A Marauder's Plan - Commentary

by CatsAreCool (Rachel500)

Summary

Author's commentary on A Marauder's Plan. Spoilers for A Marauder's Plan.

Notes

This is an author's commentary for the story 'A Marauder's Plan.' It is a summary of my inspirations and writing journey for the story.

It is not recommended you read this until you have read the story itself as spoilers for the story abound.

- Inspired by A Marauder's Plan by CatsAreCool (Rachel500)

A Marauder's Plan – Commentary

A Marauder's Plan is the longest single story I have written weighing in statistically at over 800,000 words approximately. It has taken me the best part of four years to write and is the singular reason why Aftershocks, my Stargate series, has remained on paused. As such I thought it fitting to do some commentary to go along with the posting of the final part to explain and document my time with this fic.

What inspired me?

I'd never sought to write fanfiction about a book before. Generally, I tended to shy away from book fandoms because the source material is already written.
However, I was ill and off on long term sick leave. I ended up reading Harry Potter fanfiction in desperation to find something I hadn't read before. And I liked it for the most part, especially fanon tropes of Ancient and Noble Houses, and Super!Harry, a very powerful and intelligent mage. It made me question my interpretation of the characters, story events, and how I felt about them. I re-read the original series as a result.

It reminded me of how much I loved Sirius as a character and prompted me to find stories in fandom which had him raising Harry somehow. Only there didn't seem to be a complete story among the ones I found.

The muse was tickled and A Marauder's Plan was born.

**What I knew Immediately**

Sirius was going to raise Harry and be proactive – the beginning would be the scene in front of the cottage at Godric's Hollow

Harry was going to be magically powerful and free of his horcrux when he defeated Voldemort

Dumbledore was going to give his life in the final battle to save Harry and Sirius, redeeming himself from his previous manipulations

Sirius would hide his new status and gaining custody of Harry from Dumbledore until the Wizengamot

Harry's romantic interest was going to be Hermione

The story would span Harry's Fourth Year and end with Sirius putting him on the train for his Fifth year

The end would mirror the beginning with Sirius returning to Godric's Hollow

That events generally would take canon elements but twist them: horcruxes, various relationships such as Remus and Tonks, etc.

**Initiating Operation Pronglet**

This part forms the prologue and sets up Sirius's decision and his plan.

One of the first scenes that came to me was Sirius landing outside of Godric's Hollow and determining he needed to be more Slytherin if he was going to look after Harry; the decision to return to Grimmauld Place and informing his mother's portrait he was going to restore the House of Black. This changes Sirius's relationship with Kreacher who then delivers Regulus's last letter which reveals the horcruxes. While the reveal does give Sirius a massive advantage, it also introduces the horcruxes and the need to find them to eliminate Riddle.

The second part with Remus was to enable Sirius as a character to get more information about Harry's life and begin to fill the gaps on his knowledge, and to bring Remus in on the plan. It also allowed me to explore the open question of why Remus only appeared in third year if he was such good friends with James, and a way of explaining how the plots of the first two books fitted into my universe.

**Securing Guardianship of Pronglet**

I didn't want to drag out Sirius getting custody of Harry; I wanted the story to get the characters
together as soon as possible.

It also became evident quickly that this part would require external viewpoints if Sirius was going to remain hidden as Lord Black to Dumbledore until the reveal at the Wizengamot.

I quite like the format of the early chapters which each have the main investigation and a brief return to Sirius and Remus. I love the initial scene with Cornelius and Brian, Amelia's investigation which brings in Moody, and Amelia realising the truth and the little exchange between herself and Brian is a favourite moment.

However, this whole section is probably something I would rewrite if I was going to polish the story. The new version would tell the events from the viewpoints of Remus, Sirius and Harry, with the Amelia-investigation really done off-screen so to speak. It would give a better introduction to Harry as one of the main characters as his first intro here doesn't even have him as the point of view in that chapter.

But as I've no plans to polish the story this way, everything stays as-is.

