In Silence, Unspoken

by broken_hearted_bard

Summary

An accident, largely the Dursleys' fault, five years ago took away Harry Potter's ability to speak. After reaching Hogwarts, he is sorted into Slytherin. [Sorting not pictured]. While he does meet Ron on the train, his inability to speak renders things a lot differently than canon.

Harry will have the use of Parseltongue - just a bit differently.

The only known pairings at this point are:
Pansy/Blaise (but we won't get to that for awhile)

I have diverged from canon a bit with the Slytherin dorms, partially because they aren't well-described in the books. Additionally, this is a bit OOC!SeverusSnape.
After the Sorting

Chapter Summary

Harry's first look at Slytherin.

~This has been edited to make the ASL make more sense.
I do apologize that its use has offended people. Please see the other comments on its use, comments I have responded to, before commenting to me on that particular aspect. Thank you. Also see end note.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Beginning

It wasn't what he was expecting. In fact, he'd wager that it was the last thing almost everyone in the hall was expecting. He hopped down from the stool, careful to keep his balance, and walked quickly over to the table. For the most part it seemed as though even his new House was angry, or bewildered, at the hat’s choice to place him in the den of the snakes.

He shuffled his feet awkwardly as he moved to sit down with his housemates. Draco moved over, making a space for Harry. Draco smirked slightly, and then nodded his head. Harry smiled bravely; he decided in an instant that although Crabbe and Goyle weren't necessarily people he wanted to be friends with, he could make pretty good friends with Draco. Under the din of the crowded hall, he handed Draco a slip of paper, which he’d hurriedly scribbled an apology on.

I'm really sorry about before. This is all very new to me and I've felt overwhelmed, even on the train. I hope you didn’t take my not speaking to you as attitude or looking down, or anything bad. It is simply that I don’t speak. I didn't mean any harm, and I hope you didn't misjudge. I’d like to be friends.

Draco’s cheeks pinked as he nodded and held out his hand for the second time. Harry clasped hands with him and then grinned full-out. In moments, the Headmaster had completed his start of term announcements and warnings and food had filled the tables in the great hall.

At the end of the feast, and Harry had been careful to eat only as much as his stomach could handle, the groups gathered together to trek to their dormitories. The stairs down to the dungeons were slick, but the handrails were very helpful. He could hear several of the Slytherins chatting quietly or making quiet comments about the coming term, but Harry didn't join in.

He was sure if he did no one would understand the American Sign Language that he did know. The Dursleys hadn’t allowed him to learn BSL, because they had considered it a costly endeavor that he didn't deserve – but a deaf teacher in Harry's school, who spent half the year in America, had tried teaching him some of both BSL and ASL. Mrs. Midgen had been afraid Harry wouldn't have access to any language at all. BSL was a beautiful language, but it had been hard for Harry to pick up. So reliant on his notebook, ASL (with its one-handed finger-spelling and ability to do so many signs one-handed) was just easier for him to learn. He'd continued his studies privately, at his local library, whenever he could get away from the Dursley's or whenever they sent him to Mrs. Figg.
The stairs seemed never-ending, but eventually the group evened out to stone floors and they were led down a twisting series of hallways, down a very short flight of stairs, to a large portrait of a man in medieval garb who was standing up against a tree, wand in hand.

Harry heard one of the Prefects’ voices ring out with “Good evening, Randolph. The password for this week is serpents’ sword,” and the portrait swung open.

The first years gathered around in the common room, in front of a large fireplace, and Harry looked around. It was an opulent room, but a comfortable-looking one as well. There were sofas and loveseats, chairs and tables, and a small serving table and bar. The walls were a light grey, and there were deep green tapestries hung on them as well. There were round, porthole windows on one side to which an outside view was enchanted.

“Professor McGonagall’s first year speech,” Gemma began, “is about how your house is like your family. What I want to convey, and what is important for you to know, is that Slytherin house is better than your family. We stick up for each other, guard each other, protect each other and first and foremost we stand by each other through all eventualities. We do not take others’ sides, we do not play pranks on each other, we do not behave in any way that would damage another Slytherin or would destroy the reputation of Slytherin house. If you have an issue with another member, you should go directly to a Prefect – myself or Robert – or you should take it up directly with Professor Snape.” Gemma looked around the room at the faces staring up at her as she ended her speech. “I will take the girls to their dormitories, and Robert will lead the boys. After Professor Snape has spoken.”

The first years turned slightly to watch Professor Snape glide across the floor to stand in front of them. His robes perfectly matched his stride and his feet were silent on the floor. He moved with grace and subtlety.

“Miss Farley is quite correct. Both Prefects and myself will do their utmost to assist you, should you need help. Any rule breaking or foolhardy behavior will not be tolerated. Above all, if you are going to be breaking rules or adventuring into ridiculous behavior – do not get caught! If you do get caught, you will answer to me.” Severus looked around, his face pressed into hard lines and a deep scowl.

Harry flinched.

Severus’s eyebrows raised as he noticed the emaciated young boy with the mop of wild black hair and two piercing green eyes. He nodded at Harry after a moment and then moved off to the side.

On his way to the portrait door, he said, “Mr. Eva- Potter, if you could come with me a moment?”

Harry frowned but made his way over to Professor Snape. He knew this could not be good, just as he knew his lack of speaking might go over very, very badly.

They stood in the shadow of the bookcases behind the portrait-door.

“I knew your mother, Mr. Potter,” Severus began. “We were friends as children. I wish to impart on you the importance of blending in with the other Slytherins since you have been sorted amongst us. Do not use your fame to attempt to get ahead, nor should it become a crutch for you to lean on. Is that very clear?”

Harry’s eyes widened. He had no idea why he’d want to use his fame to his advantage. He scribbled hastily on his notepad.
I didn't do anything, sir. Nothing. I would never use my alleged fame like that, or ever. I was just a baby. It was luck and doesn't sound like much more. Please, sir.

Severus frowned at the note and look up into Harry’s eyes – Lily’s eyes. “Do you not speak, Mr. Potter?” he asked gently.

Harry shook his head and scribbled on the notepad once more.

*Mute for a little over five years. I know some American Sign Language.*

“I spent a fair amount of time with my great-aunt in America, who was deaf,” Severus explained kindly. “You and I should be able to communicate without the use of your pen and paper, Mr. Potter. For now, please follow your classmates into the dormitory and get some rest. Tomorrow may be quite overwhelming for you, Mr. Potter.”

Harry nodded emphatically and rushed off to join his classmates – following Robert and Draco, and several other boys up a short staircase and into the dorm-room.

“This is the first year boys' dorm. Slytherin runs things a bit differently than the other houses,” Robert explained. “There are eight of you, and all eight of you will share this room, which is why it is so large, has its own en suite bath, and has a small study area.” Robert pointed out the door to the bath and then pointed over to where there were two desks with desk chairs, a wide couch and a bookshelf with study supplies. The dormitory was separated into three circular rooms, with four beds in one section, four beds in the other, and the study area in the third section. The bathroom door was also in the third section.

“You have assigned beds, your things should already be set before them. The alarm, which is a simple charm, will go off at seven in the morning, which should give you enough time to be in the Great Hall by eight for breakfast. Classes begin promptly at nine,” Robert said. He produced a sheaf of papers from his book bag. “These are your class schedules, you will have classes with the other houses. Please pay attention to your schedule. While each of them are the same, it is important that you get to class on time and are fully prepared for the lesson.” Robert looked around the room, nodded twice and then handed out the schedules. He gave a brief smile before saying, “Get to sleep as soon as possible. Hogwarts can be a bit daunting at first, but you’ll come to love it.”

As Robert left, the eight first years looked around at each other. Draco was the first to move. He walked confidently to where his trunk rest in front of one of the large four-poster, curtained beds and opened it. He drew out a few items of clothing, a pile of books, and other things. He began filling his wardrobe and placing things on his nightstand. He inclined his head and nodded to the rest of the room. While all the boys didn't scatter to do as he did, a few of them did.

Harry took out a few books and put them on his bedside table, but he left his clothes in the trunk – except for the pair of pajamas he’d purchased while he’d been out with Hagrid. While Hagrid hadn’t asked him about the not-speaking, it also hadn't seemed to bother him. Harry had been very careful with what he’d written, once he realized that Hagrid had some limitations on what he could read.

Harry grabbed his kit and pajamas and dashed into the bathroom. Expecting to find a standard bath, he was surprised by the four shower stalls and four loo stalls. He was equally surprised by the large, sunken tub which had a wall around it and one entrance point. If you decided on a bath, it was clear no one would be able to see in.

Although he was tempted, Harry opted for a shower. He took a long shower, because he wasn't
usually allowed one. When he was finished, and dry, he slipped into his pajamas and hung up his towel in the provided space.

Back in the dorm room, he put away his kit and dumped his clothes into the hamper. He checked his messenger bag against his schedule to make sure he had everything he needed for tomorrow. As he slipped into bed, he smiled at Hedwig's cage – which hung from the ceiling near his bed. A few other classmates had owl cages hung near their beds, so he knew he wasn't the only one with an owl. He wondered, briefly, if Hedwig was alright up in the owlery but before he had time to worry about it, he dropped into sleep.

Chapter End Notes

The use of ASL is not meant to offend anyone. I sign while I write and while I come up with the story. I am USian, and I only know ASL. I looked into BSL when I began this story, but it was difficult for me to understand it. Hopefully, Harry's use of it makes more sense now -- with the edited area.
That First Day

Chapter Summary

The first day of classes.

The next day went by largely in a blur. Harry got up, dressed in the best cast-offs he owned, brushed his hair back, used the loo, brushed his teeth and tried, valiantly, to tame his hair. He tugged on his messenger bag and headed down the stairs and out into the dungeon. His wand was in the holster on his left arm – leaving his right arm and hand available for his method of communication.

Given his lack of speech, he was concerned that he wouldn't be able to cast properly, but he'd been assured by Draco that the professors would work it out – that he wasn't the only student with issues, or that had had some form of disability throughout the Hogwarts ages.

While the rest of his dorm mates so far seemed a bit worried about his lack of speech, no one came right out and asked him about it.

He spent a pleasant morning taking notes and attempting spells wordlessly, but felt frustrated at the end of the day that he would not get to do any actual magick until he worked out how to cast. After lunch, in which he'd had a sandwich, a serving of fruit, a glass of milk and a handful of crisps; he and the rest of the first year Slytherins headed down to the dungeons for their first-ever Potions lesson.

They didn’t head down nearly as far as the Slytherin dormitory, and for that Harry was glad. He already felt worn out. He'd spent most of his lunch hour, in between food, reading his potions text.

In the Potions classroom, Draco sat next to Harry, with Greg and Vincent behind them and Blaise and Pansy in front of them. The rest of the Slytherin class was behind them as well and no one had ventured to sit on the side of the room occupied by Gryffindors. Draco had been disgusted to have the class he most looked forward to inhabited by a bunch of ‘mangy lions,’ but Harry didn't mind. He’d found Ron delightful on the train. He wished he could make inroads with Ron, and the young Ravenclaw he'd also met, now that he was a Slytherin.

Severus strode in from the back of the class – gliding the whole way up to the front, his robes cascading behind him like low-hanging wings.

“‘You are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion-making,” he began. He spoke in barely more than a whisper, but Snape had the gift of keeping a class silent without effort. "As there is little foolish wand-waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don't expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses... However, for those of you who possess the pre-disposition…I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death—if you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach.”

With that introduction, he leaned back against his desk and pinned Harry with a look.
“Mr. Potter…what would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?” he asked.

Harry smiled shyly. He’d just read about that in his potions text and remembered accurately. He made the sign for ‘drink’ and the next for ‘live’ and the next for ‘death.’ Then he nodded, smiled wide and made the sign for ‘sleep’ – to indicate he understood what it was for or what it would do. He then wrote Draught of Living Death on his notepad and held it up for Professor Snape to view as he came by their table.

Severus’s mouth quirked slightly as he swept by to view the document and he nodded.

“Very good, Mr. Potter, five points to Slytherin,” he said as he turned his head slightly and narrowed in on the Gryffindors. “Mr. Weasley…where would you look if I told you to find me a bezoar?”

Ron colored almost as red as his hair as he shook his head and said, very quietly, “I don't know, sir.”

“Tut, tut,” Professor Snape said snidely. “Thought you wouldn’t crack open the textbook before coming to my class?” He sneered dismissively and moved on. “Mr. Malfoy?” he asked. “The answer, please.”

“The stomach of a goat, Professor,” Draco answered proudly.

Severus nodded. “Five points to Slytherin.” He looked around the classroom for another unsuspecting pupil. “Mr. Longbottom,” he announced as he headed back to his desk. “What is the difference between monkshood and wolfsbane?”

Neville ducked his head. He sighed, rather loudly and then said, “There isn’t one, sir. They’re the same plant.”

Severus’s eyes widened slightly, but his sneer remained in place. “As such, it also goes by the name of aconite.” He looked around the room, using the time to cross arms and place his hands delicately on his forearms. “Well?” he asked, “Why aren't you all copying that down?”

There was a mad rush to copy down everything that had been said. As quills rushed across parchment and under the flurry of noise, Professor Snape cleared his throat slightly and eased back into leaning against his desk.

“Two points to Gryffindor, Mr. Longbottom,” he said softly.

While the Slytherins may have been collectively surprised at Professor Snape’s desire to play fair in that moment, they didn’t ask. And soon, the classroom was too busy taking notes for their first-ever potions lecture.

After classes were over for the day, Harry took his bag to the dorm room and tucked it into his trunk. He didn't want to risk anything happening to his notes or books. He did, however, take out the supplemental potions book that Professor Snape had held him after class to give to him – Professor Snape had told Harry it was his to keep.

Harry was thrilled for potions. It seemed like the only branch of magic that Harry could excel at that rarely ever required him to use spoken language. He needed, badly, to figure out how to do magic without speaking. Due to the accident that had happened just over five years ago, there was no way he could speak out loud.
He rushed into the Great Hall and took his seat opposite Draco.

Draco nudged him in the side, lightly, and raised a slim piece of parchment. “We’re to head to see Madam Pomfrey after dinner, Professor Snape’s orders,” he said.

Harry frowned. He didn't know who the madam was, but it didn't sound like a pleasant sort of task. He nearly wrote the same out to Draco but before he could Draco smirked at him a little and said, “You shouldn't worry, Harry. It will be fine, I promise. Magick is wonderful and has some wonderful advances over what you’re used to in the muggle world.” Draco made a face that was a cross between disgust and an expression as though he’d smelled something bad.

Harry nodded and helped himself to a serving each of roast chicken, vegetables and crispy fried potatoes. He poured a goblet of water, he still wasn't accustomed to the taste of pumpkin juice, and settled in for the meal. He’d deal with whomever or whatever Madam Pomfrey was when he had to.

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After the meal, Draco led Harry to the infirmary. He'd never been there before, but Professor Snape had given decent directions. If he noticed how meekly Harry followed him to the hospital wing, he didn't let on.

When they arrived, Draco put on his most pompous expression and directed his voice, loudly, to the entire room.

"We're looking for Madam Pomfrey. She's expecting us,” he said.

Madam Pomfrey held back a little laugh, but did smile down at them. She gestured to the bed next to her and said, "Mr. Potter, dear, if you could come sit over here?” To Draco she said, "You can wait outside, unless he wants you to stay."

Harry squirmed a little and then shook his head. He smiled at Draco to indicate he wasn't upset and Draco nodded. When Draco went to wait outside, Harry turned to Madam Pomfrey.

*Why am I here?* he wrote on his notepad.

She nodded. "Just to see if there's anything else we can do for you, vocally and to take a routine scan," she replied.

She waved her wand, in a fashion that Harry did find kind of silly, at Harry and a scroll unrolled in mid-air. Harry raised his eyebrows, but didn't comment - he'd grown so used to being quiet that he rarely ever scribbled on his notepad.

Madam Pomfrey nodded as the scroll unravelled past damage, wounds, illnesses and the like and it also told her of any allergies Mr. Potter might have. While she was shocked at how long the list went, it didn't show on her face nor did she exclaim aloud. Finally, when she was finished with the scans, she looked down at Harry.

