still unconscious, clearly; still lying on the bathroom floor, knocked out cold, because boys didn’t get pregnant. Not even wizarding boys….did they?

“Do… do wizards get pregnant often?” he asked hesitantly.

“It’s happened,” the medi-witch hedged. “But not commonly, no,” she admitted. “Takes the right set of circumstances that don’t always happen.”

“Like being bent,” he put forth discouragingly.

“That is one of the fundamental circumstances required, yes,” she smirked at him. “I take it from your response, you had no idea the possibility even existed.”

“Well, can’t say as it did, seeing as how it’s fundamentally impossible in the muggle world.”

“Yes.” She was frowning again. “Sometimes I forget that you were allowed to grow up there.”

“Funnily enough, sometimes I manage to forget, too, and then something so completely asinine as a bloke being able to get pregnant smacks me in the face.” All the heat he was able to muster at the beginning of his speech suddenly pettered out and he looked at the elder woman, as if hoping she was going to shout “surprise!” or “fooled you!”

“Yes, well, it is quite possible in the wizarding world, although not all that common, especially with
as how low birth rates are now and days. As I said, the circumstances have to be right. The two persons involved have to have a high enough level of magic to sustain the babe as it matures, which is most likely the leading cause of your fatigue, dear. You’re body’s working overtime trying to create a safe space for your child to grow in. A witch naturally is born with a womb, but a wizard’s magic has to create one. During actual intercourse, there must be a reasonable transference of magic as well as bodily fluids to create the babe. Many couples never allow themselves that sense of freedom and trust,” she said quietly, blushing and not looking at him. “You and your young man are actually very lucky in that regard, despite how you might feel about current circumstances. Now, would you like to tell me who the other father is, so I can have him brought here?”

“I…” Harry froze, looking at her with slightly panicked eyes. “It was a one-off,” he admitted finally, looking away.

“Impossible.”

“Really? Cause that’s what I thought about boys getting pregnant?” he snapped back at her.

“Mr. Potter,” she started, and then seeing his mutinous expression, started over. “Harry. The level of genuine trust and caring that is required… a male conception is not the result of a, a one-off, as you put it.”

“Oh, I’m sure the trust and caring was genuine,” he told her. “It just… it was only meant to be a onetime thing. We’re not together or anything.”

“But, you’ll need his support throughout the pregnancy!” she protested. “The intimacy and feeding of his magic is what will help ease your symptoms.”

“Are they going to get worse?”

“Well, as the pregnancy continues, your body will adjust, but—“

“Then I’ll be fine. I’ve survived this long. I’ll just have to be careful.”

“Harry, you can’t—“
“You said I was the thirteenth?” he cut her off again. “There are twelve others who are pregnant this year?” Her lips sealed shut tight. “Are any of them boys?” he asked. She remained silent. “When was the last time a wizard gave birth?”

“I don’t rightly know the date off the top of my head,” she answered primly.

“This year? Last year? This decade? Any time this century?” Again, she remained silent, but then again, that was answer enough for Harry. “No one can know. I don’t want anyone to know. I won’t be paraded out like some, some freak show for everyone to stare and point at.”

“Mr. Potter,” she began to protest.

“No one,” he repeated. “You’re bound by patient-healer confidentiality oaths, right?” he asked. “So you can’t tell anyone of my condition without my explicit say so. Well, I don’t say so.”

“Unless it’s a matter of life and death,” she confirmed, still frowning.

“And this isn’t.”

“But think, Mr. Potter! How do you honestly expect to hide something of this nature?”

“We live in a drafty old castle and wear robes every day,” he pointed out. “I don’t play quidditch anymore, so that’s not a problem.”

“What about your classes! Your professors should be informed for yours and your child’s safety! Certain spells and charms shouldn’t be performed, and—”

“And nothing. I don’t want anyone to know,” Harry replied stubbornly. “No one.”

“As a student, I am duty-bound to report your condition to the headmistress at the very least,” Madame Pomfrey answered stringently.

Harry frowned, thinking furiously as he sucked on his teeth. He could trust Minerva, couldn’t he?
“Oh, for goodness sake’s,” the Headmistress exclaimed when she entered the private room. “I should have known it had something to do with you, Mr. Potter. Well, what is it this time?”

“I’ll remind you of those classes I continually asked the Headmaster to allow,” Pomfrey spoke first. “The classes he continually told me were not necessary as any information needed to be imparted to our precious students would be handled by their parents and guardians?”

The headmistress frowned for a moment, puzzling over which informational classes were being alluded to now, before sighing with comprehension of just what the medi-witch was referring too. It helped, slightly, that she had just recently spent the morning discussing options with another young witch’s family. Poppy had brought the subject up again this year, but Minerva had brushed her off with the excuse of them having more pressing matters to prioritize for this year than a magical sexual education course. She had already been reconsidering her previous decision, but now she was certain.

“Good grief,” the headmistress groaned. “Please tell me it’s not Miss Weasley. I don’t think I could deal with Molly Weasley today after the morning I’ve had.”

Harry swallowed.

“No, Minerva, it’s not Miss Weasley,” Pomfrey reassured her, and although she knew there wasn’t, Minerva couldn’t help but think there was an edge of smugness to the tone. “In fact, there’s no miss at all.”

It took a moment… and then the Headmistress sunk into a hastily conjured seat. “James and Sirius are up there laughing their ballocks off, I just know it,” she muttered. “Harry James Potter,” she said wearily massaging a hand along her face, “You might just be the death of me yet.”

“Not intentionally,” he responded.

“The other father? Another student?”
“He won’t say,” the medi-witch informed her, her tone leaving no one unaware of how unsatisfied she was with that, either.

Minerva watched him carefully for a moment, but Harry wasn’t sure what she was looking for, nor whether she found it or not. In either case, the Hogwarts Headmistress turned to the medi-witch a moment later. “Poppy, perhaps you could draw up the proposal for those classes you’ve suggested, along with the plan for application. I believe we might just be able to convince the Board that this is a needed revision to our curriculum.”

Only once the door had shut behind the scowling medi-witch and the privacy wards reenacted did she turn back to Harry with a solemn mean.

“Harry.”

“Minerva.”

Her lips twitched. “You will never have a quiet year here at Hogwarts, will you?”

“I was really hoping to.”

She smiled wearily and shook her head. “What a mess this year is turning out to be. New classes, extra staff, extra students, half the castle still in disrepair…”

“And apparently the year of pregnancies, or so I’ve heard.”

“Yes, well. An after-effect of war, if you will. It happened in the late 1940’s after Grindlewald’s defeat, and again in 1981.” She smiled sadly at him. “Severus, the staff, and I have already discussed plans for the next decade, we just didn’t expect to be hit here at Hogwarts so soon. Perhaps it’s because last time the celebrations kicked off during the school year, and we were the better equipped to handle rowdy teenagers,” she mused.

“Madame Pomfrey says I’m pregnant.”
“She is the most qualified in this school to determine so.”

“I’m a bloke.”

“And that is just another reason why I will never allow myself forgiveness for allowing you to be left with those muggles,” she grimaced. “Tiny nuggets of our history and culture that you should have been raised knowing and accepting,” she sighed. “Of course, no one could have been expected to know that you would choose a male lover, but—“

“But nothing,” Harry interrupted. “I’m a bloke, and I’m fucking pregnant. How is that even possible?”

“Well, the obvious answer would be ‘magic’, Mr. Potter,” the headmistress told him in the most flippant and yet stringent tone of voice he’d heard from her this year, and it successfully took the steam right from him. She sighed as he looked back at her, looking so lost and confused and, dare she say, scared. “Harry, it is possible for wizards to become pregnant, but it doesn’t happen very often. There are various reasons. The wizards who possess the power level either have no inclination to lie with other men or they never act on those compulsions, mostly because of family obligations. It is still the expectation of our society for young lords to marry young ladies and produce more young lords and young ladies. Therefore, it is mostly commoners who are left to act on their baser passions, and, quite frankly, most commoners don’t possess the power levels required to support a male pregnancy.”

She sighed again. “Poppy really is right. We simply must introduce a sexual education class to the curriculum, but how and who…” She sighed again.

“I’m supposed to be a lord, a head of two houses.”

“I know, Harry. And you’ll be a splendid lord, too.”

“I can’t be pregnant.”

“The reality of the situation begs to differ.”

“Minerva, I can’t. The press, they’re still hounding me about Voldemort and the war! If they find out about this, too… They can’t find out about this. I can’t be pregnant.”
“Surely you don’t intend to terminate the pregnancy?” she asked, aghast. “To kill the child before it’s even breathed its first breath?”

“No…no, but… I can’t be pregnant. I wouldn’t even know what to do, how to be pregnant or be a parent or anything!”

“Well, no one really knows how to be pregnant or be a parent, Harry, until suddenly you are,” she told him. “It’s just something you discover as you go along and hope you don’t bung it up too badly. That’s why it’s so important to have a partner with you, supporting you and reassuring you. Harry,” she waited for him to look at her again. “Who’s the other father?”

“It was a one nighter. I haven’t even seen him or heard from him since.”

“But you do know who it is?” she asked, to which he responded with a pouting glare. “And he? Did he know who you were, Harry?” When he continued to glare she huffed at him. “It’s a perfectly reasonable question in a world where glamour charms and potions and self-transfiguration exists, so you can cease looking at me like that, young man.”

“Yes,” Harry answered. “I know who he is; he knows who I am.”

“Then you are honor bound to inform this boy that he’s to be a father. Harry!” she stopped him before he could protest more. “In the wizarding world, a father has just as much right, and many times more right, to the child conceived, whether knowingly or not. Now, you may choose to keep the child or give the child up, but you cannot choose to keep it a secret from its other father.”

Harry remained stubbornly silent.

“I will trust you to make the right choice. Now, how to deal with this situation,” she said, and as they set down to plan Harry thought again of how much he hated Halloween.

“Mum wanted me to ask if you were coming home this holiday,” Ron said, plopping down onto the
sofa next to him a few weeks later. “Don’t know why she would think you wouldn’t.”

“Um, because I’m not?” Harry answered.

“What? Why not?” his friend squawked, spraying cookie crumbs everywhere.

“Oh, honestly, Ron,” Hermione groused, waving her wand to rid themselves of the mess. “Harry might have other plans for the holiday, that’s why your mum wanted you to actually ask,” she said before turning to him. “Do you then, have other plans?”

“Yeah, I’m supposed to be travelling with Remus, checking out my properties and holdings and things, figuring out what to do with everything. That, and spending time with my godson.”

“But… you’ll come over for Christmas dinner, right?” Ron asked. “Even Hermione’s folks said they’d be coming. Of course, Mum’s all up in arms ’cause Bill and Fleur won’t be there—bet she’s huge now,” he continued, dodging the smack Hermione aimed at him, “but Charlie might make it in from Romania, and with George and Percy, well, that’s practically the whole family, so you just gotta come.”

“Oh, Okay,” Ron said, but he didn’t sound okay. In fact, he didn’t say much of anything for the next hour while Hermione and Harry sat, reading from two different books, occasionally sharing a tibblit. It was late when Hermione had headed off to bed—likely to read some more—with the admonishment for them not to stay up too late, that Ron finally spoke up again.

“You’d tell us, Hermione or me, if something were wrong, right?” the ginger asked, not quite looking at him as he continued to stare at the fire.

“What? Of course, I would,” Harry insisted. “You two are my best mates.”

“I know, but… I don’t know. I just… There’s something you’re not telling us,” Ron huffed. “Hermione can tell, too, you know. And, yeah, I get it. We haven’t exactly been around a whole lot this year when we’re not studying, but I didn’t think you’d mind us or anything.”
“I don’t. No, I get it. You and Hermione, you’re a couple now. That changes things. I get that. Don’t worry, Ron. Things are different, but nothing’s wrong.”

“Mate, I—I love you, all right? But you’re a pretty shitty liar,” Ron told him earnestly, causing Harry to snort.

“Nothing’s wrong,” he repeated. “There’s just… a lot on my mind is all.”

“You’ve been off for months now, don’t think I haven’t noticed. Hermione has, as well. You’ve been… off,” he repeated, still not quite looking at Harry. “Ever since we got back to Hogwarts. You haven’t been having nightmares so much, not as much as you used to,” he quickly amended. “And you’re eating, more than ever, Hermione said, though why she would keep track of that… Anyway. The point is, we know something’s up.”

Harry sighed. So far he’d succeeded in not letting anyone else but Pomfrey and Minerva know his secret, but he didn’t know for how long he would be able to keep it up. If the books Madame Pomfrey was able to get to him were to be believed, he still had four more months to make it through for a viable delivery. His goal was an April delivery, although the books said it was unlikely for a wizard to carry past the thirtieth week. He just didn’t know if he could do it, see these people every day, his friends, and lie. A lie by omission, but still a lie. He sighed again.

“It’s the portfolios,” he said after a moment’s thought. “They’re a real mess. I mean, the Black holdings and accounts aren’t too bad, because they weren’t left alone for as long, but they’re still pretty dodgy. And the Potter accounts… It’s like someone set off some dung bombs and a whole crateful of your brothers’ special fireworks before shutting the door and leaving them to fallow for almost two decades. It might take me just that long to straighten everything out, and… And I look at this, and I look at what I have to do, and I keep wondering, what am I doing, Ron? What am I doing here? I don’t need my NEWTS. I’m never going to be able to use them. I’m never going to have a normal job like everyone else. Hell, even if I wanted to, I can’t because there’s so much work to be done for the Family accounts. And that’s just the two family accounts that I head! The goblins dumped a whole stack in front of my this summer. Hell! There were twenty-three other bequeathments, Ron. Twenty-three! Those people didn’t even know me, never had met me, and yet they left me things. And now I have to figure out how to honor that? It’s just… It seems like too much sometimes,” he said quietly before admitting, “I’m thinking about not returning, after the holidays.”

“What?” Ron shouted.

“Hear me out,” Harry pushed on. “I talked to McGonagall, and she said that the Ministry holds
NEWTs twice a year, right? Once at Hogwarts in the spring, and then once again at the Ministry right before New Year’s. So, if I really wanted to, I could go sit for a couple of my NEWTS this coming holiday and then not feel too bad about not coming back afterwards.”

His friend looked queasy. “You would really do that?”


“Either! Both,” the ginger replied, still looking torn between horror and shock.

“I think I just might,” Harry confessed. “I… I can’t stay here, Ron. It just… it doesn’t feel right anymore. I… I don’t want to be here anymore.”

“Well, where do you want to be?”

“I don’t know. That’s the problem. I don’t know what I want,” Harry whispered, staring back into the fire and remembering another ginger asking him a similar question.

“I…I don’t know what to tell you, mate. Only, well, whatever you decide, don’t cut us out, all right? Me and Hermione, we want to be there for you. All you have to do is ask, yeah?”

“Yeah. Hey, Ron,” he called after the other boy when he stood to make his way towards the stairs. “Thanks.”

Ron nodded, looked ready to say something further, then changed his mind, nodded again, and took off up the stairs towards his dorm room and bed. Harry stayed up longer, just staring into the fire, absently rubbing his at his belly while wondering what the hell it was he wanted.

Chapter End Notes

This story, unlike "Vanteeria Domestica", is mostly completed; however, it is unbeta-ed
by a second set of eyes. If you see any errors, either mechanical, grammatical, or continuum, please let me know. Thanks for reading!
“Good to see you, pup!” Remus greeted him with a hearty hug.

“Moony,” Harry sighed, allowing himself a moment to relax into the embrace. And then he pulled away before the older man could suspect something was wrong. “Where’s my godson?”

His old professor beamed a proud smile. “Teddy’s at home, with his grandmum. Come on, we should get going if you want to make it back home before bedtime.”

“You made the appointment all right?”

“Not to worry. You have a very capable solicitor,” Remus told him. “He managed to set up everything you requested. Although, it’s going to be a very busy holiday if we’re to get everything you wanted done before you go back.”

Harry hummed but didn’t respond otherwise.

“Where’s your trunk?” Remus asked as they turned away from the train with hordes of children pouring off and rambunctiously greeting family and loved ones. Harry tapped his chest, and the moleskin pouch there. “Ah, it’s nice to be able to use magic outside of school and not worry, isn’t it?”

“Yeah.”

“Listen, Harry, I don’t want you to worry or stress about these accounts,” Remus started in on him for not the first time. “I know there’s a lot to go over and get through, but we will. They’re not going anywhere, so I want you to be sure to take time for yourself, too.”

“I know, Remus, but I really just want to get through as much as possible. I keep feeling like they’re just hanging over me, like a dagger ready to drop. The sooner everything’s sorted and taken care of, the better.”

Remus stopped him from leaving the station, turning him to look at him and cupping his cheeks. “Harry, you don’t look good. You’ve bags under your eyes and…and your smell is off. Have you been to see Madame Pomfrey? Are you all right?”

“I’m fine, Remus. In fact, I checked in with Madame Pomfrey before we left this morning. Hermione insisted,” he explained before turning back towards London proper. “Now c’m’mon. I want to buy my godson a special present while we’re in London.”

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At eight months old, Harry thought his godson was better looking than at four months. He seemed to
be growing into himself and not so awkward looking. But then again, what did he really know about babies, he asked himself as he carefully tucked into the crib one of the toys he’d picked up in one of the many department stores he’d made Remus stop at with him before heading over to his solicitor’s office.

Elliot Nicklehorn was the ‘N’ in ENT solicitors, one of Edward Tonks’s partners who specialized in cross the statute dealings. Harry had gone to him as opposed to his other partner on the suggestion of Andromeda, who knew her husband’s business partners well. Well, better than Harry or Remus did, so Harry trusted her opinion. So far, it had paid off. Elliot had been fairly up front and honest with what Harry could expect from his dealings with the goblins and with the Dursleys. They’d talked candidly about many subjects back in August, and four months later, Harry was now ready to see some of those conversations bear fruit.

In addition, with Remus sitting safely in the lobby and the privacy and confidentiality wards up, Harry had revealed his pregnancy to a third person, this time so that he could make the appropriate adjustments to his will, granting his unborn child as much protection and security as he could possibly think of—and some that Elliot thought of for him. He also shared his plan of not returning to Hogwarts and taking his NEWTS early with the solicitor, to gauge his reaction. It had been reassuring, and Nicklehorn had wasted no time in making the arrangements for Harry to sit his NEWTS later that same week.

And what a harrowing week it had been. The NEWTS certainly lived up to their name, but he was officially done with his schooling now, and it was like a weight had been lifted from Harry’s shoulders. Now he could really focus on living his life and taking care of his family. Now he could deal with his pregnancy without distractions. Now he could spend more time sorting out his family portfolios.

Now he just had to tell the others that he wasn’t going back to Hogwarts on the 2 January… which wasn’t so reassuring, he thought, as he read his godson a bed time story. Not that the kid could understand a word he was reading, Harry thought. Hell, Harry could tell Teddy his personal life story—everything from giant basilisks and monster spiders to possessed demons that wanted to suck your soul out and more—and the kid wouldn’t think anything of it. He was completely innocent at this age. Blissfully unaware of how fucked up the world he lived in was.

“Will you be joining us down stairs?” Andromeda asked quietly from the doorway. “I believe Remus was about to make an evening pot of tea.”

Harry started, realizing he’d stopped reading ages ago and that Teddy was fast asleep. He’d been doing that a lot, he knew—staring off into space, lost in his own thoughts. “Yeah, sure. Tea would be good.”

“Perhaps some chamomile?”

“What?”

“It’s soothing, helps one sleep easier,” she continued as he stood to join her in the hallway.

“Don’t know. I’m not much one for herbals,” Harry answered, vaguely remembering something his uncle had ranted about—something about crazy people and crazy drinks and not knowing a decent thing. What did it matter now, he thought, pushing any thoughts of his uncle and the Dursleys aside, knowing it was because of his meeting this afternoon with his solicitor that the Dursleys were even so far up close in his mind at all.

Andromeda took his hand in hers and patted it. “You look troubled. A lot is on your mind, I know,”
she continued when he would have protested. “But it is more than that. Call it a mother’s intuition. Remus has not said anything to me, but even I can tell he is worried about you. Will you not tell me what it is? Perhaps it is something we can help with.”

Andromeda was always so calm and gentle, Harry wondered how this woman could have produced a child as spunky and rambunctious as Tonks. Which then led him to thoughts of what his own child would be like. Could he really do it? Could he really hide his pregnancy from everyone successfully? Maybe the general wizarding world—sure, he could just claim he’d knocked up some girl, but…

Charlie would know, wouldn’t he? He’d at least suspect. And Ginny. She knew of his lack of interest in women personally. Or maybe she’d assume it was just lack of interest in her—he wasn’t sure which would be worse. Why was he even trying to hide it? Sure, he was a freak. He always had been, so why bother trying to hide it now?

Andromeda looked sad and resigned as she smiled at him, at his silence, and turned to head back down the stairs, but Harry found himself unable to release her hand. She had been good to him, despite him being the reason her husband and daughter had died, the reason her cousin and sister were killed. She had accepted him as the new head of her family house and gently begun training him in the knowledge he would need to successfully lead House Black. More than that, she’d tried to comfort him when no one else seemed able to, soothing his frazzled nerves with a gentle hand, a kind smile, and understanding eyes. Surely she would be able to help him now…?

Nervously, he licked his chapped lips. “What…what do you know about… about male pregnancy?” he asked haltingly.

She frowned, and turned to face him fully, folding her hands before her. “It is not common, but nor is it entirely unheard of,” she began. “Is this… something you are considering for yourself?” she queried. “I would suspect you capable of succeeding, if it was something you desired. You would only need a partner of strong magical prowess to carry the child.”

He couldn’t quite stop the whimpered laugh that escaped him as he fell back against the paneled wall.

“Harry,” she asked, worry evident. “If you… are you… not attracted to the fairer sex?”

He shook his head.

“Ah, well, then yes, I can see how finding a suitable male partner would be important, but it is nothing to fret over dear,” she tried to reassure him. “Many wizards and witches prefer the company of their own. Just because it is not generally done does not mean it cannot or is not done. You are the head of two important families. You have great political power at your fingertips. If you should prefer to live openly with another wizard, that is your choice. You will have my support, and I’m sure, Remus’s as well.”

“I’m pregnant,” he told her on a hushed breath, eyes darting up to catch her reaction.

She blinked. And blinked again. “I see,” she said finally, and after another moment, “I didn’t realize you were already in a relationship with someone, but then, I suppose you would—“

“I’m not,” he rushed to correct her. “Meantly, we’re friendly, of course, but, it was just once, just the one time, and now, and… Shit,” he huffed, his head falling back to smack against the wall.

“Harry,” Andromeda said gently, reaching out and drawing him into an embrace. “How long?”
“Since August, so, that’s what? Four months just about, right?”

“Then you should be showing,” she announced, pulling back to look at him.

“Robes,” he reminded her. “Great at hiding things. But they won’t be much good for much longer. That’s why… that’s why I don’t plan on going back to Hogwarts after the break. Professor McGonagall said I could take some of my NEWTS at the ministry, and that’s what I’ve been doing this week, so it’s not like I’m skipping out on them or anything. And it’s not like I don’t have a lot to do to get the family holdings all sorted out again.”

“Harry, yes, there is a lot of work to be done, but cutting short your education…”

“I’ve already cut short my education, last year,” he reminder her. “This year, it’s a fluke anyway. And… It just doesn’t feel right, to be there, not anymore, not after what’s happened.” He looked at her, hoping she would understand. “I don’t want to go back.”

“Well, it is your choice, of course,” she allowed, although she didn’t sound approving. “And what has the baby’s other father had to say?”

“I haven’t told him.”

Her eyes flared with slight surprise—the biggest reaction she’d displayed yet—before taking his hand and leading him off into one of the upstairs spare rooms. It was set up in what his Aunt would call a hobby room as opposed to a guest bedroom. Comfortable, with a loveseat and arm chair off to one side and a sewing basket in between. A wireless stood in one corner.

“Harry, as the head of your families, this child is, of course, your heir, but this other boy, whoever he is, has rights to the child, too. Now, I can make some educated guesses as to who the other father is—you spent much of your time this summer with the Weasleys and saw little of anyone else. Considering that the oldest boy is already married, and the youngest seems quite taken with your other friend… Well, I would understand if it were one of them who was the father, and you didn’t want to say out of propriety, but Harry, whoever he is, you must tell him.”

“No! It wasn’t Ron or Bill,” Harry shouted in protested. “I wouldn’t—I couldn’t do that. Not to Fleur or Hermione, and besides, it’s not like that at all between us.”

“Well, that is something, then,” she sighed, and by her relief he could tell she’d actually thought it possible. “But then, I fail to see why telling the other father would be a problem? It is a Weasley, is it not?”

He nodded, stomach twisting, and he thought he might just sick up dinner, although he hadn’t had any really horrible morning sickness.

“The Weasleys are a good family,” Andromeda said from seemingly nowhere. “A family rich in history and tradition. Not wealthy, it’s true, at least not in monetary assets, but always rich in fertility and magic. It’s well known. Many families have often married their daughters into the Weasley line—the Blacks and Potters, included. Why, Arthur’s mother was Cedrella Black.”

“Yeah, Sirius showed me her on the family tapestry,” he remembered. “And my grandmother. She was also a Black. Doesn’t that make me and the Weasley’s related?”

“Dorea and Cedrella actually came from different branches of the family, but, yes, you share some common ancestry through your ties to the Black family,” Andromeda instructed. “Not enough for cause of concern, however. Both the Potter and Weasley families are fairly well distributed, and of
course, your mother’s blood.”

He nodded, thoughtful.

“Why do you not want to tell him?”

“I don’t know,” Harry squirmed. “I mean, it wasn’t like we talked about any sort of relationship between us. It wasn’t planned or anything. It just… happened… And then… then he went back to work. We never talked about it, never talked about us, because there isn’t an ‘us’.”

“But would you have liked there to be?” Andromeda asked, and then before he could answer, she went on. “Because regardless of whether there was or wasn’t, you are now both responsible for a child, Harry. A life you created together. And Harry, a child magic itself gifted you. Write to him, now, and invite him to tea tomorrow, and then you can talk and discuss things like civilized persons, face to face, with little chance for misconceptions.”

“I… I can’t,” Harry breathed. “I don’t even know if he’s here.”

“The dragon handler, then,” Andromeda murmured. “I believe he and my daughter attended Hogwarts together.”

“Yeah. I mean, yes. Charlie mentioned it.”

“And how do you feel about this Charlie?”

“I don’t know.”

“Would you like to be with him again?” Harry blushed, and Andromeda smiled. “Do you find him interesting, intriguing?”

“It’s not like that.”

“Then how is it like?”

“Charlie, he’s… he’s… I don’t know. It just like, I can relax around him, you know? I don’t have to pretend to be holding it all together…”

“Oh, Harry,” she said softly, pulling him into another embrace. “Write him a letter. Invite him to tea. Maybe he says yes, maybe no, but you will never know if you don’t invite him. And then, if he says no, you can tell him you wish to speak to him privately about a matter—no need to say what in a letter. This type of news should always be disclosed in person. In the meantime, I should go check on Remus least he become worried about us. Here, I believe I have some parchment and quills in the desk. You may begin your letter now, and then you will not have time to deliberate.”

“I wouldn’t know what to say.”

“Best to keep it short, then. Try, ‘Fancy a cup of tea at my place?’” she suggested, almost flippantly before abandoning him.

***

Charlie Weasley hadn’t planned to seduce his little brother’s best mate. It had just happened, swear on the dragons he loved so much. Yeah, sure he was drawn to the kid—predisposed to like him, even. After all, he was The Harry Potter, stuff of legends, sure, but above that, he knew he owed his sister’s life, his father’s life, and probably several of his brothers’ lives to the boy. And his parents
seemed to adore him—every letter home from his mum always contained some tidbit about the boy. It was hard not to like the kid.

Except, seeing him again this summer, Charlie had been reminded that kid wasn’t really a kid anymore. Sure, he’d been surprised. Sort of sneaks up on you, he guessed, but there was no denying that Harry was no longer the gangly youth who had out flown a dragon in some crazy tournament. He was a man, a warrior, and had the scars to prove it. Funnily enough, it was those scars Charlie had found most attractive. That, and the magic.

He had noticed it from the first casual touches this summer—how his magic seemed to dance and tingle whenever he was close to the teen. And when they touched, even innocently, it was like fire and ice. He wasn’t sure what made him kiss him—whether it was to get the other boy to stop panicking or if it was simply because he had wanted to do so for days… But that was the beginning of the landslide. Charlie had feared—and he’d been correct—that once he’d started, he wouldn’t want to stop. But then again, it wasn’t like Harry had asked him to stop. And wasn’t that a surprise?

He’d known about his sister’s crush. Known that the two had dated sometime in her fifth year and that something had happened over the course of the next year that completely changed the game. He hadn’t suspected that Harry would have been receptive to his advances—but he was ever so grateful. And the way Harry had responded to him, for him… intoxicatingly beautiful. He’d completely spoiled Charlie for any other lover, he was sure of it, and the worst of it all was… there was very little chance of him ever getting a repeat performance.

Charlie knew that Harry was considered a very eligible person of interest to the public. He could have his pick of partners, and now that he had introduced the teen to the wonders of sex, Charlie doubted Harry would hold back, not with the plethora of willing bedmates that would throw themselves at the boy hero. He certainly wouldn’t if he was in the other boy’s situation. And yet, even as he’d accepted the early morning floo-call that had sent him back to his beloved dragons, Charlie had regretted not getting another chance to speak with Harry…maybe even do a little more than just speak.

He’d thought to write—at least half a dozen times he’d actually reached for a quill—but each and every time, he’d drawn a blank on what to say. They hadn’t made any promises to each other. They hadn’t even spoken about the possibility of a relationship between them. It was just a one-off, and Charlie considered himself fairly acquainted with those. But he couldn’t seem to stop himself from wanting something more, which was foolish. Still, it was that wanting, wishing, and hoping that had sent him requesting time off from the Reserve again so soon, sent him flooing back home to the Burrow for the Christmas holidays…. Only to discover that Harry hadn’t come home with Ron this year.

“You look glum, brother-mine,” George exclaimed, falling over his shoulder. “You should have more of Mum’s pudding,” he continued, offering over a cake slice.

“Not really hungry, Georgie,” he declined with a skewed grin. “Thanks anyway.”

“Tis a shame to let such a treat go to waste,” the younger brother declared, smoothly rolling into the seat beside him and eating a bite of the cake. “Didn’t eat much at dinner tonight, either. Can’t help thinking, brother-dear, that you’re not much in the Yule-tide cheer.” He took another bite. “Makes one wonder what might have Charlie-boy so down and out. Can’t possibly be missing his dragons already, can he? No.” Another bite. “Me-thinks the boy might be depressed.”

“Go away, George,” he tried, but the effort lacked any heart. His brother ignored it anyway.

“No, me-thinks he be so glum because of a certain person’s absence,” George continued, taking
another bit of cake before offering the last little bit to Charlie. “Our youngest, dearest, littlest brother perhaps?”

“What-omphf!”

George took the opportunity to shove that last cake bite into his brother’s mouth before setting the plate aside. “No, surely that couldn’t be. Why would Charlie-boy be missing our dearest, darling Harrykins?” he continued on, not bothered at all that Charlie wasn’t really participating in the conversation. “After all, they aren’t nearly as well acquainted as, say, Harry and Ron, or Harry and myself… and yet… what is this I have here?” He asked, withdrawing a letter from his pocket. “Why, it’s a letter, it is. A letter from our very dear missing little brother. And what’s this? Is it addressed to his bestest mate, Ron? Why, no, no it isn’t. Nor is it addressed to his favorite business partner and entrepreneur—that being myself. Nor to Mum, nor Dad, nor Bill, nor Ginny, nor Percy. Why, no indeed it is not. Which leads one to wonder… Why is Harry writing to you and not to any of us?” George asked, suddenly serious—which was actually a neigh on terrifying composure for his brother.

“Won’t know until you let me read it, now will I?” Charlie snapped, trying to snatch the letter away, but George yanked it out of reach, watching him harrowingly. After a moment, he handed the letter over, watching carefully as Charlie read it, and then leaning over to read it himself.

“He’s inviting you to tea?” he asked, disbelievingly.

“Apparently.”

“Why you and not any of the rest of us?”

“Don’t know. Maybe because we talked a lot last summer and he wants to talk again?”

“Rather pithy reason to invite someone to tea, isn’t it?” George asked disgustedly.

“Rather reasonable reason if you ask me,” Charlie return before getting up to find a quill.

“There’s an owl in the kitchen, waiting for a reply,” George told him. “Agreeable thing. Likes to bite, so careful.”

Charlie nodded and went in search of the bird, glancing back down at the note he held:

Charlie,
Not sure if you’re at the Burrow or not, but fancy a cup of tea at my place?
I’m staying at the Tonks’—40 White Horse Lane.
Harry

Maybe he’d get the chance to have that talk after all.

***

Somehow Andromeda convinced Remus to take Teddy out for the afternoon—though why anyone would want to take a baby anywhere in London on a cold, wet day in December, let alone the day before Christmas, Harry didn’t know, but he was grateful. He was equally grateful for her insistence of being in the household but out of sight, especially when the floo flared to life and Charlie Weasley strode confidently out.

“Charlie. Thank you for coming.”
“How could I resist, with an invitation like this?” the older man asked, holding up the letter Harry had sent him, while his eyes hungrily ate up the sight of the boy before him. “You look… good. Better than this summer. Looks like you’ve even managed to put on some weight,” he teased lightly. “From the way Ron and Hermione were talking, you’d think they thought you were dying.”

Harry swallowed nervously. “Yes, well, I’ve told them I’m fine. Just… a lot of my mind. You know.”

Neither moved. Neither one said anything, and it was like the tension was a physical force pulsing between them until they were both compelled to speak the other’s name and trip over each other in an effort to let the other person speak first.

“Harry, I—“

“Charlie, there’s—“

“I’m sorry. Go ahead.”

“No, please, you first.”

“Hell,” Charlie growled before reaching out and pulling Harry into him. He came willingly, and soon enough they were wrapped up in each other, feasting from the other’s lips and mouth. “Wanted to write you.” Charlie panted in-between kisses. “Didn’t know what to say. Didn’t know if you even wanted to hear from me.”

“You left. Didn’t even say goodbye,” Harry protested.

“I know. I’m sorry. Thought there’d be more time, but my boss, she got my owl. One of the other hands got hurt bad, and so she called me in right away. I told mum to pass along my goodbyes to everyone.”

“She did, but—I,” Harry pulled away finally, reluctantly. Charlie was just as reluctant to let him leave, even for that measly meter’s space of distance. “We should talk.”

“Yeah, all right. We can do that,” Charlie agreed, licking his lips and swallowing as he tried to calm down his breathing. “Talk.” He took another step back—he figured that was the safest thing to do right now. “So, what do you want to talk about?”

“Tea!”

“You want to talk about tea?” Charlie asked, confused. But there was a sharp pop and a tea service tray appeared on the coffee table nearby.

“Would you like some?” Harry asked, suddenly nervous again. “I did invite you over for some, so it would be poor manners not to offer you any.”

“Yeah, sure, I’ll take some tea, but, Harry—”

“Milk or sugar?”

“Lemon, if you have it,” Charlie answered, following Harry over to the settee. “Harry, I want you to know—“

“Your tea,” Harry cut him off, handing over the saucer and cup.

“Thanks, but, Harry, will you just listen to me for second?”
“Yes, I—of course,” Harry stopped himself from whatever he was going to say and sunk down into the over-plush cushions. Mauve and forest greens wouldn’t have been his first choice of color schemes for the room, he thought, but then again, the room and the house weren’t his, so it didn’t really matter.

“Harry, I like you,” Charlie said bluntly, and Harry had to forcibly stop himself from standing back up, from moving away from whatever platitude Charlie was going to say next, because he was sure it was going to be a ‘just friends’ brush off, and then how was he supposed to tell him that he was pregnant?

“A lot.”

Charlie waited, hoping to see some type of reaction from Harry, any indication that the other boy might feel slightly the same. But Harry just sat there, tense and uncomfortable, fiddling with his tea cup.

“When I got back to Romania, I couldn’t stop thinking about you,” he continued. “I meant it when I said I wanted to write you. I just didn’t know what to say.”

“I’m going to have a baby.”

Charlie blinked, uncomprehendingly. That wasn’t the response he was expecting Harry to give—nowhere near what he was hoping to hear, for sure. He was hoping to hear that maybe Harry liked him, too, was interested in getting to know him better, maybe start up a real relationship. He expected to hear another ‘thanks for a fun time but...’ Maybe he’d even expected the dreaded knowledge that Harry might have already found somebody else—maybe even several somebodies. But he hadn’t expected it to be a girl...

“Well, congratulations, then, I guess,” he stumbled, teacup and saucer jittering in his hands so badly that he had to set them down or risk a lapful of hot tea. “I... I know you wanted a family. Didn’t think, I mean... how, er, when, uh, what I mean to say is—” Harry made a funny little noise, and Charlie looked up in time to receive a face-full of pillow.

Harry was up off his seat and pacing with furious, agitated energy. “You should well enough know,” he snapped. “You were there!”

“I was--? But...” Charlie knew he was no Dumbledore, but he’d never considered himself a bowtruckle, either. “You mean...?”

“I mean, I’m. Going. To have. A Baby,” he said slowly, turning back to Charlie, one hand hovering at his stomach while the other clenched at his side.

“A baby,” Charlie repeated, staring at Harry with new eyes. “You’re...”

“Pregnant.” Harry whirled away and set back to pacing. “Which is crazy, because two months ago I didn’t even know wizards could *get* pregnant—”

“Two months?! You’ve known for two months?”

“And yet, here I am, preggers. Up the duff. Knocked up. Bun in the ove-mpherf!” Harry swung at Charlie when he’d suddenly grabbed him, but was quickly sidetracked by the kiss Charlie laid on him.

“You’re pregnant,” Charlie said, minutes later when he finally pulled back.
“Yes.”

“My baby,” he tried to confirm. Harry swung at him again, but Charlie easily ducked and grabbed hold of the flailing limb, grinning at him. “You’re pregnant with my baby,” he repeated, laughing when Harry scowled at him. “Well, fuck me sideways on a broomstick!”

Harry frowned. “Is that even possible?”

“Ask me again when you’re not pregnant,” Charlie responded with a wicked smile and a wink. And then his smile trailed off and the reality of the situation came home to him. “Fuck me, you’re really pregnant.”

“I think we’ve established that fact, yes, thanks,” Harry sniped, pulling his arms free and stepping away.

“That…complicates matters some.”

“You think?” Harry turned away and went to sit back at the settee, pouring himself a cup of tea from habit and grimacing when he went to take a sip only to find the expected black brew magically replaced with some fruity, herbal concoction.

“Well, yes, of course. I mean, you’re still in school, and—“

“I’m not going back,” Harry informed him, setting the teacup aside. “I’ve already made arrangements and have taken some of my NEWTS early, and the Headmistress is aware of the situation. I won’t be returning to Hogwarts in the new year.”

“Really?” Charlie asked, clearly surprised. “Because Ron and Hermione seem to think they’ll be seeing you again in a few weeks.”

“I’ve already told Ron there was a good possibility I wouldn’t be returning. Hermione would just try to talk me out of it.”

“For good reason,” Charlie told him. “Your last year at Hogwarts, your last chance to study under some pretty talented professors…”

Harry shrugged. “It doesn’t matter. I won’t be needing my NEWTS anyway, so I’m not too concerned. And… I already told you, it doesn’t feel like home anymore.”

“Then where does?”

“I don’t know,” Harry answered softly, fiddling with a pillow he picked up off the sofa. “Guess I haven’t found it yet.”

Charlie hesitated, watching him carefully. “Harry… what do you want from me?”

“I don’t—I don’t want anything from you.”

“Harry, you’re having my baby. That means something.”

“This is my baby,” Harry said forcefully. “You just… helped donate to it, is all.”

“Donate? Hell, Harry,” he exclaimed, and suddenly it was Charlie who was pacing. “Do you know how incredible it is for two wizards to be able to conceive?”

“I know, I’m a freak, I get it! You don’t have to—“
Charlie whirled on him. “You are not a freak! I don’t ever want to hear you say that, ever! You are incredible; amazing; unbelievably powerful. And for us to have been able to make this baby… can I … may I feel it?” he asked hesitantly.

“What do you mean?”

“Your belly. The baby. Can I feel it?”

“Um, sure…I guess?”

Charlie shuffled over until he could crouch in the space between the table and the sofa, and then he slowly stretched his hand out until it rested against Harry’s seemingly flat stomach—robes hid so much, he thought as Harry took his hand and moved it properly in place… and suddenly… there was a solid swelling of flesh cupped in his hand. Charlie looked up at Harry reverently.

“Is it crazy that I find it extremely hot that you’re pregnant and it’s mine?”

“Probably.”

“I do, it is,” Charlie insisted, leaning up and claiming Harry’s lips again. “Extremely. Hot. I want to take you home with me and lock you in my bedroom and do lots of wickedly, dirty things with you.”

Lust, which had been simmering at a pretty even pace since Charlie had arrived, exploded through Harry’s system, leaving him shivering with need.

“Can’t. Andromeda would definitely worry if I disappeared,” he swallowed out.

“Mum definitely wouldn’t approve,” Charlie growled hoarsely before groaning at another thought, and his head drooped over Harry’s lap. “Oh, Mum is definitely not going to approve.”

“What?”

“Not only are we not properly married, I’ve gone and deflowered her youngest son,” Charlie teased. “She’ll try and have my bollocks for this, see if she doesn’t.”

“M-married?”

“Are you asking?” Charlie asked pressing more kisses to Harry’s delectable lips.

“No! Are you?” Harry hurriedly returned, trying to keep some semblance of logic and reason going when his body kept screaming at him to claw off all of Charlie’s clothes and rub himself all over his body. Or even better, convince Charlie to make love to him again. That was something he definitely wanted to do again, hopefully soon.

“Can’t. You outrank me,” Charlie told him, lacing their fingers together and lifting their hands up until Harry’s two family rings were in easy sight. “Even if I gave in to Mum and accepted responsibility of the Prewitt family, the Potter and Black families still have higher status. And as head of those families, you would have to meet with my father to arrange the marriage contract negotiations.”

“So, you don’t want to ask me to marry you?”

“Never gave much thought to marriage and myself before,” Charlie admitted.

“Then why are we even talking about it?” Harry asked testily.

“Because you’re pregnant, with my baby, and I think I might just like to commit myself to you for
“We hardly know each other.”

“Know each other well enough,” Charlie returned, using one of their joined hands to rub alongside Harry small growing belly. “Harry, we created a baby together, on our first go. Do you know how incredibly amazing that is? The amount of power you have to be able to raise and give and share…. And we were able to do it without even trying. That says something, Harry.”

“And when you go back to Romania?” Harry asked. “That’s your home, but it’s not mine. I’ve never even been off the island before. I don’t think I could live someplace else entirely. What then?”

Charlie frowned a little at that. “I don’t want to give up my dragons, that’s true. I’m not ready to. But… there’s a smaller reserve in Wales. I could request a transfer. Or, if that doesn’t work, I could… find something else,” he ended hesitantly.

“You would hate it. And then you would hate me.”

“Harry, very few dragon handlers remain so for the entirety of their lives.” He cupped Harry’s cheek and forced the boy to look up at him. “There are other choices. We can do this; we can make this work, but…. I won’t force you.”

“I don’t know.” Harry chewed on his lips. “I still don’t know what I want or what to do, and everything’s a mess. I just… I feel like I’ve never really had control of my life, you know? Just followed the plan that was laid out for me. And now…. now there’s no more plan left. I was supposed to die in those woods,” he confessed softly. “I did die.”

Charlie studied him. “You look pretty alive to me.”

“Soul magic,” Harry excused. “Saved me, but I did die, and now… I don’t know.”

“You can do whatever you want, Harry. You can make your own plans now. We could make plans together. I came over here today—I came home this holiday, with the intention to speak to you again. Because I wanted…. I was hoping…. I thought we had a chance—bollocks! This is coming out all wrong! Harry, I like you. I like you a lot, and I was hoping that maybe you liked me, too, and that what we shared wasn’t just a heat of the moment fling. I wanted to try and have a go, you know, with us. A real go at it. But—” and Charlie laughed again delightedly. “This baby, it proves we weren’t just a heat of a moment fling; that we have a real connection, and do you have any idea how rare and wonderful that is?”

“Not really, no,” Harry answered honestly. “But… I like you, too. Really like you. And… I’m comfortable, when you’re around. I feel… I just feel better, about everything, and I can’t decide if that scares me more than makes me feel better. And I have absolutely no idea how to be pregnant, and that really scares me. I didn’t want anyone to know. When I found out, I wasn’t going to let anyone else know. But Madame Pomfrey insisted Minerva know. And she insisted I had to tell you, but I wasn’t. I couldn’t. And then I came here, and Andromeda knows, but she wouldn’t take no for an answer and practically forced me to invite you to tea today, and a part of me really hoped you wouldn’t come…. and the other part really hoped you would…. and you did… and…. I’m royally messed up, Charlie.”

“You really wouldn’t have told me you were having my baby?” Charlie wanted to know.

“Do you know what a fiasco the press will make out of this?” Harry demanded, furiously realizing he was crying and cursing himself out mentally. “They’re still going off about the stupid, bloody
war! If they caught wind about me being pregnant? Ugh!”

“You really weren’t going to tell me… Screw the press, Harry! This is my baby, too! Do you have any idea how long I’ve thought I’d never have kids of my own? I knew from my fifth year that girls just weren’t my thing. Sure, I continued to date because it was fun, but I never wanted to do more than just casually hang out. And for a Weasley, family is just about everything. And every time I would come home, and Mum would ask me about which girls I liked, and it was too much, knowing I would never have the wedding and wife and grandkids she seemed to expect from me. If it wasn’t Romania, it would have been somewhere else, Harry, because I couldn’t live like that. I’m not attracted to women, and I have enough brothers that I wouldn’t need to trap myself in a fake marriage just to produce an heir. And I knew how rare it would be to find another wizard whose magic would harmonize with mine so perfectly that we could potentially conceive a child. So the fact that we, you and I, were able to do it without even trying… that’s a very big thing, Harry. I like you, and yes, I think we could make each other happy for a very long time, so yes—I’ve never considered myself for marriage, but if you asked, I would say yes. I would say yes to you and to our child, and to any children we might be so lucky to have in the future.”

“Good,” Andromeda announced as she swept into the room with a petite sized tomb, causing Charlie to jump up from his crouch. “Then we need only formalize your bond and post the bands. I’ve brought one of the family books of common wedding vows and ceremonies. I thought you might like to take a look. Something simple, of course. Neither of the two of you seem to be the type for much fuss, not that there’s anything wrong with that. Ted and myself ran off for an elopement, you know.”

“Andromeda, I don’t—“ Harry started before choking off.

“Don’t what?” she demanded. “Don’t want to get married? Don’t want to be happy?”

“I wouldn’t know how,“ he finally confessed.

“How to be married?” she asked. He nodded. “Well, it’s not easy. The hardest part is living your life for your spouse and your children,” she told him. “Because when you agree to join your life to someone else’s, you’re not doing it for yourself, you’re doing it for that person and the children you will have together. You’re committing your future to trying to make a life together, a better life than that person would have had without you. Love, yes, love is important, but it isn’t enough. There should be genuine like and respect, too.”

She studied them both—the ginger-haired young man seemed determined and set; Harry, nervous and confused. “No one will force you, Harry. If you think this isn’t the right thing for you, for your child. The decision is ultimately yours. But you should know, the child will not be eligible to inherit the Black Family name if you are not legally wedded before its birth. I do not know if the Potter Family has such a statute in place.”

“You mean I have to get married.”

“If you want the child to be your legal heir to the Black Family, yes.”

“Then how is there any choice?”

“There are other potential heirs, Harry,” she reminded him. “And there is always the possibility you may choose to get married one day and have other children.”

“It could be a girl,” Charlie offered.

“Statistically unlikely,” Andromeda dissuaded. “Most wizard pregnancies result in boys. If you
wanted, I could cast the charm right now, and we would know."

“You can do that?”

“At more than sixteen weeks along? Certainly. Would you like to know?”

“I—” Harry hesitated, looking searchingly at Charlie, who looked back at him hopefully, and nodded. “Please?” he asked, turning back to Andromeda.

“Of course,” she responded, removing her wand and casting a silent charm over Harry’s midsection, which resulted in a fine mist forming. The mist seeped into Harry’s belly before sliding back out.

Charlie gasped. “Is that…?”

“A perfectly healthy little boy?” she asked, smiling. “It is. Congratulations, gentlemen. You’re expecting a son.”

Harry tried to touch the mist, but it disappeared as his hand approached. “I couldn’t see…” he said, sadly.

“I’m sorry, my dear. There isn’t much to see with this particular spell. Just a general outline of shape. It was designed just to give us a quick look to determine the sex of the child, but if you like, we could do a more thorough inspection tomorrow. And we can use another spell, in front of a mirror so you can see, too.”

“Why? Is something wrong? Did—“

“Nothing is wrong, Harry. Be at peace,” Andromeda soothed, reaching over and caressing his cheek. “Your baby looks healthy and well. You have been taking good care of him. But, perhaps not so much good for yourself.”

“You think we should get married,” Harry said.

“I do, but not because of the baby.”

“Then why?” he wanted to know. Charlie shifted uneasily but kept silent.

Andromeda smiled. “Because I think you can make each other happy.”

“How can you possibly know that?”

“Because, dear heart, you let him close enough for this situation to eventuate, and therefore, I know he has the potential to be not only special to you, but very good for you, too.” She smiled again, caressed his cheek once more before dropping a kiss on his forehead and standing to leave. “I’ve bookmarked a few places I think you might find agreeable. I’ll be upstairs.”

Charlie shifted again, watching him, and Harry felt his stomach twist with nerves. “You want to get married,” Harry said. “Because of the baby.”

“Not just because of the baby, no,” Charlie replied, moving to take the seat Andromeda had vacated. “I agree, I think we could be good together, Harry. I mean, I would like to be married to the father of my son, but I don’t want to force you into anything or make you feel like you have no choice in the matter.”

“But I don’t have a choice, do I?”
“You do, of course you do,” Charlie protested, grasping at Harry’s hands. “If you don’t want to get married, really don’t want to… well, I’ll try to convince you, but I won’t force you. And I won’t abandon you or our son.”

“I thought…” Harry licked his dry, cracked lips. “I thought maybe I’d take up in one of the properties. Maybe Grimauld Place. It needs a bit of fixing up, some redecorating, but it’s livable. Unlike any of the Potter properties right now.”

“If that’s what you want.”

“There’s plenty of space for a nursery or…” Harry trailed off. “Would you like to go and visit it? We could go right now.”

“You mean go to a big old empty house, alone, just the two of us?” Charlie asked teasingly. “Why Mr. Potter, how forward of you.” He stood and pulled Harry up into him, leaning over to press a quick kiss on those delectable lips. “I would love to.”

And, ever hopeful, he pocketed the tome Andromeda had brought them alongside a special little bottle in his cloak as he followed Harry into the floo.

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“Master Harry returns, but does he tell poor Kreacher he is coming? No,” the creature mumbled from the side of a rather dark kitchen they stepped out into.

“I’m sorry, Kreacher,” Harry said immediately, turning towards the decrepit house elf. “It wasn’t a planned trip. How are you?”

“And now Master asks after Kreacher’s well-being. Tis truly a strange Master Kreacher has.”

“Yes, well, we were wondering—is there a nursery here?”

“Most certainly, Master Harry. Grimauld Place is a house of the great and noble Blacks.”

“Great!” he said, cutting the elf’s tirade off before it could get started. “Where is it?”

“Upstairs, of course, Master Harry. Next to my former Mistress’s chambers.”

“Fantastic,” Harry exclaimed, taking off to hunt the rooms in question down.

Charlie made to follow him, but paused a moment to look back at the creature he’d heard about from his brothers but never met. “And, Kreacher, if it’s at all possible, a plate of light fare, if you would. Something easy and settling. I don’t think Harry’s eaten much today and he’s eating for two now, so it’s important he’s eating healthy.”

The elf’s eyes widened before turning to look up through the wall, and then he turned away and hunched over, muttering incoherently to himself.

Charlie wasn’t sure what to make of it, but shrugged it off. If it came down to it, they could always return back to White Horse or even go out into London for a bit to eat. He found the stairs and started up, calling out for Harry.
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“Second floor,” Harry called back, and Charlie quickly joined him to find him standing on the landing between the two staircases.

“What is it? What’s wrong?”

“That’s the Master’s bedroom,” Harry told him, pointing to the left. “Sirius kept Buckbeak the hippogriff in there. And that,” he continued, pointing to the right, “Is the bedroom Ron and I slept in when we stayed. If what Kreacher said was true, then that used to be the nursery, right?”

“Well, there are other rooms, aren’t there?” Charlie asked. “You could choose whichever room you wanted to sleep in as yours and any other as the nursery.”

Harry nodded. “Seven floors from basement to attic. Eight bedrooms, four and a half baths, the kitchen, formal dining room, drawing room, and study.”

“Pretty big for just one person,” Charlie commented, squeezing up behind Harry and nuzzling his neck.

“At least two,” Harry murmured, tilting his head to allow for more nuzzling.
“Only two?” Charlie growled, scraping teeth along skin.

“What do you want from me?” Harry gasped.

“Right now, I really want to see you naked again, preferably on one of those beds you mentioned,” Charlie told him candidly.

Harry groaned, thinking he liked that idea very much, but-- “And afterwards? What then?”

“Whatever you’re willing to give me, Harry. I’ve already told you what I want. I want you, and I want our baby. And yes, I want marriage and a family, with you, and me, and however many children we may be blessed with.”

“Really? You’re not just saying that because I’m pregnant?”


Harry reached down and grabbed Charlie’s hand. “C’mon. The bed I used to sleep in is in here,” he said, leading him off to the room to the right. It was small and a bit cramped, he thought now, looking at it. Especially with the two beds in it. But it was perfectly sized for a decent sized nursery…

He turned around in the center of the room and faced Charlie nervously. “Naked then?”

“Let me?” Charlie requested, stepping up to him and releasing the catch on his outer robe…and then peeling away his inner robe, leaving him standing there in just a tee shirt and boxers. Charlie made a little involuntary noise, reached out and brushed his fingers over the more noticeable swell of Harry’s stomach. “Incredibly hot.”

Harry snorted. “Earlier you said I was getting fat,” he reminded him.

“No, I said you were looking healthier,” Charlie corrected. “And you are. But the idea of you being pregnant… pregnant with my kid…” He groaned, snatching up Harry’s hand and shoving it against his crotch. “Definitely a big turn on,” he told him, thrusting up into Harry’s palm.

It was Harry’s turn to make a little noise. “You’re wearing too much,” he protested.

“Easily remedied,” Charlie promised, shucking his robes quickly until he stood in front of Harry in only his tightie-whities. “We didn’t get enough time last time.”

Harry coughed. “I don’t know, seems like we had plenty of time.”

“Nah, there’s still so much more,” Charlie told him, drawing him over to the closest bed, but Harry stopped him and pulled him on to the second bed. Charlie fell willingly, angling himself so he fell over Harry without crashing into him, and then slowly lowering himself down until he was covering the younger man completely. “Yes,” he hissed, undulating his body against Harry’s. “This feels right.”

“Would feel better,” Harry commented, running his hands up and down Charlie’s back, reveling in the muscles that bunched and flexed and moved beneath his fingertips.


“Everything,” Harry panted back, his own body undulating up to meet Charlie’s.
The ginger grinned down at him before swooping in for another tongue-in-cheek kiss that left both of them moaning and breathing heavy. He tugged at one of Harry’s legs until it wrapped around his waist, and used the space allotted to slide his covered cock up and down and over Harry’s cock and balls, occasionally pausing to mash his own balls into Harry’s. “Gladly,” he answered when he finally drew back.

“Please?”

“Please what?”

“I don’t know! Touch me!”

“I am touching you.”

“No, I mean… like you did before,” Harry panted.

“You mean when I held your cock in my hands,” Charlie teased. “Or maybe when I sucked you off? You seemed to enjoy that, if I recall… Or maybe you’re referring to the way I slid my fingers into your arse and made you ride them before I replaced them with my cock?”

“Yes!” Harry shouted, jerking against him.

“To which one?” Charlie asked, nibbling on Harry’s earlobe as he snaked a hand between their bodies and squeezed Harry’s cock. “Do you want me to rub one off you, or do you want me to suck you off instead?”

Harry groaned, deliberating for only a second before hissing, “Suck me.”

“With pleasure,” the ginger told him, already scooting down lower and tugging at Harry’s boxers. “But first, these have to go.” He tossed the cloth aside, uncaring of where they landed, and buried his face in Harry’s crotch, inhaling deeply. “Damn, you smell good. I could just…”

He rubbed his cheek up the silky shaft before finding the spongy head with his mouth and swallowing. Harry cried out, and immediately hands were at his hips, holding him down as Charlie bobbed his head, up and down, up and down, several times. And then, with a hard suck, he pulled off with a pop, drawing another cry from Harry. “Damn, you taste good, too,” he said, grinning down at him. “Bet you taste good all over,” he continued with a wicked leer before falling back on Harry’s cock, laving it with big, wet licks. He teased his tongue into the slit, ran it around the ridges, and traced it back down the big vein until he could suck on the bit of skin that separated his cock from his ball sacks. And then he dipped lower, trying to suck one of those sacks into his mouth and using his tongue to massage the organ.

Harry shouted and squirmed, panted and begged and pleaded, but Charlie wasn’t finished. He pushed Harry’s leg out of the way, opening him up further, and then dropped lower, trailing his tongue over the tiny sphincter a second before Harry arched away from him.

“Holy fuck! You can’t—“

“Roll over,” Charlie commanded, pulling back to push and prod Harry into the new position on his stomach. Harry growled and protested, but he did roll over, and soon, Charlie was plastered over his back, hips rocking into Harry’s backside, his cock sliding tantalizingly back and forth against his crease, as Charlie nibbled along Harry’s shoulders.

“You liked it,” Charlie told him. “You liked it when I had my fingers inside you, stretching you open, and you liked it when it was my cock inside you.”
“Yessssss.”

“Then trust me now,” he whispered against Harry’s ear. “You’ll love my tongue, licking you out.”

Harry whimpered but nodded, and soon Charlie was sliding back down until his face was pressed to the curve of Harry’s back, nuzzling, and his hands were massaging Harry’s buttocks. He gave them one more squeeze before pulling them apart and burying his face back in his prize. Tiny little licks left Harry jumping and shivering, and then the big flat tongue lick a solid strip that had him moaning and clutching at the sheets. Charlie didn’t wait before pressing for more, and Harry was moaning and writhing under him.

“Fuck, please,” Harry begged, squeezing at his own cock, desperate to cum. “Please, please, please.”

“You want me inside you, baby?” Charlie asked, worming two fingers into Harry’s winking hole. “Want me to slide my cock inside your tight little hole and fuck you until you cum?”

“Yes, please,” Harry hissed, wiggling back on those fingers that teased him.

“Fucking hot, that’s what you are,” Charlie told him. “Writhing and begging and fucking yourself on my fingers.” He added more spit before squeezing a third finger in beside the first two. “I could cum just like this, watching you.”

“No, please,” Harry gasped. “Want you. Want you inside me.”

“Don’t worry, baby. I wouldn’t be able to resist. Do you have any idea the number of nights I’ve dreamt about this? About you, naked and begging for my cock? Or you riding me? Mmm, yeah, let’s do that. Here, let me…”

There was some reshuffling, filled with Harry’s annoyed cries, until Charlie had managed to lie on the narrow bed on his back, Harry straddling him. “You okay?” he asked, cautiously rubbing Harry’s thighs.

“Yeah, just,” he groaned, rocking back against Charlie’s pelvis. “Horny as hell.”

Charlie laughed. “Let’s see if we can’t do something about that, huh? Just, sit back, gentle like, and I’ll…” He manhandled his cock until it was pressed right at Harry’s entrance. A little more maneuvering had Harry sinking down onto him, to both their satisfaction. “Just like that, fuck, Harry, you’re still tight.”

“Uh, yeah, well, it’s been four months,” Harry panted, rocking back gingerly. “Fuck, so good.”

“Ride me, yeah. Just like that, baby. Fuck, it’s better than I’d even imagined. So tight, so hot, and, fuck, your belly, right there. I’m gonna cum, Harry. I can’t… Shit! Cum for me, Harry. Wanna see you spill your cum all over me.”

He grasped for Harry’s dick and tugged furiously, hoping to make the other cum quickly. He needn’t have bothered. Harry was already jerking and spasming, and coaxing Charlie’s release that much sooner. Harry collapsed against him with a grunt and just wallowed in the aftermath, feeling his magic hum faintly around him. He twitched when Charlie slid a hand over his bottom and started fingering his hole again, massaging.

“What are you doing?”

“Wondering how soon we can have a go again.”
“You’re kidding right?”

“Nope. I told you. I’ve spent the last four months fantasizing about you. Every night when I didn’t manage to exhaust myself out first. Damn near went through six bottles of lubricant, rubbing off to thoughts of you.”

Harry squirmed. “You did not.”

“I most certainly did. It’s why I came home this Christmas. I was hoping we could talk and maybe come to some sort of arrangement.”

“Yeah?” Harry asked tentatively. “What sort of arrangement?”

“One that involved lots and lots of sex,” Charlie answered candidly, swiping sloppy kisses along his temple. “Preferably you, bent over something, your arse sticking out all invitingly. Although there were a few with you on your knees as you sucked on my cock.” Harry jerked and Charlie grinned. “Like that idea, huh?”

“Maybe,” Harry allowed.

“Did you think about me?” Charlie asked, rolling them over onto their sides. “All those long, lonely nights at Hogwarts. Did you think about me at all?”

“Maybe,” Harry repeated.

“Yeah, and what did those thoughts include, hmm?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know,” Harry shot back.

“Actually, yeah, I would,” Charlie told him, cupping his face, fingers flexing against his scalp. “I’d like to know I’m not the only one so caught up in this.”

“You really thought about me?” Harry asked, feeling suddenly shy and unsure of himself again.

“All the time. Got caught by a Chinese Fireball, actually, ‘cause I wasn’t paying enough attention. If I remember right, I’d been fantasizing about you in the locker room showers, all naked and wet and flushed from practice…”

“I’m not doing Quidditch this year.”

“Yeah, well, I know that now, but hey! It was a fantasy, right?”

“I thought about you… in front of the fire.”

“Really? What was I doing?”

“Nothing. Just lying there, in the firelight. It danced over you.” He trailed a hand across Charlie’s chest.

“And was I wearing anything, or was I naked?” Charlie wanted to know.

Harry squirmed. “I don’t know. I mean, I thought about you. A lot. I did. I thought about your kisses and how good it felt when you touched me. I thought about what it would be like if you were there. I thought about what might have happened if you hadn’t had disappeared. And then I was thinking about what you were going to say or do if, when, you found out I was pregnant, and I was worried you would hate me and be angry.”
“Definitely not angry,” Charlie grinned, rocking his hips into Harry’s. “Although I wish you had contacted me sooner.”

“You could have written me. As far as I knew, I was just some pity fuck for you.”

“Hell no!” Charlie growled, rolling Harry onto his back and hovering over him. “Not even remotely close.”

Harry snorted. “No? Then what was it, huh? It’s not like we were ever friends. We hardly even talked the few times we met before, but suddenly this summer…”

“This summer you weren’t just a kid anymore,” Charlie said. “You’re eighteen for one. And, really… I don’t know. It was… It felt good to be near you, so, yeah, maybe I sought you out more often this summer, but… I never ignored you before. I mean, I knew you were there. But, yeah, you were my kid brother’s friend, so…”

“Not a kid anymore.”

“No. No you most certainly aren’t.”

“So. What happens now?”

“Well, I was thinking of some nice, slow love making next, but after that… I don’t know. It’s up to you. Did you want to explore the house some? Figure out decorating? I mean, if you wanted to turn this room into a nursery…”?

“And after that?”

“Don’t know. What do you want to do next?”

“When do you have to get back to the Burrow?”

“Well, unless you wanted me to leave, I was kinda hoping to stay with you.”

A thrill raced through Harry at the thought, but… “But for how long?”

“How long will you have me?” Charlie returned, willing to haggle for as much time as possible.

“You’re serious,” Harry realized, and that thrill pooled in his belly, mixing with the nervous anxiety and old fears from before.

“As dragon pox, yes. I told you, Harry. I like you, a lot, and I want us to be together permanently.”