**Healing Padfoot and Pronglet**

I needed a way for Sirius and Harry to spend time together and heal from their various physical issues, for Harry's power to be discovered, for him to be healed of the horcrux and jumpstart his re-education, but for them also to have the Summer still in front of them…so I quickly came up with the time-bubble. Essentially my inspiration was Stargate SG1 and the time dilation bubble in the final episode of that series.

I also knew I wanted to follow Sirius and Harry in the time-bubble, and Remus back home observing events and pushing the plot along there nicely. The split format of the chapters came organically from that.

What I also realised was that the healing clinic time-bubble was the perfect place for Harry to learn some basics about the wizarding world, and therefore the readers. And it was also here that I decided to pop in occasional 'lessons' about things. So when Harry learns about politics so do the readers. I figured there was no harm for any young readers to get introduced to basic concepts.

Of course the family magic begins to take shape in this section as it saves Harry from the horcrux, and Sirius begins to deduce how it played a part in saving him previously.

In respect of the 'home' scenes I also figured it was time for Albus to make an appearance and the rest of the Hogwarts Professors so we start to introduce more of the usual characters to the Harry Potter universe back into mine. I definitely wanted Minerva McGonagall to end up on the Marauders' side rather than following Albus blindly, and the business with Snape and about the will allowed me to set that up.

Appointing Penny Clearwater as the secretary was really down to my needing to have someone do the role and yet save myself having to create an original character.

**Building Team Pronglet**

So, with the past events set into context, Harry and Sirius together and healed, and Sirius in place as Lord Black, it was time for them to return and start building the alliances they needed to ensure Harry's safety. The climax was always going to be the reveal at the Wizengamot to Dumbledore.

I very much wanted to use the Longbottoms because I really liked Neville as a character. While I didn't want to go the route of replacing Ron with Neville, I did want to add him to the group. The
first scene with Augusta and Sirius is another favourite of mine.

It seemed sensible to go to the Grangers next. Hermione was always going to be the love interest. Logically, Harry's only close relationship with a girl is with Hermione at this point, and I cannot see Harry ever choosing anyone he didn't know and who he was certain was with him for himself. But I was equally certain I wasn't going to go down the whole soul bond/destined to be together route either. I wanted the progression of a fairly typical and normal teenage romance. Seeds are planted here but they take a while to blossom.

The formal side of it had to be next – bringing together the War Council and Fudge's transition from incompetent to competent. This also helped layout the plan for dealing with Voldemort in more detail.

I also was absolutely certain about grabbing Bill Weasley to be in the service of the House of Potter. I did/do get criticism of how the Weasleys end up with a lot of money, etc. here and possibly I was erring too much on the side of Sirius and Harry not wanting to rock the boat with the Weasleys despite the life debt.

The Family Meeting had been foreshadowed a lot. The Judgement on the Lestranges was needed to take them out of the picture. Bellatrix is a great character but sometimes she can overshadow others. But I did feel a twinge at killing them off so soon. But the Judgement also provides the means to manipulate Lucius – after all he would only bow to the primacy if there was a compelling threat to him. Hamstringing Lucius through the primacy was also needed otherwise he remains too powerful a character to have in play.

The adoption was perhaps too quick but again I wanted everything sorted legally for Sirius before he meets with Albus. I had the scene with Lily and Morgana in mind for a long time. I also played with the idea of having Petunia there but in the end determined she'd just never want to have anything to do with magic.

The flashback to Harry taking control of the family magic and taking over Lily as a very young baby (she's pregnant enough that Harry isn't just a foetus at this point) was something that popped into my head and demanded to be written, but it is very 'out there' and I'm constantly surprised I don't get more of a 'you've lost it, I'm going to stop reading now'/'jumped the shark' reviews. I also just loved Charlus and Arcturus as characters in the flashback and kind of fell a little bit in love with them.

This was also where I began seeding the other side through Lucius's meeting with his allies. Nott immediately started to form as a character who wanted more attention. I also wanted to utilise some of Rowling's characters in the Wizengamot to spice it up, hence how Griselda Marchbanks and Tiberius Ogden wrangled their way in.