"Well, that's certainly a lot to be getting on with," she commented. "And, I'm afraid there is no good news regarding your voice. It seems to be a combination of trauma and magic that is responsible for the damage to your vocal cords and the internal makeup of your voice." She sighed and then fetched the scroll out of mid-air with her fingertips. She rolled it up quickly and then nodded. "Wait here, I have a couple of potions to prescribe, and then you can go."

As she headed back into her office, Harry shook his head and then stared at the floor. He could
have told her there'd be no miracle - no workaround. Even if there was one, he wasn't worth it. His voice certainly wasn't - it's not as if he'd done much speaking even while he'd had it, and he'd figure out some way to use magick, regardless.

Madam Pomfrey came back into the room and handed him two slim slips of parchment and two small, stoppered bottles. "There you are. The two bottles are both nutrient potions, and should get you started. You'll need to give these slips to Professor Snape, he'll fill them for you." She pressed her hands together. "You may go, but do remember, Mr. Potter, if you're ever feeling the least bit ill or hurt, you can always find me here."

Harry resisted rolling his eyes as he got down off the bed and headed for the door, the bottles and prescriptions held tight in his hands.

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TBC
Working Towards Things

Chapter Summary

There's a meeting between some of the professors. And Harry has an encounter in DAiDA. Short chapter; didn't get to writing all the parts I wanted to. More tomorrow - probably.

Chapter Notes

The following courses have been added to my version of Hogwarts:
Introduction to Healing Magicks (5th year and up) [Taught by Madam Pomfrey & Professor Hellwell]
Wizard/Witch Customs & Traditions (all years) [Taught by Lord Marbison]
Wandless & Wordless Magic (5th years and up) [Taught by Professor Aviar]
Wandlore (4th year and up) [Taught by Professor Ollivander - son of Wand shop owner]
The Art of Spell Creation (7th years only) [Taught by Professor Frederick]
Advanced Healing Magic (6th & 7th years only - prereq. intro) [Taught by Healers Roe and Kenders]

The following courses are available because of canon:
Astronomy
Charms
Defence Against the Dark Arts
Herbology
History of Magic
Potions
Transfiguration

Flying (first years only)
Magical Theory (first years only)
Apparition (Sixth year, those of age only)

Electives (third years and up):
Study of Ancient Runes
Arithmancy
Care of Magical Creatures
Divination
Alchemy
Ancient Studies
Music

I have also replaced the catch-all canon version of muggle studies with:
Muggle Skills Course A (writing, literature, geography) (all years) [Taught by Professor Lewis]
Muggle Skills Course B (math, science, world government/politics) (all years) [Taught
Late that night, a meeting unfolded in the Headmaster’s office. Headmaster Dumbledore, Professor Snape, Professor McGonagall, Madam Pomfrey and Professor Flitwick were all in attendance.

“Poppy,” the Headmaster began. “What of young Harry?”

Poppy Pomfrey sighed and clasped her hands together. “His vocal cords have been severed, quite severely, by a combination of physical trauma and magic. His own magic is blocking the repair of them, and I really can’t say why his magic isn’t letting his voice be healed, but it’s not. The physical damage could be repaired, at least in part, even after five years – but the magic, well, it can’t really be messed with, especially since I don’t know what effect that could have.” Poppy picked up a cup of tea and gently stirred in a slight amount of sugar. “Besides the vocal injuries, he seems alright. He is certainly under-nourished, and has a history of past abuse and neglect, and he is much, much thinner and smaller than the rest of the first years, but I do think spending the majority of his time in the castle will begin to fix some of that.”

“Has he been starved?” Severus asked quietly.

Poppy nodded. “No doubt about that.” Her lips pressed together in a thin, hard line. “He has all the signs of past broken bones and bruises and the like. Clearly, he’s suffered at the hands of the muggles who…raised him.” Poppy shook her head and glared meaningfully at the Headmaster.

“His best chance was with them, Poppy. His Aunt is his only last remaining connection to the blood protection his mother provided, and through family bonds the blood wards on his home stand strong. I had to put him where he’d be the most safe,” Dumbledore explained.

Severus crossed his arms. “Is there anything specific I should be providing him that I have not, due to his condition?”

“Not from a medical standpoint, no. I prescribed him the nutrient potion and the wellness potion for his muscle mass and immune system, I wanted to prescribe an appointment with an Opti-Wizard, but he seemed so uncomfortable in the infirmary, Severus,” Poppy replied.

“I’ll speak to him about an appointment for his eyes, and take him to see one if I must,” Severus replied. “I gather he was supposed to bring the prescriptions to me?” At Poppy’s nod, Severus’s eyes narrowed. “He did not. I will get them from him and fill them immediately.”

“Good, good,” Dumbledore said. “Now, how are we going to address the issue of his magic? He can’t cast without a voice, not at the tender age of eleven.”

This time, Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick stepped forward.

“With transfiguration, he may be able to cast wordlessly, provided his intent is focused and true. It will take some hard work and some additional study, but my subject is much more about intent than in the spoken elements,” Minerva said. “And if that is all, I shall take it up with Mr. Potter and take my leave of the group – I have things to see to.”
“We all have things to see too,” Severus said acidly. “We’re here for the purpose of coming to some kind of consensus regarding Mr. Potter. But, if you feel you’ve contributed all you can, then, please, feel free to leave.”

Minerva sighed and shook her head. “I have done what I can with regards to the boy, and I will make sure he is aware of his options in my class, Severus. He isn't my charge, he's not one of my lions.” She huffed out a breath, turned on her heel and marched out the door.

Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled. “Severus, there’s no need to be rude, you know it was a blow to her pride, I suppose, that Harry was sorted into Slytherin. Besides which, she has Erik waiting for her.”

“We cannot all have a paramour waiting at the end of a long day, Albus,” Severus replied. He ignored the comment about Gryffindor vs. Slytherin for the moment, he’d deal with it later.

“No,” Dumbledore replied. He sighed briefly and directed his next question at Professor Flitwick. “In any case, Filius, what do you have for me in regards to Harry?”

“I can begin teaching him some wordless magic, but it is going to be a hard road. I’d like to see, first, if the paper he writes on can be charmed to read spells aloud in a voice similar to what he might sound like. It would be far easier, at least in class. In tests and exams, he’d very much need to rely on wordless magic, but while in class it would be beneficial to just have the charms and spells read aloud from his notebook,” Filius said.

Dumbledore nodded. “Excellent, we’ll use that first then and then ease him into wordless magic.” Dumbledore glanced around and then clapped his hands. “Well, this meeting is adjourned. Thank you all for coming and for your ideas and contributions, let’s all get some sleep and address these things with Harry tomorrow.”

The professors filed out.

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Severus swept up to the first year dormitory in Slytherin house and brandished his wand. Wordlessly, he accio’d the prescriptions from Mr. Potter. He stared at them for a moment before tucking them into his pocket and heading back down the short flight of stairs.

He checked a few of the other dorm rooms while he was there; making his rounds. When he was finished he fled to his rooms, eager to begin the potions and revise his lesson plans before getting some much needed rest.

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The next day Harry looked eagerly at his schedule as he ate breakfast – fruit, oatmeal, and a rasher of turkey-bacon. Today they had Charms, Defense Against the Dark Arts, Flying Lessons, Lunch, Transfiguration and then Dinner. Transfiguration was a double lesson. On Friday, Harry saw as he checked the schedule, they had something called Wizard/Witch Customs & Traditions, Muggle Skills Course Block, Lunch and then a rather large break before they had Dinner and then Astronomy.

As Harry read through the schedule one more time he realized that classes were set up in blocks of specific days - Mondays and Wednesdays went together (Magical Theory, Herbology, History of Magic, Lunch, Potions and Dinner), as did Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Fridays were always the same as well. He wondered if, as he advanced in years, there would be any variations or other classes offered. When he wrote as much to Draco, he got a wide grin and an enthusiastic head-nod
in return.

"In third year we get to choose electives, and once we're done with Flying Lessons - which we only do for three class periods - we'll have an additional hour to fill. So, basically, once we reach third year we get to elect to fill up our time with other courses. You'll learn all about it after second year when the supplemental comes out," Draco supplied.

Harry nodded and returned to his breakfast. While he did wonder how Draco knew everything about Hogwarts, he figured it had more to do with growing up in the magical world than, say, reading books about it. Though he did really wish to read the copy of *Hogwarts, A History* he'd come across in the Slytherin common room.

After breakfast, they headed to class. As Charms ended, Harry was pleased to realize that Professor Flitwick seemed interested in helping him learn how to cast without his voice - and agreed to come by after dinner to take part in some research.

In Defense Against the Dark Arts, however, Harry had an overwhelming and alarming reaction to Professor Quirrell. His scar began aching, madly, and a headache blasted through his head with such intensity that he almost fell over. When he was recovered enough to actually pay attention to the lesson, he spent most of his time trying to figure out whose face was behind Professor Quirrell's face and if he should tell an adult about it.

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TBC
Harry finishes out Week 1 at Hogwarts.
And there's some Pure Blood vs Other Blood discussion amongst the Slytherin first year boys.

I've taken some artistic license with class scheduling in this fiction - throughout the entire fiction, and some more artistic license with a couple of the students and where they were sorted. Morrison MacDougal is Morag's twin brother, for the purposes of this fic - but they aren't central to the plot.

The first week flew by and soon it was Friday evening – after dinner but before Astronomy.

As Harry, Draco and Blaise walked together to the Astronomy tower; Harry was excited for his first weekend in the castle. He didn’t bother sharing his excitement with his two friends – though he was thrilled to have two, and he also seemed to be making friends with a very shy and quiet boy named Theo. He felt that no one could be as thrilled as he was about the time spent at Hogwarts – except maybe some of the muggle-born students.

As they neared Astronomy, the three boys stopped and stared at the small crowd gathering in front of the door to the staircase.

“What in Merlin’s name is holding everyone up?” Draco asked, his nose slightly in the air.

Harry held back a soundless-snort at the attitude-laced phrase and walked over to a brown-haired girl who was sitting on the floor near the door, reading the Astronomy text. Because he recognized her from the train, he crouched down and scribbled on his notepad.

What's going on? Is the stairway door locked or something?

He showed her the note and gave an easy smile to help put her at ease – he’d begun to realize over the last week that the combination of his lack of voice and being sorted into Slytherin really scared people [though this fear response was typically reserved for kids who had grown up in magical families].

Hermione tilted her head up from where she’d been reading about the importance of meteor showers to read the note. She smiled shyly – a pretty girl, her bookishness helped her fit right into Ravenclaw, where she’d been sorted.

“How are things going for you in Ravenclaw? Harry wrote out.

Hermione paled slightly. “It’s very competitive.” She looked around for a moment. “But, I’m enjoying it. Are you holding up alright in Slytherin? Many people were very alarmed at your sorting, Harry.”
Harry gave a genuine smile. *Things are good, I’m making friends, and doing better than I think I expected. They aren't as scary as I thought.*

Before he could write more, the door to the tower stairs opened and the small crowd of Ravenclaw and Slytherin students fled up the stairs to start their first Astronomy lesson.

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“You seemed to be making friends with that Ravenclaw,” Draco commented as they made their way into their dorm room.

Harry frowned and scribbled quickly on his notepad. Holding it out to Draco, he shook his head, his facial expression questioning.

I thought it was perfectly alright to make friends in other houses?

“As long as it isn’t those bloody Gryffindors, sure, Harry,” Draco said. “I meant…that she’s a mudblood.”

Harry lifted his shoulders in a shrug and wrote again. Instead of showing the paper to Draco, he turned and got Theo’s attention.

What’s a mudblood?

Theo’s eyes went wide and he crossed his arms angrily. “It’s a really foul name for someone who is muggle-born,” he explained to Harry while he glared at Draco. “It’s not typically used in polite society, and we shouldn’t be using it anyway as it’s banned language. Muggle-born witches and wizards aren’t any worse or better than wizards and witches born into all magical families, Draco,” Theo said. “And you know it. You’re just repeating your father.”

Having a fellow Slytherin, whose father had also been a death eater, confront him on his beliefs and accuse him of just parroting the senior Malfoy didn't sit well with Draco. In fact Draco rather resented it. His face went a sickly sort of yellow as he rounded on Theo.

“What a ghastly thing to say! And my father says that muggle-borns will ruin wizard society! Of course there’s a difference, Theodore Nott!” Draco said shrilly.

Harry sighed. I think Theo might be right, Draco. I mean…what proof do you have besides what your father says? He wrote. I mean, isn’t that the kind of thing Lord WhatsIt says – and you don’t want him back in power, right?

“His father was a Death Eater too, Harry!” Draco exclaimed, annoyed that Theo, who had such similar history to Draco, could look down on him. "You-Know-Who is dead, and of course I don’t want him back in power. Neither does my family. It was awful, according to my mother, during the war.” He sat down carefully on his bed. Staring at the floor he muttered, “I suppose you both have a point. I don’t have any proof outside of the things my father believes – and I’ve never bothered to look into it.”

Your fathers were Death Eaters? Harry wrote, it was clear he should be alarmed but...What's a Death Eater? he finished and showed his notepad to Draco.

"A Death Eater is the name for a follower of the Dark Lord," Draco explained quietly. "And yes, most people's parents, if they're in Slytherin house, were Death Eaters." Draco looked around worriedly. "We don't follow You-Know-Who anymore. And, for what it's worth, my mum never did - she was never a Death Eater," he said defensively.

Blaise patted Draco on the arm. “My parents still believe in blood purity. But ever since Harry was sorted into Slytherin, I dunno. I think it’s changing everyone’s minds about what’s right, what’s
proper and even about blood purity. I get a letter nearly every day from someone in my family, asking after Harry and trying to gauge the situation. I think….maybe things are changing.”

“We’re eleven,” Vincent piped up. “What do we really know about any of this?”

There were nods around the room and then Greg said, “Let’s get some sleep. We’ve all got a lot of homework this weekend, and it’s getting late. Best to argue about…about…politics, and the like, in the morning on a full stomach.”

The boys got ready for bed and then retired to their beds. Harry, Draco, Blaise and Theo were in the first set of four and Greg, Vincent, Pike (Moon) and Morrison (MacDougal) were in the second set of four beds.

In the dark, Draco whispered. “I apologize, Harry, for my word use. I, clearly, wasn’t thinking.”

Unable to respond with his notepad in the dark, Harry slid his wand out from under his pillow and used the only spell he had mastered wordlessly. Little balls of light zoomed towards Draco and formed into a giant smiley face, which faded moments later.

Draco laughed and pulled his covers up to his chin. He was really glad Harry had been sorted into Slytherin.

***

At breakfast the next morning, Harry grabbed Draco’s copy of The Daily Prophet for perusal over his toast and fruit. As he read through the articles, his eyes lit on the article about the Gringotts vault break in. He read silently as he sipped a glass of pumpkin juice – he was trying hard to acclimate to the flavor.

--Investigations continue into the break-in at Gringotts on 31 July, widely believed to be the work of Dark wizards or witches unknown. Gringotts goblins today insisted that nothing had been taken. The vault that was searched had in fact been emptied the same day. "But we're not telling you what was in there, so keep your noses out if you know what's good for you," said a Gringotts spokesgoblin this afternoon.--

That’s the same vault that Hagrid and I went to! Harry spelled out on his notepad.

Draco shrugged at Harry’s note and continued to eat his breakfast – savory scones, bacon and eggs.

Harry used the small pair of scissors he kept in his bag to carefully cut out the article – he also cut out a lifestyles piece on a dragon reserve and an article on magical solutions to domestic issues. He tucked all three pieces of newspaper into his bag and stood up. He was finished with his breakfast.

Harry nodded at Draco, Theo and Blaise and then headed to the Charms classroom. Professor Flitwick wanted to spend part of the morning going over a spell that would provide a voice for the spells he wrote down on his notepad; tomorrow morning he had to go to the potions classroom for some tutelage by Professor Snape, but today was reserved for spell casting work.