His mouth and throat felt parched, but somehow he managed to say the word. “Married.”

“Preferably.” Charlie apparently had no trouble.

“Can wizards even marry other wizards? I mean, legally,” Harry asked, suddenly wishing he had Hermione or Neville here to answer his questions. Except… neither of them knew he was even contemplating this decision… Oh, they were going to be pissed at him when they found out.

“Not that you hear of it happening too often,” Charlie allowed, “but, yes. It is both possible and legal. I can’t remember the last time a lord of the wizengamot was in a same-sex marriage, though I remember he was, like, the second son of a second son and so wasn’t considered in the direct-line of inheritance, and so he was allowed to marry his lover at the time. Then there was an epidemic of some sort—don’t think it was Dragonpox, but maybe it was—and all those who were set to inherit
died, except for him because he wasn’t in the country at the time. He and his husband already had a child, so the wizengamot didn’t fight his right to inherit because he already had an heir.”

Harry mulled that over. It wasn’t like he would be the first ever… just the first in a long while, probably. So there was a precedent. He could probably ask Andromeda for the details. Or Hermione, although with NEWTS, it was probably best to leave her alone this year and not hand her any new research projects. Then again, once she found out about why Harry had seemed so off this year, she’d probably assign herself to the research. “And you think… we could… I don’t know.”

“Be happy together?” Charlie supplied. “Work well together. Be a family together?” He laid a hand back over the solid swelling of Harry’s belly but didn’t look away from those searching eyes. Calmly, confidently, he answered, “Yes, I do.”

Harry took several quick breaths, mind racing. He agreed—he thought that there was a real chance at being happy and working well together with Charlie. He liked him, a lot; felt comfortable around the other man. Maybe he could even love him. He already knew that the sex was pretty great. They could be a family together. That was…. That was really tempting, Harry thought, trying to picture what that might look like. A future, with him and Charlie, and children—surely there would be more than one, right? Harry wanted. He wanted a future with a family, with children, and…

“I left the book Andie gave us,” Harry finally said.

“I didn’t,” Charlie confessed, hope soaring. “It’s in my cloak. Want me to get it?”

“You’re really serious. You want us to get married,” Harry breathed, watching as Charlie grinned at him and then rolled out of the bed to fumble for his cloak.

With a crow, Charlie held the book up, and then darted back to the bed—the floorboards were actually quite chilly. The room was chilly, come to think about it. They should think of lighting up the furnace if it wasn’t already on. “I am, I do,” he told Harry with another quick kiss to those lips. “Budge up so we can look at this together, yeah?”

“What is it, anyway?”

“Looks like a family almanac of different rituals, ceremonies, and vows used in the Black Family. See,” he added, pointing at names and dates listed under different entries. “She’s already gone through and marked some.”

“I, (groom’s full name),” Harry whisper-read. “In the name of the spirit of Magic that resides within us all, by the life that courses within my blood and the love that resides within my heart, take thee (bride’s full name) to my hand, my heart, and my spirit, to be my chosen one. To desire thee and be desired by thee, to possess thee, and be possessed by thee, without sin or shame, for naught can exist in the purity of my love for thee. I promise to love thee wholly and completely without restraint, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in poverty, in life and beyond, where we shall meet, remember, and love again. I shall not seek to change thee in any way. I shall respect thee, thy beliefs, thy people, and thy ways as I respect myself.”

“Here’s another one,” Charlie said after a moment. “‘Today I recognize Groom, my anam cara / And ask that you become a part of me, in sacred kinship./ With you, I have lost all fear and have found the greatest courage. / I have learned to love and let myself be loved. / With you, I have found a rhythm of grace and gracefulness. / Love has reawakened in my life; a rebirth; a new beginning. With you my anam cara, / I am understood, / I am home.’”

“That’s nice,” Harry murmured, running a finger along the page. “What else did she mark?”
“Here’s one,” Charlie offered the book over to him.

“‘You cannot possess me,’” Harry read, “‘for I belong to myself / But while we both wish it, I give you that which is mine to give / You cannot command me, for I am a free person / But I shall serve you in those ways you require / and the honeycomb will taste sweeter coming from my hand.’”

“I pledge to you that yours will be the name I cry aloud in the night,’” Charlie continued, “‘and the eyes into which I smile in the morning / I pledge to you the first bite of my meat and the first drink from my cup / I pledge to you my living and my dying, each equally in your care / I shall be a shield for your back and you for mine / I shall not slander you, nor you me / I shall honor you above all others, and when we quarrel we shall do so in private and tell no strangers our grievances.’”

“This is my wedding vow to you,’” Harry finished. “‘This is the marriage of equals.’”

“I like it. Sounds promising.”

“There’s another one?”

“Just one more,” Charlie answered, thumbing to the last bookmarked page.

“I, ________, take you, ________, to be my wife/husband. I to commit myself to you through all experiences of life; a commitment made in love, kept in faith, lived in hope & eternally made new. I pledge to treasure you as my dearest friend & life companion. I give you my trust & respect & promise to be worthy of yours. I will take your dreams, make them mine, and help you to fulfill them. ________, I bring my love to you with open hands. With nothing but this, I pledge to you my loyalty, my deepest devotion; & to share my entire life with you.”

“I accept,” Charlie whispered against Harry’s cheek.

Harry jumped, startled, and the book slid to the floor. “Yeah?”

“Yeah.” And Charlie swooped in to kiss Harry’s lips again, but Harry wasn’t satisfied with a quick little kiss, and he quickly deepened it, drawing Charlie to play. Charlie needed little coaxing.

After minutes filled with heavy petting and noisy snogging, which found Harry flat on his back again and Charlie moving over him, the redhead drew back, panting. “Tell me: in all those time you ‘maybe’ thought of me, did ever think about switching?”

“What?” Harry panted, slightly peeved that Charlie had stopped kissing him.

“Switching parts,” Charlie answered. “You know, the whole wand and cauldron?” At Harry’s clueless look, Charlie huffed. “I thought everyone got the wand and cauldron talk about sex.”

“Yeah, well, muggle-raised, remember?” Harry shot back.

“Point. Anyway, what I meant was, did you think about switching up. About you taking me,” he clarified further. “Some do, some don’t,” he rushed to continue. “It doesn’t matter. I just wanted you to know, that, well, if you had thought about it, and you wanted to try, I’d be okay with it. It’s not my number one, preferred way to dance, but I don’t mind on occasion, and I want you to be comfortable and happy, so—”

“You mean, switching,” Harry interrupted, “As in, top and bottom? Me taking you?” And wasn’t that an interesting thought, Harry mused, his libido definitely rising to the occasion.

“Only if you wanted to try,” Charlie reiterated. “I know, well, you haven’t really experienced a lot,
and I don’t want you to think that just because that’s the way we’ve always done it that that’s the way we always have to do it. I want you to be comfortable, asking me if there’s something you want, anything you want to try and do. I mean, I might say no—whips and chains, you know, just aren’t my thing, but that doesn’t mean you can’t ask me about them.”

Whips and chains? Harry thought, face burning. And just how did Charlie know they weren’t his ‘thing’? Oh, the mental pictures that went along with those thoughts…

There was a quiet POP that distracted both Harry from his thoughts and Charlie from his nibblings along Harry’s shoulder and collar bone. There next to the bed was a small round table laden with several covered platters. Charlie slid out of the bed to investigate.

“What is it?” Harry asked.

“Food.” Charlie showed him the selection of sliced fresh fruit under the first server before check under several others. “You feeling a bit peckish?”

“I guess I could eat something,” Harry allowed, sitting up further and taking a moment to appreciate the view. Charlie, it seemed, had no modesty. He stood at the little table, seemingly completely unaware that he was buck-arsed naked as he poked around the different offerings, putting together a plate.

“Here,” he said turning back to the bed and Harry. “There’s quite possibly a little of everything. Your elf is pretty generous. What?” he asked when he realized Harry was just staring at him.

“You realize you’re naked, yeah?”

“Really? So I am. Nothing you’ve not seen before,” Charlie went on, offering the plate again. “You know,” he went on when Harry finally accepted the plate and he could crawl back into bed beside him. “You’re pretty naked yourself.”

“I’m in bed, under the covers,” Harry protested. “Not out and parading myself.”

Charlie laughed, picking up a slice of melon and holding it to Harry’s lips to eat. “Parading myself, am I,” he teased, taking a bit of a sweet bun for himself. “I think you were enjoying the view.” Harry blushed and wouldn’t look at him, causing Charlie to laugh some more. “Ho-oh, you were. Admit it: you enjoyed looked at my naked body.”

“Not in the least,” Harry replied coolly, reaching for his own sweet bun. It was warm and smelled divine, and Harry wondered if Kreacher had actually made them fresh himself.

“I don’t mind,” Charlie brandished, stretching out in the bed and offering himself.

“Charlie!” Harry shouted as he dove to righten the plate that had started to slip.

“Look all you like, but don’t stop there!” Charlie continued, uncaring of the plate. He snatched up one of Harry’s hands and pressed it against his chest. “In fact, don’t stop at all. Here.”

“What are you—“

Harry squawked and then fumbled as Charlie took the plate back and then pulled Harry on top of him.

“You should eat some more,” he continued, setting the plate on his stomach, right in front of where Harry was sprawled. “In fact, let me be your plate,” he added, taking several fruit sections and
plopping them directly onto his chest and stomach. Then he moved the plate away.

“What—you—you’re wearing fruit, you know,” Harry sputtered.


“More’s like you want me to eat you off,” Harry quipped, surprised at his nerve a second later, but he refused to continue blushing like some virgin.


“Would you believe me if I said I never had one?” Harry returned, but he allowed Charlie’s hand massaging his scalp to guide him down over Charlie’s chest where the first piece of fruit rested, innocently, atop one pectoral. It was a piece of mango, sweet and juicy, that Harry slurped up with his lips and a slight hint of teeth. But the fruit left a puddle of juices behind, and Harry felt compelled to use his tongue to completely clean the area, dallying a little further south as he followed a rivulet of juice that just happened to pass near one of Charlie’s nipples.

The man moaned and wormed beneath him, hands grasping and rubbing along his hips and sides, pelvis rocking up against him, and Harry couldn’t help but rock back, responding with his own little moans and groans.

He found the next bit of fruit—a pineapple chunk—covering one of Charlie’s nipples. Tart and juicy, Harry again made sure to thoroughly clean the area before moving on. Tiny wedges of sweet and tangy citrus, more mango, another pineapple piece, and even a few bits of honeyed apricot—the honey was especially tricky to remove from Charlie’s skin. It took a lot of licking and sucking—before Harry finally reached the strawberry that was tucked against his navel and his chin bumped into the thing he’d been steadily ignoring.

Harry pulled back, sitting up, chewing the strawberry triumphantly as he looked back down at Charlie’s clean chest and the penis that curled proudly up from his groin.

“You don’t have to.”

“I want to.”

“Okay.” Far be it for Charlie to complain or dissuade when he wanted Harry to, too.

“Don’t know how,” Harry admitted. “I’ve never…”

“Nothing wrong with that,” Charlie told him, biting back a groan. He’d expected, sure, but to have it confirmed. Even in this, he was Harry’s first. It was heady. “It’s just a cock, Harry. You have one. You know what you like done.”

“Yeah, but I don’t think I could swallow yours without gagging,” the younger man huffed.

Charlie snorted, torn between extreme excitement at the thought of Harry trying to swallow his cock and concern at the thought of Harry having a bad experience that would lead him to not wanting to try it again. Was definitely important that Harry had a good experience. “Yeah, well, cock sucking is a skill that takes a bit of practice,” he coached. “Don’t try for so much your first go, huh? Just… try want feels right, what you’d like to do, and I’ll let you know if it’s good or bad on my end, all right? But Harry, gotta confess, I don’t rightly think you could do anything bad in my book.”

Harry huffed again, but licked his lips, studying the man before him. After seven years in a dorm and locker room, Harry knew cocks came in all different sizes and colors, but one tried not to make a
habit out of checking other bloke’s equipment, so this was really the first time he could stare and compare. Charlie was bigger than him—not a whole lot bigger. Thicker, definitely. And he curved slightly to the left.

With the back of his fingers he traced up the length of Charlie’s cock from nearly base to spongy head, where he twirled his hand around, encircling the cock in a loose grip and gently pulling the skin back on his journey down. It was as if, with that first touch, any of Harry’s hesitancy melted away, and he leaned forward, into the task of exploration with revived vigor, leaving Charlie to pant and make little noises of pleasure and approval as he watched Harry play. And play, Harry did. It was nearly a full five minutes of play before Harry leaned in further and brought the cock head to his mouth where he laid a big fat swipe with his tongue. Pulling back, he considered the taste.

Charlie watched him, jittery with expectation. He knew that many people—men and women—just didn’t like the taste of cum. Either they really didn’t like it, as in couldn’t stand it at all, or they just didn’t care all that much for it but would ignore it for the pleasure of their partner. Charlie himself didn’t mind the taste, although he would have to admit that some tasted better than others—Harry, for example, really did taste good to Charlie. Which was great, because Charlie happened to really enjoy sucking on a cock now and then. But what would Harry think?

Apparently, he was okay with it, because a moment later, he was back at Charlie’s cock, licking all over and lightly sucking on bits, and Charlie was tossing his head back in sheer revelry at the pleasurable sensations Harry was working on him. It didn’t take long in fact before Charlie was tugging Harry up off his cock, panting heavily, desperately.

“What?” What’s wrong?” Harry asked, confused at being interrupted.

“Not wrong,” Charlie gasped. “Too right. Didn’t want to cum just yet, not in your mouth.”


“You ever have someone cum in your mouth before?”

“You know I haven’t.”

“Then trust me on this: It’s not something you want to happen without warning ahead of time.”

“Well, considered me warned,” Harry replied, moving to lean back over Charlie’s crotch with new determination. If Charlie could swallow his cum, the least he could do is try and swallow Charlie’s. After all, he now knew from first-hand experience how good it felt, and if he could give that pleasure to Charlie…

“Thought you might like to try something else first,” Charlie stopped him.

“I’m not going to lick your arse,” Harry told him staunchly. No way in hell was he ready to even think about that.

“No,” Charlie laughed. “No, I was thinking you might like to try coming inside me.”

Harry blinked, disbelieving. “Really?”

“I mentioned it earlier, remember?” Charlie teased him gently. “Switching? I mean, not always, but I thought, maybe you’d like to try it. I know you haven’t before.”

“That’s what you were talking about? You want me to fuck you?” Harry tried to clarify.
“Only if you want to.”

Did he want to? It was certainly interesting. Although, was he really all that comfortable with the idea of sticking his cock up someone’s arse? Even if it was Charlie. He had definitely enjoyed it when it was done to him, sure…

“You don’t have to,” Charlie continued. “I just didn’t want you to think that just because we’ve only done it the one way doesn’t mean you don’t have the choice, if you wanted to try.”

“And it’s… good?” Harry asked hesitantly, still caught up in the idea of shoving his cock up someone’s arse.

“Oh, yeah. It’s all hot and tight and it feels really good. And that’s without magic,” Charlie confided. “With magic, it’s like your whole body is singing in pleasure.”

“I’ve never… what would I need to do.”

“Well, first, hand me that bottle I used earlier, and—you’ve got your wand, right?” Carefully and thoroughly, Charlie taught him the cleansing charm and then up-ended the bottle onto Harry’s hand, dousing the hand in slippery goop. “This potion works best as a lubricant. It’s also bit of a contraceptive,” he admitted with a little apologetic smile. “Sorry, but if you were able to get pregnant our first go… well, I’d like a little more planning for the next kid, all right?”

“Why didn’t we use this before?” Harry wondered, moving his fingers over the slippery substance.

“Didn’t have any on me the first time, if you’ll recall, and today… Well, I brought it on the off chance, but, well, wouldn’t do us a whole lot of good now, would it? I mean, you’re already preggers, aren’t you? And, well, I kind of enjoyed lubing you up with my spit earlier. It didn’t hurt too badly, did it?”

“Nah, I was good. It was good. Was just wondering.”

“Ah, well, I have to admit, it’s been a bit longer for me than you, so if you don’t mind, be a bit generous with that, yeah? Just work a few fingers in—I like it tight, just not friction burn, you know?”

Harry wasn’t sure he did know, but as Charlie turned around on the bed so he was laying down on his stomach, legs spread and bottom out on offering, he did as requested, pressing a finger up against Charlie’s hole and then pushing in. It was… strange. Hot and tight, and with the lubricant, slippery. He pushed up to the first knuckle and then withdrew. He tried this several times, allowing a bit more of his finger to slip deeper until he was up to almost the second knuckle.

Charlie wiggled and squirmed, pressing back harder. “Do you feel that?” he grunted, pressing back again. “That, right there, is a very good spot to hit. You hit that and everything just goes all tingly.”

“What everyone have that spot?” Harry couldn’t resist asking, curling his finger as if to try and tickle the cushy bit.

“Yeah, although it’s a bit different for women,” Charlie groaned, continuing to move back and forth on Harry’s finger. “Feel free to add another finger or two, really.”

Harry did, and he watched fascinated as Charlie’s body adjusted to accommodate him. He was transfixed, staring at the hole that opened and stretched and swallowed his fingers. In a few moments, that would be his cock, sliding in and out, in and out, and it would be his dick pressing up against that cushy spot that had Charlie wiggling and squirming and moaning for him.
“Fuck, Harry, enough already. Just, line it up and get inside me already!”

How could he refuse a command like that? He couldn’t, and with only a bit more fumbling as he wrenched his fingers free, swiping them clean on the blanket as Charlie shifted up on his elbows and knees, Harry was lined up as requested and pushing inside.

“How could you refuse a command like that?” Charlie panted. “Don’t stop. Whatever you do, just don’t stop, all right? Gods, I could cum right now. Shit, Harry, it’s good.”

Harry couldn’t speak; he didn’t have the words, and was surprised Charlie could even think at this moment. Obviously, he wasn’t doing something right enough, he thought, beginning a short thrusting tempo that sent the bed rocking under them.

“How could you refuse a command like that?” Charlie kept up, face mashed up against a pillow. “Fucking me, going to make me cum on your cock, Harry, you know it. I’m going to cum so hard, with your dick shoved up my ass, fucking me so good, Harry. Ugh, that’s it, fuck me, Harry, shove your cock up my ass, so deep, fill me up, Harry. Fuck me and fill me up with your cum. Gods, Harry, yes, yes, fuck me. Fuck me harder, Harry. Need to feel it, need to feel you inside me. Need it, need you. Fuck, Harry, I’m gonna cum, gonna cum so hard, and because of you, Harry. ‘Cause you’re fucking me so good, Harry, fuck!”

Harry came with a shout, hips jerking sharply, as his entire body jittered with the release. Beneath him, Charlie was caught up in his own orgasm, body twitching and seizing, before he finally collapsed onto the bed with a hearty groan, his grip on Harry’s cock remaining tightly clutched, tugging Harry down on top of him.

“Are you always so noisy during sex,” Harry gasped.

Charlie managed a laugh, and Harry slipped free to fall onto his side. “More so when I’m bottoming, but yeah. It’s not going to be a problem is it?”

“I get to fuck you, and you ask if it’s a problem?” Harry snorted.

“You liked it then,” Charlie grinned, turning onto him.

“It was a bit of all right.”

“Bit of all right!” Charlie protested. “Says the bloke who didn’t even last five minutes!”

“You came, too,” Harry mumbled, causing Charlie to laugh again.

“‘Cause your cock was so hard,” Charlie teased. “Says the bloke who didn’t even last five minutes!”

“You came, too,” Harry mumbled, causing Charlie to laugh again.

“Yes, I most certainly did, didn’t I. Come on, we should probably get up, take a shower and clean up. We’re both covered in spunk and bits of fruit, and I for one don’t fancy sleeping in the wet spot.”

“That’s your own fault.”

“So it is, yours as well. Going and making me cum so hard, really Harry,” Charlie continued to tease, pulling the younger man up off the bed. “You think the bath will fit two of us?”

Harry groaned. “I don’t think I can go again, Charls. Not so soon.”

“Then no shower sex. This time,” the redhead allowed, pulling Harry with him out of the bed room and into the hallway towards the bathroom. He only paused a moment when they ran into the house.
elf in the hallway. The elf eyed him harrowingly, but no doubt he’d seen more things that a pair of naked post-coital blokes in his life time. Charlie tipped his head in acknowledgement and continued manhandling Harry towards the bath.

“Come on, let’s get you cleaned up again and presentable,” Charlie talked on. “Then maybe you can show me the place and tell me what you were thinking about along the lines of redecorating.”


“The hippogriff, right?”

“Mmn.”

“Well, you did say there were, what? Something like six bedrooms, right?”

“Eight.”

“Well, then, there should be another one you’d like to make the master room.”

“Not Sirius’s room. But maybe Regulus’s. That was Sirius’s brother. He died. During the first war. His bedroom was on the same floor as Sirius’s, right next door.”

“Well, there you go then,” Charlie said, maneuvering Harry into the shower and using a soapy cloth as an excuse to run his hands all over the supple, naked body.

“It’s smaller than the master bedroom, though,” Harry mused on, idly responded to Charlie’s caresses, grabbing the soapy towel to return the favor. “Not that that matters all that much. I mean, not after a cupboard after all, right? But… I don’t know. And if the nursery is on this floor…don’t think I’d like to trek two floors all the time to get to the baby.”

“No, that might be a hardship,” Charlie agreed writhing under Harry’s ministrations. And the twit had no idea what he was doing to him, Charlie mentally fumed. Or, at least, he thought he didn’t until Harry’s hand swept back over his rapidly responding cock and he looked down to realize Harry was looking directly back at him, knowingly. “You little tease.”

“Me?” Harry protested. “I don’t get how you can be ready to go again!”

“What can I say: you make me horny,” Charlie replied, kissing him hungrily and quickly closing the space between their two wet, soapy bodies.

The mirrors were horribly steamed up by the time they shut the water off, and Harry and Charlie were both a little waterlogged. And, as they toweled one another off, Harry noticed their robes neatly folded on the vanity. “Did you—Kreacher must have…” He blushed violently.

“He’s a house elf, Harry. I’m sure he’s seen many things in his life,” Charlie tried to console him, suddenly very glad Harry hadn’t noticed the elf earlier.

“It’s the sense of propriety of the matter,” Harry hissed at him. “We were naked, Charlie.”

“In the privacy of your own home,” Charlie reminded him. “There’s nothing untoward about that. Now, c’mon. Let’s just get dressed, and then we can thank your house elf for the food and our clothes.”
“Oh, gods,” Harry moaned. “He knows. He knows we were having sex!”

“Harry, he’s a house elf. House elves know practically everything that happens in their houses. He probably knows every time you had a toss off.”

“I didn’t—Charlie! I shared that room with your brother!” Harry hissed, sounding so scandalized that Charlie couldn’t help but laugh at him again.

“It’s really not that big of a deal, Harry. Just calm down and relax for a moment, all right? I was thinking maybe, if you were up to it, showing me around this old place, and then, maybe, if you’re willing, we could go back to the Burrow for supper.”

“I can’t—your family,” Harry protested. “Your mother, she’ll know!”

“Know what?”

“That I’m pregnant!”

“Harry, you can’t tell just by looking at you. Not yet, anyway.”

“But, she’s you’re mother. She’ll know! Look at how many kids she has!”

“Harry, not even my mother can tell someone’s pregnant without being told. Remember Fleur and Bill? They were three months in before they told anyone, and mom didn’t know.”

“That’s because she was distracted. She’d know with me,” Harry insisted.

“Well, then, so what?” Charlie tried another route. Harry turned to him horrified. “We’re going to tell them eventually, right? I mean, we are going to get married, and eventually you’ll really start to show, so, I mean…”

“Oh, god, you’re right,” Harry breathed. “They’re all going to find out. Okay, fine, but… shit… I have to tell Ron and Hermione first.”

“And my father,” Charlie reminded him.

“Shiiiiiiit,” Harry hissed.

“It’s okay, Harry. This isn’t a bad thing, or a hardship. Tell you want, why don’t you send a quick owl to my dad—he should be at work for another little bit before he’s off for the next three days. Ask him to stop by here first before he heads home tonight. And while you’re doing that, I’ll go and write my boss to see about getting the ball moving on a transfer to the Welsh Reserve, all right? Then we can take that tour of the house and see about making more plans. Sound good?”

“I don’t know about good, but it sounds like a plan,” Harry allowed and led Charlie downstairs into the drawing room where he knew they would find paper and quills.

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A tea tray was waiting for them when they arrived in the drawing room, and Harry was even more aware now that Kreacher was somewhere in the house watching them. It made him more jittery and nervous than before. He went to the desk and handed Charlie some parchment and quills before settling down in front of his own letter.
“What should I write?” he asked after a moment of hesitancy.

“Just tell him you need to speak with him, and ask him to stop by today on his way home,” Charlie suggested. “No need to go into any details, because you can do that when he gets here.”

“And when he gets here?” Harry asked obediently writing what Charlie had said.

“Well, then you, well, technically you’re asking for permission to take me as your husband, but you don’t have to say it like that. You can just let him know that we want to get married.”

“And when he asks why?”

“Why would he ask why?” Charlie asked, confused. “Sure, he might be surprised at first, but he has no reason to doubt you or me.”

“He knows you’re…”

“A wands-only wizards?” Charlie teased lightly. “Yeah, Dad knows. Mum, I think might suspect, but she’ll never let on if she does.”

“So your mum is going to have a problem with this.”

“No! Whatever gave you that idea?” Charlie asked, frowning before he realized just how nervous Harry seemed to be.

He abandoned his letter and went over to Harry, kneeling down and taking his hands in his.

“Harry, Mum is going to be having kittens, she’ll be so thrilled. Not only will you be officially part of the family, but you’re going to be having her first grandson.”

“But Fleur—“

“It’s a girl,” he told him. “Bill and Dad are ecstatic. Apparently Ginny really did break the ‘Weasley Curse’ of male-only children. So you see, first grandson bragging rights goes to you and me. And, if we should happen to have at least three sons, well, then, Mum will be even happier.”

“Three! Why three?” Harry demanded.

“Well,” Charlie said, holding Harry’s hands so the two family rings shone in the light. “You need an heir for the Potter and Black Families, right, and if we should happen to have a third one, well, you know Mum’s been hankering for one of us to take up the Prewitt Family title.”

“Yes, but I got the impression you were sort of hoping for Percy of George to do it.”

“I was, because I didn’t think I’d ever have kids of my own,” Charlie explained, dropping little kisses on Harry’s knuckles. “I mean, it’s not like we have to. We don’t need to think about it at all. It’s just, it’s a possibility, all right?”

“One that you’re interested in,” Harry concluded, rubbing his knuckles against Charlie’s shadowed cheeks. “We haven’t even had the first kid, yet, and you’re already thinking about number three and four!”

“Why stop there?” Charlie tried to tease, tugging Harry towards him, but the teasing fell flat on Harry’s shoulders and he refused to budge.

“We don’t even know if I can get pregnant again. Hell, I don’t even know if I’d want to be pregnant again,” Harry groused.
We don’t have to deal with that now,” Charlie quickly backtracked. “Let’s just focus on what’s in front of us, yeah? You, me, the baby. My dad coming over in a few hours to talk about the bands. Us and this house and what you want to do with it. Then we can go over to the Burrow for dinner, and you can talk with Ron and Hermione and everything will be good. We can spend a good evening with my family, and if you like, we can come back here, together, or if you preferred, you can go back to White Horse, and I’ll stay at the burrow and give you some peace. Whatever you want, Harry. It’s your choice.”

“Will you stop with the ‘your choice, your choice’ thing already!” Harry shouted, standing up and pushing away from Charlie. “I don’t want to choose, can’t you see that. I’m not the thinker or the planner. My plans suck—always have. I’m better at doing!”

In the fireplace, the fire flared. The parchment Charlie had been writing on ruffled. Charlie stood slowly, carefully watching the younger man standing in the middle of the study as Harry panted, his magic whipping visibly around him. After another moment of just breathing heavily, he seemed to calm, and the tendrils of magic slowly faded away. It was a breathtaking sight, truly amazing and even a little fear-inspiring. A visible reminder of just how powerful Harry was, humbling Charlie just a bit.

He licked at his lips, still aware of the tingling in the air—the charge of magic that was Harry’s magic, still dancing invisibly over everything. “Are you finished with that letter for my dad?” he asked calmly.

“Yeah,” Harry mumbled, scrubbing his hands across his face. “But I don’t have an owl or anything to take it to him.”

“Kreacher can be taking Master Harry’s letter to the blood-traitor’s head of house,” the house elf announced, eyes focusing not on either of the two wizards but something else unseen in the air of the room, and Charlie wondered if the elf could still see Harry’s magic. “He can be picking up some owls for the Noble Black Family’s use, as well, Master Harry, if you be wishing for it.”

“Yeah, thanks, Kreacher,” Harry breathed, and Charlie sighed as the energy in the air finally melted away. Kreacher, too, seemed to slump as he turned his attention fully to Harry. “I appreciate your help, thank you, Kreacher. Here’s the letter for Arthur Weasley—it’s important he gets it right away. And then, yeah, you’re right. We should probably get some owls for family business. It’s time, I suppose. Just, uh, no white ones, okay?”

“As you like, Master,” Kreacher replied, talking the letter from Harry and then popping away.

***
Meet the Family

Since they were already on the first floor and there wasn’t much other than the kitchen and the formal dining room on the basement and ground floors, Harry decided to start the tour of the house where they were. “Your grandmum is on the tree,” he pointed out, showing Charlie the blasted off face of Cedrella Weasley nee Black.

And then he showed off the room Ginny and Hermione had stayed in when they visited. “It’s a bit bigger than the rooms Ron and I and the twins stayed in,” he mused.

“Might not have always been a bedroom, either,” Charlie guessed. “Maybe it was an extra sitting room, or a lady’s parlor, maybe it’s always been a guest bedroom.”

“I think I like idea of turning it into a parlor or study,” Harry mused, looking at the space with new eyes. “Hermione always lamented that there was no library or study where the books were centralized.”

They climbed back up to second floor, where Charlie was already intimately familiar with the smaller bedroom/would-be nursery and bathroom. When Harry hesitated to go into the Master bedroom, he suggested they head all the way to the top and work their way back down. Harry agreed.

“The attic is just a junk pile of stuff. Eventually, I’ll want to try and sort through it all, donate stuff or put it in the Family vaults or just get rid of it,” he said as they made the climb. “Should make sure to do it before any of the kids can get into something up there.”

They reached the fourth floor where the two young master bedrooms shared one large bathroom. Both rooms were equally proportionate, although differently attired. It was easy to see the two boys who had lived in the rooms’ personality.

“Not ready to really change anything in here,” Harry admitted, staring in at his godfather’s bedroom. “Maybe I’ll ask Remus what he thinks I should do.”

“They were good friends, yeah?”

“Mmn. And Regulus, well. I don’t know. Maybe if we just clean up the rooms a bit, they’ll work as guest rooms, yeah?”

“Usually, guest rooms are lower in the house, but sure,” Charlie offered. “They’d also make for great play rooms and learning rooms. You know, later on.”

Harry nodded and looked at the rooms again before going back down to the third floor. “Your mum and dad stayed in that room, right there,” Harry told him, pointing at the bedroom at the bottom of the stairs. “Then Remus in the middle bedroom, and the twins on the other end.”

“Really says something if Mum put the twins on the same floor as her and Dad, huh?” Charlie teased, and Harry even managed a smile.

“My first night here, they scared the dickens out of me, apparating right into Ron’s and my bedroom.”

“I’m sure. So Remus has a room here, too?”

“Sure,” Harry shrugged. “I mean, it made more sense than him continuing to live alone, you know?”
He doesn’t stay here anymore because of Teddy, but... I wouldn’t want to get rid of his room or anything.”

“That’s okay. He’s, like, your pseudo-godfather, right?”

“Yeah.”

“So, am I going to have to worry about an angry werewolf coming after me for knocking you up?”

Harry snorted. “I think he’s a little busy with his own kid to be worrying about mine,” he told the other man, patting his arm. “But don’t worry. I’ll protect you if it comes to that.”

“Right,” Charlie drawled, not convinced in the least that he shouldn’t be worried. “Are you happy with keeping these rooms bedrooms or were you thinking of changing them up?”

“Oh, yeah, bedrooms are fine, but, I think, the color schemes should probably be updated, don’t you?” Harry asked, turning back to look in on the room the elder Weasleys had used. “Too dark for my tastes. I’d like to lighten it up a bit. The whole house, and change some of the colors, too. What do you think?”

“Definitely. And—I see what you meant by a central library,” Charlie added. “Do all the bedrooms have a bookcase?”

“At least one,” Harry confirmed. “Remus’s has two, and Regulus’s upstairs has three, I think. Plus, there are some secret compartments hidden away in the staircases.”

“Pretty impressive,” Charlie hummed. “Have you had Bill in to look over the place, make sure it’s safe?”

“I haven’t. Not in its entirety, no,” Harry admitted, “But I think he might have done some of that when the Order was practically living here. Besides, Ron, Hermione and I spent a good bit of time hiding out here last year. You have to be careful, but it’s habitable. Loads better than when I first got here. And Kreacher’s really been stepping up his game and taking better care of the place.”

“This is better care?” Charlie asked in disbelief. “I’m really glad I wasn’t here to see it before.”

“Yeah, well, it still needs work,” Harry mumbled, suddenly embarrassed. He turned towards the stairs to head back down.

“Harry, wait,” Charlie called after him, suddenly aware he might had said something wrong.

Harry had stopped next to the bathroom, still half a hallway away from the master bedroom.

“I’m sorry, if I upset you.”

“No!" Charlie rushed out. “No, definitely not. If you’re willing to have me, I’ll live wherever you want. Even in a tent.”

“You didn’t upset me,” Harry denied.

“This is your home; I didn’t mean to disparage it.”

“I thought you wanted to live here, too,” Harry turned on him. “Have you changed your mind now?”

“No!” Charlie rushed out. “No, definitely not. If you’re willing to have me, I’ll live wherever you want. Even in a tent.”

“Not a tent. Never a tent,” Harry replied. “Don’t even want to see another tent.”

“Got it, no tent,” Charlie repeated obediently, miming out writing the directive down and earning a little snort from Harry. “Are we all right now?” Charlie asked, studying him.
“We’re fine. I don’t even know why I’m so tetchy all of a sudden,” Harry huffed. “It’s crazy.”

“Really? And here I was being all glad you don’t have any Veela genes.” Charlie scrutinized him.
“You don’t, do you? ‘Cause I really don’t want to have to suddenly dodge fireballs. From what
Bill’s told me, it might be amusing to watch, but not participate in.”

“Git,” Harry responded, pushing past him to head over to the Master bedroom. He hovered outside
the door. “This room was a mess when last I saw. Don’t imagine it’s improved any, which means if
we want to keep it the master bedroom, it’s going to take a lot of work to set to rights,” he warned,
looking at Charlie.

The redhead nodded his understanding, and Harry pushed opened the door. For a moment, he saw
the room as he’d always seen it—torn furnishings and feathers and scat everywhere…. As he led
the way into the room, Charlie’s hand on his back, there was a pulse of magic as he crossed the
doorway. The room Harry was familiar with shimmered, and then disappeared.

In its place was a richly furnished room, neatly attired in fine linens and clean, gleaming woods.
Even the throw under their feet seemed plushier.

“I… don’t understand,” Harry gasped, looking around him.

“Master likes?” a gravelly voice asked from behind, and Harry whirled around to look at Kreature,
who hovered in the doorway.

“What happened?” he asked the elf.

“Master wears the ring, so he be Master in truth and law,” Kreature explained, rocking from foot to
foot. “Family Magic accepts Master as Master of the Family, and so, it makes Master’s will known.
This be the seat of the Ancient and Noble Black Family since Master’s family left the old Black
Manor.”

The elf gestured to the Black shield emblazed on the opposite wall.

“Family Magic accepts Master as Master of the Family,” the elf repeated, as big fat tears welled up in
his eyes. “I have delivered the letter, Master, and there be two new post owls for the great and noble
Black Family’s use, if it so suits you, Master.”

“That’s great, Kreacher, thank you,” Harry told him, still confused over what had happened to the
room. “Do you think one of the owls would be willing to take Charlie’s letter to Romania for him?”

The elf eyed them before announcing, “Kreacher will see to it done, Master. Shall Kreacher prepare
tea for Master’s expected guest, as well?”

“Oh, your dad,” Harry murmured, turning to Charlie. “I guess he’ll be here pretty shortly, huh?
Yeah, Kreature, some tea would be great. Thanks for thinking of it.”

“Kreacher will do that now if Master has no further need of him.”

“No, thank you,” Harry said again, leaving the house elf to pop away, and turning to Charlie once
more. “What just happened?”

“I think,” Charlie started hesitantly, stepping farther into the room, closer to the family shield. “I
think, at some point, the Black Family must have had a manor?”

“Yeah, there’s an old property up in Lincolnshire, I think, and another in Cornwall, believe it or not,”
Harry answered, racking his brain for what he could remember from the docket he’d been given concerning the Black Family properties.

“Yeah, well, my guess is one of those manor houses used to be the ancestral seat of the family, and somewhere along the line, one of the family heads moved it here, making this city home the ancestral seat.”

“It?”

Charlie nodded towards the shield. “Think of it like a physical representation of the family magic. So, I, uh, take it this is the first time you’ve been in here since you accepted your family ring.”

“Yeah,” Harry murmured, walking closer to the hanging shield. “There wasn’t ever a good time over the summer, and well, I’ve been in school… “ He reached out a hand, to touch the shield, then thought better of it and backed away. But before he could take another step, the shield seemed to come alive. The three ravens cocked their heads at him, and then took flight, leaping off the shield and diving straight at him.

Harry yelped and tried to duck, but the ghostly birds flew directly through him, and when he looked up next it was to see the armored arm wielding a sword descend directly upon him. He had no time to react before a very real blade sliced open his hand. Blood splashed onto the floor, heralding a second pulse of magic that shook the entire house around them. The skull atop the shield seemed to laugh at him as Harry glared up at it, clenching his hand.

“What the hell?” he cried.

“Uh, Family Magic,” Charlie supplied, offering him a conjured roll of bandages to help temper the blood flowing freely down Harry’s arm. “The house is still standing, so I think it’s safe to say it definitely accepts you.”

“But did it have to fucking slice me open? Shit,” he hissed, pulling the cloth away to look at the wound. “Can you do something for this? There’s no way I’ll be able to use my wand with my hand messed up like this.”

“Um, I can do a little bit of first aid, but this does look pretty deep,” Charlie hedged. “Maybe you want Andromeda to look at it?”

Harry glared back up at the grinning skull before turning his back on the shield. “Yeah, let’s do that,” he said, rewrapping the bandage and heading out of the room. He stopped abruptly at the door.

“What is it…?”

“What is it?” Charlie asked from behind him.

“It’s different,” Harry answered, stepping aside to allow Charlie to see what he was looking at. Not that it was difficult to pinpoint. The hallway looked… different. Cleaner and lighter, although the furnishings and wall paneling were still the same.

“We can find out later,” Charlie told him. “Let’s get back to White Horse so Andromeda can fix you up, yeah?”

“Yeah, all right. Kreacher!” Harry called as they started down towards the kitchen floo.

“Master Harry calls for Kreacher?”

“Yes. We’re heading back over to White Horse and Andromeda’s. If we’re not back before Arthur
Weasley arrives, will you settle him in the drawing room and then come alert me?”

“Of course, Master Harry,” the elf responded with a bow. “It will be done.”

“Thanks Kreacher. Here, Charlie, you go first.”

“No, you go, I’ll follow right behind,” Charlie insisted, tossing the powder in for Harry. When he was gone, he turned to look at the elf. “Did you know it was going to do that to him?” he demanded.

“Black Magic is proud magic,” the elf responded negligently. “It likes not being neglected or rejected.”

“He didn’t reject or neglect it,” Charlie argued.

“He did not accept its first offering. So it took.”

“He didn’t know.”

“No problem,” the elf returned, turning from him and shuffling away.

Charlie growled, but snatched up some floo powder and high-tailed it to White Horse.

“How did such a wound occur?” Andromeda was questioning when Charlie stepped through.

“The shield in the bedroom came alive and attacked me,” Harry answered, hardly wincing as she poked at the wound.

“The shield? You mean the family magic did this?” she asked. “Whatever did you do?”

“Nothing! I just walked into the room. Everything in it changed itself. It was like, well, like magic,” Harry finished lamely.

“You mean you went into the master bedroom?” Remus asked as he cradled and rocked his son. “Whatever were you doing in there?”

“We were touring the house,” Charlie answered. “Harry’s thinking of redecorating some, making the place his primary home.”

“Grimauld Place is the seat of the Black Family Magic,” Andromeda told him. “I knew this, of course, but I didn’t think… I should have thought,” she huffed, pulling her wand out and gently casting several charms and spells. Slowly, the wound knitted itself closed, leaving an angry red scar.

“I cannot do anything about the scar now. The next time you go, enter the room where the shield is kept, and offer it your hand.”

“How did it know to do that?”

“You simply go up to the shield and lay your hand upon it. It will taste of your magic, and that will be all,” she instructed.

“Will I have to do that every time I enter the room,” Harry asked, “Because that would be a bit annoying.”

Andromeda smiled and laughed lightly. “No, thankfully not. It is only the first time the Family Magic meets and greets a new Head of the Family that blood and magic are shared. Normally it is not so… violent,” she explained. “One simply places their hand on their family’s shield. There is a bit of bloodletting and magic is called upon, and then it is done. I am sorry no one told you this before. I
had assumed, when you were able to wield the family magic and accepted me back into the family, that you had already bonded.”

“No,” Harry replied. “Didn’t even know it was possible or that I was supposed to. I mean, there was so much blood spilt while I was at Gringotts getting things squared away, that I lost track of what was going where for what.”

“That’s dangerous,” Remus told him solemnly. “Blood is a very powerful substance, and it can be used for many purposes. You know this from experience.”

“Well, no use crying over spilled potion,” Charlie spoke up. “We know now, and that’s what’s important.”

“I’m sorry,” Remus frowned. “You’re one of Arthur’s boys, correct? Charlie, is it?”

“Ah, yeah, I mean, yes. Good to formally meet you,” the redhead responded, holding out a hand to the werewolf. “And you’re Remus Lupin, I already know. Harry and my family talk well of you.”

“Oh, well, they’re good people. I wasn’t aware you and Harry were close, to be together at Grimauld Place. Is something the matter”

“Remus,” Andromeda cut in smoothly. “It looks like Teddy’s finally asleep now. Perhaps you should go up and put him in his crib for a bit.” She shot him the ‘mother’ look that had whatever he was about to say in protest swallowed back down into non-utterance.

“Yes, good idea,” he said instead. “I’ll be right back.”

Charlie breathed a sigh of relief, although he realized that when the werewolf returned, he would be empty handed…which, quite possibly, wasn’t such a good scenario for him.

“Now,” Andromeda continued once the wolf was away. “I trust you boys had enough time to talk privately and the fact you were touring Grimauld Place together means you’ve come to a decision about your futures?”

“Yes. In fact, I’m meeting with Arthur in a little bit,” Harry told her shyly.

“Excellent! Oh, I’m so pleased for you both. I wish you the best of happiness,” she crowed, pulling Harry first into an embrace and then Charlie.

“What did I miss?” Remus asked, returning sooner than Charlie had expected.

“More than you’re aware, dear heart,” Andromeda told him, unable or unwilling to hide her pleased smile. “Now, I take it you’ll be eating with the Weasleys tonight, then?” she continued to Harry.

“Probably, yeah,” Harry allowed. “I wanted to talk to Ron and Hermione first, before we tell anyone else. Well, except for Arthur. I’m thinking he might wonder why we want to get married.”

“Harry, I told you—“

“Married?” Remus interrupted. “What do you mean you’re getting married? You mean, you and, and Charlie here?”


“But, you’re only—“
“Eighteen,” Harry cut him off. “Which, I believe, was the same age as my parents.”

Remus’s mouth worked silently before he sputtered, “But they’d known each other since they were eleven.”

“And I’ve known Charlie since I was 14,” Harry returned. “Three years’ difference, and I’d point out that Mum and Dad weren’t even on good speaking terms for the majority of their time knowing each other, so I think I’m a little better off comparatively.”

“They saw each other every day.”

“Are you against me marrying?” Harry asked, frowning. “Or just against me marrying Charlie?”

“I—“ Remus’s mouth snapped shut, and he frowned. “Well, neither really. It was just… unexpected. The last I was aware, you were planning on getting back together with Ginny.”

“Ah, well, sorry about that. It was rather unexpected,” Harry allowed, smiling shyly back at Remus. “So, um, would you like to meet the man I’m planning on marrying?”

“I would be delighted,” the werewolf replied with mock fanfare that reminded Harry painfully of his godfather.

“Remus Lupin, Charlie Weasley,” Harry quickly introduced.

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They did not tell Remus about that baby—Harry, because he really did want to tell Ron and Hermione before anyone else found out, and Charlie because he really did not want a pissed off werewolf pseudo-godfather out for his blood. Although, all things considered, Remus handled the news of the impending nuptials extremely well, he didn’t get much of an opportunity to grill the second Weasley son thanks to Kreacher’s timely interruption.

And suddenly, it was Harry’s turn sweat and worry about future in-laws.

“Harry!” Arthur greeted warmly, turning away from his inspection of the Black Family tree when the two entered the parlor. If he was surprised to see his second son present also, he didn’t let on. “So good to hear from you! We miss having you at the Burrow, but we understand, family commitments. You are well, though? Ron seemed to express some worry for your welfare. Is everything all right?”

“Things have been… interesting,” Harry replied, forcing himself to relax in the elder man’s presence. Arthur made it easy to feel at ease. He took a seat in one of the sofas and gestured for Arthur to sit, as well, turning questioningly when Charlie didn’t join them.

“I’ll allow you two at it then, yeah?” Charlie said, nodding to his father and Harry. “I’ll just be downstairs if you need me.”

Harry wanted to shout at him to come back, but it was too late. The door was already shut behind him, leaving Harry alone with a quizzical looking Arthur.

“What’s this about, Harry?”

“Um, yeah, well, first,” Harry started, clearing his throat and trying to prepare himself. “First, as you know, I came into my family responsibilities this summer. Things have been, frankly, a mess trying to work the tangles out. But, I wanted to ask you, as a son of a daughter of the House of Black, is there anything you need of me, as Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Black?”
Arthur blinked… and then flushed, sputtering. “Harry, no, that’s, it’s very kind of you to ask and offer, but there’s no need for that, son. The House of Weasley is well-enough off to take care of its own, but my mother would have appreciated your gesture, as do I.”

“Mr. Weasley, your family took me in, treated me like family when no one else in the wizarding world did,” Harry pressed on. “For that, there is little that I can offer in thanks that would equal my gratitude.”

“And you, Harry, saved the life of my youngest child, my only daughter, and well as my own life. To that, my family owes you two life debts, at the very least. I know of nothing that can repay that debt, but ask, and if it be within my powers, it is yours.”

“Let there be no debt between family,” Harry responded, slightly unnerved by how the words seemed to roll off his tongue, but it felt right, so he went with it.

Arthur frowned. “I’m afraid the gap between our two families is too wide to be satisfied.”

“Then perhaps we can bridge that gap,” Harry offered. He hesitated a moment longer before proposing, “With a marriage.”

The older man looked surprised, clearly. “But I thought… you and Ginny…”

“Not between Ginny and I,” Harry quickly dissuaded.

“Then who?”

And Harry, frustrated, wondered if Arthur was being purposefully clueless. Probably not, but still… “I—Charlie. With your blessing, we would like to marry.”

Arthur blinked away his surprise as, a moment later, clarity sprung and realization dawned, and the older man looked at Harry anew. “Ah, well,” he said deeply. “That would explain why things didn’t work out too well between you and Ginny.”

And then, while Harry was still waiting for an answer, Arthur laughed. “Excellent news. I can’t say I’m not surprised, though. Didn’t expect it at all. Fascinating. Although, if I did suspect, I would have suspected you more for George than Charlie, but that doesn’t matter any. What does is that you boys both found one another, and you’re happy. You are happy, Harry?”

Slowly, Harry grinned, and then he nodded. “Yeah, I think I am. So… we have your approval and blessing?”

“Of course! Molly will be ecstatic with the news. You’ll come to dinner, tonight, won’t you? We’ll have to tell everyone the news!”

“Actually, if you don’t mind,” Harry said, standing with Arthur. “I would like to tell Ron and Hermione personally, first.”

“Of course, of course,” Arthur agreed solemnly. “Well, let’s not keep them waiting, shall we? If my suspicions are correct, my son is rather eagerly waiting for our news downstairs.”

“Your son assured me I had nothing to worry about and that your blessings were practically guaranteed,” Harry scoffed.

“Yes, well, far be it for me to stand in the way of any of my children’s happiness,” Arthur replied. “But tell me, have you thought of the logistics of the matter. After all, Charlie does live in Romania.”
“I’ve actually put in a request to transfer,” the son in question replied, standing up from the step he’d been sitting on. “To the Welsh Reserve. It would make the commute from London easier to manage.”

“London, eh?” Arthur picked up on. “So you’re thinking of living here? Don’t think I didn’t notice how much better the place looks.”

“Yes. It still needs a little more work,” Harry allowed, looking over the lighter and brighter hallway as Charlie scooted up beside him and took his hand. “But it has great potential of being a home again.”

Arthur grinned at them. “Come along then,” he chortled after a moment. “The sooner we get to the Burrow, the sooner we can tell Molly the good news!”

Harry gulped. Charlie gave his hand a little squeeze and shot him an encouraging smile.
“Good evening, family!” Arthur called as he stepped from the floo to a chorus of greetings. “Set the table for one more, Molly, dear.”

“Arthur! Welcome home!” his wife called from the kitchen, popping her head out a moment later. “Is everything all right, dear? You’re running a little late tonight.”

“Everything is fine, just fine,” he told her, striding over and dropping a kiss on her puckered lips. “I just stopped by Grimauld Place on the way home.”

“Harry!” Ron and Hermione shouted in tandem, sitting up from their slouched positions near the fire. “Indeed,” Arthur confirmed. “He’s agreed to join us for dinner tonight.”

“Oh, Arthur!” Molly cried. “That’s wonderful news! Ginny, Hermione, dear, will you help set the table? Dinner will be ready shortly. Ron, give your brothers a call, will you? Tell them if they plan to eat with the family tonight, they had best be on their way!”

Arthur slipped into the kitchen behind his wife and gave her an extra squeeze. “Oof! Off, you,” she scolded playfully. “Go wash up and get ready for dinner yourself.”

“You might want to hold dinner for just a little longer,” he informed her. “I believe Harry wished to speak to Ron and Hermione privately, first.”

“Nothing’s wrong, is it?” she asked, suddenly serious, eyes darting to the family clock hanging on the wall, back where it was supposed to be. They had formally and officially added Harry’s face to the clock this past summer on his birthday. She was somewhat saddened, but relieved, to see it pointing to ‘HOME’ before it suddenly moved to ‘TRAVELING’ and then back to ‘HOME’.

Arthur had also seen the clock handle move. “Everything is more than fine,” he promised her, dropping another kiss, this time to her temple, before moving off to wash up and get ready for dinner as requested.

“Harry!” came another chorus from the sitting room as the young man in question stumbled through the floo, and he was swept up in two generous hugs as Ron and Hermione sandwiched him on either side. A moment later another form threw themselves at the trio as George arrived and tried to get in on the glomp-action.

“Harry! We thought you’d abandoned us,” he cried. “You don’t floo, you don’t write! One would think you didn’t love us anymore!”

“Budge off, you twit,” Charlie told him, literally shoving his little brother away from Harry.

“Harry,” Percy greeted. “It’s good to see you again.”

“Perce,” Harry returned. “You’re looking good.”

“Thank you. Now if you’ll excuse me, I understand it’s time to get ready for dinner,” the bookish
Weasley announced before heading upstairs for the loo. Charlie half-escorted, half-dragged George after him, leaving Harry, Ron, and Hermione alone with Ginny in the sitting room.

“Don’t mind me,” the youngest Weasley said with a huff, getting up. “I’ll just be in my room.”

“Thanks, Gin,” Harry tried to call after her.

“What’s this about, mate?” Ron asked. “First you say you’re not staying over for the holidays, and, okay, I guess I can kinda get that—you’ve got business to take care of and all, but then you say you’re not coming over at all, and we don’t hear from you for five whole days, and now you just pop in for dinner without warning?”

“Not that we aren’t happy to see you,” Hermione rushed.

“No, of course not,” Ron agreed. “Just wondering what the bloody hell is going on!”

“Listen, we need to talk,” Harry said.

“Really?” Ron asked sarcastically. “Cause it seems to me we’ve been trying to get you to talk for the last bloody four months!”

“Ron,” Hermione hissed. “Maybe we could take this up to your room?”

“Actually, if you don’t mind,” Harry interrupted, “I’d rather talk to you both outside.”

“Harry, mate, it’s freezing out there!”

“Oh, honestly Ron, you’re a wizard,” Hermione humphed, heading over to the mud room to grab her boots and cloak.

Harry grinned back at Ron. “Admit it; you do that purposefully to get her roiled up.”

“Well, yeah,” Ron grinned back, leading the way over to the mud room after her. “But she’s cute when she’s angry like that.”

“If you say so, mate,” Harry laughed, following him out.

Although it was a day before Christmas and the weather was bitterly cold there was no snow. Still, the path through the garden was slushy, and Harry was grateful for the pair of boots he’d borrowed from the mudroom.

Hermione stood waiting for them next to a makeshift bench that hadn’t been there this summer. It looked like someone had chopped down two near trees and then laid a plank atop the two stumps….which is exactly what had happened. She cast a localized area weather charm as they approached, effectively heating the area for a short time.

“What’s this about, Harry?” she asked as soon as he was within the weather charm perimeter.

He turned without answering her, and cast several more charms for privacy. She danced and jingled with nervous energy, and not even Ron standing beside her, wrapping an arm around her shoulders could calm her. “Harry, please,” she entreated. “Just tell us. Is it bad? Are you sick? You’re sick, aren’t you? I tried to look up—but of course no one else has ever survived, and—“

“I’m not sick,” he cut her off, firmly but without shouting. “Really, Hermione. I told you before. Even Madame Pomfrey’s told you—I am not sick. I am not dying. I’m perfectly healthy.”
“If you’re not sick,” Ron asked, frowning, “Then what’s this all about?” he asked, gesturing to the privacy bubble around them.

“Mostly?” Harry shrugged. “It’s to contain Hermione’s shouting when I tell you I’m definitely not going back to Hogwarts in the New Year.”

Ron nodded solemnly, acceptingly, but true to prediction, Hermione started shouting.

“What! Harry, you can’t mean that! You’re education! And after we’ve worked so hard! You were excited to go back to Hogwarts and finish our seventh year. I don’t understand—what’s changed?”

“Several things, actually,” he told her when he was sure she would listen to his answer. “First, and I already told Ron this… Hogwarts just doesn’t feel right anymore. It’s… uncomfortable to be there now, and,” he shrugged. “I don’t have to be, so I’m not going to. I’ve already talked this over with Minerva, and she understands,” he added, hoping that the voucher from her favorite professor, the headmistress herself, would help temper another outburst from Hermione. Especially considering what news was yet to come.

“Your NEWTs,” Hermione tried.

“Actually, that’s part of the reason I’ve been out of contact this last week,” Harry admitted. “I went and sat them at the ministry already.”

“Blimey,” Ron breathed, looking at Harry gobsmacked. “All of them?”

Meanwhile, Hermione seemed ready to panic at the concept of taking any test earlier than the allowed study time made available. “What! But, we still have half a year of learning!”

“Well, I don’t know how good I did,” he admitted, “But I think I passed them reasonably well. Hermione, I’m not ever going to really use my NEWTS—I’ll never be able to hold down a real job, not as the head of Two Noble families—so what all does it matter if I earn an Outstanding or an Acceptable?”

She tried to come up with an argument for that, but he knew he had her.

“And, no, I didn’t take them all,” he continued for Ron. “I only took Charms and Transfiguration and Defense—and believe me, that was enough for now. Depending on how things go, I might decide to sit a few more sometime along the way. But, I’m going to be pretty busy with family business for the foreseeable future,” he told them. “More schooling just isn’t right for me now. I’m…”

He faltered. Marriage or pregnancy first, he debated. ‘First comes marriage, then comes baby in the baby carriage…’ Well, okay then. “I’m getting married.”

“What!” It was apparently Ron’s turn to shout, as Hermione had sunk down onto the bench as if her knees had given out. “With who? Not Ginny,” Ron protested. “And we would’ve known if you’d been dating some other bird.”

“Ah, not a bird at all, actually,” Harry told them.

“Not a… you mean… wow,” Ron finally breathed and watched sunk onto the bench beside Hermione. “Okay. Didn’t expect that.”

“I did,” Hermione quietly confessed, earning a look from both boys. “What? Ginny and I talk, and, well…” She shrugged. “It wasn’t too difficult to put some facts and speculations together and come
up with the scenario that Harry might be gay.”

“Gay? What does Harry being happy have to do with liking other blokes?”

“Honestly, Ron, it means homosexual, too,” she huffed.

Meanwhile, Harry found himself breathing a little easier. They were taking his news remarkably well—better than he’d hoped, loads better than he’d feared. Especially Hermione, who had been raised in the muggle world and therefore had exposure to a lot of the muggle bias and hatred towards homosexuals. He knew it existed to some extent in the wizarding world, too, but nowhere near as violent reactions as one might fear in the muggle world.

This was good. Now just to tell them he was marrying Charlie and that he was pregnant, and it would all be good again. They could go in and eat dinner and tell Molly and…

Harry’s stomach twisted with nerves and he suddenly wished he was the one sitting. “Budge over,” he told them. “I need to sit, too.”

“You need to sit,” Ron groused. “You’re the one dropping the bloody revelations, aren’t you? So who is it, then? Please don’t say Malfoy. I think I might be sick if you say you’re marrying Malfoy.”


“Because he’s bloody ‘Draco’ now!”

“I have to deal with his parents a lot now, and I refuse to call his father ‘Lucius’, like we’re friends or something,” Harry explained. “Besides, Draco is much easier to get along with once you understand his stupid sense of humor. And I’m pretty sure he’s perfectly straight. No, actually, I’m marrying—“

“Gods, it’s Snape,” Ron moaned.

“Ron!” Hermione snapped. “Will you be quiet and let him speak!”

“Snape!” Harry shouted back. “What the hell, Ron! I haven’t even said two words to him all term, and I’m pretty sure he’s straight, too, as he was in love with my mother!”

Ron and Hermione looked just as shaken at that knowledge he felt, and then Ron worsened the moment. “Gods, Harry, just think, you could’ve been Snape’s kid!”

“Ron! Just. Be. Quiet!” Hermione hissed. “Who are you marrying, Harry?”

“Charlie.”

“Charlie?” Ron asked, frowning. “But there’s no Charlie in our class,” he said, earning an elbow in the ribs from Hermione, causing him to sputter. “You mean my brother, Charlie?”

“Yes, Charlie,” Harry repeated, while Hermione seemed to be piecing more bits of some puzzle together. Whatever the picture made, it was obvious her mind was working on something furiously.


“He’s going to move back to England,” Harry offered.

“But, he can’t,” Ron continued. “His dragons are in Romania! You can’t just take him away from his dragons. Charlie loves his dragons!”
Harry frowned. “There’s a dragon reserve in Wales that he’s requesting to be transferred to,” he told them. “That way we can still be together, here, and Charlie can continue to work with dragons.”

“There’s more, isn’t there?” Hermione asked while Ron continued to muddle over the situation. “What aren’t you telling us, Harry?”

“Well, Charlie and I, we’re going to be getting married pretty quickly, probably before you guys head back to Hogwarts.”

“What?” Ron squawked. “Why so soon? Bill and Fleur took a whole year to plan their wedding!”

“Because,” Harry said, taking a fortifying breath. “I wasn’t lying. I’m not sick or dying. I’m pregnant.”

“Blimey.”

“Is that even possible?” Hermione asked, but it was Ron who answered her sharply.

“Of course it is! Incredibly rare, though.” He looked at Harry. “Makes sense, though. They say only really powerful wizards can get pregnant. Takes a lot of magic to help keep the baby safe until it can be born, you know. Preggers… Blimey,” he repeated staring at Harry.

“You don’t look knocked up,” he said after another moment.

“Honestly, Ron!” Hermione huffed. “It would be too soon to see. But, Harry… how do you know you’re pregnant already? You weren’t trying to become pregnant, so—“

“Didn’t you hear him, ‘Mione?” Ron stopped her. “He’s been pregnant this whole last term. And—Charlie’s the baby’s father? So, that means they—” His face scrunched up with realization. “Oh, ewe! You and my brother were off shagging this summer! My brother, Harry! How could you!”

“Ah, pretty easily, actually,” Harry couldn’t resist teasing.

“But,” Hermione sputtered. “If—August—then… you’d be…”

“A little more than four months along?” he supplied.

“But you’d be showing!” she protested.

“That’s what I said,” Ron reminded her.

“Robes,” Harry answered them both. “Big and baggy and shapeless and perfect for hiding a growing baby bump,” he added, shifting his outer robe out of the way and molding the inner over his expanding belly.

Hermione reached out tentatively, and when he nodded, touched his bump.

“Oh my god, you really are pregnant,” she breathed. She snatched her hand away, looking at him searchingly. “And you’re sure it’s not a tumor or something?”

“I’m quite sure,” he reassured her. “It’s a boy.”

“Blimey,” Ron repeated, still staring at Harry’s belly. “I’m going to be an uncle…”

“You were already going to be an uncle,” Hermione reminded him. “Or have you forgotten already that Fleur’s pregnant?”
“Yeah, but she’s all the way away in France, isn’t she?” Ron returned. “So it’s not like it’s really real, is it? She and Bill are going to show up to visit one day, and they’ll have this kid with them. But Harry, he’s here, and he’s pregnant, and hell, he’s going to have baby.”

“Sometimes I really don’t get you,” Hermione muttered. “Harry, you’re not… You’re not just marrying Charlie because of the baby, are you?”

“No, not just because of the baby,” he answered honestly. “I won’t lie—the baby is a big part of it, but there are other reasons as well. And… I think, and Charlie thinks so, too, that we can be happy together and make each other happy.”

“If you’re sure…”

“What do you mean, if he’s sure,” Ron groused. “Harry and Charlie will be great together. I mean, look! They’ve already got a kid on the way! If that doesn’t speak for how good they are, I don’t know what else will!”

“Ron, just because you’re going to have a baby with someone doesn’t mean you’d make a good couple.”

“Uh, yeah, it does,” he sassed back. “Hermione, they’re not girls. Wizards can’t just get pregnant cause they’re messing around. Our bodies aren’t meant to make babies. It takes the right set of circumstances for wizards to be able to make a baby together. They have to be powerful enough to keep the baby alive and safe, and they have to have compatible magic to share and help make the baby, and they have to be open and care enough for each other to willingly share their magic. Otherwise, no baby no matter how many times they shag. Any wizard couple lucky enough to have kids, well, they’re bound to be good for each other.”

Hermione blinked, surprised. “How do you know all this?” she finally demanded.

“Come one, Hermione,” Ron replied, embarrassed. “Everyone gets the talk…”

“Yeah,” Harry responded. “But muggle men can’t get pregnant, so muggle-borns and muggle-riased miss out on a lot of what ‘everyone’ else knows.”

Ron frowned. “Never thought of that.”

“Yeah, well, let’s just say I wasn’t all that believing when Madame Pomfrey first told me I was pregnant.”

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“What I don’t understand, mate, is, if you knew since Halloween that you were pregnant, why are you just now telling us at Christmas?”

Harry cringed. He had rather hoped that they wouldn’t come around to that point, but they had. “Well, it was a lot to adjust to,” he started to explain. “I mean, just the idea that a bloke could be pregnant, the reality that it wasn’t just some random bloke, but me… And well, I had a lot to figure out, didn’t I? And then there was Charlie. I mean, I didn’t even know what to say to him, did I? I couldn’t just send him an owl, could I?”

He was up and pacing, but it helped him think and the others weren’t complaining so he kept on it. “And once I’d finally accepted that McGonagall and Pomfrey weren’t just having a hoax on me, well, then I had even more to think about, right? I mean, I knew I’d start getting fat around the middle, and it would be rather difficult to hide a baby, and well, the idea of being around everyone
like that… Well, I was already thinking of leaving Hogwarts, I just wasn’t sure what I would do, but this kind of made for the perfect excuse, you know? And so, I started planning to not go back.”