I love the scene with Sirius and Albus in the reveal. It was everything I wanted it to be. Same with the scene later at Grimmauld.

It was about here that I realised the story was determining its own pace and worryingly just how slow the pace was – but stories sometimes do that. It was definitely around here that I ended up plotting everything out into a spreadsheet so I could keep track of things more thoroughly.

Educating Pronglet

This section had three main aims.

Firstly, to progress Sirius and Harry's relationship. I wanted to show them settling into their relationship and having a disagreement – because that's normal. Hence why they argue over the
mission to get the ring.

Secondly, I wanted to progress the horcrux hunt by finding the ring and showing the Chamber hunt; showing that Harry did need to get involved despite the adults' best efforts to keep him out of it. But I also wanted for him to be the hero again and to realise he didn't always need to be the one who had to do everything. I wanted him to start to realise he could lean on the adults in his life which links back to the beginning.

Getting the ring also allowed me to introduce the Hallows into the story properly and Harry's connection with them. I also twisted canon again by having someone get injured but not Dumbledore so poor Lawrence Appleby bites the bullet.

Thirdly, I wanted to show Harry's widening social group and education. For him to be seen to be getting close to Neville and others; the impact Harry's change of circumstances has on his friendships with Hermione and especially Ron and the Weasleys.

So in Weasley land, we see Bill starting to gel with the House of Potter and the alliance. We also see how Ron's jealousy raises its head (here rather than in the tournament) but Ron also has someone to talk to about his insecurities because of Bill's presence and interest in maintaining good relations with the House of Potter.

I also wanted to address Molly as she is so very vitriolic in Order of the Phoenix, I couldn't not. So Molly isn't pro-Sirius until the birthday and the death threat when she sees for herself how they are together in private. Ginny is also depicted here in her full 'Harry-Hero' worship mode as for me this was the beginning of Ginny's journey.

Hermione also gets a mention as she and Harry start to find additional common ground with his studies and academic performance. We see with the Runes exam, she and Harry are beginning to bond on an intellectual level.

And of course, the Heirs of the Potter Alliance declare their fealty – something which wasn't planned and just emerged from the story-telling. But I loved that bit with Neville and his 'and more.'

Another thing that emerged was the whole sex education talk. I hummed and hawed about including the scene in such detail but again, it's a bit like the politics; I figured there was no harm including a detailed sex education talk for any young people who are reading, and it enabled me to position my universe's views about sexuality.

It also served to be very good character development for all four of the participants; it positions Harry and Neville to begin to think about dating, we have the foreshadowing of Remus's love life (or lack thereof) and Sirius having to fully do a challenging 'Dad' thing.

I did get a lot of comments at the time about having Sirius kiss a boy in the memory, and outrage I was making him gay or bi. I have to admit that I'm fairly easy about writers in fandoms reimagining a straight character as gay/bi, because ultimately sexuality is an internal state of being which we choose to express or not express in how we live our lives. So, someone can be observed to be straight as they only seem to date the opposite sex but in private they could identify themselves as gay.

Sirius to me has always read as bi. Mostly because there is something in the original Rowling text that just screams to me that he was half in love with James Potter, only James was in love with Lily. However, when I climb into the head of my Sirius in this story and at this point in time, he is just not interested in sex; he's almost asexual. His focus and his attention are on Harry.

I did have an ulterior motive in making Sirius bi though which was because I had written Crouch as
gay, and I wanted balance rather than simply painting a 'bad guy is gay, good guys are straight' subliminal message which would be wrong – after all sexuality has nothing to do with whether you commit criminal acts.

Crouch's love affair with Rabastan Lestrange emerged as I was writing the scene. I wanted to give Crouch a reason beyond being rescued by Peter and Riddle for following the Dark Lord so fervently, and Sirius killing Crouch's true love was perfect. It was also here that I made Crouch as a foil to Sirius; he becomes Sirius's nemesis just as Riddle is Harry's.

