The Ilvermorny Champion

by FurySerenity

Summary

Instead of Durmstrang Academy, Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry was invited to take part in the 1994 Triwizard Tournament. When Ilvermorny arrives at Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore is shocked to see the long-thought-dead Harry and Lily Potter appear, as well as the missing Sirius Black and Remus Lupin. This has certainly thrown a wrench in his plans!
Disclaimer: Recognizable sections of this chapter come directly from Chapter 13 of "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" by J.K. Rowling. I do not take claim to these. Only my own additions
Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, was currently standing on the front steps of his beloved castle. Around him, the students and staff were congregated, as they waited for the arrival of their guests, the representatives of Beauxbatons School of Magic, and Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Originally Durmstrang Academy had been invited instead of Ilvermorny, however after the Headmaster Igor Karkaroff had been arrested on suspicion of murder, Durmstrang was forced to back out. A shame that was, Albus thought. It was rumored that Quidditch superstar, Viktor Krum, would have been chosen as one of the contenders. Such publicity would have been excellent for Hogwarts!

Alas, it was not to be. So, instead, Ilvermorny, a school from the United States, had thrown their hat into contention, and had been immediately accepted. Never before had a non-European school been invited to the Triwizard Tournament. Albus threw his support in for Ilvermorny's invitation – such a historic move would make up for the lack of Viktor Krum, when it came to publicity.

One of the rings on Albus' left hand, vibrated intensely. The ring was keyed to the wards around Hogwarts, and warned him whenever something passed through the wards.

“Aha!” Albus said, jovially, “Unless I am very much mistaken, the delegation from Beauxbatons approaches!”

“Where?” said many students eagerly, all looking in different directions.

“There!” yelled a sixth year, pointing over the forest.

Something very large was hurtling across the deep blue sky toward the castle, growing larger all the time.

“It’s a dragon!” shrieked one of the first years.

“Don’t be stupid,” said first year, Dennis Creevey, “it’s a flying house!”

The young Creevey boy’s guess was closer.

As the gigantic black shape skimmed over the treetops of the Forbidden Forest and the lights shining from the castle windows hit it, they saw a gigantic, powder-blue, horse-drawn carriage, the size of a large house, soaring toward them, pulled through the air by a dozen winged horses, all palominos, and each the size of an elephant.

The front three rows of students drew backward as the carriage hurtled ever lower, coming in to land at a tremendous speed — then, with an almighty crash the horses’ hooves, larger than dinner plates, hit the ground. A second later, the carriage landed too, bouncing upon its vast wheels, while the golden horses tossed their enormous heads and rolled large, fiery red eyes.

A boy in pale blue robes jumped down from the carriage, bent forward, fumbled for a moment with
something on the carriage floor, and unfolded a set of golden steps. He sprang back respectfully.

Albus smiled as Beauxbatons Headmistress, Madame Olympe Maxime, stepped out of the carriage. The woman was very large – no matter how much Madame Maxime had vehemently denied it, Albus knew the woman was half-giant. No matter how much she denied it, Albus knew the truth. After all, he had a half-giant on his own staff – Rubeus Hagrid, the Hogwarts Groundskeeper.

Albus noticed there were several students whispering and murmuring as they looked at the woman. He winced, as he realized some of the murmurs could be mistaken as disrespect, which would send a bad message to the Beauxbatons delegates. Indeed, Madam Maxime was looking rather disconcerted at the reaction from the students. So Albus started to clap, applauding for such a magnificent entrance. He sighed in relief, as the applause was contagious, and his staff, and most of the students applauded too.

Albus smiled when Maxime’s expression softened. The Beauxbatons Headmistress walked forward, and Albus met her in the middle. When she offered her hand, he kissed it gently – due to her size, he didn’t even have to bend very far to reach it.

“My dear Madame Maxime,” he said. “Welcome to Hogwarts.”

“Dumbly-dorr,” said Madame Maxime in a deep voice, “I ’ope I find you well?”

“In excellent form, I thank you,” said Dumbledore.

“My pupils,” said Madame Maxime, waving one of her enormous hands carelessly behind her.

Albus smiled as several boys and girls approached their Headmistress. They were shivering, which was unsurprising, given that their robes seemed to be made of fine silk, and none of them were wearing cloaks. Albus did not like the way they were looking at his grand castle, with such apprehensive looks. He did, however, notice that at least two of the girls were Veela. He wasn’t surprised, having been warned that Veela might attend.

“Has Ilvermorny arrived yet?” Madame Maxime asked.

“They should be here any moment,” Albus said. “Would you like to wait here and greet them or would you prefer to step inside and warm up a trifle?”

“Warm up, I think,” said Madame Maxime. “But ze ’orses —”

“Our Groundskeeper will be delighted to take care of them,” Albus said, “He has an affinity for handling creatures as wondrous as your horses.”

“My steeds require — er — forceful ’andling,” said Madame Maxime, “Zey are very strong...”

“I assure you that Hagrid will be well up to the job,” Albus said, with a smile.

“Very well,” said Madame Maxime, bowing slightly. “Will you please inform zis ’Agrid zat ze ’orses drink only single-malt whiskey?”

“It will be attended to,” said Dumbledore, also bowing.

“Come,” said Madame Maxime imperiously to her students.
The Hogwarts crowd parted to allow her and her students to pass up the stone steps. Albus sighed as he watched Madame Maxime step into the castle. Truth be told, he hated Olympe Maxime. She was a rude, overbearing woman. It would have been far better had Beauxbatons been the one to drop out of the tournament instead of Durmstrang.

“Albus!” Deputy Headmistress, and Transfiguration Professor, Minerva McGonagall hissed at him, “You never told me Beauxbatons delegation was bringing Veela!”

“My dear, Minerva,” Albus said, raising his eyebrows as he looked at his Deputy, “I have never thought you one for such bigotry against Veela!”

Minerva stammered indignantly. “I am not against Veela, Albus! I'm simply afraid of what their presence might mean for some of our male students here. Many of which are in the early stages of their teenage hormones, and haven't had time to get a handle on them. They could fall victim! If something were to happen, it could cause --”

“I assure you all precautions will be taken, Minerva,” Albus said, trying to maintain his jovial grandfather tone, while passing along a no-nonsense attitude to his Deputy. “Those Veela students are contenders for the Triwizard Tournament. Insulting them could also cause international problems.”

Minerva grumbled under her breath. “Of course you are right, Albus. But I will be watching them around the students!”

“And I welcome you to do so,” Albus said, praying the conversation ended right there.

Minerva huffed. Albus sighed and turned back around. His Deputy was a long-time friend of his, but her personality clashed with his on several issues. At least the issues were small and petty. If she disagreed with him on some of the larger issues, actions would have to be taken. He could not afford such disagreements in the long run.

Albus' thoughts were interrupted as his ring vibrated again. He looked around for the cause, and he suddenly heard a very loud noise coming from behind him. He ran forward onto the Grounds, parting the students. Then he turned around and saw a very large object flying over Hogwarts castle. Albus' eyes widened as he saw what appeared to be some kind of Muggle flying craft slowly hovering across the Grounds, about fifty feet in the air.

“Whoa!” Dennis Creevey said, “It looks like a Blackbird!”

“That doesn't look like a bird to me!” another student said.

“No! A Blackbird!” Dennis' brother, Colin said, “From X-Men!”

The craft started to descend vertically, onto the Grounds of Hogwarts, just feet from the Beauxbatons carriage. When it landed, the large door at the back of the craft lowered to form a ramp. The first person to step out was a tall woman with flowing auburn hair. Albus' eyes widened as he looked at her. He recognized her almost instantly.

He had to blink several times as he looked at the woman, because he was sure he was seeing things. It could not be possible. This woman was thought to have perished exactly thirteen years previously, along with her husband and infant son. The woman stepped out, walking down the ramp, onto the
grounds, and the students behind her followed in two queues. The woman was holding onto the hand of a young teenaged girl, whose auburn hair matched the woman's. Leading the pack of students was a dark-haired teen. Albus' jaw dropped as he saw the boy.

There was no mistake. Albus could not deny what was in front of him. The boy -- whom looked like a teenaged version of his father -- was surely Harry Potter.

Lily Potter, and her son, Harry -- both of whom were thought to have been killed exactly thirteen years previously -- were now standing on the Grounds of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

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Friday, October 30th, 1994 – Fifteen Minutes Earlier

Lily Potter, Potions Mistress of Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, was currently seated on a long bench of seats in the cargo and passenger area of the large craft known as the Thunderbird.

The Thunderbird – a large hovercraft helicopter – had been built a decade ago by Professor Winston, Headmaster at Ilvermorny. Professor Winston, a Muggleborn, had named the craft after his much loved House Thunderbird, of which he had been a part of when he was a student many years ago. Professor Winston had been the pilot of the plane for much of the past decade. However, a year ago, he had been struck with an illness, and the illness had recently become worse, and had taken a toll on the man's body, so he couldn't make the trip from the United States to Scotland.

He had asked Lily Potter, and her two best friends – all three of whom had grown up in Great Britain – to represent him and Ilvermorny since he could not attend. Lily and her friends had agreed happily.

Seated on either side of Lily were her two children. Harry, fourteen, and Rose, twelve. Even though he was only fourteen, Harry was one of the chosen delegates for the Triwizard Tournament. Though the other delegates were all sixteen years or older, Harry had been chosen for a reason. He had placed third in the Tournament of Champions, in which the top-ten contenders would be chosen as delegates for the Tournament. Harry's sister, Rose, was only there because her family – mother, brother, and honorary Uncles -- were all going.

Seated to the right of Harry, and also across the large space, were the other nine contenders for the spot of Ilvermorny Champion in the Triwizard Tournament.

Lily smiled as she looked over at Harry, who was staring down at his lap.

“Nervous, Harry?” she asked.

“No, not at all,” Harry said – and he looked as if he had truly meant it – “Actually, I'm thinking about Dad. I know I don't have to tell you that it has been thirteen years. Thirteen years tomorrow. I guess it is just... coming back to Great Britain after all these years – it feels like we're closer to him than we ever were.”

Lily smiled as she blinked back tears at the mention of her late husband, father of her two beautiful children, and love of her life, James Potter. It wouldn't do to break down in front of her students or children.

Thirteen years ago tomorrow, she thought solemnly.
October 31st, 1981. Halloween. Lily Potter remembered it well. She had started the evening cuddled up with her husband on the loveseat in their Godric's Hollow cottage. Their fifteen-month old son had been asleep in his swing. What neither she or her husband had known at the time was that she was also a month pregnant with their daughter, Rose. After some cuddling, Lily had decided it was time to cook dinner. She had pondered taking Harry up to his nursery, to put down to bed for the night, but Harry had been in a stage where he was very clingy to his mother. So she had brought Harry with her into the kitchen, and let him sleep in a baby carriage.

James had been in the kitchen, fixing salad, as Lily fixed pork-chops, when it happened. The front door burst open, and a monstrous wizard, known as the Dark Lord Voldemort, entered their house.

“It's him!” James growled, as he started casting his wand around, tossing about spells and charms. “Lily, Operation GTFO, Plan B.”

“Plan B?!” Lily cried, “James, no! You promised!”

“I promised to protect you and Harry!” James said, “And I will keep that promise!”

Plan B. It was something Lily had hoped would never have to come to pass. If they had done Plan A, James Potter would be alive now. But he had chosen Plan B. Both plans were similar, except for the ending. Potter Cottage – the name of the house the Potters had been living at – had been rigged with several runes which had traps, enchantments and wards in place if Voldemort or his Death Eaters attacked.

It was incredibly lucky Lily and Harry had been in the kitchen, instead of up in Harry's nursery, or they likely would have never survived the attack. Inside the kitchen, had also been the entrance to the basement. The last time Lily had ever seen her husband, was when he had kissed her, then forced her and Harry into the basement. What happened after, Lily could only guess. The corridor between the front door and the kitchen had several runes full of shields and traps. It would give Lily and Harry enough time, while James distracted Voldemort. That was where Plan B began. Plan A would have seen all three of the Potters going into the basement.

Down in the basement there was a secret door that nobody but Lily and James knew about. Not even their friends -- one of whom had been their Secret Keeper, Peter Pettigrew -- had known about the door. The door led into a very long tunnel that had been dug out by dwarves underground and had led deep into the forest behind the house. Lily, holding the carriage with Harry inside, had ran as fast as she could down the tunnel. When she reached the end of the tunnel, she knew she was far outside the reach of any possible Anti-Portkey, or Anti-Apparation Wards. She sent out several messenger Patronuses to her friends – another part of Operation GTFO. Then she grasped the carriage firmly in one of her hands, and the necklace around her throat in the other.

She called out “GTFO”, the signal for the voice-activated Portkey. As she and Harry left Godric's Hollow, she could hear a very loud explosion, and an earth-shaking rumble around her. Potter Cottage had exploded, due to certain runes inside the house. But that was part of James' Plan B – blow up the house with Voldemort inside, and the threat against James' family would be gone forever. Exactly what James had promised – that his family would be safe. He would be gone, but his family would be safe.

James Potter had been instantly killed by the explosion. Later it was discovered that Peter Pettigrew – the traitorous Secret Keeper of Potter Cottage – had also been at the Cottage, and had been killed as well. However, while Lord Voldemort's body had been disintegrated, there were rumors and whispers that Voldemort had somehow survived Death, and had escaped somehow.
The Portkey that had taken Lily and Harry Potter to France, where their good friend Sirius Black had a safe-house, which he had received from an inheritance. The morning of November 1st, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, and other friends had met Lily and Harry at the safe-house. During the following week, there had been several developments.

First, the Potter solicitor – and dear family friend – Ted Tonks had closed the Potter Accounts, with permission from Lily Potter, at Gringotts London Branch. James Potter's Will had also been locked up inside the Potter Family Vault until due time when Lily and her son would return to Great Britain. Both of these decisions turned out to be a very good thing. Rumors had spread that Lily and Harry had been killed, in the same attack that killed James Potter, and had apparently brought the end of Lord Voldemort.

Soon it had been discovered by Ted Tonks that Albus Dumbledore had started this rumor. The Potter solicitor had discovered this after the Potter Account Manager at Gringotts, Ragnok The Sixth, had told him of a meeting between the Goblin and Albus Dumbledore. Dumbledore had tried to take control of the Potter Accounts, and also James Potter's Will.

Why Albus Dumbledore had taken these actions was unknown to Lily. He had no permission to do so. This discovery had turned her against the man who she had once looked up to as a mentor.

A week after the rumors began of her and her son's deaths, Lily and Harry, and her two good friends, Sirius Black, and Remus Lupin, had fled Great Britain and Europe, and had moved to the United States. They had been living in the States ever since. Even though Lily and Harry had not changed their names, the news of their survival had not reached the shores of Great Britain – aside from Gringotts, of course. The Goblins had records which told them Lily and Harry Potter were alive, but due to instructions from Potter solicitor Ted Tonks, they were keeping that secret from everyone.

When Harry had turned eleven years of age, he had been invited to attend Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Upon hearing of this invitation, Lily and her two friends had applied for Professor roles at Ilvermorny, and had successfully been hired.

Lily Potter was one of two Potions Mistresses, teaching the younger Years at Ilvermorny. Remus Lupin and Sirius Black were hired upon as two of five Defense Professors. Unlike Hogwarts, Ilvermorny had several different class types when it came to Defense Against the Dark Arts. Remus was the Dark Creature Defense Professor, and Sirius was one of two Duel Training Professors. Unlike Great Britain, there were no prejudices toward werewolves in the United States. So Remus – a werewolf – was able to keep his job as a Professor much longer than he would have if ever had decided to do so in Great Britain.

Lily's reverie was broken as she realized she was still in the middle of a conversation with her son.

“I happen to agree with you, Harry,” Lily said, smiling at her son, “It does feel as if we're closer to your father, doesn't it?”

“Yeah,” Harry said. “Do you think he'd be happy with me? I mean – being the youngest contender for the Ilvermorny Triwizard Champion role? I mean – I doubt I'll be named the Champion, but --”

Harry blushed and Lily smiled.

“Of course he'd be happy with you, Harry,” Lily said, “Like your godfather, Sirius, your father
would probably think it would be a great prank. After all, neither Hogwarts or Beauxbatons knows you have been given special permission to become a contender, even though you're only fourteen. That will shock everyone!"

Harry laughed, then shrugged. “Like I said, I doubt I'll be chosen. Everyone here is far more talented.”

“That is nonsense, big brother, and you know it!” Lily's daughter, and Harry's sister, Rose, said. “You placed third in the contention Tournament!”

“Yes, Rose, third,” Harry said, “That means there are two others far better than me. They have a better shot.”

Lily sighed. “The placement in the tournament doesn't matter, Harry, or Professor Winston would have only brought the champion of the contention Tournament to Hogwarts.”

Harry shrugged. “I guess. Just don't get your hopes up. I've already come to terms with the fact that I'm simply here to support the Ilvermorny Champion and be a spectator for the tasks.”

Lily merely smiled and shook her head. She decided not to argue any more. Her son didn't understand that while he placed third in the contention tournament, he had done so while at fourteen years old, beating all but two sixteen and seventeen year old students. Even though two others had beat him, it didn't mean he wasn't as impressive, or skilled, or as powerful as them. He was the underdog of the contention tournament, and everyone thought he wouldn't have a chance of even been chosen as a contender. But now, even most of Lily's fellow Professors thought her son was a shoe-in for Ilvermorny Champion.

Lily wasn't sure what she thought about that. After all, the Triwizard Tournament was extremely dangerous. It had been banned for nearly two centuries, and there was a history of several deaths of past champions during the tournament. She knew if her son was chosen as Champion, there was a good chance he would seriously injured or worse. She would love if he was simply a spectator for the event. But she also knew her son was skilled and talented. In her mind, there was no denying he would be the Ilvermorny Champion.

“Pilot Black and Co-Pilot Lupin to Professor Potter,” Sirius Black's voice rang overheard, breaking Lily's thoughts, “ETA is ten minutes. Repeat. Ten minutes to Hogwarts.”

Lily brought her wand to her throat. “Ten minutes. Loud and clear. Thank you Pilot Black.”

Lily smiled as her children and the students around her reacted happily at hearing they were nearly at their destination. Lily cleared her throat loudly to get the attention of all the students. They went silent and looked at her.

“Listen up,” she said, “In ten minutes we're going to arrive on the Grounds of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. You may know that Professors Black and Lupin, and myself, were all students at Hogwarts during the seventies. All three of us are well acquainted with the castle, which is why Headmaster Winston asked the three of us to accompany you as chaperones.

“I expect when we arrive, we might be greeted by Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, his staff and the students of Hogwarts. Once we are allowed into the castle, we will enter the Entrance Hall, and wait for instructions. When it is time, we will make our way into the Great Hall. All students present will be seated together at one of the four specific tables, though the exact table has not been specified yet.
“When the Feast is over, we will return here to the Thunderbird. By then Professors Black and Lupin should have taken care of the living arrangements for us. None of you are to submit your names for contention until tomorrow morning. Am I understood?”

Harry and the rest of the contenders nodded.

“Excellent,” Lily said. “There is something else you need to know that has been kept quiet until now. For the past thirteen years, Great Britain's wizarding society has been living under the belief that myself, and my son, Harry were killed on Halloween in 1981.”

Most of the students looked shocked and concerned.

“There will likely be a lot of reactions, and a whole lot of unnecessary fuss,” Lily continued, “over the appearance of myself and my children. Please do your best to ignore it. If any of the Hogwarts or Beauxbatons staff or students speak to you about such a topic, direct them to me, Professor Black, or Professor Lupin. I do not want to hear about an international incident started by any of you, whether it be because of me and my family, or anything in general. Have I made myself clear?”

There were several nods, and murmurs of assent.

“I am not ordering you to ignore the Hogwarts and Beauxbatons students, ladies and gentleman,” Lily said. “One of the goals of this tournament is to promote International Magical Cooperation. If you want to make friends, feel free. If, perhaps, one or two of you, end up taking a Hogwarts or Beauxbatons student to the Yule Ball in December, I would not be against that –”

She grinned as several of the students chuckled.

“But please – do not be the cause of any international incident,” Lily said, “I would be most displeased with you.”

The students chuckled again, and nodded.

“Only one of you will have the honor of being the Ilvermorny Champion in the Triwizard Tournament,” Lily said, “The rest of you will be here in support of your Champion, and as spectators for the Tasks. I don't want to hear any complaints against the contender who is chosen Champion, no matter which of you it will be. We are all here to support each other. There may be rivalries amongst your Houses at Ilvermorny. But we are not at Ilvermorny right now. We'll be at Hogwarts from tonight until late June. Between now and then, these are your Housemates. Professors Black, Lupin, and myself, your Heads of House. We stand united. We are Ilvermorny!”

Lily grinned as the students – Harry and Rose included -- raised their fists and cheered.

The cheering stopped ten seconds later as Lily raised her hands. She picked up a small backpack which was resting between her legs, and opened it. She reached into it and handed a vial to her daughter, then to her son, and took one for herself. She then gave the backpack to Harry.

“Pass the bag to your neighbor, Harry,” Lily said, then she addressed her students. “These vials are filled with what is known as a Time Lapse Draught. Consider them a Jet Lag Cure. They will keep your sleeping schedules the same, even though we now have a six-to-seven hour time difference between Hogwarts and Ilvermorny. You can drink it now, and it won't make you drowsy or sleepy until your normal bedtime.”
She brought the vial to her lips and drank down the Draught. Her children followed in suit, and the students did the same, as they took a vial from the backpack. The Draught tasted like a sugary drink, and wasn't disgusting at all. Lily Potter took pride in brewing – and teaching her students how to brew – Potions and Draughts that were more delectable to the pallet, instead of those disgusting-tasting Potions she had been used to in wizarding Great Britain during the decade she had been there as a witch.

When the last student drank their vial, Lily summoned the backpack and all the vials, and stored them.

“Pilot Black and Co-Pilot Lupin to Professor Potter,” Sirius' voice rang overheard once again, “ETA is five minutes. Repeat. Five minutes to Hogwarts.”

Lily brought her wand to her throat. “Five minutes. Loud and clear. Thank you Pilot Black. Let us know when there is one minute to ETA.”

“Loud and clear, Professor Potter,” Sirius said.

Lily smiled and looked around at her children and students.

“When we set down,” she said, “You are to line up in two rows from youngest to eldest amongst you. So Harry and Rose, you will be at the front of the two lines. I will, of course, be leading everyone out. Leave your belongings, except what you have on you, in here.”

When Sirius announced one-minute to ETA, Lily stood and instructed the students to get into lines. She stood in the front center, watching the students line up. As the Thunderbird began its landing, Lily turned to the large door. Rose clutched her hand in her mother's, who looked down at her daughter with a smile.

“You nervous, Rosie?” Lily asked.

Rose shrugged and gave a small nod.

“Don't worry,” she said, “I think you'll love Hogwarts. I'm sure you'll make some friends.”

“I miss my friends,” Rose said, sighing.

“All your friends still have those mirrors you gave them, right?” Lily asked.

“Yes, Mom,” Rose said, “And I have mine.”

“Well, there you go,” Lily said, “As long as you count for time differences between here and Ilvermorny, you can still speak to your friends through the mirrors. Distance doesn't affect the mirrors.”

Rose nodded and smiled. “Okay.”

Lily smiled and squeezed her daughter's hand. “Well, there you go. I'm sure you'll have loads of fun while you're here. As long as you behave yourself.” She looked at Rose, then to Harry. “Both of you.”
“Come on, Mom,” Harry said, “We're much better than Uncle Sirius!”

Lily sighed and smiled. “Well, I can't argue with that.”

“Thunderbird has landed,” Sirius' voice rang overhead, “Students of Ilvermorny, welcome to Hogwarts!”

The rear door of the Thunderbird lowered, and turned into a ramp. Lily inhaled and exhaled, walked out of the Ilvermorny and stepped back onto British soil for the first time in thirteen years.
Friday, October 30th, 1994

Hand-in-hand with her daughter, Rose, and leading her son, Harry, and the other nine contenders for the title of Ilvermorny Champion, Lily Potter walked in the direction of the large crowd. Lily smiled as they were greeted with applause from the Hogwarts staff and students. Standing at the front and center of the group was the Headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore. A smirk crossed Lily's face as she noticed that Albus was looking at her in shock.

"Lady Potter?" Albus said, in a soft voice, "Is it really you?"

"Greetings, Headmaster Dumbledore," Lily said, "It has been a very long time."

"It has," Albus agreed, "Where is Headmaster Winston?"

"I'm afraid his illness recently took a bad turn," Lily said, "He requested that I be here in his stead. I am the Potions Mistress at Ilvermorny, and as I grew up in Great Britain, and attended Hogwarts, he decided I was the best choice to replace him in this position. Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, my friends and fellow Professors, at Ilvermorny, have also accompanied us."

Lily noticed Albus' eyes widen for merely a moment. He then nodded and glanced at Rose, then Harry. Lily frowned as she noticed him staring at Harry for much longer than he had looked at Rose. Lily cleared her throat. Albus looked away from Harry, then looked around at the other Ilvermorny students.

"I only count nine delegates," he said, "Were there complications getting a tenth, as was requested?"

"No," Lily said, "You merely miscounted. Harry is also a delegate."

Albus' eyes widened once again. But before he could say anything, Lily reached into her robes, and removed a folder of parchment, and handed it to him.

"My son has been permitted by both Headmaster Winston and the MACUSA," Lily said, "to take part as a contender for Ilvermorny Champion."
Albus sighed and took the folder. "There could be issues with that, but we can discuss this later with the other judges. May I invite you and your son to my office after the Feast?"

Lily frowned. She had rather her son didn't spend too much time in Albus Dumbledore's presence, but she knew this was necessary, if Harry was to be allowed in the Tournament.

"Of course," she said.

"Excellent," Albus said. "Beauxbatons has already arrived and are waiting for us. So how about we head on inside?"

Lily merely nodded once and motioned for the Ilvermorny students to follow her, then followed Albus through the center of the crowd of students. Albus stopped next to a woman Lily recognized as her former Transfiguration Professor, Minerva McGonagall. But, as Albus whispered something to Minerva, it was the man standing next to Minerva that caught Lily's eye. The man had aged some since Lily had seen him last, but there was no mistaking the man who she had, at one time, called her best friend. Severus Snape was staring at her, shock and rare emotion marring his expression. As Albus led her and the Ilvermorny students into the castle, Lily merely nodded once at Severus, who simply continued to stare at her.

Lily smiled as she entered the Entrance Hall. It had over sixteen years since she had stepped into this Hall. She could remember the last time she had been here. Eighteen years old, hand-in-hand with her future husband, James Potter, as they exited Hogwarts for the very last time as students. She could remember the boat ride she, James, their friends and fellow year-mates, had taken across the Great Lake, in the exact opposite route they had done so getting to Hogwarts in their first year. She could also remember their last trip on the Hogwarts Express, where James had asked her to marry him in front of their friends. Of course, she had said yes.

Lily blinked out of her reverie as Albus introduced her to the very large woman, Madame Olympe Maxime, the Beauxbatons Headmistress. She barely listened as Albus explained to Madame Maxime that Lily was there in stead of the sickly Headmaster Winston. During these introductions, the Hogwarts staff had lead the students of Hogwarts into the Great Hall.

"If you will excuse me Madame Maxime, Lady Potter, delegates of Beauxbatons and Ilvermorny," Albus said, "I must make my way into the Great Hall. My Deputy Headmistress, Minerva McGonagall, will be with you shortly to guide you into the Great Hall."

Lily merely nodded once. Albus bowed his head slightly, turned and stepped into the Great Hall. As she waited, Lily studied the Beauxbatons contenders. She quickly counted under her breath, and found there were eleven students there. However, while most of them appeared to be sixteen and seventeen, Lily also noticed a young girl – who appeared to be the same age as Rose – hand-in-hand with another girl. It was easy to see that the two girls were sisters – and Lily also had a feeling that the two girls were Veela. The younger of the two was likely there in support of her sister, much like Rose was there in support of her brother.

Lily found it rather interesting that a Veela was a contender for Beauxbatons Champion. While Lily held no ill will against Veela, she knew it was a risk for Veela to be around so many students, especially young boys who were going through the early stages of hormones. Lily made a mental note to talk with the male students of Ilvermorny. And ask them to watch themselves around the Veela. It would probably be better if her students simply avoided them, if only to prevent any issues.

Lily was so lost in her thoughts that she didn't notice her daughter, Rose, admiring the younger of the two Veela. She probably would have noticed soon enough, however the doors of the Great Hall had opened, and Lily's focus was turned to Minerva McGonagall.
"Greetings," Minerva said, "I am Hogwarts Deputy Headmistress, and Transfiguration Professor, Minerva McGonagall. I welcome you all to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry."

Lily smiled as she reminisced back to her very first day at Hogwarts, when Minerva had given a welcome speech to her and her fellow year-mates.

"A section at the closest end of two of the tables have been made available for your students to sit for the Feast," Minerva continued, "Beauxbatons will be sitting at the Hufflepuff table, and Ilvermorny will be seated with the Ravenclaws. Madame Maxime -" her voice faltered and betrayed her emotions as she looked at Lily with a smile, "Lady Potter – the two of you are, of course, welcome to sit with the Hogwarts staff at the Head Table. Madame Maxime, please lead your students inside first."