He stopped pacing and stood, looking back him. “I didn’t want anybody to know. I still don’t want people to know, but…” He made a face. “I can’t rightly hide it from everyone, can I? And well, I had to tell Charlie something, and, well, we got around to talking, and one thing led to another. And then I found myself talking to your dad, Ron, and now I’m telling you. But your dad doesn’t know,” he rushed to say. “About the baby. He doesn’t know. Only about the marriage bit. And, quite honestly, I’m not all the keen about telling your mum yet, either.”

“Don’t blame you, mate,” Ron sympathized. “She might go spare if she finds out you’re pregnant before you’re married. Hell, she’s definitely going to go off on Charlie for you, you can bet on it. She’s already had Dad stress to us about being safe and all.”

“But won’t she wonder,” Hermione asked. “I mean, if you’re really going to get married so quickly, she’s bound to suspect a reason for it.”

“Yeah, well, I don’t suppose you have any ideas for it?” he asked her.

Ron stood and reached over to clap him on the shoulder. “Mate, the best advice I have for you is to distract her with news of the baby and hope it keeps her attention long enough for you to escape out the floo. If you want, I’ll try and keep the others out of the way so you have an unimpeded exit.”

“Ronald!” Hermione scolded. “Don’t you listen to him, Harry. While I’m sure Mrs. Weasley will be…” Words failed her and her mouth snapped shut as she thought the situation over. “On second thought, I don’t suppose my old room at Grimauld is still available, is it? I don’t think I fancy sticking around the Burrow tonight. Sorry, Ron, but…”

“No worries,” Ron hastened to assure her. “In fact, I’m mighty tempted to ask the same,” he added looking entreatingly towards Harry.

“Uh, yeah, I suppose so,” Harry agreed. “But, uh, I think Charlie’s coming over, too, just so you know.”

Ron’s face crinkled. “Ugh, you’re going to be shagging, aren’t you? No, no! don’t say it! I don’t want to know—really, I don’t. I… I’ll get back on you on the room space, all right mate?”

“Sure thing. And you Hermione?”

“I have no problem with two healthy young adults enjoying themselves in the privacy of their own house,” she returned rather primly for the subject. “Only… do remember silencing charms, yes?”

Harry flushed and murmured, “No guarantees.”

“Is that all of the big news,” Ron asked. “There’s not anything else you’re holding back from us now, is there?”

“Uh, no, not that I’m aware of,” Harry mused. “Having a baby, getting married, not returning to Hogwarts… Yep, that was pretty much it.”

“Okay,” Ron nodded. “As long as it wasn’t anything serious.”

“Boys.” Hermione breathed, closing her eyes momentarily. “Well, come on, then. We should probably get back in. I’m sure they’re wondering where we’ve went and holding dinner for us.”
Molly beamed as she bustled about, putting food on the table as her family swarmed and settled into a feeding frenzy—plates and platters and dishes passed haphazardly back and forth up and down the table until a little of everything had made it onto everyone’s plates. It felt wonderful to have such a full table, she thought, and the only thing that could have made it better would be if her two missing boys could be here.

Her smile froze momentarily, but after nearly half a year, she was well-practiced at not letting the others know, even as her eyes skimmed over George, to his side, looking for the son who would never come home. George, bless him, was telling something to his older brother, Charlie, while Percy explained something to Hermione—what a wonderful girl. Such a good friend to Ronald and Harry.

And Harry… She was so happy he decided to visit. She would have to specially thank Arthur tonight for convincing the boy over. Such a wonderful and honest and sweet boy. He didn’t deserve any of the hardships life had handed him, but he had handled them with such fierce spirit and determination. She had been worried about him—she worried about all her boys. He’d looked a little off at the train station when she’d gone to greet Ron and Ginny this year, and he’d disappeared before she could greet him. And then, tonight, well, he’d looked nervous, of course, but whatever it was he had needed to say to Ron and Hermione must have gone well because all three seemed in better spirits now. What a wonderful bond those three had. It seemed almost a shame to break them apart in anyway, but Molly wasn’t clueless. She saw the looks and shared moments between her son and Hermione, and she wasn’t displeased.

But where did that leave Harry, she worried. She had hoped, once upon a time, that he and her Ginny would make a match, but something had gone foul there. What she didn’t know; her daughter wouldn’t tell her. Molly made it a point never to meddle directly in her sons’ love lives and Ginny wouldn’t allow it—to much her mother’s daughter, Molly thought. Still, she knew Ginny was spending time with some other boy at school—who, she wasn’t sure, but she knew it wasn’t Harry.

“A toast,” Arthur called, raising his glass of pumpkin juice. “To family, old and new.”

There was a special twinkle in his eye that said he was up to something, and she squashed the urge to call him on it immediately. “To family,” she cheered with her children, wondering for how much longer she’d be able to keep them children.

Harry felt more stuffed and bloated than ever—which was saying something after seven years of Hogwarts’ feasts. He sat back from the table with a grimace, rubbing his stomach.

“You alright?” Charlie asked, seeing the movement.

“Ate too much,” Harry excused. “Your mum always makes the best food.”

“Oh, listen to you!” Mrs. Weasley scoffed, batting the air at him. “Arthur said you were at Grimauld Place?”

“Yes, actually, I’m planning to make it my permanent address,” Harry answered. “At least for the foreseeable future.”

“Well, it’s rather convenient to Diagon Alley, but it’s not really suitable for a boy to live in by himself,” she countered. “You’re welcome to stay here, of course.”
“Thank you, Mrs. Weasley, really, but the place has actually rather grown on me—after the last year and all, and well, I’m making some small changes to help improve the atmosphere some.”

“Yes, well, it needed a bit of work still. And that house elf—is it still there?”

“Yes. Kreacher’s actually doing much better these days. I think it helps that I’ve come into the Black Family proper like now.”

“Well, just remember you don’t need to keep him anymore. There are no secrets he can tell that can hurt you now, so you’re free to give him clothes if he earns them.”

“Kreacher is a loyal elf to the House of Black,” Harry told her staunchly. “I don’t foresee a need to ever punish him like that.”

“Well, he is your elf,” she allowed.

“Yes, he is.”

Across the table Hermione was biting her tongue with heroic effort, and, under the table, Ron gave her hand an encouraging squeeze.

“Well, Mother, another fabulous meal,” George proclaimed. “But I should probably be off. I’m meeting Angelina in muggle London this evening for a night on the town.”

“I, also, must be off,” Percy joined, standing up and going over to give his mother’s cheek a quick kiss.

“Oh, must you be going already? So soon?”

“Afraid so, but we’ll be back tomorrow morning to open presents,” George promised, also dropping a quick kiss on his mother’s cheek. “Not too early, though!” he added with a wink.

“Uh,” Ron stalled, looking at the remaining people around the table.

Hermione heaved a sigh. “Would you like to play a game of exploding snap?” she asked, turning to Ginny. “Perhaps up in your room?”

The redhead gave a look at the others, quickly deduced something was up, and agreed. “Come along, Ron,” she ordered her brother, leading the way up to the room she was sharing with Hermione, determined to get some answers.

Mrs. Weasley started to gather the plates, but her husband stopped her. “Just a minute, Molly.”

She paused. “What is it, dear? Is something wrong?”

“No, no,” he dissuaded. “No, indeed. Quite the opposite, I should say. As you know, I stopped by after work today, and had a little chat with Harry here. He asked, and I’ve agreed, and, well, that is to say…” He turned to look at his two sons. “Perhaps you would like to do the honors?”

No, no. No, he would not, Harry thought, shooting a desperate look at Charlie that practically screamed, ‘You do something!’

“Mum, what Dad’s trying to say is, Harry and I, we’re engaged,” Charlie said, as delicately blunt as he could manage.

“Engaged in what, dear?” she asked.
“To be married. We’re engaged to be married.”

“To be… you… and Harry…?” she stammered, looking from one man to another, as if to ask if they were being serious with her. “Engaged to be married?”

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Chapter End Notes

The original reason I first started writing a Charlie-Harry mpreg was because I read another story in which Hermione and Ron reacted extremely negatively towards Harry--his relationship with another man, with Charlie in particular, and with his pregnancy. It... rankled. Ah, well. Everyone needs some sort of catalyst to get them started, right?
“Mum, what Dad’s trying to say is, Harry and I, we’re engaged,” Charlie said, as delicately blunt as he could manage.

“Engaged in what, dear?” she asked.

“To be married. We’re engaged to be married.”

“To be… you… and Harry…?” she stammered, looking from one man to another, as if to ask if they were being serious with her. “Engaged to be married?”

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It could have gone worse, Harry consoled himself as he settled into Grimauld Place’s drawing room with a cup of hot cocoa. Yes, it could have gone worse, but it could have gone a lot better, too. Mrs. Weasley, apparently, was a more traditional witch than her husband and sons believed.

“But…but,” she had sputtered, dropping into her seat. “You can’t marry,” she said weakly. “Harry has his titles, and Charlie… I had hoped… well…”

Mr. Weasley frowned at his wife. “Now, Molly,” he began.

“No, Arthur, it’s not right!” she protested, voice rising with her temper. “Harry has a responsibility to his families, and so does Charlie!”

“Molly, it’s the boys’ decision,” he told her. “They’ve come to me, and as the head of this family, I’ve agreed.”

“Well, you shouldn’t have, Arthur, really!” she scolded before turning to the two boys in question. “Boys, I love you both, and I want you happy, I really do, but surely you must understand that—“

“Mum, we’re getting married,” Charlie cut her off.

“You can’t. I forbid it,” she insisted staunchly.

“Molly—“ Arthur tried again to rein his wife’s response, but it was too little, too late.

“No! I absolutely will not condone such a thing! Harry, you need to find a nice witch and make babies, and so should you, Charlie. It’s not right, two wizards together like that. Not when so many families have been hurt by the war. It’s selfish, is what it is. More selfish than I believed either one of your capable of. And you, Arthur, allowing such a thing? Why, I—“

“Molly, that’s enough!” Mr. Weasley finally shouted, surprising his sons and wife into silence. From upstairs there was a thump that resonated through the sudden silence of the dining area as they stared at each other.

“Mrs. Weasley,” Harry spoke up finally, fists bunched in his lap as he focused on keeping calm. “I’m sorry you’re not happy for us—I really wish you could be—but… Charlie and I have discussed this, and it is a decision we’ve come to, based on what is best for us. So, yes, maybe that is selfish, but you’ll have to excuse me if, after everything I’ve done, everything I’ve been through, I decide to do something that I think might make me happy for a very long time.”

“Harry, I—“ she tried.
“But to accuse me of not thinking of my family responsibilities,” Harry bulldozed over her, visibly shaking. “That, I will not stand for. I may not have been raised to know my responsibilities, but I have worked very hard these last months to try and correct the years of neglect forced upon both the Potter and Black families, and yes, I know I still have a lot more to accomplish, but I’m looking forward to being able to accomplish those things… with Charlie by my side. I don’t need to attach myself to a witch I could never love or be as happy as I am with Charlie in order to see to my family duty,” he added, standing. Charlie stood almost as immediately, reaching up to place a bracing hand at his back.

“Mr. Weasley, thank you for our discussion earlier, your time and consideration. Mrs. Weasley, as always, the meal was fantastic. I’m sorry, but I don’t much feel up to stay for afters. If you’ll both excuse me, I think I’ll be heading home now.”

“Good idea,” Charlie said, leading him into the living room.

“Harry, please,” Mrs. Weasley entreated, but even her husband ignored her pleas. He shot her a look before turning to follow the boys.

“I’m sorry, Harry, Charlie,” Mr. Weasley intoned solemnly. “Thank you for coming to dinner tonight. I hope you will come again soon, and we can share the happy news with the rest of the family,” he offered as he walked them towards the floo. Then he leaned over and whispered, “I’m sorry about that, boys. I’ll talk to your mother and straighten her out a bit. Try not to worry about it. Prewitt blood, you understand. They were always a little more up laced and prudish. Sometimes she forgets she’s a Weasley now, and Weasleys are much more open and accepting. She’ll come around, mark my words.”

“Thanks, Mr. Weasley,” Harry began, still stiff and uncomfortable, but also really appreciative for the older man’s support.

“We’re to be family officially now, Harry. Hopefully now you’ll agree to calling me Arthur or maybe even ‘Dad’ like my other children do.”

“I would like that,” Harry admitted, somewhat shyly. “Thank you.”

“No, thank you,” Arthur countered, pulling Harry in for a familiar hug. “For helping my son find happiness and love. Now go on, get yourselves home. A warm fire and a good hot cup of cocoa will help soothe some of these nerves. It’s never a good idea to go to bed with a good mad on.”

Charlie sent him through first, and after the first handful of minutes, Harry feared he would be spending the rest of the night alone in Grimauld Place. He wondered, briefly, what was being said right then back at the Burrow, but he quickly pushed those questioning thoughts aside. Instead, he had started a pot of tea and some hot cocoa, like Arthur had advised.

Kreacher popped in and started grumbling immediately about Harry doing work beneath his position and trying to make the elf look bad before the water had even finished boiling. Luckily, Charlie arrived right about then and was able to distract the elf by asking for the fires to be brought up in the drawing room and two guest bedrooms and asking for the two bedrooms to be freshly attired.

“Hermione is just gathering her things,” Charlie told him, curling up behind and around him. “And then she’ll be right through. I think Ron plans to try and stick it out for tonight, but I wouldn’t be too surprised if he or Ginny show up, too. I hope you don’t mind?”

“No, that’s fine. Hermione and Ron and I already discussed it earlier when I told them we were getting married and going to have a baby,” Harry admitted. Charlie’s arms loosened and his hands
dropped to cover his belly, smoothing over the growing bump.

“Ah. Well. Good then, I guess. Maybe we should make up another tray of tea?”

“Sure. Um, there are some biscuits, I think, in one of the cupboards.”

“Kreacher will be doing,” the elf insisted, popping back into the kitchen. “Master Harry should be sitting down and relaxing now, not standing in the kitchen. Master Harry is not a house elf to be working in his own kitchen, gathering his own foodstuffs. That is house elf work, Kreacher’s work.”

And so Harry found himself escorted up to the drawing room. No sooner had he sat down then Kreacher was there offering a small service platter selection of fruits, cheeses, and biscuits along with a steaming mug of hot cocoa. Charlie, meanwhile, had sprawled out in front of the fire, head pillowed in his arms. Whatever had happened, he didn’t seem to want to talk about it, and Harry wondered how this tense silence was supposed to be calming.

A tiny chime sound and moments later he could hear Hermione’s boots as she came trooping up the stairs. “Harry?” she called seconds before appearing in the doorway. “Oh, Harry,” she breathed, darting across the room and falling onto him.

“Oomphf! Careful, Hermione,” he shouted, scrambling to protect his stomach from flailing limbs.

“OH, I’m sorry, shoot,” she cried, pulling back and falling onto the sofa next to him, leaning against him instead. “Really, I am. It’s just… it’s awful. I can’t believe she said those things to you both!”

“You heard then?”

“Almost every word,” she admitted. “Ginny had some extendable ears, and, well… But, Harry! She’s absolutely wrong, you know that. There have been plenty of wizards who married other wizards before. It’s not against any laws. I’ve checked. And—”

“You’ve checked the laws on wizarding marriages?” he sputtered. “Already? But you—“

“Not tonight, no, don’t be ridiculous,” Hermione huffed. “My cousin Jack is gay. I found out during our sixth year, and, well, I wondered how the wizarding world handled such things and looked it up. It’s quite fascinating, really. I never understood why there wasn’t the same stigma about men marrying men, but I supposed it makes sense if wizards can get pregnant. Nothing I read mentioned that. Of course, my books said nothing about witches marrying witches.”

“That’s because it doesn’t happen nearly often enough for there to be a written law,” Charlie muttered, turning his head to face them, and Harry realized his eyes were suspiciously red and glassy.

Hermione might have noticed, too, but if she did, she didn’t say anything about it. Instead, true to nature, she chased after a new piece of knowledge. “That doesn’t make much sense. Is it a reaction of magic that less women are gay then men?”

Charlie snorted. “Not hardly. It’s mostly due to the historical fact that women belonged to their family until they were given into the care of their husband’s family. Even then, they lack the ability to impregnate themselves, so they usually end up tied to a male. What generally happened was for the two witches who were in a relationship to marry politically for their family’s benefit and then they carried on their relationship on the side.”

“But that’s completely unfair!”
“That’s life,” Charlie shrugged, turning back away. “No fair or right to it.”

“You know,” she huffed turning back to Harry, “Sometimes the wizarding world really frustrates me.”

“Only sometimes?” Harry asked, not able to hide the funny tone in his voice. “Prophecies and unbreakable contracts that force you to do something you didn’t even volunteer for and the mass-produced stupidity and gullibility and—pregnant!” he rounded up, jabbing at his middle.

“Point,” she sighed, leaning back against him. She curled her hand into his and squeezed. “I’m sorry.”

“Not your fault,” he murmured.

“Not yours, either,” Hermione told him, giving his hand another squeeze. “Gods, Harry, it was horrible. Everyone was shouting when I left, even Mr. Weasley. I don’t think I’ve ever really heard him raise his voice to anyone before…”

There was another tiny ding—the floo bell, Harry realized when Kreacher appeared to announce Ron and Ginny were trying to come through.

“Go ahead and let them through, Kreacher, please, but that’s it,” Harry told him. “Shut the floo down for the night. And, you had the girls’ room and Ron’s room made up, right?”

“Yes, Master Harry, the rooms for the mudblood and blood-traiters have been made ready.”

“Thanks, Kreacher,” Harry sighed, not even bothering to correct the elf tonight. He was too tired to deal with much more. Of course, just because he was tired didn’t mean more wasn’t going to be thrown at him.

“Harry!”

“Mate, I’m sorry—“

Two voices came thundering up the stairs even before the stampede of footsteps.

“Harry! Why didn’t you tell me!” Ginny demanded, falling into the door frame seconds before Ron. “I swear, mate, I didn’t realize you didn’t tell them!” Ron gasped, trying to push past his sister to get into the room first. “And Gin was there, and she heard, too, and, I swear, I’m sorry mate!”

“And you!” Ginny continued, seeing her older brother in the room, too. She stalked up to Charlie and smack/punched him in the shoulder. “Why didn’t you tell me!”

“Fuck, Gin,” Charlie groused. “If you’re going to attack me, too, you can get the hell out.”


“Dammit, Gin, stop!” Charlie shouted, trying to grab the pillow from her. “What the hell?”

“You should have told me you liked Harry, too,” she returned, falling into the armchair, frowning fiercely.

“I’m sorry, mate,” Ron repeated earnestly to Harry, rushing to get the words out to the point of
practically babbling. “I swear, I really thought you’d told them. I mean, I heard what you said, at least until you and Dad left the kitchen, and, I mean, I knew what you were talking about, but I guess Mom and Dad didn’t, or they didn’t pick up on it or anything, and, well, I yelled at Mom about upsetting you when you were pregnant, and Ginny was there, and—“

“He was my boyfriend first,” Ginny sulked. “I didn’t even know you were interested! I’d already had words with George about hitting on Harry, but I didn’t know I had to have words with you, too!”

“So now your mom and dad know I’m pregnant?” Harry gulped.

“Yeah,” Ron admitted sullenly, head hanging and shoulders dropped.

“You didn’t have to have words with me,” Charlie growled. “You two dated, Gin. Past tense, and nearly two years ago. He broke up with you, if you’ll remember.”

“Yeah, but we had an understanding,” she snapped.

“I hate to be the one to tell you, Gin-Gin, but you’re understanding was a bit one-sided. I would have thought you’d have figured that out by now.”

“I have, thank you very much, but it’s the principle of the matter,” she snapped.

“Oh, god,” Harry groaned. “How mad are they?”


“Principles be damned,” Charlie huffed. “Besides, it’s not like I intentionally set out to poach on your ex. Things just… happened.”

 Those things aren’t supposed to just happen!” Ginny shouted. “You knocked him up, Charlie! Hello!”

“Yeah, well, it wasn’t planned.”

“It’s Harry. The seemingly impossible or unlikely become an almost certainty when Harry’s involved,” she informed her brother testily. “Hell, with our family’s panache for fertility and Harry’s power levels, you’ll be lucky if you’re not having twins.”

Harry’s head snapped around to look at her, horrified.

“Wizards never have multiple births,” Charlie scoffed. “You know that.”

“Don’t say that!” Harry shouted. “So help me, if you’ve jinxed me into having more than one baby —“

“No, he’s right,” Ron jumped in. “It’s just not done. Something about a wizard’s body not being ideal for carrying a baby and so magic makes sure there’s never more than one at a time. Heard a story once of a bloke who’d gotten knocked up with twins, but the magic rejected the second baby and he ended up losing both.”

“How horrible,” Hermione gasped. “Ron! How could you repeat such a dreadful thing when Harry’s pregnant right now?”

“No, but he’s safe,” Ron insisted. “Don’t you see—he’s still pregnant, right? So, he’s good. He’s
safe. Otherwise his magic would have already stopped it.”

“And besides,” Charlie said firmly, glaring at his brother as he sat up. “Andromeda did the spell earlier today and we saw. There’s only one baby, Harry, and it’s a little boy, and he’s healthy. No worries.”

“Just one baby,” Harry murmured, nodding, rubbing his suddenly agitated belly. And then something struck. “What do you mean you’ve already had words with George?” he asked, turning on Ginny. “What words? About what?”

“Oh, please, Harry,” the redhead huffed. “Don’t tell me you never noticed George was sweet on you.”

“What? He was not!” Harry squawked, sitting up.

“Was, too,” she countered. “I’m half-convinced that if we hadn’t dated during my fifth year, he would’ve tried to put some moves on you. In fact, if things had been different and Fred were still here, I’ve no doubt George would have spent the entire dinner hitting on you instead of thinking about his date with Angelina.”

Ron grimaced and Charlie frowned. “He’s not just dating her because Fred liked her, is he?” Charlie asked.

Ginny shrugged. “I don’t know. You’d have to ask him. But not tonight.” She stood, “Finding out my brother got my ex-boyfriend pregnant is exhausting, and Mom and Dad are having a rousing row back home, so there’s no way I’m going back there tonight. Mind if I bunk here in my old room, Harry?”

“Yeah, sure, that’s fine.”

“Actually,” Hermione spoke up, “We should probably all retire. It’s been an eventful evening, and I’m sure we could all do with a good night’s sleep.”

“Yeah, sure,” Ron muttered, shooting a glare at his sister’s back. “Don’t suppose you’d care to sleep upstairs then?”

“Of course,” Hermione responded matter-of-factly. “You didn’t think I’d be sharing a room with Ginny again, did you? And really, Harry has no room to talk. Unlike him, I’m on the contraception potion.”

“Too much information!” Harry shouted after her retreating back.

Charlie snorted and pushed himself up off the ground. “Come on. They’re right. We should probably turn in and try to get some rest, too.”

Harry studied him, standing there with the fire behind him, all glowing shadows. “I’m sorry,” he said suddenly. “I’ll understand if you decide you don’t want to marry me anymore.”

“What?” Charlie sputtered. “What the hell are you talking about? Of course I want to marry you!”

“But your family…”

“My family adores you, Harry, you know that.”

“Your Mum…”
“Mum is…” Charlie made a strangled yell and shoved his hands through his hair. “My mum is… old fashioned, it’s true, but I… I didn’t expect that from her. I really didn’t. But I know she loves me—never any doubt on that—and I know she loves you, too. So, yeah, maybe this will be a little hard for her to accept at first, but Harry, she will accept it. I know she will.”

“But all this trouble…”

“You’re worth it,” Charlie insisted, standing over him now and reaching down to pull him up. “Harry, you are worth any trouble, and our family is worth it, too. Believe me. I very much still want to marry you, and I will be happy to do so at our most earliest convenience.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay.”

“Okay.”

Harry snorted. “Stop repeating me,” he told Charlie, swaying a bit in his arms.

Charlie grinned back at him. “Come on. Let’s go up to bed.”

Harry groaned. “I still have to do the whole meet and greet thing with the family shield, don’t I?”

“Yeah, I’m afraid you do,” Charlie agreed. “But just remember, the magic’s already accepted you. It can’t take that back now. And you set the tone for how the magic will respond from here on out until your death. You don’t need to fear it; it’s yours.”

“I don’t fear it,” Harry protested, turning arm in arm with Charlie to head upstairs and to bed. “I just don’t like being surprised. Things are much easier when I know exactly what is expected of me.”

“I can understand that. Right now, I expect we’ll go upstairs,” Charlie told him. “You’ll place your hand on the shield and allow the family magic to taste of your magic. Then we’ll curl up together in that big master bed and… go to sleep.”

Harry snorted again. “Really? You’re going to just go to sleep? No funny business?”

“I can not have sex on occasion,” Charlie huffed.

“You’ve yet to prove it by me,” Harry mumbled.

“What was that? I didn’t quite hear it,” Charlie teased as they reached the master bedroom.

“Nothing. Are you going to wait out here or come in?”

“You’re decision,” Charlie told him. “Where do you want me?”

“With me,” Harry affirmed, giving his hand another squeeze. “For as long as you’ll stay.”

“Then you shall have me for a very long time,” Charlie promised, lifting their joined hands up to drop another little kiss onto Harry’s knuckles.

“Okay. Let’s do this,” Harry said, sucking in a fortifying breath.

“Switch sides though, so you can use your dominant hand on the shield,” Charlie pointed out,
quickly following actions to words. “There we go. Now we’re ready.”

Harry nodded and then pushed open the door. At first nothing happened. Then he took his first steps into the room, Charlie half a step behind him, and the fireplace roared to life, candles lighting themselves. He continued walking into the room until the door could close freely behind him, and then stopped, and stared up at the shield that had wounded him earlier.

“Always Pure,” he whispered, reaching up and closing the distance between himself and the shield automatically. “You’ve tasted my blood, now taste of my magic, and know the purity of my intent.”

The shield pulsed and glowed under his hand…. And then it quieted.

“Is that it?” Harry asked after another moment of nothing happening.

“Think so,” Charlie mused, looking nervously around as if waiting for something else to happen. “Oh, well. Bed?”

***

Harry really had no experience sleeping with another person in the same bed. It was… interesting. He felt hyper-aware of Charlie, curled up behind him. At first there was that little shuffle of who got which side of the bed…only, it wasn’t really a shuffle because they each just automatically went to either side of the bed without discussing it. And wasn’t that weird? No, ‘which side of the bed would you like or do you prefer?’ Just Harry moving to the left and Charlie to the right, without any discussion.

Then there was the settling into the bed. Harry wanted to lie on his back, his preferred position, but he knew from the books he’d read that soon enough that would be a bad position to sleep in while pregnant. So he’d been trying to train himself and get used to sleeping on his side. And not even a moment later, Charlie was there, scooting up behind him, arm threading under his arm and resting heavily over his waist, legs tangling with his. Harry felt almost smothered at first before he forced himself to relax and actually enjoy the intimacy and comfort.

Charlie seemed to drift off immediately, but Harry couldn’t seem to turn his mind off. Around him the house was silent, and yet he could sense it as if it were alive. It was creepy in a way he’d never experienced before. But he was safe in his bed.

Tomorrow was Christmas day. The Weasleys and Hermione would be returning to the Burrow for the day. Harry was supposed to be hosting a Black Family Dinner—not that he wanted to. And what about Charlie? Could he ask him to forego his family’s dinner to stay with Harry? What about wedding plans? They hadn’t discussed anything other than yes, they were agreed to marry. Harry wasn’t even sure how long Charlie could stay in England before having to return to Romania. What if—

“Stop thinking and go to sleep,” Charlie mumbled into his hair. “We’ll sort whatever it is out tomorrow. Promise.”

Harry sighed and forced himself to clear his mind so he could actually get to sleep.

***
As strange as it was to fall asleep with another person, Harry found it an extremely pleasant experience to wake up with another person in bed with you. Especially if that person was a lover.

It was quite a bit later before either Harry or Charlie made their presence known to the rest of the household.

“Good morning,” Hermione was the first to greet them cheerfully as they entered the drawing room. “Just getting up?”

“Mmn,” Harry replied semi-coherently, falling onto the settee beside her. “Where’s everyone?”

“Ron and Ginny flooed over to the shop after checking in at the Burrow first this morning,” she told him, handing over a cup of juice that appeared on a service tray. “Where’s Charlie?”

“He’ll be along,” Harry answered after a long sip from the cool juice. “Poking around the stairs a bit. Told him about some of the hidden compartments.”

“Ah, well, hopefully he’ll remember to be cautious.”

“Yeah, would hate to lose him before the wedding.”

“Are you really, seriously, going to get married, Harry?” she asked him, worrying her lip.

“Yep,” he responded with a resounding popping ‘p’. “Really, truly.”

“But… do you love him?”

“I…” He stared at his glass of juice, frowning. “I don’t know. Not real good on the whole ‘love’ thing,” He admitted. “I mean, I care about him. I like him a whole lot. I enjoy myself when he’s around, and, well, the sex is really, really great…”

“But?”

“How do you know? How does anyone know? I mean, I believe it, that we can be happy together. We get along, he’s easy to talk to and all, but…” Harry hesitated. “My… relatives… they… well, you know, they weren’t the best of people. They… didn’t love me. They didn’t even like me. I never understood why when I was little. I guess I get it better now. It wasn’t me. There wasn’t anything I could have done to change their opinion of me. I know that now, but it sort of makes me wish I could go back and be just as awful as they seemed to like to think I was.”

“Harry…”

“I wouldn’t,” he rushed to assure her. “I’m not. It’s not like I could sneak a time turner to send me back in time, and I wouldn’t want to anyway. I really just want all of that to be over with, and it is. I never need to see any of the Dursleys ever again, and I’m glad. But…”

She waited, patiently.

“Sometimes I wonder… what if I’m incapable of loving?”
“What?”

“Hear me out—I don’t know what it’s like to love someone, to be loved. Dumbledore seemed to think it was my greatest power, but I just…”

“Harry, you are loved by so very many people. You, Harry, not the Boy-Who-Lived or the Man-Who-Conquered,” she told him fiercely. “And you are very much capable of loving. You do it so well. In fact, I was say you love too much, too fiercely, too strongly sometimes. If you can’t see that, well, I’m not sure;” Hermione stumbled. “But… you love the Weasleys, and you loved Sirius and Hedwig. You care, Harry, and that’s a form of love.”

“Yeah, maybe you’re right,” he sighed, turning to look into the fire. “I like him. Charlie,” he explained. “I like him a lot, and I believe we can be happy together.”

“But you’re not sure if you love him,” Hermione surmised.

“What does it feel like?” He asked. “I mean, I know… I thought I knew… when…with Ginny, but… It wasn’t real, you know? But this… this… this thing, with Charlie… it’s… I don’t know what I’m doing. I’ve never felt like this before, and it’s… well, it’s kind of scary.”

“Isn’t it, though?” Hermione mused. “You worry about him, hope he’s well and safe and making good decisions. Hope he’s thinking about you when you’re not together and hope you’ll be together again soon. You enjoy just being with him, in the same room, in the same space, and you don’t even need to talk, just be. You want him to be happy; you want to make him happy.”

“Yes,” Harry agreed. “But there’s more.”

“There’s always more,” Hermione smiled at him, leaning over to kiss his cheek. “I think you’re right,” she whispered. “You and Charlie can be very happy together.”

She stood and stretched. “My parents arrived back in Crawley yesterday,” she said. “I think I might try stopping by and seeing if they’re up. Will you be visiting the Burrow at all today?”

“No, I’m supposed to be hosting a Black Family Dinner tonight.”

“Sounds like fun,” she commiserated. “Well, then, I shall see you again tomorrow?”

“Yeah, we’ll touch base and get together someplace.”

“Sounds good. Thanks for the place to stay last night, and, Harry?” she called back to him, hovering in the doorway. “Don’t be a stranger. Promise to write, even when we go back to Hogwarts?”

He smiled. “Promise.”

Hermione nodded and disappeared, running into Charlie on the stairs from what he could hear.

“Good morning,” the redhead greeting, big smile in place as he strolled into the drawing room.

“Again,” Harry teased. “Did you find the stairs interesting?”

“Fascinating,” Charlie proclaimed. “And did you notice the whole house has taken on a lighter air this morning? I think this old place is happy that we’re moving in. Houses like to be lived in, you know.”

“Mmn. Will you be staying long today?” Harry asked, eyeing the tea server that appeared longingly, wondering if Kreacher would switch it to an herbal on him if he were to try and sneak a sip—like
Andromeda’s elf had taken to doing.

“Trying to get rid of me so soon?” Charlie asked, dropping the available lemon slice into the cup and pouring his own tea.

“No, just wondering what your plans were for the day.”

“Well, that depends on you, doesn’t it?”

“Me? What for?”

“Well, what did you want to do today?” Charlie returned, grinning.

“I—well, I was originally planning on being at White Horse for most of today,” Harry admitted. “And then I’m supposed to be hosting a Black Family Dinner here tonight. Didn’t you… I mean, you’re family… I…”

Harry forced himself to stop and take a steadying breath. “It’s Christmas morning. It should be spent with family.”

“So it should,” Charlie agreed. “And you know what keeps running through my mind?”

“What?”

“This time next year, we’ll be helping our son open up his presents.” Charlie stared back at him with heated eyes that made Harry tingle. He had very intimate and recent experience with what that look meant.

“Ron and Ginny apparently headed over to the store,” he rushed out. “Apparently things are still a little tense at the Burrow this morning. And Hermione’s heading off to Crawley to spend the morning with her folks.”

“So we’re all alone in this big old house again,” Charlie surmised.

“Well, except for Kreacher.”

“Would Master Harry care for a second breakfast,” the elf asked, popping in suddenly and sending a glare towards Charlie. “He was distracted from his first breakfast, and it got cold. Not fit eating for the Master of the Black Family.”

“Happy Christmas, Kreacher,” Harry called to the old elf. “Is everything all set for the dinner tonight?”

“Yes, Master Harry,” Kreacher grumbled. “Kreacher has been working with Ivy and Mimsy to ensure everything is ready for tonight.”

“Good, I’m glad. I, uh, got you something, when I was out in muggle London last week, but I left it at White Horse. Sorry about that. I’ll—“ Harry shot a look at Charlie and quickly corrected himself. “We’ll probably be spending a bit of the morning and afternoon over there, but we’ll return before any of the guests are set to arrive. Do you need anything from me in the meantime?”

“No, Master Harry. Kreacher can take care of everything.”

“I know you can,” Harry said with a benevolent smile. “Thank you, Kreacher.”

With a nod, the elf popped away, leaving Harry and Charlie alone once more.
“White Horse?”

“Well, I was originally planning on spending the morning and afternoon there.”

Charlie nodded. “That’s fine. We should probably take a little time and think about the wedding, too.”

Harry breathed heavily, but nodded. “Yeah, need to think about that.”

“Did you have a time or day in mind? Maybe a location you’d prefer?” Charlie asked. “I know there’s all sorts of things to consider like colors and cakes and flowers and stuff—"

“I’m not really all concerned about that sort of stuff, are you?” Harry rushed to cut him off.

“Not really, no,” Charlie admitted with a little smile. “Tell the truth, I had been hoping Mum would swoop in and take care of most of those details.”

“Yeah.”

“Well, guess there’s still hope she might before we pick a date, right?” Charlie said with forced enthusiasm.

“I was thinking sooner would be better,” Harry supplied. “Not sure when you have to be back at the reserve, but I was hoping we could do it before then.”

“Well, a Christmas Eve bonding is obviously out, and Christmas Day is a little short notice,” Charlie pointed out. “Ron and Hermione head back to Hogwarts on the second, and I imagine you’ll want them to attend.”

“Yes.”

“So, that leaves us the 26th through the 1st.”

“Voldemort was born on the 31st.”

“Okay, so a New Year’s Eve ceremony isn’t exactly favorable,” Charlie noted. “Still leaves the first open if you wanted a New Year’s wedding.”

Harry shrugged. “You don’t mind sharing your anniversary with a holiday?”

Charlie frowned. “Well, being that I never thought I’d get the opportunity to get married and have a family before… I think I would consider it more symbolic—New Year, new life, new family.”

“Okay, so the first, then. What else do we need to decide?”

“Well, we could choose the vows,” Charlie reminded him. “Did any of the ones we read through last night spring out at you?”

“They were nice,” Harry allowed. “But… I don’t know. They didn’t seem quite right, you know?”

“Well, we can always modify any of them to suit our needs,” Charlie assured him. “What about a place? Did you have any specific locale in mind?”

“Not really, no.” Harry grimaced. “Am I supposed to have?”

“It’s fine, Harry. Just trying to get a sense of what you want. I want this to be a good day for you to
always remember well, that’s all. There’s no wrong answers here.”

“I just… I don’t know. I don’t really know or care about things like that. Does that make any sense?”

“Sure. Just… think of it like a big party we’re throwing for ourselves and our friends, right?” Charlie suggested. “We have to decide when and where we should have the party, what food and drinks we should serve, entertainment and such, decorations. That’s all this is—a big party for us and our friends.”

“But, on such short notice, who’s going to come? I mean, do you have any of your friends who can come?” Harry asked.

“Well, there are a few I’d like to ask, yeah, but I don’t know if they’ll be able to come,” Charlie told him. “Not all of them.”

“How many?”

“Oh, maybe about nine or ten folks I’d like to ask, not including my family.”

Harry frowned. “Which means we’d need a place big enough for at least thirty people, right?”

“Thirty? How so?”

“Well, there’s your family—that’s nine in the immediate. My family—Andromeda, Remus, and Teddy, plus the Malfoys, maybe, which is another six. Hermione, Neville, and Luna, definitely, I’d like to be there, and that’s another three for me, so we’re already at eighteen if everyone shows. Plus, your ten, and I should probably invite Minerva and Kingsley, right?”

“Okay, yeah, I see what you mean. Plus Auntie Muriel.” Charlie frowned. “Although, she might not want to come, considering.”

“So, a place big enough for at least thirty guests,” Harry said. “Ready in time for New Year’s day.”

“We could use the Burrow,” Charlie suggested.

“It’s the winter,” Harry huffed. “I don’t fancy an outside reception, even with warming charms.”

“Point.” Charlie scratched his forehead and thought. “Well, I’m open to suggestions.”

“We could check out one of the other Black properties,” Harry hesitantly suggested. “Most all of the Potter properties are in horrible disrepair, but I think some of the Black ones are still decent. Might require some work, though, to get them ready for a New Year’s party.”

“Okay, let’s go check them out then.”

“Not today! It’s Christmas!”

“Which means we’re getting married in six days.”

“Seven, and it’s still Christmas,” Harry retorted. “I’d like to spend some of the day with my godson.”

“Okay, yeah, right, sorry, forgot about that,” Charlie backtracked. “Okay, so we’re thinking a Black Property, for New Year’s Day. Noon, afternoon, or evening, you think?”

“So many questions!” Harry complained. “I don’t know, pick whichever you think is best.”
“Afternoon, then,” Charlie nodded. “Um, then, I think the only other thing we need to worry about is robes, food, cake, and flowers.”

“Ugh. Okay, I’ll task Andromeda and Narcissa on those, how’s that?” Harry offered. “Narcissa is experienced at hosting parties all the time.”

“Okay,” Charlie allowed. “Sounds like a good idea to me. So, how about visiting your godson?”

Teddy was more interested in the pieces of wrapping paper than all the new toys he had received from Father Christmas, much to everyone’s amusement. They sat around the family parlor, enjoying the cheerful fire and their mugs of eggnog and hot cocoa while the baby played with the colorful paper strewn across the floor.

“We’re thinking of a New Year’s Day ceremony,” Charlie told Andromeda.

“Oh, that would be lovely. And seven days should give us just enough time,” she mused.

“Seven days?” Remus coughed. “You mean this New Year’s? Why rush? If you wait till next year, it will be the first day of the new millennium.”


“There are circumstances,” Harry reminded him. “Besides,” he added, turning to Remus. “We don’t need to wait. It’s not like we want anything fancy. Just family and friends there to celebrate with us.”

“What circumstances?” the old wolf wanted to know.

“I’m pregnant.” It was amazing how much easier that was getting to say…and wasn’t that kind of scary in and of itself, Harry thought as he watched Remus choke on his hot cocoa and Charlie sort of freeze up beside him. Andromeda just smiled and recrossed her ankles, humming.

“Have you thought of where you would like to host the ceremony?” she asked.

“Well, we figured we’d need a place big enough for at least thirty people,” Harry answered, “So Grimauld Place is out. And I don’t want an outside reception, so the Burrow is out. But I was thinking one of the other Black properties might suffice.”

“Pregnant? What do you mean you’re pregnant?” Remus demanded, sitting up and earning his son’s attention.

“Oh, you should try Rozengard,” she suggested. “It should still be in a fairly decent state. It’s where I grew up. Lovely old manor home.”

“Is that the property in Lincolnshire?”

“Yes, it is. Of course, it’s the wrong season for the roses, but in the summer and fall… oh, the entire manor is filled with their scent!”

“What do you mean you’re pregnant?” Remus repeated, lifting his demanding son into his arms.


“She retired to another property two or three years back, Cissy tells me,” she answered. “Still refuses
to take my owls, though. I don’t know which she is more disappointed about—the fact I married a muggleborn or the fact I refused the Malfoy contract.”

“I can’t image you married to Malfoy.”

“No, nor could I,” Andromeda smiled back at him. “It worked out well enough, however. Cissy always did prefer the high society life. More so than I ever did. And I was able to become a Healer, as I always wanted.”

“I’m sorry the family didn’t support your decisions,” Harry said sadly.

“Yes, sometimes I am, as well,” she admitted. “But sometimes I’m glad they didn’t. Yes, times were difficult for Ted and myself, especially in the beginning and when Nymphadora was younger, but we were happy, and we were satisfied knowing that everything we achieved and had we had earned through our own successes. Well, and a little start-off help from Ted’s parents,” she confessed.

“How can you be pregnant?” Remus interrupted, causing the others to all stop and stare at him.

“Says the man with the baby,” Andromeda quipped. “Really, Remus, is it that difficult to comprehend? Were you this incomprehensible when Nymphadora told you she was expecting?”

“I—that is to say…” he quickly shut his mouth and looked away.

Andromeda sighed. “You are a good man, Remus. Do not let my daughter’s actions and choices haunt you. She was a stubborn and willful woman, true to her Black blood, I’m afraid. You could no more control her choices and actions than I could. Be happy and enjoy your son, dear, for as long as you can.”

Harry frowned, staring back and forth between his pseudo-godfather as pseudo-mother-figure, sure he was missing out on some key narrative point. Beside him, Charlie watched attentively, too. Finally, when it seemed no one else was going to say anything, he leaned forward and said, “Harry and I were thinking of an early afternoon ceremony. A simple affair that perhaps you and your sister wouldn’t mind arranging?”

Andromeda blinked. “Really?” she asked, looking from one boy to the other. “Oh, that would be lovely! Nymphadora hardly allowed me to do anything for her ceremony, and I know Cissy laments not having a daughter to provide such services to.”

“Why doesn’t she try to have more children?” Harry asked. “Both she and Malfoy are young enough, aren’t they?”

“It’s… a delicate matter,” Andromeda hedged. “But… I will say, Draco’s birth was difficult for her, and it was decide she should not have more children.”


“Yes. Most families try for at least two children. It’s a precarious position to have only one child heir,” Andromeda informed them—mostly Harry as the others already knew. “And the Malfoys even more so, as all of their family now resides in France. Lucius and his son are the sole representatives of the English branch of the family.”

“It’s a shame wizards aren’t more open to muggle practices or else they could have tried surrogates,” Harry mused.

“Muggle doctors can take an egg from the mother,” Remus explained at the other’s confused looks,
“Add sperm from the father, and then put the new baby inside another woman who then carries and delivers the baby.”

“That sounds… almost barbaric,” Charlie whispered.

“But… also hopeful, for those who can no longer have their own children,” Andromeda postured.

“Yeah, muggles have a lot of techniques to help people have kids,” Harry pointed out. “They even have clinics where women can go and get pregnant without ever meeting the guy.”

“Strange, but true,” Remus agreed. “And with that, let’s move on to another but similar topic of conversation, shall we? Why are you pregnant? You’re only eighteen!”

“Remus, please,” Harry huffed. “I had sex. I didn’t know wizards could get pregnant. I had sex. I got pregnant. I found out that—hey, wizards can get pregnant. So, I’m pregnant. I actually don’t want anyone outside the family to know, so I’d appreciate it if you could keep it on the low, you know?”

“And you’re the father,” Remus asked, turning to Charlie.

“Uh, yes, sir, that would be me.”

“And that’s why you’re in a hurry to get married,” Remus surmised.

“Well, that’s why for the hurry, yes,” Charlie answered, “But not the why for the marrying. As Andromeda pointed out to us yesterday, we don’t need to get married just because we’re having a baby together.”

“But a child deserves to have both its parents,” Remus maintained.

“And yet some children grow up with no parents,” Harry pointed out. “What we deserve and what life deals us isn’t always the same, Remus. You know that. Charlie and I decided that getting married is what’s best for us. The baby just moves the time table up. We want to be married before our son is born.”

“Something you can understand,” Andromeda said. “After all, isn’t that why you married my daughter?”

“You know well enough that Teddy had no bearing on my marrying Tonks,” Remus frowned.

“No, I know Teddy was conceived after your wedding night,” she agreed calmly. “But I agree with what Harry said—what we deserve and what we receive are two different tales. My daughter was a determined, obstinate woman—a Black, through and through. You always thought she deserved better than yourself, and yet she was determined to have you, and so she did. Have you and soon after, Teddy.”

Andromeda stood and moved past where Remus was sitting, putting a hand on his shoulder. “She loved you, Remus, for all her faults. And never doubt for the brief time you were married, you made her a very happy woman. I thank you for that,” Andromeda told him sincerely. “Now, if you gentlemen will excuse me, I think it’s time I retired to ready myself for this evening’s festivities.”

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Harry and Charlie also left shortly after that, returning to Grimauld Place to help prepare for their dinner party. Unfortunately—or fortunately—there wasn’t much for them to do as the three house elves in charge of the affair were dutifully observant and highly skilled…not to mention resolute in
not allowing ‘Master Harry’ or ‘Master Charlie’ to help with any of the work.

And wasn’t that a bit of a shock for Charlie when Andromeda’s elf first addressed him as ‘master’?

As they weren’t allowed in the kitchen, Charlie and Harry decided to retour the house, noting the changes in the general overall feel of the building—it just felt lighter, cleaner and airier somehow. Charlie was the first to notice that the wood grain in the doors and paneling actually seemed to be changing colors. At least, he didn’t think it was just because it was day time and not night time. And the carpets and runners seemed to be less threadbare than the previous night. Even the master bedroom, which they detoured to for an hour’s worth of canoodling, seemed… better. More vibrant and fresh when compared to the rest of the house, but especially when compared to his first impressions from the night before.

When they were within an hour of their dinner guests arriving, Harry and Charlie dressed and took themselves down to the drawing room. Charlie pulled out a card deck and started up a solitary game, while Harry curled up closer to the fire with one of the books Andromeda had given him to help him with his pregnancy.

“Are you sure you want to stay?” Harry asked for the umpteenth time.

“Yes, Harry,” Charlie dutifully replied for the umpteenth plus one time. “No time like the present to meet the rest of the family, right?”

“It’s just, well, the Malfoys are going to be there,” Harry hedged.

“I know,” Charlie answered, playing with his cards. “You’ve warned me at least a dozen times. It’s okay. Really. I know they’re your family, and, technically, I guess they’re my family, too. Actually, you realize, I probably have closer blood ties to the Malfoys than you do? But, seriously, Harry. We can meet and play nice for one social dinner. It’s not like we’re going to be forced into each other’s’ company time after time.”

“At least once a month, if Narcissa has her way,” Harry warned. “She seems to be suddenly big on this idea of family get-togethers. Which is strange, if you ask me, since she spent that last twenty-plus years ignoring Andromeda and her family.”

“Family is family,” Charlie told him, sagely. “Even after years of estrangement. Look at Percy. Shunning us for how many years? And then, bam! He’s there again. And well, with the war and battles and almost losing her son…maybe she had a realization moment.”

“A realization moment?”

“Yeah, you know—that moment when you realize you’ve been a complete turd and you change your life around?”


“Yes, Master Harry,” the elf responded promptly, popping in from parts unknown.

“How is everything? Do you need any help in—“

The elf’s eyes narrowed and he glared at him. “Kreacher be taking care of the great Black Family for more years than Master Harry has drawn breath. He be having everything under control, Master Harry. There be nothing for you to do but sit and entertain your company.”

Harry sighed. “Yeah, okay, I got it: no going in the kitchen or offering to help. But, I was thinking…”
would it be possible to change up the nursery tonight? Or at least have a crib brought out?"

Charlie shot him a questioning look.

“For Teddy, in case Remus needs to put him down earlier than he leaves, or if he decides to spend
the night,” Harry explained. “And, actually, it would probably be a good idea to have the guest
bedrooms prepared just in case, too. I doubt the Malfoys will stay, but Andromeda might.”

“Good idea,” Charlie nodded, smiling at him. “Best to be prepared, right?”

“Kreacher can be seeing it done, Master Harry. Is there anything else Kreacher can be doing for
you?”

“No, Kreacher, thank you. I’m sorry I keep pestering you.”

Kreacher grumbled something too low for Harry to make out, but he could pretty much imagine
what the elf had had to say before he popped away. Harry vainly tried to return to his book, but the
text was a bit dry, and he found himself more often than not staring into the flames dancing in the
fireplace. When the little chime announcing the floo sounded, he was more than eager to greet his
company.

It was Remus who arrived first, Teddy screaming against his father’s shoulder.

“Oh, ho!” Charlie cried, scooping the baby out of Remus’s arms and bouncing him as he turned to
head back upstairs. “Why are you making such a fuss, Teddy-bear?”

“Is he all right?” Harry asked nervously.

“He’s fine,” Remus sighed, dropping into a kitchen chair. “Andi thinks he has a tooth starting to
come in. He woke up from his afternoon nap in a right fussy mood and the floo didn’t help any.”

“It’ll be fine, dear,” Andromeda reassured, patting Harry’s cheek as she passed through the floo and
out of the kitchen.

Harry moved to go after her before realizing Remus was still sitting at the table. “Are you all right?”

“Harry, I…” Remus stopped, closed his eyes, and took a deep breath.

“Sit down, Harry. There’s
something we should talk about.”

“What is it,” Harry demanded again. “What’s wrong?” he demanded, sinking into a chair across from him.

“I wasn’t going to tell you—not like this, anyway, not now, but…” Remus cleared his throat. “Andi
has been rather insistent that I not put it off. I’m sorry for not telling you sooner, for doing it now,
tonight. I kept thinking there would be a better time, a more appropriate time, but there’s not.”

“What is it,” Harry demanded again. “What haven’t you told me?”

“The healers… they, well, they couldn’t heal everything,” Remus said slowly. “Battles are…
horrendous. Chaotic. Madness. I am lucky to still be alive. I know that, I do. And I’m grateful, so
very grateful, but…” He took another deep breath. “Harry, I’m dying.”

Harry’s world seemed to close in on itself with that statement, the rest of the world fading away into
gray fuzziness. Remus continued talking, slowly, evenly. Harry heard him, but he didn’t really listen.
Remus was dying. The healers hadn’t expected him to live past the summer, even after they had
done everything they could for his battle wounds and spell damage. The only reason he had lived as
long as he had was because Andromeda had committed her time to nursing him and caring for her grandson.

One of the spells he’d been hit with had interacted with his lycanthropy. The spell had mutated, and the Healers were unable to correct the damage. It was killing him, slowly, painfully. There was nothing Andromeda or the other healers at St. Mungo’s could do for him. Remus would die. Sooner rather than later, the last of the Marauders would die.

When the Malfoys arrived nearly an hour later, Harry was still much in a state of shock. Though he handled the greetings and introductions, his spirit wasn’t quite there. He was aware of Charlie, hovering around the peripheral; of Andromeda chatting amicably with her sister and watching over as Teddy played with some of his new toys on the carpet; as Lucius and Remus engaged in a stilted conversation. It just didn’t seem real.

When Kreacher popped in to announce dinner, he led his guests back downstairs to the formal dining room. It was when they had already started in on their first course that he realized he was seated at the head of the table with Lucius and Charlie to either side of him. Narcissa and Andromeda were next, followed by Draco and Remus, with Teddy sitting in a baby chair at the end.

“I must confess,” Lucius was saying in his ever-present droll, “I find myself surprised to see you at at Black Family Dinner, Mr. Weasley.”

“My grandmother was a Black,” Charlie reminded him jovially, “Like Harry’s was.”

“Yes, but I would have thought you would be holed up with the rest of your family.”

“Ah, well, I probably would have in years past, but I’m with Harry now, so,” Charlie gave a little shrug.

“I don’t understand, Mr. Weasley,” Narcissa spoke, leaning forward slightly.

“My fault,” Harry spoke up. “Actually, Narcissa, Charlie and I have a favor to ask of you. We’ve already spoken to Andromeda, and she’s agreed.”

“What is it, my lord?”

“Charlie and I wish to be married.”

“Married?” the blonde breathed, looking from one young man to the other in wonder. “Oh, how delightful! A Black wedding, once more! Oh, but there hasn’t been one since—”

“Since your own,” Andromeda cut in, smiling sadly. “Nymphadora chose not to incorporate any of the Black customs in her ceremony.”

“I’m sorry, Andi,” Narcissa murmured, but her sister waved her off.

“Quite all right. Besides, Harry’s requested both our help in planning his and Charlie’s wedding.”

“You’re queer?” Draco sputtered from his end of the table, looking at Harry in confused disbelief. “You’re marrying a Weasel… and it’s not the Weasellette?”

“Uh, yes, actually,” Harry answered. “Ginny and I haven’t been together since our sixth year. I thought everyone at Hogwarts knew that we’d broken up.”

“Well, there was the rumor, but…” Draco grimaced.
“Yes, well, Charlie and I got together this summer, and, well, one thing led to another,” Harry continued on before turning back to the women. “We’d like for a New Year’s Day ceremony, and Andromeda has suggested Rozengarde as a possible location.”

“Oh, that would be lovely!” Narcissa cooed. “Mother hasn’t been there for years, but I’m sure the house elves have kept the house and gardens up and in order. And a year will give us plenty of time to make any changes you both would prefer.”

“Six days,” Andromeda corrected, startling her sister.

“What?”

“Charlie and I wish to be married this New Years,” Harry explained.

“But that’s so soon!” Narcissa cried. “Too soon to plan a proper wedding ceremony and reception!”

Harry and Charlie shared a look, before Charlie took over the conversation. “Yes, it is soon, but we don’t want to wait and put it off. Many of our guests will be returning to Hogwarts on the second, and it’s important to us that we are married sooner rather than later. Neither of us wants anything big or excessive, but we do want to honor our families and our traditions. We were hoping, with your help, it would be possible.”

Talk quickly descended into wedding plans, dominated by Narcissa and Andromeda reminiscing on weddings they’d attended and Black traditions. The men attempted to add a comment or suggestion, but were mostly overruled by the women, and eventually, they gave up trying. Throughout the remainder of dinner, Draco sat mostly in thought, allowing the others’ conversation to pass over him. Like Teddy, he had no real part to play, and thus even his comments would not have been welcomed, so he kept to his own company.

When the family retired back up to the parlor, his father engaged in another scheming discussion with Lupin and Weasley, his mother still hashing out details and plans with his aunt, Draco moved to pull Harry aside.

“It’s really true, then?” he asked. “You’re really going to marry a Weasley, a male Weasley at that.”

“Is it that difficult to believe?” Harry asked, bemused.

“Considering you’ve only ever been attached to girls before, well, yes,” Draco responded, sincerely. “And you’re a lord, twice over. Do you have any ideas how many ripples this will cause? How much trouble for others?”

“Others aren’t really my concern, Draco,” Harry told him staunchly. “My family is. You really don’t care if I’m gay or who I marry, so what’s really the problem here?”

“I—” Draco choked. “There’s no problem for me. It’s your life.”

“That’s right, it is. So why are you so concerned all of a sudden,” Harry wondered. “It’s not because you’re into blokes, is it?”


“Oh, good. I know Ron was joking when he mentioned you having a crush on me, but—“

“I do not--! Why, I’ll hex that Weasel so bad—“
“I’d appreciate if you didn’t,” Harry answered drolly. “At least not badly. A mild hexing wouldn’t be so bad as long as you didn’t let it escalate. Still, I don’t see why you’re so upset about me marrying Charlie. You don’t have a crush on Charlie, do you, because that might be a bit awkward.”

“No, I don’t—I like witches, thank you very much,” Draco grounded out.

“That’s what I thought,” Harry responded, nodding. “So why don’t you just tell me what the problem is?”

“I… There’s someone that… I’m interested in,” Draco finally supplied. “Only, she’s had a thing for you for… I don’t know how long.”

“Ah, well, bit of a problem for her, then, isn’t it,” Harry winced. “I kind of figured it out this summer, that witches just weren’t going to be my thing, and, well, let’s just say, even if I wasn’t marrying Charlie, there’d be seriously, zero chance of anything happening.”

“Yes, well… we… associated a bit, last year,” Draco continued, haltingly. “Not really a relationship, of sorts. We were friendly, when we could be. Or, I guess, civilized towards one another would be the best description.”

“So, a classmate,” Harry mused. “Someone who was at Hogwarts last year. And… I’m going to go out on a limb and guess not another Slytherin?”

“No, she’s not. She’s…” Draco swallowed. “She’s actually a Gryfindor.”

“Whoa! Really?” Harry asked, surprised. “Yeah, I can see how that can make being ‘friendly-like’ a bit of a problem for you.”

“Yes.”

“I still don’t get why you’re coming to me, now, though.”

“I… I wanted to know if others knew.”

“Knew what?”

“About your… inclination,” Draco tried subtlety. “You said you and Charlie had gotten together this summer. Nothing was heard on the rumor mills at school, so I wanted to know if anyone else knew.”

“Oh, well, no actually. We were pretty mum about the whole affair. I didn’t even tell Ron and Hermione until yesterday, and that was after we’d decided we wanted to get married.”

“So no one else knew?”

“Nope.” Harry sighed. “I’m sure that’s all going to change now. It seems like more and more people are finding out about it, and by next week, even more people will know.” Harry felt queasy. “The prophet will probably want to do a special on it. Gods,” he groaned. “I wish there was a way to just shut them up about me.”

“You should have my father handle it,” Draco suggested, and Harry’s head snapped back up to look at him. “What? Father’s a genius at manipulating the press and others to think and do what he wants them to. Sure, he’s a bit whigged out right now—“


“—But if you presented it to him as a challenge, I’m sure he’d jump right on it,” Draco finished.
“Why is your dad wigged out?” Harry repeated.

“Well, the lord of two important families, marrying another man?” Draco pointed out. “That hasn’t happened in… well, I can’t think of a time when an already ascended lord has married another man. Normally, if they’ve already taken up the mantle of their family, they’d just marry a trophy witch, sleep with her long enough to produce a kid or two, and then continue on with their affair on the side.”

“That’s… horrible.”

Draco shrugged. “Most marriages aren’t love-matches, Harry. They’re political and social contracts made for the benefit of one’s family and to provide for the next generation. But, of course, you’re the Boy-Who-Lived. I’m sure there’ll be some outcry that you’re damning your family and what-not.”

Harry sunk into one of the arm chairs, feeling weak and queasy.

“Don’t worry about it, Harry, really. Sure, the old purebloods might try to cause some riot, but most of the populous will get over it, not that it’s any of their real damned business. You’re still the darling of the wizarding world, and as long as you’re happy, they’ll be happy for you.”

“I’m not damning my family.”

“Well, you are the last Potter,” Draco pointed out. “Not even the cadet branches left. I think some of the old purebloods were thinking you would settle down with the Weasellette and start popping out a bunch of brats to repopulate the family tree. Of course, this places more pressure on me, as the next available Black heir.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Harry resisted weakly.

Draco closed his eyes and sighed. “Harry, when you die, I’m next in line to head the Black family. That means I’ll not only need to have an heir for my father’s family, but one for my mother’s family, too. That’s just the way it is. It would have been different if my mother could have had another child—if it was a boy, then he would have been able to inherit the Black Family honor—but she didn’t, so it falls to me. Hopefully, my future wife and I will be healthy enough to provide such.”

“I’m pregnant,” Harry said, taking in Draco’s shocked look with relish. “It’s a boy. And if Charlie and I should be so lucky in the future, than I won’t need Ginny to help me—what was it you said? Repopulate the family tree?”

“You’re serious,” Draco breathed. “You’re really, really serious, aren’t you? You’re… well, of course, you would be able to do it, wouldn’t you? Perfect, fucking, powerful Potter,” he groused, disgustedly. And then he snorted. “Well, at least that does ease some of the pressure off me. Now I can focus solely on the Malfoy name again.”

Harry huffed. “So glad to be of service. And Draco? This falls under Family Secrets right now,” he told the other teen, enacted the family magic that would prevent others from sharing knowledge with others outside the family.

“Of course it is,” the blond sneered. “Don’t worry, I won’t go blabbing your secrets out to others now.”

“Good, because I don’t want anyone other than the family to know until after the baby’s born.”

“I suppose that makes sense,” Draco nodded aggreeable. “So that’s why you’re getting married is it? Got knocked up by a Weasel?”
“That’s why we’ve decided to get married now instead of wait,” Harry corrected. “When the baby’s born, it’s not like anyone won’t be able to count back and tell that I was pregnant before we were married, but according to Black, Potter, and Prewit inheritance laws, no illegitimate child can inherit.”

“Prewit, too? I didn’t know you qualified for the Prewit name.”

“I don’t, Charlie does.”

“Three family names? Aren’t you being a little ambitious? I mean, I heard male pregnancies are difficult to achieve.”

“I wouldn’t know,” Harry groused. “I got pregnant on the first go.”

“Really? Well,” Draco continued at Harry’s disgruntled look. “I’d say congratulations, but something tells me you weren’t expecting or planning for it.”

“No, actually, another little jewel of wizarding culture that I missed out on, being muggle-raised.” He sighed. “I know McGonagall and Snape have been putting in place a lot of changes, but I really wish they’d get an introduction to wizarding culture put in.”

“How are you going to handle Hogwarts if you’re pregnant? I mean, we have our NEWTS.”

“You have your NEWTS,” Harry retorted. “I took mine last week. Well, three of them, anyway. Depending on how things go, I might try and take some others sometime down the road.”

“You took your NEWTS? Really? How bad were they?”

“Horrid. Truly nasty and exhausting.”

And from there, talk dissolved into their classes and the NEWTS, and Harry forgot about asking which Gryffindor girl it was that Draco was crushing on. Shortly afterward, Draco dragged Harry over to his father, and they enlisted Malfoy Senior’s aid and expertise in planning on how to handle the Prophet and the news release of Harry’s and Charlie’s marriage. It wasn’t long before the Malfoy family was heading home for the night—Narcissa promising to get in touch with Andromeda in the morning so the two women could revisit their childhood home. Remus collected Teddy from the nursery upstairs, and then he and Andromeda also decided to return home for the evening.

And just like that, Harry and Charlie were alone in the house again.

“That went well,” Charlie mused, running his hands up and down Harry’s arms as they stood, staring into the empty floo.

“Yeah, it did, didn’t it?”

“Everyone was civil, and we were able to get so solid plans in place,” Charlie confirmed.

“Mmn.”

“Wanna tell me what had you in a funk earlier? Before dinner?”

Harry stiffened, and Charlie sighed, stepping up closer and pulling Harry back into him. “You don’t have to. I was just—“

“Remus is dying.”
Charlie froze.

“Spell damage, from the battle,” Harry continued, voice wooden and hollow. “Incurable. Andromeda’s been doing what she can, nursing him. I didn’t even realize she’d taken a leave of absence from Saint Mungo’s so she could spend all of her time taking care of him and Teddy.”

“Harry,” Charlie breathed. “I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry.”

“He didn’t expect to survive past the summer, and now it’s Christmas,” he continued. “It’s getting worse, harder each day he said. He’s dying, and there’s nothing anyone can do. He doesn’t think he’ll make it to Teddy’s first birthday.”

“That’s gotta be rough. Is there anything we can do? I can do?” Charlie asked. “For you or him or Andromeda?”

“I don’t know what I’m going to do with him gone,” Harry broke and crumpled. Charlie was there to catch and hold him. He maneuvered them into a chair and rocked him gently until his sobs ceased, and then he took him up to bed and put him to sleep, curling protectively around him.