I also did want to show Crouch as unhinged from the get-go; he's not altogether sane because how could anyone who went through Azkaban without any protection against the Dementors, followed by years of being held captive and forced under the imperius by his own father remain sane?

**Pronglet's World Cup**

One of the main events of The Goblet of Fire is the World Cup and I did want to include it. I also wanted to use it as a way of showing that the characters still had some way to go before they were 'changed' even if they are changing.

The opening chapter provides that for Hermione; she's part of the House of Black as are her parents and she's beginning to see the difference that makes in her life. She's also warming up to Harry as a potential boyfriend because of the impact of the changes in his life.

We also see Draco hasn't changed at the beginning of this section; he's still resistant and sneering towards Harry and Hermione; still firmly entrenched in his old mind-set. But later we see Draco finally start to assess his position and start to make the shift into allying with Harry.

Neville's changing position is evident in his role as host at the party, his coming home with Harry, and later his protectiveness of him at the World Cup. This small scene with Blaise in the tent also really prompted the whole Neville/Blaise bromance that erupts through the rest of the story.

We also see the Weasleys haven't changed all that much at this point; Ron's still impetuous but he is trying not to be envious while Ginny is still very much in fangirl mode.

Harry's actions at the end where he leaves the tent, despite knowing he shouldn't, and follows after Ron, saves the Weasleys and goes after the disguised Crouch are to demonstrate that he also hasn't changed substantially and is still a work in progress.

Dumbledore's lack of change is also shown through the story of the Elder wand begun with Sirius reviewing Arcturus's memories and through to the end when Harry is informed and has to consider what to do about Dumbledore still keeping secrets.

Snape hasn't changed either at this point although we have the start of his and Moody's strange friendship in this section. It was that initial scene together which also prompted their friendship through the story.

It was also nice to introduce Luna to Harry outside of Hogwarts and I always intended to utilise her to prompt his animagus form which had been a sub-thread since Building Team Pronglet.

I also wanted to show that the best laid plans can go wrong. But if I was going to rewrite, I would look at the set-up which feels too contrived to me for Sirius and Remus to leave Harry alone (despite their worries and concerns especially with the death threats).

Some readers comment that this whole section makes them all act stupidly. I would disagree with that as I think each decision on its own in isolation isn't an issue: Remus stays with the Minister to
translate when they only know something will happen much later and Harry has a lot of allies with him and is safe; Sirius goes to help the fire because he has skills and Harry is in the tent, has portkeys and is safe with allies.

But I acknowledge that this section could have been a lot more tightly written to ensure readers understood appreciate that Sirius and Remus are not making stupid choices, just not the right ones in hindsight.

**Pronglet Returns to Hogwarts**

I always planned for Harry to be entered into the tournament, it is the main plotline for a Goblet of Fire after all. I always planned for this section to end with that scene with the avatar of the Goblet.

This section also deals with how things have changed for Harry and everyone else to some degree at Hogwarts.

Harry is now firmly socially and politically entrenched into the wizarding world; his circle at Hogwarts is now much much wider than his immediate Gryffindor year, Hermione, Ron, and a rivalry with Draco. And outside of his circle, Harry has connections as is shown when Krum approaches him after the other schools arrive.

Ron is having to deal with others being close to Harry and his jealousy rears his head in regards to Neville. Yes, Harry forgives him quickly for the faux pas of revealing his mind healing but mostly because Harry as a character is always going to have a soft spot for Ron. But also because being raised by the Dursleys Harry wants to keep his friend more over and above being angry at him.

Neville, meanwhile, has started solidifying his friendship with Harry, with Blaise and starts to 'practice' date Hannah.

Hermione also firmly becomes Harry's romantic interest, and she has fully started to consider him hers.

The scene with the Gryffindor and Slytherin boys is one of my favourites. I kind of was inspired by reading a book version of 'Yes, Minister', a fabulous old British sitcom focused on an elite Whitehall official dealing with a pedestrian Labour Minister but who occasionally and regularly managed to get one-over on him. In that the official often describes things in convoluted and extraneous ways to befuddle the Minister and obfuscate the true meaning of what he's saying. I kind of used that 'complicated way of explaining' for Draco with Harry left befuddled and needing a simpler summary.