As the large woman led her students inside the Great Hall, Minerva walked over to Lily.

"Lady Potter," she said, "I could not believe my eyes when I saw you. I thought I had seen a ghost."

"Seeing ghosts isn't out of the ordinary here at Hogwarts if I remember correctly," Lily said, grinning;

Minerva laughed lightly. "Very true. If you and your students will follow me."

Lily nodded once and motioned for her students to follow.

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**Friday, October 30th, 1994**

Harry followed his mother through the tall oak doors, and into the large room known as the Great Hall. His eyes widened as he looked around the Hall. He had to grudgingly admit that it was larger, and more grand than the Great Hall at Ilvermorny. But he still favored the homely feel back at Ilvermorny.

His eyeful explorations of the Hall was interrupted by the elderly woman, Minerva McGonagall, clearing her throat. He turned to the table they had stopped at. Two students – apparently belonging to Ravenclaw – were sitting at the end of the table, where apparently the Ilvermorny students were supposed to sit. There was a large space between the two Ravenclaws and their house-mates.

"Miss Granger, Miss Lovegood," McGonagall said, "Just what are you doing at this end of the table? It was instructed that this section was off-limits."

"We couldn't find any seats down there, Professor McGonagall," a bushy-haired brunette girl said, with a frown, "Nobody would budge over and let us sit with them. So we had to sit down here."

Harry frowned as he looked at the two girls. It appeared that the girls were the outcasts of their house. Sitting beside the bushy-haired brunette was a blonde-haired girl with large eyes, a necklace made of bottle-caps, and what appeared to be radish earrings hanging from her ears. The girl's appearance alone would probably explain why she was seen as an outcast. It was rather eccentric.

"Be that as it may," McGonagall said, "I would ask that you join the rest of your House."

"That isn't necessary, ma'am," Harry said, "We would be happy if they would join us this evening."

McGonagall stared at Harry for a moment, then looked at the two girls. Harry smiled when his mother looked at him in approval. Minerva sighed and nodded.
"As you wish," she said. "However, I expect both of you to be on your best behavior toward our guests."

"Yes, ma'am," the brunette said.

Harry sat down at the end of the table, across from the two girls, and Rose sat next to him. The other nine Ilvermorny students sat down on either side of the students. Lily waved at her children in temporary farewell, before following McGonagall across the Hall.

"Hello, Harry Potter," the blonde-haired girl said.

"Luna," the brunette groaned, "That's not Harry Potter. Harry Potter died thirteen years ago. You know that."

"I'm afraid rumors of my death were greatly exaggerated, Miss," Harry said, grinning.

The brunette looked at him with wide eyes. "S-so you – you're really –?"

"Harry Potter," Harry said, "Yes, ma'am. And that auburn-haired lady is my mother, Lily. Perhaps you also heard that she had died."

The brunette nodded, then she cleared her throat. "I am sorry for being so rude. I'm Hermione Granger."

"I'm Luna Lovegood," the blonde – Luna – said.

"Rose Potter," Rose said, "Harry's sister – who is very happy that the death rumors were exaggerated. If they were true, then I wouldn't exist, because Mom was unknowingly one month pregnant with me on that Halloween night in 1981."

"I'm very happy you exist too, Rose," Luna said.

"Me too," Harry said. "Luna Lovegood, huh? Is your House part of the Great Alliance?"

Luna nodded. "It was. My Daddy said the Great Alliance was disbanded in late 1981."

"Mmm, not disbanded, per se," Harry said, "Simply made stagnant."

"What is the Great Alliance?" Hermione asked.

Before Harry could answer, he was interrupted by three sharp dings at the other end of the Hall. He looked toward the table where the staff were seated. He noticed that his mother was seated to the left of the Hogwarts Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore. The Beauxbatons Headmistress was sitting next to Lily. Harry also noticed two other empty chairs. He knew his Uncles Sirius and Lupin wouldn't be attending the Feast – as they were tending to the Ilvermorny living arrangements – so he wondered who would be seated there.

Albus Dumbledore was standing at the center of the staff table. It was eerie how fast the Great Hall – which had been filled with chatter – had gone silent as soon as the sharp dings had sounded. Obviously Dumbledore had a great presence that commanded silence.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, ghosts and — most particularly — guests," said Dumbledore, beaming around at the foreign students. "I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to Hogwarts. I hope and trust that your stay here will be both comfortable and enjoyable."

At the table behind Harry, where the Beauxbatons were seated, one of the Beauxbatons girls gave
what was unmistakeably a derisive laugh. Across from Harry, Hermione looked as if she wanted to say something rude to the Beauxbatons student, but she seemed to decide against it, as she remembered that she was surrounded by foreign students.

"The tournament will be officially opened at the end of the feast," said Dumbledore. "I now invite you all to eat, drink, and make yourselves at home!"

Harry's eyes widened as the table in front of him was suddenly full of several types of food. Along with the British and French types of food, Harry was happy to find things he recognized.

"Oh, God bless America!" Harry said, "I thought I'd be forced to eat British food!"

"And what exactly is wrong with British food?" Hermione asked, raising her eyebrows as she looked at him.

"It makes me gassy," Harry said, as he started to pile American food onto his plate, including a cheeseburger, a slab of pork ribs covered in barbeque, wedge fries, and macaroni and cheese, "You wouldn't like me when I'm gassy."

Hermione stared at him in disbelief. One of the Ilvermorny students near them, who had heard Harry, snickered. Rose, however, laughed out loud and Harry joined her.

"Oh, good," Hermione said, "So you're joking with me."

"No, he is definitely not," Rose said, still giggling.

Hermione looked from Rose, back to Harry. When Harry simply shrugged, she huffed.

"How can you dislike British food?" Hermione asked, "You're British, aren't you?!"

"I am not!" Harry exclaimed, "I'm a Yank, and proud of it!"

"Yeah!" Rose said, and the Ilvermorny students nearby made noises of agreement.

"B-but you born in Great Britain," Hermione said, "And your mother and -"

"You seem to know a lot about me, Miss Granger," Harry cut in.

Hermione's cheeks turned red and she stammered, and looked down at her meal.

"My mother and honorary Uncles may have spent most of their lives in Great Britain, that is true," Harry said, "But I've spent the past thirteen years in the United States. Rose was born and raised there. A few years back, I asked Mom – yes, we say 'Mom', and not 'Mum' – why she was raising us as Americans instead of British. She told us there was a chance we likely wouldn't step foot back on British soil for a very long time. If it wasn't for Ilvermorny being invited to the Triwizard Tournament, we'd probably still be in the United States. So Mom and our Uncles raised us American."

"I see," Hermione said, "I apologize for being so presumptive. That was right rude of me."

"You'll have to excuse my friend, Harry Potter," Luna said, "She just has a case of the Wrackspurts. It tends to happen a lot."

"Luna!" Hermione groaned; before Harry or Rose could ask what a Wrackspurt was, she continued, "So... you were going to tell me about the Great Alliance?"
"Ah, yes, the Great Alliance," Harry said. "It was a political powerhouse amongst your Wizengamot in the seventies, and the very early eighties. My Grandfather, Charlus Potter, founded the Great Alliance. The Alliance consisted of several families, or Houses – Potter, of course, Longbottom, Bones, Abbot, Greengrass, MacMillan, Boot, Patil and Lovegood." He nodded at Luna, when he said the last. "Houses Patil and Lovegood are Minor Houses and therefore they do not have a seat on the Wizengamot, but the rest of the Houses in the Alliance do."

"Wow," Hermione said, "Aside from Luna, the other houses all have children whom are students in my year. Padma Patil is my dorm-mate. She and Terry Boot are both in Ravenclaw."

"I'm afraid a few of those Houses have moved on to other Alliances," Luna said. "House Longbottom – who was once a very close ally with the Potters – is now in an Alliance headed by Headmaster Dumbledore. I know House Weasley is in that Alliance as well, and there are likely others which skipped my mind at the moment."

"Probably due to Wrackspurts," Hermione muttered.

"Oh, definitely!" Luna agreed, "Years ago the Weasleys were a Minor House like mine, but Headmaster Dumbledore worked his influence, and now the Weasleys are Noble House, and therefore Lord Arthur Weasley sits on the Wizengamot. House Boot and MacMillan also left the Great Alliance, and formed their own. The other Houses, however, including my own, would likely be most happy to continue the Great Alliance if it was brought back."

"I see," Harry said, before taking a large bite out of his hamburger.

The truth was, he wasn't exactly too interested in the Great Alliance, or British politics in general. It didn't matter much to him since he didn't hold much stake in Great Britain anyway. But it was always nice to know that House Potter still might have some friends in Great Britain.

"So is your mother the Headmistress of Ilvermorny?" Hermione asked.

Harry laughed. "Not even close. She's simply a lowly Potions Mistress. Headmaster Winston, a first-gen, is very ill, and could not make the trip. So he asked my mother to take his place here. He figured she would be a good choice since she lived in Great Britain most of her life, and attended Hogwarts."

Hermione nodded. "What did you call your Headmaster? A first...?"

"First-gen," Harry said, "You would call him a 'Muggleborn'. Americans believe the word 'Muggle' is very rude. I mean in British terms, calling someone a 'mug' literally means they're a stupid, or gullible person. Calling someone a Muggle is a great insult, Hermione."

Hermione's eyes widened. "Oh, Merlin. How did I never realize that? My own parents are – are – ugh, I can't say it now because it sounds like an insult!"

"We call them No-Maj," Rose said.

Hermione's expression brightened. "That is a much better term! I like that!"

"So you're a first-gen then?" Harry asked.

"Yes," Hermione said, "I like that term too. Better than Muggleborn. First-gen... like first generation of witch or wizard."

"Exactly," Harry said, "My mother is a first-gen too. She was the first witch in her family – at least
"she was the first in several generations."

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked, "She had magical ancestors?"

"Maybe," Harry said, shrugging, "There is a running theory that first-gens had ancestors who were magical, and then at one point had a child who was a Squib, who then went onto have children of their own. Children of most Squibs rarely ever show magic, so they're usually just referred to as No-Maj. A first-gen – you go with the theory – is simply a child lucky enough to have been given magic after it had skipped several generations."

"So one of my ancestors could have been a witch or wizard who had a Squib for a child?" Hermione asked.

"If you believe the theory," Harry said, nodding, "Anyway, Mom doesn't exactly know because she never took a Blood Test, which is a test given by Goblins at Gringotts that would inform you about any magical ancestor. She never took one in America because there was really no point. American blood tests only show ancestors who were American. Only British tests would show the British ancestors."

Hermione nodded. "So is that why the two of you are here? Simply because your mother is in charge of the Ilvermorny delegates?"

"That's why Rose is here," Harry said, "I, however, am a contender for the Ilvermorny Champion."

"But that is impossible!" Hermione exclaimed, "You're – what – fourteen? Headmaster Dumbledore said only seventeen year olds can compete."

"Ilvermorny had a contention tournament in September," Harry said, "The top ten students, no matter their age, would be allowed to be in contention. Headmaster Winston and the MACUSA – that is the magical Congress in America, much like your Wizengamot – allowed it. I was the youngest to compete, but there were students between fifteen and seventeen also competing. In the end, four sixteen year olds, and five seventeen year olds made it in. And so did I. I took third place in the tournament."

"Third?!" Hermione asked, "Out of how many students?"

"About thirty or so," Harry said, shrugging.

"Wow," Hermione mouthed silently. "That's brilliant!"

"If you say so," Harry said, with another shrug. "Headmaster Winston and the MACUSA promised I would be a contender for the Ilvermorny Champion. And here I am. More than likely, I'll be a spectator and someone older than me will be the Champion. So it really doesn't matter that I am so young."

"Oh, you'll be the Champion, Harry Potter," Luna said, smiling.

Harry blinked, and smiled softly. "Thanks for the vote of confidence, Luna. But I have already made my peace. There's nothing wrong with being a spectator and supporting the Champion."

"No there isn't," Luna said, "I'll be happy to spectate you performing in the tasks. I will support you too, along with the Hogwarts Champion."

Harry sighed and shrugged. It appeared there was no point of changing Luna's mind about her believing he'd be the Champion. He knew she was probably merely supporting him because their
Houses were in an Alliance, but it was nice all the same.

Friday, October 30th, 1994

Lily, currently seated between Albus Dumbledore, and Beauxbatons Headmistress, Madame Olympe Maxime, was munching on wedge fries as she watched her children talking to the two Ravenclaw students. She was mostly trying to avoid looking toward Severus Snape, who was seated a few chairs down from her. It had been a very long time since she had spoken to him, and she didn't know what she wanted to say to him now, so she merely tried her best to say nothing.

"Minerva," Lily said, turning to look around Albus toward the Deputy Headmistress, "Would you please tell me about those two girls speaking to my children. The blonde looks oddly familiar for some reason, and I can't place it."

"The blonde would be Luna Lovegood," Minerva said, "Daughter of Xenophilius, and the late Pandora Lovegood."

Lily inhaled sharply, and mentally kicked herself. Pandora. How could she have forgotten? Pandora had been one of her most dearest friends in Hogwarts. She remembered getting a letter – during her time at Potter Cottage back when her husband was still alive – from Pandora announcing the birth of her daughter, Luna. Then, less than five years ago, she had seen an article in the Daily Prophet – she had a subscription of the newspaper which delivered day-old issues to her every day – that informed her that Pandora had been killed in a Potions accident at her home in Ottery St. Catchpole.

Now she knew why the blonde looked so familiar. Luna was almost identical to her mother.

"The other girl is Hermione Granger," Minerva continued; oblivious to Lily's reverie, "A Muggleborn, much like yourself."

Lily winced at the term 'Muggleborn'. She loathed that term. First-Gen was a far better term.

"She is also known as the smartest witch of her generation," Albus said, with a light chuckle, "Much like you were, Lady Potter."

Lily flushed at the compliment. However, she also realized Albus was probably trying to butter her up. The man was manipulative – Lily had known this since the day she found out he had tried to take over the Potter Account at Gringotts. The man would say one thing, but mean another. She wasn't going to fall for it.

Lily smiled as she looked at the brunette, the First-Gen Hermione Granger. If Albus' comment about the witch was anything to go by, along with the fact that the girl seemed to be getting along well with her own children, Lily felt she might come to like the young brunette witch.

Lily wanted to continue the conversation about both of the young witches – including why they were sitting alone at the end of the table when Lily, her children and students had arrived – but she was interrupted by a noise behind her. She looked over her shoulder and found that two men had entered through a doorway at the back of the Hall. They made their way over to Albus.

Even though it had been thirteen years since she had been in Great Britain, Lily recognized Bartemius Crouch, Senior. Lily could still remember the rants her husband, James, had about the man. James used to say it was Crouch's fault he hadn't been able to become an Auror. That was probably true. Bartemius Crouch had been the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement back then, after all.
"Bartemius, Ludo," Albus greeted, "You're rather late to the festivities. I expected you to be here before the Feast began."

"Blame that one on Barty, here," the man named Ludo said, "Apparently there were complications with the Goblet of Fire."

"That was not my fault, Bagman!" Crouch snarled. "There were two rookie Aurors who – for some damn reason – didn't recognize me at first. They were guarding the Goblet, and had to check through Amelia Bones before they could allow me to collect the blasted artifact!"

"I trust it is here now?" Albus asked.

"Of course, of course," Ludo said, "I handed it off to that endearing caretaker chap of yours. He is a very interesting man, is he not? By the way, where is Headmaster Winston, Albus? I do not see him."

"I'm afraid his illness has taken a turn for the worse," Albus said, "He asked one of his Professors at Ilvermorny to come in his stead. Perhaps you recognize her? Lady Lily Potter, may I introduce you to Ludo Bagman and -"

"Bartemius Crouch," Lily said, "Senior, right? I remember you well."

Both Crouch and Bagman's eyes widened as they looked at Lily.

"Aren't you supposed to be dead?" Crouch asked Lily.

"Barty, what a thing to say?" Ludo exclaimed, before turning to Lily, "My apologies for my friend's outburst, Lady Potter. He's had a rather rough night."

"Apology accepted," Lily said, "It is very nice to meet you."

"I imagine the two of you would like to take your seats," Albus said, motioning to the empty chairs, "You'll want to get something to eat before the food disappears. You must try the hot dogs. American delicacy!"

"I would rather not eat a dog, thank you very much," Crouch muttered as he turned and walked to his seat.

Lily did her best not to snicker. Obviously the old grouch didn't know what hot dogs were.

"You'll have to forgive Bartemius, Lady Potter, Madame Maxime," Albus said, "He's been overworked lately what with the Triwizard Tournament, and the fiasco at the Quidditch World Cup."

"Ah yes, the fiasco," Lily asked. "I heard a bit about it, but I'm afraid I don't know the whole tale."

Albus sighed heavily, and started in on the tale.

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Friday, October 30th, 1994

Harry, Rose, Hermione and Luna were chatting animatedly about the differences between life in Great Britain and America, as much of the food on the table disappeared, only to be replaced with desserts. Harry's mouth watered as he collected a slice of apple pie, and some fudge brownies. He added a scoop of vanilla ice cream on top of the pie.

"Good Merlin, that is a lot more dessert options than I am used to here at Hogwarts," Hermione said.
"I would think much of it is American or French, but I know my fair share of French desserts."

"Let me guess," Harry said, grinning, "there is more American dessert options here than British and French combined."

"I'm sure you're exaggerating," Hermione said.

"No, I think he's right," Luna said, before munching on a doughnut and swallowing the bite, "I thought doughnuts were breakfast food, however."

Rose shrugged. "We Americans tend to go overboard on desserts. Doughnuts are usually breakfast food, but I imagine your house-elves decided it is a dessert since it a sweet pastry."

Hermione grumbled as she chewed on a British dessert Harry couldn't name.

"You'll have to excuse Hermione," Luna said, "She has a – er – differed opinion on house-elves than most magicals do. She threatened to go on a hunger strike when she discovered house-elves were working in Hogwarts. But when she remembered she needed to eat to live, she started something called spew."

"It isn't spew, Luna!" Hermione growled, "It is SPEW. The Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare!"

"Sounds like spew to me," Harry said, chuckling; he sobered as Hermione glared at him, "I'm serious, Hermione. You might call it SPEW, but most will refer to it as spew. Therefore, they will make jokes of it, and you'll never get the respect it deserves."

Hermione frowned. "I suppose you might have a good point there."

Once the golden plates had been wiped clean, Dumbledore stood up again. A pleasant sort of tension seemed to fill the Hall now. "The moment has come," said Dumbledore, smiling around at the sea of upturned faces. "The Triwizard Tournament is about to start. I would like to say a few words of explanation before we bring in the casket —"

"The what?" Rose muttered to Harry.

Harry simply shrugged.

"— just to clarify the procedure that we will be following this year. But first, let me introduce, for those who do not know them, Mr. Bartemius Crouch, Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation" — there was a smattering of polite applause — "and Mr. Ludo Bagman, Head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports."

There was a much louder round of applause for Bagman than for Crouch, and Harry realized why. Even in America, the name Ludo Bagman was popular amongst those who loved the sport of Quidditch. Obviously the students were excited to have a Quidditch star in Hogwarts.

"Mr. Bagman and Mr. Crouch have worked tirelessly over the last few months on the arrangements for the Triwizard Tournament," Dumbledore continued, "and they will be joining myself, Lady Potter, and Madame Maxime on the panel that will judge the champions' efforts."

There were several mutterings and whispers around the Hall as soon as Harry's mother's name was mentioned. It seemed that most of the students in the Hall didn't know exactly who Harry's mother was until Dumbledore had mentioned her.
At the mention of the word "champions," the attentiveness of the listening students seemed to sharpen. Perhaps Dumbledore had noticed their sudden stillness, for he smiled as he said, "The casket, then, if you please, Mr. Filch."

The man named Filch, who had been lurking unnoticed in a far corner of the Hall, now approached Dumbledore carrying a great wooden chest encrusted with jewels. It looked extremely old. A murmur of excited interest rose from the watching students.

"The instructions for the tasks the champions will face this year have already been examined by Mr. Crouch and Mr. Bagman," said Dumbledore as Filch placed the chest carefully on the table before him, "and they have made the necessary arrangements for each challenge. There will be three tasks, spaced throughout the school year, and they will test the champions in many different ways... their magical prowess — their daring — their powers of deduction — and, of course, their ability to cope with danger."

At this last word, the Hall was filled with a silence so absolute that nobody seemed to be breathing.

"As you know, three champions compete in the tournament," Dumbledore went on calmly, "one from each of the participating schools. They will be marked on how well they perform each of the Tournament tasks and the champion with the highest total after task three will win the Triwizard Cup. The champions will be chosen by an impartial selector: the Goblet of Fire."

Dumbledore now took out his wand and tapped three times upon the top of the casket. The lid creaked slowly open. Dumbledore reached inside it and pulled out a large, roughly hewn wooden cup. It would have been entirely unremarkable had it not been full to the brim with dancing blue-white flames.

Dumbledore closed the casket and placed the goblet carefully on top of it, where it would be clearly visible to everyone in the Hall. "Anybody wishing to submit themselves as champion must write their name and school clearly upon a slip of parchment and drop it into the goblet," said Dumbledore. "Aspiring champions have twenty-four hours in which to put their names forward. Tomorrow night, Halloween, the goblet will return the names of the three it has judged most worthy to represent their schools. The goblet will be placed in the entrance hall tonight, where it will be freely accessible to all those wishing to compete.

"To ensure that no underage student yields to temptation," said Dumbledore, "I will be drawing an Age Line around the Goblet of Fire once it has been placed in the entrance hall. Nobody under the age of seventeen will be able to cross this line."

Harry frowned as he stared at the Hogwarts Headmaster. That announcement could cause issues for his own entry. He then caught his mother looking at him, and when she caught his eye, she merely smiled and winked. Obviously this meant she would be taking care of the problem.

"Finally," Dumbledore continued, "I wish to impress upon any of you wishing to compete that this tournament is not to be entered into lightly. Once a champion has been selected by the Goblet of Fire, he or she is obliged to see the tournament through to the end. The placing of your name in the goblet constitutes a binding, magical contract. There can be no change of heart once you have become a champion. Please be very sure, therefore, that you are wholeheartedly prepared to play before you drop your name into the goblet. Now, I think it is time for bed. Good night to you all."

"My fellow Ilvermorny students," one of the eldest of the Ilvermorny students said, "We'll wait here for Professor Potter, and let the rest of the Hall clear out."

Harry, Rose, and the other Ilvermorny students nodded and murmured in assent. Harry turned to
Hermione and Luna.

"Miss Granger, Miss Lovegood," he said, "It was lovely to meet the two of you. I hope this isn't the last time we'll have such a wonderful conversation."

"I think we'll be great friends, Harry Potter," Luna said.

"I would be happy to continue our conversation at another time," Hermione said, "I have so much to ask you about Ilvermorny. Oh, and Harry... do please call me Hermione."

"Of course," Harry said.

Hermione smiled, and Harry noticed a slight blush in the brunette’s cheeks. Harry made a mental note to later discover the reason behind the blush.

Harry and Rose said 'good night', which was returned by Hermione and Luna, before the Ravenclaw girls stood and joined the queue out of the Hall. Harry frowned, as he noticed several students staring in his direction. Obviously they now realized exactly who he was.

Harry secretly waved his wand under the table, casting a mild Notice-Me-Not Charm, on himself and his sister. The modified version, which had been taught to him by his mother, allowed him to give permission to those who could pass the charm. Harry gave permission to his fellow Ilvermorny students and mother, to pass through the Charm. At once, those students who were staring at him now looked away and headed out of the Hall. Once the last of the students were out of the Hall, leaving only the Ilvermorny students and the adults inside, Harry stopped the Charm.

Harry's mother and Albus Dumbledore made their way over to the Ilvermorny students.

"Students," Lily said, "Please head toward the Thunderbird. Professors Black and Lupin have set up the living arrangements, and will give further instruction when you arrive. Harry, you are to come with me. We have to speak to the other Tournament judges about your entry as a contender."

"What about me?" Rose asked.

"Go find Uncles Sirius and Remus, Rosie," Lily said, "Harry and I will be with you soon enough."

Rose nodded. She stood with the rest of the Ilvermorny students, aside from Harry, and left the Great Hall. Harry then stood and followed his mother and Dumbledore out of the Hall.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished!

Next Chapter: Harry and Lily speak to Dumbledore and the other Tournament judges regarding Harry's entry into the Tournament. Then, we discover exactly who is working with Voldemort, instead of the deceased Peter Pettigrew.

I very much hope you liked this chapter!
Meetings And Tents

Chapter Notes

Warning: Mild discussion of Fem-Slash.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Friday, October 30th, 1994

Harry Potter was currently standing in the tallest room he had ever seen. Albus Dumbledore called it the Grand Staircase – Harry decided it was an appropriate name what with the numerous stairs. Several flights of stairs were moving around. Also, there were hundreds and hundreds of moving portraits adorning the walls – the inhabitants of the closest portraits were smiling and waving at him as he passed.

“This is awesome!” Harry exclaimed, as they traversed the first set of stairs, “I wish we had one of these in Ilvermorny.”

“Truth be told, I think it is quite unnecessary,” Lily said.

“Oh?” Albus Dumbledore asked.

“During my time here as a student, I was truant to class a total of two times, Professor,” Lily said, “I would have been on time if it hadn't been for these stairs. Both times, they brought me to the wrong levels, and I had to find another way to get from that floor to another floor, and I was late because of it. Plus they are rather dangerous.”

“They have their faults, of course,” Dumbledore said, “But I believe once one masters the secrets of the Grand Staircase, then it is a piece of cake – as Muggles say – to traverse them!”

Harry's mother made a noncommittal sound. Soon they were making their way through the corridors of the second floor, on their way to the Headmaster's Office.

“Albus,” Lily said, “Please tell me you did not invite Severus Snape into this meeting in your office.”

“I am the only representative of Hogwarts in the meeting, Lady Potter, I assure you,” Dumbledore said. “However, I am sure Severus would be happy to speak to you if you give him a chance.”

“I'll think about it, Albus,” Lily said. “I'm just not ready yet.”

Harry frowned as he looked at his mother. He remembered stories his mother and uncles had told him of Severus Snape. According to his mother's stories, Severus Snape was her first magical friend, and she had met him a couple years before she had received her Hogwarts letter. Then at the end of their fifth year, they had a really bad argument that had brought an end to their friendship.

Uncles Sirius and Remus spoke of a man who had basically bullied Sirius, Remus and his father, James – though Remus did admit that they did give as much as they had received in terms of
bullying. They also referenced to a really bad event at the end of their sixth year, but Harry suspected they hadn't told him the entire story.

They also mentioned that Severus Snape was one of Voldemort's Death Eaters. But it sounded as if Snape was a Hogwarts staff member. Surely Albus Dumbledore wouldn't have hired a known Death Eater as a Professor?

Soon they arrived at a statue of a frightening-looking gargoyle.

“Fizzing Whizbees,” Dumbledore said.

Harry jumped slightly, as the gargoyle sprang to life, and side-stepped. The wall the statue had been guarding seemed to melt in on itself, revealing an archway, which revealed a circular staircase. Harry and his mother followed Dumbledore up the stairs. Soon they stepped into the Headmaster's office.

Harry explored the office with his eyes. He had visited Headmaster Winston's office a handful of times in the three-plus years he had been a student at Ilvermorny. While Dumbledore's office was quite extravagant, Harry was partial to Headmaster Winston's, which was inviting, warm and homely. Headmaster Winston's office had two chairs and a sofa near a fireplace in one corner of the room, and every meeting he had with students would take place there.

He thought it was far more inviting then simply sitting at a desk. Obviously Dumbledore didn't share this belief, given that the mahogany desk in the back-center of the room seemed to be the central figure of the room.

Aside from the desk, there were three other distinctive features in the room.

Like the Grand Staircase, the room was adorned in portraits. Harry remembered his mother once telling him that the portraits were of the past Headmasters and Headmistresses of the school. Ilvermorny had what was called a Hall of Heads, where – instead of portraits, there were busts of Headmaster and Headmistresses, whose heads were very talkative.

Sitting on a perch near Dumbledore's desk was a magnificent-looking phoenix. Harry had only ever seen one other phoenix before in his life, and that had been during a Care of Magical Creatures lesson. The last distinctive feature was the famous Sorting Hat, which dated back to the Founders of Hogwarts. Lily, Sirius and Remus had told the story of their meeting with the Sorting Hat, when they were all Sorted into Gryffindor, but Harry preferred Ilvermorny's method of Sorting. He admitted he might have been biased.

Madame Maxime, Bartemius Crouch and Ludo Bagman were already present in the office. Minerva McGonagall was also there.

“Thank you, Professor McGonagall, for escorting our guests here,” Dumbledore said, as he crossed the room toward his desk. “You may be excused.”

Minerva bowed slightly and proceeded to leave the office. Dumbledore conjured five chairs near his desk, one of which was large enough to support Madame Maxime. Harry and Lily crossed the room and sat down in two of the chairs. Ludo Bagman took another chair, and Madame Maxime sat down in the larger chair.

“Thank you, Albus,” Crouch said, “But I prefer standing.”
“Of course,” Dumbledore said. “We are here to discuss an unexpected twist when it comes to possible contenders for the Triwizard Tournament. Lady Potter informed me that Ilvermorny chose their ten contenders through a very creative way. Lady Potter, I believe you will tell the story far better than I.”