***
Reconciliation

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"Master Charlie, sir?" a timid voice called softly. "Master Charlie sir’s mum be in the fire place asking to come through. Should Ivy be letting her in, sir?"

Charlie grumbled and roused himself, remembering at the last minute that he was still cuddling Harry, and pulling back carefully not to wake the other man. "My mum, you say?"

"Yes, Master Charlie, sir. Should Ivy let her through?"

"Yeah, go ahead," Charlie sighed, scrubbing a hand across his face and wondering what time it was. "Only, keep her in the kitchen, yeah? And maybe, if you could, put up some silencing spells so we won’t wake Harry?"

The little house elf nodded. "Ivy can be doing that, Master Charlie, sir. Would you be liking some tea?"

"Yeah, that would be great. Thanks, Ivy, and I’ll be done in a mo’."

The Tonks’ house elf nodded before popping away, leaving Charlie to crawl out of the bed and quickly dress himself to face his mother. A quick flick of his wand produced the time—barely 6 am—and he groaned, finding a pair of house slippers one of the elves must have left for him and trodding down the three flights of stairs to the kitchen.

He couldn’t quite contain the yawn that broke as he stepped into the kitchen. "Mum," he greeted. "What has you here so early?"

"Charlie! You’re all right," the woman exclaimed, popping up from her seat where she’d been fretting uselessly and scurrying over to him. "You didn’t come home yesterday, and I didn’t—but the clock said you were home, and I wasn’t—"

She stopped herself from continuing, closing her eyes and inhaling deeply. "I—I’m sorry. I do love you. You’re my baby, and I will always love you. And I want you to be happy, I do. I just… And Harry! I wasn’t expecting—and then when Ron told us—well, I never, and…"

"Mum, you’re not making much sense."

"Oh, I’m not saying anything right!"

"It wouldn’t have anything to do with it not even being daylight out, could it?"

"I couldn’t sleep," she confessed. "The night before was dreadful. Yesterday was just horrid. Nearly ruined my meal. Well, I did burn the pie. And… I just couldn’t sleep another night without seeing you, talking to you. Charlie, I am sorry for hurting you, my baby," she cried, pulling him into an inescapable embrace. "I love you, and I want you to be happy. I just wasn’t expecting…"

"Well, it’s not like I ever made a public announcement," Charlie allowed. "I guess I always kind of assumed you’d figured it out. I mean, I did before I’d even left Hogwarts."

"And… Harry?" she asked tentatively, pulling away and falling into her abandoned chair.

Charlie took the chair next to her and murmured his thanks when a tea service tray appeared with his
lemon and hot tea. “Well, it was rather unexpected. Not planned at all,” he assured her. “We just, got to talking a lot this summer, you know.” She nodded.

“And well, one day, one thing led to another, and well—but then I got called back to the reserve, and I thought: that’s the end of that, you know? I mean, he was heading back to Hogwarts and would be around lots of other kids his age and all, but… I couldn’t quite get him out of my head. I was planning on talking to him this holiday—it’s why I came home.

“Mainly,” he added hastily at his mother’s little noises. “I’d wanted to talk to him properly, about us, about seeing if there was the potential for something more than just friends between us.”

“And there is,” Molly concluded.

“Well, that’s when he told me, about the baby,” Charlie continued, face breaking out into a huge grin. “I’d never even dreamt that I might get lucky enough to have my own family—I know it’s pretty rare for a wizard to be able to get pregnant, but… when he told me he was pregnant… Mum, I don’t think I’ve ever been more excited or happier. Not even when I got the job in Romania or saw my first dragon.”

Molly smiled sadly and patted his hand. “I remember each and every time I told your father, and his expression of absolute joy each and every time.”

“Yeah, well, we talked, and we agreed that we both can be good for each other. I like him, a lot, and he likes me, too. I won’t say it’s love, ’cause I know he’s a bit skittish about that,” Charlie confessed, a little sad. “I don’t know if he’ll ever be ready to hear or say that, but we’re good together, and we make each other happy.”

“That’s important,” Molly agreed, still petting his hands. “And so, you decided to get married.”

“Well, it seemed like the responsible thing to do,” Charlie responded. “And… I actually really want to.” He grinned. “I didn’t think I ever would, but now… I can’t stop thinking about it.”

“Well, then, we have a wedding to plan,” Molly revved up, taking a fortifying breath. “First Bill, now you. You’re all growing up so fast,” she said. “Of course, you’ll be wanting to have the ceremony sooner rather than later because of the baby.”

“Mum, we’ve got it,” Charlie rushed to derail her. “We asked Narcissa and Andromeda to plan it, because they are the most knowledgeable about the Black Family Traditions and, after all, Harry is Lord Black now.”

“I’m sure,” Harry spoke up from behind them, “that they wouldn’t mind your input, too. After all, you’re our expert on Prewit traditions, right? We don’t have anyone to help us with the Potter traditions, but we’d like to honor our family’s traditions as much as possible.”

“Oh, Harry,” Molly breathed, slowly standing and reaching out to him. “I’m sorry, Harry, so sorry.”

He nodded, allowing her to embrace him, but not really returning the hug, and she pulled away hesitantly. “Ron told us.”

“I know.”

“I didn’t mean to hurt you, I just…”

“It’s okay,” he said, moving towards the table and eyeing Charlie’s tea hungrily. Before he could reach for it, though, Ivy popped in with another tea service set and stared at him. He sighed and
accepted the herbal tea the house elf pushed on him, wondering if it was only Kreacher in the house, would he still be allowed his black tea.

“Andromeda and Narcissa were planning on visiting Rozengarde today—it’s the Black home where they both grew up and is our lead location for the ceremony and reception,” he informed his soon-to-be mother-in-law before adding, “We’ve set the date for the first.”

“So soon?” Molly fretted. “And why not at the Burrow?”

“Soon because Harry has friends he wants to invite who are still at Hogwarts,” Charlie explained. “They’ll be going back on the second, so…”

“And we’re figuring on around thirty people,” Harry continued. “We can’t fit that many people inside the Burrow or here. Not comfortably all in one room. But Rozengarde is one of the old Black Manor homes, so it should have a ballroom in addition to a formal dining room. Plus, plenty of rooms for some to sleep over. I can’t remember how many rooms, they said.”

“Ten family rooms and another eight guest rooms,” Charlie supplied. “I remember thinking that we couldn’t have filled all those rooms growing up—even if Fred and George had had their own rooms.”

“Yes, well, we made plenty do with the rooms we had,” Molly said.

“Would you like me to send a note to Andromeda, telling her to expect you then?” Harry asked.

“I—I couldn’t intrude,” Molly said softly. “Andromeda hasn’t been to her home in decades.”

“Then maybe you could meet with them later?” he offered. “Ivy?” he called, knowing the little elf was close by, watching him carefully. “Would you know when Narcissa and Andi are planning on visiting Rozengarde today?”

“Mistress Mea and Cissy be going back home this morning, Master Harry,” the elf replied dutifully. “Ivy be alerting Rozengarde’s elves last night, and they be making sure everything’s be perfect for Master Harry’s and his Charlie’s ceremonies.”

Harry blinked, surprised, and then smiled having remembered. “That’s right. You followed Andromeda from Rozengarde, didn’t you?”

The elf nodded proudly. “Ivy be given to Missy Mea when she was just a little baby, and I’s be taken care of her all her life. I’s follows where my Mistress be’s, to take good care of my Missy Mea. Even to that Healer’s school of hers!”

“And now she’s sicced you on me,” Harry sighed, earning himself a narrow-eyed glare from the elf.

“That’s because Master Harry no be taking good enough care of himself and his baby!” the elf scolded. “Ivy be knowing about taking care of babies!”

Harry sighed again before being distracted by Molly’s giggle.

“I’d forgotten how bossy house elves could be with their charges,” she confessed, eyes twinkling. “They’re very particular when one is carrying the next generation and future lord of their house. My mother’s elf followed me when I first was married—constantly checking in, splitting her time between my brothers and me. And reporting back to my mother, of course.” She sighed, wistfully.

“I didn’t know you’d had a house elf, Mum.”
“No, you wouldn’t. Kora died before you were born. Bill was just a baby. My mother, your
grandmum, was so bereft. I think even my brothers must have missed her terribly. They tried to give
mum another elf, but she wouldn’t even hear of it. Of course, at the time, your father and I had
discussed possibly purchasing an elf, we actually had the funds then.” She huffed a little laugh. “But,
I enjoyed knowing I was taking care of my own family. If I had known there’d be seven of you,
though…”

“Would you like me to write that note?” Harry asked after several minutes of each of them just
nursing their cups of tea, lost in thought.

Molly closed her eyes, for a moment and looked as if she was searching inside herself before she let
out a breath and nodded. “Yes, Harry. I would very much like to be involved, if you boys don’t
mind.”

Harry smiled back at her, and Charlie reached over to clasp her hands. “We’d like that very much.”

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Molly had left after another cup of tea, and Charlie and Harry enjoyed an unrushed, unaccompanied
breakfast.

“What are your plans for today?” Charlie asked as they sat around the table, picking their way
through the spread Ivy and Kreacher had laid for them. It was obvious the two elves were in some
sort of competition with each other.

“I wanted to visit with Hermione some,” Harry answered as he sectioned off a fried tomato. “Maybe
meet up with Neville, too. Should probably send a note to Luna asking her to keep the first free from
any expeditions. You?”

“I was thinking of flooing over to the shop, talk to George and Percy, maybe check in on Ron if he’s
there,” Charlie shared. “Maybe try a floocall to Bill, see if he and Fleur might be willing to spend
New Year’s here.”

“He’d want to,” Harry assured him. “Will you ask him to stand for you?”

“Well, it depends on which ceremony we decide to have, doesn’t it?” Charlie asked. “I mean, really,
we could have all our friends and family stand with us if we wanted. What about you? I would think
you’d want Ron and Hermione, right? But what about Neville and Luna? You talk about them a lot,
too?”

Harry frowned at his tomato-soaked rashers. “Ron, yeah, he’d be the logical choice, right? I mean,
he’s my best mate… And Hermione…” Harry sighed heavily. “Can we come back to this later?”

Charlie shared his frown. “Harry, I don’t want you to feel like I’m pressuring you with all these
questions.”

“You’re not—It’s not—” Harry growled. “It’s not you, Charlie. I’m—committed. I really am. We’re
going married, and I’m happy with that, really. I think… it’s going to be good, all right. It feels
right. I’m nervous, yes, but it’s not because of you. It’s because… what if I mess this up? What if I
do something wrong?”

“Harry,” Charlie sighed, grinning as he got up and walked around the table to pull Harry up. “If and
when something goes wrong, we fix it, and if we can’t fix it, we deal with it. Together, right?”

“Yeah, together,” Harry breathed, looking up at Charlie.
He couldn’t resist that look—those green eyes looking so needy. Charlie kissed him; small, peppering kisses soon became deeper, heavier kisses. He was reaching for the hem of Harry’s robes when a solid whack against his back snapped him back into reality.

“Master Harry needs be eating for two! Not no fooling around!” Ivy the house elf proclaimed loudly, brandishing a large wooden spoon.

Charlie hastily backed away before the little elf could whack him another time, arms raised in surrender. “I got it, I got it! No fooling around during meal times,” he promised. “Only before and after!”

“Oooh, you wicked, Master Charlie!” the elf shouted, raising her spoon but lowering it just a quickly. “You sit and eat yous breakfast. Then yous best be leaving the kitchen so Ivy can do her cleaning.”

“Ivy,” Harry spoke up past a cough. “Just how long, exactly, did Andromeda tell you to stay here?”

“Ivy be taking care of Master Harry and Mistress Mea and Mister Mooney and little Master Teddy until Master Harry finds himself a personal elf who’s been trained up right,” the little elf declared staunchly.

“He be having an elf,” Kreacher grumbled from the corner. “I be the elf of the great and Noble Blacks!”

“And yous being old before Ivy’s mam being born!” Ivy shot back. “Yous too old to be personal elf no more. Yous too old to be sole house elf no more! Ivy and Mimsy help clean up Grimauld Place proper for Master Black’s important family dinner, didn’t they? Kreacher gripe and complain and do no good work!”

“Enough!” Harry shouted before Kreacher could respond. “That’s enough, Ivy. Kreacher is a house elf of the Black Family and he has served us loyally.”

Ivy nodded, pressing her lips together. “That be true, Master Harry. But Ivy be hoping and wishing and praying that when you and your Master Charlie visit Rozengarde, yous be finding your own personal elves,” she told him with a reverent nod.

“We make no promises,” Charlie told her, returning to his breakfast and sneaking heated looks at Harry for the remainder of the meal.

***

Harry found himself more able to eat at meals now, although certain foods and smells would still turn him off, but that wasn’t why he was having trouble eating right now. No, that was solely because Charlie sat across from him, shooting him heated looks that Harry had become overly familiar with in the last two days. He shifted nervously on his chair and once more felt the pull and ache of overused muscles.

He was in a little bit of disbelief and shock, truth be told. He hadn’t been lying, though—he had accepted and embraced the fact that he would be a married man within a week’s time, just as he’d accepted the fact that he was pregnant even though he was a bloke. He’d begun to embrace the fact that in a few short months he’d be a father, with a little baby and a husband—a family. His family.

But no matter how many times Charlie kissed him and held him, how many times he said he wanted
him or they’d had sex… Harry still found it a little difficult to believe that Charlie really meant it. Charlie really wanted him, Harry. Found him desirable. And yet, Charlie continued to shoot him those looks, and when they were alone for more than a few minutes, he was always trying to touch him… or more, Harry thought with another wiggling squirm.

“Are you finished with your breakfast?” Charlie asked a few minutes after watching Harry play with his food more than eat it.

“Yeah. Don’t think I could eat another bite just now.”

“Ivy? Master Harry’s finished with his breakfast. Does this satisfy you?”

The elf pattered over and scrutinized Harry and his half-eaten plate. “Ivy be making up a sack of snacks for Master Harry to take with him today. He needs be eating more,” the elf proclaimed before snapping her fingers and making the dishes dance over to the large sink basin where they began cleaning themselves.

“Goodie,” Harry growled, before he squeaked. Charlie had come around the table and pulled him up, flipping him around before lifting him up onto the table, planting his arse right where his breakfast plate had been. “Charlie, what are you—“

“Want you,” the red head told him huskily, nibbling at his chin and tugging at his robes. “Want to suck you dry and then fill you up.”

Harry groaned, head falling back even as his legs spread wider to accommodate Charlie’s girth, pressing in against him crowding him.

“Want to hear you pant and beg and scream my name as I suck you off.”

“Charlie,” he whispered, hands flying to those dark ginger strands and tangling. Already his robe was bunched up to his waist and climbing higher each second.

“Not enough,” Charlie growled. “Gods, it’s never enough. You make me feel like sixteen all over again. So hard for you, Harry. You make me so hard with just a thought. I could cum right now at just the sight of you. So sexy, sprawled out across the kitchen table, like a feast. I’m going to eat you up, swallow you down.”

Harry cried out wordlessly, moaning as his body was attacked with brushing touches and digging fingers and rough palms while Charlie’s mouth worked its way painfully slowly lower.

“One of these days, I’m going to take my time,” Charlie promised. “I’m going to kiss and lick and bite every inch of you, memorizing your body as I make it my own.”

A hot tongue dipped into his belly button, a scratchy cheek rubbed all over his belly. Harry bucked and cried out again, wantonly. And then, one of the hot callused hands gripped his cock and squeezed.

“Mine, all mine,” Charlie breathed, his hot breath puffing over Harry’s shaft as he whimpered and squirmed. “Say it, Harry. Say that you’re mine.”

“Yours!” Harry practically shouted. “Yours! Yours! Just suck me already! Too wordy all the damn ti—iiiime,” Harry cried out, arching up and attempting to curl around Charlie’s head as he sucked him down into the hot, moist tunnel of his mouth and throat.

Charlie pulled off, slowly… and then forced himself back down on Harry’s cock, swallowing it
deeply to the sounds of Harry’s cries. He attempted to swallow several times, soaking up Harry’s keens, before he began pulling back, swirling his tongue around the shaft and finally the head.

“Want to hear you,” he rasped. “Want to hear your voice as I suck you, Harry. Tell me. Tell me what you want, how good it feels,” he demanded, rubbing his cheek and lips over the shaft and nuzzling Harry’s balls with his chin. “Tell me you want more, want me.”

“Fuck, Charlie, please,” Harry gasped, breath hitchy with need.

“Tell me,” he repeated, lipping around the head of Harry’s penis again, but not sucking down. Not yet.

Harry keened again, arms flopping to either side of him as pleasure and need wrecked his body. “Want you,” he huffed. “Need you. Gods, always this need. Burning me up. And when you touch me… so good, Charlie. So good. Need more. Always need more. Your hands, your face, your mouth… on my cock, sucking me… Feel like I’m going to die, it’s so good. So hot. And you do that thing, and it’s so tight and good and—“

Harry broke off, crying out again, long and loud as Charlie swooped down and swallowed his whole cock again. He began a litany of ‘hot’ and ‘good’ as the other man continued to work him, shortly followed by ‘got to cum’ and ‘need to cum’ and ‘please’, before he felt a finger worm its way into his bum and start a steady attack on his Special Spot that pushed him to release.

Harry screamed, body convulsing as Charlie held him down to the table and continued to suck him off, swallowing his cum before continuing to suckle for several extra seconds—just to be sure. He wanted to get every last drop—swore it was getting sweeter and tastier by the hour. When he was sure he’d gotten it all, and Harry lie twitching and shivering in the aftermath of his orgasm, Charlie released him and stood. Pushing the kitchen chair back, he lifted Harry’s legs up and hooked them over his shoulders, smoothing his hands down those wiry muscled legs before sliding around to cup his buttocks, digging his fingers in and squeezing. Beneath him, Harry moaned and whimpered invitingly, and Charlie couldn’t resist, swooping down to kiss those lips.

“Going to fuck you now, Harry,” he told him, pulling his butt cheeks apart and pressing his cock against Harry’s crease. “Going to slide my cock up inside you, fill you up with my cock and cum. Going to fuck you hard and slow until your writhing under me, begging to cum again. You want that, Harry? You want me to fuck you hard and slow?”

“Please, Charlie?” Harry gasped, hands weakly grasping his shoulders.

“What?” Charlie breathed against his lips, rubbing his cock teasingly back and forth across Harry’s opening. “Got to hear you say it, Harry. Tell me exactly what you want.”

Harry shivered, panted. Licked his lips, and then said, “Please fuck me.” Charlie nearly came right then and there, shivering as Harry’s words danced straight down his leaking cock. “Fill me up,”

Harry continued breathlessly, obediently. “Fuck me hard and slow, and fill me up with your cum. Gods, Charlie, please, fuck me. Want to feel you, stretching me open, filling me up. It’s so good, Charlie. It’s so, so good. I need—ah!”

“Don’t stop, Harry,” Charlie pleaded, forcing his cock up inside that tight tunnel, sparing a moment’s thought to wonder if he shouldn’t have spent a little time stretching Harry first. “Gods, you’re so hot and tight, Harry. So fucking hot. Want to hear you. Talk to me, Harry.”

“Can’t! Gods, Charlie,” he cried clinging to him. “Just—don’t stop! Please, don’t stop. Fuck, so good, Charlie. It’s so good, and hot, and full! Gods, please, Charlie, fuck me! Fuck me and fill me
“You like it, Harry? Like having my cock filling your arse? Feels good?”

“So good,” Harry agreed, eyes screwed shut, head thrown back. “So good. Think I could cum again.”

“Mmm, yes, Harry. Want you to. You feel really good, too, wrapped around my cock, gripping me so tight. Ugh, do that again!” Charlie demanded as his cock was squeezed tight, Harry’s arse clamping down on him like a vice grip. “Fuck, baby, that’s good. You keep that up and I’m going to cum all over your insides in a matter of seconds. Fuck, yeah, Harry. Shit, shit, shit. Got to fuck you, baby, can’t go slow anymore.”

“Fuck, just do it,” Harry pleaded. “Don’t want slow. Fuck, Charlie, yes! Just like that! Fuck me! Fill me up! Gods, gods, gods, so good! Want to cum again! Want to cum with your cock buried up inside me.”

“Do it,” Charlie hissed. “Cum for me, Harry. Shoot your cum all over my hand, and I’m going to fill you up again with my cum. So much cum, Harry. I’m going to fill you up with so much cum that if you weren’t already pregnant, you’d get pregnant.”

Harry shouted in surprise as his second climax took him. Charlie wasn’t far behind him, and collapsed onto him, panting heavily and grinning madly against his throat.

“Fuck, you’re amazing,” he panted, dropping a kiss against Harry’s sweaty skin before pulling back to grin down at him. “Four rooms down—how many more to go?”

Harry groaned and pushed him off. “You can’t really be serious,” he huffed, rolling over and squirming to get off the table. “I can’t believe we just had sex in the kitchen—with the floo right there and Kreacher and Ivy—“

“Shh, it’s okay,” Charlie shushed him. “Kreacher locked the floo and grabbed Ivy before your back even hit the table,” he assured a slightly panicking Harry. “She was kicking up a right old fuss, too. Maybe we should keep our eyes peeled for another elf when we visit Rozengarde.”

“What! But we have Kreacher! I don’t want or need another elf!”

“Kreacher is very dedicated and loyal, and I’m not saying to replace him or anything,” Charlie reassured him. “In fact, I’d say we keep him for as long as he’s willing and able to serve. But there’s no denying he could use some extra help. Especially once the baby comes along,” he added, dropping a hand to Harry’s belly. “Let alone more children,” he added with a teasing grin, nuzzling in against Harry again. “It turned you on, didn’t it?”

“What?”

“The thought of me knocking you up again,” Charlie whispered against Harry’s ear. “Me cumming inside you and us making another baby.” He licked the shell of his ear before biting on the lobe. “It turned you on so hard, you came. You came at the thought of my baby batter filling you up.”

Harry squawked and pushed him away, staring at him in disbelief. “Did you just say… your ‘baby batter’?” he sputtered. “I can’t believe you called it that!”

“What?” Charlie asked, unrepentant, still grinning. “I think it fits perfectly,” he said, reaching around Harry’s back to finger his soppy hole.
“Charlie!” Harry jumped and tried to wiggle away.

“Don’t,” Charlie breathed, stepping close and trapping Harry against the table again. “Do you know how hot and excited I get every time I think of you?” He groaned. “Fuck, I could go again right now,” he told him, rubbing his stirring cock against Harry. “You’re so hot and sexy, and knowing you’re knocked up with my kid, that you’re filled up with my cum…” He groaned again. “Fuck, Harry. The things it does to me.”

“Thought you wanted to visit your brothers,” Harry panted, his body already responding as Charlie continued to play with his hole. “And I was going to visit with…” He forgot what he was going to say. Charlie was sucking on his throat and finger fucking him.

“So hot,” Charlie murmured. “You going to cum again, Harry? You going to cum just from my fingers up your arse? Or do you want me to bend you back over this table? What if I bent you over this table and sucked my cum right back out of your arse? Would you like that, Harry? Would you like me to replace my fingers with my tongue and clean you out personally?”

Harry didn’t have words to respond with to that idea. He simply gasped and sounded little cries as he clung to Charlie.

“Fuck, I want to do it,” Charlie told him, pulling back enough to turn Harry around and bend him back over the table. He tapped Harry’s legs further apart and hooked a chair back over so he could sit again as he leaned back over Harry’s exposed bottom. “Fuck, that’s hot,” he moaned, hands squeezing that delectable arse and parting Harry’s cheeks. “Your hole’s all red and stretched, and my cum’s leaking out, Harry.”

Harry moaned, hips arching back.

“You going to talk to me, Harry?” Charlie asked, rubbing his cheek against Harry’s and nuzzling closer to his goal.

“Uh-uh, Charlie, please,” he gasped, trembling. “Just… hurry up.”

Charlie grinned. “As my lord commands,” he said before burying his face against Harry’s bum and setting to his self-appointed task. It didn’t take long for Harry to be squirming beneath him. He enjoyed his task so much, though, that he wasn’t ready to move on. Instead, he grasped Harry’s quickening cock in hand and jerked him off while he continued to work over his arse with teeth and tongue. Harry was a quivering mess when Charlie finally pulled away; and he’d came much too soon, considering they’d just cum minutes earlier.

“Gods, I may never get tired of this,” Charlie panted as his rested his cheek against Harry’s bottom.

“I will,” Harry quipped, “If you keep bending me over hard tables.”

Charlie laughed and sat up, pulling Harry down into his lap to cuddle. Harry, however, was squirming and frowning again.

“You didn’t cum,” he accused. “How come you always make me cum but don’t cum yourself!”

“Better stamina,” Charlie teased, earning an elbow to his ribs. “Well, what are you going to do about it?”

Harry stood. “Get on the table.”

Charlie’s face lit up. “Yeah?”
“Yeah. Let’s see how well you like it.”

“What are you going to do to me?” Charlie asked huskily. “How do you want me?”

“I’ll…” Harry blushed before mustering on. “I’ll suck you off,” he practically taunted. “So, on your back, legs spread.”

“And if I want to watch?” Charlie returned, agreeably hopping up onto the table and spreading his legs invitingly, while leaning back on his elbows. “If I want to see my cock disappearing in your warm, wet mouth? Your lips stretched around me, your throat working to swallow me?”

Harry’s eyes fluttered, and he licked his lips as Charlie grinned.

“Come on, baby,” he teased. “Can’t suck me off from all the way over there. Scoot a little bit closer, huh? Touch me—that’s it. Now slide your hands up my legs. Yeah, just like that. That’s it, that’s it. Now just take a moment and breathe. Yeah, gods, so hot, so good.” Charlie coached, tingling and shivering as Harry’s hot breath washed over his exposed groin. “Rub your face, Harry. Go ahead and use your whole face to touch me. Yeah, yeah, just like that—oh, fuck! Watch the teeth, baby,” he groaned when Harry went from nuzzling to carefully nipping at the base of his cock.

“Shit, Harry, I’m so hard,” Charlie panted. “See how hard I am? How hard you make me? I’m gonna burst. You haven’t even sucked me yet, and I’m about ready to burst. Can’t wait to feel your hot mouth wrapped around me. Sucking on me. Oh, gods, yeah, baby, just like that! Fuck, your mouth is so hot… Uhn! Sorry, sorry,” he gasped when his hips jerked, shoving his cock further inside Harry’s hot mouth. “Gods, but it’s good, Harry. So hot and wet, and—yeah, suck it just like that. Ooh, that was good, too. Fuck, I’m going to cum, Harry. You’re going to make me cum. Harry, I’m—“

Charlie tried to push him back, but Harry grabbed at his hands and held him steady, mouth still moving over his cock, sucking and bobbing, bobbing and sucking. He keened, body jerking again, this time in rhythm to his climax. A moment later, he was looking for Harry, who had sat back, frowning as his tongue worked the inside of his mouth.

“You okay?” Charlie asked tentatively.

Harry frowned at him. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

“I—well, I mean, I came in your mouth,” Charlie tried to explain his concern. “You haven’t done that before, right?”

Harry’s frown turned into an out-right scowl. “You know I haven’t.”

“And you’re okay?”

“I’m fine,” Harry answered testily. “I didn’t choke or gag, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

“No, it’s just…” Charlie finished sitting up. “Some people don’t care for it, is all.”

Harry shrugged. “It’s fine. Not the greatest taste in the world, but, it’s not polyjuice, either. It was… you liked it?”

“Yeah, you were brilliant,” Charlie reassured, pulling him up out of the chair so they could cuddle. “You’ve got some cum on your cheek, though.” Harry blushed and tried to pull back to wipe it away, but Charlie wouldn’t let him, pulling him closer instead and licking his cheek clean.
“We should really go get dressed,” Harry hedged, starting to feel a little self-conscious, even though his dressing robe was back in place and covering him from neck to ankle.

Charlie just grinned and nuzzled him. “Thank you, Harry.”

“For what?” he asked, startled. “I mean, you do me, it’s only right that I—“

“Yes, for sucking me off,” Charlie cut in. “I definitely appreciated that. But also for… for just being you and for being willing to be with me, and, just… thank you. You’re amazing, and I’m very happy to be with you.”

“Oh, well, all right then,” Harry stuttered. “You’re, uh, welcome, I guess. And, yeah. Thank you, too.”
Charlie rang the floo to his brothers’ apartment first to see if they were in. They were, or, at least, Percy was in. George and Ron were downstairs helping in the shop Percy informed him when he stepped through.

“How are you, Charlie?”

“Good, thanks. You?”

“Very well. We missed you yesterday.”

“Ahh, yes, well. I spent the day with Harry and then had dinner with the Blacks.”

“Yes, Ron told us you would. Have you spoken with Mum yet?”

“Yeah, she came by this morning—butt crack of dawn, actually. Things are good there, I guess.”

Percy nodded and fiddled some with the stacks of paperwork at the desk he’d been working at when Charlie called. “I suppose you’d like to talk to all of us and explain what this is about? It’s obvious Ron knows, which means it’s most likely something to do with Harry, but neither he nor Mum or Dad are talking.”

Charlie grimaced. “Yeah, sorry about that. Are the others free? Well, George, at least. You’re right in that Ron already knows and it does have to do with Harry.”

“I’ll just go get them. Make yourself comfortable. There’s tea and coffee in the cupboard, some biscuits in the pantry.”

Charlie kept himself busy by preparing some tea and coffee and finding the biscuits Percy had mentioned. He searched in vain for a tray or service platter, and when he didn’t find one, cursed himself out for having been spoiled by Kreacher and Ivy in only two days’ time and conjured the service ware.

“Sorry we took so long,” George shouted, bursting through the door, grinning. “It’s a madhouse down there.”

“Can’t even keep the shelves stocked,” Ron complained. “Things are disappearing faster than I can put them back up!”

“Yes, business is quite good,” Percy replied, closing the door behind the trio. “If this keeps up, we will be able to hire another person or two full time. We’re even considering opening a second location.”


“Yeah, George beamed. “And to think this wouldn’t have been possible without Harry. So, why don’t you tell us what’s wrong, eh?”

And just like that, George was all serious-faced again. It was strange and disconcerting to Charlie, who even after half a year, wasn’t used to this new side of his little brother.
“Harry’s good,” Charlie answered, floating the conjured service tray over to the coffee table and taking a seat and a cup of coffee. “Think he’s over visiting Hermione right now, actually, and then he wanted to visit the Longbottoms.”

“Neville?” Ron spoke up. “That’ll be good. He’s been a bit down since he and Luna broke up last month.”

Charlie blinked at that information, filing it away in case it turned up important later, and then pushed on with what he wanted to say. “Harry and I are getting married, on the first.”

No one said anything immediately, and Charlie wondered if he should wait or continue on.

“You’re getting married,” George finally said before Charlie could make up his mind. “To our Harry?”

“Yes.”

“Our Harry is marrying you?”

“Yes.”

“What the hell, your Harry?” Ron sputtered. “He’s my best mate.”

“Why would Harry be marrying you?” George demanded. “He’s never shown the slightest hint of interest in other blokes. Only dated witches, he has, isn’t that right, Ronnie?”

“If you can call it dated,” Ron scoffed. “And really, Hermione figured he was queer sometime last year,” he added with a shrug. “Kind of explains why he and Gin didn’t get back together, though, doesn’t it?”

“But why you?” George persisted. “He’s not even your type—tall, blond, and muscular!”

Charlie rolled his eyes. “I’ve told you—Lothar was only a friend and coworker. We were never romantically involved.”

“Yeah, fuck-buddies, I get it,” George groused, still looking mulish. “Still, nothing like our Harry.”

“Will you stop calling him ‘our Harry’!” Ron shouted.

“No, he’s not,” Charlie agreed. “What’s so wrong about Harry and I getting married?”

“Well, it is a bit unexpected,” Percy spoke up, sipping his tea. “Firstly for the fact that most of us,” he continued with a nod towards Ron, “were unaware that he was homosexual, and secondly because we were unaware you were even in that close of a relationship with Harry.”

“What relationship?” George sputtered. “They barely know each other.”

“Know each other well enough, I’d say,” Ron snorted, reaching for another biscuit.

“You know what this’s all about,” George turned on him.

“Gin already told us she warned you off him,” Ron continued. “No point crying cause she didn’t think to warn Charlie off, too.”

“As if I would have listened to little Gin-Gin’s barking,” his brother scoffed.
“You’d poach on your own sister’s boyfriend?” Charlie asked.

“Ex-boyfriend,” George retorted. “And you did!”

“Ah, well, our relationship was more of a spontaneous thing,” Charlie admitted, accompanied by more of Ron’s snorting and scoffing. “We didn’t plan it. It just happened.”

“And you’re just now telling us because you’ve decided to get married?” Percy asked, frowning at Ron.

“Oh, go on,” Ron encouraged. “Tell them the rest.”

Charlie huffed, muttering, “I knew I should have gone to Bill, first.”

“Bill’s all the way in France, still. We’re closer,” Ron pointed out. “Now, tell them already.”

He shot his baby brother a look, but set his coffee cup down and looked straight at Percy and George. “Harry’s pregnant. That’s why we’re getting married now and not waiting.”

“Well… fuck me sideways on a broomstick,” George breathed, causing Charlie to snort and grin.

“Harry Potter’s pregnant,” Percy asked, staring at his brother in disbelief. “You knocked up the hero of the wizarding world? What were you thinking?”

“No wonder Mum was going on and all,” George chortled.

“Oh, no. We told Dad, and got his permission to marry,” Charlie told them, grimacing. “And then we waited until after dinner to tell Mum.”

“She went right off on them,” Ron growled. “Talking about how they should be looking for witches to marry and have babies and how they were being selfish when the wizarding world needed them.”

“She didn’t?” George gasped.

“She did.”

“But if Harry’s already pregnant… surely she—“

“She didn’t know then,” Charlie informed them. “Dad didn’t either. He was just happy for us wanting to get married.”

“Yeah, I kinda spilled the beans after Harry and Charlie had left,” Ron confessed. “Really am sorry about that.”

“No problem,” Charlie forgave. “Actually saved us the hassle of having to tell them, so, really, thanks, I guess.”

“So, you and Harry are really going to get married then,” George asked.

“Of course they are,” Percy protested. “Harry’s the head of two noble families. He can’t be seen having a child out of wedlock!”

“Yes, we’re really getting married,” Charlie confirmed. “But it’s not just because of the baby,” he added, shooting Percy a glare. “We want to get married. We’re doing it so soon because of the baby and because we want Harry’s friends to be able to attend. Can’t do that if they’re all back at Hogwarts. So, we’re getting married this coming Friday.”
“So soon!”

“Well, yeah, makes sense,” Ron supported. “The Express goes back on the second.”

“Exactly.”

“Will you be able to pull it off that quickly?” Percy asked, concerned.

“Harry’s set Andromeda Tonks—Tonks’s Mum—and Narcissa Malfoy to the task,” Charlie told them. “Plus, Mum came over this morning and asked to help. So, I think between the three of them, they should be able to get it done in five days.”

“It’s going to take a lot of work, though,” Percy frowned. “A reception the size needed for the Man-Who-Conquered…”

“We’re going for small and intimate,” Charlie quickly cut him off. “Only close friends and family. Well, and the Malfoys.” He made a face.

“Ewe, really?” Ron grimaced. “Don’t think I could stomach the ferret being there if it were my wedding.”

Charlie reached over and cuffed him upside the head.

***

Harry didn’t make it over to the Longbottom Estate until later that afternoon. He really hadn’t stayed very long visiting Hermione and her parents. To say it was a bit uncomfortable being in the same room as the parents of an only child who blamed you for being chosen over you, well… Harry wasn’t too convinced that Hermione’s parents didn’t place a good portion of the blame on him for her actions. Definitely not a comfortable situation, but he’d promised Hermione he’d stop by, so he did.

She had looked grateful for the visit, Harry thought, and not for the first time he invited her to stay over at Grimauld Place.

“Thanks, Harry, really,” Hermione said softly, rubbing his arm. “I really do appreciate the offer, but…” She swallowed a deep breath. “I caused this mess, and it’s not going to fix itself. But, thank you, really. It… It means a lot knowing I have someplace to go if I need a break.”

“Your room will always be ready for you,” he promised, giving her a quick hug.

He’d flooed back home, where Ivy had waysided him, forcing a snack into his hands before allowing him to leave again. Charlie, he learned, hadn’t returned yet, so he decided to floo over to Neville’s for a bit. If the other Gryffindor was receiving, that was.

“Harry!” Neville called, startled upon seeing the head in the fireplace.

“Hey, Nev? You up for a bit of company?”

“Come on through,” the taller youth commanded jumping off the lounge and reaching out to help Harry through.

“What brings you to Longbottom Manor?” Neville asked as he helped remove the travel soot from Harry’s robes. “Not that you’re not ever welcome or anything,” he rushed to add.
“Is it okay?” Harry queried self-consciously. “You’ll not get in trouble with your gran, will you?”

“Nah, not likely,” Neville shrugged and grinned at him. “It’s mine now, isn’t it? But I’d be daft not to welcome the hero of the wizarding world whenever he wanted!”

“Oh, sod off,” Harry grumbled good-naturedly at his school mate’s ribbing.

“No, but seriously.” Neville returned gesturing Harry towards a seat. “What brings you around? You’ve never tried visiting before. Not that you aren’t honestly welcome, anything, Harry, hero or not, you know. It’s just…”

“I’m not going back,” Harry announced, breaking into Neville’s stream.

Neville’s shoulders slumped, just a little, and he sighed. “I’d wondered if you mightn’t,” he confessed. “It’s different, this year. Not that it wouldn’t be, after everything, but…”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “Anyway, I talked with Minerva before the holidays, and I sat for some of my NEWTs last week. And, well, a lot is happening for me right now, and Hogwarts just isn’t right for me anymore.”

Neville nodded. “I can see that. Can’t say it’s for me. Not really ready to take on all the family accounts—and you have two to be looking over! It might legally be mine, but I’m quite all right with letting Gran continuing managing the estate.”

“I don’t really have that luxury,” Harry groused.

“No, I don’t suppose you do,” Neville agreed solemnly. “So you’re not going back to Hogwarts next term.”

“No.”

“Why tell me?” Neville asked, frowning at him, and Harry returned his frown. “I mean, I know we’re friendly and all, being dorm mates and what, but…”

He trailed off, unsure how to continue, and finally Harry was forced to say something. “They think I’m some sort of leader. The students, the staff. But it was you they all turned to last year. It was you who led them through last year, led them through the Hogwarts Rebellion safely. They all want to think it’s me, but it’s not. I’m just some… some symbol for them to rally around, we both know it,” Harry continued when Neville started to protest. “I don’t mind so much anymore. I mean, it’s not really me they’re idolizing, but some image or idea that happens to have my face, right? And I’m okay with that, really. It’s taken me a long time to separate who I am from who they think I am. Becoming the head of my two families and my lessons with Andromeda have really helped me understand all that.

“And helped me understand how important true friends are,” he added, looking directly at Neville. “I know we’ve never been the closest of friends, but I do consider us friends, Neville Longbottom, and I would like to continue and improve upon that friendship in the years to come,” Harry offered, holding out his wand hand.

Neville started at him, seemingly baffled, but he reached out and clasped hands with Harry. “House Longbottom has long stood by House Potter, and it would be my honor to continue to do so,” he replied formally. “More importantly, I will stand by my friends, Harry.”

“Good, I’m glad, because I do rather have another reason for stopping by today,” Harry admitted
with a sheepish grin.

Neville laughed at him. “All right, let’s hear it then. What does the mighty Lord Potter need from Lord Longbottom?”

Harry snorted. “Oh mighty Lord Longbottom,” Harry chortled, “I humbly request your presence at a small gathering I’m hosting on New Year’s Day.”

“Hosting already?”

“Well, more like celebrating. I’m getting married,” he confessed, shocking the other young man further.

“Blimey,” Neville breathed. “Did you just find out about a contract?”

“No, actually. I, uh, asked, and, uh, he said yes,” Harry admitted, scratching his check nervously as he watched the other teen’s eyes widened.

“Bloody hell,” Neville breathed. “Wow, well, you just crushed about a billion girls’ hearts right there, Harry.”

Harry coughed. “‘Tis not a billion!” he protested.

“All right, maybe only a million,” Neville teased, lips twitching into an infectious grin before both young men dissolved into chuckles. It took them only a few minutes to compose themselves.

“You’re really going to get married then, huh? And to a bloke. Didn’t see that coming. I mean, I hadn’t any idea you leant towards other wizards, not that I think anything’s wrong with it!”

“Gee, thanks,” Harry snorted.

“No, really, I know it’s not really a popular thing right now,” Neville rushed to continue. “I mean, Gran’s been after me nearly nonstop about selecting an appropriate witch to marry and start repopulating the Longbottom line. It’s all the older folks ever seem to talk about whenever they get together now-and-days. Making babies and building up the families.”

“Well, the last few years have been hard all around. A lot of good people died, or were incapacitated,” he added with an apologetic look towards Neville.

“Don’t I know it,” Neville sighed. “There’s only my gran and me left on the main Longbottom line; only a handful of aunts and uncles off the cadet lines, and I only have one cousin who’s fit to take over the family line if something were to happen to me, and she moved her family to the continent before I was even born.”

“At least you only have one family to repopulate,” Harry reminded him sourly.

“And three more years to find a fiancée before my gran tries to step in and find me a wife,” Neville groused.

“Luna—“

“We broke up,” Neville interrupted, looking away. “We’re still friends and all, but we both rather agreed we weren’t right for one another. Not in a long term, romantic relationship anyway.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Nothing to be sorry about,” Neville professed. “That’s life, right? We don’t always find the love of
our lives or our best match while we’re at school, right? So, who is it, anyway? You didn’t say who won the Great Harry Potter’s heart. Who are you going to marry?”

“Uh, Charlie Weasley, actually. Ron’s older brother.”

“The dragon tamer?” Neville mused, nodding approvingly. “Very fit, if you like that sort of thing, I suppose. I remember the girls were quite googly-eyed over him in fourth year. ‘Hot’ I believe was how they described him.”

Harry blushed but didn’t try to stop his grin. “Yep, the very same one.”

“Well, good for you. And with your power and the known Weasley fertility, I’m sure you won’t have much trouble producing for both your family lines.”

“Nope, no trouble at all,” Harry agreed absently rubbing a hand along his swelling stomach.

“You’re not—” Neville started, catching the motion and the guilty hand jerk as Harry tried to smooth his robes down his legs. “Hell’s bells, you are, aren’t you?”

Harry huffed. “You know, I managed to get through the first term without anyone finding out, and now I can’t even get through a whole day without someone else finding out.”

“Oh my gods,” Neville breathed. “You really are. You’re pregnant. Is that why you’re getting married then?”

“Yes, and no. Charlie and I, we just seem to click, you know, and, well, obviously we have compatible magic,” he snorted, returning to smoothing over his baby belly. “I like him. I like spending time with him, and talking to him, listening to him talk. I feel… Good, when he’s around. Knowing I’m going to see him again soon, it’s… Well, it’s good,” Harry finished lamely.

“Good, yeah, right,” Neville nodded. “You’re infatuated. Look at you with that goofy little grin. I bet it’s good, all right. Good enough for you to be pregnant already. And all through first term, too, you said. So it wasn’t just a summer fling, then? You didn’t seem to be pining away or sneaking off to write love letters or any of the such.”

“No, well, yes, I guess it was sort of a fling,” Harry admitted, wrinkling his nose. “It just sort of… happened, really, and well, there you go.”

Neville stared at him. “You mean you weren’t even trying to get pregnant, were you?” Neville shook his head. “I swear, Harry, only you…”

“That’s about what McGonagall said, too. Although, I’m not the only one of our classmates coming up in the family way this term,” he confessed. “There were already thirteen other witches expecting when I got confirmed, and that was back in October. Who knows how many more witches popped up pregnant since Halloween.”

“I guess it will be telling, how many return after the holidays. Wow… There’s usually not that many at Hogwarts. I mean, you hear about it, some witch coming up pregnant and having to leave school mysteriously.”

“Never a wizard, though, huh?”

“Well, to be fair, it does take a pretty powerful wizard to successfully conceive, let alone carry to term. The last wizarding pregnancy I’m aware of, in the Longbottom family, anyway, was a three-times-great-uncle. And he was, like, in his forties when he and his husband finally conceived.”
Harry huffed out another sigh.

“Hey, it’s not unheard of, just not all that common. It’s not that bad. Just think, if you and Charlie got pregnant so easily you could easily have yourselves, like, a dozen kids! That’s plenty to repopulate the Potter and Black family lines.”

Harry grimaced at the thought of a dozen children. Sure, he wanted a family, a larger family at that, but… a dozen children? He wasn’t even sure he’d make it through his current pregnancy, let alone thinking about the twelfth. “It’s the Prewitt line, too,” he confessed. “At least, possibly. Charlie’s first in line to inherit.”

“Blimey,” Neville breathed. “It’s a good thing you inherited from the Potter and Black lines. You’re going to need it, putting that many sprouts through school!”

“Thanks!” Harry cried, grabbing a chair pillow and smacking a laughing Neville with it. “Just you wait, when it’s your turn, I’m going… I’m going… I’ll have Charlie cast a Weasley fertility spell on you!”

That sent Neville rolling onto the floor with the height of his hilarity while Harry continued to sit there and sulk.

“I don’t think there is such a thing,” Neville snickered a few moments later as he crawled off the floor and back onto the lounge, “But you and your Charlie are welcome to cast away, when the time comes.”

“So, you’ll come? New Year’s Day?”

“Of course.”

“Good. I was going to invite Luna, as well.”

“It’s your party, Harry. You can invite whoever you want. And Luna and I really are just friends now. It’s okay.”

“Okay, well, I guess I should warn you that the Malfoys will be there, too.”

Neville grimaced distastefully. “I guess that’s only to be expected, what with you being head of the Black family now, and Narcissa being a Black daughter.”

Harry nodded. “We’re planning on just close friends and family, the headmistress and minister. As small as we can keep it. I’ll send you the floo address once we know for sure?”

“Wait, do you mean you’re actually getting married New Year’s Day?”

“Well, yeah.”

“But, that’s like, in five days!” Neville protested.

“Like I said, small,” Harry grinned.

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“Mistress Mea be asking Master Harry to visit,” Ivy announced before Harry had even begun clearing the soot from his robes.

“Uh, okay,” Harry blinked, reorienting himself to the kitchen at Grimauld Place. He blinked again,
looking around the kitchen. Charlie was right, it was lighter, brighter than the day before. Harry wondered how much of that was his magic and the house magic uniting and how much was the diligence of an extra house elf. Maybe Charlie was right about taking a closer look at the elves the other Black Estates had to offer.

“Master Charlie be—“

“Here,” Charlie announced, stepping into the kitchen. “Hey, how was your day?”

“Fine. Hermione and Neville are both in for New Year’s. You?”

“My brothers are a go,” Charlie grinned. “I think George is a little put out you chose me over him.”

“I didn’t—“ Harry sputtered, much to Charlie’s amusement.

The ginger man dropped a kiss on Harry’s nose before covering his sputtering lips with his own. Harry immediately melted against Charlie, and the older man grinned, wrapping his arms around the smaller man.

“Andromeda stopped by a little earlier,” Charlie informed him. “I believe she, Narcissa, and my mum were continuing their planning session back at White Horse Lane.”

Harry groaned and buried his face against Charlie’s armpit. “Don’t wanna go,” he muttered.

“Don’t blame you any,” Charlie tried to commiserate but he couldn’t wipe the grin from his face. “Why don’t we go upstairs, take a shower, grab a bite to eat, and then see about heading over to face the mama-bears in their den?”

Harry snorted. “You just want to get me naked.”

“Well, yeah,” Charlie conceded good-naturedly, leading Harry to the stairs. “It’s been hours since I’ve had you. I’m absolutely famished,” he added, nibbling on Harry’s neck.

“Stop it,” Harry laughed, pushing Charlie away from his neck.

“Will never happen,” Charlie growled, wheeling Harry around and pushing him into the formal dining room.

“Want you. Don’t want to wait to climb more stairs,” Charlie panting, dropping to his knees and pushing Harry’s robes out of the way.

“Pregnant is not fat,” Charlie growled, walking Harry back until he was at the head of the table and plopped unceremoniously into the head seat. “Did I tell you, watching you sitting here, at the head of the table, all I wanted to do was slink under this table and give you head?”
“Yes,” Harry hissed, helping Charlie unfasten his pants and release his aching cock.

“Would you have liked that? Me on my hands and knees, sucking on your cock while you held court over the Black Family?”

“Fuck, yes, suck me,” Harry murmured, forcing the words passed his embarrassment, knowing how much Charlie liked to hear him talk. “Swallow me down, Charl; suck and lick me like you do, do so well, so good, Charlie. Make me cum. You make me so hard, on your hands and knees, sucking on my dick. Just, like, that. Show me how good you are at giving head, Charl. Suck me, swallow my whole dick, fuck, yes!”

Every word that passed Harry’s lips encouraged Charlie on, and it wasn’t long before the ginger was eagerly swallowing his reward for a service well done. He leaned back, gasping slightly even as he grinned smugly up at his limp fiancée, before falling forward, pushing Harry’s robes further out of the way so he could nuzzle the small little pooch that was his baby. His and Harry’s baby. Their son.

Hands and arms came up and wrapped around his head, ran through his hair, lightly scratching at his scalp. “You can’t keep doing this to me, you know.” Harry breathed lazily.

“Says who?” Charlie countered, pushing himself up so he could reach Harry’s mouth. “Can’t stop myself. You’re too delectable.” He helped refasten Harry’s pants before pulling him up and leading him up the stairs to the master bath, where he couldn’t seem to resist debauching Harry once again.

It was nearly two hours after Harry had returned home to Grimauld Place that he and Charlie flooed over to 40 White Horse Lane. Teddy was playing in his playpen, Remus napping on the sofa when they arrived, but he immediately startled awake at the sound of the floo and Teddy’s happy squeal upon seeing Harry.

“Hello, my little Teddy-bear,” Harry cooed, reaching over the pen and plucking his godson up. “How are you today?”

The baby babbled at him in a flood of gibberish that Harry had as much luck deciphering as Mermish, but he nodded and hemmed and hawed seemingly appropriately because the baby continued to grin happily at him before head-butting him and laughing delightedly.

“Hello, Harry, Charlie,” Remus greeted, pushing himself into a sitting position on the old sofa. It was easy to see how tired and worn the werewolf looked from the pallor of his skin to the deep sagging bags under each golden eye. Even those eyes looked dull and pain-ridden Harry thought studying his honorary god-father with his new knowledge. It cut like a knife, straight through his chest, and made breathing difficult: Remus was dying.

“You missed Molly and Narcissa by about an hour,” his old mentor continued, seemingly unaware of his pseudo-godson’s morbid thoughts. “Andie’s up in her hobby room, just knock first or you might get hexed,” he warned. “Things sounded like they were getting a bit heated before the women finally agreed to disband for the evening.”

Harry winced and shared a look with Charlie. Three formidable, opinionated women in one room working on the same project… It should have seen the project completed quickly, but not if they couldn’t agree on anything. Maybe it wasn’t such a great idea trying to include Narcissa and Molly along with Andomed a.

“Shall I see about this little man getting fed and maybe a bath?” Charlie offered, plucking the baby away from Harry.
“Coward,” Harry hissed at him, eyes sparkling.

“Self-preservation,” Charlie quipped back, dropping another kiss onto Harry’s nose before walking with Remus into the kitchen to get Teddy his bottle.

Harry took a deep fortifying breath, steadying his nerves. Strangely enough, he felt an almost familiar dread, nothing sinister. No, more like when he had to dance at the Yule Ball… or face the school after another harrowing article. Yeah, completely different this. No reason to be afraid, he tried to console himself as he climbed up the stairs steadily. No, he wasn’t stalling. He was just being extra careful, he told himself.

He took another breath before knocking lightly on the door to Andromeda’s study room and calling out. “Andie? Ivy said you’d asked for me? Is everything all right?” he asked, slowly opening the door and peeking in.

The eldest Black sister wasn’t knitting or doing anything else so dangerously agitated, Harry realized with a little sense of brief relief… before he noticed the tear tracks and sodden kerchief and numerous photo albums piled on the small coffee table.

“Andie?” he called again, softer now that he was halfway in the room.

“Rozengard is as lovely as I remembered,” she told him stuffily. “It will be a lovely setting for yours and Charlie’s wedding.”

“Well, that’s good, right?” he asked, hesitantly creeping into the room, unsure of his welcome.

She smiled up at him, eye red and watery. “Yes, that’s good,” she sniffled, patting the seat next to her. “If you’d like, tomorrow we can go there together. We’ve already begun picking some patterns for you to approve, but you should go in person and see it. These, these pictures,” she said motioning to the open album in her lap, “hardly do the place justice.”

Harry found that hard to believe as he looked at the photos. Granted, most of the photos were of people—Blacks and guests, he thought—but one could still get a sense of the place where they were taken.

“Since this is a Black Family affair,” Andromeda continued, pushing the album back onto the coffee table and standing, “I took the liberty of acquiring some stationary while I was at Rozengard. My mother used to host lavish balls and galas in my youth, before…” She reached into a stationary desk and withdrew a stack of vellum, a bejeweled bottle of ink, a black frothy quill with a golden tip, a glossy stick of wax, and a heavy stamp.

Turning, she offered them to Harry. “My Lord Black, for use of your wedding guest invitations,” she offered with bowed head and curtsy.

He took the offerings, reverently running his fingers over the smooth vellum. “Andromeda, thank you.”

She nodded, standing back up gracefully. “Your wedding, small though you insist it be, should be something well celebrated, my Lord. It deserves proper pomp and circumstance as befitting a Lord of the 28 Families. You may not allow us much time to plan and prepare, but we shall endeavor to make sure it is magnificent, none-the-less.”

He nodded, not knowing what else to say. He wrapped the stationary carefully in a traveling satchel so it wouldn’t get ruined in the floo and went back downstairs to find Charlie rocking a sleepy Teddy, burping cloth over one shoulder as he gently thumped on the boy’s back. Blue eyes met
green, and Harry felt a wave of vertigo, from the pit of his stomach to the top of his head, as if someone had pulled a levi-corpus on him.

Would the other man look as comfortable and secure when it was their child he held, Harry wondered. He looked so confident, so sure. Harry envied Charlie that, his apparent ease with the baby. He leaned heavily against the door frame and continued to watch as Charlie finished burping the baby and then handed him over to his father.

“You all right?” he asked, coming up to Harry and studying his face.

“Yeah, just tired,” Harry told him, smiling a little and reaching out to touch Charlie’s arm. “Let’s head back and get some sleep? It’s been a pretty busy day.”

“All right, sure,” Charlie agreed readily, looking back to Remus and a sleeping Teddy. “You need us for anything?”

“No, you boys head on home,” Remus whispered. “You have a busy week ahead of you. I’m sure I’ll be seeing you both soon, and if not, then New Year’s.”

“Take care of yourself, Moony,” Harry ordered, shooting his pseudo-godfather a searching look, but the man just smiled tiredly back at him. Finally, he followed Charlie to the floo, stepping through and straight into Charlie’s waiting arms.

“Come on, you,” the redhead ordered. “You’re looking pretty tired yourself. Let’s get you to bed.”

“You just want to get me naked,” Harry taunted.

“I do love having you naked and at my whim,” Charlie couldn’t resist grinning and pressing another kiss behind Harry’s ear. “But I also love just holding you and knowing that you’re mine and I’m yours and he’s ours,” he added, one hand dropping to cover Harry’s belly protectively. “Come one, let’s go to bed, just to sleep,” Charlie promised when Harry snorted.

***
It was past midnight and hours before dawn when Kreacher woke them up.

“Master Blood-traitor be having a floo-call, he does. Be saying it be urgent,” Kreacher grumbled, glaring at Charlie reproachfully.

Charlie grumbled, but rolled out of bed obediently. He was unfortunately accustomed to middle-of-the-night emergency calls, and already the adrenalin was beginning to pump, aiding him in his blind grab for a dressing robe and slippers before he trundled down the stairs and into the basement kitchen where the floo was.

Harry shifted against the draft Charlie’s absence left and grudgingly woke up, confused at why he’d awoken. It took a moment for him to consciously realize Charlie wasn’t in bed with him, and he was supposed to be. They’d crawled into bed together hours earlier, and true to Charlie’s promise, they’d simply held one another until they’d both drifted off to sleep. But now Charlie was gone, and if it wasn’t for the spicy scent of his aftershave still lingering on the pillow next to Harry’s, he might have believed it all a dream.

Instead, he crawled out of bed, dragging the blanket with him, and padded silently down the stairs until he heard the voices coming from the kitchen.

“Listen, Charlie, I know you asked for the time, and it was granted, but we seriously need you back here, pronto. Raisil won’t be cleared for another two days, and Kilbert’s gone and caught himself on that ridgeback again. We need you.”

“I get that, Korr, but I can’t just up and disappear,” Charlie growled back, his voice a harsh whisper, but still able to reach Harry’s ears as he carefully descended into the kitchen. “I’m actually in the middle of wedding plans right now.”

“What? Another one of your brothers finally taking the shackles, then? Well, congrats to them, I say, but they don’t need you as much as we do, Charlie.”

“Actually, it’s my wedding, so, yeah, I’m kinda needed here,” Charlie replied. “It’s why I asked for that transfer. You did get my request, right?”

“You means, that was serious?” the head in the fire exclaimed. “Hell’s fire, Charlie, you can’t be honestly thinking of leaving us!”

“Charlie?” Harry called softly when he reached the bottom step. “Is everything all right?”

Charlie’s head whipped around and the head in the fire craned to try and get a better look at the newcomer. “Who’s the lad, then? Can’t be another brother. Doesn’t have the hair.”

“Harry, what are you doing up?” Charlie asked, coming over to gather him up. “You should still be sleeping.”

“Woke up. You weren’t there,” Harry explained, staring at the head in the fireplace that was staring back at him. “What’s going on?”

Charlie sighed and turned back towards the floo with Harry in arm. “Harry, this is Korvisolv, one of
the head wranglers at the reserve. One of the dragons acted up and another handler got hurt.”

“They want you to go back early,” Harry said.

“Yes.” Charlie didn’t even bother hiding it; there was no point. “But I’ve already told him I can’t.”

“Why not?” Harry asked, a bit surprised.

Charlie flustered. “Because, well, we’re getting married in four days!”

“Will they need you all four days until the wedding?” he asked, looking back down at the disembodied head floating in his flames.

“So you’re the one who’s wrangled poor Charlie here into agreeing to matrimony is it?” the other wrangler coughed. “We should be able to get by after a day or two.”

Harry stared at him. “Two days,” he conceded before turning back to Charlie. “And then you’ll have two days here to prepare.”

“Don’t you think it’s cutting it awfully close?” Charlie hedged, torn between wanting to go help take care of his dragons and wanting to stay and take care of his new family.

Harry cupped Charlie’s cheeks, tilting his face down so he could lean up and drop a quick kiss on his lips. “We’ll be fine. I have Andie and Narcissa and your mum here to help get everything ready. Go, take care of your dragons, and take care of yourself, too. I expect you to be back here in one piece, hale and hearty for our wedding.”

Charlie’s grin widened, and he leaned back down to deposit another, more thorough kiss. “I love you,” he whispered against Harry’s lips before pulling away and turning back to the floating head.

“All right, Korr, you heard my fiancée. Two days. Let me go change and then I’ll be coming through.” And with that, Charlie ran up the stairs, taking them two at a time, leaving a bemused and bewildered Harry behind to deal with the head in the fireplace.

“Don’t think I’ve ever seen Charlie so damn giddy about something that wasn’t a dragon,” Korr commented, studying the young man still standing where Charlie had left him, bundled up in blankets instead of a dressing robe.

Harry finally looked at him, but didn’t comment.

“Funny, he never mentioned having a fiancée before.”

Harry met his gaze but had no words, his mind still ablaze with the words Charlie had whispered.

“You’re not much of a talker, are you? Wouldn’t have fancied you as Charlie’s type, either. Kinda small. Are you even out of school yet?”

Before Harry could formulate a response, boots were pounding down the steps again, and Charlie was spilling into the kitchen once more, a small knapsack swung over one shoulder. “Alright, let’s get this taken care of. The sooner it is, the sooner I can get back,” he proclaimed.

He stopped before going to the floo, though; turning Harry to give him another quick kiss. “You take care of yourself while I’m gone, all right? Both of you,” Charlie added with another quick kiss.

“You, too,” Harry managed before Charlie pulled back and then ordered the head out of the way so he could go through. In a matter of seconds, Harry was alone in the kitchen.
“Master Harry needs be wearing his slippers,” Ivy bossed, smacking the said footwear on the floor before him. “Betters yet, Master Harry needs still be in bed, sleeping!”

Obediently, Harry stepped into the slippers, and then continued stepping, right up the stairs and back into the master bedroom until he could crawl back into the bed. The bed that seemed suddenly big and very empty without Charlie’s bulk there to take up some of the space. He realized that he hadn’t ever slept in this bed alone before. He shivered. Minutes later, he gave up and crawled back out of the bed and down the hall to the bedroom he’d shared with Ron years before. This bed, at least, he was accustomed to sleeping alone in, and even if it felt somewhat off now, at least sleep was possible.

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Harry woke up several hours later feeling like he’d never gone to bed at all. Miserable and tired, he tried to roll back under the covers and sleep some more, but he just couldn’t seem to drift back off. Lying in bed, thinking of nothing, just staring blankly at the wall, Harry wasn’t even aware of time passing. He might have stayed there all day if Ivy hadn’t popped in and ordered him up, dressed, and down to breakfast.

“Missy Mea and young master Teddy be up and fed already. Master Harry should be up and fed, too. Not doing any good moping in bed, you’s ain’t,” the little elf admonished him. “Missy Mea be planning on taking Master Harry to Rozengard today. You’s need to be up and fed before she gets here!”

“I'm up, I'm up!” he protested. “I’m awake, at least,” he sighed, crawling out of the bed and finding the house slippers the elf had left out for him once again. “I don’t suppose I could get a good cup of black tea with breakfast?”

The elf scowled at him something fierce before popping away. Somehow, Harry didn’t get the feeling that was a ‘yes’. Still grumbling, he found his robes and clothes from yesterday and pulled them on. It had been nice to have a wardrobe of clothes that actually fit, clothes that were actually made for him, and once again he wanted to thank Mrs. Weasley for going through the extra trouble that summer when she’s purchased all their belongings for the Hogwarts’ returnees. Ever since he realized he actually had his own money Harry had always sort of meant to get clothes that actually fit him, but somehow, he never seemed to get around to doing it. Now he had an entire wardrobe filled with clothes befitting a young lord thanks to Mrs. Weasley. Of course, now those clothes wouldn’t be fitting him so well, he thought mockingly, smoothing his shirt over his stretching belly. He was totally getting fat; it didn’t matter what Charlie said.

Charlie.

It was ridiculous to miss the other man already. He was coming back in another day, after all. It wasn’t like first term when there was pretty much no chance of seeing the other man again. Of course, he’d been mopey at the Burrow this summer after Charlie had left then, too. Ivy was right, he was being positively mopey. It was disgusting, Harry groused, plodding down the stairs with his foul funk still on high.

“Ah, Harry! There you are!” Mrs. Weasley practically shouted as he cleared the kitchen stairwell, and he stopped short, blinking at her confusedly. What was she doing here again, so early? Again?

“Is Charlie coming down, too?” the matriarch continued as she putzed around the kitchen, watched guardedly by the two remaining house elves. “I was just about to fry up a quick breakfast for you
“Master Harry not be eating fried foods,” Ivy snapped, wanting this woman away from her kitchen.

“That’s very kind of you, Mrs. Weasley,” Harry interjected quickly before his future mother-in-law could say something to seriously piss off one of the elves. He had learned long ago to never make a house elf angry at you. “But Ivy’s right. I’m afraid I haven’t been able to stomach even the smell of many fried foods, and besides, Andromeda has sort of assigned herself as my personal healer. She’s given Ivy a specific list of foods I’m supposed to eat.”

“Well, that’s,” Mrs. Weasley started before forcing herself to stop and step away from the stove. “That was very kind of her,” she said finally. “Is everything all right, with you and the baby, though? I mean, if you’re on a special diet…?”

Harry sighed and took a seat at the table, giving Kreacher a grateful smile when the elf set a tea service down near at hand. “Yeah, things are good,” Harry reassured her even as he watched the black tea fill two teacups. “She just wants to make sure I’m getting all the right nutrients and stuff. Apparently, wizard pregnancies are more tricky than typical witch pregnancies. Go figure.”