The scene though where the entire school stands up is a direct contrast to the book. Harry isn't reviled by the school for having been entered into the tournament nor is he blamed personally for entering. Everyone knows about the death threats and everyone knows he hasn't entered himself.

In contrast, I wanted to show how Sirius is coping, and not coping, in the outside. How he struggles without Harry to focus upon and how people rally around him such as Amelia and the Weasleys.

The introduction of Wenlock was mostly because I needed someone to fill the political gap and become an adversary at the Wizengamot. Wenlock provides a nice thorn in the side; he's traditional, elitist and corrupt without being a Death Eater.

Getting the alliance in on the secret of the family magic, fully understanding what was at stake and demanding to be more involved was necessary as really nobody was going to just accept their family avatars showing up at the behest of the Potter magic. And sending Remus, Augusta and Richard to Paris also allowed me to explore Remus-as-Alpha with his meeting with the others in Paris, and
solidly introduce Remus's love life.

What wasn't originally planned was Benjamin Nott and the year of service for Theo; the whole back story for Nott. But once it emerged it also felt right. Here is a Death Eater who is trying to change the future for his son but take responsibility for the choices they've made previously – and so this nicely set up the future and I knew from this moment that Nott would die challenging Riddle.

**Ensuring Pronglet Survives**

Three things I knew from the start with this section: one, it had to cover the first task, two, it had to progress Harry and Hermione, and three, it is the beginning of the Sirius/Snape detente.

The latter really emerges out of Snape's reaction to seeing the Potter avatar take Lily's form at the end of the previous section. Seeing her again and how caring she is with Harry means Snape's self-justifications are completely torn away. They'd been crumbling ever since Sirius caught him in the corridor and faced him with the fact that he knew it was Snape who'd told Voldemort the prophecy but this is the fatal blow. He can't deny Harry is Lily's son. He can't deny his own role in what happened to Lily any longer. And seeing Harry cared for by Sirius, he can't deny that perhaps Sirius has grown up.

As Snape begins to accept his transgressions, Sirius also begins to look past Snape as a childhood nemesis and see him as someone who is an ally. The scene with the elves and Sirius engaging Snape to come up with the cure was in my head for a while, especially the moment where Dumbledore is so pleased at the two of them working together.

Snape also begins to look past Sirius as a childhood nemesis and start to admire Sirius's Slytherin tendencies in the way he responds to the threats. He especially admires how Sirius negotiated to get a place at Hogwarts.

Sirius was always going to end up at Hogwarts with Harry. Apart from the fact that why would any sane parent keep their child in that school after their security had been put so at risk unless they would stay with them, narratively I needed Sirius and Harry to still have regular contact.

Harry’s return also meant dealing with the delayed romance between himself and Hermione, and their interlude in the classroom provided the perfect opportunity for Harry to become the master of the Elder wand when Dumbledore interrupts them. I wanted Hermione and Harry to be slightly awkward with each other as young teens are; fumbling is probably the best word. I wanted their romance here to be the antithesis of stories where they start to date and within days are soul bound and acting like they've been married for years (although nothing wrong with those stories and many of them are a great read, they just don't really depict for me how teenage romance goes in reality).

Of course, this leads into the real beginning of Ginny's development as Hermione getting hurt kick starts her healing and her slowly shifting from fangirl to true friend (albeit one who still considers Harry her dream guy).

Finally, the task had to be dealt with. I wanted to keep the heart of the task the same but change it to be more dangerous. So Harry doesn't get the Horntail but still ends up having to battle it. He's hurt but he survives. And we start to see that the tournament is being used by Crouch and Voldemort to torture their respective targets.

What I didn't plan for at all was the Peter thread that begins to emerge here. I wanted to show Voldemort's reaction to the task and Peter was a good way of doing that. That then led into using him in the tunnels and when I was writing that scene the ending with Peter and Sirius separated by the wall, Sirius berating him and Wormtail giving some information in response to that jumped into
my head.