“Thank you, Albus,” Lily said, “With the permission of Headmaster Winston, and the MACUSA, Ilvermorny students between the age of fourteen and seventeen were allowed to take place in the contention tournament which took place in September. My son, Harry, here, was the only fourteen year old wizard to place his name in the tournament. Roughly twenty-nine other students, ranging from fifteen to seventeen participated. The top ten students – no matter their age – would be invited to submit their names into the Goblet of Fire. Out of thirty students, four sixteen year old students, and five seventeen year old students made the list. As did my son.”

“Let me get this straight,” Crouch said, “You expect us to grant your son to place his name in the Goblet of Fire? A fourteen-year old?”

Harry bristled at Crouch's words. Obviously the old grouch didn't believe Lily's story.

“If Headmaster Winston and MACUSA believed Mr. Potter was qualified enough to be a contender,” Dumbledore said, “Then I believe that is enough of a reason for us to accept him as a contender for the Ilvermorny Champion. Mr. Potter? Do you believe you qualify to be a contender?”

“Out of thirty students in the tournament,” Harry said, “I placed third. Personally, I think there are at least two other contenders who have a better chance than me, but...”

“Mr. Potter, you underestimate yourself!” Bagman exclaimed, “Third place in a tournament of thirty – and all your opponents were older than you? Some three years older, the same age as those would be your opponents if you were chosen as Ilvermorny Champion? Mr. Potter, I think you deserve to be a contender, and perhaps even the Champion!”

Harry blushed and smiled at Bagman.

“Madame Maxime?” Dumbledore asked, “You've been silent. What do you think?”

“I do not know Monsieur Potter, Dumbly-door,” Madame Maxime said, “But eef 'e is 'ere as a contender, zan zere must be a reason. Eef 'e becomes Champion, I would 'aff no complaints. If ze Goblet chooses 'im, zan 'e is the rightful Ilvermorny Champion.”

“Well said, Madame Maxime,” Dumbledore said, “Bartemius?”

Crouch snorted. “Let him put his name in the blasted artifact. If the Goblet accepts him, then there is no reason for complaints. If the Goblet chooses him over nine older, obviously more talented students –”

Harry bristled again. Hadn't he proven he was more talented than at least seven of his fellow contenders?

“-- then he is far better than I expect him to be,” Crouch continued.

Harry did his best not to react. That was definitely a back-handed compliment.

“I assume you agree that your son should have permission to enter his name in the Goblet, Lily?”
Dumbledore asked.

“Of course I do, Albus,” Lily said.

“Excellent,” Albus said, clapping his hands together, “A unanimous decision then! After Lady Potter informed me of this new change, I was considering all possibilities. As we know, Ilvermorny has a fourteen-year old contender, as well as sixteen year old contenders. One of my decisions, unfortunately, would upset you Madame Maxime.”

“What decision eez zis?” Madame Maxime asked.

“I was considering allowing sixteen year old students to enter their name,” Albus said, “Unfortunately, all your students are seventeen years old --”

Maxime snorted. “If Monsieur Potter can achieve a spot as a contender, zen obviously age eez not a problem. I am content wiz my ten seventeen-year old students. If you wish to permit sixteen year olds – in addition to Harry Potter -- in the Tournament, and the other judges agree, I'll allow it.”

“Show of hands?” Dumbledore asked.

All five judges raised their hand – Crouch, surprisingly, was far more cooperative this time.

"Very well," Dumbledore said, "I will pass along the announcement to the Hogwarts Heads of House so that they may inform the sixteen year olds of the decision. I will simply modify the Age Line to allow sixteen year old students and older.”

“And what about Harry?” Lily asked.

“Mr. Potter, do you have your wand?” Dumbledore asked.

Harry nodded and removed his wand from his robes. Dumbledore conjured a piece of parchment, which seemed to be shimmering.

“Tap your wand on this parchment, Mr. Potter,” Dumbledore said, “It will temporarily place a copy of your magical signature on it, and I can transfer the signature to the Age Line to accept you.”

“Hold up!” Lily exclaimed, “A lot can be done with the possession of somebody's magical signature, Albus. I want your promise that you will only use it for the Age Line and no other reason.”

“I give my sincere promise that I will use it for this simple reason, Lady Potter,” Albus said, “Then I will destroy the parchment and its ashes.”

Harry watched as his mother stared at Dumbledore for a moment, studying him.

“Fine,” Lily said, “But if I get any indication you broke your promise --”

“Warning well received, Lady Potter,” Dumbledore said; he indicated the parchment, “Mr. Potter?”

Harry hesitated for a mere moment before he tapped the tip of his wand onto the parchment. It shone with sparkles, then returned to its previous form.

“Thank you, Mr. Potter,” Dumbledore said, “If there are no other questions or comments, I believe
this meeting is finished.”

“I need to speak to you after this meeting, Albus,” Lily said, “Aside from that, no other comments.”

Dumbledore nodded, then looked around at the other judges. None of them had questions or comments. Albus excused the other judges and they stood and left the office.

“How may I help you, Lady Potter?” Dumbledore asked.

“The summer before my husband died,” Lily said, “You spoke to James and made a request of him. You asked James if you could borrow his Invisibility Cloak, and you never returned it.”

Harry's eyebrows raised. He had heard stories of his father's Invisibility Cloak from his mother and Uncles, but they never told him what had happened to it. Why did Dumbledore borrow his father's Cloak? His mother and Uncles told him that Dumbledore could become invisible without it.

“I believe it is time it is returned to its rightful owner,” Lily continued.

She looked at Harry with a smile, and his eyes widened. Was she really giving him his father's Invisibility Cloak?

“Unfortunately I do not have it nearby at this moment in time,” Dumbledore said, “But if you give me until Sunday evening, I promise to return your husband's Cloak. As I'm sure you understand, I will be very busy between now and tomorrow evening.”

Lily sighed heavily. “Fine. You have until Sunday evening. And Albus? I know exactly what my husband's Cloak looks, feels, and smells like. As do Sirius and Remus. We will know if it is the wrong one.”

“Of course,” Dumbledore said, “If that is all, I have much to do this evening before I can call it a night.”

“It is,” Lily said.

“Then I have one last thing to say to both of you, and then you can leave,” Dumbledore said, “Thirteen years ago tomorrow night, I received some horrible news that absolutely gutted me. Two of my greatest students, and their child, had been murdered by Voldemort. I am now beyond happy to know that the two of you survived that tragic night. I can only imagine what you went through that evening. James' sacrifice will always be on my mind. He was a true Gryffindor, the bravest of the brave. I will raise a glass to him tonight, thanking him for protecting the two of you.”

Lily cleared her throat, and Harry knew she was likely trying not to cry.

“Thank you Albus,” Lily said, “That means so much to me.”

“To us, sir,” Harry said.

Albus smiled. “You are very welcome. Welcome back to Great Britain, Lily and Harry Potter. I very much hope you will enjoy your stay.”

Friday, October 30th, 1994
Twenty minutes later, Harry and his mother walked the short trip between the steps of Hogwarts, toward the Thunderbird. Standing near the Thunderbird were five separate tents. As they approached the craft and the tents, Harry's Godfather/honorary Uncle stepped out of the back of the Thunderbird, and down the ramp. He grinned when he saw Harry and Lily.

“Was beginning to wonder when you'd return!” Sirius said, “What do you think of Hogwarts, pup?”

“You'll always be my pup, pup!” Sirius said grinning.

Harry sighed and shook his head. Then he grinned. “Hogwarts is pretty incredible, but it makes one miss Ilvermorny.”

“That it does,” Sirius said, with a great sigh.

“Anyway,” Lily said, “Give me a report on the living arrangements, Sirius.”

“It is just as we discussed before we made the trip, Lily,” Sirius said. “Five wizarding tents – which, as you know, means they're bigger on the inside than they are on the outside. The closest tent is the House Potter tent.”

“House Potter?” Harry asked.

“It is where you, Rose, your mother, and Remus and I will be sleeping,” Sirius explained. “As for the older students – well, we have three girls and six boys. So that was pretty easy to divide them up. One girl for every two guys.”

“Sirius!” Lily growled.

“Alright, alright, of course I'm joking!” Sirius said, hastily, “Keep your panties on! One of the tents is for the girls. Then two of the other tents have three boys a piece. And the final tent is the classroom tent, complete with the portable library, and three separate small classrooms. Each residential tent has three bedrooms. While the other tents have one bed per bedroom, the House Potter tent has two beds per room. Remus and I have claimed a room; Lily, you and Rose claim another room, and Harry will get another room for himself. Of course, pup, you are most welcome to invite someone into your room --”

“Sirius!” Lily growled in an I'm-warning-you voice.

“Lily, your son is fourteen,” Sirius said, “And there's a really good chance he'll become Champion. The girls will flock – ow! Merlin, woman!”

Harry snickered. Lily had whipped out her wand and had hit Sirius in the chest with a Stinging Hex. His godfather would never change.

“Behave, or the next hex goes below the belt,” Lily warned Sirius.

Sirius winced and crossed his legs. Harry couldn't blame him.

“I think that is it with the living arrangements,” Sirius said, “The Thunderbird will remain here for
the evening. Tomorrow I'll figure out a better place to park it. And that is everything I can think of. Let's go inside and I'll give you the grand tour.”

Harry followed his mother and Sirius into the tent. Harry grinned as he looked around. He had been in his fair share of magical tents over his lifetime. Every year since he was seven years old, his mother and Uncles has taken him and Rose on annual camping trips at several parks around the United States. By far, Harry's favorite had been the Rocky Mountain National Park. Due to the appearance of the tents looking normal on the outside, and the wonder of Muggle Repelling Charms, the magical tents could be used around the No-Majes in the parks, which made for a lovely, and comfortable vacation.

The three bedrooms were spread out at the three corners of the tent – the fourth corner being the doorway. The kitchen was nestled against one wall, and the bathroom against another wall. The dining room/living room was located in the very center.

They found Remus and Rose sitting at a table, having an animated discussion, and drinking from cups of hot cocoa.

“There you are!” Rose said, grinning, when she saw her mother and brother; she pointed to the farthest corner in the tent, “Harry, your bedroom's over there. Have a look, get in your pajamas, then come join us for some cocoa.”

“Yes, bossy,” Harry said.

Rose stuck out her tongue. Harry crossed the tent, and stepped into his bedroom. While the other two bedrooms had two beds a piece, Harry's room had one bed. Though, Harry doubted the beds in the other rooms were as big as his. It seemed to be two beds magically merged together. Harry realized Sirius must have done it on purpose – given his earlier hints about Harry having 'room-mates'.

Harry found his two trunks at the end of the bed. One of the trunks was solely for his school belongings, while the other trunk had clothes and other personal items. Harry opened the personal trunk, and rummaged through it, until he found his pajamas – which were adorned with the mascot of his Ilvermorny House, the Wampus. Sirius had given him the pajamas for his birthday, and the first night he wore them, he realized why they had been Sirius' gift. He had been woken several times by the loud growls of the animated mascots. He complained to his mother the following day. Lily used Charms to silence the mascots, then she screamed at Sirius for costing her son crucial sleeping hours for a simple gag gift.

Harry dressed in his pajamas, then left his bedroom and headed to the dining room and sat down at the table. Like Harry's pajamas, Rose was also wearing pajamas that represented her Ilvermorny House, Pukwudgie; the outfit had animated mascots all over the fabric.

“So, Harry.” Remus said, “Rosie was just telling us of a First-Gen witch you and her met during dinner. According to Rose, this witch might just very well have a crush on you.”

Harry blushed and glared at Rose.

“What?!” Rose asked, “She was blushing at times when looking at you. Surely you caught it once or twice! You're good at catching those type of things!”

“Exactly,” Sirius said, “And who do you have to thank for teaching you how to catch such behavior?”
Harry ignored him. “Even if you're right, Rosie. I'm sure she has a boyfriend already.”

“Harry, she was sitting with Luna at the very end of the table,” Rose said, “Do you not remember the large space between them and the rest of their House?”

Harry shrugged. “So her boyfriend is from a different House. Mom, didn't you tell us that there is an age-old rule that students can only sit at their House tables during the big Feasts.”

“And then they can sit at other tables during normal meals,” Lily said, nodding.

“Of course you know that rule, Lily,” Sirius said, with a snort. “I lost count of how many times Amos Diggory joined our table in fourth year just to sit with his girlfriend – you.”

Lily blushed, and Harry and Rose grinned at each other. They had heard the story before.

“And I lost count of how many times James nearly blew a gasket watching you and Diggory flirt,” Remus said, grinning.

Sirius laughed. “That had been an interesting Gryffindor-Hufflepuff Quidditch match. James absolutely plowed Diggory into the ground going for that Snitch. He volunteered for Seeker once what's-his-face – the current Seeker at the time got injured – a week before the match, simply so he could take on Diggory.”

“Wasn't there a rumor James hexed the Seeker so he could take his place?” Remus asked, “He never confirmed whether that was true.”

Lily cleared her throat. “Enough about our school-aged antics, boys. We're discussing Harry's new friend.”

“I concede that you have a good point, big brother,” Rose said, “But what if Hermione and Luna are alone tomorrow at breakfast? It will be a normal meal.”

“We'll see what happens,” Harry said, “You might be wrong, after all. She might not have been blushing because of a crush.”

Rose snorted into her cup of cocoa.

Harry smirked. “You know, Rosie – if I remember correctly, I noticed this evening that there was somebody you were admiring from afar.”

“Harry!” Rose squealed.

“What is this?” Sirius asked, “Does my sweet, little, innocent Rosie have a crush?”

“I don't want to talk about,” Rose said, “They'll never accept me anyway.”

“They?” Remus asked, smiling, “Not 'he'?”

Rose blushed as red as her hair. Harry, Lily, Sirius and Remus shared smiles. During the previous summer, Rose had called for a private family meeting. She announced that she was bisexual – attracted to girls more than guys, but not enough to simply be a lesbian. That had caused a long
discussion. By the end, it was understood that Rose was mature enough to make her own decisions, but she also knew she had a role as the Heiress of her House. While Harry was the Heir Apparent, Rose was still an Heiress, and had a responsibility. In the end, it was agreed that further discussion on the topic could wait until Rose had a boyfriend – or girlfriend, if it happened that way.

“Fine!” Rose huffed, “It's a girl.”

“Hmm,” Lily said, “Is it Hermione's friend, Luna?”

Rose shook her head. “She's sweet, but she's not my type.”

“I know who it is,” Harry said, in a sing-song voice. “I don't know her name, but I know who it is.”

“It doesn't matter,” Rose said, frowning, “I don't have a chance with her. Everything I know about her tells me that.”

“Everything you know about her?” Remus asked. “So you did meet her.”

“I meant... her kind,” Rose muttered.

“Oh,” Lily said, grinning, “I think I know who it is. Is she a Beauxbatons student?”

“Mom!” Rose said, her face as red as her hair once again.

“Come on then,” Sirius said, “Tell us. Don't keep us in suspense!”

“You can tell them, Mom,” Rose grumbled.

“One of the Beauxbatons delegates is a Veela, I suspect,” Lily said; then grinned as Sirius and Remus' eyes went wide, “If I am correct it was her sister I saw holding her hand in the Entrance Hall. Her sister – also a Veela – appears to be Rose's age.”

“She's definitely a Veela,” Rose said. “And everything I know about Veela tells me she's straight as my wand.”

“Perhaps not,” Remus said, “Veelas attracted to the same sex are very rare, but it does happen.”

Rose huffed. “I doubt I'm that lucky. Besides... there's no real point, is there? We're heading back to the States next June. She'll be in France. I'm much too young for a long-distant relationship.”

She sighed, drained her mug of cocoa, then stood and walked off toward her bedroom.

“Poor kid,” Sirius muttered. “I'd hate to say it, but she does have a point.”

“So you're telling me I should give up on Hermione before I even begin?” Harry asked.

“Ha!” Sirius barked out a laugh, as he pointed at Harry, “So you do like her!”

Harry blushed and shrugged.

“Harry,” Lily said, with a soft smile, “If you like her, and she's single, then you should give it a chance.”
“Really?” Harry asked, his ears perking up.

“Well, I might be a little biased,” Lily said, “I heard from a couple of the Hogwarts Professors during the Feast that, not only is Hermione a First-Gen, but apparently she’s also the smartest witch of her generation.”

“So you’re saying she’s just like you,” Remus said, grinning.

“I’m saying, Harry, if it works out,” Lily said, “Then I approve of your choice.”

Harry smiled and sipped at his cocoa. He let his thoughts about bushy-haired brunette girls wash through his mind, as Lily explained to Sirius and Remus about what had happened in Albus Dumbledore's office. By the time he was finished with his cocoa, the conversation was over. Lily then ordered him to bed, because he needed to be up early to submit his name into the Goblet with the other Ilvermorny contenders.

Friday, October 30th, 1994 – Late Evening

Lucius Malfoy was laying on a couch in a sitting room at a large Manor House in Little Hangleton. Nearby, a disturbing sound that was somewhere between a hiss, a growl and a snore was keeping Lucius up when he so desperately wanted to sleep. But he couldn't sleep yet. Any minute now his Master, the Dark Lord Voldemort - who was responsible for that grotesque snoring - would wake and demand to be fed. If he was asleep, he would be woken up by a Cruciatus Curse cast by his Master. He had been woken up once by his Master this way, and it was the first and last time that would happen if he had his say.

As he lay there, staring at the ceiling, he pondered how his life had come to this.

It had all started with that infernal diary. He remembered the day, three summers ago, when he had decided to fob it off to someone else. During the Spring Solstice months before the day in question, the Muggle-loving fool, Arthur Weasley, had weaseled his way into the Wizengamot and had become a Lord. His first task as Lord, and member of the Wizengamot Council, was to propose a law which made it a crime to own artifacts that could lead to Muggle-baiting. Lucius had been shocked to find that the law had passed.

However, the aftermath of the vote wouldn't come into motion for several months. During July of the same year, surprise raids had started. Friends and Allies of House Malfoy were becoming victims of raids. So Lucius had to get rid of the artifacts that were now illegal to own. After his third visit to Borgin and Burke's in Knockturn Alley, in which he had sold off several artifacts to the pathetic shop owner, he had then visited Flourish and Blott's in Diagon Alley, with his son, Draco. A chain of events had taken place, ending up with Lucius placing that damnable diary in the cauldron of Lord Arthur Weasley's only daughter and youngest child.

Lucius’ intentions with the move was that he had expected Arthur Weasley to have taken the diary from his daughter, then Lucius would simply work his so-called political magic, and get Lord Weasley arrested for the same crime he had created earlier that year. Alas it was not to be.

A few months after that Diagon Alley visit, Lucius learned from his son that the Chamber of Secrets had been opened. After some internal debates, Malfoy realized that infernal diary must have had something to do with it. Mudbloods were getting Petrified every few months. Lucius was quite
pleased with that, so he had let it continue. Then in June of '93, the Chamber of Secrets threat had been solved.

Ginny Weasley had been taken down into the Chamber of Secrets. Albus Dumbledore's golden boy, Neville Longbottom, and the twin sons of Lord Weasley had found the Chamber of Secrets. A Parselmouth was needed to open the entrance, so Longbottom had called for the support of his Great-Uncle, and Unspeakable, Algernon Croaker – who was a Parselmouth. Together, Longbottom, Croaker and the two Weasleys had entered the Chamber of Secrets, defeated a Basilisk, and saved Ginny Weasley. None of the Mudbloods had died during the threat, and they had all been cured. Even worse, that diary had been destroyed. Algernon Croaker had stabbed it with a Basilisk fang!

But things would get even worse for Lucius Malfoy. It had been discovered that he was responsible for the diary being in Ginny Weasley's possession, which ended up possessing her, causing the Chamber of Secrets fiasco. The young Weasley bitch was found innocent, and the DMLE had started an investigation against Lucius. Lucius had worked his political magic to delay the investigation. But it was all for naught. In early June of the current year, Lucius had been arrested by Amelia Bones, and sentenced to life in Azkaban. But Lucius never stepped a foot in that ghastly prison. No... en route to Azkaban, as he was escorted by two Aurors – John Dawlish and Kingsley Shacklebolt – Lucius made his move. He killed John Dawlish, injured Shacklebolt, and escaped. He was a fugitive, but at least he wasn't surrounded by Dementors.

Lucius had heard whispers of his Master – the Dark Lord Voldemort – hiding out in Albania. So he had taken a trip to Albania – a long one consisting of walking and flying on brooms. A few Imperius Curses and discussions later, he finally discovered where the rumors of his Master's last known location had been. Soon enough, he had found his Master. His Master's first task was to help him create a homunculus. A horrible experience that had been, but in the end it worked. He still had nightmares about it. His Master's next order was to find some particular information, and he had soon succeeded, torturing the information out of Bertha Jorkins, before his Master killed her. The late Jorkins had given some very good information.

Now, after a series of long months and tiresome events, Lucius was now his Master's caretaker. The only time he was allowed to leave the Manor they were now staying at was to get supplies and nourishment. Aside from that, Lucius was a prisoner. He was forced to take care of his Master, nursing him with the venom of his Master's familiar – the great snake, Nagini.

He was also forced to listen to his Master boasting about the fact that he, Lucius, was not his Master's most faithful, most trusted follower. No... according to his Master, there was another who deserved that title.

Lucius shivered as he heard Nagini hissing nearby. Then he heard rustling in the chair that his Master was sleeping in, followed by more hissing.

“Lucius!” Voldemort hissed, “Get up and go to the door! Nagini says my most trusted, most loyal, most faithful follower has returned to me to give a message. Greet him.”

“Yes, my Lord,” Lucius said.

He stood and made his way over to the door. Just as he opened it, his Master's 'most faithful' follower – Barty Crouch, Junior -- stepped inside.

“Barty,” Voldemort hissed, “You have returned to me.”
“Of course I have, my Lord,” Barty said; he moved in front of Voldemort's chair, and knelt down, bowing.

“I trust you have news?” Voldemort asked.

“Yes, my Lord,” Barty said, “Shocking news. I'm – I'm almost wary to report the news, because I feel it will only pain you, and slow the progress you have made.”

“Tell it to me anyway,” Voldemort said, dismissively, “If you are correct, then it is simply more work for Malfoy.”

Lucius shivered, and hoped his Master hadn't caught this reaction.

“Today, I discovered the most shocking news,” Barty said, “Lily and Harry Potter are alive.”

“What?!” Voldemort growled. “Give me my wand, Barty!”

Before Lucius could react, he was stricken with a Cruciatus Curse from his Master. He fell to the floor, as extreme pain coursed through his body. Only after thirty seconds, did the pain stop.

“Malfoy,” Voldemort snarled, “I thought you told me Lily and Harry Potter were dead!”

“I-I thought they were, my Lord!” Lucius spoke through the aches he was feeling, “The past thirteen years have been filled with rumors and discussion of the deaths of the Potters. The blood-traitors mourn their passing every Halloween! If I had heard differently, I would have told you, my Lord!”

“Of course you would,” Voldemort sneered. “What else have you discovered, Barty?”

“The Potters were living in the United States of America these past thirteen years, my Lord,” Barty said. “Apparently the Potter bitch was pregnant when you killed her husband, and she had another bitch of her own, a girl, Rose. She looks just like her mother. The blood-traitor Black, and the werewolf, Lupin, had joined them.

“When Harry Potter turned eleven, he began attending Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The Potters are here because Harry Potter has been given permission to be a contender in the Triwizard Tournament. There is a chance he could be Ilvermorny Champion, even at fourteen!”

“How good a chance?” Voldemort asked, “Good enough that you don't have to manipulate the Goblet like you have for Longbottom?”

“I-I believe so, my Lord,” Barty said, “But if I am wrong, I will accept any punishment you give me for upsetting and wronging you.”

“Hmm,” Voldemort said, “Do nothing to risk discovery. As long as Longbottom is in the Tournament, I will be pleased. If Potter is in the Tournament, we will change our plans if we have to, to account for both.”

“As you command, My Lord,” Barty said.

“You may leave, Barty,” Voldemort said, “You have done well this evening. Continue to please me, and you will be rewarded beyond your wildest dreams.”
“I vow to please,” Barty said.

He bowed again, then stood. He sneered at Lucius, as he walked by him and left the room.

“Get up, Lucius,” Voldemort said, “It is time for my feeding. Be sure not to disappoint me any further.

Lucius mentally grumbled as he stood. Ever since Barty had come into the picture, Voldemort seemed to have forgotten all that Lucius had done. He was the one to find his Master! He was the one to get the information from Bertha Jorkins, which kicked off his Master's grand plan. He was the one who had found Barty. But it was Barty who his Master called 'most loyal'.

Lucius crossed the room to his Master, wondering if his life could sink any lower than it already was.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished! Woo boy, a lot happened in this chapter!

We discovered that the Tournament was going to get a lot more interesting now that sixteen year old Hogwarts students would be allowed to enter. We discovered which Ilvermorny Houses Harry and Rose belong to. We discovered both Harry and Rose have romantic ambitions, as well as doubts and issues concerning such a topic. We discovered Rose has a little secret of her own. And we discovered who exactly is aiding Voldemort, and how he came to be in such a position.

What did you think of the “House Potter” dynamic in this chapter? I absolutely loved writing Sirius being his usual Marauder self. And even Remus had some fun. What did you think about the topics of romance concerning the children? Was it too much?

Next chapter: Harry and the Ilvermorny students place their names in the Goblet of Fire. What will the reaction from Hogwarts students be when Harry puts his name in? Also, a scene between Harry and Hermione that I think many of you will love. I already wrote the entire scene, and I love it. It is one of the reasons I started this story actually. Also... Lily talks to Minerva about something. No, Lily won't talk to Severus yet, but that will come. I think the Champion choosing will be in two chapters.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter!
Author's Note: I feel like I need to explain Harry's personality in this story (and Rose's, but Harry's more importantly).

One of my reviewers complained that using Harry shouldn't use “Miss 'Surname'” so often because Americans don't do that. I am bringing this up now, because it happens again in this chapter. Even though Harry is American-raised, he was also raised as the Heir Apparent of an Ancient And Most Noble House. Lily and Sirius raised him in that way. That being said, there will be some British-isms in Harry and Rose's personalities, because they were raised by three Brits. Their speech and stuff (as long as I catch myself with all the Mum/Mom mistakes – oops) will be American.

Also! Being raised by two Marauders, one of which is a fun-loving joker, Harry and Rose like to be funny. Yes, they're also mature and respectful because they were raised by their Mom. That whole “gassy” thing in Chapter 2 – while Rose denied it – was them being jokers. Harry calling himself a “Yank” (Americans don't do that) was him joking around, because he was talking to Brits, who would call him that. Harry's a joker. He's mature and respectful at times, but he's also Marauder-raised.

Another aspect of 'raised-by-Sirius' Harry will be shown in this chapter. I think it will be easy to point out. So I'll let you readers find it yourself.

Thanks for all the reviews so far! Means so much to me! Without further ado, read on!

Warning: Mild Adult Situations, and some uncouth language

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, October 31st, 1994

Early Halloween morning, Harry was awakened by a loud clap of thunder that sounded as if it was directly above the tent. Immediately as he woke, he grabbed his wand out from under his pillow, sat up and pointed his wand forward. After a few moments, he realized exactly what the sound was.

“Thanks, Sirius,” he muttered to nobody but himself, “That training you put me through this summer has made me scared of a little clap of thunder.”

During the previous summer, Sirius had put him through a boot camp of sorts to prepare him for the contention tournament that had taken place in September. Every weekend, Sirius woke him up at the crack of dawn. However, it wasn't a simple nudge on the shoulder, or Sirius telling him to get up. He had been woken up with everything from a pail of ice cold water, to a tickling hex, and several things in between. It wasn't until the Sunday of the second of eight weeks of training that he had learned to put his wand under his pillow. It took two more wake-up calls, before he had been able to
wake up before Sirius could come into his bedroom and wake him up.

Ever since then, he had slept with his wand under his pillow, and woke up at the sound of anything threatening. However, he had never woken up due to thunder in the weeks since his training.

He was answered with another loud clap of thunder, this one louder than the last. Then he began to register the other sounds. It was raining – pouring heavily, if the sounds of the raindrops hitting the roof of the tent were any indication. Harry groaned. If the rain didn't stop in the next few minutes, he was going to get soaked on his way into the castle. Maybe his mother had a Rain-Repelling Charm up her sleeve that she hadn't taught him yet. If the sound was any indication, it appeared to be a downpour, and he doubted an umbrella would aid him even if he had one.

Suddenly, the curtain – which separated Harry's bedroom from the rest of the tent – was pulled back by Rose Potter.

“Big brother!” she said, “It is time to –!”

She stopped and pouted when she saw that Harry was awake.

“Aww!” Rose whined, “You're awake already! I was going to jump on your bed and wake you up.”

“You were, hmm?” Harry asked, “And what if I was in the middle of getting dressed, and I was naked when you walked in here unannounced?”

Rose's face went as red as her hair, and she made an 'eep!' sound. She made an even bigger “eep!” sound when Harry grabbed her hand and pulled her over to him. He started tickling her around the waist, and she began shrieking with giggles as she collapsed onto his bed.