He quickly lifted the cup of divineness to his lips… and then immediately grimaced when the herbal taste hit his tongue. He sent a sour look towards Ivy, who was glaring right back at him accusingly.

He sighed in resignation and set the cup down away from him. “I don’t suppose I could get some hot chocolate?”

The elf sniffed, but a moment later a frothy topped mug filled with warmed chocolate appeared on the table next to him. He grabbed for it gratefully.

“But you’re well?” Mrs. Weasley asked, studying him.

He nodded, sipping blissfully at his hot chocolate. “We’re both all right. Promise. Andromeda even showed us a picture of the baby, not that he looks like very much all right now.”

“He? It’s definitely a boy then?” she asked, and she was unable to hide the excitement from her voice.

Harry smiled and nodded. “Madame Pomfrey did say we’d be more likely to have boys, which I guess is a good thing. I mean, if we have more kids, that is.”

“Oh, do you not want more children?”

“Well, Charlie and I haven’t really talked about it more than in passing. I mean, I know I’m responsible for the Potter and Black families, and Charlie was hoping to help cover the Prewitt line, I mean, if you still wanted us to, of course.”

“Of course, no, I would love that. Really.”

“But, quite honestly, I don’t know. I mean, I didn’t even know it was possible for wizards to get pregnant, so, I mean, you can imagine how much of a shock it was for me when I found out I was. Pregnant, I mean. And, well, things are really rather new between Charlie and me. We haven’t really established who we are as a couple—I didn’t even think we’d ever get the chance to, truth be told. And now, here we are, getting married in less than a week, and we’re having a baby… It’s… well, it’s a bit much, isn’t it?”

“Arthur and I were married for quite a while before we started having children, but we always knew we wanted a large family. Well, both the Prewitts and the Weasleys were known for their larger than
normal families. Of course, after first one war and then the other, well, no one was really left unscathed.”

Harry nodded. “It’s been difficult, but we have to hope things will be better now.”

“I do, dear, I do.” She sipped her tea while Ivy set a plate of thick ham slices, boiled eggs, sliced apples and pears in a light nutty dressing, and a small stack of toast in front of Harry. “Is Charlie not joining us?” she asked, realizing the little elf had moved on to cleaning up the kitchen once her fare was set before Harry.

“He got called back to Romania last night, actually. He’ll be gone today and tomorrow, but then he’ll be coming back.”

“What! With only four days until the wedding?”

“It’s okay. It’s not like there’s a whole lot we can do, right? I mean, we trust you and Andromeda and Narcissa to make things good.”

“That’s not the point!” Mrs. Weasley shouted, practically breathing flames. “He should be here, to support you, at the very least! There are still a ton of preparations to arrange and patterns to pick and—”

“I’m sure whatever we pick will be fine, Mrs. Weasley.” Harry tried to deflect her rant.

“Really, Harry, you can call me ‘mum’, you know. After all, after New Year’s it will be official.” She smiled at him and patted his hand. “Might as well get used to it, right?”

“Right. Thanks, Mrs. We—mum.”

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Normally, Harry loved Mrs. Weasley’s smothering nature. She was everyone’s mum, taking care of things and calling you to task, tsiking and admonishing and trying to protect everyone. For a boy who’d never had an affectionate mother figure, he would soak up those precious, mothering moments. But for the teen and young man he had become, the self-reliant and independent soul he’d been forced to become, well… a little of Mrs. Weasley tended to go a very long way.

Particularly now. Harry still felt uncomfortable with the woman who had been so against him marrying her son. He found it a little difficult to swallow that just because he was pregnant, suddenly she was all okay with him and Charlie marrying. He was sure there was more to it than that, and Harry couldn’t help but still be a bit misgiving about the other woman.

He did hope Mrs. Weasley didn’t pick up on his uneasiness, though, and indeed it seemed as if she didn’t because she was still visiting an hour later when Andromeda flooed in and offered to escort Harry through the grounds and halls of Rozengard. And because he couldn’t just ditch his future mother-in-law, Mrs. Weasley ended up joining them in their visit to the Black Estate.

Rozengard was more like a palace then an estate in Harry’s opinion. It was huge, and truly beautiful, despite, as Andromeda lamented, the flowers not being in bloom. She repeatedly assured him the estate was even lovelier when the roses covered over everything, and Harry thought he might just have to get out there to visit again in the spring and summer.

They were touring the bottom floors, discussing possible uses and placements, when an elf popped in right before them.
“Begging your pardon, Master, Mistresses, but Layla being sent to fetches you for luncheon, served in the second dining room.”

“Thank you,” Andromeda answered for them. “I know the way,” she dismissed the elf before gesturing Harry and Mrs. Weasley towards the right wing of the estate home.

The second dining room, Harry thought, trailing both women through the halls. Because having just one dining room wouldn’t do. Mentally, he snorted. If Rozengard had been a castle, it would have equaled if not surpassed Hogwarts. This palace, however, had not been built in the time of castles, and so it was much more lavish. Harry couldn’t imagine just one single family living in its walls, but then again, it wasn’t meant for a single family as Andromeda had informed them.

Centuries past, when the palace was originally built, it had housed the main family: the Head Black, his family, and his children’s families. Indeed, there were three separate wings dedicated to just family living quarters, with another entire wing just for guests. The first and ground floors boasted the entertaining rooms, as Harry thought of them—the rooms guests and visitors were allowed to enter. Already they’d toured the main dining hall, the ‘small’ and ‘grand’ ballrooms, the lady’s salon, the lord’s study, the first, second, and third parlor rooms, the family study, and the main floor library (because apparently, and Harry just knew Hermione would love this, there were at least two other libraries in the manor, not including the Lord’s private library). The basements held the kitchens (as in more than one) and store rooms and cellars, along with the elves quarters. It was… much more than Harry was used to or had even expected.

He couldn’t imagine why the main Black family had left this lavishness to hole up in the cramped quarters of Grimauld Place. Then again, he couldn’t honestly imagine himself being comfortable living in such rich surroundings every day. Grimauld was plenty big enough for him, even if he and Charlie did have more children. Of course, if they did end up having near a dozen children, maybe he would reconsider. Then again, maybe not, he thought as he followed Andromeda into the second dining room. It was easily as big as the Dursley’s entire lot, front and back yard included.

The women took seats on either side of the table, forcing Harry to the head even though he’d much rather choose to have a bit to eat in the kitchen as opposed to this ostentious room. As soon as he sat, food appeared on the table, much like it did at Hogwarts. Harry felt a bit like a country bumpkin looking down at the seemingly fancy food set before him.

“How’s Master Harry not be liking his lunch?” a timid voice asked from beside him, and Harry looked down into the big brown eyes of another house elf, this one wearing a pristine pillow case dress with the Black ‘B’ embroidered at chest level. “Sailsby can be making something else, sir, iffen you’s prefer?”

“Ah, no, no, thank you, Sailsby?” Harry quickly responded picking up his napkin and silverware.

“Ivy be warning us to take special care with Master Harry,” the female elf confided. “Master Harry be special, needing special care.”

“Ah,” Harry hedged, blushing brightly and not knowing what to say to that.

“It’s all right,” Andromeda interceded for him. “Thank you, Sailsby. This meal is perfectly balanced for Harry and the baby. You did an excellent job, and the lamb roast is perfectly divine. I can’t remember when last I had such a delicious roast, but please don’t tell Ivy that,” she continued conspiratorially, winking at the little elf.

“It’s a pleasure and honor to serve the house of Black, Mistress,” Sailsby gushed before promptly popping away.
“It is delicious,” Molly allowed. “I wouldn’t mind getting the recipe.”

Meanwhile, Harry obediently tucked in to his meal. It was good—even the vegetables, wouldn’t Hermione be so proud of him?

“Have you given any thought as to what you would like to serve for your wedding meal, Harry?”

“We always have ham for New Year’s,” Molly responded first.

Andromeda nodded. “We typically would have roasted pork, but as this won’t be a typical New Year’s meal but rather a wedding meal...” She turned back to Harry. “Was there a meal you are partial to, my dear?”

“Charlie’s always enjoyed a good potato hot dish. I usually make some up with the leftover ham. Of course, the boys never leave any of the treacle bacon, or I’d use that, but...”

“The Dursley’s would eat ham for New Year’s dinner,” Harry finally put in, and Mrs. Weasley fell silent, her lips pursing in a little disapproving frown. “We’d have pork at Hogwarts, usually, too. I think, maybe, I’d like to start my own tradition,” he mused. “New Year, new life,” he repeated Charlie’s sentiments to him from before, before smiling up at both woman. “Of course, I haven’t a clue with what.”

“Ah, well, I’m sure we can come up with something special,” Andromeda reassured him. “After all, this will be your wedding anniversary. You’ll want to make sure it’s a good memory.”

Harry smiled gratefully back at her.

“Don’t worry, dear,” she continued. “Although it may be faster than any of us would like, we will make sure your wedding day is glorious, as is only befitting a lord of the wizarding world.”

“It is rather rushed, though,” Mrs. Weasley began back up. “It’s a shame we can’t have just another week’s worth to plan a proper ceremony and celebration.”

“You know why we decided on New Year’s Day,” Harry said, slicing into his lunch.

“I know, you want your friends to attend before they return to Hogwarts, but really, one week isn’t enough time to plan a proper wedding, Harry.”

“It will be time enough,” Andromeda told her. “Already we have made important progress: we know who is getting married, who will be witnesses, where they shall gather, and when the deed shall be done. I should think any other details to be mere trimmings on a cake—pretty, but not overly useful.”

“Says she who eloped,” Mrs. Weasley scoffed.

“And yet, legally wed,” Andromeda returned. “But, I’m sure that’s not what you’re suggesting for Harry and your son to do, elope, is it?”

“Of course not!” Mrs. Weasley sputtered, affronted. “They’ll have a proper wedding!”

“Ah, but by who’s standards? It is, after all, their celebration. Should not the details of such be theirs as well?”

“It’s alright, really. We just want something small, simple,” Harry entreated. “I know we agreed to have it here, and really, this place is really nice, but Charlie and I have discussed this much. We only want our close family and friends there.”
Andromeda leaned over and patted his hand. “You’ve never planned an event before, have you, Harry?”

“Oh, quidditch tryouts?” he offered, causing both women to twitter in amusement.

“This will be far more involved than a mere tryout,” the elder Black woman assured him.

“Let us handle the details, Harry, so that you and Charlie only have to worry about enjoying the day,” Mrs. Weasley commanded.

“Simple,” Harry stressed.

“Simple can still be elegant and tasteful,” Andromeda placated. “You said there will be around thirty guests?”

He started rattling off the names of people he was planning on inviting or had already invited over for the day. Hermione, Ron, Bill and Fleur, Percy, George, Ginny, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, their Aunt Muriel, Andromeda, Remus and Teddy, the three Malfoys, Luna and Neville, Minerva and Kingsley… plus whoever Charlie could get to come.

“At least twenty,” he agreed. “I don’t think we’ll get quite as many as thirty.”

“Well, best to plan for more,” Mrs. Weasley told him sagely. “Tis always better to be left with left overs then to have someone left wanting.”

“It is a small gathering,” Andromeda lamented. “If we had had more time to better prepare, you would have had a splendid ball, as is only fitting for when a lord marries. But, we shall make do with what we have. And you said an afternoon ceremony?”

“Yes.”

“Well, then, we can simply invite the majority of the guests over for New Year’s Eve and have them stay over for the next day. Goodness knows, Rozengard has the rooms to spare.”

“If that’s the case, we’d better invite Hermione’s parents and Luna’s dad and Neville’s grandmother over, too.”

“Auntie Muriel might be convinced to spend the night, too.”

“Well, really, we should all just move in now. That will allow us better opportunity to plan,” Andromeda suggested, and Harry almost choked on the idea.

“Ah, go ahead, I mean, if you want. You’re welcome to move back in here, Andie. After all, this was your home.”

“A long time ago, yes, but White Horse Lane is my home now, Harry, thank you. As lovely as it is to visit, I should not like to live here in this big old manor by myself.”

“It’s more like a palace than a house,” Harry muttered and the women laughed again.

“The Blacks of old did not believe in doing things in small or mediocre standard.”

“Ostentious and overbearing, you mean.”

“To some, perhaps.”
“Begging your pardons, Master Harry,” the elf from earlier popped in beside him. “But there’s being Missy Cissy here. May Sailsby be telling Layla to send her in or be waiting in the family salon?”

“Cissa’s here?” Andromeda asked. “She must be excited at the challenge of planning Lord Black’s wedding in such short time,” she teased at Harry.

“It’s all right, Sailsby, thank you. Narcissa is welcome to join us for lunch if she’d like.”

The elf nodded and popped away. Not even a moment later another setting at the table appeared, and minutes after that, Narcissa arrived in the second dining room.

“Good afternoon all,” she greeted, gliding straight to the made up seat as if she’d sat in that spot a million times before.

“I was just showing Harry around the Rozengard entertaining rooms,” Andromeda told her.

“They’re perfect for entertaining any number of guests.”

“Yes, it’s almost too big for what we need,” Harry huffed. “Really, there’s only going to be about twenty, twenty-five guests.”

“But don’t forget, if they’re coming early, you’ve offered to invite parents and families, too.”

“And if they’re coming the night before, that means you’ll have to provide dinner, snacks, breakfast, lunch, and dinner again,” Molly put in.

“That shouldn’t be a problem,” Narcissa dismissed. “The elves will ensure every meal is prepared to perfection. My concerns lie more towards the decorations and entertainments. If you’re going to be entertaining for so long, you’ll want to have some sort of schedule of events for everyone to follow.”

“A schedule?”

“Of course. That way everyone will know what is to occur and where. They may plan accordingly, and we can then plan accordingly around them. Have you already written your invitations??

“Ah, no, not yet. I mean, I’ve talked to a couple of people already, but I haven’t done any written invitations yet. Do I really need to do that?”

“Yes,” three women answered firmly before blinking in surprised at the other two women.

“It would be terribly rude if you didn’t write out formal invitations to your wedding, Harry.”

“If you need some assistance with what to write or how to word it, I am available to you, my lord.”

“Ah, thanks Narcissa, but I think I can figure it out.”

“It’s a shame about the roses being out of season. You would have had a truly lovely wedding if the roses were still in bloom.”

“They will still have a lovely wedding,” Mrs. Weasley insisted.

“Of course,” Narcissa returned, as if Mrs. Weasley were insane to suggest anything else other than a lovely wedding. “Did you have any special requests for colors, flowers, Harry?”

“Uh, not black?” …And he was really starting to hate feeling like the women were laughing at him.
“No, not black,” agreed Narissa. “And I suppose green and reds are out, too” she added with a glanced towards Mrs. Weasley, her own grey-blue eyes darting up quickly to look at the woman’s hair. “Grey is simply not fitting for a wedding. Well, I supposed there are always the traditional silver, gold, and whites.”

“I think a dove-grey would look very fetching on the boys.”

“No, no blue for Harry,” Narcissa rejected. “But yes, mayhap a dove grey will work as a base color for their robes and then gold and silver embroidery.”

“You can be more colorful than that,” Andromeda challenged.

“You don’t want them to look tacky, do you?”

“Of course not, but stop being so biased against colors. Really, Cissa, has nothing changed?”

Narcissa sniffed but didn’t otherwise answer.

“House crests on the robes you think, or a more personal symbol?”

“A dragon and a phoenix,” Harry supplied readily, before blushing with embarrassment for having interrupted the women’s planning session…. Which was ridiculous because it was, after all, his wedding they were planning.

“Oh, that’s a marvelous idea!”

“Yes, it truly is appropriate: the dragon tamer and the Boy-Who-Lived… “ Narcissa nodded and lapsed into quiet self-thought. “Blues and silvers,” she announced, “and greens and golds. I’ll have my seamstress come visit this evening to take your measurements.”

“Well, then, I suppose we should discuss the flowers and decorations next,” Andromeda suggested.

“It’s a shame the flowers are all gone,” Narcissa sighed.

“We could always spell some roses,” Mrs. Weasley reminded them. “If we even decide to go with roses at all.”

“True, but it’s not the same,” Andromeda sniffed.

“No, no it’s not,” agreed Narcissa, frowning delicately. “Still, I think I like the idea of roses, best. Thorns and all.”

“It has lovely possibilities, especially for the photos.”

“Oh! Engagement photos,” Mrs. Weasley practically squealed with delight.

“That might be a little difficult,” Harry warned, making the mistake of drawing all three women’s attention to him.

“Why? Where is Mr. Weasley, anyway?” Narcissa frowned, eyes narrowing. “He should be here to help plan his wedding.”

“He has a date with a few dragons he’s working to reschedule,” Harry said, offering the other man an easy out.
“I do rather like the idea of roses,” Andromeda mused. “Long-stemmed with the thorns still intact.
“Roses are quite traditional.”
“Maybe too traditional?”
“Is there such a thing?”
“Well, at the very least they’re not terribly personal, are they?” Molly huffed before turning to Harry.
“What do you think, Harry, dear? Do you want roses or would you like a more personal flower arrangement?”

And once more, Harry found himself the object of three very intimidating women’s attention. It was a very bad idea, he decided, to have expected them to have been able to handle this on their own. What did it matter what type of flowers one decorated with? Why decorate with flowers at all? It wasn’t like Charlie or he were all that gushy-gush about such silly things as flowers.

Of course, he couldn’t say that to the three still waiting for him to say something. He valued his life too much, and right now, it easily seemed like the wrong answer might forfeit him that commodity. Possibly. Probably. Maybe not. After all, Mrs. Weasley wouldn’t harm her first grandson, right? And technically, as head of the family, Narcissa and Andromeda weren’t supposed to be able to hurt him. Not that that technicality worked very well for Sirius.

What would Sirius have done if he were stuck in this position? Well, okay, he probably wouldn’t have ever been caught alone with three wedding-planning women, true. Geez, Harry wished Remus, at least, could be here suffering with him, if not Charlie. It was his wedding, too, supposedly. He should have to sit here and listen to these women go crazy and bicker over such silly, simple stuff as what to eat and what to wear and what flowers to put out on the table…

“Ferns,” he said, looking not at the woman but at the walls and doorways. “Big, potted ferns and peace lilies along the walls and doorways. And maybe some ivy and holly and mistletoe decked about, for the season and all. And for color, throw in some simple center pieces of peonies or camellias, or jonquils,” he concluded.

The women stared at him, silently processing what he’d said. And then…

“That’s quite an elegant suggestion,” Narcissa approved. “Tasteful, especially for a wizards’ wedding.”

“I suppose you wouldn’t want too many flowers, would you,” Adromeda agreed, nodding her head sagely.

“That will be quite lovely, dear. What a fine suggestion,” Mrs. Weasley beamed at him. “It’s not the traditional roses, but that’s just fine. Sometimes simple and sweet is the best way to go.”

“Maybe just a few roses, here and there,” Narcissa allowed. “Shall I meet with the house elves and see to the flowers, then?”

“That would be grand, Cissa,” Andromeda agreed. “You always had a better hand with the gardeners. I still suspect it’s because you’re named after a flower.”

“Pish posh,” her sister scoffed. “Nothing to do with it at all. I just have a better appreciation for the floral arts than some others I could name. With your leave, my lord, I shall go now and talk with the gardener elves so that everything will be ready for your wedding day.”
“Thanks, Narcissa,” Harry nodded her departure. And then there were two. Still, he thought. What were they going to throw at him next? Oh, he was so going to make Charlie make this up to him…

“Well then, with that taken care of, there’s only really those wedding invitations to take care of. Shall we return now and get them started? Best sooner than later.”

Harry sighed.

They returned to Grimauld place and Harry retrieved the travel satchel he’d placed the inks and vellum Andromeda had given him just the other day. He sat down at the table, picked up the fine black frilling quill, hovered the tip over the ink, and then paused. “I have no idea what to write,” he finally admitted. How the heck was he supposed to know how to address a wedding invitation?

“It’s not that difficult, really. Just state that you’re inviting them to a special event on the first, that they are welcome to arrive early and with any necessary bodies needed to feel secure.”

Harry frowned, sounding that out in his head, and then shrugged. Setting tip to paper, he began to write.

Dear Luna,
I’m inviting you to a special event on the first. You’re welcome to come the night before and spend New Year’s Eve, too. You can bring your dad, too. Let me know if you can make it.
Cheers,
Harry

Andromeda looked it over and barely fought down a grimace. “Well, it’s certainly doesn’t sound like a wedding invitation,” she told him.

“Well, what else am I supposed to write?” Harry snapped. “I’m getting married on the first. Want to come watch?”

“No, no, definitely not. Really, Harry. We did go over some of this during the summer. Do you remember nothing?”

“No.”

“When using written correspondence, one should start with the addressee’s title. In this case, it is acceptable to refer to your friend as Miss Lovegood or even Miss Luna Lovegood.”

Harry sighed and settled himself for another Lord-of-the-Family etiquette lesson, once again regretting his early morning and generous decision to let Charlie leave.

It took a dreadful, dull filled three hours until Andromeda was satisfied with his written invitations. By that point, Harry’s hand was quite cramped, his nerves shot, and his stomach vocally empty.

“I should be going,” Andromeda announced, as if only then realizing the time. “If you would like, I can take Remus’s and my invitations with me?”

“You mean I won’t have to owl them to you like everyone else’s?”

She shot him an unamused look. “Should I take them or not?”

“Take them, save the poor owls an extra trip.”

“Fine. Don’t forget Narcissa was planning to have her seamstress stop by and measure you tonight.”
Harry groaned.

Taking pity on him, she told him, “Go have a lie-down and a bit of a rest. I’ll floo Cissa and tell her to come by later rather than sooner.”

As far as Harry was concerned, they could get married in their Hogwarts’ robes or jeans or naked—well, preferably not naked, but what no never mind. He was tired, achy, and sick of dealing with this wedding that was supposedly for him and Charlie but wasn’t meeting up to everyone else’s standards, apparently. Bloody witches.

He rolled out of the kitchen chair and onto the lone sofa that some wonderful person had thought to stash in the kitchen. Quickly, he fell fast asleep.

“Master Harry should eat,” a soft voice prodded him awake.

“Hmm?” he mumbled, incoherently.

“Layla be hoping Master Harry not be mad at her, but she be listening in for Master Harry ever since he came to Rozengard this morning. Layla be hoping to be of service to Master Harry.”

Harry blinked his blurry eyes clear and managed to focus on the little female house elf hovering inches in front of his face. “Who?”

“Layla, Master Harry, sir. Layla the house elf, from Rozengard. I be hearing others speak. They be saying Master Harry being in special way, and Master Harry be marrying in three days’ time. And Layla be hoping to serve Master Harry properly,” she concluded, looking up at him hopefully. Big eyes pleading, but in his sleep-fogged mind, Harry wasn’t aware of what for.

“Sure, help away,” he declared with a yawn, already slipping back into sleep.

“Oh, Layla be taking good care of Master Harry and his family! But first, we be getting Master Harry fed proper-like. Layla will be right back, Master Harry.”

“Mmm, all right.” But the elf was already vanished, popped away to places Harry wasn’t of a mind to consider or care about. Only when the elf popped back and brought with her the arousing scents of fresh bread and an herb crusted chicken did Harry finally rouse, in part thanks to the generous grumbling of his empty belly that was demanding to be fed.

He cracked an eye open far enough to see the service tray sitting on the kitchen table, only feet away. With a herculean effort, he roused himself up and over to the kitchen table, where he plopped gracelessly into a chair and fell over the meal delivered.

“Master Harry be liking? Layla can prepare other meals if Master Harry being desiring it.”

“No, this is fine,” he muttered before forcing himself to actually pay attention to what his fork was shoveling into his mouth repetitively. “Great, actually. It’s really good. Did you actually make this yourself?”

“Layla’s momma being kitchen elf. Layla learning lots of cooking stuffs from her Momma. You wanting something else, Layla can make it right quick you see.”

Already feeling more human like and alert, Harry smiled down at the little elf. “No, thanks, Layla? This really is good.” He dug his fork into a mixture of steamed root vegetables. “I used to cook, too. Although, I have to say, this is far better than anything I’ve ever prepared.” If only because it was healthier than any of the meals he was forced into preparing at the Dursleys, Harry thought. “Do you
“Oh, noes, Master Harry. Layla being doing all sorts of work around the house. She not always being allowed in the kitchen proper like. But I’s enjoying cooking, just like my Momma. I enjoys seeing people happy eating my food.”

Harry grinned at her. “It’s even better when you get to join them in the eating. Are you hungry?” he asked, before wondering what it was house elves even ate. Now there was something that could have been useful to learn in CoMC….

“No, Master Harry, but iffen you be wanting company, Layla can stay and sit a little longer. I be finished with all my work,” she added sadly.

“Not enough work to keep you busy?” he guessed.

The elf startled, eyes widening in panic. “Oh, Layla not meaning to be complaining, Master Harry!”

“Nah, it’s okay. I guess it must be kind of boring working in a house that has no people living in it anymore.”

“Layla wouldn’t say ‘boring’, per say… “ the elf hedged, causing Harry to snicker just a bit. The little elf was personable: friendly and forward while still being subservient. She almost reminded him of Dobby, just a little bit.

“Have you met Kreacher yet?” Harry asked.

“Master be calling for Kreacher?” the old house elf grumbled.

“Not really, no, but it’s good of you to show up all the same,” Harry answered, quickly taking another bite of the meal Layla had brought him. “Kreacher, this is Layla. She’s from Rozengard, but I think she might just be convinced in joining us here and Grimauld.”

“Really, Master Harry?” the little elf squeaked. “You’d let me stay here and serve at the main home?”

“Do you know of reason we shouldn’t invite Layla, Kreacher?”

“Kreacher doesn’t know what crazy Master would be asking Kreacher’s opinion. Master does what Master wants anyway.”

“Well, this is your home, too, Kreacher. I just know what with me living here full time and Charlie moving in now, too, and a baby soon on the way, and, well you know I’ll probably having company quite a bit. Just friends and family, but, still, extra mouths to feed and pick up after.”

“Oh, Layla would love to help Master Harry and Kreacher!”

Harry continued to watch the older elf for a sign, but Kreacher just shrugged one shoulder and turned away, muttering something about ‘better than the other one’, causing Harry to grin. Kreacher and Ivy had not necessarily gotten along well at all. Then again, Ivy had been quite bossy and not shy about it, either.

“Welcome to the family, Layla. Is it going to be a problem for anyone if you join us here? Right now it’s just Kreacher and me, but Charlie, my fiancée, should be back tomorrow night. The next day after at the latest. And, well, you already know, I’m pregnant,” he added with a self-mocking little smile.
“Layla be knowing of Master Harry and Master Harry’s special way and Master Harry’s Wheezy,” the elf replied, nodding. “Layla be taking care of Master Harry’s family personally now. You just leave everything to me!” she told him before popping away.

Harry stared at the empty space a moment, before shaking his head and chuckling and turning back to the remaining bits of his supper. He had barely set his fork and knife down on the empty plate before it, too, disappeared. And, almost as if it had been planned, the floo chimed an incoming call.
Harry had barely set his fork and knife down on the empty plate before it, too, disappeared. And, almost as if it had been planned, the floo chimed an incoming call.

“Lord Black? Are you there? May we come through?”

“Sure, Narcissa,” he called back. Best get this over with.

“Ah, here we are,” the sleek and always sophisticated blonde chimed, stepping clear of the floo and removing any soot or ash with a casual flick of her wand. “Now, I’ve brought two of my very best seamstress, dear. They understand what an honor it is to be able to facilitate the Black Family, and in deed, Lord Black, himself, in this manner.”

“Lord Black,” the two women trailing Narcissa greeted, dropping into curtsies just on this side of the fireplace.

Harry stared at them dumbfounded—he really was doing too much of this dumb staring, he thought—before shaking himself into motion. “Thank you, ladies, for joining us on such short notice. I’m sorry for having made you wait till later this evening.”

“Oh, it was no trouble at all, my lord.”

“Harry, please,” he told them, not quite successfully hiding the cringe from Narcissa’s sharp eyes when the first woman called him ‘my lord’. “Um, I’m not sure where the best place to do this is, but perhaps the upstairs drawing room?”

“Yes, certainly more preferable than the kitchen,” Narcissa agreed before turning and striding purposefully up the stairs.

“Um, sorry, I didn’t quite catch your names?” Harry asked, ushering the two women up behind Narcissa.

“Oh, begging your pardon, Lord Black,” the elder of the two spoke. “My name’s Margret, Meg to my friends, Stittlespore, and this is my best seamstress after myself, Cora.”

“Meg?” Harry asked, stopping at the landing and holding out a hand. “If I may? And I believe I asked you both to call me ‘Harry’, please. I confess, I’m a little out of my league, here. Charlie and I are pretty simple, down to earth people, all things considered.”

“Charlie’s the name of your bride, my lord?” the younger, Cora, piped up.

“Uh, groom, actually, and Harry, remember?”

“Oh, begging your pardon, my lor—Harry,” Meg quickly jumped in, pinching the other woman. “Will your, ah, groom, be joining us tonight for the fitting?”

“Ah, no, actually. He got called back into work earlier this morning. Dragon on the loose or something. Here we are,” he finished, motioning both women ahead of him into the drawing room. “Would you ladies like something to drink? Narcissa? Meg? Cora?”
Layla pop in right beside him with a tea service. She set it daintily on the coffee table before popping away again. Narcissa shot him an amused look.

“Oh, that would be lovely, thanks,” Cora agreed while Meg called out her tape measure.

“Madam Malfoy wasn’t very forthcoming about what it was specifically you were in mind for, my dear,” Meg announced as her tape measure and a quick quote quill and pad set to work, measure Harry from sole to crown. “We know, of course, you’re getting married, but have you thought of which style you prefer?”

“Style?”

“Well, are you more in favor of traditional full robes or split robes or suited robes, or perhaps no robes at all?” she continued, pulling out a large portfolio from her travel bag. She flipped it open and turned it to face him. On the pages were modeling fashion sketches of the different styles she’d rattled off.

He fell onto the sofa beside her, staring at the different designs. “I don’t know.”

“If I may, my lord,” Narcissa leant forward slightly. “I would refrain from the more fitted styles, at least for yourself. From what I recall of your young Weasley, he would look very fine indeed in a fitted robe.”

Harry continued to look over the fluttering designs. They were all winter-worthy designs, at least they seemed it to his untrained eye, and he supposed he was grateful that bit at least had been taken care of. “These are all just winter designs?” he asked, just to be sure.

“Yes, my—Harry.” Meg smiled at him. “Madame Malfoy did explain that the event would be commencing soon?”

“Yes, New Year’s Day,” he confirmed, not aware of Cora’s gulp or Meg’s widening eyes. “These are all… they’re nice, but… they’re a little fancy, aren’t they?”

“Well, yes, we were told it was a formal function we were to prepare you for…?”

Harry sighed and leaned back before cutting a look across to Narcissa. “There’s no way to just elope, is there?”

“You wouldn’t dare,” she returned, eyes narrowing. “You are the head of—“

“No, I wouldn’t,” he cut her off. “Mrs. Weasley would probably kill us if we even considered it.”

“Then you’d best be putting that thought far from your mind,” she stuffily replied before turning towards the seamstresses. “Lord Black should be embroidered with a glorious phoenix, green and gold. Mr. Weasley, a blue and silver dragon. Short cloaks over half or three-quartered robes. Sleek under trousers, we’re not Scottish,” she sniffed.

“Well, then, let’s take a quick-see, shall we?” Meg offered standing up again and motioning Harry over to a free stretch of space. “We’ll just get a feel for styles and cuts first, and then we’ll look at patterns, colors, and materials, all right luv?” she cajoled him, smiling reassuringly before waving her wand and summoning several scraps of fabric from her bag.

The first wrapped around Harry’s waist and legs before shimmering into a pair of trousers, sleek and black. Another scrap wrapped around his shoulders and down his arms and chest, forming into a short robe that stopped at his waist. Towards the wall, a full-length mirror materialized and Harry
turned to see his reflection.

“Too short,” Narcissa snapped, even as Harry tried to tug the jacket-like robe down a bit.

“Here,” Meg bustled, reaching over and tugging on the hem. As she did, the hem lengthened and grew. She stepped back when it reached his hips, allowing him to see his image again.

“Longer,” Narcissa drawled while Harry turned to look at himself. “At the very least to mid-thigh.”

Meg reached in again, drawing the hem down until it fully covered Harry’s bum and pelvis. He stepped away first to see himself.

“It’s not bad,” he allowed. It felt like he was wearing a long jacket. “But maybe if it went down to the knees?”

She obligingly lowered the hem, and Harry studied the young man looking back at him in the mirror. He continued to stare and study as the two seamstresses begun to wave their wands and the cloth began to cycle through a series of different materials.

“This one,” he called out finally, running his fingers along the silky smooth but stiff material. The threads began to bled colors under his fingertips and he went back to staring at the mirror. From black forward through the colors of the rainbow and seemingly every shade in between. Blacks faded into grays, which became lavenders and purples before turning into a sea of blues and greens, seeping into yellows and oranges that eventually started to bled crimson shades of reds. Finally the reds paled into blush and finally the band of whites.

“Go back a bit again,” Harry requested, and the whites slowly cycled through again. “This one. What is it called?”

“That’s a cream shade, sir.”

“Really? I thought cream was, well, more yellow.”

“Ah, well, if you think of, well, whipped cream—“

“Or ice cream,” Cora helpfully supplied. “It is a lovely shade on you, Harry. It doesn’t make you look washed-out or anything. That’s always a bit of a problem with whites. But this sets off your skin tone just right.”

He turned to look back at Narcissa, only to realize she was smiling and suspiciously bright eyed.

“You look radiant, Harry,” she told him before clearing her throat and standing. “Now, he’ll need his family crests here,” she instructed, tapping his left pectoral. “And the phoenix should stretch the entire length of back. And perhaps a shade of green to the pants, echoing up at the cuffs, hems, and again into the phoenix.”

“Of course, Ma’am,” Meg replied even as Cora took notes. “And for the other young lord?”

“Charlie?” Harry looked up away from his image.

“Below the knees,” Narcissa continued. “Straight hem. A deeper cream, more golden—he is a ginger, after all. And a good, strong blue to Harry’s green. His family crest will also need to be included, of course, although it is not the first time a Black will be marrying a Weasley.”

“Is it all that important that our family crests are on display?” Harry asked, wondering why he had to practically announce to all and anyone his family business. Of course, the only people who would be
there to see him were family, for the most part, but, still…

“Yes,” Narcissa answered succinctly. Then she softened and sighed, as if remembering who she was talking to—not just her head of house, but a young man who had been denied his heritage as a child. “Family is very important, and the union of two people is a union between those families, so it’s important to openly display your family’s shield, because, in essence, you are extending your family’s protection onto that person you take as your wife or husband, welcoming them to take shelter as is only fitting for a member of the family.”

“So, even if I’m the only one in my family, I should display the family shield.”

“Yes, because when you walk away, Harry, you will no longer be a family of one.”

Unconsciously, he smoothed a hand over his baby belly.

“A bit intimidating, isn’t it?” Cora asked, smiling at him. “I know I was nervous something awful when I married my Albert.”

“So I should display all my family shields then?” Harry asked, beginning to chew on his lip nervously.

“It’s just the two, Harry,” Narcissa scoffed. “It’s not that bad. Charlie will be displaying his Prewitt Family crest as well, won’t he?”

“So I only have to display the two, even if there’s more?” Harry tried to clarify.

All three women froze and stared at him.

“More?” Narcissa asked. “More than your father’s and godfather’s families?”

“Is that strange, then?” Harry asked, feeling queasy.

“Ladies, I believe you have all that you need to get started?” Narcissa directed the two wide-eyed seamstresses into gathering their belongings and Layla popped back in.

“Layla be showing Seam-missies to the floo,” the little elf declared, escorting the women out.

Narcissa flung a locking and privacy charm at the door behind them and then turned on Harry. “What do you mean more families, Harry? Why would you think you have right to claim more families’ names and protections?”

“Uh, well, I don’t know about the protections, but according to Gringott’s, I’ve got access to quite a few family names and vaults.”


Harry sunk back into a chair, grateful to be back in his own comfortable clothing and not the stiff fabric of what would be his wedding robes. “I don’t know. They rattled off a whole list of names and numbers to me this summer. It’s written down somewhere in one of the folios. Really, I was more concerned with making sure the Potter and Black families were stable and secure. I figured I’d have time after Hogwarts to bother with the rest of them.”

“Them?” Narcissa breathed, sinking down onto the sofa. “Harry, does anyone else know that you’re heir to more than just the two families?”

“You make it sound like the Potters and Blacks are practically inconsequential,” Harry growled at
“Of course not,” she snapped. “But don’t you understand?”

“Understand what?”

She growled herself and stood up furiously to pace. “Did the goblins offer you these families’ heir rings or just access to their vaults?” she demanded to know.

“Some were rings, some were just vaults. I had all the vaults connected though, so I can consolidate them later or portion them out as gifts. Why? What am I missing here, Narcissa? Just tell me!”

“Ooh, I could… I would hex that man right this instant,” she hissed. “If he had done his duty to you, you never would have been raised with muggles. You would have known your heritage from the get go and not be so—so—so blatantly ignorant!” she practically shouted.

A glass of sherry appeared on an end table even as a mug of hot chocolate appeared beside Harry’s chair. Narcissa snatched the glass up and threw back the contents with a deep exhale. Struggling to regain her composure, she retook her seat and looked directly back at Harry.

“Those of us who are raised in the families grow up learning about our families, our histories, our connections to the other families. As a result, we learn which families are historically noted for their magical strength—such as the Blacks—or their fertility, like the Weasleys. We are taught who the lords and future lords of the different families are so that we may better acquit ourselves. Thus we also learn which families have been deemed extinct, which families have faded, because there is no longer a lord or heir. If the goblins have offered you the lord or heir rings to these families…. Any one of them are notorious, at best."

“So anyone pureblooded knows who every other pureblood is?” Harry asked.

“Not quite, but for the most part, yes. We would know of the family if not the individual themselves. That is why, during introductions, it is common practice to explain the degree to which one derives from the main branch or one’s relationship to the current lord.”

“But Ron never went around announcing such things. Neither did Draco,” Harry protested.

“No, they wouldn’t have,” Narcissa sighed. “Because there shouldn’t have been a need to those who mattered. Well, to those who it matters to, I should say. The Weasleys were labeled as blood-traitors just prior to the last war, so their status would have been looked down on in any regard. Draco is his father’s son, his only child, and thus heir to the Malfoy name. Anyone of traditional pureblooded custom would have already known this. The same as your friend, Lord Longbottom, was his father’s only child and heir.”

“So, they never said anything because people were already supposed to have known?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that’s dumb. What about all the people who don’t grow up learning this stuff? How are they supposed to find out if no one ever tells them? Oh, right, they don’t matter,” Harry finished sourly.

“Harry, to the majority people who don’t already know, would such things really matter to them?” Narcissa pointed out. “Regardless, we have travelled away from the main topic: that being you are heir to more than just your father’s and godfather’s families. I can list at least a dozen families that have gone dormant or are considered extinct without much thought. And you said the goblins offered you rings and vaults… Just how many families have you laid claim to?”
“Well, it’s not like I did anything,” Harry mumbled. “I just agreed to the stupid heredity test to prove I was who I said I was.”

“You would only need to sign your name on a magical affidavitum parchment to prove your identity,” Narcissa frowned. “The goblins made you preform a full heredity test?”

“Yeah, they took probably a full pint of blood from me, too,” he groused.

“How many rings, Harry? Just how many of the dormant families did they offer to you?”

“Like I said, a few,” he hedged.

“A few, a few,” Narcissa practically jumped up from her seat to start pacing again. “How many does that mean? Three? Four?” When he didn’t answer she attempted again. “Five? Six? Harry, how many rings did Gringotts’ offer you?” she demanded.

“I don’t remember!” he finally admitted. “I was a bit overwhelmed, all right? I stopped counting after the seventh or eighth chest they brought out. I was just tired and wanted to get my things and go home!”

“Seventh or eighth?” Narcissa breathed. “Dear god and goddess, they’ve practically made you the most important person in the entire land, if not continent.” A little hysterical laughter bubbled up from her chest. “Perhaps the whole word!”

“Can’t we just, I don’t know, ignore it until after the wedding?” Harry entreated.

She sobered immediately. “Does anyone else know?”

“No, well, only my law-wizard,” Harry admitted. “But, he’s, like, sworn to secrecy, so…”

Narcissa closed her eyes and leaned back against the sofa cushions. “Did you put on any of the other rings?”

“Uh, just to try them on. The goblins said I had to see if the family magics would accept me, and, well, I was already not on the best footing with the goblins, so, I, uh, didn’t argue much. But I took them off right again and put them back in their separate chests. They’re in my vault right now. Didn’t know of a better place to keep them.”

“Of course. Well, what’s done is done. And the family magics accepted you, then? Obviously so, as you are still here and obviously in well health considering your state. Oh!” she exclaimed sitting bolt up. “Had you already claimed your inheritance before you and your Charlie… were close?”

“Yeah, why?”

“Magick wants to be used, Harry, and some of those family magics have been laying unused and dormant for, well, some for centuries if I’m not mistaken. Magic finds a way when given an opportunity. Like I said earlier, the Weasleys are known for their fertility. I would say you and your Charlie never had a chance once magic saw an opportunity.”

“Wait, so, you’re saying some family magic pushed us together and got me knocked up?”

“Well, no, not exactly. Not to the first, but as to the second… well, yes. The family magics could have easily seized the opportunity you presented it with to create your child and a new magic user. In fact, I wouldn’t be surprised at all if your marriage proves to be quite fruitful.” She smiled, almost smugly, while Harry sat there battling with the concepts of some family magic of some sort taking it
upon itself to put him up in the duff… let alone a perpetual state of paternity for the foreseeable future.

“I’ll have Meg come back over tomorrow—just herself—and we’ll sit down with that portfolio of families you’ve inherited. I’m sure we can come up with a clever way to incorporate so many family crests onto your robes without making you look ridiculous. Don’t worry, dear. You’re going to have a marvelous wedding and a happy married life. I can tell. Your Charlie is very taken in by you.”

“Oh, he’s taken me all right,” Harry snorted, remembering what Charlie had done to him just the other morning on the same sofa Narcissa was currently rising from.

Narcissa finally left, and Harry was stuck in the big old townhouse by himself once more. He continued to sit in the chair, just staring out into space while a hand rubbed over his expanding belly. Thankfully the seamstresses hadn’t said anything to him about his growing waistline. Of course, they had no previous reference to compare to, so…

Charlie wasn’t home by eleven that night when he finally dragged himself upstairs to the master bedroom. He looked into the empty room before turning away back towards his old bedroom. It just was not the same without Charlie. Strange how less than a handful of days could make things seem so different, Harry mused as he shucked down to a shirt and pants.

It was ridiculous, he grumbled as he tossed over in the bed, struggling with the coverings to get comfortable. He’d lived his entire life sleeping alone or at least alone in bed. But it was a bit different, even knowing that Kreacher was somewhere in the big old townhouse wasn’t the same as being in a dorm room with four other boys or in a tent with at least Hermione. He shivered. It was silly to feel lonely.

He forced his mind away from thoughts of loneliness. He tried focusing on the wedding robes he’d tried on tonight. It was definitely a strange feeling, picking out the right style, the right color. He didn’t think he would have felt that strongly about such things. But seeing it, the robes and the trousers and the fancy fabric and the colors… seeing it come together like that…

His stomach jumped into his chest and did a funny little flip. It was really real. It was really happening. He was getting married. He was going to have his very own family, just like he’d always hoped and wished and dreamed about when he was a kid stuck with the Dursleys in that freaking cupboard in 4 Privet Drive. They were never his family. They never let him have any doubts about that. He was never supposed to have lived with them. Heck, he probably never would have known about them until he was all grown up if things had gone the way they were supposed to, he thought bitterly.

He’d mostly let go of the fact he was an orphan, that his mother and father were dead, and even if he went back in time, nothing was going to change that. His parents were always going to die and leave him, but he didn’t have to be alone. He hadn’t needed to go to the Dursley’s, and that nugget was what burned him the most. He didn’t blame Sirius for going after Wormtail—he would have, too, if it had been him in Sirius’s place. If he ever found out Ron or Hermione had betrayed him so grievously…. He didn’t really blame Remus for disappearing into his own depression after the fact. Again, he could easily see himself doing a similar if not the same thing.

But just the same, he was going to make sure his will and expectations for his child were met if something ever happened to him. His parents had left fail-safe instructions in their will for his care. If those instructions had been followed, he would never have been given over to the Dursleys. His life might not have been happy—who could say for sure—but it would have definitely been better. He would have known about all these things other purebloods and lords are supposed to grow up learning.
He would make sure his family was safe and they couldn’t be hoodwinked or curtailed by something like a sealed will being locked inside a vault that the only people who could enter it were either under the age of consent or locked away. This bit with all these other family lines he was supposed to inherit and carry on just reinforced that fact. He didn’t intend to let the Potter or Black families die out or become dormant or extinct just because something happened to him.

Harry groaned and rolled back over, smashing his face into the pillow. He’d done his best not to think about those other families the goblins had pushed on him back in the summer. It was ridiculous, and Harry just knew if any of those names were mentioned, people would go even more crazy over him. It was absolutely asinine to even consider that he should be responsible for so many other families.

Narcissa had seemed truly surprised, though, when he’d told her Gringotts had made him complete a full inheritance test. He wondered if he should suggest such things to some other people. Maybe he could spread the responsibility around a bit. After all, misery loves company. Wouldn’t it be ironic if there ended up being five or six others who were destined to become heads of multi-families. At least he wouldn’t be such a novelty. Or heck, even just one other person, he thought wistfully. He was so tired of being the only one, the chosen one, the boy who lived, the man who conquered. It was all a bunch of shit, really. This was his life, not up for someone else’s entertainment damn it, and he wanted a quiet, peaceful, happy one. He deserved it after all the shit he’d been through thus far. He —

“Master Harry needs to be resting,” Layla scolded, snapping Harry out of his spiraling thoughts. “Layla be bringing Master Harry a mid-night snack to help him sleep,” she added, setting a small tray on the night stand. Harry sat up and looked over to see a steaming baked apple wafting tantalizing flavors of cinnamon, honey, cloves, and bergamot. Right beside the bowl was a large mug filled with creamy hot chocolate.

“Thanks, Layla. How’d you know I was still awake and having trouble sleeping?”

“It be a house elf’s duty to be knowing about her family, Master Harry.” The little elf levitated the tray over Harry’s lap and watched him closely to make sure he was eating before popping away.

Harry nursed his mug of hot chocolate and took small bites from the baked apple, feeling the warmth from both suffuse his insides in a way the blankets and coverings weren’t able to penetrate. He was grateful to Layla and was glad she’d followed him home today. He hoped Charlie liked her, too.

Charlie Weasley. His future husband. Soon-to-be-husband? Fiancée? Lover? Father of his unborn child? Father of any of his future children? Children. As in more than one, plural, multiple. Harry sighed. He’d wanted a family when he was younger, a big family even, but he’d never planned on fielding an entire quidditch team, let alone possibly two!

But even last year, when he’d been on the run for his life and not even sure if he would live another day let alone another year, he knew he had a responsibility to the Potter legacy, to make sure the family didn’t end with just him. And that was before he knew about his inheriting the Black Family thanks to his godfather or any of the others.

He’d felt horribly silly and self-conscious when he’d tossed out those four vials-full and placed them under stasis in his vault. He’d left letters to Hermione, Ginny, and Luna, on the hopes of them surviving even if he didn’t. He knew muggles had been performing artificial insemination for years, so he didn’t think witches would have any difficulty with it.

Of course, it was all a moot point now. Not only had he survived, but he’d managed to get himself knocked up without any need of a female, let alone witch. The only reason he hadn’t discarded the
vials this summer was because he’d finally realized his own preferences wouldn’t see him married to a witch any time soon. Not happily, at least, he didn’t think. Which meant, in his mind, artificial-insemination was really his only option available for him having children in the future.

Now, though… He snorted, and ended up nearly choking on a sip of chocolate. Layla popped right back in, snapping the tray away from him before he could spill anything and glaring at him.

“It be very late now. Master Harry be needing his sleep,” the elf proclaimed, watching him obediently shimmy back under the covers.

“Good night, Layla. Thank you.”

“Good night, Master Harry. You sleep well,” Layla replied before popping away again, leaving Harry alone once more with only his thoughts for company.

Not too surprisingly, he found it much easier to nod off to sleep with his belly full of warmed chocolate.

***

Harry awoke slowly to a pleasant glowing warmth molded to his back, practically cocooning him. He shifted, snuggling in closer, and was rewarded with a sensation he was becoming all to intimately familiar with in recent days as a firm presence shifted back against him, sliding and slipping right along the seam of his bum. An arm slid down his side and a hand slipped inside his sleep pants, cupping his cock securely and delivering a little squeeze.

“Keep that up, and I’m not going to be able to resist molesting you,” a sleep-gruff voice mumbled against his pillow.

“Charlie!” Harry started, dislodging the other man’s grip and squirming around to face the other man. “You’re back.”

The redhead nuzzled in against Harry’s hair, drawing him closer to snuggle. “Mmm. Slept like shit. Missed you.”

“Are you hurt? Why are you back so soon? I thought they needed you for at least another day?”

“They’ll survive. Missed you. Wanted you,” Charlie grumbling, snuggling some more.

“So, wait. Does this mean you have to go back?”

“Mmn. Transfer approved. Didn’t think I was serious, but I was. I’m back for good now. Start at the new Reserve next week.”

“So, you’re back.”

“Mmhmm. Missed you.”

“Missed you, too,” Harry confessed, returning Charlie’s nuzzle.

“Was gonna wake you up with a blow job,” the redhead mumbled. “Weren’t supposed to wake up before me.”

Harry tingled. Charlie’s blow jobs were… really, really good, he remembered. “Sorry to ruin the
“Mhn. It happens. Want to sleep now. Suck later.”

Suck later indeed, Harry thought, snuggling in closer to Charlie, tangling their legs and getting comfortable. It felt right and safe, curled into Charlie’s warmth. And the hand lazily squeezing his ass just made it all the better.

***

Charlie got his wish, and Harry had his chance to reciprocate, when they woke up again later. They lied snuggled up together, panting and still sweating, Charlie casually petting Harry wherever he could reach, and Harry soaking up each and every tender little touch.

“So, is there any particular reason you were sleeping in here and not in the master bedroom?”

“Mmn, didn’t feel right, sleeping there without you.”

“Sorry I made you sleep alone. And did I thank you enough for being understanding about letting me go?”

“That’s your job. I get it.”

“Mmn, maybe, but you didn’t have to be so awesome about my running out like that,” Charlie growled, squeezing Harry before sighing. “I guess it was a good thing I went, anyway. Did I tell you they weren’t going to process my transfer request?”

“What? No, why not?”

“Well, thought it was a hoax, didn’t they?” Charlie chuckled. “It the last eight years, the most I’d ever taken off before was, well, last year, you understand. I hadn’t ever talked about leaving before, so, yeah, it was a little out of character.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Stop that,” Charlie demanded, rolling over on top Harry and staring down at him. “I love dragons and working at the preserve, but I love the chance we have even more.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Charlie grinned, leaning in to drop kisses over Harry’s cheeks and nose. “Come on,” he groaned, rolling off Harry and onto the floor. “We should get up and get dressed. You visited Rozengard yesterday, right? How was it?”

“Huge,” Harry groaned, using Charlie’s offered hand to follow him up out of bed. “Seriously, I think it’s bigger than Hogwarts. And they’re all arguing over flowers and food. And last night brought over a seamstress for wedding robes, and it became this big mess because apparently we need to display our family crests on our robes?”

“Yeah, that’s traditional, but why’s that a big mess?”

Harry sighed. “Apparently, when I went to Gringotts last year, they had me take an inheritance test, which isn’t normal?”

“Not really, no. Why did they make you take an inheritance test?”
“They said it was to verify my identity, but Narcissa said that was just an excuse.”

“Yeah, I’d say. Hardly anyone takes an inheritance test anymore.”

“Yeah, I kind of figured that out now, but I plan to ask some more people to take these inheritance tests,” Harry confided. “I can’t believe I’m the only one with ties some of these dormant or extinct families. I think it might even be interesting if some of the muggleborns, like Hermione, took these tests.”

“It might be interesting, but what’s that—” Charlie paused, looking back at Harry. “’Ties to some of the extinct families’? You mean, you inherited more than just the Potter and Black families?”

“The goblins seemed pretty happy about it, but I just wanted to get home.”

“Of course they were happy,” Charlie huffed. “You opened up access to all those families’ monies and vaults. Just how many families?”

“More than a few,” Harry sighed. “I don’t know how many exactly. I was tired and stopped really paying attention how many times they handed me a new ring to try on.”

“Okay, it’s okay. I mean, it wasn’t like I was marrying for your name or money,” Charlie teased, winking and goosing Harry as he slipped in the shower. “It’s okay, Harry, really. We’ll figure it out.”

“I hope so. Narcissa said something about coming back over again today with the seamstress to figure out the robes. It’s a good thing you’re back; you can get fitted today,” Harry informed him, stepping aside so Charlie could join him.

“Yeah? Did she mention what time?” Charlie asked, stepping up behind Harry and pulling back against him, slipping his arms around to rub his hands over their baby as he pressed his face in against Harry’s throat.

“No, why?”

“Well, I imagine it’s fairly late. If not late morning then early afternoon. I mean, I got in this morning around, six or seven, and you didn’t even notice, you were out.”

“It can’t be that late,” Harry protested.

“It being past three in the afternoon, Master Harry, Master Charlie. Layla be setting out your clean robe things. Miss Cissy and company won’t be coming for another two hours, Layla made sure. Yous be having plenty of time for a good meal before you be dealing with company.”

Harry forced himself to relax at the surprise intrudence. “Thanks, Layla. We’ll see you downstairs.”

“Layla?” Charlie questioned.

“Ah, yeah. We have a new member to the family,” Harry explained. “She kind of followed me home from Rozengard yesterday.”

Charlie just laughed and reached for the flannel.

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Chapter End Notes
Thanks to Bickymonster for some editing details!
When they finally made it downstairs and into the kitchen, Harry formally introduced Charlie to their new house elf.

“Master Harry, Master Charlie, Layla be finishing dinner right quick. The dining room be set proper-like for yous.”

“That’s all right, Layla, Charlie and I are more comfortable eating down here in the kitchen,” Harry told her.

The little elf stopped what she was doing and turned to give him a stern look. “Master Harry be Master of all Black Family. It not being proper for Master Harry to always be eating in the kitchen,” she scolded. “Master Harry needs to be acting more proper-like, like Head of Family he is. Kreacher be telling Layla you be eating in kitchen all the time. Most times you even cook for self. No good! Layla be here now, be taking care of things. Now Master Harry can focus on family. Dinner being ready to serve in dining room soon. Kreacher be telling you when.”

And with that, she turned back to the stove and ovens, ignoring a stunned Harry and a snickering Charlie.

“I guess you got told,” Charlie snorted. “Come on. You said you had a file with the information the goblins gave you?”

Harry sighed. “More like an entire portfolio of things,” he confessed, turning to lead the way back upstairs. “My solicitor has been going through a lot of it, but really, I need to get an estate manager. I’ve just been going through the Black and Potter estates, and I just barely understand most of it. These other estates… I don’t know. I guess I was just kind of hoping I could ignore them.”

“No such luck,” Charlie teased, bumping shoulders. “If nothing else, the goblins wouldn’t let you ignore it, not if there’s a galleon to be made.”

“That reminds me. I wanted to send Hermione a note about going for an inheritance test. I’ll pay for it, but I think it would be a good thing for lots of people to do. Especially now after two major wars. Who knows who might inherit what, right?”

“Good idea. Although, I’m not sure why you’re hoping to find. I mean, Hermione’s a muggleborn, right?”

“Yeah, but haven’t you ever wondered how and why muggleborns exist?”

“Not really.”

Harry shook his head and sighed. “Muggle scientists have been studying genetics for decades. They’ve figured out why some people are born with blue eyes and some with green, even though both our dads’ had brown eyes, right? Well, what if there was a, a, a magic gene, right? And it was passed down from mother and father to child, just like eye color. Well, then, a mum or dad would have to possess that trait for the baby to inherit. But then, how do we get squibs and muggleborns?”

“No really thought about it,” Charlie admitted.
“I doubt many wizards or witches have,” Harry allowed. “But I think, maybe, if we had all those muggle-borns go in and take inheritance tests, we might just find out there’s a wizard or witch in their family tree, if you go far enough back. I mean, what happens if two squibs have a kid? Is that kid a squib, too?”

“Ah, sometimes,” Charlie thought, scratching his scalp. “But to be honest, you don’t hear too much about squibs marrying, or if you do, it’s some muggle they met.”

“What if all muggleborns are, are the descendants of two lines that went squib and married muggles, until those two lines met and merged and, poof! You’ve got a magical baby again?”

Charlie stared at him.

“What?”

“If we weren’t already, I’d be asking you to marry me and have my babies,” Charlie said boldly, grabbing at Harry and pulling him in until he could reach his lips. “You are amazing. Wonderful. Sexy. Ultimately desirable in the extreme.”

“Charlie, stop it,” Harry laughed, highly embarrassed as he twisted away from his fiancée. “I think you might be biased. Sometimes I think you’re only marrying me because I got pregnant.”

He froze the minute he said it, internally wincing. How stupid. Of course they were only getting married because he was pregnant.

Hands started massaging his tense shoulders. “Do you really think that?” Charlie asked carefully.

“No, I’m sorry,” Harry sighed, reaching up to grasp one of Charlie’s hands. “I know better. I’m just being stupid, saying stupid things. I don’t know why.”

“You’re not stupid,” Charlie insisted, turning Harry around in his arms. “In fact, I think you’re pretty brilliant.”

Harry scoffed. “I’m sure you did better in your OWLs and NEWTs than I did.”

“I’m not talking about tests, Harry. You really don’t see how amazing you are, do you? Even after everything…”

“That’s just it, though,” Harry practically cried. “I’m not amazing. I’m not some—some superhero. I thought you got that.”

“And that’s what makes you amazing to me,” Charlie insisted. “You’re good looking, sure, but it’s so much more than that, Harry. I slept with you this summer because… because…”

“Why?”

“Because I liked you,” Charlie finished feeling more than a little lame. “You, the person you are, my little brother’s best friend, not just the hero of the wizarding world or the savior or the all-powerful lord of however many families you’re now in charge in! Just you, Harry. This person with such a huge heart, and your eyes… so sad, so lost sometimes… so yearning.”

He framed Harry’s face in his rough, calloused hands, forcing the younger man to look at him. “And that day, and every day you’ll allow me to since, I want to fill that yearning in you. I want to be the one to make you happy, Harry. I’m not sure yet how, but I’m going to keep trying, I want you to know that, Harry. Believe it. I’m going to make you happy.”
“I’m scared.”

“Of what?”

“Happiness doesn’t last.”

Charlie pulled Harry into his chest, cradling that dark head close so he could lean down and press his lips against the black tufts. “I’m going to make you happy, Harry. I promise. I’m going to keep giving you reasons to be happy, again and again, for a very long time, for the rest of our lives.”

Hands clenched Charlie’s shirt into fisted clumps. “I want to believe you.”

“Believe it,” Charlie told him. “I’m going to make you love me, and you’re not going to regret it.”

“I think, maybe, I already do,” Harry confessed softly.

His hand in Harry’s hair helped pull Harry’s head back so he could look him in the face. “Funny thing, me, too,” he replied before swooping in and claiming another kiss, complete with tongue and teeth.

Only Kreacher popping in to tell them dinner was ready prevented Charlie from showing him more enthusiastically just how he felt about Harry. Harry didn’t say more as they entered the formal dining room and took their seats. Charlie somewhat missed the intimacy of sitting side by side at the kitchen table like they had in days previous. However, there was something to be said for a nice candlelit dinner with fine china and full course servitudes. It was definitely nothing he’d been accustomed to, at either homes—the Burrow or the reserve.

Layla had truly outdone herself. Between the leek and onion soup, the mixed greens salad, the oven-fresh bread rolls, green beans and mushrooms, and the tender slices of roast beef… Charlie was in gastro-heaven.

“Not that your cooking isn’t good or anything,” Charlie started, wiping his mouth and sitting back from the table, “But she’s staying, right?”

Harry grinned back at him. “She’s good, isn’t she? Last night she brought me some baked chicken that was probably some of the best I’ve ever had. She said she learned from her mother who was a kitchen elf.”

“If she’s this good, can you imagine how good her mother must be?” Charlie breathed in awe.

“I know, right?” Harry chuckled.

“Mama being very good,” Layla said, popping in from the kitchen. “Better than Layla. Would you be wanting afters now? Master Harry’s guests will be arriving in another half hour.”

“I don’t think I could eat another bite right now,” Charlie confessed. “Maybe you could save mine until after company leaves?”

“Of course, Master Charlie. Layla being happy to be keeping it ready for whenever Master Charlie be wanting it.”

“What is it?”

“Apple and pear crisp,” the little elf answered before popping away with the dishes.

Harry groaned. “I am so going to get fat.”
“Me, too,” Charlie laughed coming around to help Harry from his seat.

“You run around chasing dragons all day,” harry accused. “I get to sit around and try and figure out paper work and ledgers!”

“So find someone else to do it and go do whatever it is you want to do,” Charlie told him. Harry glared at him. “What? It’s a reasonable solution!”

“Come on. Narcissa asked me to pull those family files before she came back,” Harry huffed. “I suppose now’s as good a time as any to find out just how deep I’m in.”

“Don’t forget, you wanted to mail that letter to Hermione, too,” Charlie reminded him. “Is there anyone else you think should have an inheritance test? Maybe you could mention your theory about muggleborns to her.”

“Yeah. Here,” Harry said pulling out several files from the desk in the drawing room. “You look through these and see if you can make any sense out of them, and I’ll write that note to Hermione.”

“You sure you don’t want to be the one looking through these?” Charlie asked, looking unnerved at the stack. It was actually a lot larger than he thought it would be, even with Harry having somewhat warned him.

“It’s fine,” Harry brushed him off. “I’ll be quick, promise,” he said turning away from Charlie and back to the desk, pulling out some parchment and inking a quill.

Charlie took the folders back to the sofa and set them down on the coffee table. He opened the first, wondering how he was going to work organizing it all… and nearly jumped back up in shock.

“Harry?” he called. “Do you remember any of the names the goblins mentioned?”

“Not really,” Harry answered, distractedly. “I really did end up tuning them out and just doing what they told me to until I could get back home and crash.”

Charlie closed his eyes and focused on breathing evenly for several minutes. Licking his lips, he began again, better preparing for the shock. He managed to locate six families in the pile before Harry finished and came to join him.

“So, how bad is it?” he asked nervously, studying Charlie’s face.

‘‘Bad’? I don’t know if I would call it ‘bad’,” Charlie told him, looking up at his amazing fiancée. “Will it cause a bit of a stir, yeah, probably.”

Sighing, Harry fell into position next to him on the sofa. “Okay, so what’ve we got?”

“These are all separate families,” Charlie explained, pointing to the six piles he’d started. “This, I’m still going through.”

“You know, none of this is going to make much sense to me,” Harry informed. “If I didn’t already tell Narcissa I’d do it, I’d leave it for her to sort. I’m sure it would make more sense to her than it does to me.”

“Hey, don’t rule me out as useless,” Charlie ordered, poking him in the side. “I might not have paid the best of attention, but I did learn some of the old family lessons.”

“Really?” Harry asked surprised. “I didn’t think, I mean, Ron never talks about any of that stuff.”
“Well, he wouldn’t would he? He never had to sit through any of those lessons. Mum was grooming me and Bill to take over the families, but by the time Ron and Ginny were old enough to start those lessons, well, let’s just same Mum was run more than a little haggard chasing the twins around. I think Percy might have gotten some of them, but I don’t know for sure.”

“I guess that makes sense, if she was hoping you or Percy would step in for the Prewitt family.”

“Yeah. I didn’t get it at the time, but that’s what Mum was doing—grooming us to be little lords. Well, to the best of her ability.” Charlie lapsed of into thought, and Harry let him, reaching for the next file on the original pile.

“I think this says… Sin-wolf? Sine-wolf?” Harry attempted, squinting at the name.

“Cynewulf is on the third pile to your left,” Charlie told him, shaking himself free of his memories. “So far, I think I’ve identified Witte-Wigheard, Holingberry, Cynewulf, Meath, Clardge, and Peverell,” he said watching Harry closely.