Professor Flitwick greeted him at the door and then led him into a connecting room off the classroom.

“This room, Mr. Potter, is where we sometimes have duels, and a bit less formal than the classroom,” Professor Flitwick explained. “I thought it might be better to practice your casting.
Professor McGonagall will be joining us shortly. Professor Snape passed on some messages from your other instructors, and I thought you might want to know what they said.”

Harry nodded. He hoped he’d been doing okay in the other courses, but he couldn’t be sure. Herbology, Magical Theory, Astronomy and Potions were the only courses that didn’t necessarily require him to use his wand, or his voice, to cast spells.

Professor Flitwick waved his wand and a slip of parchment paper popped out of thin air and into his hand. He skimmed the paper and then said, “Professor Sprout says you’ll do well without the use of your voice, but wants you to keep in mind that some plants do need to be spoken to, but in those cases she thinks a bit of music might do. Professor Quirrell is concerned about your ability to do defensive magic, without your voice, but…well, to be honest, the rest of that note isn’t worth much, Mr. Potter. You’re only eleven, you need all the training up you can get.”

Professor Flitwick picked a book off the shelf near the door and handed it to Harry. “Professor Sinistra thinks you’ll do fine in her course – no silly wand waving there, for the most part, she says. There is no notation from Professor Snape, but praise is highly unlikely from that source in any case. Professor Lipwell notes that you won’t have any trouble with the Theory.” He stopped his slow pacing after a moment and turned to face Harry. “You haven’t had any trouble with flying lessons, and you still have one left, is that correct?”

_I figured out the brooms rise with intent more than with the word ‘up,’ so…yeah, I haven’t had any problems_. Harry beamed as he showed his notepad to Professor Flitwick.

“Good,” Professor Flitwick said as the door opened and Professors McGonagall walked in. “Ah, Minerva, welcome. We’re going to be testing a spell with Mr. Potter’s notepad so that spells can be vocalized, and since I was going to work on this with him, I thought it was a good idea to have you share your idea with him as well and then maybe we can see if this spell I’ve devised will work with Transfigurations too.”

Professor McGonagall nodded and smiled briefly at Harry. “I’m sure we’ll work something out Mr. Potter,” she said.

Harry looked down at the book in his hands, _Wordless Magick for Beginners_, as he waited for Professor Flitwick to begin.

“Yes, so….the wand movement with this spell is very simple,” Professor Flitwick began. “You tap the paper with the tip of your wand and then raise the wand very quickly, with one sharp wrist movement, up from the paper. When you raise your wand, the paper should announce the spell word out loud.”

Professor Flitwick took a small quill pen from his pocket and wrote on the paper he held in his hand. “This spell is specific to its caster, so make sure you’ve written it down in your own hand, on your notepad, once I’ve cast it for you. For everyday use, you’ll be simply tapping the spell on your notepad with the wand movement I’ve explained – which I’ll demonstrate. There is also an abbreviated spell-specific wand movement to do, but again, I’ll be showing you how it works.” Professor Flitwick frowned a little. “That sounds all very complicated, but it really isn’t Mr. Potter. In order to cast spells out loud, you’ll tap your wand on the written spell I have yet to teach you, using the wand movement and then you’ll simply tap once on the written spell you wish to cast. For example…”

Professor Flitwick tapped the point of his wand down on an area of the piece of paper he held in his hand and then lifted his wrist up, with the wand tip pointing to the sky, very sharply. He then pressed the wand tip down on a different corner of the paper and the spell –word ‘lumos’ rose in
the air like vapor, when it dissolved, the word “Lumos” echoed in the chamber in Professor Flitwick’s voice – without him ever speaking.

So, people will always know what I’m casting? Harry wrote.

“No, once you get used to casting in this way, once you’ve used it for a while, I’ll show you a slightly different version of the spell which will not announce what spell you’re using, and it will also provide you with options for volume – whisper, medium and loud,” Professor Flitwick explained.

“This is very nice, Filius,” Professor McGonagall said. “I have some plans today I need to attend to, and a group of advanced students coming for a lesson soon – may I interrupt for a moment?”

“Of course,” he replied.

“In my class, this spell may work and it may not,” she said, directing her comments at Harry. “However, the good news is that transfiguration is more about intent than it is about spell words.” Professor McGonagall removed a book from the bookcase and put it on the floor. “For example,” she said as she pointed her wand at the book. She stared hard at it for a moment before making a jabbing motion with her wand and a little flourish. The book turned into a snuff box in moments. “Intent, Mr. Potter,” she added. After a moment she cancelled the transfiguration with a verbal ‘finite.’

As she left she said, “We’ll work on that in class next week.”

Professor Flitwick clapped his small hands together and a look of glee came over his face. “Wonderful. Now, the spell you’ll be learning…”

***

Harry raced to the common room after his lesson with Professor Flitwick. He was so happy that it appeared as though he’d be able to cast spells like everyone else – albeit with a bit more effort and a little more time.

In the common room, Draco, Blaise, Theo, Greg, Vincent, Pansy and Millie sat around doing homework – writing on parchment, flipping through textbooks.

Harry smiled at the little pile of friends he’d made over the last week. While he couldn’t say any of them were the type of people to be his friends for years and years, he did think he and Draco (and he and Hermione, honestly, as they’d hit it off during Astronomy) would remain friends for a long while.

He pointed to his notepad, where he’d written the majority of the spells they’d learned that week, and performed the wand movement and then pointed his wand at the pillows near where Draco was sitting, finishing in an abbreviated *wingardium leviosa* wand movement. The words rose up into the air like vapor and then the words were spoken somewhat mechanically, but because the Slytherins were paying attention to their homework and not to Harry, they didn't look up until the pillows began to rise into the air.

Pansy was the first to focus on Harry, her eyes narrowing until she realized what had happened. She leapt up from where she’d been sitting on the floor and rushed over to him.

Harry cancelled the charm with a pointed wand movement and a little intense focus, and the pillows rested themselves back on the couch.
"Well, look at that, you can cast Potter!" Pansy exclaimed.

Draco and Theo were the next to congratulate him, and Blaise soon followed.

They rest of the evening passed quickly; they all went down to dinner and then stayed up late doing homework and watching Harry cast spells.

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TBC
All Hallows Eve

Chapter Summary

This chapter picks up several weeks after the last chapter.

The first years Flying Lessons are over and have been replaced with Muggle Skills Course C (computers and pop culture) (all years) [Taught by Professor May].

We pick up the day before Halloween, and this chapter will cover Halloween and some other details. It is important to note that Harry has not made the Quidditch team as of yet in this story, because the Remembrall storyline in the Original book (book 1) did not happen.

A/N - While in cannon Lucius Malfoy would have opted out of any Muggle Skills for Draco, it is important to note that he does not do so in this story because keeping up appearances is equally important to him.

Chapter Notes

A reminder of Harry's first year course schedule in my story:

Monday & Wednesdays
/Breakfast/ Magical Theory, Herbology, History of Magic /Lunch/ Potions (Double) /Dinner/

Tuesday & Thursdays
/Breakfast/ Charms, Defense Against the Dark Arts, Muggle Skills Course C /Lunch/ Transfiguration (Double) /Dinner/

Fridays
/Breakfast/ Wizard&Witch Customs & Traditions (Double), Muggle Skills Course A /Lunch/ Muggle Skills Course B (Double) /Break (Studying, Homework, Club Activities)/ /Dinner/ Astronomy.

Wait. So what you are telling me is that Ronald, Seamus and Dean stumbled upon a very large three-headed dog under a trapdoor? Harry scribbled on his notepad as fast as he could and then showed it to Hermione.

It was Thursday afternoon, the day before Halloween, and the Ravenclaw/Slytherin class were waiting for Professor May to arrive to begin the Computer lesson of the day. The Muggle Skills Course C consisted of learning the ins and outs of computers and being regaled with tales of muggle pop culture such as television series, films, music and other media.

Draco leaned across the aisle and tugged on Harry's robe. "What are you writing about with her?" he asked. His face was pale and slightly scrunched with distaste.
Harry resisted the urge to roll his eyes. *Hermione's my friend and we've talked about this. Stop being a git.* Harry wrote as politely as he could on another scrap of paper and handed it to Draco. He turned back to Hermione and shrugged.

"Yes," Hermione said. "It's no joke. Ronald was being a right berk and went to go duelling another classmate late that night, last Friday. Anyway, he didn't get caught out of dorms or anything as far as I know, but he and Seamus and Dean, who was his second, stumbled across a three-headed dog." Hermione looked around for a moment and then dropped her voice to a whisper. "On the third floor!" she hissed.

Harry made the sign for 'what,' and Hermione nodded.

"Exactly," she replied confidently and then leaned back in her seat. She huffed out a breath and turned to face the front of the classroom.

*What were they thinking being out like that though? A duel? Did they get hurt? What was the dog guarding?* Harry wrote.

Hermione looked at the note and then crossed her arms. "I've no idea, do I? I didn't ask, just warned them not to go mucking about on the third floor and to be aware they could have been killed...or worse, expelled." Hermione turned slightly to Harry and made the signs for 'look' and 'professor,' then she finger-spelled MAY. "Class is starting," she said softly.

Harry put his pen and notepad away. The best thing about Muggle Skills Course was that even though a lot of magic was required to make the electronics work, almost no magic was required of the students during the class. They were some of Harry's favorite classes, though he'd never let on about that to his fellow Slytherins.

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"I don't understand," Draco said later, at dinner. "Why would anyone keep something guarded by a Cerberus and in a school of all places?"

*Hagrid said that there's no place as safe as Hogwarts, except perhaps Gringotts...and that got broken into, so...perhaps Hogwarts is the safest place for....whatever the dog is guarding?* Harry wrote as he helped himself to a few mini chicken pies.

"Right," Draco commented. "Only...what's to keep the students safe from that thing if it gets out?"

Harry shrugged.

"Do you suppose we should go looking for it ourselves?" Blaise asked quietly.

"I should hope not!" Theo said. "I think that's more danger than we could possibly be prepared for."

"You'd make wonderful friends with Longbottom, Theo," Pansy said unkindly.

*Neville is nice. Let's focus on the mystery and not on sounding off about Neville, okay?* Harry scribbled. *Besides, he's a Pure-Blood, just like you.*

"You'd defend every puppy, wouldn't you Potter?" Pansy asked snidely. After a moment she shrugged, shook her head and stood up.

As she walked away, Harry stared after her for a moment. One moment they were close to being
friends and in the next she was back to dismissing, or worse hating, him. He sighed soundlessly.

"Don't worry about her Harry. She's just mean," Theo added.

Blaise raised his eyebrows but then nodded. "She doesn't have the easiest time. With anything," he defended.

Harry nodded slowly and then went back to his meal.

"So, it's sorted, isn't it?" Draco asked. "We'll let the - ahem - brave Gryffindors deal with the monster under the trapdoor."

Harry laughed - which since he was mute was just a sort of gleeful air escaping from his lungs half-sound with a big grin. He nodded again and the others agreed.

********

The rest of the day and night passed quickly and soon it was morning. A gloomy Friday, Halloween, morning.

Harry stretched as he gathered his shower stuff and tried to shake off the feeling of sadness and despair that had crept into his dreams.

As he was having breakfast, later that morning, Harry couldn't place the odd feelings of discomfort he'd been having and mentioned it, on a scrap of parchment, to Draco.

"It makes sense, Harry," Draco said. His eyes widened slightly at Harry's confused expression.

'What?' Harry signed.

Draco nodded softly and turned to face Harry. He lifted his hands gently and signed 'Years ago your parents died today.' He then clapped Harry on the back gently before returning to his meal.

You're getting good at signing Harry wrote.

Draco smiled. "Thanks. I've been practicing some things so that you don't have to scribble all the time. I want to be able to understand your language. Any good friend would."

Harry grinned. A partial weight lifted, he too returned to his breakfast.

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That Night, At Dinner:

Professor Quirrell raced through the Great Hall. He stopped before Professor Dumbledore and yelled, "Troll! Troll in the Dungeons! Th-thought you ought to know," before collapsing in a dead faint.

Harry snorted silently. Regardless of if Quirrell was telling the truth, Harry wanted nothing to do with him. He avoided him at all costs, and was passing DADA by the sheer force of his will and doing very well, thank you very much, on tests.

"A troll?" Draco said as mass terror began to spread through the hall.

"Remain in your seats!" Professor Dumbledore yelled as students began to panic. "Now," he continued. "Prefects, lead your classmates back to their dormitories at once and no one is to leave
until we have sent word that it is safe." The Headmaster looked out over the Great Hall and then looked at the teachers. "With me, please!" he said to them as he led the way to the Dungeons.

Robert and Gemma looked at each other oddly and then Gemma went to speak to Professor Snape before he took off after the Headmaster.

Theo, Blaise and Millie crowded around Draco and Harry.

"How could a troll get in?" Millie asked.

"Not sure," Blaise replied. "They're typically pretty stupid."

"Someone let it in. Probably a prank," Draco replied.

Gemma rushed up to the Slytherin table. "Come on, follow me. Professor Snape says it's not safe to head back to the Dungeons, so we're going to the second floor, to the Duelling room - there hasn't been a Duelling club, team or tournament in forever, so Professor Snape reckons that's the safest place for now. Professor Sinistra is already up there to make it a bit more habitable."

As they followed her to the Duelling room, Theo whispered, "Did anyone see Neville at dinner?"

Harry turned sharply toward Theo and signed 'no.' He understood Theo's worry - the three of them had become fast friends during Herbology and Harry couldn't remember seeing Neville at the Gryffindor table at dinner. 'You think Neville knows about troll?' Harry signed - fingerspelling TROLL and using Neville's name-sign.

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TBC
Chapter Summary

This is set a week after Halloween and will answer -- what happened to Neville; what's quidditch; and some other plot points.

Very, very short chapter. Just to get us back on track. The next will be longer, and have more movement, promise.

They had saved Neville, who had been locked in the Boy's Bathroom with the Troll. Two Slytherin boys and Hermione - a Ravenclaw - had worked together to save a Gryffindor. The story spread through the school like wildfire. There were tales that had them battling three trolls and an ogre in the limited space, with no one injured or getting nary a scratch on themselves. There were other theories, that the teachers had saved Neville and then made up the story to give the Slytherins a chance at being heroes. There were even versions closer to the truth, but no one, save Neville, Hermione, Harry and Theo knew what actually had happened.

The teachers had arrived at the end of the "battle." Neville had been standing a little in front of the doorway, gave a sort of squeaking noise and dodged to the corner. Professor Snape had come up behind him with Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick. Theo had used a few spells he knew to disarm the Troll while Harry had run around distracting the Troll. Ultimately, Hermione had offed the Troll with a simple swish and flick -- hitting it with its own club. The bathroom was destroyed, water was everywhere and all four were soaking wet when the teachers had happened upon them. Hermione, Theo and Harry had gotten points -- they'd also been assigned detention for not going to get a teacher. Neville had been assigned points as well, and then had half of them taken away. They'd all gone to the hospital wing for various injuries -- Neville had broken his wrist in the process.

But, they all lived to tell the tale, and Harry, Theo and Hermione had become fast friends with Neville. The Slytherins weren't too happy about that, but they'd written it off as needing allies in other houses - for the most part.

Now it was Saturday - just over a week later - and Harry huddled in the Slytherin stands, waiting for the first Quidditch game of the season to start. He still didn't completely understand what Quidditch was about, even though both Draco and Blaise had explained it to him. The air was frigid, but being kept at bay by localised warming charms set by the teachers.

As Harry watched the match, he scribbled notes to Theo, Blaise and Millie. Draco was the new Slytherin seeker and, as such, was playing in the game. Do you think he'll get the snitch? Harry asked.

"He sort of has too, Harry," Theo commented and shifted uncomfortably.

Harry frowned and made the sign for 'why'.

Theo sighed.

Blaise squirmed slightly and then took a deep breath to compose himself. He dropped his voice
below the roar of the crowd as Gryffindor scored. "His parents are here, over in the family stand. His mother and father. If he does not win the match for Slytherin...he will pay the price of Lucius Malfoy's disappointment," Blaise explained.