Equally the fallout for Percy, his break-up from Penny and his resignation from the Ministry wasn't planned but just fell into place.

**Holding Onto Pronglet**

By this time, I had very firmly lodged in my head the idea I wanted the canon events of Harry going to save Sirius in London to be part of the story. Losing Sirius was a defining moment for canon-Harry and I similarly needed to have Harry start to stand on his own two feet by similarly thinking Sirius was dead.

Of course the set-up for the abduction of Neville and for the assumption of Sirius's death means things have to go awry with the plans to keep everyone safe again. At the end of the fic, I hope the revelation of Hannah helps explain how Neville was hoodwinked and manoeuvred into an unsafe place.

I'm not entirely happy with the way the whole thing plays out. I think the miscommunications, Dumbledore's insistence on not telling Harry, Remus's reliance on Dumbledore…I think they all could have been written better so it doesn't come across as so contrived.

I liked saving Sirius and Neville in the same way that baby-Harry had saved Sirius. And the way the whole cemetery scene turned out was exactly what I wanted. The denouement with Harry talking to his parents in the cemetery only for Sirius to be there and not dead was always in mind. I never intended for Sirius to be killed. Tying their lives together was also planned because I knew at this point that I needed Harry to have a tether to life to trigger the whole 'who will be the sacrifice for the magic' discussion which would redeem Dumbledore.

I also really liked the scenes with Harry, Remus and Sirius during their visit to Godric's Hollow and exploring the past, followed by the Christmas scenes and the beginning of the Yule Ball where everything is happy and joyous. It helps make the events that follow that much more angsty.

I also liked that the whole thing allowed me to bring some conflict into Harry's relationship with Hermione. He essentially breaks-up with her to protect her and she's incredibly hurt by that.

What I didn't realise at the time is that the way Harry sent his friends back to Hogwarts would be a useful foreshadow for him transporting everyone to Hogwarts in the final battle.

On a different note, both Remus and Percy also get development in this part. Remus starts to come to terms with his role as an Alpha but suffers romance mis-steps with Tonks and Clara. Percy meanwhile helps his father during a werewolf attack and begins his recovery from events with Crouch.

**Pronglet Fights Back**

This section is where Harry starts to take control, Sirius lets him and they start to make headway. They take their first step forward in the horcrux hunt for some time by finding the Room of Hidden Things; they deal with Wenlock in the Wizengamot; Harry joins the War Council; he makes up with Hermione; he and the others absolutely own the second task; they foil a second abduction attempt and capture a Death Eater leading to Karkaroff's death…

Everything starts to turn in Harry's favour.

I really didn't want Harry and Hermione separated for a long time and I didn't want the task to be the point at which she forgave him. It would have meant too long a separation. Then the whole scene
with Harry being able to get into the girls' dorm popped into my head complete with Fred and George's shout of approval at the end.

The surrender of the family magic wasn't planned but it made sense and gave me another aspect of the family magic to consider for the final battle. This would finally translate itself into Nott's last act to ensure his son's future.

Of course, this is also where I effectively get Remus and Tonks together via the unplanned pregnancy. I know for some this was controversial. But my Remus was never going to fall in with Tonks or Dora as she became known in my story, because there were no circumstances driving them together in the same way as the canon events, beyond that first night they spent together. The baby gave them the excuse and hopefully then set them up to fall in love with each other properly.

I also have Ron together with Lavender in this section which also follows canon. It also allowed me to have the conversation with Hermione and Harry about where their boundaries were in regards to physical affection.

I also wanted to show how Bill was becoming close to Caro in this section; we see them talking and confiding in each other. It was at this point I was beginning to plan for Caro to die saving Bill. I had originally planned for Sian to save Remus but I didn't think Sian was a likeable enough character for anyone to really feel gutted by her death. Caro's interactions by this time had been minimal but she was a smart strong woman who was good at what she did.