“S-stop, Harry!” Rose giggled, “I-I'm --”

“Ticklish?” Harry asked, as he continued his playful assault, “I am well aware of that!”

“I'm sorry!” Rose giggled.

Harry stopped and backed away. “You're sorry?”

“I'm sorry... for coming in... unannounced,” Rose said, as she tried to regain her composure after her brother's onslaught of tickling.

“What is all the commotion in here?!” Lily asked, as she appeared at the curtains.

“Uncle Sirius told me to wake Harry up,” Rose said. “But when I opened the curtains, he was already awake. And – and --”

“And when she came in unannounced,” Harry said, “I decided to tickle her so she would reconsider ever attempting such a thing again. What if she had come in when I was getting dressed?”

Rose made yet another 'eep!' sound, and stood up, then ran past her mother and into the main area of the tent. Lily merely grinned and shook her head, as she watched her daughter. Then she turned back to Harry.

“Well, I was going to make sure you were awake anyway,” she said, “You need to be ready in about
fifteen minutes, so that you can join the rest of the Ilvermorny delegates to submit your name into the Goblet of Fire. There's a blank slip of parchment on the table in the dining room. Write your first and last name, and the name of your school.”

“Alright,” Harry said; there was sudden and very loud clap of thunder above them, “Er... what about the storm? It sounds as if it is pouring! We'll be soaked before we get inside!”

Lily merely smiled. “We'll manage.”

Before Harry could say anything else, his mother backed out of the room and shut the curtain, blocking his room from the view of those in the rest of the tent. Harry grinned and shook his head, as he began to change his clothes.

Family. What would he ever do without them?

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**Meanwhile...**

**Gryffindor Tower – Dormitories and Common Room**

“Fred! George! Wake up!” Lee Jordan yelled, “You won't believe what is going on!”

Fred Weasley groaned as he opened his eyes. “It is too early, Lee. Come back in half-an-hour!”

“No!” Lee said, “This is a matter of life and death!”

“Lee,” Fred's brother, George, who had also been woken up by Lee, “If this is some kind of prank, you're going to be walking into the Great Hall today in a dress!”

“I don't know if it is a prank or not,” Lee said, “But if it is, it is Dumbledore's prank, not mine!”

The mention of their Headmaster's name and the word 'prank' had Fred and George wide awake now. The Weasley twins put on their trainers and grabbed their wands, then followed Lee out of their dormitory, deciding whatever was going on, it was more important than showing up in their Common Room in anything aside from the pyjamas they were currently wearing.

Fred followed George and Lee down the stairs and into the Gryffindor Common Room. There was a large crowd of students around the noticeboard.

“Budge over, budge over!” Lee ordered to the younger-year students, as he led Fred and George to the noticeboard.

As they reached the noticeboard, Lee pointed at one particular piece of parchment. Fred and George read it together.

**Attention Sixteen Year Old Students!**

*Due to a last-minute decision made by Headmaster Dumbledore, and the four other officials of the Triwizard Tournament, the previous rule which only allowed seventeen year old, and older, students to submit their names into the Goblet of Fire has been amended.*
Students Sixteen Years of age and older now have permission to submit their names into the Goblet of Fire. The Age Line will now allow students Sixteen Years old and up.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are chosen as Champion, you CANNOT back out. Before you submit your name into the Goblet of Fire, make sure this is a serious decision. The Triwizard Tournament is difficult and dangerous, and there is a moderate risk of life and limb involved.

Good luck to all who submit their name into the Goblet of Fire.

Thank you,
Professor Minerva McGonagall

Head of Gryffindor House
Hogwarts Deputy Headmistress

“Wicked!” Fred and George exclaimed in unison, giving each other a high-five, as they finished reading the notice.

“We don't have to use the Aging Potion now!” Fred said.

“Which is probably a good thing,” Lee said, “Because I had doubts it would ever work.”

“Come on, Fred!” George said, “Let's get upstairs and get dressed! Lee, you better wait for us before you submit your name into the Goblet of Fire.”

“Oh, I'm not entering,” Lee said.

Fred and George stared at Lee, as if he was mental.

“You're JOKING!” they exclaimed in unison.

“Nope,” Lee said, shrugging, “I'm not as mad as the both of you. “Besides, why would the Goblet pick me when one of you are obviously the better choice.”

Before the twins could reply, they heard a loud snort. Their year-mate, and fellow member of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, Angelina Johnson, appeared behind them.

“Problems, Angelina?” Fred asked.

“Nope,” Angelina said, “I just don't think either of you are the right choice for Hogwarts Champion.”

“Oh, yeah?” George challenged. “And who would be a better Champion? That prat, Diggory?”

“Nope,” Angelina said, grinning, “Me.”

Fred and George shared a glance, then laughed. Angelina scowled.

“What's the problem with me being Champion?!” she said, glaring dangerously at them.
“Nothing!” Fred said, quickly.

“Nothing at all!” George said.

Before Angelina could retort, the Weasley twins hurried off back toward the stairwell that led to their dormitory.

“Johnson doesn't have a chance,” George said, as soon as they were out of hearing range as they ascended the stairs.

“Against us?” Fred asked, “Oh definitely not!”

“Though, I admit, she'd be a better choice than the prat, Diggory,” George said.

“Really?” Fred asked.

“Yeah,” George said, then grinned, “She's more attractive than him, so that gives her points already.”

Fred laughed and agreed with his brother. The twins gave each other high-fives again and headed back up to their dormitory.

A few minutes later...

**Hogwarts – Entrance Hall**

Roughly twenty minutes after he had woken up, Harry stepped into the Entrance Hall of Hogwarts with his mother, sister, and the other delegates of Ilvermorny. Owing to his mother's Rain-Repelling Charms, Harry was quite dry, which was miraculous given the fact that there was a literal monsoon happening on the Grounds of Hogwarts.

In the very center of the Entrance Hall, the Goblet of Fire was set upon a perch. Surrounding the Goblet was a bright blue line of magic, the Age Line. Crowded around the Entrance Hall were numerous Hogwarts students of all ages. Lined up along the wall near the large oak doors to the Great Hall were Albus Dumbledore, Minerva McGonagall, Bartemius Crouch, Ludo Bagman, and several Hogwarts Professors.

“Make way, make way!” Dumbledore said loudly, with the aid of a Sonorous Charm from his wand, “The Ilvermorny delegates wish to enter their names into the Goblet of Fire. Clear them a path, and allow them through!”

Much like the biblical Moses had parted the Red Sea, the announcement of the Ilvermorny delegates’ arrival had cleared a path of students between them and the Goblet of Fire. Harry remained behind with his mother and sister, gripping the slip of parchment tightly in his hand, as he watched the nine other delegates queue up and make their way toward the Goblet of Fire.

Harry jumped slightly as he felt his mother's hand clutch his shoulder.

“Nervous, Harry?” Lily asked.

Harry swallowed. “I suppose I am.”
“You don't need to do this if you don't want to,” Lily said. “There's nothing wrong with simply being a spectator and supporter.”

“N-no,” Harry stammered, then cleared his throat, “I'm going to enter. If I don't, then all that training I did this summer for the contention tournament, and then the contention tournament itself, would have all been for naught.”

“Very well,” Lily said.

Harry grunted slightly as Rose jumped at him and hugged him around the waist. Her head came up to just under his jaw.

“Good luck, big brother,” she said.

“Thanks, Rosie,” Harry said, rubbing the top of his sister's head.

Rose giggled and backed away.

As each of the nine older delegates submitted their name, they stepped away from the Goblet, then lined up on either side of the path to the Goblet. When it was Harry's turn, there were four Ilvermorny students on one side of the path, and five on the other side. They all looked at him encouragingly.

“They're showing their support for the youngest delegate,” Lily whispered into Harry's ear.

Harry blushed at his mother's words. He inhaled and exhaled, then walked down the path toward the Goblet of Fire. Around the Hall, there were murmurs and whispers from the Hogwarts students. Then there was a hushed silence as Harry neared the Age Line. Harry inhaled and exhaled again, then stepped over the Line.

“Hey!” one of the Hogwarts students snarled. “How is he able to get past the age line! He's – what – fourteen years old?! That's not bloody fair!”

Harry turned to the owner of the voice and saw a ginger-haired student who appeared to be his age, standing just outside the Age Line and glaring at him. Before Harry could say anything, he was interrupted by one of the Hogwarts staff.

“Ron Weasley!” Minerva McGonagall, “Fifty points from Gryffindor and detention for a week for your outburst and utter disrespect toward an Ilvermorny delegate!”

The red-head – Ron Weasley – sputtered, though he was still glaring at Harry.

“But Professor!” he said, “If he's able to enter, why can't others his age?! I should be able to enter my name!”

McGonagall walked over to Weasley, grabbed him by the arm and pulled him in the direction of the Grand Staircase. The ginger-haired boy could be heard sputtering, stammering and complaining as the Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts dragged him up the stairs.

Harry heard someone clearing their throat, and he turned and saw Albus Dumbledore standing where Ron Weasley had been. Dumbledore placed his wand at his throat.
“Attention!” he said, his voice magnified for everyone to hear, “Harry Potter may be fourteen years old. However, he placed third in a contention tournament beating out twenty-seven students all of whom were older than him, including seven of those students who just entered their name into the Goblet of Fire.”

Harry felt his face heat up, as the Hogwarts students around the Hall began to whisper and murmur at this announcement. All of them were staring at him, wonder and shock lighting up their expressions.

“The Headmaster of Ilvermorny,” Dumbledore continued, “and the Magical Congress of the United States of America has given Harry Potter permission to enter his name. Bartemius Crouch, Ludo Bagman, Madame Olympe Maxime, Lady Potter, and I made a unanimous decision last night to support the same decision.”

He smiled, took his wand from his throat, and looked at Harry.

“Please proceed, Mr. Potter,” he said, “And good luck.”

Harry smiled, then turned to the Goblet of Fire. He inhaled and exhaled, then placed his clenched fist over the Goblet’s opening, and dropped the slip of parchment into it which had his name and school. He sighed in relief when the Goblet didn’t spit the parchment back out. He turned and stepped back across the Age Line. Rose started clapping, and it was contagious, as the students around the Hall started to applaud. Harry blushed furiously as he strode past his fellow Ilvermorny delegates, which followed him in suit back to his mother.

“Attention Ilvermorny students,” Lily said, “Professors Black and Lupin have set up breakfast for us in one of the tents. You’re welcome to join us or you may go into the Great Hall and join the Hogwarts students if you wish.”

As one, the nine older Ilvermorny students started off back out onto the Grounds. Harry decided he, too, would join the others in the tents. Even though he wanted to find Hermione Granger – and discover whether or not she had a boyfriend – he didn't want to encounter another student like that Ron Weasley again. What was that idiot's problem anyway?

He decided to ignore it and stepped back into the monsoon on the Hogwarts Grounds. It wasn't as if he was ever going to have to deal with that ginger asshole again anyway. Right?

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**Early Afternoon – Hogwarts Library**

Harry had spent much of the rainy morning inside the designated Classroom Tent, where he had been looking through the Portable Library that had been brought along. He had been looking for books on specific subjects, but could not find what he was looking for. So he had asked his mother about the books. She told him there was a good chance that the appropriate books were in the Hogwarts library.

So after lunch – which, like breakfast, took place in the dining area of the Classroom Tent, Lily led Harry through Hogwarts and toward the Library.

“I could have found the library myself, if you had just given me directions, Mom,” Harry said, when he and Lily were standing outside the library.
“What – you didn't want to be seen walking around with your mother?” Lily asked, grinning.

Harry blushed. “I didn't say that...”

“I'm in the castle for another reason besides escorting you,” Lily said, “I need to speak to one of the Hogwarts staff members about something that concerned me.”

“Regarding that Ron Weasley idiot?” Harry asked, with a scowl.

“Harry,” Lily said, sternly, “You shouldn't speak like that, especially about students of Hogwarts and Beauxbatons. We're supposed to be promoting International Magical Cooperation, remember?”

Harry frowned, and nodded. “Sorry, Mom.”

“That's alright,” Lily said, “Truth be told, I agree with you. That boy is definitely an idiot... and loud, and very rude.”

Harry raised his eyebrows, then grinned when his mother smiled at him.

“The incident with the boy will likely be brought up,” Lily said, “But no, I have other business. So how about you head into the Library. Think you can find your way back onto the Grounds afterward?”

“Yes, Mom.” Harry said.

“Alright,” Lily said, “If the librarian is the same one who was here when I was a student, her name is Madam Pince. She's very protective of the books she lords over in the library. So be very respectful towards her and the books.”

“I will,” Harry promised.

“Good boy,” Lily said, “Go on. I'll see you soon.”

Harry nodded, said farewell to his mother, then headed off into the library. Fifteen minutes later, he had a stack of five books in his arms – which was apparently the maximum limit of books that could be checked out at one time, according to the notices around the library. Harry was about to head over to the librarian's desk, when he saw Hermione Granger sitting at a table, and reading a book. He approached her table and cleared his throat. Hermione jumped slightly.

“Do you mind –?!” she started; then she blushed as she looked at him, and realized who he was, “Oh. Hello, Mr. Potter. I'm sorry for being rude. You startled me.”

“That is alright, Miss Granger,” Harry said, “I apologize for startling you. May I sit here with you?”

Hermione's cheeks went pink again, and she nodded. “Alright. But only if you call me Hermione. I could swear I asked you to call me that already.”

“I promise to refer to you by your first name from now on, Hermione,” Harry said, as he sat down; he looked at her, as he set the books down, “As long as you call me Harry.”

“Alright,” Hermione said.
“Great,” Harry said, “May I ask you a question, Hermione?”

“You already did,” Hermione said, grinning, “But you may ask me another.”

Harry did his best to hide a snort. That was another comparison between his mother and Hermione. His mother loved to use that phrase. It appeared his mother was correct when she said she’d like this girl.

“Why are you here in the library on Halloween of all days?” he asked.

“Oh – um – well, it was supposed to be a Hogsmeade weekend,” Hermione said. “But that has been postponed until next weekend due to the absolutely terrible weather. I’m sure you noticed the storms.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah, I noticed.”

“I thought you might have,” Hermione said, with a smug smile, “I saw you walk into the Entrance Hall this morning with the rest of the Ilvermorny delegates, when you entered your name in the Goblet of Fire. I was rather surprised you were rather dry for having just walked through a monsoon.”

“Rain-Repelling Charms,” Harry said, “Mom's really good with her Charms.”

“Oh?” Hermione asked, looking intrigued, “Maybe she can teach me some of what she knows? I mean, all I know is Impervious when it comes to repelling rain, but that doesn't keep me dry!”

“No, it wouldn't, would it?” Harry said, smiling; “I'll talk to Mom and see if she can give you some pointers.”

“I'd like that, thank you,” Hermione said.

“So you were there to watch me enter my name?” Harry asked, “Wish I would have known that. I'd have joined you in breakfast instead of eating with the other Ilvermorny delegates.”

“That's alright,” Hermione said. “Anyway, since it is raining, I figured I'd use this free time to catch up on my studies.”

“Surely you have something better to do with your free time,” Harry said. “I thought you would be in a secluded corner of the castle snogging your boyfriend.”

A very red-faced Hermione stammered and mumbled under her breath as she looked down at her book.

“Pardon, Hermione?” Harry asked, “I didn't hear that.”

“I – um – don't – don't have a boyfriend,” Hermione stammered.

“Between boyfriends then,” Harry said.

Hermione blushed again. “No. I've – um – never had a boyfriend.”

“Girlfriend?” Harry asked, “I mean, in the romantic sense?”
“No!” Hermione huffed; her blush worsening.

_Hmm,_ Harry thought, _Well, at least she is straight, if not, perhaps, bisexual. And very single, it appears. Which is quite surprising._

“Surely you've gone with someone on a date to the village?” Harry asked.

Hermione blushed and shook her head. “Usually I visit by myself. I've never been on a date.”

“Surely, you jest!” Harry exclaimed, nearly raising his voice above library-acceptable volumes. “Is everybody inside this castle blind?! How has nobody asked someone as beautiful as you on a date?”

_Are you really telling me I have a shot at being your first kiss?!_ Harry decided it was probably not a good question to ask out loud.

Hermione frowned. “If you're going to tease me, then I rescind my invitation to let you sit with me.”

“I am not teasing you, Hermione!” Harry said, quickly, “I'm completely serious.”

_Thank God Sirius isn't here, Harry thought, This would be a really bad time for name puns!_

Hermione stared at Harry for a moment, then smiled lightly. “Really? You're not teasing me?”

“Of course not,” Harry said. “Wampus honor.”

“Wampus?” Hermione echoed.

“My House at Ilvermorny,” Harry said, indicating the patch on his robes. “You're a Ravenclaw of Hogwarts, I'm a Wampus of Ilvermorny.”

“Oh,” Hermione said, then she stammered, “S-so... you – you really think I am beautiful?”

“Definitely,” Harry said, nodding.

Hermione hid her face behind her bush of hair, and looked down at her book.

_Shit, Potter, you're embarrassing her_, Harry thought to himself, _If you don't take the initiative here, you're going to lose your chance, and she might never talk to you again. Especially if she still believes you're teasing her. You'll never hear the end of it from Sirius if that happens._

“Hermione?” he asked, “Have you heard about the Yule Ball?”

Hermione looked up at him again and nodded. “When I heard that the Triwizard Tournament would be taking place here at Hogwarts, I did my research. A Yule Ball is part of every tournament. It is a dance... a social event.”

“Indeed it is,” Harry agreed, “I know there is nearly two months to go before the Ball, but I am compelled to ask now before someone else does, and I lose my chance. Hermione Granger, would you do me the great honor of accompanying me to the Yule Ball?”

Hermione blinked. “L-like a – a date?”
“Yes,” Harry said.

Hermione's cheeks went pink. “Harry, I... I barely know you. Besides, what would your girlfriend say?”

“I am single at this moment, actually,” Harry said, “But you make a good point. We barely know each other. So I am changing my proposal. Would you do me the great honor of being my date to Hogsmeade next weekend? I will wait for your answer to my Yule Ball invitation until the end of the date. We can get to know each other during our date, and then you can make your decision.”

Hermione teased her bottom lip with her teeth; even though she appeared to have buck-teeth, the action was still something Harry found extremely sexy.

Finally, Hermione smiled. “I would love to accompany you to Hogsmeade on a date next weekend, Mr. Potter.”

Harry sighed in relief. “Fantastic. I do hope whatever happens this evening doesn't bring complications to our date. I mean – on the off-chance I'm chosen as Champion – it could be seen by some as you betraying the Hogwarts Champion by being seen on a date with an opposing school's Champion.”

“Harry, I said I would accompany you on a date,” Hermione said, smiling. “And I will. I promise to go on that date with you no matter what happens this evening. It doesn't matter whether you become Ilvermorny Champion or not. And if it turns out you do become Champion – well, I'll just tell anyone who asked, that you asked before you became Champion.”

“Great,” Harry said, “I very much look forward to our date. I can't believe I'm lucky enough to get this chance. Are you sure you're not joking with me? Our date isn't going to be interrupted by a jealous boyfriend – or girlfriend – decking me, right?”

Hermione giggled – a beautiful sound. “No Harry. I promise I don't have a boyfriend, or a girlfriend – at least in the romantic sense, that is.”

_Huh, _Harry thought, _It would appear not offended at the idea of having a girlfriend. Interesting. And hot!

“Yet?” Harry asked, grinning.

Hermione raised an eyebrow. “I'm not going to answer that, Mr. Potter.”

“Damn,” Harry muttered, jokingly.

Hermione then smiled. “At least not until the end of our date next Saturday.”

Harry grinned. There was hope! “I will hold you to that.”

Hermione smiled, then she frowned slightly. “Please don't take offense to my question, Harry. But do you really believe you'll be chosen as Ilvermorny Champion?”

Harry sighed. “I don't know. My mother and sister and Uncles do, but they're my family. Of course they're going to say that. Your friend, Luna, seems to think I'm going to be the Champion. Would I
be happy to be the Champion? Oh, definitely. But I've made my peace with the fact that I will likely be a spectator. Do you want me to be the Champion?"

Hermione bit her lip again. Harry groaned under his breath as he felt his boxers tighten. If she didn't stop doing that, he was going to be in trouble!

“Like I said, I barely know you, Harry,” Hermione said. “So I don't know whether or not you're Champion material. But if you were chosen as a contender for the Champion, then you must be talented enough to get a shot at being chosen. Ranking third in a contention tournament of thirty? That is impressive! So, yes, I'd be happy if you were chosen. But... I'd rather you be a spectator.”

“Oh?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” Hermione said, then blushed, “Forgive me for being so assuming. But if our date goes well, then there's a good chance you'll be my date to the Ball. I would hate for you to get hurt during the First Task. You might not be healthy enough to dance with me.”

“Hermione,” Harry said, “If you happen to be my date, and I get injured, I would spin you around while sitting in a wheelchair if it meant I could dance with you.”

Hermione blushed prettily again. “While that sounds fun, I'd very much like you to be standing and healthy.”

“Then I will endeavor to do exactly that, Miss Granger,” Harry said, smiling.

Hermione smiled. “I haven't said I'll be your date to the ball, Mr. Potter.”

“Might I remind you that you're the one who was so assuming,” Harry said, his smile turning into a grin.

Hermione huffed. “I'd very much like to return to my studies now.”

“Then I will leave you to it,” Harry said, “I need to check these books out and return to my tent anyway.”

And possibly relieve the tension in my boxers, Harry thought privately.

“A tent?” Hermione asked, blinking.

“A wizard's tent,” Harry said, “One of five actually. Very spacious. If our date goes well, perhaps I'll invite you to explore the tent.”

Hermione stammered. “I very much hope you're not implying what I think you're implying, Mr. Potter.”

“You're being assuming again, Miss Granger,” Harry said, in a sing-song voice, while he grinned.

Hermione huffed again, and looked back down at her book.

“If we don't talk before then,” Harry said. “Then I will see you next Saturday in the Entrance Hall.”

“The carriages usually leave at ten in the morning,” Hermione said, still looking at her book.
“Then I will see you at a quarter-til,” Harry said. “But I hope we will meet again before then.”

“I'm sure we will,” Hermione said, smiling as she briefly looked at him again.

Harry smiled and stood. “Good luck with your studies. Farewell.”

Hermione said farewell, and Harry walked over to the librarian, Madam Pince. She looked at him suspiciously, and he merely smiled and placed his books on the desk between them.

“Don't you have your own library?” the librarian asked.

“We did bring a portable library with us,” Harry said, “But it is nothing as grand as your own. You have a wider selection of books here.”

Madam Pince huffed at Harry's attempted flattery. “I hope you do not break that young girl's heart, Mr. Potter. She's one of my favorites.”

“Why would you believe I am a heart-breaker, ma'am?” Harry asked.

“I knew your father,” Pince said, “He and that Black scoundrel broke their fair share of hearts whilst they were students. Sometimes more than once.”

“With all due respect, ma'am,” Harry said, “You may have known my father, but you do not know me.”

Madam Pince huffed. She stamped the inside cover of each book, then handed them back to Harry.

“Books are to be returned in exactly one month or less,” she said, “and I expect them to be in the same condition as they are now.”

“Yes, ma'am,” Harry said.

Madam Pince's eyes followed him suspiciously as he walked out of the library.

“Bitch,” he muttered under his breath, when he was out of hearing range.

He whistled a jaunty tune as he headed off back in the direction of the Grand Staircase. He needed to find his family. He hadn't even been at Hogwarts for twenty-four hours, and he already had a date. That had to be some kind of record!

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**Meanwhile, in the Library...**

Hidden behind a bookshelf, a fourth-year Ravenclaw witch was staring at Hermione Granger with narrowed eyes. She had heard the entire exchange between Granger and Harry Potter.

Ever since the Feast the previous evening, where Headmaster Dumbledore had revealed that the Ilvermorny official was none other than the long-thought-dead Lily Potter, there had been rumors about whether or not one of the Ilvermorny students who had accompanied her was Lily's son, Harry Potter – who also was thought to have died in an attack by He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named on Halloween night in 1981.
The rumors had provided good evidence. The boy was fourteen years old, and looked a lot like James Potter. The rumor had been confirmed earlier that morning when Headmaster Dumbledore had revealed that Harry Potter was the youngest Ilvermorny delegate. Harry Potter was fourteen years old, and had been legally permitted to enter his name into the Goblet of Fire. Apparently he had placed third in a contention tournament of thirty students, all of whom were all older than him! Harry Potter must be really powerful and talented! At least that was what the rumors were.

Not only was Harry Potter apparently a powerful and talented wizard, but he was also the Heir Apparent of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter, a very powerful and old House thought to have gone extinct on Halloween of 1981. There was no question that Harry Potter would be one of the most eligible bachelors in Wizarding Great Britain!

The Ravenclaw witch narrowed her eyes at that thought. No self-respecting pureblood witch would just sit there and let what she had just watched happen. She couldn't believe her eyes when Harry Potter had asked out that know-it-all Muggleborn bitch, Hermione Granger, on a date to Hogsmeade. Potter also had interest in taking that bitch to the Yule Ball! Well that simply could not happen!

The Ravenclaw fourth-year witch was about to walk over to Granger, when she changed her mind. Now wasn't the time for a confrontation. Not here in the middle of the Hogwarts Library where Madam Pince was present with her ever-watchful gaze that seemed to cover every inch, and spot ever incident inside her Library.

The Ravenclaw witch made a decision. She would seek out her group of friends, and together they would confront Granger. They would convince her not to go on a date with Harry Potter. Or else!

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished. Well, I was intending on having Lily speaking with a couple of Hogwarts Professors (not Snape, not yet) in this chapter, but that will take place next chapter.

Also next chapter: The identity of the Ravenclaw witch is revealed as she and her friends confront Hermione. Then the Champions are named!

I have not completely figured out the identity of the mysterious Ravenclaw witch yet... obviously it is one of Hermione's dorm-mates, who is a fourth-year Ravenclaw student. I am leaning toward one person in particular, but I haven't decided yet.

To those of you do not know, I set up a poll on my FFN profile, that has to do with the Hogwarts Champion. The leading option is quite surprising (at least to me). I totally wasn't expecting it. It appears it will be the winner of the poll, but I will keep the poll up until I start writing the scene which names the Hogwarts Champion. As of now, it appears I will have quite the challenge writing their involvement in the tournament, because it was the one I wasn't prepared for! So, a challenge!

Hope you liked this chapter.
Additional Note: Once again, it appears I am going to be without internet service for a few days. I have been on a pay-per-week subscription while I wait for Google Fiber to be set up. I expect it will be set up soon, so I don't want to waste money on another week of the pay-per-week internet. So the next chapter of this story (and Neko's Mate) might not be up for a few days. Just a heads up!
Saturday, October 31st, 1994

Ten minutes after leaving her son at the Hogwarts Library Lily Potter walked through one of the first floor corridors of the castle, en route to Minerva McGonagall's office. At least, she hoped the office was in the same location. It had been roughly seventeen years since she had been a student at Hogwarts – but even back then Minerva had the same three positions she had now. So Lily was quite sure the office was in the same place.

She arrived at the door to Minerva's office, and rapped her knuckles against it. She smiled in relief when she heard Minerva's voice, inviting her in. Lily opened the door and stepped inside. She was rather surprised, and amused to find Minerva's office hadn't changed much in seventeen years.

“Lady Potter, this is a surprise,” Minerva said, getting to her feet, “Do come in. How may I help you?”

“Well, first, you can call me Lily,” Lily said.

“As long as you call me Minerva,” Minerva said, with a small smile. “I assume you're here to talk about the young man who complained about your son's entry into the Tournament?”

“Well, that was one of the topics on my mind, but not the most important,” Lily said. “I wanted to bring this up during the Feast last night, but never had the chance. It has to do with those two Ravenclaws that were sitting with my children. Luna Lovegood and Hermione Granger, I believe?”

“Filius Flitwick is still the Head of Ravenclaw House, Lily,” Minerva said, “Perhaps it would be best to discuss this with him, as they are in his House. Shall I Floo him and ask him to meet us here? We can talk about the other topic while we wait.”

“If you believe it would be best,” Lily said.

Minerva offered Lily a seat, before she walked over to the fireplace on the left side of the office. Lily sat down in one of the chairs on the nearest side of Minerva's desk. Minerva, meanwhile, had stuck her head into the Floo. Lily smiled as she looked around the office.

She noticed a bookshelf standing against a wall behind Minerva’s desk. On one of the shelves were several pictures. From where she was sitting, Lily could see that one of the pictures was of her and
her late husband, James, standing on either side of Minerva. Her eyes stung with tears as she remembered posing for that picture. It had been during the first meeting with Minerva, as she and James talked with the Head of Gryffindor about their Head Student duties.

Minerva returned to her desk and sat down, breaking Lily from her reverie.

“Filius is making his way here now,” Minerva said, “He should be here in five-to-ten minutes.”

“Thank you,” Lily said.

“You're quite welcome,” Minerva said, “Now let us talk about the incident in the Entrance Hall this morning. I'm sad to say that the young man who confronted your son was one of my Gryffindors, a fourth-year trouble-maker and problem-child by the name of Ron Weasley.”

“Weasley,” Lily said, “The name sounds vaguely familiar.”