“Mmn, okay,” Harry huffed. “Let’s see if we can sort the rest then?”

In the end, the goblins had given into Harry’s care eleven families. Harry seemed more put out than anything—afterall, that meant a total of thirteen families he was responsible for, not including Charlie’s Prewitt ties. Charlie was more in awe at some of the names he recognized.

“Charlie, I think we should talk about children.”

“Well, it’s a little late now to ask me if I want kids,” the redhead tried to tease, but Harry stared him down. “Okay, fine. What do you want to talk about?”

“I don’t want to be pregnant for the rest of my life,” Harry huffed, just a tad dramatically, but he felt totally justified. “I mean, that’s thirteen families! Fourteen total the goblins expect us to provide for!”

“It’s not that bad,” Charlie tried to sooth, but Harry wasn’t having it.

“You’re not the one pregnant!”

“Well, I could be,” he countered, shutting Harry down just a bit. “I mean, I’ve never really given it much thought for myself, but, hey! I’m willing to give it a go. It’s only fair, right?” he continued, swallowing his nerves.

“That’s…” Harry began, before shaking his head to clear it and starting over again. “I want kids, yes, but I don’t want that many kids, I don’t think. And I definitely know I don’t want to go through ten plus pregnancies.”

“Oh. So we figure out another way,” Charlie replied.

“I think… I think I already have,” Harry hesitated. “The muggles have a procedure, well, several procedures, but the one I’m thinking of is called artificial insemination.”

“That sounds….”

“Yeah, it’s, it’s basically where they help women who are struggling to have a baby get pregnant. There’s actually a whole lot of things muggles can do to help people have kids. Anyway, I’d already prepared, in my vault, before last year you see, in case, you know, something happened to me. I didn’t want to be the last Potter ever, so I sort of…. Well, provided the resources, I guess you could say. And then, when I figured out I was gay, well… Then I started thinking about what I would do
to get some kids eventually, when I was, you know, ready to settle down and start a family. Obviously I didn’t know then that it was possible for wizards to get pregnant, so I was thinking I would need the help of some woman, and well, that wasn’t really appealing to me, so I figured I would have to find a surrogate mother to, well, basically, grow my babies.”

“Wow. That’s…” Charlie was at a loss for words.

“Yeah, well, as it turns out, that wasn’t necessary, was it?” Harry asked, rubbing his baby belly. “At least not for the Potter line, and I think I might be okay with two more, you know, for the Black and Prewitt lines, but… I don’t know. I really can’t see myself being pregnant and.pop out baby after baby just to help keep some of these other families that I’ve heard nothing about before going.”

“But you might be willing to use a… a… surrogate mother?” Charlie asked, trying to make sure he was following along.

“Well there’s that or there’s…” Harry hesitated again. “Some people really want to have kids, but for whatever reason, they can’t, so they go to a special clinic and, well, they find a donor to help father their baby, right? The guy doesn’t have anything at all to do with it—he just, leaves a donation and then walks away, right? I could do that, but I could, I don’t know, put a trace out to find any kids, right? And that way, they can be raised with a loving mum and dad, and we could be, like, uncles or something, coming in to explain and teach him or her about magic, right?”

“I don’t know, Harry. I mean, it’s obvious you’ve thought of this some, but, I’ve never heard of any of this before. Plus, wouldn’t you feel weird, knowing you have a kid out there somewhere but someone else was taking care of them?”

Harry sighed and slumped back against the sofa. “I don’t know. Maybe. But you can’t tell me the thought of trying to take care of fourteen kids isn’t daunting,” he challenged.

“Well, it’s not like we’d have to have them all at once, right? I mean, wizards live a good long age. Just look at my parents—they didn’t start having kids till they were much older.”

A bell chimed, and Layla popped in to tell them Narcissa had arrived with the seamstress.

“Let’s shelve this topic for now and revisit it later,” Charlie suggested.

“Yeah, all right,” Harry agreed in time for Narcissa to bustle into the room.

***
“Hello, dears,” the blonde called. “I hope we’re not interrupted anything private. Charles, it’s so good to see you home again.”

“Madame Malfoy, a pleasure,” Charlie returned, standing and escorting her to a seat. “And accompanying you?”

“Margret is one of the best seamstresses in the kingdom, and the only one I would ever trust with my men,” Narcissa answered. “Now that you’re here, we can get you measured for your robes, too. Don’t worry about anything else. I’ve got it taken care of. We just need to devise a pattern for displaying all your house affiliations.”

“Well, I’ve only got the two that I’m aware of, but Harry’s managed to con the goblins thirteen,” he teased.

Narcissa blinked, slowly, and then rapidly as she tried to process what he said. Finally, she had to clarify. “Did you say thirteen families?”

“Yes, I was quite surprised myself,” Charlie confessed. “I knew he’d gotten something more this summer, but I didn’t want to seem like I was prying. Well that’s Harry for you—never wanting to make a fuss or stir, but always somehow managing to do the seemingly impossible.”

“I heard that,” Harry groused.

“And you know it’s true, so hush,” Charlie returned, pulling Harry up against him and dropping a kiss atop his head. “Now, Margret, is it? Harry tells me you were successful in finding us some robes to wear New Year’s Day, but there’s still a bit of finagling to do?”

“Ah, yes, my lord,” the seamstress stuttered, stepping forward but still shooting wide-eyed glances towards Harry.

“None of that,” Charlie admonished. “I’m Charlie, this is Harry. No lording it about.” He winked at her. “Now, let’s see if we can work around the newest tangle Harry’s provided us, hmm?”

“Of course,” Margret replied with a half-aborted curtsy. “Seeing as you’re here my lor-Charlie,” she forcibly corrected herself. “Perhaps we should start with your robes?”

“Fine by me. What do you need?”

In much of an echo of the previous evening, Charlie stood apart as he was measured by a diligent length of tape. Then he was dressed up like a mannequin doll as those magical bits of cloth wrapped around him, changing into the length and color and fabric preselected. He studied his reflection in the mirror.

“It’s a good length,” Narcissa told him, “But I think you might want to tweak the color a bit now that I see it on. We were going with a blue and silver embroidered dragon along the back.”

“Blue and bronze,” Charlie corrected. “A rich, deep indigo blue, and the base should be lighter. More of a satin white.” As he spoke, the seamstress spelled the cloth to match, and he nodded his approval. “And the dragon should be a Norwegian Ridgeback. Can you do that?”

“Norwegian?” Narcissa questioned, shooting a glance towards Harry. “Not a Hungarian Horntail or
Welsh Green? I would think those two would have significance—”

“So does the Norwegian,” Charlie told her, smiling over at Harry. “First time I met Harry, he was helping smuggle a Norwegian Ridgeback out of Hogwarts.”

Harry grinned sheepishly while Narcissa just blinked at them. The seamstress cut amused glances between the two men.

“Now,” Charlie said, returning them to their purpose. “I’d like a split robe with an off-centered seam, fastenings on the right, family crests on the left. You have access to the Weasley and Prewitt crests, I believe?”

“Yes, sir, that shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Good. Feel free to embellish how you see fit, make it look appropriate for all the pomp and circumstance, but both Harry’s and mine should be comfortable and with easy access.”

“Of course, sir. I think I can have this ready for you in plenty of time. You’ll look smashing, I’m sure of it.”

“Thanks. Now that’s done, let’s tackle the harder bit,” Charlie said, stepping away from the mirror and motioning Harry forward. “What have you come up with so far?”

And with that, the focus of the rest of the evening turned to Harry. Charlie vetoed the choice of green in his robes, suggesting a rich burgundy red instead. He approved of the phoenix design, and pointed out the reds and golds better suited a phoenix anyway. When it came time to figure out how to incorporate the family crests, he actively debated with Narcissa how the crests should be arranged and in which order of importance.

It was Margret the seamstress who came up with a solution they all could agree upon: The Peverell crest would take center dominance over the left pectoral, since it was the most historic family name, and indeed many of the surviving families could trace their ancestry to some Peverell somewhere in their family line. The Peverell crest would then be connected by golden chains to the four other predominate family crests: Potter, Black, Ravensdale, and Meath. Potter would lead first, followed by Black, since those were the two families Harry felt most strongly connected to. The remaining families—Bursnell, Edeson, Hollingberry, Witte-Wigheard, Clardge, Segarus, Cynewulf, and Aethelgard—would then form a semi-ring up along the collar of the robe in reverse order of newest / most recent family to oldest / most ancient family.

The entire ordeal had taken over an hour, and although Harry hadn’t participated at all in the heated debates and arguments, he found himself exhausted. Therefore, he was extremely grateful when Layla popped in with a small tray of hot chocolate and digestives.

“Master Harry needs to be eating something,” the elf proclaimed, shooting a disapproving look towards the other occupants in the room. “Will Master Harry’s guests be staying much longer?”

“No,” Charlie grinned at her. “We’re just finishing up now. In fact, if there’s nothing else, I will escort you ladies to the floo?”

“Layla can be doing that,” the elf supplied.

“That’s all right, Layla. Thanks, but I’ve got it,” Charlie told her. “Harry, was there anything else you can think of?”

“No, not really,” Harry murmured, luxuriating in the smooth, rich hot chocolate.
“Okay, I’ll be right back,” he said before motioning the women ahead of him.

“A few other things, before you leave,” Charlie continued on quietly to the women once they were clear of the drawing room. Narcissa shot him a calculating look, but the seamstress just turned to him attentively.

“I do not believe Narcissa would bring you into our home if you were not trustworthy or discrete——” he began, darting a confirming look towards the blonde. “Harry and I will both need some additional items for our wardrobe in the coming months. May I trust you will be capable of fulfilling these needs?”

“Of course, my lord, it would be an honor to continue to serve you and Lord Potter, er, Peve, er, Black—ah”

Charlie grinned. “Potter’s fine if you must lord-us anything. He’ll always be Harry Potter, no matter what else he might take on. Good, I’m glad to hear that. In that case, I would like to put in an additional order with you, for once you’ve finished with the wedding robes, of course.”

“Of course,” she repeated, somewhat weakly as if in disbelief. “Whatever it is you and Lord Potter require, I would be most happy to supply.”

“Great. Glad to hear it,” Charlie replied, beginning once again to lead the women towards the downstairs floo. “First, any scraps left over from the robes, will you give to our elves? I believe they would enjoy making some new outfits from the finery. Second, Harry will be need some comfortable paternity robes very soon. I think it’s safe to say you understand Harry’s and my style tends towards the more relaxed, even mugglish fashion?”

“Oh,” the seamstress blushed. “Congratulations, my lord.”

“Yeah, we’re pretty stoked,” Charlie grinned at her. “Well, Harry’s still a bit put out,” he teased with a wink. “I might be needing some paternity robes myself in the future. Still, well, I’m going to need some robes that aren’t dragon scorched or dung drenched. Again, simple, neat, but tasteful.”

“Oh, the seamstress blushed. “Congratulations, my lord.”

“I think that’s about it for now, but we’ll probably be in touch. You understand, Harry and I value our privacy and honor those who keep our confidence?”

“You may be assured, my lord, that Ede and Ravenscroft, Magical Branch, will serve you with the upmost discretion.”

Charlie blinked, before looking over questioningly towards Narcissa who sniffed at him, as if to say, ‘What else but the very best?’ Charlie shook his head and grinned. “It’s a pleasure to have met you Margret,” he concluded, holding out a hand to the seamstress. “I look forward to using your services in the future.”

“My lord,” the seamstress curtsies before turning to Narcissa. “Madame Malfoy.” And then she was gone.

Charlie turned to Narcissa before she, too, could disappear in the flames. “Ede and Ravenscroft? Really?”

“But of course,” the Lady Malfoy replied before she, too, stepped into the floo.

Charlie shook his head and turned to leave, only to be confronted with one angry house elf. “Hello,
Layla,” he greeted nervously.

“Master Charlie needs be remembering he be Master now,” the elf reprimanded. “Needs be acting like Master!”

“Ah, but if I let you lead them out, I wouldn’t have gotten to make my special requests, now would I?”

The elf scowled.

“Do you not want the extra fabrics? I know Harry and I would be very pleased if you and Kreacher dressed up with us for our wedding,” he cajoled. “And now that you’re here at Grimauld and not at Rozengard, well, wouldn’t you like some fabric that represents your new role? You are, after all, the main house elf to Harry and myself, next to Kreacher, of course, who is the senior Black house elf at Grimauld Place. But Harry and I, we’re more than just Blacks, even though we’re both of Black blood. We’re building a new family, hopefully.”

“Master Harry and Master Charlie both be strong wizards. They be having many children,” the elf prophesized. “Yous be needing more house elves to properly care for family. Layla not enough,” she determined. “Layla be finding more elves to help Master Harry and Master Charlie properly.”

“Not too many,” Charlie cautioned. “But one or two might be okay. It is just Harry and me right now. And Grimauld Place isn’t as big as Rozengard, don’t forget.”

“Layla be knowing her family needs,” the elf criticized. “And right now, Master Harry be needing his husband,” she added, shooing him out of the kitchen. “Layla be sending up afters to the drawing room. Then, she be setting up a nice hot bath for Master Harry.”

“Sounds great. Thanks, Layla,” Charlie grinned, obediently heading up the stairs and back towards the first floor and drawing room. He paused considering, just outside the door, and then, taking a fortifying breath, he determinedly waved his wand several times before sliding it back into its holster and continuing in.

“Hey, you didn’t eat too many of those biscuits, did you?” he teased as Harry hastily brushed crumbs off his robes. “Layla’s sending up the apple crisp she told us about earlier.”

Harry groaned. “I’m so going to get fat.”

“We’ll just have to come up with a way to burn all those calories off, won’t we?” Charlie purred, crawling up over Harry’s lap and snogging him senseless. Harry responded as enthusiastically as ever, his entire body reacting to Charlie’s touch.

Harry groaned, slumping over and under Charlie’s onslaught. It was always such a heady rush, a tingle of electricity that starburst from each point of contact. It was intoxicating and delicious and exhilarating, and Harry wondered if he’d ever get tired of Charlie’s lovemaking. Because that’s what it was. Each and every time they came together, no matter how rushed or fumbling.

“Need you,” Charlie groaned against his lips, sucking and biting.

“Have me,” Harry offered, so readily, so easily. Why was it so easy with Charlie? He didn’t feel like a stupid kid. He felt desirable, sexy, passionate. “Please, Char.”

“Want you,” his lover gasped, fumbling at each of their trousers until their cocks sprung free. “Want to feel you inside me again, Harry.”
Harry moaned at the thought. They’d only switched the once before. It had been good, and Harry wasn’t against doing it again if that’s what Charlie wanted, but he wouldn’t deny he preferred bottoming.

“Need to feel you,” Charlie whimpered, tugging at Harry’s cock. “Need to feel this, filling me up, stretching me open. Gods, Harry, want you inside me so badly. Please say yes.”

“Yes,” Harry hissed, back arching as Charlie continued to pull at his cock. Hell if he was going to argue with the man who had a grip on his most tenderest of body parts, even if he wanted to. Which he didn’t, so it was all good. All so very good, he thought as Charlie shuffled over him and suddenly sank down, right onto his cock.

Harry’s cry echo and mated with Charlie’s own as the redhead proceed to ride him. He wasn’t even aware of speaking. “So hot, so tight, so goooooood.”

“Gods, yes, Harry,” Charlie moaned. “So good, so very good, filling me up. Mmm, so deep, gods, Harry, you’re so deep inside me. Uhn, not enough. Want more, Harry. Need to feel you. Fuck, Harry, please, make me feel you. Please, Harry, please. Need it, need it so bad. Need you to fuck me. Need you, Harry, please,” the redhead continued to moan.

He pulled Harry up off the sofa, so he was sitting up with Charlie still in his lap, riding him, moaning and groaning. “Come on, Harry. Fuck me. I’m yours, for the taking. I give myself willingly, freely. Please, Harry, take me. Show me you want me, too. Show me you want me even half as much as I want you, Harry. Need to feel it, feel you, please.”

He was sure he was going to be in pain for it tomorrow, but when Charlie fell back against the sofa, Harry followed him down. And suddenly, it was Charlie who was folded in half, Charlie’s legs that were spread and dangling, curling around Harry’s arms and shoulders as the dark-haired man began to thrust and pound into his lover.

Charlie howled his appreciation, spurring Harry on harder and faster with each dirty plea that poured from his lips. Each entreaty to fuck him harder and faster and deeper and more…

“God, I’m going to come,” Harry gasped, sweat pouring from him, adding to the slick slapping of their bodies joining. “Shit, Charlie, I can’t—I’m going to come!”

“Do it!” Charlie commanded. “Fill me up, Harry. Come inside me. I want to feel you, inside me, please!”

And really, who was Harry to argue with such a requested. He shouted out his release, jerking and spasming into aftershocks of pleasure as his entire body seemed to flare all at once, leaving him shivering and shocky in the aftermath. Beneath him, Charlie cried out, and Harry moaned as he felt the spasming around his sensitive cock, but pleased his lover had found his release, too.

It took minutes, where both just laid there, content to wait out the afterglow of such an intense joining. But finally, Harry shifted, just enough to slip completely free and move into a more comfortable spot. Charlie mewed, and he was tempted to laugh at him, but Harry manfully reined in the temptation.

“Mind telling me what that was about?” he finally worked up the energy to ask.

Charlie took his hand and drew it down towards his waist. At first, Harry thought he was going to his crotch, where his flaccid penis lay curled up and sated in its nest of ginger curls, but Charlie’s descent stopped before it could reach his groin. Instead, he pressed Harry’s hand against his lower
stomach and held it there.

“I want you to know, that no matter how many families you may be responsible for,” Charlie began, “that it’s ultimately our family, and you don’t need to go looking for other women to have your babies.”

“Charlie? What are you talking about?” Harry asked, frowning as he leaned up so he could look down at him.

“I don’t like it,” Charlie told him. “The thought of any other person having your child. If anyone’s going to have your babies, Harry Potter, it’s better best be me. And forget some stranger raising your child. If you don’t want to get pregnant again, that’s fine. If our magic isn’t strong enough for me to get pregnant naturally, then I’ll go on potions until I can conceive and carry as many children as you need to repopulate your families. But no one else, Harry. No one else but me, and you, and the children we create together.”

“You’re crazy.”

“You think so? Maybe.” Charlie closed his eyes and sighed. “But you know what? The thought that I could be pregnant right now, that you could’ve just knocked me up…?” Blue eyes cracked open, and this time, Charlie did move his hand to cover his groin. “It gets me excited.”

And the truth was there, stirring under Harry’s palm.

“How about it, Harry?” Charlie purred, chest rumbling and sending shivers up through Harry’s torso. “You think you’re powerful enough to have knocked me up? All that cum you just filled me up with… think we made a baby?”

“You’re crazy,” Harry repeated, not having any other words.

“Why? Because I want you to want only me?” Charlie growled, pulling Harry up over him so the smaller man was splayed atop him like a living blanket. “Because I want to be the father of all your children and not just some of them? How is that crazy, Harry?”

“Even if it was just one kid,” Harry sputtered. “Just one! You’re talking about fourteen kids, Charlie. That’s insane! And that’s not even taking into consideration if any of those children end up being girls!”

“Forty years.”

“What?”

“Forty years. That’s how long I figure I’ve got of good reproductively. One kid every five years would only give us eight. Every four years, brings that number up to ten. Every three years, thirteen. Every two years, twenty. See. It’s doable.”

“If you don’t mind being pregnant for the rest of your life!” Harry shouted, squirming to get free. “What’s so bad about surrogacy?” he demanded. “You just pay some woman to have a baby for you. It’s not like there’s any sex or anything. Is that what has you acting so weird?”

“No. Yes. A little,” Charlie admitted. “I don’t know. Just the thought of anyone else getting to have your baby… I don’t like it. Especially not if someone else got to raise your child.”

“What if we both went and visited one of the clinics I was telling you about?” Harry offered. “Would that make you feel a little bit better if you actually got to talk with the doctors and they could explain
how it works?”

Charlie looked away. “You’re not going to change your mind about this, are you? No matter what I say.”

“Charlie…”

“No, forget it, whatever,” the ginger said, pushing to get up from the sofa and retrieve his clothes. “It’s your body. Your family.”

“Charlie, wait, don’t—“

But the older man had already gathered his things and left. Harry sighed heavily, burying his fingers against his scalp and pulling at his hair. He wasn’t exactly sure what had gone wrong here, but he knew something definitely was not right. He just wished he could figure it out and fix it. He was supposed to be getting married on Thursday, after all, and it was already Sunday evening.

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Charlie bowed his head under the hot spray of water, wondering what the fuck had just happened. What the hell had come over him, to press at Harry like that? It wasn’t as if the other man didn’t have a valid point. It was a bit crazy to contemplate trying to have fourteen babies, especially when, if push came to shove, they could just bequeath multiple family titles to several children. It had happened before. Sure, there was an increased risk of those family titles being lost, but look at the situation they were in now? Because someone, somewhere, didn’t designate an heir. Their best solution was trying to provide an individual for each family. Multiple, if possible.

But…

He wasn’t lying. The thought of another person getting to have Harry’s babies… it was like dragon bile, boiling up his insides. What was wrong with him? Was he seriously willing to give up his career to become a brood mare? Harry was right, it was crazy. He’d never considered getting pregnant himself before—it just wasn’t his style. And yet, here he was, not even half an hour ago, begging Harry to knock him up. Hell! Even now, the idea of him already being pregnant was arousing!

He groaned as his cock stirred to life once more. What the hell was wrong with him? It was like he’d become some sex-obsessed walking hormone. He hadn’t even been this bad when he was a teenager! Now he couldn’t go five minutes without thinking about sex. Seriously, something had to be wrong.

A tentative knock sounded on the bathroom door, and Harry’s voice called through not even seconds later. “Charlie?”

He sighed, leaning forward to rest his forehead against the cooler tile.

“Charlie? May I come in?”

He groaned. Again, he was hard again. Angrily he turned off the water and stepped out of the shower. Snatching up a heated towel from the rack, he tied it around his waist before jerking the door open. Steam billowed out, fogging up Harry’s glasses.

“You’re right,” he said. “I’m crazy. Something’s wrong, but I don’t know what.”

Harry frowned, biting his lip as he leaned back. “You’re having second thoughts, then? About us
getting married?”

“No,” Charlie ground out. “Definitely not.”

“It’s all right if you are. I’d understand.”

“Harry, listen to me,” Charlie growled, grapping for Harry’s shoulders and forcing the other man to look at him. “I’m not having second or third or fourth thoughts about us getting married. I want to marry you. I want to spend the rest of my life with you. But I’m telling you, you’re right—something’s off. With me. It’s like, all I can think about right now is sex and babies, and, yeah, all right—sex is a pretty great thing to be thinking about, but… not to this degree. Where, seriously, even right now I’m thinking about dropping to my knees and sucking on your cock and here we are, trying to have a serious conversation.”

Harry’s eyes fluttered, and he swayed just a bit, having to put a hand out against the door frame to steady himself.

“See?” Charlie accused. “You’re feeling it, too, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I think,” Harry swallowed hard, eyes still a bit unfocused. “I’ve never been… been this… this sexual,” he finally stuttered out, licking dry lips. “But, it’s like, all of a sudden…”

“Yes, exactly. What’s up with that?”

“I don’t know. Maybe we could ask someone? Andromeda, maybe? She’s a healer. She might know something.”

“But not right now. It’s late.” Charlie forced himself to breath steadily. “Think we can last the night without jumping each other again?”

“Do you think you really might’ve gotten pregnant already?”

Charlie sighed. “It’s possible, yeah, but no. Even with you being super-powerful and all, it was only this one time. The other time, we were using the anticonception spelled cream.”

“It only took the one time with me,” Harry pointed out. Frustrated, Charlie scrubbed at his face.

“I don’t know. If we’re going to talk to Andromeda about this anyway, we can ask her to do a check on me, just to be sure.”

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Andromeda blinked at them.

Sitting in the front parlor of White Horse Lane the next morning, squirming on the setae, Harry tried not to look guilty. Right beside him, Charlie attempted the same. They had requested an audience earlier that morning, before Layla had even had a chance to try and feed them. The elder Black woman had responded positively, chiding them for even bothering to ask before attempting to visit. Now, here they were, only two hours after waking, trying to explain their concerns to the respected healer.

“You’re worried you’re having too much sex,” Andromeda finally summed up bluntly, causing both boys to blush deeply and look anywhere but at her or each other.
“It’s not just the sex,” Charlie sighed, rubbing his palms. “I mean, yeah, it’s the sex, too, but it’s more than that.”

“But you’ve actually attempted to not have sex and yet it still happened?”

“I wouldn’t say we’ve actually attempted not to,” Harry admitted, coloring deeper. “It just, it just keeps happening. One or the other will start something, even something that should be, I don’t know, innocent!” Harry exclaimed. “Simple, like a hug! And then the next we know, we’re snogging, and then more,” he finished with a mumble.

“And this upsets you?” Andromeda asked. “It seems to me that you are both healthy young men who are enjoying the benefits of attraction.”

“And you don’t think there’s anything off or funny about it?” Charlie followed. “Even with, with this preoccupation with pregnancy and babies and all?”

“Charlie, Harry’s pregnant. Of course you’re going to be thinking about babies and pregnancy, if only subconsciously,” Andromeda told him. “It’s natural for you to be wondering what it’s like, what he’s going through, even, maybe, feeling a little jealousy.”

“But I’ve never wanted to be pregnant before!” he protested. “No matter how much I may have wanted kids. And last night? Harry’s right. I was acting pretty crazy and not normal for me!”

“And you think, what? That you’re under some magical compulsion to suddenly want children?” she asked him, looking towards Harry to see what his reaction was to all this. The younger man looked grim and uncomfortable. It was only to be expected.

“He was pretty crazy,” Harry confirmed. “He was talking about having lots of babies, like, a baby every two years for the next forty years!”

Andromeda blinked again, trying to organize her thoughts. “It would be difficult and extremely unlikely to maintain such a schedule, even if you were female,” she cautioned.

“But Harry wants to go and knock up some unknown women!” Charlie lashed out.

“I wouldn’t be knocking them up,” Harry protested. “I wouldn’t even be involved at all in the process! It’s all clinical!”

“What’s this?”

Harry groaned and fell back against the settee cushions. “That goblins are mean and nasty and basically made me do an inheritance test this summer, and somehow I gained control of, like, twenty families, and I don’t see how it would be possible to have enough kids to fill in that many families, so I was thinking of using this muggle technique call artificial insemination and some surrogate mothers to help me birth the kids, right? I’d even thought of maybe just donating to some clinics for people who are having a hard time having kids of their own, but Charlie,” he added, gesturing angrily at his fiancée, “had a big hissy fit about it last night, and went on this rant about he’s the only one who would be having my babies and how he may be pregnant right now.”

“Well.” And didn’t that just sum up Andromeda’s reaction as she tried to process everything that had come spewing forth from Harry’s mini-rant and possibly piece together some of the puzzle. “You are the head of multiple families?” she finally decided to start there. “More than just the Potter and Black families, I mean.”

“Yes,” Harry huffed. “Still not sure how the goblins thought I was the best one to take over these
families, but they gave them to me anyway.”

“And it isn’t twenty,” Charlie corrected calmly. “It’s actually thirteen, including the Potters and Blacks.”

“But that’s still a lot,” Harry countered, grumbling.

“Thirteen?” Andromeda breathed. “The goblins named you head of thirteen different wizarding families?”

“And we’re talking some old, ancient lines, too,” Charlie said before rattling off the list of family names. “I mean, old-time ancient, like Witte-Wigheard and Aethelgard and Cynewulf,” he added, feeling a bit justified in how her eyes widened in shock. “And if those weren’t enough, the goblins even handed him the Peverells, Ravensdales, Meaths, and Hollingberrys. I’d never heard of the Bursnells or Edeson, but I’m pretty sure I remember something about the Clardges and Segaruses.”

“And the goblins confirmed this?” Andromeda demanded in disbelief, looking from Charlie to Harry. “They gave you the family rings?”

“All but the Potter and Black rings are sitting in my vault right now,” Harry confirmed glumly.

“I apologize,” she said solemnly. “If Harry truly is the head of thirteen families—so many ancient and long thought dormant families—then it very well might be magic itself trying to compel you into fulfilling the requirements for each family.”

“You mean magic wants me to be pregnant?” Charlie breathed, most than a little disbelieving.

“Quite possibly, yes,” Andromeda told him. “And you must understand, there is a reason why it just isn’t done for one witch or wizard to hold mantle over more than one or two families. By olden laws of customs, Harry would be well within his right to acquire a wife or consort for each family line. In fact, it is something I would hasten to suggest even now.”

“But I don’t want a wife!” Harry protested. “And, besides, Charlie and I are getting married in three more days.”

“Yes, I’m aware,” Andromeda returned drily. “Which is why I would recommend arranging for contracts and agreements. You mentioned artificial insemination. I’m aware of the procedure, although I know of no magicals who have performed the procedure. In this situation, however, I agree with Harry. It is a worthwhile pursuit.”

“You would condone his having children with other women?” Charlie barked.

“No,” Andromeda cut him off. “I would condone other women carrying his children,” she corrected. “At least ten, if not more different women, who would carry the babes to full-term safely. More safely than either one of you could guarantee. And if handled correctly, it would powerful connection now and for future generations.”

“What are you talking about?” Charlie hissed angrily.

“Think of it: how many witches would jump at the chance to be the future dowager of the Meath Family reborn? Or the Ravensdale Family? How many would prostrate themselves to tie their name to Peverell?” Andromeda asked. “Not only will it strengthen Harry’s standing politically, it will strength the bloodlines.”

“How so?” Harry frowned, feeling queasy but somewhat vindicated, too, that Andromeda thought
his idea had merit.

“Right now, you and Charlie stand at the head of three families: Potter, Black, and Prewitt. That means for the next three to four generations, no matter who your children marry, they will all have close ties to each other because both you and Charlie are their common ancestor. If you extended that to all of your inherited families, Harry, you would be condemning a large percentage of the wizarding world’s future population. But if you were to choose different witches for each of the other family lines, then you will be opening up the blood lines, not closing them down.”

“You mean, I give them a better genetic chance,” Harry mused.

“That is a muggle science word, yes? But if my understanding of it is correct, then yes. You would give your future children and multiple families a better genetic chance if you impregnate multiple witches. I say witches, of course, because it is more difficult and more intimacy is involved for a wizard to successfully conceive. I do not believe the muggle procedure of artificial conception would work.”

“No, I don’t think it would, either,” Harry squirmed. “So, really, it’s just finding enough girls who would be willing to have a baby for me, right?”

“I don’t like it,” Charlie groused.

“You wouldn’t,” Andromeda reassured him. “I’m sorry I underestimated your concerns earlier. You are probably feeling an incredible compulsion right now to conceive a child and prove yourself fertile to the family magics. They would only be appeased briefly, however. No, it is best to think of potential mothers to your future children. But first, you should focus on your wedding. After you are married is soon enough to plan your Dynasty.”

“Dynasty,” Harry sputtered.

“But of course,” Andromeda replied, amused. “After all, you will be the father to a good many of the revived houses, and Potter blood will tie them all together!”

Harry groaned and collapsed onto a still unhappy Charlie.

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“Harry!” Hermione squealed excitedly, rushing up the front entry way staircase at Rozengard to greet him with another enthusiastic hug. “When you sent along the invitation for Mum and Dad, well, they weren’t too convinced at first, but they finally agreed to come. Thank you for thinking of them. And this place,” she gushed. “It’s absolutely amazing! It’s like right out of a fairy tale!”

“It is pretty amazing, huh?” Harry agreed, hugging her back. “Thanks for coming, Mione.”

“And miss out on your wedding? I don’t think so,” the young woman scoffed. “Besides, I’ve heard so much about the treasures of old manors. Even Dad didn’t want to miss out on an opportunity to explore a bit.”

Harry grinned, but was prevented from replying by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Granger. At the bottom of the stairs, the coach that had been sent into town to collect the Grangers rolled away towards the stables.

“Mr. Granger, Mrs. Granger,” Harry greeted. “It’s a pleasure to see you again. Allow me to welcome you to Rozengard.”

“It’s enchanting, Harry,” Mrs. Granger replied, smiling at him a bit mechanically but shaking his hand agreeably. “I never would have thought of you living in such a place.”

“Oh, I don’t, actually,” Harry answered awkwardly. “This is just one of the Black Properties that I recently inherited. If you’ll follow me in, I understand you had a long drive.”

“Traffic was god’s awful,” Mr. Granger lamented. “Wasn’t even sure we’d make it here before dark.”

“Yes, well, I’m glad you did,” Harry responded painfully. “Would you care for something to drink? Or perhaps you’d prefer to see your rooms first?”

“Yes, that would be nice,” Mrs. Granger answered. “Sitting in an auto for hours on end is surprisingly exhausting.”

“Certainly. I’ll just—”

Harry didn’t have a chance to say what he would or wouldn’t do, because right then, one of house elves that had taken to following Harry and Charlie around popped up right at Harry’s knee, bobbling and bouncing.

“Mack, here, Master Harry,” the creature announced. “I’s be taking your guests to their rooms.”

“Thanks, Mack,” Harry grinned down at the eager little elf. He was one of the two elves Layla had personally introduced to Charlie and him yesterday afternoon when they had decided to stay at Rozengard until after the new year. Of course, Mack had seemed more likely to attach himself as Charlie’s personal elf than as Harry’s, but that was a moot point, really. Since returning to the ancestral Black manor, all of the Black elves had been more than eager to assist and anticipate their needs and wants.
“Not a problem, Master Harry. Mack is liking to help any which way he can!” The bulbous house elf turned to the stunned Grangers and snapped his fingers, disappearing their luggage. “Follow Mack! I’s knows the way! Come along, then, come along!”

Harry watched them go with a sense of relief that Hermione was here now. She was the last of today’s guests to arrive, mostly likely due the incredible amount of travel time it took thanks to her two muggle parents. But that was it. Tomorrow the last of the stay-over guests would arrive. They would celebrate and see out the old year in fine style. And then… the day after that, Harry would be getting married.

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“All right, spill,” Hermione demanded when she managed to corner him mostly alone in the front parlor after dinner.

Luna and Charlie were on one of the sofas by the fireplace off in one of the side salons, discussing magical creatures; Ron had wheedled Hermione’s dad into a game of wizard’s chess in the downstairs game room, and the muggle man was thoroughly engaged. Neville was reading a book about some type of plant he’d found in the downstairs library, while Andromeda and Mrs. Granger chatted quite amicably in one of the lady’s parlors. Remus had gone to tuck Teddy in for the night and never returned. The remainder of their guest list was expected to join them at Rozengard sometime the day next or the following morning for New Year’s and the wedding festivities.

“What’s up, Hermione?” Harry asked, looking away from the fireplace that he’d been half-staring at for the last half-hour.

“Don’t give me that,” his best friend huffed, budging him over and plopping down beside him. “I know something’s wrong. Did you and Charlie have a fight?”

“What? No! What would make you say that?” Harry squawked, not quite hiding a flinch.

“For starters, the way you and he have been practically avoiding each other,” Hermione began. “Then there are the angry hurt looks you keep throwing at one another when you think no one’s noticing. Oh, and let’s not forget the chilled conversation at dinner,” she concluded.

“So, fess up,” she prompted again. “What happened?”

Harry sighed and slumped back against the cushions again. Slumping was going to become his trademark signature move if this kept up. “It’s not my fault, you understand,” he started his defense. “Really, if any one’s to blame, it’s the goblins. They’re the ones that made me do that inheritance test.”

“The same test you asked me to take?” she asked, surprised.

“Yeah.”

“I don’t understand. What did it show? And why would you want me to take one anyway? I mean, I’m a muggleborn, so I don’t know what you’d expect for me to inherit from the wizarding world.”

“That’s just it,” Harry practically shouted. “So was my mum, but I’ve somehow wound up the head of thirteen families, and I didn’t inherit them all from my dad, did I? If I did, then other people would have inherited those houses long before now, right?”

“Wait a minute, Harry. You’re not making sense. What do you mean you inherited thirteen families? I thought you were the head of the Black and Potter families. How can you head any more families?”
“Well, I’m not supposed to be, am I? But the goblins went and gave me all these rings to try on and the next thing I know, bam! I’m the supposed head of thirteen different wizarding families. Some of which have been determined extinct or dormant for centuries, right? Only, here I come along, with my half-blooded self, and poof! Suddenly they’re not considered dead anymore. So how does that work, huh? I tell you how. It had to be my mum’s blood. It’s the only thing that makes sense to me.”

“So you want me to do the inheritance test, too, to see if some long-ago ancestor of mine was really a witch or wizard?”

“Yeah, basically. Yep.”

“Well, okay,” Hermione nodded thoughtfully. "I can do that, and I will, like I said. It would be interesting to find out, sure, but I still don’t see why this would lead to you and Charlie fighting.”

“We’re not fighting. Not really. It’s just…” Harry sighed deeply. “So, all this old family magic that was sleeping for centuries sort of got woken up, right? By me putting on the rings? And now it’s all there, wanting to be used, but there’s no one really to use it, right? Because right now, it’s only me it recognizes as family.”

“So you’re having trouble with your magic?” Hermione concluded.

“No, not at all. You know that. My magic’s been fine all term long. Great even. Hell, if it wasn’t for being pregnant and sick, this would’ve probably been mine best school year ever.”

“So, then, what’s wrong?” Hermione asked, frowning.

“Well, it’s like I said. The magic wants to be used, but there’s only me to use it, and I don’t really need it, right, so it’s… well, it’s trying to make more people so it can be used, I guess.”

“Wait, Harry. That doesn’t make any sense. What do you mean it’s trying to “make” people?”

“Pretty much that. For the last three days, any time Charlie and I are in the same room, it’s like we can’t keep our hands off each other. But I’m already pregnant, aren’t I? And it’s not like I can get any more pregnant no matter how many times we have sex, right?”

Hermione blinked. “So, you mean by making more people…”

“Literally making people, babies, yeah.”

“Well, okay.” Her lips quirked. "So you’re both extremely randy, I take it. Will make for an enjoyable honeymoon, I should think.”

“It’s not just that. It’s… it’s affecting us,” Harry growled.

“What do you mean, Harry?” Hermione asked, frowning now. "Affecting you how?”

“Well, let’s just say there’s a reason I got pregnant this summer, right?”

“Right, I follow that.”

“But the family magic isn’t satisfied with that.”

“You mean… do you mean, the family magic is… is compelling you to impregnate Charlie?”

“That’s just it. It’s not compelling me at all. It’s compelling him!” Harry exploded. "I mean, sure, I’m a healthy bloke, same as the next. I’m not about to turn down an offer, am I? Especially from a
guy I happen to be very attracted to. But Charlie… it’s like he’s possessed. Andromeda said that it might be his magic trying to prove itself to the other family magic, that he was fertile or something. Which I think is bloody ridiculous because if he wasn’t fertile, I wouldn’t be pregnant right? But, anyway, yeah.”

“So… your family magic is compelling Charlie to prove himself by trying to get pregnant, only, that’s not, let’s say, your preferred roles? And so things are… uncomfortable between you two right now,” she summed up.

“That’s the main of it, yeah.”

“Wow. That’s pretty messed up.”

“Thanks, Hermione!”

“No, it’s just that… I mean, the thought that our own magic could influence us so strongly to do something that’s out of our norm,” she hastened to explain.

“Yeah, well it’s worse, I take it, because it’s not just one or two family magics pressuring us, is it?”

“Thirteen…” Hermione breathed. “That’s insane. How could the goblins possibly expect you to be able to handle that many families’ magics?”

“Charlie thinks they just did it to have access to those old vaults again,” Harry shared. “Even Andromeda thinks it’s outrageous. The most she’s ever heard was a lord holding title to three families.”

“Three’s a far cry from thirteen!”

“Tell me about it,” Harry grumbled.

“What exactly did they think you would do with access to thirteen families’ vaults?”

“Well, I haven’t done anything with them yet. I mean, aside from the Potter and Black portfolios, of course, I’ve pretty much ignored all the other ones. Won’t be able to do that for very much longer, though. Apparently I have to wear all my family crests on the wedding robes. Narcissa, Charlie, and the seamstress were arguing for over an hour the other night trying to figure it all out.”

“Well, you know if you need anything, Ron and I are still here to help.”

He hesitated a moment, licking his lips nervously before hedging, “There is something.”

“What?” When he didn’t say anything right away she asked again. “What is it, Harry?”

“When I thought… When I thought I might not make it, during the war, well, I didn’t want to be responsible for being the last Potter, right? I mean, if I died, then that was it, and let’s face it, it was never good odds on me surviving, not with every death eater and snatcher out there looking for us.”

“No, but we did.”

“Yeah, we did, but just barely. Well, I did something… Look, don’t laugh, all right? But I figured, even if I died, someone could make sure the Potter line lived on, right?”

“What do you mean, Harry?”

“You know how muggles have those clinics you can go to—“
“Please tell me you did not go to a sperm clinic, Harry Potter!”

“No! No, I didn’t go, but I knew about them, right? Know it’s possible to get pregnant with just, just… that,” he gestured helplessly. “Even if the bloke isn’t there or even alive anymore, right? So, I, sort of… used some potion vials and some stasis charms, and I figured, hey, if something does happen to me, you, or Luna, or Ginny might still survive, right?”

“Are you saying you put your sperm under stasis charm and stashed it somewhere in the hopes that Ginny, Luna, or I would find it and have your baby?” Hermione asked in disbelief.

“It sounds so wrong when you say it like that,” Harry grumbled. “I left letters, explaining it and all.”

“I don’t know whether I should feel more shocked, appalled, or honored… that you would even think of such a thing…” She shook her head.

“I had a lot of time to think about it, didn’t I?” he mumbled embarrassedly. “After Sirius died and I got everything because he didn’t have any other kids? I didn’t want that to happen again, did I? Only now I had more than the Potter Family to think about, it was my dad’s and my grandfather’s family lines at stake. And, like I said, my life expectancy wasn’t looking very good, even before last year.”

“Okay, so apparently you still have these vials you meant for Luna, Ginny, and I to get if… if you… if something happened to you.”

“Yeah, well, but I lived, right? And, don’t get me wrong, I’m happy to be alive, but, well, then I kind of got a clue that I wasn’t… all that attracted to girls, per say. I mean, they’re pretty, I like them, but I wasn’t really like-liking them.”

“Got it.”

“Yeah, well, the whole thing with Charlie this summer was a big clue, I guess, and I realized I probably would never be happy if I married a girl, and well, I didn’t know then that wizards could get pregnant, did I? So, I started thinking about what I would need to still have my family, whether I found another bloke I liked enough to hook up with long term or not. I figured I’d need a surrogate to, you know, have a baby for me.”

“I can see that. It’s fairly common in the muggle world for couples who are having trouble conceiving.”

“Right?” Harry continued excitedly. “So, I just figured, when the time came, and I was ready to have kids, I’d just… I’d just find the right woman to be a surrogate mother. Only, then I found out I was pregnant.”

“Which was understandably a bit of a surprise.”

“You can say that again. But, okay. Wizards can have kids. Okay, strange, but good, too. Means I wouldn’t need a surrogate just to have my family, right?”

“Right.”

“Only, it’s not just my family anymore,” Harry laughed. “It’s the Blacks and the Peverells and the Ravensdales, and Hollingberrys and the Meaths and the… I can’t even remember them all now! It’s thirteen, Hermione! Thirteen family magics that are all pressuring to be used! Thirteen families that need to be rebuilt because right now it’s just me!”

“And Charlie,” she reminded him.
“But Charlie wanted to help the Prewitt line, and I said okay, because I wasn’t thinking, was I? I was just thinking: Potter, Black, Prewitt? I could probably do three kids, couldn’t I? But it’s not three kids, Hermione. It’s at least thirteen. Fourteen now with the Prewitt line thrown in, too. It’s fourteen boys!”

“That is quite a bit.”

“I thought he was joking,” Harry half laughed, half-sobbed.

“What?”

“Charlie, he said, the other night, he told me that he figured he had forty more good reproductive years,” he repeated with a snort. “Forty years… and then he did the math, Hermione. He did the math! Forty years, having one kid every five years would only be 8 kids in forty years. Having one kid every other year would be twenty kids, and again, that’s not allowing for any girls. I don’t want to be pregnant for the next forty years, Hermione.”

“No, I should think not,” she agreed. “But, Harry, what are you going to do? Can you give back any of those family rings?”

“I don’t think it works that way, Hermione. No, I tried… I explained to Charlie my plan, about how if something happened to me there’s the muggle process of artificial insemination, right? Well, I figured, we could still use it, and then neither one of us would have to worry about being pregnant all the time, right? Great idea, right?”

“I take it Charlie did not agree?”

“No! He got all broody and possessive and said that he would be the only one having my babies!” he choked out a hysterical, wet laugh. “Charlie doesn’t even want to be pregnant—never has. Sure he wanted kids, same as me, but he never thought he’d get the chance. Apparently the wizarding world has no alternative to artificial insemination yet.”

“No, they wouldn’t. In some regards they’re very behind the muggle world, especially when it comes to science and technology.”

“I know, right. So, anyway, he went off about anyone else having my kids, and we fought, and then we sort of made up, but by that point Charlie realized something was wrong, and we went and talked with Andromeda yesterday morning, and that’s how we kind of figured out about the whole family magics thing pressuring to be used and how it’s effecting Charlie, and, anyway, we’ve been trying to avoid being alone together because every time we are, we end up having sex and Charlie goes all crazy about me putting my baby in him, and… it’s just… it’s a mess, Hermione.”

“Wow.”

“Oh, very helpful there, Hermione. Thanks ever so much.”

“Well, I mean, what can I say? It’s a lot to take in,” she defended herself. “You tell me you’re the head of thirteen families, not just two, and that magic is pressuring you and Charlie into have lots of hot sex, but specifically sex that can get him pregnant and he’s basically begging you to knock him up, and this is apparently a problem for some reason…”

“Dammit, Hermione, you’re supposed to be helping me here!”

“Well, I think you’re right. It’s ridiculous for you to spend the rest of your life pregnant. I can’t imagine it would be very fun, either. But obviously you still have a responsibility to these families
you’ve inherited, even if you didn’t know anything about them before. I think surrogacy would actually be a very good alternative for you both if you don’t want to worry about burdening any of your children with multiple titles like you are having to deal with.”

“Thank you!”

“I mean, sure, continue to have sex and if you get pregnant, you get pregnant, but if it’s the family magics that are pressuring you into having sex just so you can repopulate the families, well, then, you can do that with artificial insemination, as you said. In fact, it would probably be a good idea to diversify the family gene pools a bit by including different mothers for the different families.”

“Yes. That’s what Andromeda said.”

“Well, of course, it’s only logical. It was custom, long ago, if an heir became lord of more than one house, he would take a spouse for each family. Of course, usually, they were wives, although I think there might have been one where he assigned his lover as consort to his second family.”

“I don’t want any other lovers.”

“No, I wouldn’t expect you, too. But you would still want to draw up some form of legal agreement with the surrogates. Even if you and Charlie choose to raise all the babies yourself.”

“What do you mean?”

“A contract. A legal agreement. Usually the birth parents will pay for the surrogate’s medical bills while she’s pregnant, sometimes there might be room and board payment, a stipend of some sort. I mean, you’re basically paying a woman to have your child.”

“It sounds so wrong when you say it like that.”

“It is what it is,” Hermione shrugged. “I told you about my cousin, Jake, right? He and his partner were talking about having a baby through a surrogate. Of course, they just want a baby because they want a baby, not because their family magic is forcing them into procreating,” she added with just a hint of snark.

“It’s totally not my fault,” Harry protested.

“I know,” she sighed, patting his arm. “These things just tend to happen when you’re around. Still, if I were you, I would seriously consider taking on a few surrogates and having their contract include at least two successful pregnancies. That way you’ll have better luck of appeasing the family magics, right? More babies, more people to use the magic. And if you have different surrogates then you don’t have to worry about messing future descendants with some weird genetic defect.

“Oh, that’s a happy thought.”

“Mmn, yes. So really, the first thing you need to worry about, after you get married of course, is how you’re going to select these surrogates.”

Harry groaned.

“Hermione? Are you in here? Have you seen—Ah, Harry, there you are,” Ron called, finally spying his friend. “Budge over,” he warned before plopping down right between them, stretching his long legs out towards the fire. “You’re dad’s pretty good, Hermione. Almost caught me a few times there.”
Hermione smiled and patted Ron’s hand where it came to rest on her thigh. “He’ll be wanting a rematch tomorrow.”

“Yeah, that’s fine. So what are you both talking about?”

“Finding Harry some women.”

“What!”

The two burst into uncontrrollable hilarity while Ron continued to stare—somewhat disbelievingly, somewhat angrily at them. “All right, spill,” he said once they’d finally regained control of themselves.

“Harry’s family magic is demanding he have babies.”

“Yeah? Well, he’s already knocked up, ain’t he?”

“Yes, well, it’s not satisfied with just me being pregnant,” Harry groused.

“Please don’t tell me Charlie’s up in the duff now, too.”

“No, but it’s not for lack of opportunity or trying.”

“Too much information! Do not need to know that about my brother!”

“Yes, well, Harry and I were just discussing the benefits of procuring a surrogate or ten,” Hermione told him.

“A surrogate? You mean, like a fake-mum?”

“No, like a woman who would carry the baby for Harry.”

“Okay, yeah. I’m following. So you were talking about how you would find these women, right? By why ten? I mean, unless you were kidding about the ten, because I could think about half a dozen birds at Hogwarts alone who would be happy to have your baby, Harry. You know, if you didn’t mind weird, obsessed, crazy girls as your babies’ mothers.”

“Uh, yeah. No. Definitely no crazy, weird, obsessed girls, thanks.”

“I would think at least ten because apparently, the goblins thought it would be a good idea to make Harry the head of thirteen different families.”

“WHAT?”

“Ron! Right in my ear!”

“Sorry, Hermione, but… I mean… What?”

“Yeah, I know.”

“Yes. The goblins made Harry do an inheritance test this summer and then gave him a bunch of rings to try on.”

“They didn’t! Blimey, that was dangerous… What if the family magics rejected you? I mean, you could have been seriously hurt. Those crummy, no good goblins. Just thinking of another way to make a knut, I tell you…”
“Yeah, well, they didn’t reject me. Not one of them,” Harry sighed. “So now Charlie and I are looking at fulfilling the needs of fourteen different families.”

“That’s crazy. No wonder you were talking about finding you some extra baby-mums. What did you call them again, Hermione?”

“Surrogates,” she supplied readily.

“Yes, all right. Those. So, how are you going to do it”

“Do what?”

“Find you some sar-ah-gates.”

“Haven’t the foggiest,” Harry huffed.

“Well, you could always put out an advert in the Prophet.”

Hermione and Harry both unsuccessfully choked down their laughter at that thought.

“Hey, no worse than scrying in a crystal ball, looking for the answer. Of course, you could always try a lottery, but then that wouldn’t give you overly much say-so, would it?”

“For that matter, you could probably just auction off your sperm to the highest bidder,” Hermione snickered, causing Ron to devolve into his own laughter.

“I wonder if I couldn’t just use the inheritance test that got me into this whole mess to somehow get me out,” Harry groused.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, if more people went in to do the inheritance test then more of those old family magics and lines might be recovered, right? And if some of those lines might be for families I’ve already laid claim to, well, then, having additional people wielding the magic can only be good, right?”

“I would think so, yes,” Ron agreed, nodding.

“You could go one better and offer the surrogate contract to any witch who is of that family blood line, thereby better enhancing the family magic, tying in back in to the blood.”

“Oh, good one, Hermione.”

“Thank you, Ron.”

“So what’s Charlie think of all this? Or is that why he’s in a bad mood?”

“Bad mood,” Hermione replied.

“Charlie’s…” Harry grimaced. "He’s being affected by the family magic, we think. He was all crazy the other night, saying that he wanted to be the only one to have my babies, but that’s just crazy. I mean, he was working out the math, and even if we have one kid every other year for the next forty years, that’s only twenty kids, and not allowing for any little girls we might have.”

“Yeah, well, Charlie’s a Weasley. He should be able to handle it.”

“No he shouldn’t” Harry snapped. “He doesn’t like it, and I hate that I know he doesn’t like it but
magic is still trying to force us both to continue on.”

“So what are you going to do?”

“What I’ve always done, I suppose: Survive.”

***

Harry was still awake later that night when someone knocked on his bedroom door. He was uncomfortable in the large master suite, but the house elves had given him little choice in where to stay when he and Charlie had flooed in the day before. Rosengard was just too big in Harry’s opinion. Too many floors and too many wings and too much for just one family. Although, he could easily imagine living there with thirteen other families.

It was crazy. Insane. And what was worse, some of those crazy and insane ideas Ron and Hermione had thrown about earlier that evening were still stuck in his head. He realized he was actually contemplating some of them.

He groaned and was about to roll over for the nth time when the light rapping caught his attention.

“Come in,” he called and was only slightly surprised when he saw it was Charlie.

Things had been tense and strained for the last two days, and when the house elves had set them up in separate suites, Harry nor Charlie had protested. Harry wondered what had changed—whether it was Charlie or the family magic bringing the other man to him.

“Hey,” the ginger greeted casually, hovering in the doorway, as if unsure of his welcome. Harry hated that.

“Mind if I come in?”

“Sure. I mean, please,” he said when his voice cracked. “It’s, uh, late. What has you still up?”

“I could say the same to you,” Charlie teased with a little grin. “Listen, Harry, I’ve been thinking. About you, about me, about us and this whole family magic situation.”

Dread curled like a slimy centipede in his stomach. Had Charlie finally decided that Harry was too much trouble? That it wasn’t worth the hassle of a relationship with him? Was he going to call off the wedding?

“May I, do you mind if I sit down?” Charlie asked, and even though there were two arm chairs by the banked but rosy fire, Harry scoorted further up in the bed and held the blankets up in invitation, half dreading Charlie would refuse.

He didn’t. In fact, in so much as any grown man could, Charlie scrambled into the bed and snuggled up closer to Harry, pulling the smaller man into his arms and nuzzling his face into the inky dark hair.

“I know things are a little crazy.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault. These things just happen around you.”

"I wish they wouldn’t keep happening.”

“I don’t know. It promises to make life interesting.”
“Isn’t that a cures? May you live in interesting times?”

“Yeah, well, it’s only a cure if you let it be. We’re going to be blessed. I’ve been able to think, a little bit more clearly, I think, I hope, this past day. I really do think spending some time away helped. That, or I’m pregnant and the family magic is as appeased as it’s going to get for the next several months.”

Harry groaned. “I’m sorry.”

“I’m not. I mean, sure, it’s not exactly convenient, and yeah, it’s not something I ever foresaw for myself, but we can make it work. We will make it work. And, well, I still think you’re worth it, and our family is worth it. But, like I said, I’ve been able to think a little bit more clearly this past day—which really does make me wonder if I’m pregnant now—and, well, I talked a bit to Hermione’s parents about this muggle procedure you were talking about, and… well, I think it might be a good idea.”

“What?”

“I’m saying, you were right. It’s just not realistic for you or me to spend the entirety of our life together pregnant or in-between pregnancies. Not that I think we should do anything to actively stop it, I mean, but… Bloody hell, Harry…. Fourteen families…. Even with, with surrogate mothers, that’s a hell of a lot of kids. I mean, we’d need a place as big as this one just to raise them all. And can you imagine fitting them all for Hogwarts?” Charlie groaned.

“You’re serious,” Harry whispered hoarsely, awed and disbelieving at the same time.

“Well, yeah. I mean, it’s the reality of the situation, isn’t it? We have fourteen families to take care of. That’s not going to change just because we don’t like it or try to ignore it.”

“I think I love you.”

Charlie leaned forward and captured Harry’s lips. “Take away that ‘I think’ and that would be perfect, because I think I love you, too.” Harry moaned, pressing into Charlie fully, melting against him. “I missed you last night, he admitted. “It was lonely trying to sleep all by myself. I think you’ve spoiled me.”

“Yeah? I missed you last night, too. But it was good time to think, and well, this is what I think.”

“I told Hermione and Ron, about the families, this evening.”

“I figured you’d might. If you hadn’t already, I couldn’t see you holding out much longer. Not now that you know just how big a deal they are.”

“Yeah, well, they had some interesting ideas on how to find some potential mothers.”

“OH yeah? Like what?”

“Well, your brother suggested running an advert in the Prophet,” Harry told him, causing Charlie to bark with laughter.

“Yes, well, if you think that’s bad, Hermione even suggested selling my sperm,” he shared, happily watching Charlie start to howl and gasp and wheeze from his laughter.

Harry grinned, watching him, hard pressed not to join him. “Yeah, well, I think making others take the inheritance test is the best way to go. And for that, I can run an advert in the paper, encouraging
others to go in to Gringotts. Then, Hermione suggested possibly finding others who are descendants of the ancient families. At the very least, finding other decedents and claiming them should spread the family magic’s focus around, instead of just targeting me. And if it’s some witches that are found, well, I could approach them about continuing on that family line, right?"

“Yeah, that makes a bit of sense.”

“Yeah, so, I mean, it looks like we have a somewhat tentative plan in place now.”

“Plans are good.”

“Are we good?”

“What?”

“I mean, you and me. Things between us. Us. Are we going?”

“I’d say we’re better than good,” Charlie teased, nuzzling along Harry’s neck.

“Are you still feeling the effects?”

“No, I don’t think so. I’m not gearing up to sex you up, if that’s what you mean.”

Harry snorted. “Who says ‘sex you up’? Is that even a real phrase?”


“Yeah?”

“Yeah. Think the house elves will throw a hissy fit if I try to sleep here tonight?”

“I don’t know about them, but I know I will if you try to leave.”

“Ah, well, we can’t have that, can we? I guess I’ll just have to stay here tonight.”

“Oh, it’s such a burden, is it?”

“It’s one I shall endeavor to make the best of,” Charlie teased back, snuggling down into the blankets and pulling Harry down with him.

“Are we good then?”

“We’re better than good, Harry. You and me are great.”

“No, I mean things, between us. Are we okay?”

“Yes, Harry, we’re better than okay. We’re fantastic. Just you watch us. We’re going to be amazing.”

“If you say so.”

“I do. Now, get some sleep. Knowing my mum, she’s going to be over here early tomorrow, trying to run things.”

“She’ll be disappointed. Layla won’t even let me try to manage things. Every time I tried today she shooed me off. My own house elf, shooing me out of the closet.”
Charlie laughed

“Well, we’ll let the elves handle it tomorrow when she shows up, deal?”

“Deal.”

And with that, Harry found he was able to fall asleep quite easier that night, curled up in Charlie’s arms again, right where he belonged.

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Chapter 16

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Though Charlie and Harry had been half-heartedly teasing, Layla heard her master’s words and happily took them to heart. Together with the other Rozengard house elves, they sealed off the ground floor rooms that were intending to be used on New Year’s Day for the wedding. Elves scrubbed from top to bottom, ceiling tiles to grout and hard polished wood floors and furniture. Layla had heard her master’s words when he and the other misses had visited days prior, and she was determined that her Master get the very best of everything he wanted.

She sent Mack and Henley out in charge of the gardens, acquiring all the proper flowers and shrubs and bushes her Master had mentioned. Sailsby refused to relinquish her kitchen, even to her favorite sprog, but she did listen to Layla’s input on the young masters’ eating habits. It was not easy, considering Layla had only lived with them for a few shorts days, but Sailsby was sure she would prepare a proper feast for her young lord and his future spouse. But first, there was New Year’s Eve to get through.

The Master had given no specific or concrete instructions for the day, so resourceful elves that they were, they put their experience and training to use. Layla had several of the other elves gather up the old wizarding board games, clean them off, and set them up in one of the family’s parlors. Other games were procured, dusted off, and also strategically placed around the estate to encourage the company into a friendly game.

As predicted, Mrs. Weasley arrived bright and early, before the guests from the night before had even finished breakfast, as if too excited to wait any longer. Harry could somewhat understand how she felt, but he still had to wait till the next day, just like everyone else. Neville and Hermione were talking quietly when the elder Weasleys bustled into the breakfast room. The Grangers were having a private conversation at the other end of the table. Charlie and Harry had eyes only for each other, while Ron was making gagging jokes and noises at all their lovely-dovey-ness.

“I can’t believe how mushy you two are acting,” he grumbled.

“I think it’s very sweet,” Hermione spoke up.

“You would.”

“Harry, dear, Charlie, you’re looking well this morning.”

“Morning, Mum. You’re here early.”

“Just thought I’d popped over and offer any help you might need.”

“Would you care to join us, Mrs. Weasley?”

“Thank you, dear, but we’ve already eaten. Just wanted to stop in early to make sure things go as well as possible.”

“We house elves be taking care of everything for Master Harry’s and Master Charlie’s wedding,” a squeaky yet strident voice rang out. “Missus Wheezy-mum needs to be sitting down and letting house elves do work. Missus Wheezy-mum being guest!”

Many at the table chuckled at the slightly gob smacked look on Mrs. Weasley’s face at being
reprimanded by a tiny little elf, other some hid it better than others.

“Have a seat, Mum,” Charlie called over after a moment more. “Might as well. I don’t think Layla’s going to let us do anything much today at all but have fun and relax.”

“Are you sure there isn’t something we could help out with?” she entreated, half-heartedly accepting the seat her husband directed her to.

“Nah, that’s all right. The house elves have got everything,” her son assured.

“Besides,” Harry piped up. “If we keep harassing them about it, Sailsby’s threatened to put sleeping potion in our next meal.”

Down the table, the Grangers paused in their eating to eye their plates warily.

“I don’t think they really would,” Hermione rushed to reassure her parents, elbowing Ron none-too-gently when he said a little too loudly, “I wouldn’t take that bet.”

“Will the other’s be following you, then?” Charlie asked while sliding another slice of toast onto Harry’s plate. The younger man had managed to use the last of his last slice mopping up his beans.

“Ah, well, now,” Arthur began, accepting the tea his wife handed him with an absent word of thanks. “You know your brothers. Percy and George are still at the store this morning, but they’ve promised to close up shop early. Bill and Fleur will be arriving a little later, I believe.”

“Yes, they were spending the morning with her family,” Molly sniffed.

“What about Ginny?” Harry hesitated to ask. Last night, all Ron had said was that she wasn’t coming over till the next day. He hoped she wasn’t still having an issue with him marrying her brother and not her.

“Oh, she decided to head on over to the Rookery and spend the night with Luna last night. I do believe she is planning to come over this afternoon with Luna and her father.”

“That’s good,” Charlie nodded. “We were going to have them share a room anyway, so that works out just fine.”

It really was going to be a mellow sort of day. Hot drinks, toasty appetizers, good company, and some fun games saw the company straight into the early evening in easy fashion. Family and guests drifted from one salon into another parlor, conversation topics shifting just as naturally.

Mr. Granger got his rematch, but found his fate little changed until Mr. Weasley offered him a game. At which point, Ron gratefully stepped aside, reminded that it was not always in good taste to better up one’s girlfriend’s father… even if they were slightly estranged. Hermione and her mother found themselves falling into a discussion about family traditions in the wizarding world with Andromeda, Remus, and Molly. Molly would recount stories of when she was a little girl growing up in the Prewitt main house. Andromeda would add her own stories about being a daughter of the Black Family and what traditions would be honored amongst the ancient family. Remus added his own modest memories, memories somewhat tainted by his disease acquired at such an early age.

By noon Harry had discovered the Cluedo board set up in the side parlor and invited the others to play. They were on their third game by the time Layla popped in to tell Harry additional guests had arrived, and minutes latter, Ginny arrived with Luna and her father—the Lovegoods dressed as
characteristic as Harry had come to expect from the rather eccentric family.

Mr. Lovegood entered the room first, beaming at Harry. “Mr. Potter, thank you for inviting me and my Luna into your home,” the man began, but Harry was too blindsided by glittery stars dancing amongst the vivid blue robes to respond.

And then there was Luna, a state completely, undeniably hers. “Daddy,” the young woman chided. “You shouldn’t rush Harry like that. It’s not very nice. Hello Harry. Happy Christmas.”

“Hello, Luna,” he greeted, not sure if her bright pink and green outfit was any less blinding. “Thanks for coming.”

“It’s a pleasure, always, Harry. I wish you good luck and health in your marriage,” she added, leaning up to kiss his check. “Ginny wishes the best for both your and her brother, too,” she prompted, stepping back so the ginger girl could step forward.