Harry hunched his shoulders. *There's more than one player on the team,* he wrote.

Millie shrugged and looked uncomfortable. "That just does not matter, Harry," she said not unkindly. "It is his father. It is rumored that Mr. Malfoy was in the inner-circle of the Dark Lord, and as such, well...his displeasure must be....quite something," she finished.

Harry sighed, nodded, and then returned to watching the game. The game lasted for about an hour, and when Gryffindor won [170 points to 60], Harry shuddered. He couldn't imagine it was going to go well for Draco.

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Later, after the field had cleared and they'd all dined on the post-game feast, Harry and his friends made their way down to the Slytherin common room.

Draco sat in the dark, on his bed, in the first-year boys dorm. Harry went to him immediately.

*Was it bad?* he scribbled.

Draco blinked, cleared his throat. "Uh. Not as such. He was...understandably upset. He'd gotten me on the team, after all. He reminded me of my place as the Malfoy heir. Mother hugged me, and they left. Not...not as big of a deal as I had thought," he explained.

Harry patted Draco awkwardly on the arm for a moment and then turned to go.

"He was a little distracted by your being in Slytherin. I think it's what saved me from his cane, honestly," Draco added in a near whisper.

Harry whirled around. "Cane?" he mouthed.

Draco nodded sadly. The other boys in the room pretended to have other things to do, though Blaise and Theo came to stand beside Harry.

"It has been three months since the sorting," Blaise said. "What is still so interesting about our Mr. Potter?"

"My father believes it might mean the Dark Lord will not reappear. That having Harry...having you," Draco directed his comment to Harry. "Having you in Slytherin will...I suppose, put you on the side of the dark, and you will be far more competition than....than you're worth."

"Until now, he's believed the Dark Lord is coming back?" Theo asked quietly.

Draco nodded.

*Does he really beat you?* Harry scribbled.

Draco gave a slight scoff. "Of course not. He sometimes, when he feels I need it, gives me a few whacks with his cane. Not very many, usually around the backside. He did not feel the need tonight. As I say, he was distracted." He moved his shoulders. "I hate that cane," he admitted. "It's where he keeps his wand."

Harry frowned. *But you're alright?* he wrote.
"Yes, Harry. I am well. It was an okay match." Draco nodded at Blaise and Theo. "Now, I'm tired. We have an easy Sunday ahead, but I'd like to get some sleep." He scooted back and used a simple charm to pull his curtains back.

Theo and Harry exchanged pointed looks as Blaise went to his own bed.

*Is it alright to talk about it with you later?* Harry wrote and then shoved the notepad at Theo. At Theo's nod, Harry smiled and then went to get ready for bed.

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TBC
Chapter Summary

Potions class and the beginning of the Holidays. Sorry about the shorter chapters -- this one would have been longer if my neighbors would have turned their horrible, pound-y music down and the walls weren't vibrating!

This story also places Sally-Anne Perks into Slytherin. This move, and her subsequent backstory, is inspired by the Lionsnake Chronicles by Terias. Not stolen, just inspired by.

Additionally, to even out the class lists and to account for Harry's sorting into Slytherin, witch Tracey Davis has been placed into Gryffindor.

Italics is Harry writing down what he's saying and showing it to someone. ' ' with words between (ex: 'Hello') is Harry signing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"What's sad," Ron said as he entered the potions classroom, "Are those students, especially first years, who can't or won't go home for the Holidays." He shot a furtive glance in Harry's direction.

Harry continued setting up his potions station and did not respond. Ron had been a right git to him lately, and Harry was actually really happy to be spending the Christmas Holidays at Hogwarts and besides, Professor Snape, his head of house, had made a specific request that he stay over them.

"I mean," Ron said a little louder as he settled next to Neville at their potions station. "It generally means they're either unwanted at home, or they don't have families, right?" Ron looked behind him, at Dean and Seamus, for confirmation.

Dean and Seamus both shrugged. "Could mean they like the castle better, or that Christmas at home won't be fun, or that they don't celebrate Christmas," Dean replied.

"Well, I think it means they're largely unwanted." Ron dropped his voice to a stage-whisper. "Who wouldn't want the Boy Who Lived home for the Holidays?"

"That is quite enough, Mr. Weasley. Twenty points from Gryffindor," Professor Snape said icily. "For your assumption." He strode back to the front of the classroom and whirled around. He leaned against the desk.

"Today, you'll be brewing Flu-Cure. While the flu is actually quite rare among wizards and witches," Professor Snape began. "It is not unheard of and does, indeed, happen. This particular cure is quite good to have on hand in times of cold weather. It lasts without refrigeration for up to 86 hours. It can be taken at anytime during the onset of flu-like symptoms, but typically is administered in the beginning stages. You have one hour for the initial stage, one hour for the secondary stage, and then a final ten minutes to bottle and get your potion on my desk, on the tray. Make certain you have labelled the potion correctly with its name and your name and house."
They spent the class period working on their potions. Harry and Theo were at the same table, as were Blaise and Draco, Vincent and Greg, Pike and Morrison, Pansy and Millie, Daphne and Sally-Anne. It was a similar setup on the Gryffindor side -- Ron and Neville, Seamus and Dean, Lavender and Parvati, Emma* and Tracey.

*Ron and Neville are sure to have a disaster. Let's make sure we're both extra careful with our potions.* Harry wrote and shoved the note at Theo, who nodded after he'd read it.

It wasn't until the second hour of class - during the secondary steps in the potions ingredients, timing, stirring and waiting - that the accident happened.

Harry was patiently waiting for his potion to turn a bright, luminescent orange, when he heard Ronald shout "No!" and Neville's potion blew up, showering both Ron and Neville in a stinky, sticky, sap-like potion that was the color of mud.

They were lucky it hadn't hit anyone else, or ruined anyone else's potions. The Slytherins always put up shield charms around their tables, and Harry knew that Emma always did as well, but he wasn't sure anyone else knew to.

"Twenty points from Gryffindor, Mr. Longbottom. You are a complete imbecile. The black poppy goes in off the heat, you dunderhead," Professor Snape said coldly as he stalked over to Ron and Neville's table. He whipped out his wand and cleaned up the mess in a matter of moments, then vanished what was left of both of their potions. "You haven't time to do it all again within the frame of the class, so you will both have to come back after dinner to redo your potions." He sneered at them. "You have time to prepare some of the ingredients now, but do not waste time!"

He turned away from them and began gliding back to the front of the room.

Ron looked angry, his face all red, his chest puffed out, and muttered, "It wasn't my potion that blew up."

Professor Snape turned around sharply. "No, it was not. However, as a desk-mate, you should know that it is your responsibility to look out for one another. Surely such brave and loyal Gryffindors know how to look out for one another? Or is it that you are too inept to focus on more than one task at a time? Ten points from Gryffindor and detention on the first evening back from the Holidays, for your impertinence!" he said.

Neville squeaked and then hurried to the student store cupboard for additional ingredients. Ron glowered, but began assembling what he needed to remake the potion.

The rest of the class period passed without interruption.

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"I thought he might have some sort of fit," Draco said as they tucked into the pre-Holiday leaving feast. "Weasley turned so red, and seemed...ill. It was quite delightful."

*It was good that the potion didn't explode all over everything, and that it wasn't toxic when it did.* Harry scribbled.

Draco nodded.

"They've both got to go back after dinner, those two. Do you think our Head of House will make them miss the train tonight?" Theo asked.

"Not likely," Blaise commented. "He would probably get into trouble with the Headmaster."
Harry smiled at Blaise and then nodded. 'Makes sense,' he signed.

Theo passed Harry a basket of bread. "You're not eating much, are you alright?"

'Fine, fine,' Harry signed. *Nervous about spending the Holidays alone.* he continued.

"You will not be alone," Sally-Anne said softly as she looked over at the note. "Other students stay behind too. I will be here, and so will some of the upper years. I am certain some of the friends you've made in other houses will be staying behind as well. Several of the professors will be here too. You will not be alone, Harry."

Harry grinned at her.

"By the gods, Harry, you do make a lot of friends in other houses," Pansy said disapprovingly. "Too many, one might say. It is not very Slytherin of you."

'I know,' Harry signed. *I guess I'm not that good a Slytherin then. But, it's where the hat wanted me,* he wrote and handed the note to Pansy.

"I cannot understand why. You are much more attuned to Hufflepuff sensibilities. Or worse, Gryffindor," Pansy said snidely. Her face was pinched, as if she'd smelled something bad.

"Lay off him, Pans. He's one of us, and it's nearly Christmas," Millie defended.

Pansy huffed and turned around to talk to Daphne.

Harry gave a slight smile with the left side of his mouth. 'It's okay,' he signed. *That attitude is nothing new from her, it's alright.* he wrote and showed it to Millie, who nodded.

*Listen, I'm not very hungry. Think I'll go up to our dorm. You all have to come up for your trunks or suitcases or whatnot, right?* he passed the note to Theo.

"Yeah, Harry," Theo said kindly. "We all have to come up for our things before we head to the train. We'll say goodbye." Theo looked around the group of first year Slytherins for confirmation, and each student nodded.

'Great,' Harry signed as he stood up. He grabbed his bag and headed for the stairs to the dungeon.

***

Up in the Slytherin boys dorm, Harry started on his Holiday homework while he waited for his friends to finish dinner. By the time he was finished outlining what he had to do over the break, his friends had come up and were loudly getting together what they needed for their two weeks away.

Every first year made a point of stopping to see Harry on their way out of the dorm - he'd moved to his favorite spot in the common room when the commotion had started.

Harry was glad when the house rooms emptied, except for a few people who were staying behind. He hoped he'd have a little more freedom to explore the castle with the majority of students and professors away.

Theo was the last to leave for the train, nearly late, it seemed, by the way he was running towards the portrait door. "Remember to look out for my letters, Harry! Hephaestus should be bringing a letter at least twice a week!" he called as he sailed through the portrait door.

Harry laughed. He had a feeling it would be a good holiday after all.
Chapter End Notes

In case you wondered...
Ravenclaw Students in Harry's Year:
Terry Boot; Michael Corner; Kevin Entwhistle; Anthony Goldstein; Stephen Cornfoot.
Mandy Brocklehurst; Su Li; Padma Patil; Hermione Granger; Morag MacDougal.

Hufflepuff Students in Harry's Year:
Justin Finch-Fletchley; Wayne Hopkins; Ernie Macmillan; Zacharias Smith.
Megan Jones; Hannah Abbott; Susan Bones; Lisa Turpin.

I have used stuff from J.K.s notes and interviews to help fill out the student lists.
*Emma's (Emma Stewartson) been made up to even out the Gryffindors.
Lisa was moved to Hufflepuff to account for Hermione being in Ravenclaw.
Harry wakes up on Christmas morning to things he hadn't expected.

Short chapter.

I realize J.K. has one head boy and one head girl and that's it, but I've taken some artistic AU license with this. So in my story:

1 Head student per house just in general - making a total of 4 Head students, instead of 2.

Christmas dawned bright and cold two days after the beginning of the holiday break.

Harry woke after a strange dream involving snakes, flying on a broom and a long, twisting staircase. He climbed out of bed, grabbed his shower things and his glasses and raced into the bathroom.

After his shower, as he was coming back into the dorm room, he froze in front of his bed, his mouth dropped open. There, at the foot of the bed, was a small pile of presents. Harry carefully put back his shower things and tossed his pajamas in the laundry basket. He closed his mouth with a gentle click.

Harry lowered himself onto the floor in front of the small pile as a grin slowly spread across his face. 'I've got presents,' he signed to himself.

He opened each package carefully - as if it might break, or be destroyed by unwrapping it. He'd sent every first-year Slytherin a present of some sort, but he hadn't expected anything back. He'd gotten to know his fellow Slytherins through classes and other school activities - enough so that he'd understood what they might appreciate. He'd also sent gifts to Hermione, Neville, Emma, Hagrid and Professors Flitwick, Snape and McGonagall.

He'd sent cards of thanks and gratitude to the other professors and the Headmaster, because he'd felt they'd all done so much to help him, but he didn't really know them enough to send them presents. He'd also sent little tokens to the Slytherin Prefects -- even the ones he hadn't yet met. Apparently, according to the other students, the prefects in years 6 and 7 had different duties than the two he knew -- the 5th years -- and so Harry wouldn't really interact with them much, as a first year.

After opening each present, Harry spread them all out on the floor and made a quick list of who had sent him what for his thank-you cards. Theo had given him a book on magical creatures that communicated nonverbally; Draco had given him a large box of dark chocolate caramels which were Harry's favorite; Blaise had given him a gift cheque to an Owl-order clothes shop and a letter detailing clothes selections Harry should make and why; Pansy had given him a sensible winter hat, which was sort of funny since he'd gotten her a hat and scarf. Vincent and Greg had given him a box of pumpkin pasties; Pike and Morrison had given him a set of very fine quills; Sally-Anne had given him a pocket-watch and chain.
Millie had given him a scrapbook filled with articles and collected stories about his family line -- the Potters and, surprisingly the Peverells -- she'd also included a note about how her mother, who was a Ancestral Historian, had helped her put it together. Hermione had given him a new copy of *Hogwarts A History* since he'd often borrowed hers over the last few weeks, which was interesting, because he'd sent her a copy of a potions book that Professor Snape had recommended to him and that Hermione had asked to borrow, but he'd never gotten around to letting her.

Professor McGonagall had sent him a pin in the shape of a Gryphon, but he hadn't really figured out why. Professor Flitwick had sent him a book on the uses and applications of nonverbal spells and charms for daily encounters. Emma had given him a slim volume on the history and uses of pumpkin juice - which he figured was a nod to the fact that he still couldn't get used to the taste and he and Emma, who was also muggle-raised but not muggle-born, had talked about it. He'd sent her a book about Kneazles and a stuffed one as well, because she was fascinated by them.

Professor Snape had sent him a note which read: *Tomorrow we will head out of the castle for an important appointment. Meet me in the common room at precisely nine a.m. Sincerely, S. P. Snape.* It had also included a thank-you for the Christmas present that Harry had sent him - which had been a leather-bound journal for journalling new potions or creative use of ingredients.

And Hagrid, well...Harry still didn't know what to make of Hagrid's gift to him. It was a long, carved, wooden flute. And the note had said *Happee Cristmas Harry. I carved it for you meself. Hope you like it!*. Harry wasn't particularly musically inclined, nor was he gifted, but...he appreciated the thought anyway. He'd also received cards from Daphne, Gemma, Robert, Ron, Tony, Morag, Padma, Hannah, Ernie and Justin.

Since he'd sent Daphne, Gemma and Robert tokens of his appreciation - candy - he had expected the cards from them. The others, however, were a bit of a mystery to him. As far as he was aware he'd never spoken to Morag, Padma, Hannah, Ernie or Justin and Ron disliked him entirely. Tony and he, however, had become friendly during the time Harry had spent with Hermione.

Lastly, Draco's mother, Narcissa, had sent him a small package. It contained one beautiful, dark-green knit jumper; a wide black-leather belt that had curious pouches to put stuff in; a small booklet on Pureblood etiquette; and a set of small, silver cuff links. While Harry appreciated the items, and had penned and drawn a beautiful card for her as thanks, he wasn't sure he understood why she'd sent them. He'd get a lot of use out of the perfect-fitting jumper, and he'd read the book but he just couldn't understand why a woman he'd never met would send him such fine items.

Harry carefully put all of his presents in his trunk and locked it. He had breakfast to attend, school work to do, and thank-you notes to write out and send.

****

When he was finished with writing (and sending) thank-you notes and eating breakfast, Harry wandered back down to the Slytherin dorms.

As he entered his room he caught sight of a parchment-wrapped package on his bed. He grabbed it; it was squishy. He sighed inaudibly and opened it. A long column of silver slid out and onto the floor. The material was very soft and sort of fluid. It shimmered.
A moment or two later, Harry noticed the note on the floor. *Your father left this in my possession before he died. It is time it was returned to you. Use it well. A very merry Christmas to you.* The note wasn't signed.