“He's the youngest son, but not the youngest child, of Arthur and Molly Weasley,” Minerva said, “The Weasleys have six boys, and then a daughter, which is the youngest of the children – she's in her third year, this year. Ginny Weasley has had a few problems of her own here at Hogwarts, but nothing like her youngest brother.”

“Molly Weasley,” Lily said, thoughtfully.

“Formerly Prewett,” Minerva said, “You may remember her twin brothers who died in the war, Fabian and Gideon. They were members of Albus' Order of the Phoenix. Along with yourself, James, and his friends, I believe.”

“Yes,” Lily said, nodding, then smiled, “I remember the Prewett boys. They talked a lot about their sister, and her family. Yes, now, I remember them mentioning the Weasleys. That is why the name sounds familiar. They were trouble-makers themselves, if I remember.”

Minerva snorted. “Nah, they were jokers, much like your dearly-departed husband and his friends were. There's a difference between jokers and trouble-makers. Ron Weasley's older twin brothers are trouble-makers and jokers, but Ron himself is a problem-child. Truth be told, the boy should be at least one or two years back in his education. He's not a very bright boy, and his highest grades he's ever achieved was an Exceeds Expectations in a nonsense class like Divination. The rest were a handful of Acceptables, and lower grades.”

“If he's done so poorly, why is he a fourth year student?” Lily asked.

“Albus Dumbledore,” Minerva snorted. “For several reasons. One, he doesn't believe in letting students fall back a year in their education. Two, Ron's father, Arthur, is a Lord and a member of the Wizengamot. The Noble House of Weasley is in an Alliance with Dumbledore. If Ron is outed as a bad student, it could bring issues into the Noble House of Weasley. At least that is what his mother, Molly, says anyway.”

“So Albus is letting Ron skim through his education,” Lily said, “so the boy does not harm the reputation of one of his Allied Houses?”

“Correct,” Minerva said. “And it doesn't stop there. As I am sure you can tell, due to his outburst in the Entrance Hall, Ron Weasley is a loud and rude child. I've also had several complaints from students about the boy's eating habits. But the last time I said anything to the boy about it, I received
a lecture from Dumbledore, and a Howler from Molly Weasley the following day telling me to be more respectful toward her children, lest the House of Weasley forms a blood feud with me.”

“Wouldn't that be her husband's decision?” Lily asked.

Minerva snorted again. “Molly Weasley has her husband by the short and curlies if you know what I mean. Arthur may be the Lord Weasley, but Molly is the Lord of the house.”

“So her husband is whipped,” Lily said.

“Understatement of the year,” Minerva said, snorting yet again; she sighed heavily. “To be perfectly clear. I did not punish Mr. Weasley because he complained about your son entering the Tournament when he is so young. To be honest, most of the students in that Entrance Hall – those whom were below sixteen years old – probably agreed with Ron about that subject.”

“I suppose you're right,” Lily said.

“I punished Mr. Weasley,” Minerva continued, “simply because he was breaching etiquette when it comes to respecting the guests of Hogwarts. I explained precisely that to him this morning.”

“Do you believe my son doesn't deserve to be in the tournament?” Lily asked, raising an eyebrow.

“I never said that, Lily, and I never will,” Minerva said. “Harry's accomplishment is excellent. Though I can't say it is surprising, given who his parents are, and who he was raised by. Originally this tournament was supposed to only have students seventeen and older entering. But due to that contention tournament Ilvermorny had – which, I admit, was a brilliant idea – half of Ilvermorny's delegates are under seventeen. Then, as you know, Albus allowed sixteen year old students in Hogwarts to enter, just so there wouldn't be any complaints. I'm not saying that fourteen year old students should be allowed too, because Harry entered. I'm just saying...”

Minerva sighed and looked right at Lily. “I don't envy you for allowing your son to be a contender – and possibly the Ilvermorny Champion -- in this Tournament, Lily. The Tasks of this tournament were created with seventeen year old students in mind. If your son is chosen... well, I wish him the best of luck, Lady Potter. And I hope you and those Marauders of yours have trained him well.”

Before Lily could reply, there is a knock on the door of Minerva's office. Minerva waved her wand toward the door, and it opened. Lily smiled when saw Professor Filius Flitwick – Charms Professor, and Head of Ravenclaw House – step into the office. Lily stood as Filius closed the door.

“Professor,” Lily said, as she stood.

“Oh, you don't need to stand for me, Lady Potter,” Filius said, chuckling, “And do please call me Filius. I believe, as one of my favorite students ever to step into my classroom, you deserve that right.”

“As long as you call me Lily,” Lily said.

“Of course!” Filius said.

He walked over to the empty chair next to Lily, and conjured a footstool in front of the chair. He stepped up the footstool, then conjured books on top of the chair, and sat on top of them. Lily did her best not to laugh at this action.
“It is so good to see you after all these years, Lily,” Filius said, “When I saw you walking toward the castle last night, with your children, I nearly fainted from happiness. I am so glad the rumors of your death were only rumors. I only wish the rumors of your husband's death were just that – rumors.”

“Don't we all,” Lily asked, rhetorically, with a grim smile.

“Yes,” Filius said, with a sigh. “Now, Minerva said you wanted to talk to me about two of my students?"

“Yes, sir,” Lily said. “Last night, when Minerva led myself and my students over to the Ravenclaw table, two of the young Ravenclaw witches were separated from the rest of their House. Perhaps you noticed. The girls said they were pushed away from the rest of their house-mates. Forgive me, Filius, but that sounds to me like bullying, and I am quite concerned.”

“The two witches are Hermione Granger and Luna Lovegood,” Minerva said, “If that helps, Filius.”

“Yes,” Lily said, “And I am only bringing up this concern, because my own two children have taken an interest in the young ladies. I see the bonds of friendship forming between your two students, and my children.”

“I am afraid there have been some signs of bullying targeted at the two girls in question,” Filius said, “I've noticed it before. However, when I spoke to Headmaster Dumbledore about it, he told me to leave it alone.”

“Why ever did he do that?” Lily asked, “If the two girls have been bullied –”

“He's under the impression that the two girls would take care of it themselves,” Filius said.

“If you wouldn't mind, would you clarify more about the bullying?” Lily asked. “I'm only asking because I want to know if it is something my children would be involved in.”

“Of course it is right for you to be concerned,” Filius said, with a sigh. “I shall begin with Miss Granger. Hermione reminds me of you, actually, if you would believe it. She is a prodigy, there is no better word for it. She is one of the top – if not the top – students in every single one of her classes. The only classes she had trouble with were Defense, Divination, and Muggle Studies.”

“Muggle Studies,” Lily asked, in disbelief, “But she's a –!”

“Yes, she is,” Minerva said, “However, according to Miss Granger, Muggle Studies should have been called Muggle History.”

Lily sighed. “Are you telling me that class is still teaching things that went out of style half-a-century ago? Minerva, I complained about that very thing when I was a student! I left after one year of that class, because it disgusted me!”

“Miss Granger is much the same way,” Filius said. “When I said she had trouble with it, I meant she simply was hoping for lessons on modern topics. She had issues in Divination simply because she believes the Divination Professor is a fraud.”

Minerva snorted. “I can't blame her.”
“As for Defense,” Filius said, “She had issues with the class, but even then she was one of the top five students in her year in that class. So, like I said, she's a prodigy, a top student. Unfortunately, that's not a good thing, if you'll believe it. Even amongst the brainy Ravenclaws, Miss Granger is considered too smart.”

“She's a prodigy, while the rest of the Ravenclaws are mid- to high-level geniuses,” Lily guessed.

“Yes,” Filius sighed. “She's also a Muggleborn among half-bloods and purebloods. So that makes it even worse. Because of that, her year-mates and house-mates have turned away from her, when they should be friendly with her. There hasn't been any physical bullying yet... only emotional and mental.”

“But there may come a time,” Lily said.

“Yes,” Filius said, “There may come a time.”

Lily frowned. “And Luna Lovegood?”

“Luna Lovegood is something different,” Filius said. “She appears to be a mild-leveled Seer, an Aura Reader, and a Natural Occlumens.”

“Wow,” Lily breathed.

“Yes,” Filius said, “Then there is the fact that she witnessed her mother's death.”

“Oh, God,” Lily said, softly, as she frowned, “I never knew.”

“It was quite traumatic, as you can guess,” Filius said. “She rarely talks about her mother's death. I believe her abilities – at least her Aura Reader ability – manifested from that traumatic event. Maybe there some residual effects from the accident that caused her mother's death. She has spoken of several imaginary creatures. One of these creatures she talks about is called a Wrackspurt. Which is a tiny mosquito-like creature that ventures into your brain through your ears and makes your brain go fuzzy. According to Miss Lovegood that is.”

Lily realized what Filius was implying. “So when she sees Wrackspurts, what she is actually seeing is...”

“Magical Auras as a result of emotions,” Filius said. “The other creatures she speaks of also has to do with Auras coming from the earth and various other things. During the weeks and months after she received this ability, she started speaking of these creatures she invented. She started discussing the creatures with her father, Xenophilius, who is the owner and editor of the newspaper the Quibbler. Xenophilius was so inspired by his daughter's stories, he started writing articles in his newspaper about them. When readers of the articles complained that they weren't real, Luna was very upset. Xenophilius promised her that they would find real concrete proof that her imaginary creatures really existed.”

“And because of her father's influence,” Lily said, “She's spent the last five years believing these creatures truly exist, when in reality, they are the result of magical auras.”

“Precisely,” Filius said. “But she doesn't understand that. She became an outcast amongst her Ravenclaw house-mates when she started spouting off stories of creatures that didn't exist. They became frightened of her, when she started telling them they had Wrackspurts in their brains. Those
students started bulling her – emotionally and mentally. There were rumors they also stole things from her. But Luna never complained, and all her belongings always come back to her.”

“And so...Hermione and Luna?” Lily asked.

“They became friends when they realized that they were mutually outcasts,” Filius said. “Hermione doesn't know what to think of the creatures Luna talks about. But she never, ever, makes fun of Luna, and even defends her from the bullies – which are usually mutual between the girls.”

“Filius – Professor Flitwick,” Lily said, “May I give you a piece of advice?”

“Of course,” Filius said.

“You need to solve this bullying issue quick,” Lily said, “Or there are going to be problems. Not from me, but from my children. My children do not like bullies, and they value friendship. Also – well – Harry has a... ah... romantic interest in Hermione Granger.”

“Really?” Minerva asked.

“I believe he's going to ask her on a date before too long,” Lily said, smiling. “I don't think I need to tell you what will happen if Hermione becomes Harry's girlfriend, and he discovers she's being bullied.”

“I imagine he's a lot like his father in that aspect,” Minerva said.

“Exactly, ma'am,” Lily said. “Exactly.”

Filius sighed. “I believe you're right, Lady Potter. I promise to look deeper into this. It is time I act instead of watch, like Albus advised me to do.”

“Good,” Lily said, “Now if you will excuse me, I need to go back to my students. We need to prepare for the events of this evening.”

“Of course,” Minerva said.

Lily stood, said farewell to the two Professors, then turned and walked out of the office.

Four summers ago, Sirius and Remus had sat down with her and they discussed whether or not they should move back to Great Britain, so that Harry could attend Hogwarts. Sirius and Remus were all for the idea, but Lily was adamant against it. Now that she was hearing about the bullying – and, in essence, Albus Dumbledore's refusal to have the staff put an end to it – as well as the fact that the education was basically sub-par to Ilvermorny, she was quite happy she had made the decision for her children to attend Ilvermorny.

The House Potter Tent – Hogwarts Grounds

Thankfully the rain had stopped by the time Harry had returned to the Hogwarts Grounds, though with the gray clouds still covering the sky, it wasn't assured whether there would be any more before the end of the evening. So there was no risk of getting the library books wet unless he dropped them onto the wet earth. He was very careful holding onto them as he headed into the House Potter tent. Rose and Uncle Remus were sitting at the dining room table playing a game of wizard's chess. Harry
crossed the tent and headed into his room. He set four of the books on his trunk, and kept one of them, as he walked back into the living room. He whistled the Ilvermorny School Song as he sat down in one of the very comfortable chairs.

“Someone's happy,” Remus said, as he grinned in Harry's direction, “Is there something you would like to tell us, cub?”

“I do,” Harry said, “But I think I should wait for Sirius, and perhaps Mum. Where is Sirius?”

“You didn't see the Thunderbird, did you?” Remus asked.

“Now that you mention it,” Harry said, “I did notice.”

“Sirius is moving the Thunderbird to a more permanent parking spot,” Remus said.

Harry snorted. “I can't imagine where he would park it.”

“Me either,” Remus said, grinning, “Guess we'll have to ask Sirius where he parked it.”

“Checkmate!” Rose squealed.

“Again?!” Remus asked, “What is that? The third time today?!”

“Fourth!” Rose said, giggling.

Remus sighed. “Sirius is better to play against. At least he lets me win.”

Rose giggled again.

“Hello, family!” Sirius announced his presence; he raised his eyebrows as he looked at the still giggling, Rose, “Why is my little Rosie so giggly?”

“I beat Remus four times in a row,” Rose said.

“I think she cheats,” Harry said.

“I do not!” Rose growled.

“I'm sure he's just joking with you, Rosie,” Remus said, “And no, you don't cheat. You're just that good. So, Sirius, where did you park the Thunderbird?”

“I'm not telling you!” Sirius said, as he plopped down onto the sofa a few feet away from where Harry was sitting.

“Why?” Remus asked.

“Because you'll yell at me,” Sirius said. “The Full Moon is in two days, and I know well enough not to anger you around the Full Moon.”

Remus narrowed his eyes. “Why would I yell at – oh, Sirius, you didn't!”

“Didn't what?” Sirius asked.
“Please tell me you didn't park it on the roof of the castle,” Remus said.

“Of course not!” Sirius said; then he sighed. “That was my first choice, though, but there are no flat spots big enough up there.”

“So where did you put it?” Rose asked.

“Why did you have to ask?” Sirius replied, “You know I can't resist my little princess.”

Rose giggled. “Because you wouldn't answer Remus.”

“Point,” Sirius said.

He stood up and walked over to Rose. Then he bent toward her and whispered into her ear.

“The Forbidden Forest?!” Rose shrieked.

“Rosie, you traitor!” Sirius exclaimed; he tickled her around the waist making her squeal.

“Sirius,” Remus said, sighing.

“She lies!” Sirius exclaimed, backing away from his honorary niece, “I'm innocent!”

“Sirius,” Remus repeated.

“Fine!” Sirius huffed, “Yes, I put it in the Forbidden Forest. I even found a nice little clearing. It looked as if it was recently cleared away, probably by Hagrid, so I landed it there.”

“Why would you put it there of all places?” Remus asked, “We'll be lucky if it is able to fly if it stays there until June!”

“You're exaggerating,” Sirius said, “Besides, in addition to the enchantments already covering it, I added my own. Nothing will hurt it.”

“Sirius,” Remus said, “This is the Forbidden Forest we're talking about.”

“And you say that like it is a bad thing,” Sirius said. “It will be fine. I assure you. Let's talk about something else. Anything else.”

“Harry seems really happy for some reason,” Rose said.

“Sirius is right, Rose,” Harry said, “You're a traitor.”

Rose stuck out her tongue. Harry sighed as his sister and both Uncles joined him in the living room. Sirius and Remus sat on the sofa, while Rose took another chair.

“So is there something you want to tell us, pup?” Sirius asked. “You're happy for a reason.”

“Hermione was in the Library when I checked out the books,” Harry said, indicating the book in his lap. “She was there doing some studying.”

“I asked her basically the same thing,” Harry said, “And she said she didn't have a boyfriend...”

Sirius, Remus and Rose were all grins by the time Harry finished his story.

“So let me get this straight,” Sirius asked, “You asked her to the Ball. But she said she barely knows you. So you asked her to Hogsmeade, so she can get to know you, so then you can ask her to the Ball.”

“Basically,” Harry said, shrugging.

“And you didn't even get a kiss out of it?!” Sirius asked.

“Sirius,” Harry said, sighing, “I don't think she's ever been kissed.”

“Even better!” Sirius said, “You could have claimed her first kiss right there! Someone's bound to wise up and steal her first kiss before your date!”

“I don't think she's that kind of girl, Sirius,” Remus said, sighing.

“No, she isn't,” Harry said. “And I will only kiss her if we have a nice time next Saturday, and she lets me.”

“Have you forgotten everything I taught you?!” Sirius asked.

“Yes,” Harry said, “And I am much better because of it.”


“I'm feeling very unloved today,” Sirius said, with a pout.

“Of course we love you, Uncle Sirius,” Harry said, “We just also know you're a dog.”

“And what exactly is wrong with that!” Sirius demanded, “Just because you're --”

“Hello, family!” Lily said, interrupting Sirius, as she stepped into the tent. “Looks like I missed something. What's going on?”

“I beat Remus four times in a row at chess,” Rose said, “Sirius is feeling unloved today. Oh, and Harry has a date with Hermione Granger on Saturday, and there is a chance he's going with her to the Ball.”

Sirius and Harry both muttered “traitor” again. Rose stuck her tongue out in response.

“You have a date with Hermione, Harry?” Lily asked, as she sat down in the last vacant chair. “I left you in the library to check out books, and now you have a date? Tell me everything young man!”

Harry sighed and started telling the same story he told his sister and honorary Uncles.
Hermione Granger was currently sitting at one of the tables in the private library/study area in the Ravenclaw Common Room. She was working on the last half of a Potions Essay that Professor Snape had set during the previous day's lesson. As she dipped her quill in the vat of ink, she hummed happily as she thought about what had happened in the Hogwarts Library. She could not believe she had been asked out on a date.

Nobody had shown interest in her like that in the three years and two months she had been at Hogwarts. Of course, up until last year, she wasn't interested in anything beyond friendship with anyone. But aside from Luna Lovegood, nobody else wanted to be her friend. Everyone either ignored her, or did much worse to her.

And then the previous evening, she had met two people and had the longest conversation she had with anyone aside from her parents and Luna Lovegood. Even though Harry and Rose Potter didn't precisely say they wanted to be her and Luna's friends, she could still feel as if they were her new friends. Rose Potter was a brilliant and fun young teenager, but it was Harry Potter who had caught her eye. By the time the Feast was over, Hermione had fallen for Harry Potter. She had never fallen for someone so fast.

Then she had cried herself to sleep last night, because there was absolutely no chance that Harry Potter would ever be interested in her in a romantic sense.

And then there was the scene in the Hogwarts Library. Harry Potter had asked her to the Yule Ball! Hermione was so shocked, that she thought Harry was teasing her when he called her beautiful. She had been so afraid he was joking, that she had gone on the defense, saying she barely knew him, even though she had such a long conversation with him the previous evening. And Harry had agreed with her, and yet, he still asked her on a date! He had asked her to join him on a Hogsmeade weekend, so that they could get to know each other, and then – if she was okay with it – he would ask her to the Ball again.

By the time Harry had left, Hermione had almost melted into a pile of happy, nervous goo in the library. She had forced herself to stay seated, so she wouldn't have run off to find Harry before he could get too far, so that she could tell him she would go to the Yule Ball, and wherever else he wanted her to go. Hell, the way her hormones had been rampaging during her discussion with Harry, she had nearly ran after him just to kiss him!

But that was silly. She wasn't that type of girl. She wouldn't kiss before the end of the first date, and maybe even the second! And yet, she wanted to kiss him already. There was an entire week – minus a few hours – before she would be going on a date with Harry Potter, and she wasn't sure she could survive it. Her hormones would definitely not survive it!

“Relax, Hermione,” she said to herself, “Calm yourself. It is just a date.”

“Talking to yourself, Granger?” a voice said, “That is a sure sign of insanity.”

Hermione jumped slightly, nearly upturning her vat of ink. She turned her head and saw Mandy Brocklehurst standing there. Mandy wasn't alone. Su Li, Cho Chang, and Marietta Edgecombe were also standing there. Hermione groaned under her breath. These four girls were her biggest problem in not only Ravenclaw, but Hogwarts as a whole. They were bullies to her and Luna.

“She probably has a bout of Wacky Sparks,” Cho Chang said, “Or whatever Loony calls them.”
“Wrackspurts,” Hermione muttered.

She was trying not to lose her composure at the fact that Chang was insulting her best friend. It was nothing new after all. Just one of the weapons the bullies used.

“You realize the fact that you're correcting Cho about an imaginary creature is quite pathetic, right?” Marietta Edgecombe said. “They're imaginary, Granger. You can call them Wacky Sparks, Wrackspurts, or Jock Straps, and they'll still be imaginary.”

“And what is wrong with imagination?” Hermione asked.

“Nothing,” Su Li said, “As long as you don't take it seriously like Lovegood does. No normal person spends so much time on imagination, Granger.”

“What do you want anyway?” Hermione asked, “I am working on homework. Go bother someone else.”

“I was watching you in the library, Granger,” Mandy said.

Hermione tensed up. Had Mandy seen or overheard her discussion with Harry?

“You need to leave Harry Potter alone,” Mandy said.

“Excuse me?” Hermione asked. “For your information, Harry is the one who met with me. Both times we met, he was the one who sat with me. Last night, he discovered Luna and I were alone. Why were we alone? Because you, Mandy, wouldn't budge over and let me and Luna sit with you. Would Harry have sat with Luna and I if you had let me sit with you guys?”

Mandy frowned. Hermione wasn't finished.

“If Harry and his sister hadn't sat with me,” Hermione said, “he likely wouldn't have spoken to me in the library today. So thank you for not budging over last night, Mandy.”

Mandy narrowed her eyes. Hermione merely smiled.

“I don't know why it is any of your business anyway,” Hermione muttered.

“Of course it is our business!” Mandy growled, “You don't get it Granger, do you? Harry is the Heir Apparent, and future Lord of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter. One of the oldest, most respected Houses, which until yesterday, was feared to have gone extinct.”

“You forgot to mention it was a pureblood-driven House before his mother got her hooks into James Potter,” Marietta Edgecombe said. “Potter and his sister are the half-blood Heirs of a pureblood House.”

“What Marietta is trying to say, Granger,” Cho said, “Is that House Potter doesn't need another Muggleborn like you tainting its bloodline. It is utter disrespect, and you should be ashamed of yourself.”

“Excuse me?” Hermione repeated, “Harry asked me on a date, Chang! He didn't ask me to marry him!”
“He also asked you to the Yule Ball,” Mandy said.

“Then he changed his mind, and asked me to Hogsmeade instead,” Hermione said, in a half-truth.

“And if the date goes well, you'll be on his arm at the Yule Ball,” Mandy said. “And that will just not do. You think we are bullying you, Granger? The Yule Ball is going to be a public affair. Harry Potter's return to Great Britain will be big news. What do you think is going to happen if you accompany Potter to the Yule Ball, and Wizarding Great Britain finds out? You'll be drowning in Howlers and hex-letters so much that you'll likely have to leave Wizarding Great Britain just to get away from them.”

Hermione frowned, trying to fight the tears. She was starting to believe what the girls were saying.

“Do yourself a favor right now, Granger,” Cho said, “And go turn Potter down. If you're so hormonal that you need to shag somebody, find a Muggleborn like you. Justin Finch-Fletchley’s single, and attractive. You might even gain a bit of respect for dating amongst your own level instead of ours.”

“Excuse me!” a voice said.

Hermione was quite surprised when Padma Patil pushed through the girls and stood in front of her.

“Go away, Padma,” Mandy warned. “You're not involved in this.”

“I'm not?” Padma asked, “May I remind you, Brocklehurst, that my family is in an Alliance with House Potter. One of the few who stuck around in the Alliance when it appeared House Potter went extinct.”

Marietta laughed unexpectedly. “Oh, I see. Good game, Patil. You're trying to claim Potter before we can.”

“Of course not, you stupid bint!” Padma snarled. “I'm not interested in Harry Potter.”

“Yeah, quit lying to yourself, Patil,” Mandy said, “Of course you are.”

“Even if I was,” Padma said, “At least I'm not trying to poach him.”

Mandy, Cho, Marietta and Su all gasped at Padma's words.

“Yeah,” Padma said, “You're trying to poach him. You didn't realize that? You girls put the moron in oxymoron! Stupid Ravenclaws, all of you! If Potter has shown interest in Granger, then you have to let it take its course. I was listening to this entire conversation, and Hermione's right. All she is doing right now is going on one date with Potter. True, it could become more. By this time, next Saturday, Hermione could be Potter's girlfriend.”

Hermione blushed deeply, and smiled lightly.

“Of course, there is a chance their date could also go horrible,” Padma said.

Hermione frowned. She didn't need to hear that right now.
“But you are not to interfere in any of it,” Padma said, “Or it could be seen as poaching, which is a serious offense. Possible time in Azkaban, and definite consequences for your Houses. Blood Feuds would only be the worst of it! Potter could challenge all of you in an Official Duel for Satisfaction right now. Given that he is a contender for the Ilvermorny Champion, I have no doubt he could wipe the floor with every one of you. Yes... even you Su Li. Even you.”

Su Li scoffed. Hermione smiled lightly at this slight. Su Li was the top student in Defense, and if the rumors were anything to go by, she was also a Duelling Champion in the Teen circuit.

“As long as Potter's interested in Granger, then they're both off-limits,” Padma said, “Whether it be dating, shagging, or your nonsensical bullying! Potter is my Ally, and if Granger is in Potter's best interests, then so is she! Leave her alone or deal with me. Oh, and leave Luna alone too. Because she's also an Ally of House Potter and House Patil. Go on ladies.”

“This isn't over, Granger,” Mandy muttered, “Turn Potter down. Or else!”

“Brocklehurst!” Padma snarled.

Mandy sneered and walked off with her friends. Padma sighed turned and sat down in another chair at Hermione's table.

“Padma,” Hermione said, “Thank you, but... I didn't need help.”

“Yes, you did,” Padma said, “No! Don't say a word, Granger.”

Hermione frowned.

“Those girls have been bullying you for years now,” Padma said, “I've put up with it, because I haven't had any good reason to be able to defend you. I'm sorry, but if I had done anything before now, I'd be an outcast, just like you and Luna. Don't say you didn't need help, because you did. This wasn't about how you're embarrassing them because you're the top student of our year. This wasn't about pride, Granger. This is about Pureblood Politics, and Pureblood Heritage. And with those two subjects, you stand very little chance without someone who can back you up.”

“Someone like you,” Hermione said, when she found her voice again. “Well, sorry. I could just have Luna help --”

Padma snorted. “Luna may be a Pureblood, but she's not going to garner any respect around here because of her beliefs. I'm sorry, but it is true. And it isn't just Politics and Heritage here. Anger those girls any further, and it will go beyond words. You're going to get hexed and cursed before too long. You'll end up in the Hospital Wing or worse. Mandy might very well be on her way to hexing you in the back.”

Hermione frowned. She couldn't deny Padma's words. Mandy's last threat rang in her ears.

“If they had started something with you,” Padma said, “Something beyond words, I mean. You wouldn't have had a chance. First, it was four-on-one. Second, there were two fifth years. Last, but not least, there is Su Li. Hell, Granger, one-on-one, Su Li would wipe the floor with you. She's won the Chinese Duelling Circuit Championships these past two summers. And they were the only two summers she ever competed professionally. She's undefeated in the professional circuit, if you need me to make my message any clearer. Still think you don't need my help? Still want to fight your own battles?”
Hermione frowned. “Harry...”

Padma gave an unexpected, encouraging smile. “There you go, Granger. Using that smart brain of yours. Yes. Potter. Tell him about this poaching threat. Either he, or Lady Potter or – hell – if I heard correctly, Sirius Black, the new Lord Black once he takes up his title, is back in Great Britain. Any one of them will help you against the poaching threat. You may think you're a tough girl. Maybe you are. But you're also smart. Use that brain of yours and know when to get help.”

Padma sighed and stood up. “Think about what I said.”

“Thanks, Padma,” Hermione said. “Um... are we friends now?”

Padma stared at her for a moment. “Maybe.”

Leaving that mysterious response up in the air, Padma turned and walked away. Hermione capped off her tub of ink, rolled up her still unfinished scroll of homework, and placed everything in her knapsack. She stood and headed up to her dormitory. It was thankfully empty. She placed her knapsack under her bed, climbed into bed, and wrapped the curtains around giving her privacy. Then she laid down and let the tears flow as she stared at the ceiling of her four-poster bed. She needed to think about things.

Lately, she found she did her best thinking when she cried.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished. I was able to write this chapter so fast because I knew exactly what I wanted in it (even if the House Potter tent scene gave me pause).

Yes, I decided not to put the Champion Choosing Ceremony in this chapter, because it wouldn't have fit with the theme. Besides, the first scene went much longer than I anticipated, and with the two additional scenes, this chapter just got too big for anything more.

Poor Hermione. One of my reviewers said to me “Please don’t make Hermione weak to the point where Harry has to save her.” Unfortunately, that is kind of what I’m doing here. But with how the scene went, Hermione was facing insurmountable odds. She needed help, and Padma was there to help her, and now Harry will soon help. I was trying not to make Hermione weak. Trying to give her a good defense, and a “I can fight for myself” attitude. But again, she was facing insurmountable odds, and she is not learned in the art of Pureblood Politics. She needed help. She will get help, not just in protecting her, but she’ll also learn Pureblood Politics and stuff, thanks to Harry and his family. I just needed this scene to begin the storyline that leads to her being stronger.