“I really do, Harry,” she said softly, not quite able to meet his gaze.

“Thanks, Gin. It means a lot, to both of us,” Harry continued. “I’m sorry things didn’t go the way you wanted them to.”

“No, it’s better this way,” she said staunchly. “I mean, better to find out now then twenty years down the road when we would’ve had kids already and… yeah. It would have been messy. But I really am. Glad. That you and Charlie have each other. I mean, if nothing else, it means Charlie will be staying closer to home now,” she teased.

“Yeah, there is that,” Harry agreed, grinning back. “I don’t think either one of us would have fancied the constant travel time to and from work the current setup would require.”

She smiled weakly, but darted in to give him a little hug.

Ginny and the Lovegoods caused another shifting of groups as Mr. Lovegood, Mr. Weasly, Mr. Granger, and Luna continued another game of Cluedo. Luna joined Ginny, Neville, and Ron in a game of exploding snap, while the rest of the elder group seemed to fall back into nostalgic talk of holiday years long gone. Harry, much to the amusement of the others, somehow managed to fall asleep in Charlie’s lap while the ginger was rambling on about magical creatures and dragons specifically to an incredulous Ms. Granger.

It wasn’t until shortly after sunset that Bill and Fleur arrived fresh from France. By that time, Harry was awake again and horribly embarrassed for having fallen asleep while all the mothers in the room smiled indulgently at him, patting his hand, and telling him to get as much rest now as possible. Needless to say, Charlie was not at ease with such dire warnings.

“Harry!” Fleur gushed, rushing over. “Oh! Charlie and Bill have told me the wonderful news! Is it not fantastic? And look at you! You look magnificent! Glowing! Radiant! Oh, it is so incredible!”

“Oh, Fleur, look at you,” Mrs. Weasley cried upon seeing her very pregnant daughter-in-law. “You look lovely, dear.”

“But of course,” the blonde replied. “I am happily married,” she added with a beaming smile towards her husband. “And now, so will Harry. Oh, Harry, I am so happy for you, mon ami. I can think of no other who deserves happiness and a loving family more so than you,” she deemed, giving him another hug and kissing both his cheeks.

“Sorry we’re so late,” Bill said, grinning apologetically and not empty-handed. “These are from
Fleur’s family,” he explained, setting the parcel down and unwrapping it to reveal multiple miniature gifts. “Gabrielle was especially insistent we hand deliver them when she found out we were coming to see you, Harry. She sends along Christmas blessings as well as best wishes on your marriage, although, I think she might be a little broken hearted that you’re getting married and she wasn’t invited.”

“She could have come,” Harry sputtered.

“Non, Harry, she was more upset not to be marrying you than to be seeing you get married,” Fleur smirked at him. “Ma sister has had quite the crush on you since you saved her those years ago.”

Harry blushed, causing Fleur to laugh merrily as she hooked her arm through his. “Come, let us go sit down and complain of body changes, yes? Commiserate over the pains of pregnancy while the others envy us our glowing, radiant visage.”

Unable to refuse, Harry followed her into another room where he endured the horror stories of pregnancy that he had yet to look forward to apparently. He was half tempted to grab Charlie and drag his ass into the room, too. No need for him to be left out of the prelude to torture that was apparently going to be happening to their bodies as they changed to accommodate another person.

Was having a baby really worth this, he wondered as Fleur’s laments turned to more personal discomforts that had Harry squirming in his seat. He did not want to know about bowel movements and swollen legs and ankles and heartburn and…

Bill was still doling out the presents for everyone when the Malfoy family arrived. The air immediately chilled as the three blonds stood in the door way, scanning the receiving room.

“Season’s greetings,” Andromeda called, standing to greet her sister’s family.

“Season’s greetings,” Narcissa returned, stepping forward to meet her sister inside the room.

“Welcome to Rozengard,” Andromeda continued turning to Lucius and Draco. “Draco, your mother and I grew up here, did you know?”

“Yes,” Draco drawled after coughing to clear his throat. “We used to visit Grandmother here, before… Before.”

Andromeda smiled sadly. “Of course. Well, come in, please. I believe the house elves were planning on serving dinner in another little bit, so please, be at ease.”

“Now’s all guest being here, Sailsby be having dinner ready to serve in twenty minutes, Missy Meda, iffen Master Harry and Master Charlie be willing,” the head elf informed them.

“That’s fine, Sailsby, thank you,” Charlie called with an extra smile to the formidable kitchen elf. “I’m sure Harry will be ready to eat whenever you’re ready to feed us. Everything so far today has been absolutely scrumptious.”

The elf’s eyes widened before lowering quickly. “Sailsby be very happy knowing Master Charlie be liking her food,” she whispered quickly before popping away again. Not even a minute later, a new tray of the little spinach and cheese pastries Charlie had been scarfing down appeared on the coffee table nearest him.

“Do all your house elves behave so… queerly?” Lucius asked, unable to rid the snideness from his tone.
“I know,” Charlie sighed. “We keep telling them they don’t have to go around ‘Master-me’ this or ‘Master-me’ that, but so far, we haven’t been able to break them from the habit,” Charlie confessed apologetically. “They’re also a bit timid still about accepting compliments and being thanked, but Harry and I are hoping to have them on more even keel by the end of this next year.”

Lucius blinked, as if wondering if the other man was purposefully obtuse to his insult.

Arthur chuckled. “Yes, well, Harry’s always had a remarkable way with house elves. All magical creatures, really, I believe. Wasn’t it a hippogriff that he flew that one year, Ron, you were telling me?”

“What? Oh, yeah. Went right up to the thing gave it a pet; next thing you know, Hagrid was plopping him right on the back of the beast.” Ron shook his head. “Hermione got to ride him, too, but they’re the only ones from our class who did it.”

“I’ll remind you, that beast nearly killed me,” Draco drawled.

“Wimp,” Ron huffed before speaking up. “I’ll remind you, you’re the idiot who insult him right after Hagrid had just got done telling us *not* to insult hippogriff’s because they’re proud and all that.”

“Man, I wish I had Hagrid as my Care of Creatures professor,” Charlie sighed.

“You would’ve been all dragon-crazy sooner,” Bill teased him.

“Hey, did you know Hagrid actually got his hands on a dragon egg and hatched it?” Charlie asked him, grinning excitedly.

“What?” the two elder Malfoys cried out.

Ron groaned. “Don’t remind me. Darn thing bit my hand. Swelled up like crazy.”

“There, there,” Hermione soothed.

“Is this the dragon you said you first met Harry over?” Narcissa asked.

“Yeah.” Heads swiveled to see a somewhat gray-looking Harry holding the door open. “Hermione, Neville, and I had to smuggle the hatched dragon out of Hogwarts, so we had Ron contact Charlie.”

“I got some of my friends to come and help me collect it,” Charlie concluded, smiling at Harry. “Gods, but you were so tiny back then. All of you were!”

Neville laughed. “To be fair, we were only eleven.”

“Twelve,” Hermione sniffed primly.

“Yes, Hermione,” Ron, Harry, and Neville all chimed in, grinning at one another before laughing.

“You were only first years…” Andromeda mused, shaking her head.

“Harry and Hermione flew on a hippogriff,” Narcissa pointed out to her sister.

“Really, Harry,” Neville called him out. “A hippogriff, a thestral, and dragon…. Is there anything you haven’t flown?”
“Don’t forget the car,” Ron piped up before flinching under his mother’s glare.

“Yeah,” Harry replied before looking at Hermione. “I’ve never flown in a plane.”

She snorted, and he quickly joined her.

“A plain what?” Mrs. Weasley asked.

“It’s a muggle device used to transport large masses from one place to another quicker than it would take to drive or take a train,” Draco answered before coloring in embarrassment.

Hermione blinked at him. “Ah, yes. Remember, muggles don’t have floo or portkeys. Instead, they’ve developed a large metal-made bird-like machine that flies through the air.”

“They’re very interesting,” Luna spoke up. “Daddy and I have tried traveling by them when we were exploring muggle areas. But they’re also terribly noisy and somewhat crowded. And they do take an awfully long time to get from place to place. Portkey or floo is much faster.”

“Master Harry,” a quiet voice rose from Harry’s side. “If you’s being ready, Sailsby will begin serving dinner in the main family dining hall.”

“Thank you, Sailsby. We’ll start heading that way now, thank you. And thank you for all the great food all day today. It’s been really great. Perfect, really, for eating while talking and playing games. I can’t wait to eat whatever you’ve made for us.”

The elf curtsied before quickly popping away, and Harry sighed before turning back to his guests. “Everyone, if you’ll join me in the main family dining hall, I’ve just been informed dinner is ready for us.”

Everyone shifted and robes rustled as the group made their way through the hallways and into the main family dining room. It was one of three dining rooms, not including the breakfast room or the kitchen, and it could easily seat twenty with extra elbow-space, thirty would be tighter, but still comfortable. Tonight, Harry had his family with him at his table as they feasted the end of the year. He wasn’t friendly with everyone; he didn’t necessarily like some of them; some were more or less “in-laws” to him in the case of the Grangers and Mr. Lovegood; but they were his family.

Standing at the head of the table, looking down at the people gathered here, Harry felt… good. Hopeful. Happy, even. He smiled and lifted his flute of sparkling juice. “If I may, a toast,” he called and everyone reached for their own glass, even the Malfoys, he noted, and Teddy with his special sippy cup.

“To endurance and survival, to family, both blooded and wedded. Here’s to a year over and done. May it be the worst we’ll see never again.”

“Here, here,” several muttered while others more repeated, “Never again,” before sipping from their flutes.

Harry and several of the others downed theirs, however, much to the protest of Mrs. Weasley. “Harry, really, do you think you should be drinking right now? I mean… and Fleur.”

“Be at ease,” Andromeda admonished her. “One glass of champagne will not harm them or the babes.”

“Besides,” Charlie spoke up, “Layla’s taken to replacing anything that could be potentially dangerous to pregnancies. These are just sparkling cider, not real champagne, Mum, so relax.”
“I’m sorry,” Molly muttered, “But, I just worry…”

“It’s okay,” Harry brushed her off as he slid into his seat. “Shall we eat?”

“What did you call this?” Draco asked, studying his champagne flute critically.

“It’s sparkling cider,” Harry answered. “It also comes as a sparkling grape juice. It’s fairly popular in the muggle world,” he explained.

“Not bad,” Draco allowed, taking another sip.

“And completely non-alcoholic,” Harry grinned. “So, safe for pregnant folks to drink and not feel left out of the festivities.” He raised his refilled glass in mocking toast.

There was a clatter of flatware hitting the fine china halfway down the table, and a hissed conversation was not quite overheard from the Malfoys, but nothing was said aloud to the group. Eventually, private conversations started up around the table amongst the different groups, and Harry grinned, happy to have regained his pleasure at seeing his familiar seated all around him.

This was his family. The one he chose for himself; the one blood had dictated for him… his. His friends, who were as dear to him as any siblings could ever be—Ron, and Hermione, and Neville, and Luna. Hermione and Luna were the sisters of his heart. Neville was like a shield brother to him. The Weasleys had practically adopted him, taken him in, and now he was legally marrying into the family. Andromeda and the Malfoys he’d inherited from his godfather. Remus was practically his godfather now, the only last remaining living link to his parents… and Teddy, his godson. This was his family. And he was so proud.

Conversation flowed and ebbed around him while Harry sat, soaking up the sheer joy he felt by being surrounded by family. He wondered if next year would be similar. Would the families converge on Rozengard once again next year? Would someone else be married or engaged? Would they be eagerly anticipating the arrival of another family member?

A hand rested against his belly, hidden by the table. This time next year his son and Fleur’s daughter would be with them. Teddy would be one and a half. Fleur’s daughter would be nearly a year old. His own son wouldn’t be that far behind. And Charlie...

He looked to his left, where his fiancée sat chatting amicably with his elder brother. As they had the last several mornings, Harry and Charlie had visited Andromeda that morning. She had been unable to confirm what they both suspected—Charlie was pregnant. It was the only thing that seemed to reasonably explain their sudden easing off of otherwise uncontrollable bouts of amorous action.

Harry half snorted. Charlie had such a way with words. ‘Amorous action’ indeed. If he gained nothing else from his union with Charlie Weasley—which was doubtful since the other man already brought so many things into Harry’s life—Harry would at least gain a more colorful vocabulary. Who would have expected a dragon handler to be so eloquent? But Charlie was truly a poet in Harry’s opinion.

After their last course was served and cleared, Sailsby popped back in beside Harry. “Master Harry, coffee and afters being served in the blue drawing room when’s you be ready.”

“Thank you, Sailsby, and thank you for the absolutely wonderful meal,” Harry said before she could pop away.

“Yes,” Charlie quickly joined. “It was fabulous. I can hardly remember a New Year’s Eve meal that was so delectable. You know my mother’s quite the cook. I’m sure she’ll want to know some of
your secrets.”

The house elf blushed brightly before murmuring a quickly muttered “of course” and popping away.

Harry and Charlie shared an amused look between them before turning back to their guests. “If everyone is quite stuffed and satisfied, I’ve just been informed coffee and afters will be made available in the blue drawing room. Andromeda? Will you show the way?” he asked his honorary aunt who was playing hostess for the evening.

“Of course, my lord,” the elder Black sister replied, rising gracefully from her seat at the end of the table. In ones and twos and threes and fours, his family rose and began to follow her out. Harry, however, remained sitting watching them all, Charlie staying at his side as if seemingly aware of his mate’s mood.

“You okay?” the ginger prompted after Harry had waved off a questioning Hermione and Luna, leaving the two alone at the large empty table.

“Hmm… It’s nice,” Harry said after a contemplative moment.

“What is?” Charlie asked, reaching over and clasping Harry’s hand. Harry shifted his hand so they could thread fingers.

“Have family,” he replied, smiling whimsically. “Can you imagine, this table tonight, filled with family, every night?”

“Well, we’ll certainly outgrow Grimauld Place soon enough,” Charlie quipped, squeezing Harry’s hand even as his other fell over his own flat stomach. Andromeda couldn’t tell them affirmatively, but both Harry and Charlie felt certain he was now pregnant with their second child.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be,” Charlie reprimanded, giving his hand a shake. “I told you, it’s not something I had planned for myself, but neither was getting married. I didn’t plan for you, Harry, but I’m very glad to know you and have you in my life, whatever challenges or mishaps that may come, I’ll gladly accept them as long as I’m with you and we’re together, do you hear me?”

“Yes,” Harry said softly, shyly, fingers sliding through Charlie’s, threading in and over and around.

“I want you, too,” he added, looking up into those sincere and loving blue eyes. “Whatever challenges may come.”

Charlie grinned brilliantly at him. “It’s a good thing, Mr. Potter, that you plan on marrying me tomorrow, then, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Harry agreed, grinning back at him as they leaned forward to gently kiss one another. And for the first time in nearly the week they’d been reunited, the kiss remained that—gentle and sweet and endearing. They pressed their foreheads together and remained like that, close and connected, for several minutes.

“All will be well,” a voice said sedately from the doorway, causing the two to pull apart.

Luna stood there, silver blonde hair twisted into neat little curls except for two strands that had been braided and then knotted with little beads and charms woven in. Her green and red patterned jumper dress would have successfully hidden any curvature to her womanly girlish frame, but Ginny had successfully talked her into cinching her belt tight enough to show off slim hips with only a slightly slimmer waist. To Harry, she still looked very much like that waif-like child he’d met in fifth year,
but she was oh so much dearer to him now.

“Luna?” he called. “Are the others waiting on us?”

She smiled at him and Charlie, but she wasn’t really seeing them Harry knew. She was looking past them, at their auras, or whatever it was she saw.

“So much happiness, Harry. So much love and joy and life… Sadness, sorrow, too, but it will be tempered,” she told him, tears glistening in her large, luminous eyes. “So much life… you will bring life back to the world, Harry. You’ve only to ask, and all will be willingly given.” She smiled at him. “All will be well.”

Another squeeze to Charlie’s hand, but Harry couldn’t help but ask, “And this year ahead of us? Is all well this year, too?”

Luna’s head tilted to the side as she looked at them, through them, sideways. “There will be some upheavals, some surprises,” she paused, looking more closely at Charlie. “Some not so-surprises. Some sorrow,” she added, frowning sadly as she looked back to Harry. “But many reasons to rejoice and celebrate. But you must remember to ask for what you want and what you need. You are not alone. You haven’t been for a very long time. It’s time for you to realize and acknowledge that, but I believe you have begun.”

She smiled whimsically. “Do you think your Sailsby has made pudding? I do so love pudding…”

Harry returned her smile. “She did say afters were being served in the drawing room,” he reminded her.

“Oh, goodie. See you there, Harry. I’ll try and make sure to save some pudding for you, too, okay?” she called as she turned away and skipped out the door.

“Okay,” Harry replied to empty air, still smiling after her.

“Okay,” Charlie responded. “That was a bit odd.”

“That was Luna,” Harry told him.

“Yeah, so, she’s what? A Seer?”

“No, not so much a seer,” Harry answered, leaning back against his family head chair. “She’s just… more open to the possibilities that exist.”

Charlie snorted, but shook Harry’s hand as he stood, gently tugging Harry up out of his seat, too. “Sounds a bit like a Seer to me, but, whatever. She’s predicted us a good year.”

“It’s not all good,” Harry reminded him solemnly.

“Ah, but she said there will be many reasons to celebrate and rejoice,” Charlie countered. “And right now I’d like to celebrate the year’s end with my future husband,” he added, nibbling at Harry’s lips.

“Oh, yeah?”

“Yeah.”

***

Things were somewhat tense when they joined the others in the blue drawing room—so aptly named
due to the differing shades of blue that patterned the walls, floors, and furniture. Despite the different colors of blue, Harry found the room to be calming and relaxing as opposed to garish or depressing. It was actually one of his favorite rooms on the ground floor.

The source of agitation seemed to stem from where Mr. Weasley and Mr. Malfoy were squared off. It was obvious to see something quite incinerary had been said just before the two hosts had entered. The shocked and appalled looks on several of the guests’ faces was enough to attest to that, but also the fists hands of both patriarchs, clasped tightly and shaking at their sides.

“What is going on?” Harry asked, stepping boldly into the room and approaching the standoff.

“It’s nothing Harry, just old laundry being dragged about,” Mr. Weasley replied, struggling for a calm voice.

“I would hardly call it ‘nothing’,” Lucius all but growled, turning to face Harry as well. “After all, here again the Weasley family is attempting to beggar themselves by marrying into their betters, and what do they hope to gain from it?”

“I’m afraid I don’t understand your point, Lucius,” Harry answered.

“At my side, Charlie growled menacingly, and only Harry’s hand on his arm stilled him from rushing the tall blond and battering him with his fists.

“My Lord Black,” Lucius began, but Harry once again cut him off.

“I would be very disappointed to hear that is what you were insinuating, Lucius. After all, Charlie’s and my union has very little to do with family politics. In fact, if anything, family politics serve to complicate our marriage, not to benefit for either one of us joining together,” Harry reminded them all, lifting his and Charlie’s clasped hands to kiss lightly.

“There is nothing wrong with family union, nor need we accept each other’s misfortunes or family politics. In fact, if anything, family politics serve to complicate our marriage, not to benefit for either one of us joining together,” Harry reminded them all, lifting his and Charlie’s clasped hands to kiss lightly.

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“I’m afraid I don’t understand your point, Lucius,” Harry answered. “Unless you mean to disparage my future husband and his family. You’re not trying to imply Charlie has some ulterior motive for marrying me, are you?”

At his side, Charlie growled menacingly, and only Harry’s hand on his arm stilled him from rushing the tall blond and battering him with his fists.

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“I would be very disappointed to hear that is what you were insinuating, Lucius. After all, Charlie’s and my union has very little to do with family politics. In fact, if anything, family politics serve to complicate our marriage, not to benefit for either one of us joining together,” Harry reminded them all, lifting his and Charlie’s clasped hands to kiss lightly.

“All of my children have been successful in their own chosen fields,” Arthur said, still tight, “and as my two youngest are still in school… but even them, they have endured great hardships and successes. We may not live richly, but we have no need of such things.”

“My lord,” Lucius tried again, “I meant only—ah—that is to say—”

“That they are gold diggers,” Andromeda sniffed, “After the Black family fortune? No, that was you, Lucius, who thought Harry would not know about or accept his inheritance. It was you who believed your son would become the next Lord Black and tried to fill his head with such ideas. He didn’t seem to mind any, though, did he, when he wasn’t offered the head ring. In fact, if memory serves, he was downright relieved, wasn’t he, Cissa?”

Her sister frowned. “Regardless, I am relieved such a burden will not be placed upon my son’s shoulders. He is already responsible for ensuring his father’s family thrives.”

Harry choked out a laugh at that. “Thanks, so much,” he muttered.
“I do not mean to disparage you, my lord, especially in your situation—“

“So it’s true then,” Lucius cut in turning critical eyes on Harry, or more specifically his robe-covered stomach.

Harry’s hand went immediately to baby belly, as if to shield and protect it from the other man’s view, which, he thought, was pretty telling about how much he instinctively did not trust the other wizard. He sighed, shooting a suffering look towards his friends. “Yes, Lucius, I’m pregnant,” he said baldly. “So you can rest assured, Draco can focus on fulfilling the Malfoy family’s needs. Charlie and I have already begun taking care of the Potter and Prewitt lines, and we’ve a plan for the other families.”

“Other families?” Mrs. Weasley asked.

Harry groaned, but it was Andromeda who answered. “The goblins gave Harry an inheritance test this summer before they would allow him access to the Potter and Black family vaults. I’m afraid the results were rather… startling.”

Harry gave another groan and Charlie helped him over to the nearest sofa, consoling him.

“The goblins named him sole heir to thirteen families,” Narcissa added smoothly, soaking up the shocked reactions of all the others who did not yet know.

“Blimey,” one of the Weasley boys breathed while others sputtered or slumped back into seats.

“Thirteen?” Molly hissed while even her husband looked too stunned to say anything. “That’s ridiculous. How could the goblins condone such a thing?”

“That’s insane,” Bill agreed. “There must have been a lot of gold or valuables in those vaults for them to attempt something so ambitious just at the chance to get them reopened.”

“I don’t know the exact amounts,” Charlie answered, “But there were some pretty old family names. I mean, we’re talking ancient, to even pre-Hogwarts era. Hell, I think some of those families are even pre-Roman,” he shared, rubbing Harry’s back soothingly as the younger man continued to moan and groan and hide his face away.

“But thirteen,” his mother whispered.

“That’s quite the responsibility,” Arthur intoned solemnly. “Not that I don’t think you boys will be able to handle it, but… have you talked about what you will do?”

Charlie sighed. “It is, we have. It was a shock, of course. Harry didn’t even understand what it meant, let alone recognize any of the family names—“

“I recognized one,” Harry grumbled in protest but otherwise didn’t deem to add to the conversation.

“Okay, well, one,” Charlie allowed, “Plus the Potters and Blacks, of course, which was quite a lot on their own, really. But Harry already had some plans in place since he knew he wasn’t going to be marrying a witch anytime soon, and well, we’ve talked it over some with Andromeda and the Grangers, and even I can admit, now that I’m not all muddle-headed, that the idea had merit.”

“Muddle-headed?” Molly jumped on him. “What was wrong? Were you sick? Do you have a fever?”

“Mum, no, calm down. It was just a side effect of all the family magics reacting to Harry’s and my
engagement,” Charlie calmed her. “They’ve settled down now,” he added, shooting Andromeda a pointed look.

“Well, if you’re sure,” the elder Weasley murmured half-heartedly.

“I’m sure.”

“Well, I for one would like to know how you plan to provide for thirteen wizarding families,” Lucius cut in. “And just what families have the goblins deemed you heir to?”

“There’s a muggle procedure,” Hermione spoke up, “called artificial insemination. Basically, it takes a man’s sperm and places it inside the woman so it can fertilize her egg and make a baby. Sometimes they go one step further and remove an egg from the woman first and fertilize it outside of her body before going back in and replacing the fertilized egg inside her so it can grow.”

“Wait, woman have eggs?” Ron sputtered. “Like, like eggs we eat for breakfast?”

“No, Ron, honestly,” Hermione huffed exasperatedly.

“It’s muggle science,” Harry spoke up, “That allows people to have babies without having to have sex with the other person. There’s even a procedure where a woman can carry another woman’s baby inside her and deliver it safely when it’s been determined it wouldn’t be safe for the first woman to carry another child,” he added, peeping glances towards Narcissa to see if she might be receptive to the idea.

“I don’t understand how this will help you,” Molly began. “Neither one of you is a woman; and it’s quite apparent you didn’t have any trouble conceiving…”

“No, but I don’t fancy being pregnant for the rest of my life,” Harry sighed, sitting up. “And with fourteen families to provide for, well, that would likely be the case. Besides, just because we conceived easily this time doesn’t mean we always will. And added to that, we’re talking about reproducing for fourteen families.”

“It would also be best is the families were diversified as much as possible,” Andromeda added.

“Yes, and Harry has thought of looking for others who might have similar ties to some of these dormant families,” Hermione added. “I’m going in on Saturday to Gringots for my own inheritance test.”

“You?” Lucius sneered. “What could a mu—muggle born like you possibly hope to inherit from the wizarding world?

“I didn’t get all these families from my father’s blood,” Harry spoke up. “It had to have been in my mother’s blood. Cause, otherwise, those family lines would have been notably attached to the Potters, right? But only the Peverell family is notably attached to the Potters.”

“Peverell?” Mr. Lovegood spoke up.

“Yes,” Harry nodded, completely aware of what the other man was thinking of, but he wasn’t about to confirm the existence of the Deathly Hallows. “My theory is that these other families might have come to me through my mother. I believe somewhere in every muggle-born’s past there is a magical. Either a squib who was thrown out of their family or something.”

“That is quite the radical thought,” Arthur hedged.
“How else can you reasonably explain muggle-borns? I mean, their magic had to have come from somewhere. They didn’t just steal some other witch’s or wizard’s magic as a baby,” he added acidly thinking of those awful mock trials Umbridge had held in the Ministry, an excuse for torturing and imprisoning muggle-borns. “No, I think a muggle born is born when two previously squib lines cross again, and it’s enough to spark the magic back up, and poof! You’ve got a magical baby. And if I’m right, Hermione’s test will show her to be the long-lost daughter of some family or another, maybe another dormant one, or maybe one that’s still thriving.”

“And you think this for all muggleborns?” Narcissa asked, shooting looks towards her sister. Her sister who had been disowned and abandoned by the family for her choice of falling in love and marrying a muggle-born. “That they might all be the children of some squib ancestor?”

“Makes sense, doesn’t it?” Charlie supported his fiancée. “I mean, what do you all think happens to those squib children that are abandoned in the muggle world?” he asked, looking at his parents and then the others in the room. “They get taken in, adopted if their lucky, given new names, grow up and get married. They have kids and their kids have kids, and they all grow up, not knowing about magic… But if one of those kids happens to marry another squib’s kid, and they have children… well, then, that’s two magical family lines that have crossed.”

“I suspect,” Harry continued, squeezing Charlie’s hand in thanks for the support, “depending on how strong the family magic is or isn’t, that a certain number of times crossing will cause some of the family magic to wake back up and then voila! You’ve got a magical baby again.”

“It is an interesting theory,” Andromeda allowed.

“One I hope to prove mostly correct, too.”

“How?” Lucius demanded.

“What would happen if all the muggle-borns went in and had an inheritance test done at Gringots,” Harry asked. “How many of the old family lines do you think we might be able to show had woken back up?”

“It’s… an outrageous thought.”

“Yeah, I specialize in that.” Harry grinned at the elder Malfoy.

“But that doesn’t explain how…” Molly began again.

“Harry’s going to contract out to several women,” Hermione supplied, as if it was a done deal decided upon already. “More’s better, really, especially if some of those women were actual descendants of the different family lines he’s now responsible for, but with a little bit of help, it shouldn’t take too long for Harry to have at least one child for each of the families, if not more. With some of the muggle reproductive treatments it’s common for multiple births to occur.”

“That’s…. barbaric,” someone breathed loudly enough to be heard.

“Not really. If you ask me,” Hermione continued, “it makes perfectly logical sense. This way Harry can help repopulate the different families, and by using a different surrogate mother for each of the families, he helps ensure a more diversified genetic pattern for future generations. It should help keep the magical world strong for the next several generations, and maybe counteract some of the problems being faced by many of the purebloods who have obviously suffered from too much interbreeding.”

“Excuse me?”
“Well, it’s rather plain to see to someone who understands genetics,” Hermione went on in her lecture tone so many of them were familiar with. “After all, many of the pureblood children at Hogwarts are notably poorer either in anesthetic looks or health or mentality or even magical ability. It’s easy to see that any of the mixbloods are more magically powerful than a majority of the purebloods, and, well, the muggleborns generally are, too. Purebloods are often outclassed in all areas except for financial support and social status.”

“That’s heresy,” Lucius shouted, spittle flying.

“That’s facts,” Hermione countered coolly. “If you don’t believe me, you should look at the test results for the last decade. Pureblood scores continue to decline while others continue to stay the same or improve. What’s worse is that the curriculum of the last century has been butchered practically to shreds of what it originally was to compensate for the failings of the pureblooded children.”

“This is utterly ridiculous,” the blond continued to deny, moving as if to leave.

“I dare you to look at the data and say that,” Hermione challenged angrily, full of self-righteous indignation. “This is the first year that the Hogwarts curriculum has even begun to approach its former rigorous standards. And I, for one, am quite pleased with the change.”

Lucius finished walking out, leaving the others still staggered at the possibilities, the implications and insinuations that had been raised about their worldly beliefs.

“What do you expect from me, Ms. Granger?” Narcissa finally asked, standing as well.


“And what is that?”

“Peace, happiness. A future,” the brunette muggle-born answered decisively before turning back to her first friend in the wizarding world, her dearest friend. “Harry, I’ve thought about this a lot since the other day, and I wanted you to know, even if it turns out I’m not a descendent for one of your families, I will like to volunteer to carry one of your children.”

“What?” Harry sputtered, not sure he even dared to believe he’d heard her correctly. “Really? I mean… That’s a…”

“Hermione, what are you saying?” Ron gaped, standing up as well.

“Hermione, surely you’re too young to be considering having a child,” her mother stepped in, looking at the others as if for support.

“It would have to wait until after NEWTS, of course,” Hermione allowed, smiling and nodding towards her mother. “But I would be honored to help you provide for your families, Harry.”

“Now wait just a minute, Hermione,” Ron spoke up, sputtering. “Don’t you think this is, I don’t know, something you should discuss with me first?”

“Why?” she returned. “This is my body. If I should choose to have a child and carry it for my best friend, why should that bother you, Ron? Wouldn’t you help Harry if you could?”

“You know I’d do almost anything to help Harry out, but, I mean, having his baby? Isn’t that, I don’t know, a little extreme?”
“I don’t think so, no.”

“Nor do I,” Luna agreed lightly, humming and kicking her legs under the backgammon table. “Although, I think I would look horrible swollen with multiple babies.”

“You could never look horrible, Luna,” Neville told her softly, earning a smile from his ex-girlfriend. “And I agree with Hermione, it’s her body, and it’s a very noble and honorable thing she’s offering to do, help Harry meet his families’ needs.”

“What about you, Nev?” Ron tried. “You’ve got your own family needs to be met.”

“I do, but I’ve still got some time to figure out what I’ll do. If nothing else, I might follow Harry’s example if I can’t find someone I want to spend my life with, I might just contract out some women to carry my kids for me.”

“This is completely absurd!” Molly exploded. “I’ve never heard of such a… a disgraceful thing! Talk of having children with multiple women and not even marriage. Your grandmother would be ashamed if she could hear you right now.”

“Gran would deal with it,” Neville told her. “Especially if it means the Longbottom line was assured of continuing. That’s her greatest fear—that something will happen to me before I can do my honor and duty to the family.”

“That won’t be a problem,” Luna told him. “You bring honor to your family with your every deed, and soon you will bring, life, too.” She smiled. “You’ll be a great father, Neville.”

He colored and looked away from her shyly. “Thanks, Luna.”

“I really don’t think I’m okay with you just agreeing to have someone else’s baby,” Ron groused. “Even if it is Harry.”

“I don’t think you understand that it’s not really your choice,” Hermione returned hotly. “You need to understand this is my body, Ron, and it’s my choice when and with who I decided to have a baby with.”

“You should only be having babies with your husband, me,” Ron answered, just as hotly.

“I never agreed to marry you, Ron,” Hermione huffed. “Hell, you’ve never even asked me! What if I don’t want to get married?”

“You’d—you’d…” Ron sputtered before forcing out. “You’d live your life as a scarlet woman?”

“If I did, it would be my choice, wouldn’t it?” she returned. “My life, my choice.”

“I can’t agree to that, Hermione,” Ron said staunchly. “If you’re going to be with me, you’re going to be with me.”

“Well, then, I guess I’m not going to be with you, am I?” she declared before whirling away and out of the room.

“What the hell,” Ron breathed, staring after her, stunned.

“Damn, she’s scary when she’s riled,” George whispered a little too loudly. “Me thinks Ronnikins just managed to get himself dumped, and on New Year’s Eve, too. Not good luck, is it?”

“Oh, shut it,” Ron snapped, whirling around on his brother. “You can’t tell me you would be okay
with it if it were Angelina who was talking about having someone else’s baby, now would you?”

“Her body,” George shrugged. “What she decides to do or not do with it is her call.”

Run sputtered outrageously. “You’re just saying that because Hermione said it,” he accused.

“Uh, no. I’m saying it ’cause it’s true,” George answered, getting up and strolling towards the exit. “If you’ll excuse me, I think I’ll find another room to relax in. The air in here is a bit bitter, don’t you think?”

“Ron—“

“Shut it, Harry, I really don’t want to hear it right now,” the ginger continued to grouse.

Slumping against Charlie, Harry allowed him to lead him out of the room with the others, leaving his best friend to fume alone.

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He found her in the other family wing, away from where she had been staying with Ron previously, pacing back and forth furiously, muttering to herself. He caught up to her as she swiveled, startling her into stopping before she ploughed right into him.

Neville leaned in closer, breathing in the scent of her hair, her skin. “That was a very brave and noble thing you did.”

“What?” she snapped, still obviously angry. “Breaking up with Ron?”

“No, supporting Harry.” He stepped closer, the better to get at her scent.

“Neville?” she asked, shuffling back, startled when she realized her back was quite literally to the wall. “What are you—“

“I want to kiss you.”

“What?” she gasped, his face already closing in against hers as he begun to nuzzle her cheek and lower.

“I want to kiss you. Say yes.”

“Neville, what are you—“

“Say yes,” Neville demanded, stepping fully into her, feeling the entire length of her body slide against his.

“Yes,” she breathed, and he wasted no time in covering his mouth with his, lips grasping and teeth catching and tongue invading her mouth forcibly, even as his body pushed her back against the wall and held hers there.

She whimpered as his body pressed into hers, molding him to her front. His hands came up her sides, sliding from her waist and hips up to the gentle swells of her breasts, thumbs caressing against her highly sensitized skin. She whimpered against him, faltering, and he grabbed her more securely, encouraging her arms up around his broad shoulders and neck.

Another step forward, and Hermione was forced to spread her legs a bit to make room for him. He took the move as an invitation, gripping her thigh with one hand, squeezing and pulling it up to his waist and sliding perfectly into the hollow space provided, pelvis rocking and thrusting against her hot core. Hermione whimpered in his arms, and suddenly her other leg was locking up around his hips, drawing him in deeper, closer to her core.

Neville groaned, rolling his hips against her as he continued to feed at her mouth. Gods how he wished they were unclothed and doing this. His mouth left hers, trailing down her chin as she threw her head back against the wall, panting and whinging, fingers digging into his shoulders and back as she continued to rock frantically against him. His lips dropped to her exposed collar bone, nipping and licking and sucking at the flesh he could reach. He wished he could tear the clothes from her body and feast on her properly, touch her properly, he thought as one palm slid up to cover her breast and squeeze, delighting in her exquisite moan.

“Oh god, oh god, oh god,” she panted, and he could feel it to, the swirling magic whipping around them, and he knew he was as close to climax as she must be. It was only a question now of who
would go first. Determined for it to be her, he continued his frantic frottaging, squeezing her hips and breast alternatively as he continued to suck on her clavicle, grazing his teeth along the bone again when she shivered and cried out.

She gave an aborted little shout before clenching down on her vocal release, but she couldn’t hide the way her body shook and trembled against his. He felt it, too, in the ozone charged explosion that ripped out of her, with her at its epicenter. Neville never stood a chance of withholding himself from her release. Still, he could feel the tendrils of magic dancing around them, seeking to join their union.

“Know this Hermione Granger, I want you, but I’m willing to wait for you to honor your pledge to Harry. I was willing to wait and let you have Ron if that’s what you really wanted, but you showed tonight it isn’t. I will not wait for any other man to claim you.” He kissed up her neck and cheek before he could reclaim her lips. “No other will ever give you as much pleasure as I can give you,” he added. “Let this be my troth unto you.”

“Neville, what…” Hermione panted. “That was… what was that?”

“A claiming,” he grinned rather smugly. “Now my magic knows yours intimately, as yours knows mine.” He kissed her, deeply. “I want you, Hermione Granger, as my wife, as my mate and partner in life, as the mother of my children.”

“What—are you—are you proposing to me?” she asked, stunned.

“Yes. Unofficially right now, but I want you to know, ‘m serious. I won’t let you try and go to any other man before I’ve had my say. And yes, I know you’ve promised to help Harry with his different families, and I don’t have a problem with that, as long as you help me with my family, too. Hopefully our family.”

“What, but… I thought… Luna… or Ginny…”

“Luna and I are still friends, but we both realized a relationship between us wasn’t really possible. And, Ginny, well, I’ll admit I had a little crush on her in fourth year, but that’s all it was, a crush. No, Hermione, you’re the one I’ve always liked, even back in first year. You were always so brave, so smart, so beautiful, always…” He brushed her hair back from her shoulder. “Always, you. But you never saw me, did you? I don’t blame you. How could I compare to Harry or Ron who were always there for you, always first for you.”

“But not now?”

“No, not now, not so much,” Neville agreed. “Harry? Maybe still, but he’s not a threat, what with Charlie. Even if, when, you have his children for him, it’s not… it’s not like he would be having you,” Neville concluded. “I can live with that. Especially if you agree to be mine,” he growled.

“Neville, what are you…” she panted.

“Do you feel that?” he demanded. Rubbing his face against her throat, hands still gripping her hips, pelvis still locked against hers. “Do you feel how our magic flows against each other’s? The way it melts into each other’s? Just like the way I would melt into you if it weren’t for these clothes we were wearing, and isn’t it a good thing we are wearing them because even having just cum, I’m already hard for you again, Hermione. Can you feel that? Feel how hard I am? If it wasn’t for these clothes we’re still wearing, I’d be inside you right now, Hermione, I’d be inside you, moving and filling you up with my cum.”

Hermione moaned, shivering against him.
“Would you like that?” he growled. “Would you like it if I took you back to my room right now and laid you out on the bed and stripped you naked? I would feast on you, Hermione. I would kiss and lick and suck every inch of you until I’d tasted every bit of you, and then I would sink my cock into your hot pussy and fill you up with my cum.”

Hermione shivered again, moaning as her lips found his and she kissed him frantically. “Please,” she breathed, her body one long, live wire sparking dangerously.

“You want that?”

“Yes, please.”

“My pleasure,” Neville growled, releasing her body back to the ground but snatching her hand and tugging her along behind him as he made for the quickest way back to the bed chambers Harry had provided for him the previous night. He wasn’t about to let her change her mind this night. It was a new year, a new start, and Neville was ready to see it start in a very good way.

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Neville wasn’t the only young lord planning to see the new year in with a special rendezvous. Of course, Draco’s intended target was not nearly as complacent or agreeable as Hermione.

Upon leaving the blue parlor, they brought up into smaller groups that scattered about the open and available rooms the house elves had prepared for them. His mother, aunt, and the French champion had discovered the music room and were chatting about inane things. His father, he knew, had found the lord’s parlor and was probably attempting to drink himself through a decanter of whichever was the finest liquor available. Most likely brooding over what the Granger chit had had to say. He never did take logical counter arguments to his beliefs well. Draco didn’t really care where most of the others went, but he managed to stumble upon a good many of them before he found his query.

The majority of the younger crowd had holed up in the front salon, talking lightly on varying subjects. The werewolf, he learned, had said his goodnights already, claiming exhaustion as he carrying his son up to bed. The baby didn’t look very sleepy to Draco, but he was by no means an expert on babies.

The Weasley parents seemed to be grilling the Grangers on the method Granger had mentioned earlier—and wouldn’t that be something. Harry Potter, the lord of thirteen families, surrounded by a ton of kids, all by different mothers? It was wild, especially now knowing Harry didn’t like women.

It took him longer than he thought it should have to find the snip of a woman in the library. It wouldn’t have been his first choice for her, though, so he supposed it was a pretty decent hiding spot for someone who wanted to be alone.

“Fancy my finding you here,” he drawled.

“What are you doing here?” Ginny growled, tossing the book she was looking at aside.

“Oh, I was just looking around. I used to visit here as a child, you know,” he reminded her. “My mother and her sisters grew up here, and it’s where my grandmother use to live until she decided to move into her dowry cottage.”

Ginny snorted. “Of course. How could I forget, being a Black and all.”

“What,” he scoffed. “Did something Black deny you access? Was your blood not recognized by the family wards?”
“Oh, like you’re much better?” she groused, staring at him like a mouse would stare at a cat.

“I’m a scion of the—“

“And I don’t care,” she cut him off, pushing angrily to her feet. “Why are you really here?”

“I was invited, just like you, Weaslette, because I’m family. Just. Like. You,” he added deliberately, circling closer to her.

“We’re nothing alike,” she growled, hair whipping around as she turned to keep him in sight.

“Ah, but we are. After all, am I not a child of a Black daughter, and it is Lord Black who is getting married tomorrow. To a Weasley. To your bother. Which is why you are here, is it not? I can’t see any other reason why you would be invited to Harry Potter’s wedding ceremony.”

“Shut up.”

“It’s not like he was ever looking for a bride, is it? And besides, he must have liked your brother an awful lot. He is, after all, having his baby.”

“Shut up! Just shut up!”

“And he’s how far along?” Draco continued. “Why, it’s over four months now, isn’t it. Tell me, did you know lover boy was sneaking around your hovel this summer bending over and taking it up the ass from your brother?”

Her fists went flying, ready to strike at him, but he was prepared. After all, it wasn’t their first tango. He wrestled her arms down to her sides and finally behind her back, holding them there by using the pressure against her back to push her into him.

“You understand, don’t you,” he whispered against her ear. “He was never going to be yours.”

“I hate you,” she seethed.

“So you’ve said, numerous times, but you keep coming back, don’t you?” he asked, nuzzling her ear and down to her throat. “Don’t you?” he demanded with a little shake, pulling back to look her in the face. “You can’t hide behind your little fantasy anymore. We all know the truth now. Harry is never coming back to you, Ginevra. It’s over.”

“No!” she shouted, struggling against his hold, panting heavily.

“It’s not, it’s not. It’s a mistake. You’ll see!”

“It’s not a mistake,” Draco grounded back. “He’s marrying someone else! When are you going to wake up and realize the mistake was yours for believing he ever really loved you, wanted you, as anything more than a dear little kid sister. It was all you, Ginevra. All you, this whole time. He’s never going to marry you. What’s it going to take for you to get that through you think ginger skull?”

“Why the hell do you care,” she spat, still struggling against his hold, panting heavily. “What do you want from me, huh?”

“I told you what I want.”

“Yeah, well I don’t want you.”

“That wasn’t what you said—“

“Don’t talk about that! That doesn’t count!”
“Doesn’t it?” he countered, holding her arms by the wrists, he brought them between their bodies before pressing close again. “Are you sure it doesn’t count, because I think it does. You were so needy, Ginevra, and didn’t I give you what you needed?”

“I told you, it was a one off thing. It didn’t mean anything. Why can’t you forget—“

“No. I won’t forget. I can’t forget,” he hissed. “And I’m willing to bet, neither can you.”

“You’d lose,” she grounded back, glaring up at him.

“Would I? Would I really?”

She didn’t respond other than to continue glaring at him.

After another moment, he smirked and released her, stepping back. “That’s what I thought.”

He turned to leave, and only prior experience had him ducking out the door when he heard her growl. Not a moment too soon, either, he thought as he heard the thump of a probably heavy book hitting the door behind him.

He grinned and took off down the hall, whistling. The night was still relatively young after all. Still several hours until midnight.

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Two hours till midnight saw the younger set back to playing Snap and lazing about aimlessly or reading. Meanwhile, the Grangers had convinced several of the older set to try their hand at Rummy in another room. Andromeda was proving to be quite the deft hand at cards, much to the others’ chagrin. It was as the elder Black sister was dealing that the younger decided to speak her question.

“My sister tells me you would be knowledgeable about the ritual your daughter spoke of earlier?”

“Just a bit,” Mrs. Granger answered, studying her cards closely before looking up. “Why? What did you want to know?”

“I—” Narcissa shut her mouth and thought. “You might not realize it, but the birth rate in the wizarding world is actually quite low. Many families have just one child, if they’re lucky, two. It’s rare for wizarding families to be blessed with more than three children unless they have some Weasley blood in them,” she added with a sly smile towards the couple.

“Really? No, I didn’t know that. I wonder if it’s an effect of magic on fertility,” Hermione’s mother mused.

“It’s more likely a side-effect of inbreeding,” Mr. Granger responded, taking his turn at the deck. “If what Hermione says is true.”

“Yes, well, I was wondering how these rituals might be used on witches? With fourteen family lines at stake, well, you’re looking for at least ten different witches. How will these muggle fertility rituals affect the witches?”

“I should think the same as regular humans,” Mrs. Granger answered. “I would be more concerned with taking care of ten different women and their children if it wasn’t for this house. I mean, that’s a lot of children to be considering bringing into the world and raising, and at least one of those children is going to be my grandchild if I know my daughter.”
“You should,” her husband grumbled. “She gets her stubbornness from her mother.”

“Behave,” she warned, but her husband just grinned unapologetically. “Was there something else you wanted to know?”

Narcissa hesitated only a moment before pushing forward. “Your daughter mentioned a procedure that allowed another woman to have someone’s child?”

“Surrogacy, yes,” the Granger mother replied, making a show of studying her cards and not the other woman. “In cases where it’s deemed not safe for a woman to carry her own baby, a surrogate mother is hired to carry the child safely to term.”

“What magic do they use to put the baby inside the other woman?” Narcissa asked wondrously.

“Not magic, really, just science,” Mr. Granger answered. “The reproductive cells are withdrawn from the mother and then fertilized by the father’s sex cells. Doctors then take the resulting zygote and implant it into the host mother’s womb.”

She wasn’t sure what a zygote was, but she suspected it had something to do with the unborn child. Still, he made it seem all so simple. “And it is a common ritual?”

“Well, it’s not uncommon,” Mrs. Granger hummed. “It’s more common for the zygote to be implanted in the biological mother, but like I said, surrogacy is used when the natural mother cannot carry her own child, and it does happen.”

Narcissa thought on this—on what it might mean for her and her family—but there was still so much unknown. How risky was it? How did they find another woman? “How do they remove the reproductive cells from the mother?” she asked finally.

“It’s just a simple surgery,” Mrs. Granger replied before her husband added, “With a really long needle.”

***

It was another hour closer to midnight when she left the others in search of her husband. Like her son, she knew her husband well enough to suspect where to look first, and she was not a bit surprised to find him in the men’s parlor, tumbler in hand as he sat in one of the elegant high-back armchairs, staring broodily into the merrily crackling fire.

“Lucius?” she called gently, stepping into the room and closing the door behind her. “Will you hide away the rest of the night?”

“Cissa. Come to chase me back into that band of ruffians and hoolagins and other undesirables?” her husband grumbled, but not sloppily. Thankfully, he had not imbedded much of the fine spirits Rozengard had to offer, then.

“No, my love. I won’t force you back into their company.” She approached on light feet and slid easily into his lap. His arms came up around her waist to hold her closer.

Lucus groaned and buried his face against her throat and shoulder. “Why did it have to be that boy?”

She did not have to ask which boy—after so many years of marriage and maneuvering together, she knew her husband’s mind most times. “He was Sirius’s godson, and as I understand it, Sirius and James Potter became blood brothers sometime during their sixth year,” she informed him.
“Meaning he was always ahead of Draco. Why he couldn’t just die and stay dead.”

“You don’t really mean that,” she chastised him, leaning her head against his.

“No,” he sighed. “No. But if it was just about anyone else but him…”

“He is a young lord who was given no tutelage in how to be a lord, Lucius,” she reminded him, soft whispers near his ear. “That is a role you could easily fill for him. You could have a place, if you but reach out your hand in offering.”

Lucius shook his head minutely. “I don’t think I could.”

“Really? Even after this past year?” she countered. “I thought you were coming to enjoy the boy’s company.”

“Tolerate, yes. Enjoy, no,” Lucius growled before continuing. “He’s still a brat. Impossible brat. And now he’s to be the last hope for fourteen families? Fourteen, Cissa!”

“Yes, I know,” she smiled, leaning her head against his. “I was there when the robes were ordered. It will be quite a scandal when the news leaks.”

“Who?” he demanded to know. “Which families is the brat to represent now?”

“Well, as you already know, the Potters, Blacks, and Peverells.”

“Yes, but that’s only three,” Lucius huffed. “What of the others?”

“The Prewitts through Charlie.”

“And the other ten? That ginger dragonslayer said they were ancient. Pre-Roman, even!”

“I would need to remember my history correctly,” she mused playfully, “but I believe he was referring to Aethelgard, Cynewulf, and Witte-Wigheard.”

Silver-blond eyebrows arched in awed surprise. “Witte-Wigheard, really? And Cynewulf? They haven’t been around for centuries…”

“No, but then, neither have the Bursnells, Hollingberrys, Segaruses, or Clardges,” she added smartly.

“That’s quite a mixture,” Lucius mused.

“Yes, and not very light orientated, are they all?” Narcissa smiled. “But then again, that could be countered by the Edesons, Meaths, and Ravensdales.”

“All three? And…” Lucius’s thoughts wondered off. “He’s right. Even with the Black blood tie thrown in from his godfather, there’s no way all those families came to him from his father’s blood.”

“No, there isn’t,” she agreed calmly. She had, after all, more time to consider the consequences and repercussions of so many dormant families being reawaken.

Lucius huffed. “It’s outrageous to think of muggle borns as being somehow related to any of us.”

“Distasteful, perhaps,” she allowed, “but is it really that outrageous. He did have some valid points, as well. Where else, what better explanation is there for why muggle-borns spontaneously happen?”

“My father had a sister,” Lucius said suddenly after several minutes of heavy silence between the
two.

“What?” Narcissa asked, startled.

“My grandfather had intended to drown the child, but my grandmother convinced him not to. They left her, in the ruins of a bombed out building, to be found by muggle rescue men. I have an aunt somewhere out there, if she survived. An aunt who knows nothing of our proud heritage as Malfoys.”

She studied his face searchingly. “You never said anything.”

“Have you ever spoken of your family’s dark secrets?” he countered, somewhat harshly in his defensiveness.

“No, I suppose not.”

“I find myself wondering what happened to her. Did she survive? Did she ever marry? Have children? Do I have cousins somewhere?” he asked, rubbing his large hand soothingly up and down her back.

“We may never know.”

“Or we might,” Lucius hedged, “if Potter’s plan to have all the muggleborns tested happens.”

“Are you against the idea of finding out there are others out there who could belong to the Malfoy family?” she asked, honestly unsure of his answer.

“No, I don’t think I am,” Lucius mused, “but it does lead to questions of responsibility.”

“But you will support Harry in this?” she reassured herself.

“Haven’t I supported him since the end of the war?” he answered, bemusedly at the turn of events of the last three years.

“That was different,” Narcissa scoffed. “I know you don’t like feeling indebted to him.”

“To anyone,” he agreed.

“And yet, he saved our lives.”

“You saved his,” he pointed out. “It’s only fair.”

“He saved Draco’s life,” she returned. She knew he felt the same. There was little they wouldn’t do for their precious son, their only child.

“And again, Draco practically saved his by lying about who the boy really was,” Lucius huffed. It was an old argument between them. The result was always the same.

“But you will support him?”

“I already said I would.”

“Good,” Narcissa declared. “Because he will need a master specialist to handle the backlash of publicity that is sure to erupt.” She sat up and smoothed his robe folds down his chest, smiling at him.
“Assuredly,” Lucius groused. “Wherever that brat is concerned, he is a publicist’s nightmare.”

“Really?”

“I’ve been wracking my brain for the last week trying to decide how best to release the news of this whirlwind of a wedding of his, and now to discover he is with child already, too?” Lucius groaned.

“Ah, but it is a remarkable thing, is it not? To be blessed with life, and so young, too,” she sighed wistfully.

“I’m sorry, Cissa.”

“I know, my love,” she smiled sadly, patting his chest. She knew, even though he insisted not, that the many miscarriages before her one successful delivery of their sole child was the results of her own body’s failing. The fact that Draco’s delivery had nearly ended in death for them both… The healers had told her she would never survive another pregnancy.

“Tell me,” she began again, thinking back on her early conversation with the Grangers. “The rituals spoken of earlier… would you ever consider having another child if another woman could carry the babe?”

“I will not forsake you,” Lucius snapped gruffly. “I promised you that and I have ever kept my promise to you.”

“I know and honor our vows, Lucius,” she soothed, “but that is not what I asked. The Grangers spoke of a ritual of surrogacy, where another woman carries the child for the natural mother. It would still be my child, our child, but it would be safely carried by another woman,” she rushed to explain to him.

“Who?”

“I don’t know, but, it is a thought… a hope where once there was none,” she said, leaning back against his chest, content to just sit close to her husband in silence.

The silence stretched, not uncomfortably so, until Lucius finally asked, “And this is something you would want?”

“To have another child with you? Yes, always,” Narcissa breathed.

“Then we shall consider this more, later though,” Lucius decided.

“Later,” she agreed, leaning back against him.

He held her loosely, running his hands up and down her arm and back. “The new year approaches.”

“It shall be a better one for us all.”

“I hope so.”

“I know so.”

***

“Excuse me,” Fleur murmured as she attempted to hide another yawn.

“I think that’s it for us for the night,” Bill said, yawning himself. “We’ll have to wish you a Happy
New Year in the morning.”

“Tis but one more hour,” his wife sleepily protested, rubbing her large distended belly. At eight months, the young French woman looked like she could pop at any moment. Harry found it difficult to believe she still had another month to go.

“I’m thinking of turning in myself,” Percy announced, closing his book and standing up. “Harry, Charlie, thank you for a lovely evening and your fine hospitality. See you all in the morning.”

“Wimps,” George declared before yawning himself.

“Mmm,” Harry agreed. “Well, some of us wimps are busy growing little people,” he told the other, leaning into Charlie sleepily. “And we can use all the extra rest we can get, even if it’s only an hour.”

“Aw, are you planning on leaving us, too, Harry?” the remaining Weasley brother pouted.

“I think that’s a yes,” Charlie laughed at Harry’s incoherently murmured reply. “Sorry, Georgie. It looks like you and Miss Luna are on your own for the remainder of the night.”

“Oh, no,” Luna smiled. “I plan on heading out into the conservatory. Would you like to join me?” she asked sweetly.

“Maybe another time, Luna, thanks.”

“That’s okay. Maybe another time,” the blonde replied before floating away, leaving George on his lonesome.

He hated being alone. The quiet of the room soon got to be too much and he pushed to his feet, determined to find some other company. Wandering down the hallways, he tried each of the doors he came across. Some were still locked, as they had been all day; other opened to empty rooms.

That was, until he got to the room at the end of the far right of the left corridor. That room was most definitely not empty if the sounds coming from the other side of the room were anything to go by. Thinking it his little brother and Hermione making up, he snuck into the room, ready to pounce and surprise the two love birds in a compromising position.

What he was not prepared to spy, however, was his little sister, mostly unclothed and ravishing a most willing Malfoy.

“Bloody hell.”

Ginny gasped, pulling back and looking over to see her brother standing there, gobsmacked.

“Do you mind?” Draco drawled, sitting up on his elbows and glaring at the stunned ginger. “We’re a bit busy here.”

“What the hell?” George exclaimed.

“Dammit, Weasley, can’t you just get lost for a few hours?” Draco groaned, even as Ginny slid off his lap and started tugging her clothes to right.

“No, I bloody well can’t. What the hell is going on here?”

“What does it look like?” the blond growled.

“It looks like you were making time with my sister, that’s what it looks like!”
“Give the man an O.”

“Dammit, Ginny, what are you thinking?”

“It’s not what you think,” she cried, scrambling off of Malfoy and standing up, still fixing her clothes.

“Really? Because right now I’m thinking you’ve been screwing around with Malfoy. Malfoy for fuck’s sake!”

“Always knew you were smarter than you let on,” Draco drawled, leaning back and staring at the ceiling.

“Shut up, Malfoy,” both Weasleys shouted at him, and if he wasn’t coming to terms with the fact that he was going to be left unsatisfied, he would have snorted.

“Come here, Ginny. Let’s get out of here.”

“And what if she doesn’t want to leave?” Draco counted, wondering why he was even bothering.

“Why would she even want to stay?”

“George, leave it. Let’s just go.”

“Wait a minute, just how long has this been going on? Have you been screwing around with Malfoy, Gin? I mean before tonight.”

“And if she has? How’s it any of your business.”

“Curse you, Malfoy, if I find out—“

“Let’s just go, George. C’mon,” Ginny pleaded, tugging at his arm.

“You know where to find me, Weaslette,” Draco called out before the door could close behind them.

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Chapter 18

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Hermione woke with a start. She felt languid, her body achy but in a good way, like she’d done a really good workout. Which was crazy, because she hadn’t done a workout since… The bed moved behind her and a warm body pressed up against hers, which was strange because Ron wasn’t really much of a snuggler. No, he was more of a sprawler and a snorer and… and it was too quiet, she realized.

And with that thought came the memory of who’s bed she was in and how she had gotten there and what she had done once she did get there.

She groaned and tried to bury her face in the pillow. The pillow that smelt of sage and bark and…

And a large, warm hand slid from her stomach up to cover one breast and squeezed. “You’re awake,” Neville rumbled against her shoulder.

“Yes.”

“You should be sleeping.”

“I woke up.”

“Go back to sleep, Hermione,” Neville commanded gently, pulling her back against him and rubbing her belly again. “It’s still dark out.”

She wanted to protest. She was awake and now her mind was beginning to wake up, too. There was no way she would be falling back to sleep any time soon. But then, Neville did… something. She wasn’t sure what it was, but it left her feeling loose and lassitude. And with his warm lips still on her neck, she found herself falling asleep once more.

***

“You awake yet?” a sleep-gruff voice whispered against his ear.

Harry yawns and stretched. “I’m now. What time is it anyway?”

“Don’t know. Sometime after midnight, before dawn,” Charlie answered, snuggling against him and rubbing his scratchy cheeks all over Harry’s bare skin, causing the younger man to laugh and squirm.

“Charlie!” he finally managed to gasp past his laughter, all flushed and rosy cheeks, green eyes sparkling.

“Happy New Year, Harry,” the ginger man said, hovering over a somewhat breathless Harry and grinning down at him.

“Happy New Year, Charlie,” he returned, reaching up to cup the other man’s cheek and maneuver him down for a light, sweet kiss.

“Guess what?”

“What?” Harry asked obligingly.
“I’m getting married today.”

“Really? What a coincidence. So am I.”


“Think I love you, too, Charlie Weasley,” Harry whispered back.

“Well, you know what? I think there’s only one thing to do. I think I want to marry you.”

“I think I want to marry you, too.”

Charlie laughed. “Good thing we’re getting married, then. Can you imagine what the guests would say if we changed our minds?”

Harry snorted and snuggled into Charlie’s chest, running his hands up and down the man’s torso, relishing in the strong muscles built up from wrangling dragons for years. Muscles that would probably grow soft and flabby with disuse, he thought sadly, trailing his hand down to Charlie’s currently flat stomach.

Charlie’s hand came up and covered his, pressing it against his belly. “She’s going to say it’s still too soon to tell,” he murmured, brushing his thumb against the back of Harry’s hand.

“But we know it’s not.”

“No, we know,” Charlie agreed. “Hey, who knows. This one could be a girl.”

“I hope not,” Harry groaned.

“You wouldn’t like a little girl?” Charlie asked. “Daddy’s little girl? She’d have you wrapped around her little finger.”

“Have you wrapped around her fingers, you mean,” Harry teased back before becoming serious once more. “Are you really going to be okay?”

“I already told you, yes. It’s okay, Harry, really. And we have a plan in place, a good plan, to help manage the family magic. I really do think your idea about the muggle borns is correct.”

“I hope so. I already feel bad enough about Hermione and Ron breaking up because of me.”

“Hey, they did not break up because of you. If anything you were just the excuse they needed to finally realize it wasn’t going to work long term for them.”

“Maybe.”

“Think of it this way: now they’re both free to find someone better suited to them, and they won’t have this ‘what if’ always hanging over them.”

“Yeah, you’re right, but I still do kind of feel bad.”

“Don’t. It’s not your fault. None of it. Not even having to have a bunch of kids to fill out a bunch of previously thought dead family lines that the goblins decided to give to you.”

Harry snorted. “If you say so.”
“I do say so, and as your pregnant fiancée and soon to be pregnant husband, you should listen to me.”

“I should, should I? Should I remind you that I was pregnant first?”

“A mere coincidence of circumstance,” Charlie disavowed. “I’m sure if we had been allowed more time, both of us would have been pregnant before the end of summer. There’s no way I would have resisted your delectable body if I was within distance of it.”

“Delectable is it?”

“Mmm, scrumptious, delicious… my favorite food.”

“Says the man who will eat anything.”

“I’ll have you know that though I may try anything once, some things I never try twice,” Charlie told him solemnly. “You, however, I will never get tired of eating. In fact, I wouldn’t mind a bit of a taste right now.”

“Now?” Harry sputtered as Charlie began to shimmy down the bed.

“But don’t we—“

“It’s early,” Charlie cut him off before he began to suck him off, much to Harry’s pleasure and delight.

***

Draco woke knowing he was not alone. Normally that would be cause for alarm, but he quickly remembered where he was and, more importantly, who was in bed with him.

He rolled over so he could study her sleeping form.

She had come to him, just as he knew—hoped—she would. How or why, he didn’t really care. Not when she was there, in his bed. Her golden ginger hair spilled across his pillows, her milky cream skin against the silk navy sheets, looking like fresh snow against the silver comforter. Her lips were a pale slash of pink, but he knew how to bring color back into them.

He reached out and pressed his thumb against her bottom lip, obligingly slipping the digit past those blush lips when she parted them, gently forcing her jaw open to make room for his entire thumb in her mouth. Her body was always so accommodating to his wants and desires, he thought, rolling over onto her.

Even still asleep, her body moved for him, welcomed him. Her tongue pressing against his thumb wakened other parts of him, and he wiggled and squirmed until he was nestled at the fiery nest of her core.

How many times had they come together in the last term—he could count on one hand—but their couplings from the night before blew that record to smitherins. He didn’t want to stop yet. She was tight, tighter than the night before, he thought as he slowly and with short thrusts joined them together once more.

Ginny moaned and murmured, shifting under him, but not to get away. No, her body welcomed his, just as her magic welcomed his and had since their first time together.
“Tell me again,” he whispered against her cheek. “Tell me how badly you want me, need me. Tell me how much you want me to fill you up, all the way, and cum in you. Tell me, Ginevra. Make me believe it, because you believe it.”

He thrust hard, forcing himself in that last bit until he was completely sheathed in her hot core. She came awake with a cry, arching up against him, but he was ready for her, already working his hips faster, building up momentum. Liquid gushed around his cock and suddenly the passage became no less swollen and tight, but that much easier to glide in and out of.

His thumb was still in her mouth, pushing eagerly, greedily in and out as she began to suck on it. “I’m going to cum,” he warned, hips already speeding up as he raced towards his finish. She moaned around his thumb and her inner muscles clasped his cock tightly.

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you, Ginevra,” he purred. “You like it when I cum inside you. Can you feel me all day? My cum slushing about inside you all day? Or do you just like the way it feels trickling out of you, staining you pants. Oh, I forgot, you don’t wear pants anymore, do you. The quicker to access your core, my dear.”

Ginny moaned and squirmed under him. “Here it comes, Ginevra. I’m going to fill you up with my cum. Are you ready?”