Harry reached for the cloak and put it on.

The cloak covered him from head to toe, with a bit of extra material pooled on the floor. As Harry turned around to look in the mirror, his eyes widened and he stumbled backwards. His body was gone! An invisibility cloak! He grinned excitedly as he took it off and shoved it under his pillow. He'd explore the castle tonight!

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 TBC
The Mirror

Chapter Summary

Harry finds the Mirror of Erised.

Some OOC!Snape here.

'this' is Harry signing. Italics is Harry writing what he's saying and showing it to someone.

This part, Harry & the Mirror, is roughly inspired by Gwyrd Arwar - Book The First by inspredmama.

Harry pulled the cloak tighter around himself as he swept across the entrance hall. He was being far more careful than he felt was warranted -- it's not like there were many people left in the castle over Christmas break anyway. He'd cast a silencing charm on his feet and another charm that would muffle the sound of his breathing. The cloak did the rest - masking the sounds and movements of Harry's body.

He had every intention of going up to the third floor and, once and for all, finding out what Fluffy was guarding under the trapdoor. Hermione had kept him updated each time she'd found out something new from Neville, who had found out tidbits from Ron, Seamus and Dean. The new knowledge was that the three-headed dog was named Fluffy, he was one of Hagrid's pets, and that Hagrid had let slip that someone called Nicolas Flamel was involved in the whole business.

Harry was certain he'd heard the name Nicolas Flamel before, but he couldn't remember where. He'd promised to write to Hermione to tell her if he remembered over the holidays.

Distracted by his thoughts, Harry didn't hear the voices ahead of him until it was almost too late. He careened to a stop only a few scant feet from where Professor Snape was cornering Professor Quirrell. A small part of Harry's brain felt glee at the quivering, afraid Quirrell practically begging Professor Snape to let him go, another part wondered what was going on.

Harry crept backward into an abandoned classroom to eavesdrop and wait them out.

"I am quite aware, Quirinus, of where your loyalties currently lie. I have spoken to the Headmaster about the dangers you pose if you continue to be allowed to teach. I am not unforgiving, and I can be kind, contrary to popular opinion. However, I will not stand for your feeble attempts to put Mr. Potter's life in jeopardy, nor will I abide your attempts to go after the stone. I will stop you, make no mistake!" Severus shoved Professor Quirrell hard and strode away.

Harry's eyes widened. He wasn't wrong about his suspicions about Professor Quirrell! And what stone? What sort of stone was worth protecting by a Cerberus?

As Professor Snape walked past where Harry hovered in the doorway, he looked directly at Harry for a moment. Professor Snape frowned in Harry's direction, put a hand out to feel around and then shook his head and continued walking. Professor Quirrell hurried after Professor Snape after only a few moments.
Harry sighed. He'd almost been caught out of bed, after hours, by not one professor, but two.

Deciding to wait a little longer before heading back to his dormitory, Harry turned around and walked further into the classroom, closing the door behind him.

There, in a corner of the unused, dusty classroom, stood a large, ornate mirror. Harry approached it cautiously.

The inscription, carved around the top of the mirror, read *Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi*. Harry frowned at the inscription for a moment and tried to puzzle out what it meant. After a moment, when he'd had no luck, he looked into the glass.

Harry gasped inaudibly and looked behind him. Seeing no one in the room with him, he looked back into the glass. There, in the glass, were at least a dozen people standing next to and behind him. Harry moved closer and pressed his hands to the glass.

It was clear to Harry, as he looked around the room once more, that the people in the mirror existed only in the mirror. He looked closer at their faces. The man standing next to him placed his hand on Harry's shoulder, as did the woman standing on his other side. Harry sighed.

The man and Harry had several features in common -- hair, nose, mouth, and even rounded, dark-framed glasses. Harry looked over at the woman and looked directly into eyes just like his own. Understanding came over him.

'Mom?' 'Dad?' Harry signed.

They blinked at him and nodded.

Harry looked hard at the faces of the other people surrounding him. There were older men with his hair, other women with his eyes. He had the same chin as the woman standing well behind his mother, the same stature as the younger man standing behind his dad. These people were his family. His long dead family members, standing around him.

Harry sank to the floor. He stared at them for a long, long time before heading back to bed.

****

Harry went back to stare into the mirror the next night and the night after that.

On the fourth night, he raced into the classroom without looking and nearly collided with Professor Snape, who was standing, eyes drenched in some emotion Harry couldn't name, staring at the mirror.

"I am very well aware that you are there, Mr. Potter. Remove the spell or disguise, whichever," Professor Snape said softly.

Behind Professor Snape, but out of view of the mirror, Harry removed the cloak and stuffed it in his pocket. He approached the mirror.

"What do you see, Mr. Potter, that would cause you to break the rules for the fourth night in a row?" Severus asked, not unkindly.

Harry turned his head to face Professor Snape directly. 'My family, sir.'

Severus nodded. "A life lived inside a dream prism, is not a life lived, Mr. Potter," he replied
vaguely as his eyes flicked to Harry.

'I understand,' Harry signed.

"Do you?" Severus asked as he backed slowly away from the mirror. "Do you understand what this mirror does?"

'Not really,' Harry signed. 'Shows what we want. What we want most.'

"Not exactly, but I suppose, for a first year, that is close enough," Severus responded. He moved to an unused desk and sat down on top of it.

'What do you see in the mirror, sir?' Harry signed.

Severus flinched. "It is a mirror," he said softly. "Its inscription reads, I show not your face, but your heart's desire...do you see?"

Harry peered at the inscription. He nodded. 'The message is backwards,' he signed.

Severus nodded. "It is quite a personal question, Mr. Potter, but...given our shared history, which I am given to understand you know very little about...I will tell you."

Harry smiled gently at Professor Snape in what he hoped was an encouraging manner.

"I see my best friend. Staring at me, smiling proudly, at peace and happy in the knowledge that I lived to do the right thing, instead of what was easy. I see my best friend, Mr. Potter, who died before I could truly repent. Who perished before she could know just how much I cared for her," Severus said.

Harry frowned, then nodded. 'My mother?' he signed.

"How very perceptive of you, Mr. Potter. Perhaps the hat did not make a mistake after all." With that, Severus rose. "Come. Tomorrow, the mirror will be moved. Do not go looking for it again."

Severus led Harry out of the classroom and all the way to the common room without another word spoken, or signed, between them.

In the common room, Professor Snape put a hand on Harry's arm. "You are not to go looking for the mirror again, do you understand?"

'Yes,' Harry signed.

"If you have trouble sleeping over the next few nights - bad dreams brought on by your experience with the mirror - I want you to come to me, directly. I will help you through this, Mr. Potter. However, I can only help if I know how bad it is," Severus explained.

'Ok,' Harry signed.

Professor Snape straightened and gave Harry an appraising glance. "I believe you overheard my conversation with Professor Quirrell." It was not a question. "In that case, there are a few things you should know so as to not get into any undue trouble. Professor Quirrell is dangerous. Avoid, at all costs, getting a detention with him. It is vital that you not be alone with him at any time."

At Harry's nod, Professor Snape continued. "I have also been made aware that you and your friends have been enquiring after Nicolas Flamel and a certain dog that belongs to Hagrid. It is very important that you, and your friends, cease all activity on that score. It is extremely important, Mr.
Potter, that you heed my warnings and do as I say in this matter. Do I make myself clear?" Severus asked. His voice was cool, his face composed, but Harry could hear the urgency.

"Yes, sir. I understand," Harry signed. 'I will try to do as you say.'

"Some days ago, you missed our appointment. As it was to be your Christmas present, and something the Headmaster as well wanted you to have, I have rescheduled. We will depart in the morning. Be ready at precisely ten o'clock, Mr. Potter," Severus explained.

'Ok,' Harry signed.

"Good. Now, go on up to bed." Professor Snape watched as Harry moved up the stairs. He waited until he heard the dorm-room door close, and then turned on his heel. He had potions to see to and a late-night appointment with the Headmaster.

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TBC
Harry inadvertently discovers who Nicolas Flamel is. Professor Snape takes Harry to Hogsmeade.

For the purposes of this fiction, some artistic-license has been taken with Hogsmeade Village because of what is needed here.

'this' is Harry signing.
In most cases, unless it's a book title or the title of a shop, Italics is Harry writing and handing the note to someone.

The next morning, Harry put on the best of his hand-me-downs and his best student robe. The robe buttoned at the top and zipped at the bottom and was one of his favorites. He pinned on the Gryphon-pin that Professor McGonagall had given him, brushed his teeth and hair and tried to look as smartened up as he could. He was going somewhere with Professor Snape, and it wouldn't do to look dishevelled.

Professor Snape greeted him in the common room with a nod. He then said, "Hold still," and tapped Harry lightly with his wand.

Harry felt a slight buzzing sensation along his skin and hair follicles and, for one brief moment, felt quite dizzy.

"Yes," Professor Snape said. "With a charm as strong as this one, you will feel light headed for quite some time. Nothing to be done about that, it is a necessary precaution."

'What?' Harry signed.

Professor Snape's lips quirked for a second. If Harry hadn't been paying attention, he would have missed the near-smile. "A strong glamour has been applied to you, Mr. Potter," Severus explained. "Take a moment to peer in the looking glass, and then we must be off."

Harry spun around and ran to the mirror on the far side of the common room. He startled badly as he looked at his reflection. His hair was long and blonde, pulled back by a simple band. His scar was gone. His eyes had gone from their bottle-green to an unremarkable brown. His other features were the same, but with these changes, you wouldn't be able to tell he was Harry, much less the Boy Who Lived. He understood at once the need for the precaution, considering Death Eaters still wanted him dead, but he didn't have to like it.

Blonde? Really? I mean...for goodness sake, Professor! Harry scribbled.

"I will address you as Mr. Evans while we are out," Professor Snape explained. "We need to leave now, come with me."

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Professor Snape used side-along apparition, once they were outside of the gate, to whisk both he
and Harry to Hogsmeade. From there, they turned off High Street down a much smaller street and went into a small shop called Sir Fellum's Formal.

"This is our first appointment of the day, Mr. Evans. Afterwards, we have two other errands that must be seen to. As such, I will also treat you to lunch at some point during our day," Severus explained to Harry as he caught the eye of a sales clerk.

"Sir Fellum is expecting us," Severus said to the clerk. "Please see that he is informed that Lord Prince and Mr. Evans have arrived."

The sales clerk nodded and hurried off. A moment later a tall, gangly man who looked to be older than Professor Snape, but younger than the Headmaster, approached Harry and Severus.

"Ah, Severus. Very unhappy about our need to reschedule, but you're here now. The whole lot for Mr. Evans, is it?" Sir Fellum said.

"Yes, Frances," Severus replied. "As he was sorted into Slytherin, he requires the whole lot. When you've finished, he'll need an outfit to wear out. Burn the clothes he's wearing now."

Harry's eyes widened and he stepped back. Burn his clothes?

'Only clothes I have' Harry signed frantically.

"Yes, I am quite aware they are some of the only clothes you currently possess, Mr. Evans," Severus replied. "You will be getting all new ones today. Do not fret."

Harry spent the better part of an hour being measured for trousers, shirts, jackets, hats, gloves, cloaks and even belts. Sir Fellum also assigned him a package of underpants and two packages of socks -- both of which made Harry color in embarrassment.

Once properly measured, Sir Fellum, with the aid of Professor Snape, spent the rest of the morning picking out patterns and fabrics for Harry -- while Fellum had in mind colors and choices for the blonde glamour, Severus rejected them for tones and patterns he knew would look good with Harry's normally dark hair and green eyes.

When they were finished, Harry had an entirely new, fitted wardrobe, but Professor Snape still wasn't done. He added ties, lapel pins, a set of cufflinks, undershirts, pajamas and two wand holsters. He showed Harry the proper way to use each wand holster before sizing the first on his arm and slipping Harry's wand inside it.

Severus handed Harry the second wand-holster and said, "It is up to you whether you want it at your hip or on your leg, but know this -- the best of all Wizards, the Headmaster included, carries at least two wands. Their primary wand, and a back-up. So choose which place fits you best, and start practicing the use of both wands."

'I don't have another one,' Harry signed.

Severus sighed. "I will see to it that you do. A family wand will be best. I will speak to the Headmaster about it. There are things you need to know to be a Slytherin, Mr. Evans. Important ideals, ideas and language. It is up to me, and your fellow housemates, to teach you." Professor Snape paid Sir Fellum for the clothes, items and the delivery to Hogwarts, then selected a complete outfit for Harry to wear for the rest of the day. "Go change. Apply a freshening charm to both yourself and the clothes. Leave those...rags..on the chair inside the changing room, Mr. Evans," he instructed Harry.
As Harry did as instructed, Severus pulled a slightly-worn pocket watch from his pocket and checked the time. He nodded. "A bit later than I had hoped," he muttered.

"Well, there was a lot of work to be done. You weren't kidding when you said he needed everything," Frances said as he cleaned up his shop and the debris from the morning.

"No. I rarely ever speak in jest," Severus replied.

Frances gave a large, genuine smile. "I know," he said.

Harry emerged a few moments later. He wore deep-green trousers, thin brown socks, an off-white v-neck t-shirt under a pale-cream, button-up cardigan and a short, two-pocketed brown blazer. It was completed by a brown belt that completely matched the color of both the socks and the blazer. He wiggled his toes in the silky-feeling socks and grinned.

"When you purchased items for the school year," Severus asked. "Did you purchase more than one pair of formal shoes?"

Harry shook his head.

"We will need to owl-order shoes, then. A few pairs of different styles, and a pair of boots," Severus said to Frances, who nodded. "Can you take young Mr. Evans' proper shoe size, Frances?"

"No need, it'll be on file at Diagon Alley, with Madam Malkin, yes? I'll just floo-call her for the details. Didn't she try to outfit you, Mr. Evans?" Frances asked.

Harry nodded. I didn't think I needed that many clothes. It seemed like a lot, like a waste. I didn't think I'd need all this.

"I see," Professor Snape replied. "For now, get back into the shoes you came in with. Then, put on your student-robe, but leave it unbuttoned. When you are quite finished, we will go. We have another appointment quite soon." He turned to discuss shoes with Sir Fellum.

Harry hurried to comply and, when he was finished, he looked around the changing room to be certain he hadn't forgotten anything. He patted his pockets -- moneybag, muggle school ID card, Wizard Card, and the tiny tin of breath-mints were all accounted for.

***

Professor Snape led them out of the shop, across High Street and down another smaller street. He opened the door of a shop whose sign just said **Oculist In** and ushered Harry inside.

"Professor Snape!" A small woman exclaimed as she hurried over to greet them.

"Healer Alondron, good to see you. Mr. Evans requires a full work-up, including at least three pairs of frames with one for formal-use," Professor Snape replied.

"For the millionth time, Professor, you may call me Antonia," Healer Alondron replied. "We were friendly, once upon a time." She winked at Harry and then offered him a smile. "Mr. Evans, come right this way, we'll get you fixed up in no time."

"What?" Harry signed. He was feeling rather alarmed. *Get me fixed up how, I don't need another healer, I promise!* Harry shoved the note at Professor Snape, who sighed.

"Healer Alondron is an Oculist, Mr. Evans," Severus said patiently. "She will be providing you
with an eye-examination and a prescription for lenses that actually work, they will also provide some correction to your eyesight. Additionally, you will choose which frames you would like." Professor Snape crossed his arms. "Go with her. Now. She is here to help you, not to hurt you."

Harry trudged along after Healer Alondron. The exam took only a few minutes and, with a roll of parchment in hand, Antonia dashed into a back room to work on Harry's lenses.

Meanwhile, Harry and Severus looked through the dozens of frames on offer.

"We will lunch after this," Professor Snape said softly. "There is one more errand on our way back to the castle, which will take us to High Street, which I am sure you will like."