So those who guessed Mandy Brocklehurst (who was the girl in the Library) and Cho Chang were right. Also one predicted Marietta Edgecombe, which is obvious, cause she’s Chang’s lackey. Su Li was an option simply because she poses a challenge. A challenge which might show up later.
Some of my reviewers wanted more of Sirius. I hope you liked what you got!

Next chapter: The Champion Choosing Ceremony, and the aftermath. And that is all I'll say about that!

The statement made in the last chapter about the internet issue still stands.
Saturday, October 31st, 1994

Even though it wasn't pouring rain like it had been during the morning, there was a light mist falling over the Grounds of Hogwarts. However, due to the Rain-Repelling Charm, Harry Potter was quite dry as he strode toward the castle with his mother, sister, Uncles, and his fellow Ilvermorny delegates. The Charm, his mother's own invention, was quite an interesting piece of magic. It was as if he was holding an invisible umbrella above him. The rain fell around him, but never once touched him.

Minerva McGonagall was waiting for them as they stepped into the Entrance Hall.

“Good evening,” Minerva greeted the students and staff of Ilvermorny, “Once again, I invite you to sit at the Ravenclaw Table this evening. Lady Potter, you're welcome to join myself, my fellow staff, and the Tournament officials, at the Head Table. Professor Black, Professor Lupin, you may join either us at the Head Table, or you may sit with your students.”

Sirius and Remus whispered to each other for a moment, then looked at Harry and Rose, then back to Minerva.

“I believe we'll sit with our students, ma'am,” Remus said.

“Very well,” Minerva said. “To begin the evening, we will have another Feast, much like we did the previous evening. Then after the Feast, the Goblet of Fire will choose the three Champions of the Triwizard Tournament. If you are chosen as Champion, you are to head through the door behind the Head Table to meet with your fellow Champions, and the Tournament officials for more instructions. Good luck to each of you, and I hope you enjoy the evening whether or not you become the Champion of your school. Make your way in please. Mr. and Miss Potter, may I speak with you before you enter?”

Harry and Rose nodded, and walked over to Minerva. Their mother and Uncles also remained behind.

“Mr. and Miss Potter,” Minerva said, “Miss Granger and Miss Lovegood have requested to sit with you again at the Ravenclaw Table. They asked me permission first, and I, in turn, am asking you.”

Rose's smile told Harry that she was fine with the idea.
“Hermione and Luna are quite welcome to join us again, ma'am,” Harry said.

Minerva smiled. “I thought you might say that. Follow me, please.”

Harry and Rose followed Minerva into the Great Hall, with their mother and Uncles in tow. When they entered the candlelit Great Hall it was almost full. The Goblet of Fire had been moved; it was now standing in front of Dumbledore’s chair at the Head Table.

Once again, they found Hermione and Luna sitting at the very end of the Ravenclaw table, except this time they were sitting across from each other instead of together. There was enough space left to fit two more people on either side of the table. Rose nudged Harry and nodded to Hermione. Harry didn't need to ask to know what she meant. He walked over to Hermione's side of the table and sat down next to her. Hermione blushed prettily and smiled, which told Harry she probably had been saving the seat next to her for him. Sirius sat next to Harry, while Rose and Remus sat next to Luna.

“Behave yourselves,” Lily said, “I'm speaking to you, Professor Black.”

Harry, Rose, and Remus snickered as Sirius looked quite scandalized. Lily merely grinned at Sirius, before following Minerva to the Head Table.

“Greetings!” Sirius said, to Hermione and Luna, “Which one of you two gorgeous young ladies is my godson's girlfriend?”

Hermione sputtered and stammered. Harry gave a world-weary sigh.

“Date, Sirius,” Harry said, “She's my date next Saturday to Hogsmeade. Not my girlfriend.”

“Right,” Sirius said, grinning, “My mistake. I'm guessing he's talking about you, Miss?”

He pointed to Hermione, who blushed and nodded.

“Hermione Granger,” Hermione said, “It is nice to meet you...”

“Sirius Black,” Sirius said, “Harry and Rose's Godfather and Honorary Uncle, and Defense Professor -- Beginning and Intermediate Dueling division – at Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, at your service. My good buddy here is...”

“Remus Lupin,” Remus said, “Harry and Rose's Honorary Uncle, and Dark Creature Defense Professor at Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.”

“I'm Luna Lovegood,” Luna introduced herself, with a smile.

“It is very nice to meet the both of you, Miss Granger, Miss Lovegood,” Remus said.

Their conversation was interrupted by three sharp dings. As one the occupants seated at the House Tables turned toward the Head Table. This time, Lily was sitting between Dumbledore and Minerva this time, while Madame Maxime was sitting on Dumbledore's other side. Dumbledore, however was standing at the moment.

“Before the Goblet of Fire makes its decision on whom our three Champions of the Triwizard Tournament will be,” Dumbledore said, “We will first fill our bellies with another wonderful Feast of dishes from Great Britain, France, and the United States of America. I know each and every one of
you are eager to find out who the Champions are, but sustenance is more important.”

Dumbledore's lips twitched when several students muttered in disagreement.

“Without further ado,” the Hogwarts Headmaster said, “Let the Feast begin!”

As the table in front of him filled with various foods, Harry was quite relieved to see several American dishes.

“Harry,” Hermione whispered, so that only he could hear her, “I need to speak to you about something important. But I don't want to do it in public. Can I speak to you in private after the Feast?”

“Er... if I am chosen as Champion, I might be rather busy after the Feast,” Harry said.

“Oh, right,” Hermione said. “Well, don't worry. If you're chosen, then it can wait until tomorrow. You'll have too much on your mind this evening if you're picked as Champion.”

“I will do my best to find time to speak to you, Hermione,” Harry said, “Especially if it is important.”

Hermione smiled and nodded. The pair began piling their plates with much different varieties of food than their neighbor.

“Er... Professors?” Hermione asked Sirius and Remus, “Did you say you were both Defense Professors. And that you are teaching different subjects?”

“You have permission to call us by our first names, Remus and Sirius, Hermione,” Remus said, smiling, “And yes, you heard correctly. Unlike here at Hogwarts, Ilvermorny has five different Defense classes, separated into divisions. There is the Dark Creature division, which, of course, teaches students in their first and second years of education how to identify and defend oneself against various Dark Creatures.”

“Only two years?” Hermione asked. “Is that enough time? I mean, personally speaking, I've spent the first three years of my education in Defense learning about Dark Creatures. And we haven't even managed to get to creatures like Inferi. I asked our Defense Professor last year, Emmeline Vance, about them, and she said Inferi aren't usually taught until sixth year!”

Harry and Rose's eyes widened as they looked at Hermione.

“You're joking!” Harry exclaimed.

Hermione frowned and looked at Harry, shaking her head.

“I am going to wager a guess,” Remus said, “and say that the Defense curriculum here at Hogwarts hasn't changed much since Sirius and I attended as students. Hermione, the difference between your curriculum here at Hogwarts, and Ilvermorny curriculum – when it comes to Dark Creature Defense – is that, for some reason, the British Ministry of Magic believes you need to learn about every single creature listed in Newt Scamander's book. There's one main issue with that. Can you name it, Hermione?”

Hermione bit her lip. Harry had to take a sip from his glass of butterbeer, so he wouldn't focus on what she was doing, and lose himself. She didn't understand how much that turned him on.
Hermione sighed and shook her head.

“Harry?” Remus asked, “Can you answer it?”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said, as if he was answering one of Remus’ questions in class, “Unless you are interested in a career such as magizoologist, you’re probably not going to encounter half of those creatures in Scamander’s book.”

“Exactly,” Remus said, “At Ilvermorny, in addition to my teaching role, I sponsor a Club which focuses on those creatures I don't normally teach in class. Students who are interested in magizoology, or similar fields, usually join the Club.”

“Ooh!” Luna said, smiling, “I would be very interested in that Club!”

Remus smiled. “And you would be a most welcome member, Luna. But most students aren’t interested in Dark Creatures once they’re finished with their second year of education. I only teach my students about the Dark Creatures that are more common, the creatures they need to know about. Inferi, Dementors, Giants, Vampires, Boggarts, Veela, Dragons --” he paused, “-- Werewolves, et cetera.”

Hermione frowned. “So... Red Caps, Hinkypunks, Pixies, Grindylows?”

Remus laughed. “Pixies are taught during the very first lesson for first years, because they're so simple to handle. Grindylows, as well as Mermaids, are usually covered on a field trip when we go to one of the lakes near Ilvermorny. Red Caps and Hinkypunks are Club-type lessons. You're hardly ever going to encounter them unless you're out looking for them.”

“Merlin,” Hermione grimaced. “We spent a whole month on Red Caps and Hinkypunks alone.”

“No offense, Hermione, Luna,” Rose said, “But I am so thankful I attend Ilvermorny.”

Harry nodded in agreement.

“So the students at Ilvermorny are done with Dark Creatures after second year,” Hermione said to Remus, “Unless they join your Club.”

“Yes,” Remus said. “Third Year is the Curses and Hexes Division. Unforgivables are taught, though there is no Practical lesson about that topic of course. Several Curses and Hexes are taught so students know how to defend oneself against them.”

“Then Fourth and Fifth Year, you're with me,” Sirius said, “Beginning then Intermediate Dueling. Mind you, I'm not just teaching students how to duel on your league-standard dueling platform. No! We duel in classrooms, in corridors, on the Grounds, and in the nearby Forest. We duel in all kinds of weather too. Sunshine, rain, snow.”

“But that is so dangerous!” Hermione gasped. “Dueling on the platforms is so... coordinated and....”

“Safe?” Harry asked.

“Moderately safe,” Hermione said, nodding.

Sirius snorted. “Interested in joining the Dueling Circuit, are you, Hermione?”
“Er... no, not at all,” Hermione said, shaking her head.

“Really?” Sirius asked, “So why do you think every duel you're going to be involved in, in the future, is going to be on a league-standard platform then?”

Hermione's eyes widened. Harry, Rose, Sirius and Remus all nodded with grim smiles.

“Now you see,” Sirius said, “I don't teach students how to duel in the Circuit, Hermione. I teach students how to duel in real life.”

“Like in battles and wars?” Hermione asked, quietly.

“Nah,” Sirius said, “That is where the Battle Strategy Division comes in. My lessons teach students how to win a duel, but not just on the Circuit. Battle Strategy teaches you how to work together with others in the heat of battle and war.”

“Oh,” Hermione said, “S-so Ilvermorny is a military academy?”

Harry, Rose, Sirius, Remus, and those Ilvermorny students who heard Hermione laughed out loud. The rest of the Ilvermorny students joined in when their neighbors told them what Hermione had said. Hermione looked at them questioningly.

“Hermione,” Remus said, “Ilvermorny is simply a school like Hogwarts. It just has a much more advanced curriculum than Hogwarts.”

Hermione nodded slowly. “I am now beginning to understand that.”

During the rest of the meal, Harry, Rose, Sirius and Remus discussed the differences between Ilvermorny and Hogwarts with Hermione and Luna. Luna looked quite impressed with Ilvermorny, but Hermione looked envious. By the time dessert had appeared, Harry noted Hermione looked rather downhearted and disconcerted.

“We've upset you, Hermione,” Harry said, “I'm sorry.”

“No, I'm not upset at you,” Hermione said, “At any of you. I'm... I'm upset at the seemingly substandard education I've been dealing with for the past three years here at Hogwarts. When I got my Hogwarts letter, I was anticipating learning about a whole new world. Now it feels as if I'm learning only a percentage of it. I'm seriously thinking about transferring to Ilvermorny. I don't think my parents would allow it though.”

“Hermione,” Remus said, “While I would very much welcome you at Ilvermorny, I want you to put a lot of thought into that. Right now, you're just thinking about the wonders of Ilvermorny we've been telling you about. You need to think about the pros and cons, the life-changing decisions, and all of it. I'm not trying to scare you...”

“I know,” Hermione said, “Thank you, Professor. Like I said, my parents...”

“If it is your decision in the end to transfer,” Remus said, “Then Sirius, myself, and Harry and Rose's mother would speak to your parents about it. We'd call it a recruitment meeting.”

Hermione smiled and nodded. “I'll take my time and think about it. Thank you, sir.”
At long last, the golden plates returned to their original spotless state; there was a sharp upswing in the level of noise within the Hall, which died away almost instantly as Dumbledore got to his feet. On either side of him, Lily and Madame Maxime looked as tense and expectant as anyone. Ludo Bagman was beaming and winking at various students. Mr. Crouch seemed to be studying different students, and Harry wondered if the man was trying to figure out just who the Goblet would pick as the three Champions.

“Well, the goblet is almost ready to make its decision,” said Dumbledore. “I estimate that it requires one more minute. Now, when the champions’ names are called, I would ask them please to come up to the top of the Hall, walk along the staff table, and go through into the next chamber” — he indicated the door behind the staff table — “where they will be receiving their first instructions.”

He took out his wand and gave a great sweeping wave with it; at once, all the candles except those inside the carved pumpkins were extinguished, plunging them into a state of semidarkness. The Goblet of Fire now shone more brightly than anything in the whole Hall, the sparkling bright, bluey-whiteness of the flames almost painful on the eyes. Everyone watched, waiting. A few people kept checking their watches...

“I wonder which school's Champion will be named first,” Hermione whispered to Harry. “Ilvermorny, you think?”

“That would be nice,” Harry said, “It'd be great to – what's the term you Brits use?”

“Rip off the plaster?” Hermione suggested.

“Right,” Harry said, “It'd be nice to rip off the plaster and get it over with. Anticipation and suspense sucks, you know?”

Hermione giggled and nodded.

The flames inside the goblet turned suddenly red again. Sparks began to fly from it. Next moment, a tongue of flame shot into the air, a charred piece of parchment fluttered out of it — the whole room gasped.

Dumbledore caught the piece of parchment and held it at arm’s length, so that he could read it by the light of the flames, which had turned back to blue-white.

“The champion for Ilvermorny,” he read, in a strong, clear voice, “will be Harry Potter.”

It took a few moments for Harry to realize what the Headmaster of Hogwarts had said. It wasn't until he felt the sharp pats on his back from Sirius and Hermione, that Harry realized Dumbledore had said his name. As Harry stood, much of the Great Hall was roaring in applause, but none was louder than Hermione, Luna, Rose, Lily, Sirius, Remus, and the Ilvermorny delegates. None of the other delegates looked disappointed. They were showing their support.

Harry swallowed and swung his feet around so that he could stand up. He cleared his throat and walked down the aisle toward the front of the Great Hall. Lily was waiting for him, blocking his path to his destination, and when he reached her, she grabbed him in a hug.

“I'm proud of you,” she whispered into his ear, “Head on through that doorway. I'll be with you shortly.”
Harry nodded as he backed away. As he walked past Dumbledore, he noticed the man smiling at him. Harry nodded at the Hogwarts Headmaster respectfully, then headed toward the door. Bartemius Crouch was staring at him. Ludo Bagman was still clapping joyfully, even though much of the applause had died down. Madame Maxime had a mildly surprised expression on her face, but when she caught his eye, her expression changed and she smiled. Harry merely nodded respectfully again, and headed toward the door.

Various other Hogwarts Professors glanced at him. Minerva was smiling at him. The dwarf Professor looked something between happy and concerned. The dark-haired sallow-looking Professor was glaring at him for some odd reason, and Harry wondered if that was Severus Snape. Then there was another man with a wooden leg, and an odd magical eye spinning around in one eye-socket. The eye stopped and looked at him. Then the man's gnarled lips upturned in what Harry thought was a smile. Harry merely nodded again. He arrived at the door, pushed it open, and walked through the doorway.

_Great Hall – Hogwarts_

Lily Potter watched her son as he made his way toward the door at the back of the Hall. A storm of emotions were clouding her mind. She was proud of her son, and thrilled that he had been picked as the Champion of Ilvermorny. But she was also afraid. She remembered Minerva's words earlier that day about how the Tournament was meant to be played by seventeen year old wizards and witches. Minerva seemed to think that it was far too dangerous for someone Harry's age, no matter how talented he was.

Lily regained her composure. She knew Harry was prepared for this, and so was she and her friends, Sirius and Remus. They had prepared for this evening. They had made plans just in case Harry would be named Champion. The night was far from over. Plans needed to be enacted, and steps to be taken, when they returned to the tents.

As Harry stepped through the doorway and into the adjoining room, Lily noticed that Sirius had moved to stand at a wall near the door. When he caught her eye, he nodded at her, and so did she. Earlier that evening they discussed what would happen if Harry was named Champion. She and Sirius would both join Harry in the post-Choosing meeting. Remus would escort Rose and the rest of the delegates back to the tents after the ceremonies.

Lily turned her attention back to Dumbledore as the Goblet of Fire spat out the name of the next Champion.

"The champion for Beauxbatons," said Dumbledore, "is Fleur Delacour!"

Lily looked toward where the Beauxbatons were seated, and was slightly surprised to see the two Veela girls hugging. The elder of the two Veelas stood from the table and headed in her direction. Lily nodded – so the older Veela's name was Fleur Delacour, and she had been chosen as the Beauxbatons Champion. A passing thought told Lily that the Delacour name seemed vaguely familiar, but she couldn't place it. Lily shrugged the thought away. It probably wasn't important.

Lily smiled encouragingly when the young Veela passed by her. She noticed the young woman had a slight haughty demeanor about her, and she deduced that Fleur Delacour must be a highborn in France. Highborn were known to carry such an expression, especially after earning something as
important as the title of Beauxbatons Champion.

Lily watched as Fleur embraced her Headmistress, before the young walked off through the doorway into the same room as Harry.

The Goblet of Fire turned red once more; sparks showered out of it; the tongue of flame shot high into the air, and from its tip Dumbledore pulled the third piece of parchment.

“The Hogwarts champion,” he called, “is Angelina Johnson!”

The Gryffindor table erupted in roaring cheers and applause, as the rest of the Great Hall attempted to echo in the same response, but never earning the same crescendo. A dark-skinned, athletically-built, young woman stood. Two girls, and a couple of ginger-haired twins – Ron Weasley's twin brothers, Lily realized, remembering Minerva talking about them – stood with the Hogwarts Champion and hugged and patted her on the back. Lily was reminded of the closeness between James, Sirius Black, and the rest of the Gryffindor Quidditch Team in her time, and she wondered if this group was this generation's Gryffindor Quidditch Team.

Angelina finally escaped her friends' grasp and headed toward her Headmaster. When she reached him, she shook his hand, and he shook her offered hand with both of his. He quietly congratulated her, and she made her way toward the door. Minerva met her at the door, and Professor and student embraced in a hug. Angelina then headed through the doorway.

The applause for Angelina went on so long that it was some time before Dumbledore could make himself heard again.

“Excellent!” Dumbledore called happily as at last the tumult died down. “Well, we now have our three champions. I am sure I can count upon all of you, including the remaining students from Beauxbatons and Ilvermorny, to give your champions every ounce of support you can muster. By cheering your champion on, you will contribute in a very real —”

But Dumbledore suddenly stopped speaking, and it was apparent to everybody what had distracted him. The fire in the goblet had just turned red again. Sparks were flying out of it. Whatever was happening, Lily knew it wasn't supposed to be happening. The three Champions were chosen. The flames were supposed to die out until the next Triwizard Tournament began. Lily looked around at the officials and Hogwarts staff. It was easy to see none of them thought this was normal. They were staring wide-eyed and shocked at the Goblet. Albus Dumbledore was slowly making his way toward the Goblet.

A long flame shot suddenly into the air, and borne upon it was another piece of parchment. Automatically, it seemed, Dumbledore reached out a long hand and seized the parchment. He held it out and stared at the name written upon it. There was a long pause, during which Dumbledore stared at the slip in his hands, and everyone in the room stared at Dumbledore.

And then Dumbledore cleared his throat and read out – “Neville Longbottom.”

The Great Hall seemed to exhale as every single occupant in the Hall gasped as one. Then there was a great, pained shrieking sound coming from a ginger-haired girl. Lily turned to the direction of the shriek, and saw a girl clutching onto a boy, who looked pale and scared.

Two of Lily Potter's dearest friends were Frank and Alice Longbottom. Lily was proud to say that Alice was one of her best friends. Lily and Alice experienced pregnancy together – they had their
baby showers on the same day, they shopped for baby clothes and supplies together, and helped each other with their child's future nursery.

Neville Longbottom was born one day before Lily gave birth to her son, Harry. Alice had named Lily the godmother of her son, and in turn, Alice was named Harry's godmother. After James' death, and Lily had escaped Godric's Hollow with baby Harry, and her future daughter in her womb, she had met with Sirius and Remus in France. They had tried to contact the Longbottoms, but to no avail. The Longbottoms were hidden behind a Fidelius Charm. Five days after the escape from Godric's Hollow, Lily had received terrible news. Frank and Alice had been attacked, and tortured into insanity by some of Voldemort's Death Eaters. Neville had survived uninjured, and was now the ward of his grandmother, Augusta Longbottom. It was Frank and Alice's attack which finally made Lily, Harry, Sirius and Remus decide they needed to leave not just Great Britain, but Europe as well. It was then they moved to America.

Lily Potter had not seen her godson since his and Harry's first birthday party which the Potters, Longbottoms and their friends had celebrated together. Only a few days later, James, Lily and Harry moved into their Godric's Hollow safe-house.

Lily hadn't even spared a thought about Neville or his parents since she had returned to Great Britain. It had been over thirteen years since she had seen her godson, and yet she could still point him out. Just as Harry look like his father, James, Neville looked like a young Frank Longbottom.

At the Head Table, Professor Dumbledore had straightened up, nodding to Professor McGonagall.

“Neville Longbottom!” he called again. “Neville! Up here, if you please!”

Neville whispered something to the ginger-haired girl, before he stood up. No longer did he have fear in his eyes. He looked resolute as he turned to Albus, and walked toward the Head Table. Meanwhile, Lily walked over to where Sirius was standing.

“What's going on, Lils?” Sirius asked, “I thought there was only supposed to be three names. Why did the Goblet spit out the name of Frank and Alice's boy?”

“I have absolutely no idea,” Lily said, in a monotone voice.

Neville did not walk up to Albus, to shake his hand. He glared at the man, who merely stared back at him. Neville continued to glare at his Headmaster, as he turned and walked along the table. Lily stared at her godson, as he headed toward the door.

When Neville walked through the doorway, the students in the Great Hall started to shout.

“He's a cheat!” one student said.

“Longbottom's not even sixteen!” another student said.

“SILENCE!” Dumbledore yelled.

“I believe we should meet with Harry,” Sirius whispered to Lily, “I don't think we want to be in here right now.”

Lily agreed, and followed Sirius as the Hall gradually began to quiet down. Lily caught Severus looking at her and Sirius, but she ignored him, and followed Sirius through the door as Dumbledore
began to speak to the students. Beyond the door was a flight of stairs going downward. Lily and
Sirius descended the stairs and headed into a small room adorned with more paintings. Harry was
standing alone in a corner of a room, and was staring at Neville, who was talking in whispers with
the Hogwarts Champion. The Veela Beauxbatons Champion was watching Sirius and smiling
prettily. Lily rolled her eyes when Sirius grinned at the Veela, and she jammed her elbow into his
side. Sirius groaned, and apologized quietly to Lily. The Veela tittered quietly.

Meanwhile, Harry smiled when he saw Lily and Sirius, as they walked over to him.

said his name was – said he was named as the *fourth* champion. I thought there were only supposed
to be three.”

“There were,” Lily said, “Nobody knows why Neville's name was chosen. Dumbledore even looked
shocked. Something went wrong.”

“I'm sure it will be taken care of shortly,” Sirius said, “For now, let's focus on you. Congratulations,
pup! Ilvermorny Champion. Your girlfriend was staring at you, with a pretty smile, as you walked
through the Great Hall. She might have been staring at your --”

“Sirius!” Lily warned.

“But... anyway,” Sirius grinned, “Congratulations!”

“*Date, Sirius,*” Harry said, “She's my *date* next Saturday. How many times do I have to say that?
And thank you. How did the other delegates take it?”

Before Sirius could reply, there were footsteps coming from the stairway they had descended earlier.
Lily turned and saw Ludo Bagman appear with a large grin. He walked over to Neville, and clapped
him on the shoulder.

“Extraordinary!” he muttered, “Absolutely extraordinary! Gentlemen... ladies,” he added,
approaching the other Champions, as well as Lily and Sirius. “May I introduce — incredible though
it may seem — the *fourth* Triwizard champion?”

The Hogwarts champion looked rather emotional at this announcement. Lily realized that Angelina
and Neville were both Gryffindors. Obviously Angelina knew Neville somewhat.

Fleur Delacour, however, tossed her hair, smiling, and said, “Oh, vairy funny joke, Meester
Bagman.”

“Joke?” Bagman repeated, bewildered. “No, no, not at all! Neville’s name just came out of the
Goblet of Fire!”

Fleur frowned. “But evidently zair ’as been a mistake,” she said contemptuously to Bagman. “’E
cannot compete. ’E is too young.” She cleared her throat and looked at Harry with a stunning smile.
“No offense to ze Ilvermorny Champion, o' course.”

“Well... it is amazing,” said Bagman, rubbing his smooth chin and smiling down at Neville. “But, as
you know, the age restriction was only imposed this year as an extra safety measure. Then there was
the – er – modification for sixteen year olds to add their name in, and of course, Mr. Potter, here – the
Age Line had to accept him. There could have been some – er – flaws, I suppose.”
He chuckled nervously. “But as Neville's name’s come out of the goblet. I mean, I don’t think there can be any ducking out at this stage. It’s down in the rules, you’re obliged... Neville will just have to do the best he —”

The door behind them opened again, and a large group of people came in: Albus Dumbledore leading Madame Maxime, Bartemius Crouch, and several Hogwarts Professors into the room.

“Madame Maxime!” said Fleur at once, striding over to her headmistress. “Zey are saying zat zis little boy is to compete also!”

Lily snorted softly. Little boy? Neville was barely shorter than her own son, and both boys were taller than average boys their age. Lily figured this must be some way of the Beauxbatons Champion demeaning her fellow competitor.

Madame Maxime had drawn herself up to her full, and considerable, height. The top of her head brushed the candle-filled chandelier, and her gigantic black-satin bosom swelled.

“What is ze meaning of zis, Dumbly-dorr?” she said imperiously.

“I'd like to know the answer to that myself,” Sirius said, “After all, Dumbledore, this is a Triwizard Tournament. Tri... meaning three. And two Hogwarts Champions to boot! Lily, you seemed to forget to tell me about the rule in the rulebook where two students in the hosting school were allowed to compete.”

“I'm sure Lady Potter can tell you, Black,” Bartemius said, “That there is no such rule.”

“Well, how am I supposed to know that, Crouch?” Sirius asked, “Now that I think about it, I would like three Tournament rulebooks. Yes, three. For myself, Lily, and Harry. By evening's end. So we can check through all the rules. Wouldn't want to find any more surprises like this one now that my godson is competing in the tournament!”

Severus Snape snorted. When Lily and Sirius glared at him, he turned away.

“I will make sure to have three rulebooks delivered as soon as possible, Mr. Black,” Ludo Bagman said, nodding. “In fact, after we are done here, I'll have my own personal house-elf deliver them to you.”

“Thank you,” Sirius said, “We'd appreciate that.”

“C'est impossible,” said Madame Maxime, whose enormous hand with its many superb opals was resting upon Fleur’s shoulder. “ ‘Ogwarts cannot ’ave two champions. It is most injust.”

“Did something go wrong with the Age Line, Albus?” Lily asked. “Mr. Bagman referenced possible mistakes with the last-minute modifications to allow sixteen year olds, and my son to enter their names into the Goblet.”

“It is possible, of course,” Albus said; Minerva made to say something, but Albus raised his hand to stop her; he then walked over to Neville, and asked, in a calm voice, “Mr. Longbottom, did you put your name in the Goblet of Fire?”

“No,” Neville said; like he did in the Great Hall, he was once again glaring at his Headmaster.
“Did you ask an older student to put it into the Goblet of Fire for you?” asked Professor Dumbledore.

“No!” Neville repeated, resolutely.

“Ahh, but of course ’e is lying!” cried Madame Maxime.

“He could not have crossed the Age Line,” said Professor McGonagall sharply. “I am sure we are all agreed on that —”

“Dumbly-dorr must ’ave made a mistake wiz ze line,” said Madame Maxime, shrugging.

“He did not make a mistake!” Minerva defended Albus, angrily. “Really, what nonsense! Neville could not have crossed the line himself, and as Professor Dumbledore believes that he did not persuade an older student to do it for him, I’m sure that should be good enough for everybody else!”

“Mr. Crouch... Mr. Bagman,” Lily said, “you are our objective judges. What do you say?”

Bagman wiped his round, boyish face with his handkerchief and looked at Mr. Crouch, who was standing outside the circle of the firelight, his face half hidden in shadow. He looked slightly eerie, the half darkness making him look much older, giving him an almost skull-like appearance.

“Rules are rules,” Crouch said. “We must follow the rules, and the rules state clearly that those people whose names come out of the Goblet of Fire are bound to compete in the tournament.”

“Well, Barty knows the rule book back to front,” said Bagman, beaming and turning back to Lily, Sirius and Madame Maxime, as though the matter was now closed.