Ending with Voldemort was a deliberate decision designed to give a little insight into his thoughts at this point. Some people have complained about my calling him Thomas but…I find it highly unlikely in that period of time that Riddle would have been named 'Tom' on his actual birth certificate (unlike now). It was probably Thomas formally. I can also say that even if it wasn't, I don't think Riddle would have referred to himself by such a common moniker; he would always think of himself as Thomas before he created the persona of Voldemort. He didn't ever want to be Tom Riddle.

Finding Pronglet's Power

This was meant to the last section and I ended up having to divide it into two. This part deals with Harry discovering his power at last.

He finds out the truth about his ancestry, the connection to Death and the Hallows. But ultimately comes to realise his power is love – the love Sirius has for him, he has for Sirius, the love their family has...

Sirius continues to support his son throughout events here. He takes a step back from leading and allows Harry to flourish. Harry ends up gaining the fealty of the adults by the end of the section because he is about to go to war.

But in the run-up, we deal with several sub-plots: Neville has problems with Hannah, Remus marries Tonks and kills Greyback – he embraces being in both worlds, Crouch reveals himself at Hogwarts and causes chaos which ruins the illusion of a paternal relationship with Voldemort (and there's a good contrast here – Crouch takes the initiative and is punished, Harry takes the initiative and is supported).

Pronglet Goes to War

*Chapter warning for discussion of child abuse, sexual contact of an adult with a minor.*

With the climax of several storylines, this section was always going to deal with the final task, the
graveyard and the ultimate battle at Hogwarts.

The run-up with the conversations with the ghosts of dead loved ones was completely emergent from the writing. But it helped set-up a lot of the action and allowed me to flashback to some of the Marauders’ past.

The final task was difficult to write because it is hard to find something original and I needed it to be a twist on the maze/cup just as the second task was a twist on the lake/hostages, the first a twist on dragons/eggs. I was happy with the final version especially with the back and forth between the task and observers, the introduction of the 'betrayer'.

On the latter, and Hannah being revealed as the spy, enamoured by Crouch. I debated long and hard over Hannah and whether Crouch would go as far as to have a physically intimate relationship with her; whether it would move from an emotional manipulation to a physical act of abuse. Crouch is gay after all.

Where I ended up with that yes, Crouch did end up having sex with Hannah, namely as another part of his manipulation of her, to ensure she would go through with opening up the cabinet. He was disgusted by it; it was perfunctory on his side with a spell used for him to take part; a way of manipulating her, nothing more. Hannah, on the other hand, is truly under Crouch’s thumb at this point; she wants nothing more than to please him and to have confirmation she is special and loved in his eyes so sees sex as an expression of that. Clearly though this is a rape; regardless of the fact that she is fifteen and a minor (lots of fifteen year olds do have consensual sex with other teens after all) Hannah has been groomed and manipulated into her compliance here and is not in a position to give informed consent. Hence the chapter warnings.

The rest of the action scenes were pretty much just waiting in my head to be written given I'd been picturing a lot of the scenes since the beginning of the story years before.

Sybill had to die. She was the point of entry so she was going to be dead by Crouch's hand.

I knew Nott would die and Harry would save Lucius from death.

I knew Cedric was going to die and in the end killed both his father and him as I couldn't see his Dad not jumping into save him first.

I knew Snape was going to challenge Voldemort and get bitten by the snake but wasn't too sure if he was going to survive or not.

I knew Crouch would battle Sirius.

I knew Harry would use his holly wand and do the dome and the moment with his parents again.

I knew Bill and Caro would be after the snake but Neville would get his moment of glory and kill it. That Caro would then die saving Bill.

What emerged was the ritual with the women and Hogwarts, the dragon.

The ritual came out of the dream with Harry's grandmothers and their point that Voldemort hadn't considered his mother. It also gave me a good way of getting Hermione to the battle despite all the efforts to keep the women safely away.