In the end, they picked out two frames. One was thin, slightly squarish and black for everyday wear. The next were square, slight and dark-grey, for formal wear. The last were Harry's original frames, which were resized and fit with the new prescription and given back to him to be used as a backup pair.

Professor Snape paid for the visit, the lenses and the frames, and then they were on their way once more. Antonia handed him a little bag with the three cases, two of which held Harry's glasses, and a little booklet about cleaning and care inside.

Harry slipped the new black-framed glasses onto his face and blinked owlishly for a moment. 'The world is so clear now,' he signed.

Professor Snape frowned. "The world is what now?"

Harry sighed inaudibly. He'd forgotten that while Professor Snape knew a lot of sign-language, he was a little rusty. 'Clear,' Harry finger-spelled.

Professor Snape nodded. "We'll lunch at the Three Broomsticks. They do a good fish and chips and things of that nature. You may have whatever you want on the menu as far as food is concerned, but I do not recommend the stew," he said as he led them into the pub.

***

The each dined on fish and chips and had tall mugs of water besides. The air was close, but cool, the room dark, but lively with the sound of music and voices from other patrons.

Harry decided, then and there, that he loved the Three Broomsticks.

After lunch, Rosmerta came over to their table to chat with Professor Snape for a few moments. Before she left, she handed Harry a chilled, stoppered bottle and a single chocolate frog packet. "You have both those when you get back up to the castle," she said kindly.

Harry blinked, smiled and waved in her general direction before slipping the chocolate frog into his pocket. He looked confusedly at the bottle.

"It is a sweet, slightly spicy, fizzy drink known as butterbeer, Mr. Evans," Professor Snape explained.

'Did she know who I was?' Harry signed.

"Quite likely," Severus replied moodily. "The Three Broomsticks is enchanted to displace charms and glamours while you are here. Do not worry, the glamour is merely shuffled to the side to
anyone who looks at you quite closely. It is still there." Professor Snape rose. "We need to be
going, we have one more stop to make and the day has been very long."

Harry followed Professor Snape out dutifully.

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Professor Snape led them down High Street to Scrivenshaft's Quill Shop and they went inside.

"Your penmanship is atrocious," Severus said by way of explanation. "You have done extremely
well on the practical work - preparing potions, and in your wand work in your other classes, but
your essays and written assignments are abysmal. Clearly, you need assistance."

Harry expelled a breath, then rubbed a hand over his face. I don't....I've never written with a quill
before, it's hard and...and...foreign to me!

"I am very aware of that, Mr. Evans," Severus said as he glanced at the note. "Which is why I will
now attempt to correct the problem. I have viewed some of the notes you take for your classes.
They are well-done, but as we both know you cannot submit assignments done in a muggle pen. It
is not acceptable, and quite difficult to write on parchment with one."

Severus led Harry down the aisles and picked out a selection of ink, parchment paper and a slim
book before bringing it all up to the check-out counter and handing it over the the young woman
who sat behind it.

"Is this all, dears?" she said softly as she totalled up the purchases in a small ledger.

"Yes, thank you," Professor Snape replied.

"First time at Hogwarts is it?" she asked Harry.

Harry nodded politely.

"Well, you can't get much better than this book on quill-writing, if you're a wizard or a muggle-
born, dears," she said.

Harry nodded again.

"Doesn't speak much, does he?" she commented, not unkindly.

"He is mute," Professor Snape offered as he accepted their purchases and ushered Harry out of the
shop.

"I will remove the glamour," Professor Snape said quietly. "When we have gotten back on
Hogwarts' soil."

Harry nodded in acknowledgment.

They walked back to the castle.

***

Harry put his new possessions (ink, paper, book, glasses, pajamas, a few other clothes items) away
carefully. He'd been informed that all the other clothes would be arriving by owl over the next few
days, and that Professor Snape expected him to have the first three exercises in How To Write
Beautifully With a Quill and Ink done before midday tomorrow.
He set the still-cold butterbeer and the as-yet unopened chocolate frog on his bedside table and hung his blazer up tidily in his armoire. Each boy had a small bookshelf, an armoire, a four-poster curtained bed, a bench at the foot of the bed, a shoe rack, two bedside tables and their trunks and pet cages in their assigned area.

The round study area held two desks and desk-chairs, a bookshelf half-full of books that could prove handy for whatever assignments were being done, four over-stuffed armchairs, a coffee table in front of them and, standing against one wall, was a squat cold-cupboard.

Harry had discovered the cold-cupboard worked like a muggle refrigerator and was currently stocked with water, juice, milk, lemons, apples and cheese. On top of it sat some bowls and plates. Next to it, a small table held cups and silverware as well as the makings for a cup of tea. He'd also found that occasionally it held potions that needed to be kept cold, and that his years mates often kept tasty treats inside as well, depending on what they'd been sent from home.

Harry took the butterbeer and the chocolate frog and put them on the coffee table. He then went back to his armoire, pulled out one pair of his new pajamas and grabbed his shower stuff. He took a long shower, dried himself very well, brushed his teeth and slipped into the cotton pajamas. He hadn't wanted a dressing gown, he just couldn't figure out why anyone would want to go to sleep in something that looked like a dress.

He tossed his clothes in the hamper, knowing full well that a house-elf would have them cleaned and pressed and hanging in his armoire by morning. He hadn't seen a house-elf yet, but Draco had told him about them -- and that he'd be unlikely to see one unless he owned one. Harry was okay with that, he was just curious if they looked as odd as Draco had said.

He flopped down in his favorite of the four armchairs, popped open the butterbeer and took a tentative sip. His eyes widened. Sweet and fizzy. Not certain he liked it, he set it down and opened the chocolate frog.

As it gave its one hop, he turned to look at the card. Dumbledore, again, he thought. Then he blinked and looked at the card again. He'd found him! He'd promised Professor Snape that he and his friends would stop looking but....he'd found him! Nicolas Flamel was mentioned on the Headmaster's chocolate frog card!

**ALBUS DUMBLEDORE ~ CURRENTLY HEADMASTER OF HOGWARTS**

*Considered by many the greatest wizard of modern times, Dumbledore is particularly famous for his defeat of the Dark wizard Grindelwald in 1945, for the discovery of the twelve uses of dragon’s blood, and his work on alchemy with his partner, Nicolas Flamel. Professor Dumbledore enjoys chamber music and ten-pin bowling.*

Harry rubbed his hands together. His face fell. Should he tell his friends, or keep his word to Professor Snape?

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TBC
Chapter Summary

Harry learns something about Severus Snape & learns an important lesson about trust.

****Theodore Nott. I've made him different than in books. Here he's olive-skinned and of Jewish-Wizard descent. Okay? Thanks for going along with that, it's important to me to represent other cultures besides just christian & white.

***Re-written Severus and Lily's history just a tad. I needed to in order to set up an important plot-point later.

The holiday break went by quickly after that and soon enough the students and teachers were all back at Hogwarts. Classes would resume the very next day.

"I still find it hard to believe that you really came across the Mirror of Erised, Harry," Draco said that evening.

Harry, Draco, Theo and Blaise were sitting in the over-stuffed armchairs in the sitting room area of their dormitory. It was Harry's turn to tell the other boys how his Christmas holiday had gone. He'd finished telling them about the clothes shopping and the mirror and was still undecided about whether to tell them about Nicolas Flamel.

'It's true,' Harry signed.

Draco sighed. "I'd love to see my heart's true desire. That would be amazing information to have about oneself."

"It's great that you got to seem them, your parents, but better that Professor Snape made you promise not to go looking for the mirror again. Brave men, and women, have wasted away in front of it. It's dangerous," Theo said.

Taking the attention off of Harry, Theo went on to describe how his Chanukah had gone, what he'd gotten, and that he and his father had gone to the family mausoleum to visit his mother. He'd smiled gently, but sadly, at Harry at that point.

"Over the summer, you should see if the Headmaster, or Professor Snape, can take you to visit your parents graves Harry. I know you've never been. I find it to be very comforting, going to visit now. I didn't at first. Her death was horrible, you see. But now...it's nice. My father takes me, leaves me there for an hour or so and I talk to her about my life. It's nice. Every holiday season," Theo explained.

I don't think I'm allowed. I'm not sure they'd let me go. Besides, why would Professor Snape know where my parents are buried? Harry wrote.

"I thought you might not be aware," Blaise offered. "Professor Snape was good friends with your mother, for a time."

'I know,' Harry signed. While they were in school, yeah. Why would he know where they were
"Everyone is aware of what cemetery the Potters are buried in, Harry," Draco said snootily. "It is a well-known fact from the War. What is not known, is where exactly their graves are."

'Yes,' Harry signed. So...why would Professor Snape know?

"Oh for Merlin's sake," Theo said finally. "It's no big secret. He's mentioned in her obituary, Harry." Theo ran over to Harry's side-table and grabbed the album that Harry kept there. He flipped through it and returned to the chair he'd been sitting it. "Survived by son Harry James Potter, sister Petunia Evans and best friend Severus Prince," he read. He pointed to the article. "Hadn't you read all of this yet?"

Er...no. I had a lot going on, I'd only gotten through the first few pages, Theo, Harry wrote.

"Professor Snape is of the Prince line. Last remaining heir," Draco said quietly. "It would make sense they'd put him down that way. They would not want 'Severus Prince' associated with Death Eater 'Severus Snape,'" he finished.

Professor Snape isn't a Death Eater! Harry scribbled angrily.

"I'm sorry, Harry. I thought you knew," Theo said as he shut the book and handed it to Harry.


Harry's eyes widened. 'Why?' he signed.

"The Dark Lord promised a lot to his followers," Draco said. "He probably gave Professor Snape a place to belong when Professor Snape had none. You see, Harry, Professor Snape was not a believer in blood-purity back in those days, nor is there any proof he is now. According to my father, the Dark Lord promised each of his followers, in the early days, something they needed. Not just wanted, but a real need. It is how he got such loyalty from them. Until he didn't."

Did Professor Snape betray Lord WhatsIt? Harry frowned as he handed the note to Draco.

"Uh, not as far as I am aware. But, I would not really know. That is about all I do know, Harry. My father does not like to discuss it and I have never heard Professor Snape speak of it directly either. I have gleaned a lot from eavesdropping and from books," Draco explained.

At Harry's nod, Blaise began talking about his holiday and then it was Draco's turn. They passed the evening like that, talking about the break and what they hoped the new term would be like.

Later, much later, the boys went their separate ways and got ready for bed.

As he was getting into bed, Theo whispered, "I'm very happy for you about your new clothes and glasses, Harry. You look quite smart. It was good of Professor Snape to take you, if he hadn't, we'd have all petitioned him to let someone -- at least to get glasses that actually work."

"You do look quite the part now, Harry. Very Slytherin. It is very nice, you fit in better now. Not that you didn't before," Draco said.

"Leave him alone you guys. Let's all just get some sleep. The next several weeks will be very busy," Blaise added.
Harry smiled into the darkened room. He liked having friends, and he enjoyed that they'd noticed he looked more like one of them. Originally, he'd been afraid of being sorted into Slytherin, but...they were just as loyal, if not more, than anyone else and, besides, they seemed to accept the things about him that made him the most odd. They accepted he'd not been treated well by the Dursleys, but didn't push. They accepted he was mute, and even worked hard to learn ASL to make communication easier. And they stood up for him. He rolled over and, snuggling into his pillow, fell asleep.

****

*Harry,*

*I've sent similar letters to both Neville and Ron. I know it isn't such a good idea to clue Ron in, but right before the holiday he was saying the most ridiculous things imaginable. And, after all, knowledge is the best of weapons.*

*Nicolas Flamel is the only known maker of the Philosopher's Stone! That's what Fluffy is guarding. That's what's under the trapdoor.*

*The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with making the Philosopher's Stone, a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The Stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal.*

*Since it's used to create the Elixir of Life, it stands to reason that whoever is after the stone isn't after it for altruistic reasons. We all have to be very careful!! It could be anyone! Ron's guess is Professor Snape, but with what you've told me recently, Harry, my guess is Professor Quirrell. But...what's he planning to do with it??? We've got to tell someone, a teacher, anyone who can take this on. We're eleven year olds! We can't possibly fend of an adult wizard and live to tell the tale.*

*What do you suggest!*

*Love from,*

*Hermione*

The letter from Hermione burst into flames at a gentle nudge from Harry's wand. The Slytherins around him, at breakfast, gave him suspicious looks before returning to their plates and conversations.

Harry cringed. He hadn't told any of his friends about the Nicolas Flamel connection, but he wasn't altogether surprised that Hermione had spent her holidays solving the mystery.

Harry pushed back from the table, completely uninterested, now, in his breakfast. He nudged both Draco and Theo, who'd been sitting next to him. 'Need to talk to Professor Snape. I will try to be on time for class.'

Theo rose. "I'll go with you, Harry."

Harry shook his head. 'No. Stay. Have breakfast.'

He looked up at the High Table and caught Professor Snape's eyes. 'Need to talk. Very important. Stone. Flamel.' he signed quickly.

Professor Snape's eyes widened slightly, but he pushed back from the table and glided out of the Great Hall. Harry followed him down to the dungeons.
"Did I or did I not," Professor Snape began once they were ensconced in his office. "Specifically state that you and your friends were to stop researching Nicolas Flamel?"

'You did, sir' Harry signed.

"Then what, pray tell, possessed you to figure out who Nicolas Flamel is and connect that to the stone?" Severus asked acidly.

_I let it go. I didn't tell anyone. Hermione figured it out and sent me a letter about it. She wants my suggestions on what to do. She believes no student could go up against an adult wizard, but she's convinced Quirrell is after the stone, sir!_

Severus read the note quickly. His face shut down. He rubbed the bridge of his nose. "Miss Granger is a foolish girl. I think it would be wise if you stopped your association with her. No," Severus said at Harry's hurt look. "That is not a command. Merely a suggestion. Did she propose going to a teacher?"

'Yes.'

"Quirrel is after the stone," Severus said at last. "But not for himself."

It took Harry a long moment, but when he figured it out, he looked up into Severus's face with an expression of horror. "Voldemort?" he fingerspelled.

"Yes. Do not sign the name either, Mr. Potter," Professor Snape replied. "There is such a thing as taboo-magic. If a wizard attached a taboo-spell to his own name, that name, if spoken or signed, Mr. Potter, could trigger disastrous things to happen to the person who had spoken it."

'I understand.' Harry fidgeted. 'I will try to not sign it anymore.'

"Good." Severus paced his small office. "As for Miss Granger...I will take care of it. You need to tell her to back down, and that she needs to get any other students she's told to back off as well. I will...check on the stone, Mr. Potter. I have already informed the Headmaster that Quirrell is after it, he does not believe me," he explained. "Or wishes not to. This is a very delicate situation. We must proceed with caution."

'Ok," Harry signed.

"Get to class. I will write you a note, try to not be late again." He wrote a note quickly on a slip of parchment and handed it to Harry. "We can discuss this more thoroughly tonight, after dinner, if I am not overseeing a detention," Severus said.

Harry grabbed the note and slipped out of the office.

***************

TBC
They met that night in Professor Snape's classroom.

Ron Weasley, Seamus Finnigan, Dean Thomas, Neville Longbottom, Hermione Granger and Harry Potter. The top lion stared at Harry resentfully, while Seamus looked nervous and Dean looked intrigued. Neville was looking at the floor as though something interesting was carved into it. Hermione sat, completely poised, on a stool -- she'd dragged several into a semi-circle around Professor Snape's desk. Harry stood to the right of the desk and crossed his arms.

"What are we doing here? This is mental. I'm not staying in this dank and dark room to wait for that greasy git!" Ron growled.

*Watch your tongue, Weasley,* Harry wrote. *He's a professor at this school, and my Head of House besides.*

"I don't take orders from you, Potter," Ron said darkly.

"Both of you just shut it," Seamus muttered. "We're in enough trouble as it is."

"C'mon, Shay, it'll be fine," Dean added.

"It won't be if you three can't mind the rules," Hermione said in a sing-song voice.