She moaned loudly in assent, and Draco wasted no time, chasing his release up and over the pinnacle.

***

“Good morning, everyone. Happy New Year,” Charlie called brightly as he escorted Harry into the breakfast room.

The sun had barely peeked its rays over the eastern sky when they awoke this morning. But the young couple saw no reason to rush from their beds. Instead they had spent a good hour just cuddling and chatting about little pieces of their personal histories. It was nearing nine when the house elf Mack popped in to call them to breakfast.

“Begging your pardon, Masters Harry, Masters Charlie, but Sailsby be wanting yous to know breakfast being served for yous’s guest and family in the breakfast room,” the elf informed them solemnly. Harry wasn’t sure how old the elf was, but was pretty sure he was older than Dobby but younger than Kreacher. “Or’s, iffen it be’s to yous’s pleasure, Macky can be bringing Masters’ breakfastes to them.”

“Thank you, Mack,” Harry quickly answered. “We appreciate that, but we’re fine to join the others in the breakfast room.”

The elf nodded before popping away, leaving Harry and Charlie alone once more.

“Well, I guess that’s our clue to get out of bed,” Charlie yawned and stretched.

Harry huffed. “What if I don’t want to.”

“Well, you’re going to have to at some time,” Charlie countered. “Unless you wanted to get married in bed,” he added with a grin. “I wouldn’t mind, but I think one of our guests might just protest.”

Harry snorted at that, but agreeably rolled out of bed. Of course, it took them a bit longer before they made it down to the breakfast room. Most of their guests were gathered, calmly sipping tea, chatting amicably, reading the Prophet, or attending to their meal. All looked up and returned the pair’s
greeting though, as Harry and Charlie entered.

“*I trust everyone slept well?*” Harry asked, looking around at his extended family and feeling pearls of happiness bubble up inside him.

“Indeed, my lord,” Narcissa returned with a smile. “And you? Are you ready for today’s festivities?”

Harry smiled. “*I think so,*” he answered as Charlie began to pass him some of his favorite items and sneak a few others onto his plate, too. As if he didn’t notice, Harry thought, half-amused, half-annoyed. “*I mean, what all do I have to do?*

“*Layla be making sure everything be taking care of, Master Harry,*” the little house elf piped up as she popped in. “*Everything being right perfect for Master Harry’s and Master Charlie’s bonding. We’s make sure of it! Master Harry not be needing to worry about a thing!*”

“*Thank you, Layla,*” Charlie replied for his stunned fiancée.

The elf just shook her head, big bat-like ears flapping wildly. “*Layla and house elves be being grateful to yous and Master Harry for coming, for not forgetting about us. We’s being doing our very bestest to make Master Harry’s wedding ceremony especially special. Layla already have masters’ robesies ready, and Macky be making sure the main ballroom be having everything right, and Sailsby being making sure Black’s and Prewitt’s and Potter’s and all Master’s other families being properly represented and honored!*” the elf declared.

Harry blinked, stunned. “*How… I mean… How would you even know… I…*”

Layla’s head tilted sideways, like a dog or owl might cock its head to look at something, and then she grinned toothily. “*Layla be hearing Master Harry and Master Charlie. They be saying we house elves will take care of everything, so we house elves do! Masters Harry and Masters Charlie be having a very special day. We make sure of that!*”

And with that, the elf popped away, leaving a bemused human audience behind.

Andromeda broke it with a small chuckle that quickly wrangled the others into a round of giggling laughter. “*Well, that’s that then,*” she summed up, smiling down at Harry.

“I suppose it is,” he agreed, grinning back. “*Well, then, I suppose there’s nothing left for us to do today except get married,*” he added, looking over to Charlie.

“I suppose not,” Charlie grinned back. “*Although, I for one wouldn’t mind finishing my breakfast first.*”

Harry snorted. “*No, you wouldn’t, would you. You’re like Ron. Where do you put it all, that’s what I want to know?*”

Charlie winked at him. “*I’m just very good at burning through all the food I eat, is all. Speaking of, where is Ron anyway? And the others, too, come to think of it?*” he asked, looking around and noticing the empty chairs and missing faces.

“They should be up by now,” Mrs. Weasley sniffed. “*Even if they stayed up late last night.*”

“*Layla?*” Harry called. “*Do you know where Hermione, Ron, Neville, Ginny, and Draco are?*”

“*Missy Mione being in with young Lord Longbottom,*” the elf popped back in to answer. “*Missy Ginny being in with young Master Draco. Master’s brother being in his room still sleeping. Should
Layla be sending someone to get them, Master Harry?"

Silence ensued. Even the sound of the silverware paused as everyone tried to process what they heard.

“Oh, good,” Luna spoke first. “I had hope Neville would have seized the opportunity to approach Hermione. Would you pass the jam, please?”

“What do you mean, ‘with’?” Mrs. Weasley sputtered. “You don’t mean—Hermione and Ginny aren’t—but Ginny was sharing a room with you last night, wasn’t she?” the elder Weasley finally turned on the Lovegood daughter.

“Hmm? Oh, no,” Luna moued. “I slept quite alone last night, more’s the pity. I haven’t even received my New Year’s Kiss,” she added solemnly before brightening and turning towards Harry. “May I have a kiss from the groom?”

“Oh, sure, Luna,” Harry replied hollowly, still trying to comprehend what his elf had meant by Hermione being with Neville….? And Ginny with Draco? She didn’t really mean with-with, did she?

Luna popped up from her seat halfway down the table and gleefully skipped up to the head where Harry was sitting and quickly she dropped a kiss right on Harry’s lips, shocking the young lord out of his puzzlement. She smiled beautifully at him. “It’s funny how things work out, isn’t it?”

“Luna…?”

“Do you mean to imply that my son,” Lucius began, frowning frighteningly.

From the other side of the table, George growled and started to stand. “I knew I should have hexed that ferret last night.”

“Wait, what’s this? What happened last night?” Mr. Weasley demanded from his son.

“I, uh, might have run across the two of them,” the second youngest son admitted.

“Ginny and Draco?” Harry asked. “Wait a minute, Ginny? She’s the Gryffindor he likes? No wonder he wanted to know if anyone else knew I was gay.”

“What’s this about Ginny and Draco?” Mrs. Weasley demanded. “You don’t really mean to imply that they—that they’re—“

“Impossible,” Lucius growled.

“And Neville and Hermione, too?” Harry asked, still bemused. He shot a look at Luna who had returned to her toast and jam. “And you knew? Is that why you two broke it off?”

“Oh, no,” Luna replied calmly. “I’ve known forever that Neville was particular to Hermione. Has been since his first year, I suspect, the way he talks about her. But you know Neville, he’s so shy sometimes, too busy listening to the bumbling humdingers. It’s gotten better in recent years, though. I suspected a Templeton Tuntu might have attached itself to him, but I assure you, I searched him thoroughly and could not find it.”

“But, he never said anything!” Harry protested.

“No, he wouldn’t, would he,” Luna countered. “After all, everyone knew to get to Hermione they
would need to get past you and Ron first. Well, everyone except Viktor Krum, of course.”

“Neville likes Hermione,” Harry breathed, shaking his head and then grinning. “That’s an interesting pairing.”

“Ginny and Draco?” Charlie was sputtering. “Since when? Why did you say something last night, George?”

“Well, you all had gone to bed, hadn’t you?” groused the younger brother. “I broke them up and dragged her out of there, you can be sure. Should’ve made sure she went straight back to her own room and then spelled the door locked, that’s what I should’ve done.”

“Why didn’t you?” Bill growled.

“She shook me off, didn’t she? Went storming one way and told me to leave her alone,” George grumbled. “Since she took off in the opposite direction of the ferret, I left her to it.”

“I don’t understand,” Mrs. Weasley huffed. “Do you mean my daughter is with Draco Malfoy?”

“Elf,” Narcissa called commandingly. “Tell my son he is expected in the breakfast room, and if he is not alone, his companion is to arrive as well. He has ten minutes.”

“Yes, Missy Cissy,” Layla nodded before popping away.

“There,” the blonde Black daughter announced. “Now we may have some answers.”

“You don’t seem quite as upset as the others,” Andromeda murmured to Mrs. Granger as she picked up her fork and speared a piece of citrus fruit.

“Hmm? No, I guess not,” Mrs. Granger allowed. “It’s not like we didn’t already know or suspect Hermione was sexually active. She is nineteen now and more than capable of making her own decisions. Plus, after as many conversations as we’ve had, I’m sure she’s being safe and protecting herself. She’s a smart young woman.”

“That, she is,” Andromeda agreed. “And the Longbottom heir is quite a match.”

“Neville? Yes, he seems like a fine young man,” Mrs. Granger agreed before leaning in closer to her table companion to whisper conspiratorially, “Truth be told, I think he’s a much better match for her than Ron, but I know she’s liked Ron for practically forever. I’m not sad they broke up, though. As good of friends as they supposedly are, I don’t think they really would have been happy together in the long run. She seems to have a better relationship with Harry, but then, I’ve only this summer of watching them all interact together to judge, really.”

“Sometimes you don’t need a lot of time to see what should be and could be,” Andromeda replied. “I knew from the second date that my Ted was the man for me—sweet bumbling Hufflepuff that he was. But he was shrewd, too. Reminded me constantly that hardwork and loyalty did not negate intelligence or cunning.”

If Mrs. Granger was going to reply to that, she was never even allowed the chance, for down the table, the Weasley parents and stood to face off against the Malfoy parents and heated words were beginning to fly.

***

Upstairs in the east family wing, the cause of the drama unfolding downstairs were busy chasing
another orgasm.

Ginny’s arms were thrown over her head, her sharp little nails biting into Draco’s scalp and shoulder as he continued to move behind her. Sweaty skin slapped and slid against sweaty skin, and keening cries and pleas filled the sizzling air around them. Draco continued to leave little bite marks all across her neck and shoulders while holding her open with one hand hooked under her thigh and the other curled under and over the spot where they were joined, flickering and flicking and rubbing and pinching her into a fevered pitch.

“You going to come for me again, Ginerva?” he growled, hips pummelling against her ass, the bump and grind causing her pretty little breasts to jiggle and bounce. “Gonna cream around my cock again? You know I love that right? How wet and slick you make me when you come all over my cock while I’m still fucking you.”

Ginny moaned, loudly, her fingers digging in deeper as she continued to grind herself back onto him. “Please,” she panted. “Please, please, please, please.”

“What do you want, baby?” Draco purred. “Tell me and I’ll make it happen for you. You wanna come again? I’ll make sure you get off, baby. You want me to come and fill you up again—you know I will, baby. I’m gonna fill you up with so much cum, you’ll look as pregnant as Potter.”

In his arms, Ginny shivered, full bodied, and Draco growled. Was it the thought of Potter or the thought of being pregnant that caused that shiver, he wondered. And was it a good shiver or a bad shiver. He knew which one he wanted it to be.

“I can just picture it,” he whispered against her ear, freeing up one of his hands to cup her little belly. “You would look so good, Ginerva, pregnant with my baby. Your belly all big and round and full of life…” She shivered again, gasping, and in response, he sank his teeth back into her tender throat, causing her to moan loudly.

The sound excited him further, and he ended up pushing her over onto her hands and knees, pulling her ass and hips back to meet his increasing thrusts. “Yes, Ginevera, that’s it. Your greedy little twat is going to soak up all my cum, swallow it deep, and it will give you such a cute little tummy,” he added, smoothing one hand over her hips and waist to cup the little belly she already had. “Going to fill you up, knock you up,” he added with a sharp thrust.

Ginny shouted out, lurching forward, hands scrambling in the bedsheets, searching blindly for something to hold on to, to ground her. Her entire world was focus on the heavy, throbbing, thrusting filling her up—so good, so deep, so big…. Although, in this position, he didn’t sink as deeply into her as he could, as she knew he could because he had. She shivered again remembering how he had battered at her cervix and how painfully delicious it had been. But then, this position was good, too, she’d discovered, because it place different pressure on her sex. A pressure that continued to build and build and build…

“You’re going to look so good carrying my baby,” he groaned out.

“No,” she gasped, forcing speech patterns through her brain. “Not.”

“Yes,” he counted, dragging his teeth over her shoulder again. “Big and beautiful and carrying my baby.”

“Never!”

“Definitely,” he growled, pulling her up onto her knees and back against his chest. This way he
could continue playing with her breasts, too. “You could be pregnant right now with my child.”

“No, can’t!” Ginny panted. “Took the potion.”

“Well then we’ll just have to see which wins out—the anti-conception position you took who knows how long ago or the fertility charm I cast last night.”

“You what?” Ginny started, moving to pull away from him.

“What do you think, Ginevra? Think we fucked enough to have knocked you up?”

“What the hell, Malfoy!” she growled, struggling to fall away from him, but he held her tight, hips speeding up their frantic thrusting.

“Think I dumped enough cum in you,” he added, his hand falling to cover her belly again. “You were begging for it, couldn’t get enough of it,” he reminded her. “I filled you up good, didn’t I? Fed all that cum right into your hungry womb, and I’m going to do it again.”

“No, wait, Malfoy, wait!” she panting, scrambling at the sheets, but he simply followed her down, crushing her into the bed.

“I’m coming, Ginevra, I’m coming!”

“Shit, fuck, don’t—!” she shouted, but it was too late. The same tingles she’d come to expect from one of Malfoy’s orgasms raced through her, suffusing her with warmth and heat. She shivered as his groan sounded in her ear.

She laid there, panting beneath him for several seconds as she recovered from the wave his release had set off in her own body. After only a minute of allowing herself to reign her senses, she pushed up and shoved him off of her back, crawling free from the tangle of sweaty limbs.

“What do you mean, fertility spell?” she demanded, turning to glare down at him.

He rolled off of her—reluctant to leave her body but content to keep her in his sights. Smirking, he reached up and fisted some of that coppery hair, dragging her fact down to his.

“Just what I said,” he growled. “You could very easily be carrying the Malfoy heir right now.”

“What were you thinking,” she hissed, yanking herself free from his grip. “Why would you even do such a stupid thing?”

“I told you, Ginevra, I want you, and a Malfoy always gets what he wants.”

“I already told you, I don’t want you.”

“Liar.”

“Shut the hell up! Just because I might sleep with you a couple of times, doesn’t mean I want to actually be with you!”

“Doesn’t it?”

“No! Gods, Malfoy, it’s just sex!”

“Mmm, very good sex, too,” he agreed, still smirking at her.

“Did you seriously cast a fertility spell on me last night?”
“Yes.”

“Why? Why would you do that?”

“I told you. I want you, and if they only way I can get you is by trapping you into a marriage, then so be it. I figured it worked for Harry Bloody Potter. Why not work for me?”

“You can’t just do that,” Ginny cried frustrated. “Oh, gods, what if I’m pregnant now thanks to you!”

“Then it’s my baby, and I will take care of it.”

“You can’t just go doing shit like that! It’s not fair! I already told you, I don’t want you. Why do you keep persisting in—“

“Liar,” he called her. “You do want me. Your body craves me. Your magic sings out ot mine. You want me plenty.”

“You son of a—“

“Layla be delivering a message,” the little elf popped in before Ginny could finish her insult. “Missy Cissy is being saying Master Draco needs be coming down to the breakfast room, and he’s to bring his lady friend, Missy Weazy.”

And then the elf popped right back out, leaving the two stunned teens staring at the empty space she’d just occupied. In a sudden flurry of movement, Ginny scrambled from the bed and snatched up her wand, flicking a quick tempus charm.

“How the hell did it get so late?” she groused, glaring at the floating numbers that informed her it was after ten in the morning.

“You know what they say,” Draco responded, unable to hide the smugness in his tone. “Time flies when you’re having fun.”

“Fuck you, Malfoy,” she snapped.

“Draco,” he corrected, “And I believe we already have.”

He crawled out of bed, much slower than she had, and came up flush behind her, wrapping one arm around her waist as the other went to secure her wrist, preventing her from turning her wand on him. He was well aware of his fiery temptress’s temper, and he smiled against her shoulder, unable to prevent his body from rubbing provocatively against hers.

“Several times.”

She gave a token struggle—a little wiggle and a small tug—before falling back against him, and he couldn’t help but smirk wider, hold her tighter. She shivered in his arms as his teeth grazed her delicate skin.

“Damn it,” she mumbled, eyes falling close as she leaned back into him. “What are we going to do?”

“I suggest we dress and head down to breakfast.”

“In case you’ve forgotten, my family is down there,” she growled.

“Funny, so is mine.” He nibbled at her ear, delighting in the shivers that raced up and down her
body.

“My mum’s going to go berserk.”

“I’m sure my father will be equally as upset.”

“They’re going to try to make more of this than it is.”

“And what do you think this is?”

“I told you before. This is just a one-off, Malfoy. Nothing more.”

“I might have convinced myself of that belief last year—after all, we were all under a lot of stress—but not now, Ginevra.”

“Will you stop calling me that! My name is Ginny.”

“Too common of a name,” Draco scoffed. “Despite your living conditions, you are no plebian. You were born to be more than just some common witch. You were born for greatness.”

“You stuffed-up, scruffy-looking peacock!” she growled, struggling free from him and whipping around to glare.

Draco drew himself up, running a hand through his loose blond hair, and quirked an eyebrow at her. “Who’s scruffy looking?”

“You’re such an ass!”

“I thought you liked my ass,” he taunted.

“Fuck you.”

“Been there, done that,” he quipped. “And if our families weren’t waiting for us presently, I would have no qualms about doing it again.”

Ginny screeched out her frustration, fisting her long ginger hair and shaking. “You… are… so aggravating!”

“I’m a challenge,” he corrected. “I’m the bad boy, the one your family wouldn’t approve of,” he continued, stalking her. “The would-be enemy,” he breathed against her skin, smoothing his hands up her arms, feeling the wirily banded muscles under the silky skin, until her could pinch her wrists and pull her hands free from her hair.

“The one who makes you feel alive again, who can make your body sing.” He brushed his lips up over her throat, along her jaw and across her cheek before finding and claiming her mouth. He started to get lost in the kiss, especially when he felt her come alive beneath him, against him, and reluctantly, he pulled back.

She started to follow, and he couldn’t repress the smug feeling that suffused him. Dropping another little kiss against her lips, he withdrew completely, stepping back away and placing several feet’s distance between them. She was too addicting by far. “We need to get dressed,” he reminded her.

She groaned, hand clenching around her wand once again, and for a moment Draco wondered if he’d have to go on defensive—not for the first time in his interactions with the Weaslette. It was just one of the reasons he wanted her.
She challenged him—physically, mentally, magically. She was the good girl, one of the darlings of the wizarding world. Not as famous as Hermione Granger, but her connection to Potter and her own record highlighted her, made her shine in the light of the public’s eye.

When she finally turned away and started to get dressed, he knew it was safe for him to do the same. Unfortunately, he couldn’t chase his thoughts away from her, examining why he wanted her.

He knew his father would be at best, least pleased with his choice. His mother, though, should support his cause. After all, the bad blood was between the Weasleys and Malfoys, not the Weasleys and Blacks, and indeed, Ginny’s grandmother was a Black—not too closely related to cause problems in the bloodline, though. And the Weasleys were known for their fertility, which should please both his parents, but his mother especially. He knew how badly she’d wished for more babies to cuddle and spoil, just as he knew it was a miracle both he and she had survived his birth.

His mother would adore Ginny, he knew, and delight in teaching her some of the social graces she would have missed out on growing up as she did. His father, too, would respect her, if he didn’t already. After all, she was one of the six who had confronted him at the Ministry several years ago. She was brave but devious, too. Her quick wit and fiery attitude would ensnare his father as easily as it had him, Draco was sure.

Of course, he would have preferred more time to convince Ginny that what they had wasn’t some multiple repeat of a one-off. Like he’d said, he might have convinced himself that it was if it had only been the once. Tensions were tight, emotions high, stress even higher. Last year had been nightmarish for all. He wasn’t even sure what had possessed him to step in and save her from the Carrows, but he had, and it had started something between them.

Something that had sparked and ignited and eventually led them to a hurried and furiously fumbling tumble in a broom closet of all places. It had truly been magically, however, and Draco found that despite her warnings of it having been a one off and mistake, he couldn’t wait for it to happen again. And it had, surprisingly, just this past September. He wasn’t sure what had set her off, but he was more than grateful. That time, they’d availed themselves to an unused classroom. Then again in November, this time in the fabled Room of Requirements. And now…

He looked over at the rumbled bed and smirked. Now they’d shared an entire night of lovemaking, and Draco knew he wouldn’t be willing to let his fiery ginger-cat go any time soon. It was just a matter of convincing everyone else. Well, he hadn’t been sorted into the House of the ambitious for nothing!

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In another bedroom suite, Hermione nuzzled in closer to the gentle warmth Neville radiated. He laid there, a solid gentle supporting presence, holding her loosely to him, one hand smoothing up and down her bare back in comforting, soothing sweeps, and she snuggled closer, smoothing her leg up and down his, delighting in the tiny tickles of his leg hair dancing over her skin. Not that Neville was hairy, or anything, or soft. Although, he didn’t have the same musculature as Ron did, but then, Ron played keeper and Neville was more used to squatting in front of a planter’s bed or lifting bags of soil and fertilizer. She pressed her nose against his chest and breathed deeply.

“You know, we’re going to have to get up eventually,” he said softly, his stomach gurgling as if in agreement.

“I know,” she allowed, humming and snuggling closer. “Don’t want to more yet, though.”

He chuckled, and the rumbling vibrations of his laughter sent shivers through her. She couldn’t help
but drop a little kiss against his skin and nuzzle closer, breathing him in.

He growled in response, arm tightening around her. “Keep that up, and I won’t be able to help myself,” he warned. Her groin wiggled against his hip and she hummed, “Promise?” With another growl, Neville pushed her up on top of him completely, leaving her to straddle his waist as he held her against him.

“I can go again if you can,” he taunted, shifting his hips beneath her bum so she could feel the stirring of interest slowly swelling against her delectable rounded cheeks. “What say you? Fancy another tumble before we head down to join the others for breakfast? I’m sure most everyone is up already, if not wondering where we’re at.”

Hermione sighed, instinctively wiggling back against him. “You’re right, I know. We should get up….”

She pushed up off his chest, sitting up and sliding back, trapping his swelling cock against her body as she stared down at him through hooded, smoky eyes. “But I don’t want to just yet.”

He groaned, hips thrusting up uncontrollably. “Want do you want? Tell me?”

“You like it when I fill you up, baby? Like the way my cock slides in and out of you so perfect?”

She purred, hooded eyes still watching him. “Yes.”

“Good. I like it, too,” he declared. He snatched at her hand and pushed it between their bodies until those strong, calloused fingers could wrap around his cock. “Put me inside you,” he commanded. “Put me where you want me.”

She obeyed readily, kneeling up and aligning his cock head perfectly with the swollen opening of her sex before sinking down on him swiftly. They both groaned and panted heavily.

So deep, so hot. So hot and deep, he filled her up, she swallowed him whole. He grinded his hips up against her, and she went wild, hardly needing him at all, she rode him passionately, seeking her own pleasure and providing him with immeasurable pleasure in the pursuit.

“Come for me, Hermione,” he chanted. “Want to feel you get all quivery around my cock, buried inside you. It feels so good. Makes me want to blow my load just thinking about it.” And he felt that tell-tale fluttering. “Mmm, you like it, too, don’t you, knowing how easily you can make me lose control, make me cum all up inside you, make you full of my cum.”

Tiny cries fell from her lips as she continued to rock against him wildly. He knew she was close, but not there yet. Growling, he grabbed her and rolled her under him, wrenching one of her legs up over his shoulder, he took over the pace of their mating, fucking and pounding into her as the dirty words continue to fall from his lips—promising to fuck her good, to fill her up with all his cum.

She clung to him, bucking against him, tiny cries encouraging him onward until she was chanting his name like a prayer, begging for release.

It came too soon, or perhaps not soon enough he thought with a wry grin as his back twinged. He collapsed on top of her, and not for the first time, she held him against her, unwilling to allow him to move off of her. It was his turn to nuzzle into her. He lay there for several minutes, waiting for his racing heartbeat and ragged breath to smooth some.

“We really should get up and head down to breakfast.”
“I know.”

“He’s getting married today.”

“I know.”

“If you would be agreeable, I would like to talk to your parents and my gran about a contract between us.”

She stiffened, and he smoothed his hands up and down her available body, nuzzling her breast. “You don’t have to say yes now. I told you, I want to ask you properly. I would like to court you properly, too, make you believe I’m serious—“

“I know you’re serious, Neville. It’s not that. It’s just… I was serious, too, last night. I’m not sure I even want to get married, period.”

“Then grant me permission to try and change your mind,” he requested, dropping a kiss against the fleshy part between her arm and her breast. “I would settle for whatever way I could have you, but allow me the right to try and convince you to marry me properly.”

She studied him. “All right,” she finally conceded and he grinned down beautifully at her, making her insides warm and slosh again. Why had it never felt like this with Ron, she wondered before determinedly pushing that thought down. It was discourteous to either of them to try and compare them.

“Shall we go get breakfast then?” she asked instead, trying to deflect the topic and her various moods surrounding the dreaded subject.

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“Elves being making sure everything is perfect for Master Harry’s day,” Layla chirped, bouncing around him as he slid into the specially prepared bath. The warm, lightly scented water embraced him, calming his muscles and nerves alike. He sputtered in protest when the elf jumped up on the lip of the bath and dumped a bucket of water over his head.

“We’s be making sure of everything,” she repeated, long fingers going to work against his scalp and Harry practically melted. “Macky be taking care of Master Charlie rights now, and Layla be fixing up Master Harry so yous both be looking extra special nice today.”

She dumped another bucket of warm water over his head before repeating the process once more. With a snap of her fingers, the bathwater started bubbling around him, and Harry groaned in delight. He wasn’t sure how much time had passed before Layla caught his attention again.

“Master Harry needs to be finishing cleaning off,” the elf insisted, prodding him into standing and leaving the warm waters. Immediately after clearing the bath, a big fluffy towel encircled him, invisible hands patting him dry as another towel began petting his head. “Special creams for Master Harry,” Layla offered, showing him the different bottles and tubs set out on a vanity tray.

“I don’t need any of those things,” he tried to protest, but the little elf scowled at him. She snatched up a jar and held it open out to him in silent demand. Reluctantly, he scooped up a finger-full of the cream and stared at it.

“That one being for hands and legs,” she informed him almost prissily. Obediently, he smeared himself with the goop, grateful it didn’t smell florally or anything else girly. After sampling from the different jars and tubes and being smeared from sole to crown, the little elf showed him into another room offset from the bedroom and bathroom.

The dressing room, he realized immediately, starring in some confusion at all the different robes and outfits surrounding him. He was fairly sure this room devoted to clothing was even bigger than the bedroom his aunt and uncle had shared back on Privet Drive.

At one end of the closet—if one could even call this room a closet—was a little pedestal and a three-winged mirror. And beside that was a butler manikin, displaying the robes he had picked out only nights before.

Enchanted, he approached the robes, drinking in the rich sight of the material and colors. It was easily one of the most beautiful things he’d ever seen, and he didn’t know how long he would have stood there, studying the robes, if Layla hadn’t hurried him along into actually putting them on.

She tugged, tucked, and prodded him until satisfied and then allowed him to turn and look at himself in the mirrors.

Was that him? Really? Even in his Yule Ball robes, he’d never looked so… sophisticated. Mature. Fine. The cream brocade had tiny phoenixes embroidered across the front, but the eye was drawn explicitly to the large Potter crest emboldened over the left breast and the four primary houses they had identified as most important, lined up just to the left of the center seam, each crest attached to the Potter crest with a sparkling ruby bejeweled golden chain. His other seven houses curled up over his
left shoulder like a cat’s tail, smaller than the others, but no less equally detailed.

The neckline was a banded pattern of silver crystals, golden thread, dazzling rubies, and rich blood red velvet. The slacks were a darker shade of that velvet, bordering on black. The only way to know they weren’t black was because of the shiny black dress shoes. Even his hair looked less unruly, more purposefully disheveled styled.


And he couldn’t halt the excited thought that if he looked this good, then what must Charlie look like?

***

In the consort suite, Charlie was receiving equally devoted attentions from a diligent Mack, who scrubbed and soaked and scraped and peeled at the young master consort until he was satisfied the young man would be presentable as a bride-groom. Mack took his duties as seriously as any house elf, and he knew what an honor it was to help prepare a new consort to the family. He wasn’t about to let his family down—not least of all Layla or Sailsby who’d put the fear of clothes into him if he didn’t do a well and proper job today.

Mack intended on doing better than, he thought determinedly as he stepped away from the young master and allowed Charlie his first glimpse of himself since entering the consort suite over an hour before.

“Master Charlie being looking quite nice for his wedding day,” the elf nodded satisfactorily.


He looked like some prince out of a fairy tale, he thought bemusedly before having another thought: if he looked this good, how must Harry look?

He suddenly couldn’t wait to find out.

“Master Charlie needs be waiting in the Lavender Study Room,” Mack directed. “Master Harry being almost ready now. Waits till yous see the main ballroom. Macky and other elves worked very hard to be making sure everything’s being perfect for Lord Black Master Harry’s wedding!”

“Then we best not keep them waiting, huh,” Charlie grinned down at the elf.

***

As the others readied and prepared themselves, with Layla and Mack taking charge with the young masters, Sailsby stepped forward downstairs to make sure everything was ready. In the Lavender Study, slavers were set out with light snackables that would not settle heavily on anyone’s stomach yet serve as an appetizer until the wedding feast was served. In the ballroom, the finishing touches were being put on the decorations, and down in the kitchen, her team of elves was working diligently to prepare the feast. Everything was to be perfect.

Slowly, in ones, twos, and threes, the guests began to gather. Small talk and compliments on each other’s dress was made, filling in the waiting period until finally Mack showed Charlie into the room.

“Oh, my baby,” Mrs. Weasley immediately broke out into tears, waddling over to him with outstretched arms. “Look at you!”
“Looking pretty spiffy there, brother,” Bill teased while George whistled.

“You’re just jealous,” he teased his brothers back before accepting his mother’s embrace and returning it. “And really, if you think this is something fancy, wait till you see Harry.”

“You look very dashing, Charlie,” Fleur commented, leaning into her husband’s side.

“Yes, who know he’d clean up so well,” George added, grinning.

“Congratulations on this, your wedding day,” Percy greeted, squawking only mildly when Charlie laughingly pulled him into a head lock.

“I guess this means you’re next, Perce,” he warned his brother.

“Nah, think Gin-gin’s going to beat the rest of us to the alter,” George growled. “If mum or dad have anything to say about it, at least.”

“Where is Ginny, anyway?” Charlie asked, looking around and taking note of who was missing. It looked like most everyone was here now, even the extended guests from what he could see. Aunt Muriel was sitting closest to the fire, chatting with Andromeda, Mr. Lovegood, and Remus while little Teddy played with some toys on the floor, Luna Lovegood playing with him. Augusta Longbottom was sitting in another area with the Grangers, Neville, and Hermione. He could just guess what that was about.

His father and Lucius Malfoy were glaring at each other more than talking while Draco sat in between the two. Brave of him, that. Ron sat broodily at the other end of the room, not really looking at anyone, but occasionally throwing confused and glaring looks towards Hermione and Neville. He didn’t relish his brother that situation.

Really, it was only Harry, Ginny, and Narcissa he didn’t see. Even McGonigal and Shacklebolt had arrived and were chatting amicably as they nibbled on hors d’oeuvres. He felt kind of bad that some of his friends from the reserve wouldn’t be able to make it, but he understood. But then, the door opened again, and several bewildered dragon handlers entered the room.

Grinning, he rushed to greet them.

***

At a quarter past one, the side doors that had previously been locked, opened wide, startling many of the guests.

“It is time to assemble,” Lady Malfoy announced, stepping into the study room from the hall entrance and striding serenely towards the now open ballroom doors. Behind her, a rather humbled-looking Ginny Weasley followed.

Charlie, and in fact most in the room who knew the girl, started. Not only did she look elegant and sophisticated, she looked practically demure! And the gown… He suspected it must have been on of Narcissa’s, because he knew his family could never have afforded something so fine. He niggled at him, bringing back home once more the fact that they really were the poor relations. Not that such things minded to Harry, of course, but it still did sometimes rattle him.

They followed Narcissa and Ginny into a veritable indoor paradise. Large pots of flowery bushes and green topiaries lined the walls and created a practical indoor maze. Smaller pots spaced in between the larger pots filled to large room with color, texture, and scent. Charlie was not the only one amazed at the house elves’ results.

“So many different types of flower,” scoffed Auntie Muriel. “Might as well be a garden shop.”
“Obviously you don’t remember your etiquette lessons,” the Longbottom matriarch rebuked the last remaining Prewitt. “Neville, dear, tell me what we have here,” she commanded, waving a hand towards the large, heart-shaped green leaves marked in varying patterns of white, pink, and red. It was rather exotic looking, she thought.

“That’s a caladium, Gram,” the young lord informed her, stepping forward. “More of a tropical plant found in Africa or India, or the Americas. It means ‘great joy and delight.’” He turned to the surrounding plants. “The ferns, of course, represent magic and confidence and shelter. The ivy along the walls is wedded love, fidelity, friendship, and affection. I’m not surprised to see the holly or mistletoe, either,” he added, pointing out the boughs and sprigs decorating the chairs, doorways, and other various areas throughout. “Besides being representative of the season, mistletoe means affection and to surmount difficulties, and holly represents domestic happiness.”

“These are Bells of Ireland and Stars of Bethlehem, aren’t they?” Hermione questioned, delicately brushing along the petals of the white star shaped flowers and stocky green bell-shaped blooms in an urn.

“Yes, for hope, happiness, and good luck, although there are some stephanotis tucked in there, too, along with the orchids and jonquil,” Neville acknowledged, grinning at her. “I especially like the camellias,” he added, running his hand along one of the bushes.

“You’re adorable, you’re a flame in my heart, and I long for you.”

“Jonquil means love me,” Narcissa murmured.

“Affection returned,” Lucius added, raising her hand to his lips. “Desire.”

“Also known as the narcissa,” Neville nodded. “And the orchids could easily represent several different things, although, in this case, I think it safe to say it stands for love, maturity, and perhaps many children,” he added with a smirk towards Charlie who just laughed.

“Are these violets on the alter?” Ginny asked.

Luna stepped up the alter beside her. “Yes, see,” she added pointing to the little blue blossoms. “Faithfulness… a promise to always be true. It’s a love representation and promise for Harry’s and Charlie’s marriage.”

“I hope so,” Harry said softly from behind them, forcing the others into whipping around in surprise. He smiled at them, almost shyly. “The elves have truly outdone themselves, wouldn’t you say,” he asked of Charlie, holding his hand out to his soon-to-be-husband.

“Breathtaking,” Charlie breathed, pulling Harry towards him and dipping in for a sweet kiss.

A strong clearing of the throat was the only thing that really penetrated enough to break them apart—too many years’ conditioning as a Gryffindor not to respond to their former head of house. “Gentlemen,” McGonagall commented. “Perhaps you would like to precede with the ceremony first.”

Charlie grinned, unrepentantly. “Well, if you would be so kind as to do the honors, headmistress?”

She nodded solemnly, lips twitching despite herself, and stepped forward with the use of her ever-present now cane. “Please be seated,” she directed, and all those in attendance quickly shuffled into their seats.

“We gather here today, to witness and celebrate the sacred union of two souls, bound by magic and love. We understand and honor the commitment these two make here before us, and we vow to
support their continued health and future forever more. Charles Septimus Weasley, Harry James Potter, please stand before me.”

She waited until the two were standing before and motioned for them to clasp handed. “Are you prepared to make your vows?” she asked, raising her wand in preparation. The two nodded, without hesitation, and she smiled. “You may begin.”

They turned to face the other and swallowed.

“I pledge to you my future days,” Harry began, “good and bad though they may be. All my children shall know you as their father, my equal, my partner, my mate. Yours will be the name I call in the night, and yours will be the face I look upon each morning.

“The road we walk may be bumpy, but I will walk it steadily with you. The weather we fly may be stormy, but I will fly it securely with you. The seas we sail may be choppy, but I will sail them safely with you. For with you, I am home forever more.”

Golden cords fell from Minerva’s wand tip and twirled into intricate knots around the two’s clasped hands as they said their vows until their hands could no longer be seen behind the bright glow of magic. They turned to her, expectantly, and she found she had to clear her throat before continuing.

“What magic has brought together, my no one tear asunder. Go forth with the blessings of your family and friends, and know, forever more, you are not alone. Blessed be.”

“Blessed be,” the guests chanted, and Charlie and Harry grinned at each other before Charlie tugged him forward and into another kiss. Their hands were still knotted together, but that didn’t stop Harry from raising his other hand to cup Charlie’s cheek.

Cheers rose up around them, and the two tore apart, laughing.

***

It was too many hours later when Charlie and Harry were able to escape their guests. The day had been a long, but satisfying one, and now Harry wanted nothing so much as to curl up and sleep. Of course, there was still the small issue of their hands still being tied together. The knots wouldn’t release, unfortunately, until the marriage had been consummated. Which, normally, wouldn’t have been a problem for either of them, but both were horribly exhausted.

As threatening since breakfast, Mr. Weasley and Mr. Malfoy had managed to get into a small fight that escalated quickly past words. It had taken several of them—Kinsley, Bill, Remus, and George included to pull the two men apart and McGonagall to deliver a tongue lashing that finally had the two couples sitting down and discussing the matter of their children like somewhat civilized adults.

Charlie’s friends hadn’t been able to stay long, unfortunately, but Sailsby made sure each guest had a large take-away parcel of goodies to remember the day by. A feast had been prepared to one end of the ball room, filled with many excellent dishes. All the wonderful food, all the wonderful excitement… it had been too much for Harry, and to be truthful, for Charlie as well. They were both beyond exhausted, and despite the leers, grins, and innuendoes that accompanied them, they decided to turn in early.

“Bed,” Charlie groaned, trudging across the master suite in the direction of the bed chambers, Harry leaning against him as much as he was leaning against the smaller man. He groaned gratefully upon sight of the desired item and fell face first into the downy mattress.

Harry grunted in protest, following him down onto the bed via yank on his bond hand and falling
“Still dressed,” he mumbled.

“Mmm,” Charlie murmured. “You looked so good today,” he told his husband, not for the first time.

“You, too,” harry yawns, sliding off Charlie to cuddle up against his side, using his chest as a pillow. “Hands still stuck.”

“T’at’s a’right. Can wait till later. Sleep now, yeah?”

“Mmm,” his husband agreed, and very shortly later, both were dead asleep.

Layla popped in first, taking a careful survey of the room before spying her sleeping masters on the bed. With a shake of her head, the little house elf used her magic to remove the fancy wedding robes from both men. She would make sure they were cleaned and preserved for her masters. Then she disappeared again, leaving the young men to their much deserved rest.

***

Downstairs, the wedding couple’s guests had, for the most part, broken up and continued on their way as well. Mcgonagall and Kingsley had departed with their own parcel of goodies shortly after Charlie and Harry had disappeared. Auntie Muriel and Madame Longbottom argued themselves into a pique of discontent until both turned away in high dungeon and demanded escort away. Percy and Neville had done their duty to their elderly family and taken the two home.

Mrs. Weasley was also feeling itchy to return to the Burrow—not that Rosengard wasn’t a completely lovely home, but… --and so Arthur soon found himself torn away from Mr. Granger’s fascinating stories of muggle life to escort his wife back home, a firm hand leading his only daughter to the floo ahead of him. Ron hadn’t wanted to stay when his parents had left, so he took off home as well, to no one’s disappointment. George and Bill had elected to stay for the evening, but then Bill and Fleur would be returning to France on the morrow.

Hermione’s parents also expressed an interest in getting back to things, and since she was unsuccessful in convincing them to at least wait till the morning, Hermione called up a coach to take her parents back to the local village where their car was parked. Mr. Lovegood had stayed longer than any of the non-family guests, but that could easily explained away by his engaging conversation with Andromeda, which kept the pair entertained for the majority of the evening before he finally realized the time and excused himself, heading home without his daughter who had asked for and received permission to stay the night.

Luna took Hermione in hand soon after the others had left, quite literally scooping up the older girl’s hand and tugging her along after her down the hallways of Rosengard. “You have warksprats buzzing about your ears. Come for a walk with me, and let’s see if we can’t free you from them,” the blonde girl entreated.

Having nothing better to do now that her parents and most of her friends were gone, Hermione agreed. Besides, it was usually just better to go along with Luna than try and protest. And, if one could sort through her seemingly nonsensical, illogical, completely fantastical talk, grains of truth and wisdom could often be found. But the Ravenclaw girl made you work for it, for sure.

“You’re staying the night?” Hermione asked.

Luna nodded. “So are you. You could have chosen to go home with your parents.”

Hermione frowned, thinking of what that might have been like. How uncomfortable things had been like during the holiday. “Will it get better, you think? There’s such a terrible rift between us now…”
“It can never be the same,” Luna told her bluntly, causing the older girl to wince. “but that doesn’t have to be a bad thing. I think they understand why you did what you did, Hermione. Parents, however, seem to have a difficulty dealing with being the protected when their children are involved. Daddy was the same way. He’s gotten better at it, though. They still love you.”

“Do they? How can they when they don’t even remember me?”

“They do,” Luna insisted. “They may not have the specific memories of events, but the emotions remain, and it’s easy to see that your mother and father still love you, feel protective of you, in spite of everything. Or maybe because of everything. After all, you very really saved their life by sending them away.”

“They’re still angry at me for that.”

“Hurt,” Luna corrected. “You did, after all, take away their choice in the matter.”

“I should have left them alone in Australia.”

“They would have always known something was missing.”

Hermione said nothing more, and Luna continued to lead her around the manor in silence. Eventually they came to the conservatory, and Luna led her out into the middle of the indoor garden. Little ponds and fountains and springs decorated the garden around every corner, leading to the natural humidity in the room that allowed the plants and flowers to flourish even in the heart of winter. Finally, they came to the circular fountain at the very center of the conservatory and sat along the wide, bench-like lip.

“I understand Neville approached you last night,” the blonde began once more.

“Luna, I—” Hermione began, startled and suddenly guilty. After all, Neville was this girl’s ex-boyfriend. Her friend’s ex-boyfriend.

“I’m glad,” Luna cut her off. “I’d worried he’d never take the chance if the opportunity presented itself. I’m glad and sorry to have doubted him.” She smiled shyly up at Hermione. “You understand, of course, how much he’s always fancied and respected you?”

“I, yes, I think I do, now.”

“Good. You would be very good for each other.”

“You think?”

“Mmhm. Neville is steady, dependable, supportive, but he’s always determined and passionate, too. He’s strong enough to allow you to be who you are while stubborn enough to tell you no if and when you need to hear it. It was just a question of if you were compatible, and I would say, after last night, you are.”

“The way you say it, he’s good for me, but how can I be good for him? After all, he’s lord of a noble family and has all those responsibilities…”

“Responsibilities that you would help him with, no? You support him, too. Give him confidence to be his own person. You were always kind to him, never teased or bullied him. Those are important. No, it is a good match. One I hope you will allow him to pursue?”

“He mentioned wanting to court me,” Hermione sighed.
“Yes, Neville would,” Luna smile softly. “He’s quite honorable that way.”

“I told him I wasn’t even sure if I wanted to get married, ever.”

“Really? You don’t ever want to get married?”

“I don’t know.”

“I think I should very much like to stand up before my family and friends with my chosen beau, dressed out in our finery as we pledge our lives to one another.” Luna smiled wistfully. “I should like that very much. Like Harry and Charlie today. They radiated with love and happiness, didn’t they?”

“They were very handsome,” Hermione agreed. “Like fairy-tale princes. Promise not to tell, but I used to have a little crush on Charlie, long time ago.”

“Mmm? My crush was for the twins. They’re very funny and terribly smart.”

“Both of them?” Hermione asked. “You didn’t like one over the other?”

“Oh, no. I knew quite well that Fred and George came as a set,” Luna grinned wickedly. “I was quite happy to think of the both of them.” Her smile quickly faltered and died, however. “It’s difficult to see George without Fred. It hurts,” she added, rubbing her breast bone. “He’s trying so hard, but it’s plain to see his soul is broken in half.”

“Luna, do you still like George?” Hermione asked, honestly curious, wondering if her two friends might chance to find happiness together.

“No, not like I did,” Luna admitted sadly. “Not enough to try and pursue something with him. No, I think I should like to go traveling after I graduate this year. See and study the world at large. What of you?”

“I thought I might go into the Ministry, see if I could tackle some of the bigotry and prejudice that allowed last year to go as far as it did.”

“Yes, that is a noble cause for you. You would make a very good law wizard, I think. Neville and his grandmother could help you on that path, you know.”

“Luna! I’m not going to date someone just because they’d help me advance my career goals!”

“No, but I should think it wouldn’t hurt.”

“You’re incorrigible.”

“Thank you.”

“I suppose we should be getting back,” Hermione sighed.

“Why? What’s the rush?” Luna countered, causing Hermione to pause.

“I—I don’t know,” she admitted.

“We won’t get many more restful days from here on till the end of the school year,” Luna mused. “Many will be surprised when Harry doesn’t come with us tomorrow.”

Hermione sighed. “I have a feeling he won’t be the only one not returning.”
“No, he won’t,” Luna agreed. “The end of the war was a cause of celebration for many. There will be repercussions.”

“How many, do you think? Harry mentioned that he wasn’t the only student pregnant, but he wouldn’t say who or how many.”

Luna nodded. “At least fifteen, if I’m not mistaken.”

“That many!” Hermione cried in surprise.

“At least,” Luna confirmed. “And not all seventh or eighth years, either. Hogwarts is bound to be a very busy place in the future.”

“Harry thinks Charlie’s pregnant now, too.”

“Yes.”

“And I’ve offered to carry one of Harry’s children.”

“I, as well.”

“Neville wasn’t upset.”

“He wouldn’t be. He understands the importance of family, and he highly respects both you and Harry.”

“To tell the truth, I’m a little nervous about the idea of being pregnant.”

“That’s understandable.”

Hermione sighed deeply again. “Do you think Harry might be right, about muggle-borns being the descendants of squibs?”

“I think it’s very logical. There have been some attempts at studying the origin of muggle-borns in Ravenclaw, but most research is staunchly subdued by many of the purebloods. Were you planning on stopping at Gringotts tomorrow morning before catching the train?”

“Yes, it’s the best time if I don’t want to wait,” Hermione allowed. “And really, it’s better to know sooner rather than later, isn’t it?”

“I think so, yes. And we can talk it up some with the other muggle-borns at school this term, convincing them they should go, too, next break. I think it will be quite fascinating what we will discover.”

“If Harry’s right, then both of my parents are descendant of squibs, maybe multiple squibs. I could have a houseful of relatives out there that I never knew about.”

“Quite possible. Does that worry you?”

“No. Yes… maybe a little,” Hermione confessed.

“I shouldn’t let it,” a new voice replied. “After all, any family should be proud to count you among them.”

“There you are!” Luna cried, popping up off the fountain bend and hopping over to hug Neville around the neck. She popped a quick kiss against his cheek before releasing him. “I’ll just let you
two alone, hmm?” she mused before strolling of with a little bounce in her step.

“Neville,” Hermione greeted softly, standing. “I wasn’t expecting you to return tonight.”

“I just had to settle Gran,” he explained, stepping up to her. He studied her face—looking for what, she didn’t know—and then he cupped her jaw and stole her breath away. His kiss was deep, steady, hungry, and Hermione felt herself shiver in the suddenly cool night air.

“You looked so beautiful today,” he murmured when he finally drew back enough to allow speech.

“Harry and Charlie were the ones who looked magnificent,” Hermione corrected.

“You always look beautiful to me,” Neville insisted, fingers reaching around to massage at her neck.

“Say you’ll join me in my room again tonight.”

“Neville, do you really think,” she murmured in protest.

“Yes,” he whispered against her lips.

“Yes,” she responded, almost hypnotically.

“Good.”

“But we can’t sleep in,” she warned, blinking herself back to clarity. “I need to stop at Gringotts before the train tomorrow, so I’ll need to get up early.”

“I’ll go with you,” Neville promised, grinning. “We’ll just have to make sure to set the alarm on our wands.”

She smiled at him, retrieving her wand and setting the alarm. “Done.”

“Good. Let’s go to bed,” he said, squeezing and tugging at her hand.

***

Lucius sat staring into another fire contemplatively.

“Are you almost ready to retire,” his wife asked him, coming around side the arm chair he sat in. He reached out and snagged her delicate hand in his, raising it to his lips and nuzzling the soft, cool hand against his cheek.

“I find my thought disconcerted,” he confessed.

“Tis only to be expected, my love,” his wife murmured affectionately sliding into his lap and resting her head against his shoulder. “You’ve had quite a number of surprises this past week.”

“And you haven’t?” he scoffed.

She smiled and smoothed her hand over his cheek and into his hair. “Tell me, what upsets you most?”

“What doesn’t?” he groused.

She lay placid in his lap while he cuddled her. Many thought Lucius a cold man, but his wife knew him better. It had not been a love match between them—most pureblooded marriages were not—but that did not mean that the emotion could not exist if encouraged, and after a quarter of a century, he’d
had plenty of time to nourish and encourage honest affection and love between them. In truth, he’d spent more years as Narcissa’s husband than he had as not. This woman completed him, knew him better than he sometimes knew himself, and she had a wickedly brilliant mind and cunning. Nor was she some weak-willed witch who complacently went along with whatever her husband planned. No, Narcissa always had her own plans in motion, and if they countermanded his own plans, well, he might be angry or exasperated, but he always found himself grateful for her contingencies.

She was his heart, his life, and he was immensely grateful and gratified to have survived this last horrible war with her still by his side. And free of Azkaban, thanks, once again, to his wife’s contingency plans.

He sighed deeply. There was not much he wouldn’t readily do for his wife, no matter how it might gall him. It was why he made nice with the half-blood Potter brat. It was why, even know, he was honestly contemplating an alliance with those blood-traitorous Weasleys. It was why he was dancing around the idea of some barbaric muggle procedure that might safely give his wife the children she’d always longed for. Why he was sitting here, trying to think up an appropriate spin to encourage mudbloods into Gringotts and attempting inheritance tests. It soured his stomach.

“We shall put out an advert in the Prophet, inviting all the muggle-borns in to Gringotts for a discounted inheritance test,” he said finally.

“The half-bloods, too,” she reminded him. “It would be best if all were tested. Perhaps the Wizengamot could pass a law requiring all new corners to be tests prior to attending Hogwarts. That would allow for fostering of the newly discovered. It would be easier for the children, perhaps, if they felt they had family already in our world, and we could teach them those things our children grow up learning. Andromeda’s confessed to me how despondent she is with some of Harry’s preconceived notions and attitudes. Why, even the simple fact he had no idea wizards could carry children!”

Lucius snorted. “Yes, well, the idea has merit. But don’t you think we should see if these half-bloods and mudbloods even have any ties to our world?”

“You doubt it, still?” Narcissa murmured.

“You don’t?”

She sat thoughtfully for several minutes, and for a while, Lucius thought she might not speak at all. But finally, “Ms. Granger plans on going in to Gringotts early tomorrow morning, before she gets on the train. I plan on accompanying her. I find myself curious as to which lines she might descend from.”

“Then you believe it’s true.”

“It is more logically than accusing an infant of stealing some witch’s or wizard’s magic,” she answered demurely, causing him to grimace.

He’d never cared for that toad of a woman, Umbridge, but she had certainly helped ease the way for the Dark Lord’s agenda. Of course, that was all in the past now. The dark lord had failed—thankfully, Lucius surprisingly found himself. How foolish and blinded he had been in his youth. How narrowly he had come to losing his family, his life.

“And what of Draco’s infatuation with the Weasley chit?” he grumbled.

“She is very pretty, for a ginger,” Narcissa mused. “Spirited, too. I believe it to be a good match. The
Weasleys, after all, are considered heros of the wizarding world currently. Plus, they’re pureblooded.”

“Yes, but they’re Weasleys,” Lucius growled.

“Yes, they are. A family known for their magic and fertility,” she reminded him. “I imagine they would have no trouble rebuilding the Malfoy line within a generation or two.”

“I’m too young to be a grandfather,” he protested glumly, much to his wife’s amusement.

“Well, then, perhaps we should not wait on Draco to see if we could expand our family?” she asked slyly. He knew she referred to the muggle ritual she had learned of the night before.

“Have you looked in to this ritual anymore?” he asked.

“No,” she admitted. “But Andromeda would be willing to help. With your leave, my lord, I will continue to research it?”

“As if you need my permission for anything you want to do,” he scoffed, kissing her temple. “Fine, look into it further. When we have more information, then we can decide, but I will have nothing done that could risk your life.”

“I have no desire to leave you or our son,” Narcissa reassured him.

***

Harry woke needing to pee. Only, he found he couldn’t leave the bed because his arm was still tied to Charlie’s.

“Charlie,” he called, shaking the other man. “Charlie, get up. I need to pee.”

“Wha? What is it?” the ginger man mumbled, attempting to turn over and go back to sleep—except his arm was yanked back by a frustrated husband.

“I need to pee,” Harry repeated. “Now.”

“Hmm? Yeah, all right,” Charlie grumbled, following Harry to the ensuite bathroom and water closet.

It was slightly embarrassing, Harry thought, needing to use his dominate hand to facilitate things—his hand that was still tied to Charlie’s—and he was making a mess of things before Charlie moved up behind him and helped out, chin propped up on Harry’s shoulder.

“Welcome to married life,” the ginger snorted while Harry blushed.

“What time is it, anyway?” Harry mumbled, desperate not to focus on the fact that his husband was helping him pee.

“Hmm, not even midnight, I don’t think,” Charlie answered, giving Little Harry a little shake. “Don’t think we were asleep that long. Hey, budge over so I can go, too.”

“You still sleepy?” Charlie asked while he took care of his own business.

“A little, yeah.”

“Think you could handle a shower before turning back in?”
“Sure. Any idea where our robes went?”

“One of the eles probably took them,” Charlie shrugged. “Makes things easier though, right?” he asked, shucking his pants.

“Mmn,” Harry agreed, sleepily following his husband into the shower. The water was warm and soothing. Soon mist started filling the enclosed space. Charlie grabbed one of the sea sponges that seemed to naturally ooze suds and began dragging it across Harry’s chest and belly before covering his back and shoulders.

“I think we’ve been handfasted long enough, don’t you?” Charlie murmured, slipping to his knees and nuzzling Harry’s groin with his face. “Think I can make you cum with just my mouth?”

Harry groaned, leaning back against the cool tiled wall, free hand coming up to dig through Charlie’s quickly dampening locks. “Charlie, don’t tease me.”

“But I like teasing you,” the redhead responded, using his nose and cheek to touch all of Harry’s intimate bits before lipping his bollocks. “I like hearing you, panting and gasping and making all those tiny little noises. Turns me on, knowing you’re so excited for me. I like knowing how horny I can make you with just a little touch… or lick… or suck…”

Harry cried out, head flinging back to smack against the tile as Charlie continued to tease and torment him with little caresses and licks and sucklings. It wasn’t enough though.

“Charlie, please!”

“Please what? Tell me, Harry. Tell me what you want.”

“Touch me!”

“I am touching you.”

“No, suck me,” Harry gasped. “In your mouth. I want you to suck my cock. Want you to swallow me so deep I can feel your throat. Want to fuck your mouth.”

“Gods,” Charlie groaned, positioning his mouth over the leaking tip and swallowing him down happily into his throat. He hummed, and Harry jerked, shoving his cock in deeper, and Charlie had to pull back or risk choking. “Keep talking,” he rasped. “Don’t stop.”

“Shit, don’t stop,” Harry repeated. “Gods, it feels so good, Charl, when you sucking me down like that, swallowing me whole. Feels so good. Makes me want to cum. I’m going to cum, Charlie, if you keep that up, fuck, yes. You’d like that, wouldn’t you? Me coming down your throat. You love that I’m so needy for you, that my body can’t help but respond to yours. Oh, uh, gods, that’s… do that again,” Harry ground, unable to control his spasming hips as Charlie managed to do something with his tongue and the hard vibrations of his throat encasing his cock and…

With a shout, Harry came, spilling himself down his husband’s greedy throat. The magic around them swelled, seeming to explode in communion with his release, and in the afterglow of orgasm, everything seemed shiny and sparkly.

“Good, huh?” Charlie quipped, rubbing Harry’s thighs, and it was only then that Harry realized their hands were no longer bound.

“Always,” he panted. “What about you?”
“Mm, I’m good for a little bit,” Charlie brushed off, pushing to stand up. “I’d prefer to have my go in bed, anyway. Tile floor is not comfortable, and I didn’t think to cast a cushioning charm beforehand.”

Harry snorted, but agreeably followed Charlie out of the shower. “Mmn, but shower sex is so much fun.”

“Isn’t it, though?” Charlie grinned down at him, snagging two towels to dry them off with. “Come on, let’s try and get some more sleep.”

To which Harry was completely amendable to.

***
There was a clattering of noise as the family settled into their seats. They had gathered again to celebrate the end of the year and the beginning of the next, as had become tradition. At the head of the table, Lord Potter, lord and consort of fourteen families, surveyed those gathered at his table.

They were seated in the banquet hall—long gone were the days they could comfortably seat everyone in the main family dining room. To his right sat his husband of twenty-five years, still lowing as robust and handsome as he did the day they were married. To his left sat Luna, consort and regent of the Ravensdale Family. Luna’s four children sat further down the table, the youngest, seven year old Phoebe, was still confined to the children’s table, which easily outnumbered the ‘adult’ table now.

Harry couldn’t help but smile. It hadn’t been a very difficult decision to return Rozengard as the seat of the Black Family. For the first three years, Harry and Charlie had made Grimauld Place work, but by the fifth year they knew they would have to move into larger accommodations. Rozengard already held their affections, and despite their earlier concerns of the manor being too large, they soon enough filled its rooms with family and friends. With his ten consort-wives identified, acquired and contracted, they had still managed to use the family dining room for the first six years. But then the babies began arriving. Two, three, sometimes four a year—they quickly outgrew even Rozengard’s family room. And that was just the immediate family.

For the New Year’s Meal, everyone attended, from infant to crone, in-laws and outlaws alike. He smirked at that thought. Even old Augusta Longbottom dragged her aching bones out to attend the Black Family New Year’s Feast with her grandson, his wife, her mother, and their children. It had taken nearly ten years for Neville to convince Hermione that she really did want to marry him, and Harry suspected that she might have held off longer if she hadn’t turned up unexpectedly pregnant. After three planned pregnancies that provided the Bursnell Family with five beautiful children, Hermione had staunchly declared she was done with pregnancy. To say she was stunned to discover she was pregnant again only four months later was putting it mildly. Neville, of course, had been tickled pink and proud. Especially when Hermione agreed to his courtship and proposal. It had been a lovely May wedding, he remembered fondly.

Hermione wasn’t his only consort to have married after fulfilling her contract to one of his families. Three other women had gone on to marry into other families after providing him with children. As per agreement, those women were here tonight with their other families, adding to the numbers seated at his table. Six of his chosen consorts, like Luna, had chosen to remain autonomous for all intents and purposes. They helped him manage his many family obligations and raise their children into mature young men and women. They were a large, extended family, close even if they chose to live separately.

Tonight, Harry had his family with him at his table as they feasted the end of the year. He still wasn’t friendly with everyone nor did he necessarily like some of them in the case of a few in-laws… but they were his family.

Harry beamed, standing at the head of his family, glass raised high in toast, waiting as everyone quieted down and turned to look at him. “To family,” he called.

“To family,” they chanted back.
This was his family. The one he chose for himself; the one blood had dictated for him… his. His husband, who had stood by him and his decisions these many years; who had helped him every step of the way in choosing his consorts and rebuilding his families. His friends, who were as dear to him as any blooded-siblings could ever be. His consorts, who were friends as well, companions and confidents. His extended family—the Weasleys and the Malfoys, Andromeda and others… His children—over forty the product of his own seed, fifty-seven in all, including his godson, Teddy. His grandchildren, who were even now beginning to arrive…

This was his family. And he was so proud.

=The End=

Story Notes:
Harry’s Inherited Families:
1. Potter (3) [James Sirius, Albus Severus, Lily Luna]
2. Black (2) [Orion Sebastian, Cygnus Grayson]
3. Bursnell (Hermione)5 [Hugo, Rose, Emma, Noah, Gale]
   {Longbottom: Franklin, Robert, Eleanor}
4. Edeson (Juniper)2 [Edward, Elsa]
   {Olivia, Owen}
5. Hollingberry (Emily)3 [Holly, Rory, Charlie]
   {Daniel, Henry}
6. Meath (Aurbris)4 [Liam, Maisie, Niamh, Ethan]
7. Ravensdale (Luna)6 [Phoebe, Zoe, Aiden, Kieran, Leon, Micah]
8. Witte / Wigheard (battle brave/hardy) (Tabithia) 5 [Keira, Kian, Reese, Ryan, Roland]
9. Peverell (Florence) 3 [Maddison, Francesca, Maurice]
10. Claridge / Cleridge (Corrinne)3 [Imogen, Daisy, Blake]
11. Segarus (Moraine)2 [Beatrice, Darcy]
   {Sophia, Rosalyn, Oliver}
12. Cynewulf (Seraphina)4 [Skye, Sienna, Silas, Sherwin]
13. Aethelgard (Judith)5 [Emmeline, Charlotte, Nathaniel, Gabriel, Maximillian]
14. Prewitt, 3 [Elizabeth, Rebecca, William]

Mothers: Hermione (remarries), Luna, Corrinne, Juniper (remarries), Seraphina, Katherine, Judith, Aurbris, Emily (remarries), Moraine (remarries), Tabithia, Florence

Contract for at least two successful pregnancies—conception through birth. Payment includes medicals, room & board as regent of family, stipend…. Continues unless mother marries. Some want to be independent = great income. Possible additional names:

1. Ava,
2. Isabella,
3. Amelia,
4. Mia,
5. Bethany,
6. Caitlin,
7. Megan,
8. Chloe,
9. Grace,
10. Leah,  
11. Rachel,  
12. Amber,  
13. Alexandra,  
14. Matilda,  
15. Ruby,  
16. Willow,  
17. Ivy,  
18. Brooke,  
19. Rosa,  
20. Maryam,  
21. Maria,  
22. Lydia,  
23. Sarah,  
24. Victoria,  
25. Malinda,  
26. Freya,  
27. Poppy,  
28. Jasmine,  
29. Mason,  
30. Logan,  
31. Louis,  
32. Jenson,  
33. Evan,  
34. Christopher,  
35. Kyle,  
36. Dylan,  
37. Bradley,  
38. Michael,  
39. Jacob,  
40. Matthew,  
41. Benjamin,  
42. Jordan,  
43. Lucas,  
44. Tyler,  

Wedding Robe Inspirations:  
http://www.indianfashiontrend.com/Cream-Brocade-Designer-Wedding-Indo-Western-p-4884.html#page=special-note

Wedsearch: Flower Meanings:  
STEPHANOTIS Happiness in Marriage, Desire to Travel  
VIOLET (BLUE) Watchfulness, Faithfulness, I'll Always Be True  
VIOLET (WHITE) Let's Take a Chance  
PEONY Shame, Happy Life, Happy Marriage
ORCHID
Love, Beauty, Refinement, Beautiful Lady, Chinese Symbol for Many Children, Thoughtful, Maturity, Charm

MISTLETOE Kiss me, Affection, To Surmount Difficulties

IVY Wedded Love, Fidelity, Friendship, Affection

JONQUIL Love Me, Affection Returned, Desire

HOLLY Defence, Domestic Happiness

FERN Magic, Fascination, Confidence and Shelter

CALADIUM Great joy and delight

CAMELLIA Good luck gift for a man

CAMELLIA (PINK) Longing for you

CAMELLIA (RED) You're a Flame in My Heart

CAMELLIA (WHITE) You're Adorable

BELLS OF IRELAND Good Luck

star of Bethlehem Embraces a meaning of purity, hope and happiness.

* The wedding vows were researched on-line through the search “Celtic Wedding Vows”

Margret Stittlespore is a made up character working for a very real and historic tailor:
http://www.edeandravenscroft.com/about-us/the-company/#history

The floor plan of Grimauld Place I used: http://firephoenix86-fanfiction.webs.com/apps/photos/photo?photoid=90508246

Elves: Layla, Sailsby, Mack “adopt” HP&ChW

Andromeda’s home: 40 White Horse Lane & Ivy
Black Estate: Rozengard

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