“And before any of you continue with the rubbish excuse that you want to submit more names of your delegate into the Tournament,” Crouch said, “Hear me out. The Goblet of Fire’s flame has gone out, and it will not return until the start of the next Tournament.”

“-- een which Beauxbatons is not competing!” Madame Maxime thundered dangerously. “I haff half a mind to take my Champion away from here.”

“Nonsense,” Crouch scoffed. “You can’t leave your champion now. She’s got to compete. They’ve all got to compete. Binding magical contract, like Dumbledore said.”

“Heh!” a man Lily recognized as Auror Alastor 'Mad-Eye' Moody, half-laughed, and half-growled, “How convenient!”

“Convenient?” Sirius asked, “I’m afraid I misunderstand, Auror Moody.”

“Ex-Auror Moody now, Black,” Moody said, grinning. “It is very simple. Someone put Longbottom’s name into the Goblet, knowing he would have to compete if it came out. You’re a man with a smart, strategic mind. If you put Longbottom’s name in, how would you do it?”

Sirius paused and stared at Moody, then he looked at Harry.

“My godson had to put his first and last name, and the name of his school on the slip of parchment he entered,” Sirius said, “All the Ilvermorny students did the same thing. Were the other entrants
required to do the same?"

“Yes,” Albus said.

“There you go,” Sirius said. “The Goblet chose one name for each school. All the culprit had to do was put Longbottom’s name in, and add a different school. Durmstrang, maybe. The Goblet would spit out his name, and only his name, for the school.”

“Pretty convincing strategy, Black,” Crouch said, “Maybe you put Longbottom's name in.”

“I trust every single person inside this room,” Dumbledore said, before Sirius could reply to Crouch. “I do not want to hear any more accusations thrown around. How this situation arose, we do not know. It seems to me, however, that we have no choice but to accept it. Both Angelina and Neville have been chosen to compete in the Tournament. This, therefore, they will do...”

Maxime whined. “Ah, but Dumbly-dorr —”

“My dear Madame Maxime,” Dumbledore said, “if you have an alternative, I would be delighted to hear it.”

Dumbledore waited, but Madame Maxime did not speak, she merely glared. She wasn’t the only one either. Bagman, however, looked rather excited.

“Well, shall we crack on, then?” he said, rubbing his hands together and smiling around the room. “Got to give our champions their instructions, haven’t we? Barty, want to do the honors?”

Crouch merely glared at Ludo.

“Oh, right, this is my job!” Ludo said, tittering nervously; he turned back to the Champions. “Let’s see... the first task...

“The first task is designed to test your daring, so we are not going to be telling you what it is. Courage in the face of the unknown is an important quality in a wizard...”

He grinned at Angelina and Fleur.

“Or witch!” he added. “Very important, yes! The first task will take place on November the twenty-fourth, in front of the other students and the panel of judges. The champions will face the first challenge armed only with their wands. They will receive information about the second task when the first is over. Owing to the demanding and time-consuming nature of the tournament, the champions are exempted from all exams except for OWLs or NEWTs which are, of course, important for the future. I think that only qualifies for you, however, Miss Delacour.”

Fleur smiled prettily. Bagman grinned and turned to look at Dumbledore.

“I think that’s all, is it, Albus?” he asked.

“I think so,” said Dumbledore; he was not looking at Bagman, but at Crouch, with mild concern, “Are you sure you wouldn’t like to stay at Hogwarts tonight, Barty?”

“No, Dumbledore, I must get back to the Ministry,” said Mr. Crouch. “It is a very busy, very difficult time at the moment... I’ve left young Weatherby in charge... Very enthusiastic... a little overenthusiastic, if truth be told...”
“You’ll come and have a drink before you go, at least?” said Dumbledore.

“Come on, Barty, I’m staying!” said Bagman brightly. “It’s all happening at Hogwarts now, you know, much more exciting here than at the office!”

“I think not, Ludo,” said Crouch.

Albus turned to Madame Maxime, Lily and Sirius. Madame Maxime, had already put her arm around Fleur’s shoulders and was leading her swiftly out of the room. Harry could hear them both talking very fast in French as they went off into the Great Hall.

“Lily and I must be getting back to our tents too, with Harry, Albus,” Sirius said, “We have much to talk about before we go to bed. Bagman?”

“Hmm?” Bagman asked, “Ah, yes, the rulebooks! Waspy! Three Triwizard Tournament Rulebooks please!”

A house-elf appeared next to Bagman carrying three large books.

“Hand them to Mr. Black, over there,” Bagman told his house-elf.

The house-elf walked over to Sirius, who took the books and thanked the house-elf. The house-elf bowed to him, then returned to Bagman.

“Er... Mr. Bagman?” Angelina asked. “Can Neville and I have one of those books too?”

Dumbledore cleared his throat. “Miss Johnson, Mr. Bagman is a busy --”

“Nonsense, Albus!” Minerva interrupted the Headmaster, “I’m sure Ludo would be happy to give Miss Johnson and Mr. Longbottom each a rulebook.”

Bagman smiled and spoke to his house-elf. Two more rulebooks appeared in the elf’s hands, and he handed them to the two Hogwarts Champions. The Champions thanked the elf.

“Angelina, Neville,” Albus said, “I’m sure you want to be getting to your Common Room. The Gryffindors are likely preparing a grand celebration, and it would be a shame to deprive them of this excellent excuse to make a great deal of mess and noise.”

Lily and Sirius led Harry, as they followed Neville and Angelina back into the Great Hall. The Great Hall was deserted now; the candles had burned low, giving the jagged smiles of the pumpkins an eerie, flickering quality.

Lily cleared her throat. “Neville Longbottom?”

Neville and Angelina turned to Lily, Sirius and Harry, looking expectant.

“Do you know who I am, Neville?” Lily asked.

“Lady Lily Potter,” Neville said, “Grandmother told me stories about you, and your husband. She told me you’re my godmother. Is that true?”
“Yes, it is,” Lily said.


Lily frowned. “‘Future mother-in-law’?”

“Yes,” Neville said, “I am – er – betrothed to her daughter, Ginny.”

“Oh!” Lily said, shocked, “I didn't know. Congratulations. Would Ginny be the young ginger-haired girl I saw with you tonight?”

“Yes, ma'am,” Neville said.

“She looked quite concerned for you, Neville,” Lily said.

“She is,” Neville said, “And I really should go and find her now.”

“Of course,” Lily said, “I know you're an unwilling participant, and if you ever need our help, do not hesitate to ask.”

Neville raised his eyebrows, then shrugged. “I'll think about it. It is nice to meet you, Lady Potter.”

“It is good to see you again, Mr. Longbottom,” Lily said. “Good evening.”

Neville nodded, and turned with Angelina. The pair of Gryffindors headed out of the Great Hall.

“Nice lad,” Sirius said, as he, Lily and Harry made their way out of the Great Hall.

“So that's my god-brother you told me about,” Harry said. “I had forgotten his name.”

“Don't know how important that is anymore, now that he seems to have another godmother,” Sirius said.

“I can't believe he's betrothed,” Lily said. “Alice never mentioned anything like that.”

“I don't think Frank and Alice penned that Betrothal Contract,” Sirius said, “Harry? Weren't you telling me earlier this afternoon how that friend of yours – Luna Lovegood – was telling you about some of the changes in the Great Alliance?”

“Yeah,” Harry said, “Yeah, Er... House Longbottom left the Alliance, and are now part of Dumbledore’s Alliance, with the Weasleys, I think?”

“I see,” Lily said, “So, Sirius, you think Dumbledore convinced Frank's mother to pen a Betrothal between Neville and the Weasley daughter?”

“If he believes it would strengthen his Alliance,” Sirius said, “Then yes. It seems like something he would do.”

Lily nodded. As she, Harry and Sirius headed onto the Hogwarts Grounds, she thanked the heavens her son wasn't involved in such nonsense as Betrothal Contracts.
Chapter End Notes

Or is he...? --evil laughter-- (Yes, there is a way for Harry to be involved in a Contract without his mother knowing about it.)

Hmm... I was planning on having Hermione reveal to Harry about Neville's relationship with Ginny Weasley, but this seemed a better idea.

I did away with the rule that champions cannot get help from their school's Professors. It would be broken away, so it seemed unnecessary.

I thought about adding another scene at the end of the chapter, but that can take place next chapter.

Next chapter: Harry, Lily, Sirius, Remus and Rose have a small celebration, and discuss some initial plans for the Tournament. Also, right before he is planning to go to bed, Albus gets a late-night visitor... who is not very happy with him.

What did you think? I hope you liked this chapter!
Saturday, October 31st, 1994

Much like the previous evening, Remus and Rose – the latter dressed in her pajamas – were sitting at the dining room table with mugs of hot cocoa, when Lily, Harry and Sirius returned to the House Potter Tent. Harry retreated into his bedroom to change into his own pajamas. Sirius sat down at the table with the three Triwizard Tournament rulebooks, while Lily made mugs of hot cocoa for herself and Harry. As she sat down at the dining room table, she found Remus and Sirius already skimming through the rulebooks, and rolls of parchment, quills and vats of ink sitting on the table.

“I see, Remus, that you were already predicting we were going to discuss the initial stages of preparation tonight,” Lily said, motioning to the supplies on the table.

“Lily, how long have we known each other?” Remus asked, “I know you don’t like to waste time, especially when it concerns your children. Of course I predicted we were going to spend the rest of the night preparing for the Tournament. I predicted that as soon as Albus named Harry as Ilvermorny Champion.”

Lily smiled at her long-time friend. As Harry walked over to the dining room table, Rose jumped up and hugged him.

“Congratulations on becoming Champion, big brother!” Rose exclaimed.

“Thanks, Rosie,” Harry said.

Rose backed away moments later and the siblings sat down at the table.

“You know, I half-expected to walk in here and find the rest of the delegates waiting to congratulate me,” Harry said, “Like some kind of party or something. Are they... okay... with me being Champion?”

“Of course they are, Harry,” Remus said, smiling when a look of relief crossed Harry’s face, “They’re very happy with you. Yes, they’re kind of jealous and envious, as is expected. But leave no doubts that they’re going to support you as the Ilvermorny Champion. You didn't hear it from me, but I think they are actually planning some kind of celebration for you, to take place in the Classroom Tent tomorrow evening. They predicted, correctly, that you would want to spend this evening with us.”
“So... I shouldn't plan on having dinner in the Great Hall tomorrow night?” Harry asked.

“Not unless you want to face nine angry sixteen- and seventeen-year old Ilvermorny wizards and witches,” Remus said, grinning.

Harry grimaced. “Duly noted.”

“Alright,” Lily said, “This discussion is going to take a while, so let's get started so we can have a relatively normal bed-time.”

“I think the first thing we need to discuss is the unexpected fourth Champion, Neville Longbottom,” Sirius said.

“Wait... fourth Champion?” Rose asked, “But... Professor Dumbledore told everyone in the Great Hall that he would do everything he could to make sure Neville wouldn't be in the Tournament.”

“Yeah, well,” Sirius said, “Either he lied to everyone, or decided there was nothing he could do about it.”

“I'm going to take an educated guess,” Remus said, “and assume that Neville didn't enter his own name into the Goblet of Fire?”

“No, I don't think he did,” Lily said, shaking her head, “He looked absolutely shocked and afraid when Albus said his name. He also denied it himself.”

“He could have been lying,” Rose said.

“I could tell there were a few people inside that room who thought Neville was lying,” Sirius said, “Including the Beauxbatons Headmistress. But I don't think he was lying.”

“I believe Madame Maxime is simply upset that Hogwarts now has two Champions,” Lily said. “No, I firmly believe that somebody else entered Neville's name into the Goblet of Fire.”

“Yeah,” Sirius said, “And I am quite sure they made it so there was no question Neville would be in the Tournament. It is quite likely that whoever placed Neville's name in the Goblet did so by also naming him the only representative of a fourth school – like Durmstrang, for example.”

“But why would they do this?” Rose asked, “What's the point?”

“Assassination-by-proxy,” Sirius said.

“Sirius!” Lily scolded her friend.

“What?!” Sirius retorted, “You know I'm right. Obviously someone wants Neville Longbottom dead. Instead of risking themselves by trying to murder the boy, they place him in the middle of the Tournament, with three dangerous Tasks! They're hoping he gets killed in the Tournament!”

Lily frowned as she saw Rose's hands shivering so much that her mug of cocoa was vibrating.

“While I believe you're right, Sirius,” she said, “You didn't need to spell it out.”

“But there has to be contingencies for this very thing, right?” Harry asked, “I mean – anybody could
enter anyone's name into the Goblet. They could have entered an eleven year old's name!

“If there were contingencies,” Sirius said, “I think they would have been named in the post-Choosing meeting, Harry. I'm willing to bet there is nothing in these rulebooks that states contenders must submit their own name into the Goblet of Fire. You heard Bagman and Crouch. All they said was that the boy had to compete. It's complete bull, of course, but there you go.”

“So there is nothing we can do?” Harry asked.

“We can do what we've already done, Harry,” Lily said, “We've already offered to help Neville. He just has to make the decision to accept our help.”

“You want to help another Champion win the Tournament?” Rose asked.

“Not win, Rosie,” Lily said, “Survive.”

Rose frowned and nodded.

“Enough about Longbottom,” Sirius said, “Harry's the Ilvermorny Champion. We need to focus our time tonight on him.”

Lily stood up and headed into her bedroom. A few moments later, she returned with a notebook of parchment. Inside the notebook was a checklist of prepared notes.

“I've been skimming through this Tournament rulebook these last few minutes,” Remus said, “And it is filled with jargon and stuff that – for me – could be a foreign language. That's how very little of this stuff I can understand.”

“Let me guess,” Sirius said, “Typical Ministry of Magic mumbo-jumbo?”

“Yes,” Remus said, “I'm sure if I took the time to dissect the entire rulebook, I would come to understand it. But between the lessons I have prepared for Rose, Harry, and the rest of the students here – and helping Harry prepare for the First Task – I don't think I could set aside enough time. I probably wouldn't be finished by the time the First Task comes around, and that doesn't help any of us.”

“So what do you think we should do?” Lily asked.

Remus smiled and looked between Lily and Sirius.

“When was the last time either of you spoke to Ted and Andromeda Tonks?” he asked. “Ted is still the House Potter and House Black Solicitor, right?”

“Well, if he isn't, I'm sure he'd like to take up the role again,” Lily said. “As I'm sure you remember, the Tonks were some of the few people who knew Harry and I survived that evening. So I think Ted was likely planning for the time he would be House Potter Solicitor again.”

“Sirius, you need to write to your cousin and her husband tonight before you go to bed,” Remus said.

“Why tonight?” Sirius asked.
Because you and Lily need to meet Ted no sooner than sometime tomorrow,” Remus said, “Breakfast or lunch, perhaps, at the Leaky Cauldron. I can't go, because someone needs to be here to be chaperone for the other students.”

“Diagon Alley?” Lily asked, “Why do we need to go there? The Three Broomsticks in Hogsmeade is just as good for a meeting place.”

“Because you’re also likely going to be visiting the Daily Prophet Headquarters in Diagon Alley,” Remus said, “We’re lucky there was no article in today’s Daily Prophet about the glorious return of Lily and Harry Potter, back from rumored death. Tomorrow, however, we may wake up to an article. After all, the Champions for the Triwizard Tournament were chosen this evening, and one of them is Harry Potter.”

“Why is that so important?” Harry asked, frowning.

“Harry, you're well educated in the history of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter,” Remus said, “You know how important House Potter is to Wizarding Great Britain. Until yesterday, Wizarding Great Britain thought you and your mother were dead.”

“Right,” Harry said, slowly.

“Harry,” Remus said, “You and your sister are the last generation of the House of Potter. If you and your mother had died as a baby on that Halloween in 1981, if Rose – sorry Rosie – if she never existed --”

“Oh,” Harry said, “House Potter would go extinct.”

“Exactly,” Remus said, “These past thirteen years, Wizarding Great Britain believed House Potter was extinct. Now the Heir Apparent of House Potter has returned, and he's the Ilvermorny Champion to boot! The Daily Prophet is going to latch onto that very quickly.”

‘Why is that a problem?’ Harry asked.

“Oh,” Sirius said, “I believe I understand what you're saying, Remus. Harry, unlike the United States, there are no libel and slander laws in Wizarding Great Britain. The Daily Prophet has a history of slandering names and reputations.”

“Exactly,” Remus said, “We need to nip this in the bud before it even begins. We need to control the media. If I remember correctly, House Potter and House Black share a total of forty-percent ownership of the Daily Prophet. According to what I read in the Daily Prophet today, Barnabus Cuffe is the current Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper. Even though he's not a journalist, he does write articles from time to time. I read one of the articles he wrote for today’s issue. It was rather impressive, and respectful. That is who we need when it comes to your media presence during the Tournament, Harry. We promise him exclusivity – only Cuffe can interview you, or anyone else, affiliated with Ilvermorny. Only he can write articles about Ilvermorny’s part in the Tournament.”

“And if he refuses?” Sirius asked.

Remus grinned and waved his wand. A moment later, a very colorful magazine appeared in front of him on the table.

“Luna Lovegood gave me this magazine before Rose and I left the castle,” he said, “It is called The
Quibbler. Luna's father is owner and Editor-in-Chief. As far as I can tell Xenophilius Lovegood, and his daughter, Luna, are the only two journalists for this magazine. There may be guest journalists from time-to-time, but the Lovegoods seem to handle ninety-percent of the work. With that said, according to Luna, the Quibbler is the main rival of not only the Daily Prophet but also Witch Weekly and Teen Witch Weekly, both of which are affiliates of the Daily Prophet. How do you think Barnabus Cuffe would react, if we tell him we've decided to give exclusivity to the Quibbler, which is owned by one of House Potter's Allies?"

Sirius barked out a laugh. "He'd do anything he could to change our minds. Which means he'd accept pretty much any decision we propose."

"Precisely," Remus said, grinning. "Tomorrow, the two of you – and Harry and Rose, if you allow them – will meet with Ted Tonks – either for breakfast or lunch – and discuss all of this with him. He could help us not only with the media coverage, but I think he could also tackle this rulebook far better than we could. Then you meet with Barnabus Cuffe in the Daily Prophet Headquarters."

"I like it!" Sirius said; "What say you, Lily?"

Noting that both Harry and Rose looked happy with Remus' idea, Lily smiled.

"It is a very well thought-out idea, Remus," Lily said, "Let's work with it. I'm sure Ted will be happy to help us. And yes, Harry and Rose, you're both allowed to join us."

Harry and Rose cheered.

"I will start writing a letter to my favorite cousin and her husband right now," Sirius said, grabbing a blank piece of parchment. "Good thing we brought a few owls with us. Hopefully one is ready for an overnight delivery."

"Next on the Agenda," Lily said, looking at her check-list. "Headmaster Winston had several meetings with the judges and officials of the Triwizard Tournament, before he had to back out due to his declining health. So I think we can trust him when it comes to the schedule he laid out. Remus, when you were skimming through the rulebook, was there anything about a 'Weighing of the Wands'?

"Ah, yes!" Remus said; he flipped through several pages and landed on one. "Weighing of the Wands. Sometime during the first week after the three – or, in this case, four – Triwizard Tournament Champions are chosen, there will be a Weighing of the Wands ceremony. A wand-expert will be on hand to make sure each Champion's wand is functioning and legal."

"There should be no problems with that," Sirius said.

"In addition to the ceremony," Remus said, as he read, "The media will get their first chance to interview the Champions, and there will be a photo op."

"Excellent!" Sirius said, "So we have until the Weighing of the Wands ceremony to convince Barnabus Cuffe."

"Which could mean anytime between Monday and Friday," Lily said. "I doubt it would be as early as tomorrow, or we would have been informed during the post-Choosing meeting. Your idea to meet with Barnabus Cuffe tomorrow is looking better and better every moment, Remus."
Harry grimaced. “I suppose they're going to be unavoidable?”

“Yep,” Lily said, “Sorry, son. We'll make sure you're ready. No worries. Next up, the First Task. I have a note here from Headmaster Winston. He says, and I quote ‘While the first task is set to test a Champion's skills and abilities in the face of the unknown, it is rare that all Champions go into the task without knowing what they are facing.’”

“So what he is trying to tell us,” Remus said, “Is that there are no rules against discovering what the Task is before Harry has to face it.”

“Sounds like it.” Lily said, “Headmaster Winston also says that, traditionally, the first task usually has to do with some kind of magical creature. The Champions are supposed to get past the creature, and retrieve something in the arena that will help them out in the Second Task. In the past, there has been... my god!”

“What?” Harry, Rose, Sirius and Remus asked at once.

“In the past, they've brought in Nundus, Manticores, and Hydras,” Lily muttered. “They wouldn't -- they're not --”

Harry and Rose went very pale as they stared at their mother.

“I don't think we need to worry about something as dangerous as Nundu or Manticore, Lily,” Remus said. “We have to remember, the last Tournament was roughly two centuries ago. Back then, the rules regarding such dangerous creatures were a lot different than they are today. While I'm sure the creature will be dangerous, I don't think we have to worry about something along the level of the XXXXX Category.”

“So,” Sirius said, “Between tonight and November 24th, all we have to do is figure out what Harry's facing. Then we can prepare for it. Easy enough.”

“It may be easier than that actually,” Remus said.

“How?” Harry asked.

“We'll write out a list of possible creatures you might have to face,” Remus said. “Then we'll figure out a range of strategies and prepare you for them. I'm sure we can think of some strategies that would work out no matter what creature you're about to face.”

“Good thing we have an expert on Magical Creature Defense with us,” Lily said, grinning.

“And if it turns out that the Creature I'm facing is one we've discussed,” Harry said.

“Then we'll obviously continue to prepare that strategy,” Remus said.

“I like that idea,” Lily said, “We'll be vigilant between now and the First Task, and see if we can discover the Creature. If we can't, then with our plan, you should be prepared enough anyway. Next... okay, the Second Task won't take place until late February. But between the First and Second
Task, there is the Yule Ball at Christmas.”

“Christmas?!” Sirius asked, “As in Christmas Day? Good Merlin, do these people have any respect for family tradition? Christmas Break is for students to go home and celebrate the holidays with their families! I mean, we could have been planning something ourselves, but now we have to spend Christmas here for the Ball?”

“Well, we didn't have any plans otherwise,” Harry said.

“Yet, Harry,” Sirius said, “We don't have plans yet. I think we should expect invitations to at least one or two social parties during Christmas Break, if not more. Once the news that House Potter and House Black have returned gets out, there will be other Houses – and not only just our Allies, mind you – who will want to mingle with us, and talk politics and Alliances and everything else. If we're invited to social parties, it would be rude of us to turn all of them down. So I think we should prepare to attend one or two. Also...”

“Also what?” Lily asked.

“Also,” Sirius said, “There may be several offers between now and then for Betrothal Contracts for the both of you.”

He pointed at Harry and Rose, who looked pale again.

“Don't worry,” Lily said, “We'll deny all Betrothal Contracts. Won't we, Sirius?”

“Huh?” Sirius asked; he looked up from the letter he was still writing, “Oh, yeah, of course, of course. There shouldn't be any problems when it comes to Betrothal Contracts.”

“Shouldn't be?” Lily echoed, glaring at Sirius.

“I'm being cautious, Lily!” Sirius exclaimed. “Betrothal Contracts are a nasty business!”

Lily huffed. “Let's move away from that topic. I forgot how much I hated Pureblood Politics.”

“These possible social parties you mentioned, Sirius,” Harry said, “They're not going to interfere with the Yule Ball, right?”

“I highly doubt it,” Sirius said, “The Yule Ball is not exactly a secret. It is the biggest social event of the year. If, on the off-chance, we do get invited to one on that same day, we'll decline it.”

“Why do you ask, Harry?” Lily asked, grinning, “Are you looking forward to the Ball?”

“He's expecting to take Hermione to the Ball,” Rose said, giggling.

Harry groaned. “Don't jinx it, Rosie! I don't even know if we'll have a nice time on our date next Saturday!”

“I don't think you'll have a problem with that, Harry,” Remus said, smiling, “Hermione looked quite pleased that you chose to sit with her this evening. I'm sure she's looking forward to the date. So I am quite sure you'll have a nice time.”

“Hey, that reminds me!” Rose said, “What were you and Hermione talking about in whispers earlier
tonight during the Feast?”

“Oh,” Harry said, “Hermione wanted to talk to me in private about something. She said it was important. But I told her if I was chosen Champion then I wouldn't have a chance tonight. I imagine she was already back in Ravenclaw Tower by the time the post-Choosing meeting was over. I'll just find her tomorrow sometime.”

“We may not have a chance tomorrow, Harry,” Lily said, “It appears we have plans to go to Diagon Alley.”

Harry shrugged. “We won't be there all day. Even if we leave tomorrow morning, I'll talk to her when we get back.”

“I think I know what she wanted,” Sirius said.

“What?” Harry asked.

Sirius grinned. “I bet she wanted to kiss you to see whether or not going on a date with you is worth it!”

Harry sputtered. Rose giggled. Remus snickered.

Lily smacked Sirius over the head with a rolled up piece of parchment.

“Behave, Sirius,” Lily said, “Okay. We need to continue, or we're never getting to bed tonight. Alright... the Second Task...”

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A few minutes earlier – Gryffindor Common Room

Neville Longbottom was quietly fuming as he walked through the seventh floor corridors toward Gryffindor Tower with Angelina Johnson. His fellow Champion in the Triwizard Tournament, Angelina Johnson. When the Goblet of Fire spat the fourth piece of parchment out, Neville didn't need Headmaster Dumbledore to call his name. He already knew it was his name. Even though he hadn't entered his name into the Goblet, he knew it was his name on that piece of parchment.

Why wouldn't it be? It was the icing on the cake that promised yet another eventful year for him at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Two out of the past three years had been quite eventful and dangerous for Neville.

During his first year at Hogwarts, there had been the whole Philosopher's Stone fiasco.

On Halloween during his first year, a troll had invaded the castle. Neville had heard from Parvati Patil that Ravenclaw student Hermione Granger had been hiding in a bathroom, and didn't know about the troll. Apparently his fellow Gryffindor first-year Ron Weasley had insulted her, causing her to hide in the bathroom. Ron's older brothers, Fred and George, offered to find Hermione – to apologize for their stupid brother – and Neville joined them to find her. They had ended up in a girl's bathroom with Hermione and a troll. Together, Neville, Fred and George had defeated the troll, saving Hermione. Professors McGonagall, Snape and Quirrel – the Defense Professor that year – had found them in the bathroom moments after they defeated the troll. Fred and George saw that Snape was limping, and they privately told Neville that they figured out why he was limping. Apparently he had tried to get past a giant three-headed dog.
So began an investigation between Neville, Fred and George as to what the dog was guarding. During the beginning weeks of second term of their first year, Hermione Granger found them doing research in the library about what the dog was guarding. So she joined in. With her help, they discovered it was the Philosopher's Stone. They soon suspected Snape was going after the Stone. In June of their first year, Neville, Fred, George, and Hermione went to rescue the stone from Snape – actually, it turned out to be Quirrel. Neville was shocked to discover Voldemort was on the back of Quirrel's head, like a leech!

During their confrontation, Voldemort slipped out the information that Neville was destined to defeat him, so Neville had to die. Dumbledore had arrived in time to help Neville, and Voldemort escaped from Quirrel's body, whom he had been possessing. Quirrel died as soon as Voldemort left him.

Dumbledore later told Neville that Voldemort simply wanted revenge on Neville for surviving an attack against some of his followers. When Neville asked what Voldemort meant by 'destined', Dumbledore said Voldemort was lying to him.

Neville's second year would be just as interesting. The Chamber of Secrets had been opened. Muggleborn were being targeted and Petrified by a creature. Fred and George Weasley convinced Neville to join them in this investigation. Unknown to them, Hermione was also doing her own investigation with her friend, Luna Lovegood. The events culminated in June when Hermione Granger had been Petrified, and Luna had discovered a wadded up book page in Hermione's petrified hand. She gave it to Neville, and Neville found out the creature was a Basilisk, and that it was using pipes. Luna had even suggested talking to Moaning Myrtle, who had died during the last Chamber of Secrets incident. Talking to Myrtle led Neville, Fred and George to finding a sink in the bathroom Myrtle resided in. The sink had a snake etched into its faucet.

Neville's Great-Uncle, Algernon, was an Unspeakable, and also a Parselmouth (something Neville was quite relieved he didn't inherit from the Croaker bloodline) so Neville contacted him to help out. On the day Algernon had come to Hogwarts, Ginny Weasley had been taken to the Chamber. So Neville, Uncle Algie, Fred and George all went into the Chamber. There they were confronted by a ghost-like figure of a boy named Tom Marvolo Riddle. Riddle told them that Ginny had opened the Chamber of Secrets, and she had been writing in a diary. Riddle possessed her through the diary. Riddle then told them that he was Lord Voldemort. He then summoned a Basilisk, which was quickly defeated by Algernon Croaker using the crow of a rooster he had brought with him. Uncle Algie then stabbed the diary with a Basilisk fang, and Ghost-Riddle disappeared. Ginny had survived, and was found innocent of any crimes concerning the Chamber of Secrets. Neville's Gran, Augusta Longbottom – who was also named Ginny's godmother, sponsored Ginny and paid for her to attend Mental Healer counseling to help with the trauma.