"Lovely," Professor Snape said as he entered his classroom and closed the door. "Some of the loudest, most inelegant, most likely to cause a ruckus Gryffindors imaginable are caught up in this plot. Won't this be fun?" He spelled the door - casting both locking and silencing charms. He stalked over to his desk.

*Professor Snape, I've gathered everyone here so we could talk about the....real foolishness that's been going on in regards to the stone,* Harry explained.

"I am well aware, Mr. Potter, that we are in this situation because of the stone," Severus replied.

"How do you know about the stone?" Ron said loudly as his face turned pink.

"I didn't realize how dangerous knowing about it could be," Hermione offered. "So, when I discovered the links, I sent word to Ron, Neville and Harry to make sure they were as informed as I was. I didn't know You-Know-Who was after it. I swear."

"Wait, what?" Seamus said. "What does...You-Know-Who have to do with this?"
He's after the stone, Harry scribbled. And the three of you will likely lead him to it if you don't drop it.

"If you do not leave well enough alone, if you do not step back and stop attempting to solve the mystery, you will end up in the Dark Lord's clutches, or worse, you will end up dead and your Head of House and the Headmaster will be in charge of writing your parents and taking the blame," Severus said icily. "And there will be blame for this, make no mistake."

"We can't just leave the stone for y--for whoever wants to take it though!" Dean burst out.

"That is exactly, Mr. Thomas, what I am asking you to do," Professor Snape said. "Leave it where it is. Do not go after it. Know that it is protected by many, many enchantments and spells. It is safe only so long as you all leave it alone."

Harry nodded.

"I agree to leave it where it is, Professor," Hermione said softly.

"Me too," said Neville.

"Then the two of you may go," Professor Snape said. "One word of caution, Miss Granger. While knowledge is a powerful weapon indeed, in the wrong hands knowledge can be the thing that destroys all. The next time you go looking for the answers to a puzzle that has nothing to do with you, bear in mind the risk, the danger, that giving away those answers has. And, Mr. Longbottom?"

Neville risked a glance at Professor Snape. "Yes, sir?" he squeaked.

"Standing up to your friends, in cases such as these, proves you have high character. Going along with them, and shuffling behind them as they take their lives into their own hands, does not prove character, only foolishness," Professor Snape finished. He unlocked the door and ushered both Hermione and Neville out of the room.

He closed and re-spelled the door behind them. "And you?" he addressed Seamus, Dean and Ron.

"I'm not giving up," Ron said petulantly. "The stone isn't safe, no matter what you say! Sir," he added.

"Pity, I thought we might get by without having to call in your parents. No? Well. We do what we must," Severus replied.

Ron cringed.

"Listen," Seamus said. "My da wouldn't understand a word of this anyway. And it was fun, while it lasted, hunting, looking for clues and the like...but I don't want to be in any more trouble and I'm not interested in going after the stone. Alright?"

"Very well," Professor Snape responded. "And you, Mr. Thomas?"

Dean placed his hands on his hips while he considered all the information. "I'm not bloody well going through a trapdoor into what must be complete darkness and a host of magic -- I'd probably never come out alive, sir," he replied. "I'll drop it. Leave it be."

"Good. That just leaves Mr. Weasley. The two of you may go. Understand, however, that you will both be watched. If you attempt to travel near the corridor on the third floor, you will be stopped. If
you attempt, through planning and subterfuge, to go after the stone, you will be stopped. Hogwarts is the safest place for the stone right now. You have given your word, and now you must keep it," Professor Snape said.

Professor Snape let them out of the classroom and then marched back to tower over Ron.

"I understand Gryffindors live to be brave little lions, and so really, you leave me no choice. I am going to have you confined to the hospital wing until further notice. You will come down with a very lengthy illness," Severus decided. "It will hurt. It will be miserable. It will take weeks. And since there are only four weeks left to the term, in any case, I doubt you will be much missed."

'Professor,' Harry began.

"Enough, Mr. Potter. You are not entirely blameless in this matter. If you had come to me, or to another professor, when you first suspected these little idiots knew about the trapdoor, we might have avoided this outcome," Severus said sharply.

Harry winced. It wasn't untrue, so there was nothing he could say or do in reply. He stared wordlessly at Ron.

Professor Snape grabbed a vial of potion off his desk. "This is a rare strain of Gepsum Toxin. When ingested, it causes fever, chills, the inability to speak for a temporary period of time, hallucinations and other symptoms. It is not easily detected as a toxin, but instead introduces itself to the body and the central nervous system as a complicated flu. One vial, down the hatch, Mr. Weasley and our greatest problem right now --you-- will be solved," he said.

"No! You can't do that! You're a teacher! You'll get in loads of trouble!" Ron cried.

"If traced back to me, yes, I imagine I will. It is of no matter. What must be done, to ensure the safety of the school and its students, will be done," Professor Snape replied as he took a step towards Ron.

Ron whipped out his wand and held it at Professor Snape. "Don't come near me!" he yelled. Tears welled in his eyes. "I w-won't! I w-won't say anything, I swear. I won't g-go looking f-for the s-stone!"

Professor Snape smiled thinly and placed the vial back on his desk. "There, now, was that so difficult? You have given your oath, of that which you cannot break," he said quietly. "All over a little vial of pepper-up."

"Waa..what!?" Ron exclaimed.

Professor Snape's eyes glinted. "Yes. You see, the threat was enough. You may go." He unlocked and un-spelled the door.

As Ron swept past them, Harry looked over and grinned at Professor Snape.

'That was brilliant, sir,' Harry signed.

Professor Snape blinked once at Harry and then nodded slowly. "Off to bed with you, now," he said.

As Harry left, Severus sighed. He might come to care for the boy, his father's looks be damned, after all.
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TBC
Chapter Summary

The students sit their exams.

Harry and Hermione talk to Hagrid -- Hagrid introduces them to Norbert (who goes unnamed in this fic).

'this' is Harry signing.

Italics is Harry writing down what he wants to say and showing it to someone.

I have moved some electives up to Second Year, while others will remain third-year electives.

The following additional (2nd years and up) courses have been added to the curriculum in my fic:

Rights and Rituals -- taught by Professor Zabini
Art -- magical and muggle art -- taught by Professor Burbage
Law and Government -- Wizarding laws and government -- taught by Professor Blakely

The next two weeks went by in a blur.

There were exams to study for, classes to attend, a Quidditch match (Gryffindor beat Hufflepuff and would move on to play Ravenclaw), homework to complete and Harry had nightly lessons with his housemates about being a Slytherin and other pureblood etiquette.

At the end of the third week, it was exam time. The results of their exams wouldn't be announced until the day before all the students left for the summer holidays -- which would give the students enough time to pick out an elective for their second-year term. It was rumored that the Headmaster had hired at least three new teachers and that one of them was Blaise's mother. Harry looked forward to finding out, since he fully intended, if his marks were high enough, to take her course on Ritual magic.

Exams took place Wednesday, Thursday and Friday in accordance with the classes held on those days. Wednesday held the Magical Theory examination, then the exams for History of Magic, Herbology and Muggle Skills Course A. On Thursday, they would sit examinations for Charms, Defense Against the Dark Arts, Muggle Skills Course B and Transfiguration. On Friday, they would take their exams for Wizard and Witch Customs & Traditions, Potions, Muggle Skills Course C and Astronomy.

There were some examinations that were moved around based on the mix of written and practical and how much time it would take. Potions, for example, was held on Friday because it required a long brewing time, instead of on Wednesday when they would have had the actual class.

There would be no more practical classes -- the final week of school would be dedicated to make-up exams, handing in additional homework assignments, rounding up club activities, the final Quidditch game, packing and the school leaving feast on Thursday night. Some students would be sent home with more holiday homework than others. Some students would be picked up a day or
two early by their parents -- those students would have their exam results sent to them by owl.

Harry enjoyed finding out all he could about how the final week of school would go, but he also enjoyed sitting his exams. They were long, and in some cases tedious, but Harry revelled in the fact that he had found a way to perform magic, that he had kept up with his studies and homework for the entire school year, and that he was confident he'd do very well on each exam placed before him -- both the written and the practical.

Harry was determined to do well, as were the majority of other Slytherins. They spent the nights studying for the following days' exams and the day of the exams, quizzing each other on details that they were sure to be tested on.

***

On Friday, after examinations were all over, Harry, Theo, Draco, Blaise, Millie, Emma, Hermione and Neville lounged by the Black Lake.

Suddenly, Hermione sat up and got Harry's attention.

'What?' he signed as Hermione dragged him away from the group.

"Hagrid is the only one who knows how to get past Fluffy! Not even Professor Snape knew, Harry!" she said enthusiastically.

_Hermione, we'd dropped this. We shouldn't be mucking about in it. Come on, let's go back to the others and lay on the cool grass and decompress from a very long week._

"No, no you don't understand!" Hermione insisted. "How is Quirrell going to get past Fluffy? Only Hagrid knows! He's your friend, we've got to go and speak with him! He could have told Quirrell by accident!"

Harry frowned. He didn't want to go and talk to Hagrid about Fluffy and the stone because he was certain it would only get him into trouble. But, he could see Hermione's point.

'Okay,' he signed and then he let her drag him back up the hill. They walked for a while, up the hill and then down a smaller one, until they came to the levelled out area where Hagrid's house stood.

Hermione knocked loudly on the door.

The door banged open. Hagrid stood in his usual attire, but with both a leather apron and thick gloves added. He smiled pleasantly at them for a moment and then shook his head.

"Sorry," he said cheerfully. "I'm in no fit state to entertain today!"

"Hagrid!" Hermione nearly shouted.

"Hagrid!" Hermione nearly shouted.

He blinked. "Yeah?" he asked sullenly.

"We've got to talk to you about Fluffy. We know Ron, Seamus and Dean have already spoken to you, but we have very specific questions that must be answered! People's safety depends on it!" Hermione said earnestly.

"Alright," Hagrid replied as he stepped back to let them into his hut.

Harry gasped inaudibly. Hagrid's hut was a scorching temperature which made Harry instantly regret coming to see him.
Why's it so hot in here, Hagrid? Harry penned.

Hagrid peered at the note, his eyes slightly unfocused, and then nodded. "Bit warm, I'll give ye that," he replied vaguely.

Hermione sat down in one of the chairs. "Hagrid, have you told anyone how to get past Fluffy?"

"No, 'course not," Hagrid said easily as he sat down near the fireplace.

Harry frowned at the fireplace. The fire was stoked up high, and a cauldron with a lid was directly over the heat. The cauldron was rattling and sputtering and making odd noises that Harry couldn't place. 'What is that?' Harry signed to Hermione.

Hermione shook her head. "What's in the fire, Hagrid?"

Hagrid turned an odd shade of yellow and swallowed hard. "Bit o' laundry, if ye must know," he said irritably.

Harry, who was fairly good at reading people due to his upbringing with the Dursleys, shook his head. He was certain Hagrid was lying. 'Lie,' he signed to Hermione, who nodded.

"Hagrid, really, what is going on?" Hermione asked.

"I've a new pet, is all, nothing ta worry 'bout," Hagrid said. "Just needs a bit of hatchin' and cleanin' up and raisin' right. It'll be right as rain, ye'll see."

"What kind of pet?" Hermione asked.

Hagrid's eyes shifted. His voice dropped to a whisper. His face went a little lax with contentment and wonder. "It's a dragon."

"A dragon?" Hermione squeaked. "They're illegal, Hagrid, to own them as pets!"

"What do you want with a dragon and where'd you get one?" Harry wrote.

Hagrid squinted at the note. "I've always wanted one. Since I was a little boy. Bought him off a bloke I met down at the pub," he explained.

Harry's eyes widened.

Hermione made a strangled sound. "We'll need a plan. You can't keep him, Hagrid. He'll burn your house to the ground and...and...they're very dangerous!"

"A dragon's gonna be not much trouble, after Fluffy. Don't ye worry about it, Hermione. It'll be alright," Hagrid replied.

"It won't," Hermione responded. She looked wildly around the room for a moment. "There are dragon preserves. Reservations exclusive to a dragon's habitat and needs. I've read about them. He'll be with his own kind, Hagrid!"

Let's leave him alone, Harry scribbled. He needs some time to deal with this, clearly. What I'd like to know, honestly...is who goes around with dragon eggs in their pockets?

"That's a very good question Harry. It is suspicious," Hermione said and then she looked at Hagrid. "Did you see who sold you the egg?"
"Kept his hood up. Now, if ye two don't mind, I've got other stuff to see to today. Best be off," Hagrid said.

Hermione rose, but she still looked upset.

***

Once outside, after Hagrid had shut the door behind them, Hermione turned to Harry.

"I'm going to tell Professor Dumbledore. He'll know what to do. We need to keep Hagrid out of trouble. He could end up in Azkaban Prison, if he maintains a dragon as a pet," she explained.

*He told me he'd always wanted a dragon, but how did anyone else know he'd be keen to buy one? And who sold it to him?*

"I don't know, Harry. But, first things first. We've got to save Hagrid from himself. Then, we can try to figure out if Quirrell knows how to get past Fluffy," Hermione replied.

'Yes,' Harry signed.

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Later that night, Hermione cornered him just outside of the Great Hall.

"The plan is all worked out," she whispered. "The Headmaster was very helpful. He'll smuggle the dragon to Charlie Weasley, who is a Dragon Keeper. That'll keep Hagrid out of danger."

Harry nodded. 'Good,' he signed.

Hermione grinned. "It's brilliant really. The Headmaster believed me and set out straight away to help Hagrid. It's kind of sweet, really."

*So now we just need to make Professor Snape aware that Quirrell might know how to get past Fluffy, Harry wrote. But after that, Hermione, we stay out of it. Well out. We're already too involved, again!*

"I completely agree, Harry," Hermione said.

'Good,' he signed.

"Are you looking forward to the summer?" she asked quietly.

'No. Not really,' he signed. 'I like it here.' *Hogwarts is the only real home I've ever known. It'll be sad to leave it."

Hermione tugged Harry forward in a quick hug. "It'll just be for the summer," she said softly.

'I know,' he signed.

They parted ways shortly after -- Hermione to the Ravenclaw tower, Harry to the dungeons.

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TBC
Heads and Tales

Chapter Summary

Quirrell is being possessed by Lord Voldemort. Severus tries to save the day.

Sooner than Harry would have liked, it was the day before the last day of the term. Tonight, they'd have the Leaving Feast and tomorrow, the entire student body and many of the teachers would leave the castle for their summer holidays.

Harry knew he'd be going back to the Dursleys and it wasn't a happy thought. In fact, it made him feel anxious and sad -- like he'd overstay his welcome in the home of a dear friend or like he'd been given a gift that he was being made to return.

"Oh for Merlin's sake!" Hermione cried as she approached him.

'What?' he signed. 'What's going on?'

"Fluffy is lulled to sleep by music, Harry!" Hermione replied. "I only just got back from Hagrid's! He told me all about it, and worse...he did tell that fellow who sold him the dragon egg!"

That's not good. Was it Quirrell? And...did Hagrid talk to you about Norbert?

"He wasn't sure if the man who sold him the egg was Quirrell or not, he couldn't be certain. And yes, we spoke about Norbert. According to Hagrid, Norbert is actually a she, so they're calling her Norberta. And, Hagrid's getting weekly updates about her growing, care and habits. He still wasn't happy about having the Headmaster send her off with Charlie Weasley, but I think he finally understands how much trouble he could have been in," she replied. "What are we going to do about Professor Quirrell?"

"You will do nothing," Professor Snape replied from behind them. "It would do very nicely if you both would please stop discussing delicate matters in the corridors."

"Professor Snape!" Hermione exclaimed in shock. "I'm so sorry sir!"

"Be that as it may, Miss Granger, it is very dangerous for you to be spouting off about Hagrid's affairs or the situation with one of your professors," Professor Snape said unkindly.

'Is everything going to be alright? Will Quirrell get the stone?' Harry signed.

"Everything will be quite fine, Mr. Potter," Severus replied. "Now, the two of you should be off to the Lecture Hall. I am told it is where all First-Year students are to meet for a fascinating lecture this morning."