The dragon came out of the dream with the Founders but gave me a good way to turn the tide of the battle in favour of Harry right at the end.
And finally Crouch was always going to be a silent bomb waiting to go off and destroy everything, meaning Harry had to call all the magic and a sacrifice was demanded in return, allowing Dumbledore to step up.

Happily Ever After With Pronglet

There was a lot of aftermath to deal with.

I wanted to show Harry as having a proper meltdown – he'd been through a lot and I needed to show this so the time bubble was great as it allowed me to do this but then return a normal Harry back to the action without losing too much time in real time.

The trials were difficult to write as I wasn't quite certain I'd settled on the right justice for either Peter or Hannah.

With Peter, it was as I was writing the court scene that I realised the rightness of the Marauders giving the judgement and the scene with Prongs taking on form instead of Lily for a change emerged.

Hannah's justice was the most problematic because the questions are not easy ones to address. Hannah was abused and manipulated into a belief system which then caused her to act in a criminal way. What's the right punishment for that? Do you treat her as a victim or an enemy? The final denouement wasn't comfortable but I think it was the right balance. It did provide an opportunity to write about grooming and abuse in a way that I hope is a useful forewarning for any young people reading the story so they can be wary.

On the Crouch baby…again a lot of internal debate but the possibilities it opens up for any future sequel were too hard not to allow. So Hannah is pregnant with Crouch's heir. Will it grow up to be an innocent and hardworking member of society or will it grow up to resent what happened to his/her father? It's a question that may never be answered but which I was compelled to pose.

I also wanted in this section for Harry and Hermione to come out stronger. I also wanted to rebalance their respective powers to some degree. In JK's series, Hermione almost upstages Harry; she's the one with the smarts, the plan, and the deductions most of the time. But I think I almost went too much the other way in the story to make Harry powerful and the hero; Hermione is side-lined to a large degree throughout and although she makes her appearance on the battlefield, she's effectively representing all the Wiccan circle and Morgana there.

I've left their relationship in place but open-ended. There is no soul-bond or destiny involved for them to be permanently romantically linked. Like many teenagers, Harry cannot see himself without his girlfriend or imagine being with someone else; Hermione is more sceptical of them lasting but that is down to her insecurity. They might survive the storms of teenage romance; they might not.

And then there is the whole Merlin and Morgana legacies which really only emerged when I was writing the epilogue. The whole Death, Grim and Raven link turned out much, much stronger than I had anticipated too. But it does provide some nice seeds for potential plotlines if I do return to this in the future.

If there was one thing in the epilogue I was truly surprised emerged in the writing, it was the exiling of Lucius – but then Narcissa was pretty insistent.

In the end, the characters pretty much ended up where I wanted them to be:

Bill has a newly developed sense of duty, is recovering from a great loss in Caro, and is beginning
his friendship with Fleur and the possibility of his canon relationship.

Snape is gone from Hogwarts and has a second chance working as an Unspeakable with Bertie; redeemed but not forgiven.

Draco has made a true transition to supporter and ally, albeit he fundamentally hasn't really changed his politics.

Neville is firmly entrenched as godbrother, a strong young man who is embracing his own sense of power and worth, and supported by an invigorated Grandmother in Augusta.

Ron remains himself, a tempestuous best friend, but one who has matured and who is maturing still.

Dumbledore is gone – redeemed in his sacrifice and enjoying his next great adventure.

Hermione is on her way to becoming Harry's equal partner in magic; she accepts herself fully and is dealing with her insecurities.

Remus is a settled family man, balancing his responsibilities and looking forward to his life with Dora and his son, Teddy.

Harry has embraced all that he can be and has a future without Voldemort to look forward to living.

And Sirius…Sirius has remade the world to give his godson a home and is finally at peace with himself.

The end scene at the cottage was perfect – it was the way I'd always intended to end it and the last words were fitting and brought it full circle: A Marauder's Plan.

Sequel? One shots?

I never say never but it will not happen soon. I have a NCIS story to finish (under my TrekCat pseud), and then I want to return my attention to my Aftershocks series (under my Rachel500 pseud) and getting that completed. Until then, happy reading!

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