Harry grabbed Hermione's hand and dragged her off in the direction of the Lecture Hall. The Lecture Hall was on the fourth floor, and in times where there were not any practical courses or lessons to sit, lectures on various magical and Wizard world topics were held. Today, a descendant of Merlin was coming in to speak about ancient times and ancient magic.

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"Professor Quirrell is aware of how to get past Hagrid's beast," Professor Snape said quietly as he stood in front of the Headmaster's desk.

Professor Dumbledore nodded. "I was afraid of that. Hagrid was here only moments ago to tell me the tale. Do you think Professor Quirrell will go after the stone?"

"Tonight, during the Leaving Feast," Severus replied. "I am sure of it."

"Do you think you are up to the task of stopping him?" Dumbledore asked as his eyes twinkled gently.

"It depends, Albus, on whether or not he is, indeed, being possessed by the Dark Lord. If he is, then no. I cannot ruin my cover should the Dark Lord return to power by assaulting him now and keeping Quirrell from the stone," Severus said.

"We cannot let Professor Quirrell get to the stone. We must do whatever is necessary. Maybe young Harry can help us in this matter? He did defeat, or had help defeating, Lord Voldemort as a baby," Dumbledore said.

"Absolutely not! He's a child under my charge, Albus! He is an eleven year-old boy! He hasn't the magical strength to take on Quirrell!" Severus argued.

"Ah, but, it is not Quirrell that concerns me, Severus. Lord Voldemort is the one we need to be worried about in this case," Albus replied.

Severus's eyes narrowed. His breathing slowed. In a deadly quiet voice he said, "You will not pit a child against the Dark Lord, Albus."

Dumbledore blinked. "We may not have a choice."

"I will do what I can to protect the boy," Severus replied. "Even if I am protecting him from you."

As Severus fled the office, Dumbledore smiled and tapped his fingers together. "We shall see," he said softly.

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That night, half-way through the Leaving Feast, Severus approached Harry.

"Mr. Potter," he said dully. "Come with me."

Nearly finished with his food, Harry just nodded and rose from the table. He checked to make sure his wand was still in place, and followed Professor Snape out of the Great Hall.

While Severus's intentions were to keep Harry well away from Quirrell, he could not know what would befall them next.

As Severus led them through the corridor to the stairs that would lead them to the Dungeons, a strange screaming echoed up from the dungeons below.

"Draw your wand, Mr. Potter," Severus said as he drew his wand.

Harry did as he was told as they made their way down the steps.

"The enchantments that keep the stone protected," Severus explained. "Are beneath the school. The trapdoor opens to a drop-down of several feet. It is a long fall, and Professor Sprout has protected it
well with Devil's Snare. However, it can be gotten through. Obviously."

They moved through the halls, towards the Slytherin dorms.

'The spells are under the school?' Harry signed.

"Yes. Not exactly in my dungeons, but...to the left of them. If we encounter Professor Quirrell, and he has the stone, you are to run in the opposite direction regardless of myself. Do you understand, Mr. Potter?" Severus asked.

'Yes, yes,' Harry signed.

"Good. Come now, quickly. I want you to wait in the common room until I send word," Severus said.

In that moment a figure rushed towards them.

"Ahhhh...Ssssseverus," a low voice said.

Severus gasped and grabbed his left forearm. 'Go,' he signed to Harry. 'Run.'

Harry needed no other direction. He ran back the way they had come, heading for the stairs.

Professor Quirrell glided towards Severus, but his body was wrong. He was walking backwards.

Severus cringed inwardly at the ghoulish, garrish face peering out from the back of Professor Quirrell's head.

Ever the competent spy, Severus gave a slight smirk. "My lord?" he asked.

"Sssssseverus. Sssssso kind of you to bring the boy. He is needed. We only just escaped the chambers! I must have the boy, Sssssseverus!" Lord Voldemort said.

"You escaped the chambers, sir?" Severus asked politely.

"Of Course! They were no match for me! Quirrell certainly had trouble, but, he had my help. A loyal subject, is Quirrell," Voldemort replied.

Harry, who had been heading eagerly towards the stairs, paused in his escape. What was Professor Snape doing? Why weren't they fighting? He turned around and headed back.

"Silly boy," Voldemort drawled as Harry got closer. "Doesn't know when to run when that's what's best for him. No survival instincts. How, how did you defeat me?"

"We'll never know," Severus replied icily. He spared a quick glance at Harry and used his left hand, down by his side, to sign 'Run.'

"Now the boy!" Voldemort said as Quirrell turned back around.

Quirrell's eyes were nearly black, his face was lax as though he'd been sleeping. After a moment, he snapped back and stood up straight. He reached for Harry. "Come here, boy!" he yelled. "My master needs you to help him get to the stone!"

Harry's body lurched forwards as Quirrell grabbed him. But, Harry wasn't going down without a fight and he shoved back.
Quirrell howled in pain as Harry's hands connected with Quirrell's face.

Harry frowned and shoved again. Quirrell cried out in pain again. Harry grinned wickedly and advanced on the older wizard.

"What magic is this!" Quirrell cried. "Master I cannot touch him! It burns! It hurts!"

Harry surged forward and used every part of his hands to grip Quirrell's face. Whatever was going on was too much for Quirrell. Tears streamed down his battered face. Wailing, he collapsed onto the cold, stone floor.

Harry stepped back just in time. Lord Voldemort's soul vacated Quirrell's body an instant later.

Severus Snape caught Harry as he passed out.

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TBC
Harry blinked slowly. The room was quiet, the air soft, a light breeze blew over him from what he assumed was an open window somewhere.

'Infirmary,' he finger-spelled.

"Good morning, Harry," Professor Dumbledore said gently.

Harry rubbed his face and looked around. The Headmaster sat in the chair next to his bed. On the tray in front of him were a selection of cards and sweets, as well as a glass of water, a glass of orange juice and two potion vials.

"You're to take those as soon as you wake, my boy," Dumbledore said kindly.

Harry reached out for them. He unstoppered the little vials and took them one after the other, then gulped down the glass of water. He picked up the juice and sipped at it for a moment before putting it back down.

'What's going on?'

"He'd like to know what's going on," said a soft, feminine voice.

Harry looked around wildly. It took him a moment, but finally he saw the woman - she must have been in her twenties - sitting in a chair on the other side of the room.

'I don't need an interpreter,' he signed to her.

'You do,' she signed back. 'Dumbledore doesn't know ASL and your notebook is back in your room with your other things.'

Harry sighed and then nodded. He turned to look at the Headmaster. 'Did Quirrell get the stone?'

"Did Quirrell get the stone?" the woman parroted as she moved to stand next to Harry, opposite where Dumbledore sat.

'My name is Meara,' she signed to Harry. 'I am assigned to you, in cases such as these.'

Harry nodded, then looked anxiously at Professor Dumbledore for his answer.
"No, my dear boy. It was never in his grasp. And, more to the point, you saved us from Lord Voldemort by your act of bravery. It is a wonder the hat didn't put you in Gryffindor," the Headmaster replied.

'Does the whole school know what happened?' Harry signed.

"Does the whole school know what happened?" Meara asked.

"What happened in the dungeons between you and Professor Quirrell is a complete mystery. So, naturally...the whole school knows. Your friends, who are largely responsible for the pile of sweets displayed here, have been quite worried about you. You passed out due to stress, anxiety and the amount of magic used to defeat both Professor Quirrell and Lord Voldemort. You missed the Leaving Feast, but will be well enough to see your friends off this afternoon," Dumbledore said.

'Is Professor Snape alright?'

"Is Professor Snape alright?" Meara asked.

"I am glad you asked. He....was anxious that he may have frightened you. He is just fine. I trust you understand that the situation with him is more complicated than it may have appeared, and it would not be wise, it would not do, to tell your friends about his interactions with Voldemort," Dumbledore replied.

'Yes,' Harry signed. 'Can you tell me....is he a spy?'

"Yes," Meara said. "Can you tell me...is he a spy?"

Dumbledore's eyes cut sharply to Meara, whose facial expression must have told him what he needed to know because a moment later, he nodded. "We'll not speak of it. Dangerous times lay ahead Harry, dangerous times. Now, have you any more questions?"

'What will happen to the stone?' Harry signed.

"What will happen to the stone?" Meara asked.

"The stone," Dumbledore said as he looked at Harry. "Will be destroyed. My friend Nicolas and his wife have enough Elixir left to put their affairs in order, and then...they will die. The stone is far too dangerous to be left out in the open, and cannot be safely kept anywhere, really. Nicolas and Perenelle agree, and have made plans to destroy it."

'I'm sorry, sir. I don't want them to die,' Harry signed.

"I'm sorry, sir. I don't want them to die," Meara repeated.

Dumbledore sighed softly. "To one as young as you, I am sure it seems incredible, and sad, as well as perhaps a waste of life. But, Nicolas and Perenelle have been alive for a very, very long time. For them, it will be like going to bed -- going to sleep -- after what was a very, very long day. After all, to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure. You know, the stone was not really such a wonderful thing -- as much money and life as you could want!' he explained. "The two things most human beings would choose above all - the trouble is, humans do have rather a knack of choosing precisely those things that are worst for them."

'I think the stone sounds awful,' Harry signed.

"I think the stone sounds awful," Meara explained.
"Yes, well. Again, why the hat chose you for Slytherin...I suppose we'll never really know," Dumbledore replied. He rose from the chair. "Is there anything else Harry?"

'The Dark Lord is going to keep trying to come back, and keep coming after me,' Harry signed.

"The Dark Lord is going to keep trying to come back and keep coming after me," Meara said.

Dumbledore blinked in surprise. "You should use his name, Harry. Fear of a name only increases fear of a thing itself. But, yes. He will keep trying to come back. He is not gone. There are ways in which he can, indeed, come back. Not being truly alive, he cannot truly be killed. You delayed him, his return. We may, as yet, keep being able to delay him and perhaps, one day, he will give up. But, I have my doubts. One day, he will probably rise to power again. On that unhappy day, there must always be people like you and I who are willing to stand up to him, willing to fight him," he said.

'Why could I not touch Quirrell? My touch hurt him,' Harry signed.

"Why couldn't I touch Quirrell? My touch hurt him," Meara said.

Dumbledore smiled sadly. "Your mother died to save you," he explained. "If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. Even in his more...human years, when he was but a boy, Tom could not understand feelings of love, sympathy, compassion and the like. The love your mother had for you, which caused her to sacrifice her life for you, leaves a mark. This mark cannot be seen. It lives in your very skin. For Quirrell, as marked with greed and avarice as he was, could not touch you for these reasons. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so innately good."

'What happened to Quirrell? Did he die?' Harry signed.

"What happened to Quirrell? Did he die?" Meara asked.

"Quirrell did not die. His fate is that worse than death, I'm afraid. He lost vital parts of his soul and sanity. He will be locked up, and closely monitored, for the rest of his days. He is badly scarred, and incoherent. He cannot consent to being possessed any longer, so we are safe from Voldemort possessing him again, but he can also no longer be the man he once was," Dumbledore explained. He looked into Harry's eyes for a moment.

As Dumbledore looked into Harry's eyes, Harry felt a slight buzzing in his brain, and a warming that made him feel the tiniest bit fuzzy. He frowned and shook his head.

"You have other questions. Please, ask them," Dumbledore said.

'Why does the Dark Lord want me dead?' Harry signed.

"Why does the Dark Lord want me dead?" Meara asked.

"That is a very good question, Harry. And one I feel I cannot answer. You are very young. There will be time for all of those answers, and questions related to it, when you are older," Dumbledore replied. He held up his hands in a stop motion. "I understand your desire to protest, and your desire to know the truth, but let us leave that aside for now. Your other question?"

'Do you know who sent me the Invisibility cloak?' Harry asked. He felt awkward asking, but he was certain the Headmaster both knew of it and knew who had sent it.

"Do you know who sent me the Invisibility cloak?" Meara asked.
"Ah. Yes. I wondered if you'd puzzle that out. I sent it to you. Your father left it in my care, at a time where he felt he no longer needed it but he also could not see his life ending happily. It was during the war, times were...difficult. I was to hold onto it, for you, or for any next Potter heir. I felt you needed it, and would get good use out of it. I see I was not wrong," Dumbledore replied. "Now, according to Madam Pomfrey, you are to shower, dress and make your way back to your dormitory. There is something we need to discuss, once the castle has emptied, and so, you shall not be getting on the train."

'What?' Harry signed. "I have to! I have to go back to my Aunt and Uncle's and there is not another way there!'"

"What? I have to! I have to go back to my Aunt and Uncle's and there's not another way there!" Meara exclaimed.

"Fear not, dear boy, we will see you home when the time comes. There is something important to address once the castle has emptied, as I said. Go back to your dormitory, pack up your things, and say goodbye, for the summer, to your friends. Then, wait in the common room until Professor Snape collects you," Dumbledore explained kindly. "Do not worry, Harry. It will all work out."

As Dumbledore left the hospital wing, Harry looked over at Meara.

'What was all that about, do you think?' he signed.

She shrugged. 'I have no idea. If you need me,' she signed as she handed him a small envelope. 'You have only to write.'

Harry nodded and watched her leave, then began to gather the gifts left to him.

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The castle had emptied but for a few professors, the house-elves, ghosts and the Headmaster. Professor Snape, Harry, Professor Flitwick, Madam Pomfrey and a man Harry had never seen before, were gathered around the Headmaster's desk in his round office.

A vibrant reddish-orange bird trilled in a gilded cage.

Sitting at his desk, the Headmaster spoke. "I wish it had not come to this, and that these actions had not been taken without my express permission. However, some things, as it so happens, cannot be avoided or undone once they have commenced," Albus said vaguely.

"Is this about the inquest, sir?" Professor Snape asked quietly.

Dumbledore sighed. "Yes, Severus, it is."

"Did it go through alright?" Professor Flitwick asked.

"First things first," Dumbledore replied. "Harry, the young man standing in the room that you do not know, is Remus J. Lupin."

Harry frowned. 'Okay,' he signed. He had no idea why the Headmaster was acting like that was significant. He felt Professor Snape tense next to him. The air began to hum.

"Calm down, Severus. He's here as witness to these matters. You included him in the inquest," Dumbledore replied.
Harry turned to Severus. 'What is going on? What inquest?' he signed.

Severus's eyes narrowed, but he nodded. "Mr. Potter, an inquest has been made into your living conditions at home, and an additional inquest was made into the accident that caused your muteness. If the Headmaster would kindly get on with appraising us as to the outcome, we will know more," he replied.

"I," Remus Lupin said softly. "I knew your father, and your mother. We were close friends at school and during the war. I...am runner up, I suppose, to be your godfather."

Harry's eyes widened. 'I have a godfather?' he asked Professor Snape.

"Yes. Your godfather is currently serving a prison sentence at Azkaban, but in the event that he cannot perform his duties, it falls to Mr. Lupin, which is why he was included in the inquest. Professor Flitwick and I applied for both inquests, Mr. Potter. Neither of us feel your home is safe for you," Professor Snape explained. He looked coldly at Albus. "Albus, what is the outcome?"

"The outcome," Albus explained. "Is that the courts find in favor of the plaintiffs and remove one Harry James Potter from the custody of Petunia and Vernon Dursley."

Harry swallowed hard. 'I don't have to go back to them?'

"No, Mr. Potter, you do not have to go back to them," Severus replied. "Why are you angry, Albus?"

Albus rose from his chair. "This is very dangerous. He was safe, protected by blood-wards, in Petunia's home. We will have to be very careful to ensure that his next home is equally safe. Blood-wards will no longer protect him. I am not entirely certain what will," he replied.

"He wasn't safe there if he was being abused," Remus said softly.

"He was not safe with those people, they caused the accident. We had to remove him from their kind of care," Professor Flitwick argued.

"I understand your reasoning," Professor Dumbledore replied. "I wish only that you had discussed it with me first."

"You would have stopped us," Professor Snape replied acidly.

"Yes," came Dumbledore's response.

'So....now what? Where do I go now?' Harry signed.

"An excellent question, Mr. Potter," Severus replied.

END of Book 1.

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