Lucius Malfoy was later discovered to have given Ginny the diary and was later arrested. During the most recent June, Malfoy was sentenced to life in Azkaban, but en route to Azkaban, escaped custody and has been a fugitive ever since.

Third year was a surprisingly normal year for Neville Longbottom. Nothing of interest happened. Unless you counted the Defense Professor that year, Emmeline Vance, romancing a seventh year student much of the year, ending up pregnant by said student, and giving her resignation when the relationship and pregnancy was discovered. But that had nothing to do with Neville Longbottom.

But it appeared Neville's fourth year would be like his first two. Eventful and very dangerous.

“Neville?” Angelina Johnson asked.
Neville broke from his reverie. “Hmm?”

“I believe you,” Angelina said, “I believe you didn't enter your name. I wish I know who was responsible, but I don't. If anybody believes you put your name in the Goblet, I'll help dissuade them from that belief.”

“Thank you, Angelina,” Neville said, “That means a lot to me.”

“I know Lady Potter said she would help you during the tournament,” Angelina said, “But so will I.”

“Thanks,” Neville said.

Neville got a shock to find himself and Angelina facing the Fat Lady already. He had barely noticed where his feet were carrying him. It was also a surprise to see that she was not alone in her frame. Neville recognized the witch who was now sitting smugly beside the Fat Lady. She had a portrait in the same room where the post-Choosing meeting had taken place. She must have dashed through every picture lining seven staircases to reach here before him. Both she and the Fat Lady were looking down at him and Angelina with the keenest interest.

“Well, well, well,” said the Fat Lady, “Violet’s just told me everything. Who’s just been chosen as school champion, then?”

“Balderdash,” said Angelina.

“It most certainly isn’t!” said the pale witch indignantly.

“No, no, Vi, it’s the password,” said the Fat Lady, and she swung forward on her hinges to let Neville and Angelina into the common room.

“Congratulations, both of you!” Violet said.

Neville merely nodded and followed Angelina into the Gryffindor Common Room. The blast of noise that met Neville's ears when he stepped inside almost knocked him backward. Next thing he knew, he was being wrenched forward by about a dozen pairs of hands, and was facing the whole of Gryffindor House, all of whom were screaming, applauding, and whistling.

“Everybody leave Neville alone!” a familiar voice, at least to Neville, shrieked.

Neville smiled when his Betrothed, Ginny Weasley, pushed her way through the crowd and pounced on him, hugging him.

During the start of the previous summer, Ginny's mother – and Neville's godmother, Molly Weasley had invited Neville and his Gran, Augusta, over to the Burrow for dinner with the Weasleys. During the dinner, Augusta and Molly together announced a Betrothal Contract between Neville and Ginny made when both were very young. At first, Neville was quite shocked, and rather reluctant. But a week after the announcement, Ginny had written him a letter saying that she had fancied him for a few years now even though he was technically her “god-brother”. Augusta suggested to Neville that he ask her on a date, and start courting her. So during four Saturdays of the summer, Neville and Ginny went out on dates – each date at the Leaky Cauldron and Diagon Alley, with dessert at Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlor. Either Augusta or Molly was a chaperone every time, but they had always kept a marginal distance.
By the second date, Neville had gotten the courage up to ask Ginny to be his girlfriend, and they had their first kiss. Aside from those original dates, they had also spent time at the Quidditch World Cup together – Neville had been invited by the Weasleys – and they had gone on a date during the Hogsmeade weekend in September. It had been Ginny's first trip to Hogsmeade, and she loved it.

“You okay, Neville?” Ginny asked, her voice muffled into his chest.

“I will be,” Neville said; he wasn't sure if that was a lie or not.

Ginny's twin brothers, Fred and George, pushed through the crowd.

“Angelina!” the twins roared.

“We're so happy you're the Champion!” Fred said.

“You and Neville!” George said.

“If it couldn't be us,” Fred said.

“We're glad it was you!” George said.

“How did you do it, Neville?” Fred asked.

“How did you enter your name?” George asked.

“I didn't,” Neville said, “I didn't enter --”

Those students who heard him started jeering and muttering – obviously very few believed him.

“SILENCE!” Angelina Johnson roared over the crowd of Gryffindors.

Miraculously, the Common Room went silent almost immediately.

“Neville did not enter his name into the Goblet of Fire,” Angelina said; she glared at several Gryffindors when they scoffed and murmured, “Neville and I were both there in the Post-Choosing meeting. You weren't. We were. I was there when Neville was interrogated by Headmaster Dumbledore about whether or not he entered. Neville said he didn't enter. Several adults, including the Beauxbatons Headmistress, and Professor Snape didn't believe Neville. But Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall do and that should be enough!”

“So what happened?” Neville's dorm-mate, and fellow year-mate, Dean Thomas, asked. “Why is Neville in the tournament?”

“Because somebody thinks the Tournament is going to kill me,” Neville said, dully; he winced when Ginny whimpered into his robes – she had not let him go since she pounced on him.

“Be serious, Neville!” Seamus Finnegan – another dorm-mate -- said.

“He is, Finnegan!” Angelina said, “Professor Moody thought the same thing --”

“Yeah, well, Moody's a paranoid bugger!” Lee Jordan said, “Of course he's going to think that!”
“There was a theory,” Angelina said, “That somebody wrote Neville's name and the name of a completely different school – like Durmstrang – and put it into the Goblet.”

“Blimey,” Fred said, “If there was only one student named for a fourth school --”

“-- then that student's name would automatically come out!” George said.

“Why didn't we think of that?!?” Fred and George yelled in unison.

“Fred and George are correct,” Angelina said, “That's the theory anyway. So as you can see, Neville's innocent here. I don't want to hear anyone here accusing him of cheating!”

“That goes double for you, McLaggen!” Katie Bell said, “We all heard you tonight in the Great Hall, calling Neville a cheat!”

Cormac McLaggen blushed furiously, as everyone glared at him, and he hurried off up the stairwell toward the boy's dormitories.

“Neville's a Gryffindor,” Angelina said, “Like all of us. We're all going to support him as Champion...”

“Both of you!” Parvati Patil said, “You're both Champions!”

Angelina smiled as the students yelled in agreement with Parvati.

“Fine,” she said, “Both of us. The other three Houses are going to be jealous. We need to convince them that, if either of us win, it is a win for Hogwarts! Everyone needs to know that Neville is a Champion, but is in this tournament involuntarily. Don't let anyone call him a cheater!”

There were murmurs and mutters of agreement.

“Now go on and give Neville his space,” Angelina said.

“Come on, Neville,” Ginny said; as the others walked away, “Let's go cuddle in front of the fireplace.”

“Not tonight, Ginny,” Neville said, “I'm too tired. I'll spend time with you tomorrow. All day if I can manage.”

Ginny frowned. “Neville --”

“I need time to myself, Ginny,” Neville said, “I need time to think. I'll make it up to you tomorrow.”

“You better,” Ginny said, frowning.

Neville pecked her on the lips. When she tried to deepen the kiss, he smiled and kissed her again. Then he backed away.

“Sweet dreams, Ginny,” Neville said.

“Good night,” Ginny said, smiling, “Love you.”
It was the first time Ginny ever said it to him. But Neville barely registered it as he walked past her and headed up the stairs to his dormitory. When he arrived at his dormitory, he found Ron Weasley sitting on the end of his bed with his arms crossed, and glaring at him.

“Already getting ready for bed, are you?” Neville asked, “I thought you'd be downstairs celebrating.”

“Why would I celebrate you becoming Champion, Neville?” Ron asked.

“I don't care whether or not you celebrate for me,” Neville said, “Angelina deserves it, however.”

“I don't care about Angelina, Neville,” Ron said, “Why didn't you tell me?”

“Tell you what?” Neville asked.

“Why didn't you tell me you found a way to enter your name into the Goblet of Fire?” Ron asked, “I'm your dorm-mate! Your friend! Your god-brother! You know I wanted to enter too! You were there when I complained this morning when Harry Potter was able to enter! You should have told me!”

“Ron,” Neville said, “I didn't enter my name into the Goblet of Fire.”

“You're lying!” Ron snarled.

“I'm not lying!” Neville shot back.

“Yes, you are!” Ron growled. “You don't need to lie to me! If you don’t want everyone else to know, fine, but I don’t know why you’re bothering to lie, you didn’t get into trouble for it, did you? That friend of the Fat Lady’s, that Violet, she’s already told us all Dumbledore’s letting you enter. A thousand Galleons prize money, eh? And you don’t have to do end-of-year tests either. Could have helped me enter too, though...”

“I didn't enter my name into the Goblet, Ron!” Neville repeated, “I do not want to be Champion! Why would I need a thousand Galleons? House Longbottom has a fortune already – not that a load of Galleons mean tripe to me!”

Unlike you it would appear, he thought coldly, as Ron muttered darkly under his breath.

“I don't have a chance in this tournament,” Neville continued, “More than likely, I'm going to get killed! You think I want that?!”

“So you're still determined to lie to me,” Ron said, “Even after I told you I'm not going to get you in trouble. You know what. Fine.”

Neville glared at Ron as the boy backed up onto his own bed. Why didn't Ron believe him? Out of everyone, Neville thought all of the Weasleys would believe him. House Weasley was allied with House Longbottom, after all!

“I think I'm going to write to my mother tomorrow,” Ron said, “I doubt she's going to want a rotten liar and a cheat for a son-in-law anymore. I think I'll suggest to her that she cancels the Betrothal Contract between you and Ginny.”
“Ron,” Neville said.

“Consider your Betrothal Contract terminated,” Ron said, then he snarled, “That means stay away from my sister, Longbottom! And stay away from me!”

Before Neville could say anything, Ron yanked the curtains around his bed. Fuming, Neville walked over to his bed and laid down on it, without bothering to undress. This was not his fault.

He picked up his pillow, so he could beat it and make it more comfortable. He found his Invisibility Cloak – which he had received from Albus Dumbledore – for Christmas during his first year of Hogwarts. He stared at the Cloak, as an idea swept through his mind. He took the Cloak, covered himself with it and stood up, then headed back out of his dormitory.

No, this wasn't his fault. And it was time to get answers from the one person who Neville blamed more than anyone else!

\[ 	ext{Several minutes later – Albus Dumbledore's Office, Hogwarts Castle} \]

Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, was in a quandary.

He was relaxing in his comfortable leather chair behind his magnificent mahogany desk, and currently sipping from a glass of dazzling oak-matured mead. Sitting on the desk in front of him was a bottle one-quarter filled with the remainder of the mead. Ludo Bagman had just left his office moments before, after drinking his way through half of the bottle. Bagman had spent the last half-hour or so getting Albus' opinions on each of the four Triwizard Tournament Champions. Given that Ludo Bagman was a well-known gambling addict, Albus had easily deduced that Bagman was going to bet on one of the Champions to win the Tournament, and the man obviously needed pointers. In the end, Bagman had chosen Ilvermorny Champion Harry Potter, though it was a close choice between him and Neville Longbottom.

When Albus asked Bagman why he was choosing one of the two youngest competitors instead of the older two, Bagman said he usually liked to go for the underdogs.

“Nobody should ever count out an underdog, Albus!” Bagman had said, “I was considered an underdog, and look how my career went!”

Albus seriously doubted Harry Potter was an 'underdog', but he wasn't about to tell Bagman that. Nor did he tell Bagman that he had to agree with the man. Harry Potter had a good shot at winning the Tournament. A shame, he had to admit, since he was the Ilvermorny Champion. But Harry Potter was obviously a skilled, talented and powerful young man. How could he not be, having been raised by Lily Potter, Sirius Black and Remus Lupin – each of whom were excellent and talented students when they attended Hogwarts. Plus, there was the fact that Harry had placed third in a contention tournament, beating out twenty-seven students all of whom were older than him. An impressive feat!

However... Albus had to admit that Neville Longbottom also had a good shot at winning. Not because he was skilled and talented. He was barely above average in his age-range when it came to that category, and definitely nowhere near the best student in his year group. But he had a good chance because of something completely different.
Albus had a secret. A secret he wasn't about to tell anybody. While he wasn't responsible for entering Longbottom's name in the Goblet of Fire, he did know exactly who had done it. Longbottom's name had been entered by a servant of Voldemort, using Polyjuice Potion. Being Headmaster had many advantages. One advantage was that he was alerted when someone was using Polyjuice Potion in his school. Obviously Voldemort had ordered his servant to guide Longbottom through the tournament. The end-game was questionable. Whether Voldemort wanted Longbottom to die, or whether Voldemort was setting up a trap for the boy, Albus didn't know. At least, not yet. But it was obvious that Longbottom was in the Tournament for a reason.

Like Albus, and everyone else in Great Britain, Voldemort was obviously under the assumption that Harry Potter was dead. In June of 1992, after Neville had told Albus about his confrontation with Voldemort, while rescuing the Philosopher's Stone, Albus had realized that Voldemort had changed his mind about who was prophesied to defeat him. Since Harry Potter was dead, and Neville Longbottom alive, there was no other way about it. Neville Longbottom was the Chosen One.

Albus, of course, had predicted this even before Neville had survived the attack on his family on November 5th, 1981. When he had heard that not only had James and Lily Potter been killed on that Halloween in 1981, but Harry Potter too, Albus had deduced he had been wrong about the prophecy. The Chosen One was Neville.

Upon hearing about the Potter's deaths, Albus had visited Gringotts. He had planned to convince the Goblins of Gringotts to turn over the House Potter fortune to him. He planned to use the fortune to fund the war when Voldemort inevitably returned. But the Goblins had refused. They had closed the House Potter account, and the House Potter Vaults, until the Potter Heir returned to open them. Once a year, for the past thirteen years – on Harry Potter's birthday, in fact – Albus met with the Goblins in hopes to convince them that House Potter was extinct. But it was to no avail. Each time they told him they were waiting for the Potter Heir. Now Albus realized that the Goblins knew Harry Potter had survived that Halloween night in 1981.

When Neville Longbottom survived the attack by Bellatrix, Rodolphus, and Rabastan Lestrange and Bartemius Crouch, Junior, Albus predicted that Voldemort would target Neville as the Chosen One of the Prophecy. So Albus convinced Augusta Longbottom that he could help her raise Neville. It turned out that Augusta's brother Algernon Croaker – an Unspeakable – had told her that Neville was prophesied to defeat Voldemort. This was unfortunate for Albus. He had wanted to raise Neville as a boy who would sacrifice himself when it came time, so that Albus could defeat Voldemort in the end.

But Augusta opposed him. She planned on training her grandson, preparing him for his destiny. In the end Albus agreed, deciding his plans might still work out anyway. In a way, Albus' plans did sort of work out. Neville wasn't the hardened warrior his grandmother wanted him to be. He was barely an above-average student, and definitely not the top of his year. At fourteen, as a Triwizard Champion, he was nowhere near ready to face Voldemort. Albus' plans could still go forward.

Long before Neville became a student at Hogwarts – back when he was still a toddler – Albus convinced Augusta Longbottom to remove House Longbottom from the late Charlus Potter's Great Alliance. Albus knew what the Goblins of Gringotts didn't. House Potter wasn't returning. The Great Alliance was done. Albus was wrong, of course, but back then he thought he was right, and he had convinced Augusta anyway. Augusta did as was asked, removed her family's House from the Great Alliance, and she joined Albus' new Alliance, which would rival the Great Alliance's power. House Weasley soon joined the Alliance, and upon Neville's second birthday, Albus made his next move. He convinced Augusta Longbottom and Arthur Weasley – through Arthur's wife, Molly – to pen a
Betrothal Contract between Neville Longbottom and Ginny Weasley – the youngest child and only daughter of House Weasley.

Albus' plan regarding the Contract was simple. Neville and Ginny would marry, and Neville would impregnate Ginny, before the boy had to confront Voldemort. When Neville died, the pauper House Weasley would inherit House Longbottom's fortune. Arthur Weasley was far more malleable than Augusta Longbottom. Once House Weasley had House Longbottom's fortune, Albus would simply remove House Longbottom from his Alliance.

With the Longbottom fortune, his political power, and immense popularity after he destroyed Voldemort, Albus Dumbledore could meld the British Wizarding World to the paradise he wanted it to be.

But a new problem had arisen as of October 30th, 1994. Harry and Lily Potter had returned to Great Britain, alive and well. With the addition of Rose Potter, House Potter was flourishing! Neville Longbottom was no longer the prophecized Chosen One. Harry Potter, the real Chosen One, was alive. And he was talented, skilled and powerful. Even if Albus wanted to get Harry Potter under his influence, there was no way the boy would be a martyr. The boy had a family and a sure future. Plus there was the fact that he was now a citizen of the United States of America. Why would he care for Great Britain when he hadn't lived there in thirteen years, and barely remembered it? Great Britain wasn't his home. Voldemort's terrible tyranny didn't reach American shores. Harry Potter's life and future wasn't threatened by Voldemort.

Albus smiled at that thought.

“At least, as far as Harry Potter knows, that is,” Albus said. “I wonder what would happen if I informed him and his mother of the Prophecy, of the reason Voldemort killed his father, and nearly killed him, his mother and his unborn sister – at least unborn at the time. I wonder what would happen if I told him he was destined to defeat Voldemort once and for all. If, without him, Great Britain and everyone in it, would be doomed. Could he live with the consequences? Or would he decide to remain in Great Britain and fight Voldemort?”

Harry Potter, student of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Albus raised his glass in a toast, at the very thought, and gulped down his drink.

As he filled his glass with more mead, the small statue representing the larger gargoyle which guarded his office sprang to life.

“Neville Longbottom is requesting entrance,” the statue said.

“What's he doing here?” Albus asked, “He should be celebrating with his fellow Gryffindors! Not breaking curfew to come see me! Fine! Let him in!”

Albus poured the mead back in the bottle, capped the bottle, and placed the bottle and glass in a desk drawer. He relaxed in his chair, composing himself in his grandfatherly Headmaster role. When Neville knocked on the door of his office, Albus waved his wand toward the door, which opened. Neville walked into the room and slammed the door behind him. He marched toward Albus, glaring at him.

Oh, dear. Albus thought internally, I do believe Longbottom is mad at me.

“I am surprised to see you here, Mr. Longbottom,” Albus said, “I thought you'd be celebrating with
“your Betrothed and the rest of Gryffindor.”

“I don’t feel like celebrating,” Neville said.

Yes, Albus thought, *He is definitely angry.*

“I saw Ludo Bagman walking away from your office,” Neville said.

“Oh?” Albus asked, “And he didn't see you?”

“I was under my Cloak,” Neville said.

*Ah, the Invisibility Cloak,* Albus thought, *I'm going to need that back before he leaves. It belongs to Harry Potter, after all. I would be in a heap of trouble if Lily discovered I had given her husband's cloak away, even if it was to her godson. Angering Lily Potter is not on my top ten list of things to do. More like a bucket list. Because it is likely the very last thing I'd ever do if that ever happened.*

Which was also why he had only used that piece of parchment with Harry Potter's magical signature on the Age Line, and did nothing else with it. Even though he wanted to. If he had used it for other things, and Lily Potter found out, he would have problems with her. Like Augusta Longbottom, Lily Potter was not a witch you wanted to cross.

“I assume you were meeting Mr. Bagman to discuss how to remove me from this Tournament?” Neville asked.

“I'm afraid, Mr. Longbottom,” Albus said, “That there is no possible way of removing you from the Tournament. It is a binding magical contract —”

“I didn't sign a contract!” Neville growled, “I didn't even sign my own name!”

“*You did, actually... unknowingly,*” Albus said.

He pushed a strip of parchment across the desk. Neville walked over to the desk and grabbed the parchment and looked at it. He turned pale.

“This – this is *my* writing,” Neville stammered, “The word 'Durmstrang' is not my writing. But my name is in my writing. How —?”

“How indeed,” Albus agreed. “It could have been ripped off of an assignment you did. Or it could have come from a letter you wrote to the Ministry of Magic. We do not know. But, as you said, it is your writing.”

“Do you recognize who wrote 'Durmstrang'?” Neville asked.

“No,” Albus said, “Sadly, I do not.”

“This isn't right!” Neville said, “I didn't put this parchment in the Goblet! I shouldn't be the Champion!”

“No, you shouldn't,” Albus said, “But you are.”

“I don't want to be in this tournament, Dumbledore!” Neville said.
“Mr. Longbottom,” Albus said, “I am your Headmaster, and you will respect me.”

“Fuck that, Dumbledore!” Neville growled; Albus blinked; the boy had never sworn at him. “I told you this would happen! I guess your suggestion of putting me in Divination gave me foresight! When I heard the Champion Choosing Ceremony would be on Halloween, I told you my name was going to come out of that Goblet, and you promised me it wouldn't happen! You promised me!

“Ever since I stepped foot in this Merlin-be-damned school, things tend to happen to me on Halloween! First year, the troll – Hermione Granger would have died if Fred, George and I hadn't saved her! Second year, the Chamber of Secrets opening, and Mrs. Norris petrified. On Halloween! Third year, nothing too bad, except for Malfoy cursing me so bad he put me in the Hospital Wing! Today is Halloween, of course something was going to happen to me.”

“Dear boy, you can't count the first two years at Halloween as something happening to you,” Albus said. “You made the choice to save the Granger girl. And Mrs. Norris' Petrifaction had nothing to do with you. Now, please be seated, Mr. Longbottom. At least do this old man the courtesy of not having to look up to face you properly.”

Neville continued to glare at him. He huffed and sat down in a chair.

“You must compete in the tournament, Mr. Longbottom,” Albus said, “If you refuse, I'm afraid you will lose your magic. You'll become a Squib.”

Neville's jaw dropped. “Surely you can do something about this!”

“If I could, I would, I assure you,” Albus said, “But I cannot.”

“I'm – I don't stand a chance!” Neville exclaimed, “I'm going to be killed! Whoever put my name in the Goblet wanted to kill me --”

“We will discover who is behind this, Mr. Longbottom,” Albus said, “This, I promise you. Actually, you can be a lot of help with that.”

“How?” Neville asked.

“By competing in the tournament,” Albus said, smiling. “They put you in the tournament for a reason, after all.”

“Yeah, to kill me,” Neville huffed.

“Perhaps,” Albus said, “Or perhaps... they placed you in the tournament, hoping you would win.”

“What?” Neville asked.

“Yes,” Albus said, “There is a possibility that the person behind this will do their best to help you win. You just need to compete, and let myself, and your fellow Professors, and the judges, be on the lookout for anyone taking a particular interest in you.”

“The Ilvermorny delegates!” Neville gasped. “Lady Potter, and that bloke she was with. They offered to help me this evening! And the bloke – he – he mentioned Durmstrang! Which is on this parchment! I bet it is him!”
Albus raised his eyebrows. So Lily Potter and Sirius Black were offering to assist Neville in the Tournament. Though it was an interesting development, it wasn’t so surprising. Lily was one of Neville's Godmothers, in addition to Molly Weasley, who had been given the title by Augusta Longbottom, after both ladies agreed the Betrothal Contract. Lily and Sirius Black had been friends of Neville's parents.

“While I am quite sure they're innocent, Mr. Longbottom,” Albus said, “I would urge you to be cautious around them, just in case you're right. It may turn out, however, they're just simply wanting to help you.”

Neville frowned. “Or they might be trying to kill me.”

Albus merely shrugged. While he knew Neville was wrong, it would be interesting to watch the boy's actions around the Ilvermorny Champion, his family and the delegates. If Neville discovered he was wrong, Albus would simply say 'I told you so'. So he found no fault there.

“Mr. Longbottom,” Albus said, “Professor Moody has volunteered to train you for the tournament.”

“I have my own tutors,” Neville said. “Gran, Uncle Algie, and others. They'll be of more help.”

“But they're not readily available,” Albus said, “Professor Moody is. And, as I said, he was already volunteered. As you know, he's an ex-Auror. He is the Defense Professor --”

“One of my Defense Professors tried to kill me,” Neville said, “Another one was a complete fraud. I'm not very trusting with them. Another might have been flirting with me.”

“Neville,” Dumbledore admonished.

“Alright, probably not,” Neville said, “But you can't deny what she did with that Hufflepuff. The proof is in the baby they had this summer. And the wedding my Gran couldn't help but gossip about with her friends. She didn't even go! She just read it in Witch Weekly!”

Albus cleared his throat, stopping Neville. He didn't want to be reminded of that whole fiasco. Never before had Riddle's DADA Curse done that to a Professor to remove them from the post before! Thank god it was an adult being impregnated by a student, and not the other way around, with a Professor – like Lockhart – impregnating a student!

“I trust Professor Moody, Neville,” Albus said. “You should too.”

“I plan to write to my Gran anyway,” Neville said, “I'll get her advice. If she says Professor Moody can help me, then I'll trust her.”

Albus sighed. Neville was supposed to be trusting him, more than his Gran!

“Very well,” Albus said. “Is that all?”

“I guess so,” Neville said, slumping his shoulders. “May I be excused?”

“Not just yet, Neville,” Albus said, “I'm afraid I need the Invisibility Cloak back.”

“What?!” Neville yelped. “But you gave it to me!”
“I gave it to you,” Albus said, “Because I thought the owner wouldn't come back to claim it. But they have, and I have to give it back to them. The Cloak belonged to James Potter, and Lily Potter has asked for it back so she can give it to her son.”

Neville frowned and took the folded Cloak from his robes. He placed it on Albus' desk.

“That Cloak was the only reason I was able to get to your office tonight,” Neville said, “I would have been caught otherwise. I'll surely be caught going back.”

“That is your fault, Mr. Longbottom,” Albus said, “If you're caught, then the next time you'll remember not to break curfew. You're excused.”

Neville stood and proceeded to leave the office. Albus huffed, reached into his drawer and took the bottle of mead and glass back out. He filled the glass a quarter of the way and drank it all, then filled the glass halfway and set both the bottle and glass on his desk.

He knew now that he no longer had Neville Longbottom's complete trust. He suspected such when the boy was glaring at him earlier that evening after his name came out of the Goblet. He suspected it more when the boy stormed into his office, looking angry. And by the end of the meeting, Albus knew – he had lost all influence he had on the boy. The boy no longer trusted him.

Albus shrugged. Oh well. It no longer mattered, did it? Harry Potter, the true Chosen One in the Prophecy, was alive. Neville Longbottom no longer mattered. Albus now hardly cared whether or not the boy survived the tournament. Competitors die in the tournament, after all. The Ministry of Magic wouldn't blame him on that, would they? After all, it was the Ministry, not him, who wanted this godforsaken tournament!

His focus was now on Harry Potter. Now he just needed to bring the boy into his influence. The task would be a difficult one, perhaps a more difficult task than the three Harry would be facing in the Tournament. But Albus knew he needed to succeed.

The Greater Good demanded it, after all.

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**Riddle Manor – Little Hangleton**

“Speak, my loyal follower,” Voldemort hissed.

“Your plan worked, My Lord,” Bartemius Crouch, Junior said, as he bowed in front of his Master, “Neville Longbottom is in the Tournament. And so is Harry Potter.”

“Well done, Bartemius,” Voldemort said, “Let us now discuss our next move...”

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Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished! Longest chapter of the story by far! Might be the longest in the whole...
story by the end. We'll see!

So much happened in this chapter. I don't know where to begin first! So I won't!

I will add, however, that everything regarding Former DADA Professor Vance's reason for being booted from the post was a last minute addition for humor purposes. (yes, I chose her, because she's the sole reason I can brag my first name is being represented in Harry Potter canon – not that I had anything to do with that, of course).

Next Chapter: Harry wakes up to letters and articles. Then he, Lily, Rose and Sirius go to Diagon Alley. There will probably be two or three Diagon Alley Chapters in a row coming up. I know my readers want Harry and Hermione to talk, but... unfortunately, that won't happen until he comes back from Diagon Alley.

Hope you liked this one!
Letters, Articles, and Solicitors

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: One smart reviewer pointed out that the holly and phoenix feather wand won't be coming into play in this story. I'm very well aware of that. I already know how the graveyard scene is going to go down. So there should be no worries about that.

Another reviewer (this one, not-so-smart and anonymous) asked for – and I quote – “less Hermione”. Um... what? She's one of the main love interests in the story! Hermione will have a large part in the future of this story! I denied that anonymous review.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sunday, November 1st, 1994

The following morning, Harry was awoken by the sound of the curtain opening. He opened his eyes and sat up, grinning when he saw Sirius with a large glass of ice water.

“Is that drink for me, Uncle Sirius?” Harry asked, innocently.

Sirius huffed. “I never should have taught you how to be vigilant in your sleep.” He grinned, showing there was no heat in his words, “However... you didn't grab your wand. I could have been an attacker. So I have to take points off for that.”

“You should be thankful,” Harry said, grinning, “I could have banished those ice cubes into your boxers, you know.”

Sirius barked out a laugh. “Very true. You need to get up. Don't worry about breakfast, however. We're meeting Ted and Andromeda Tonks at the Leaky Cauldron for breakfast in about an hour or so.”

“An hour?” Harry asked, “So why did you wake me up now?”

“One,” Sirius said, “Because we have to walk to the front gates of Hogwarts so your mother and I can take you and Rose to the Leaky Cauldron via Side-Along Apparation. We're leaving in about half-an-hour.”

“I know how to Apparate, Sirius,” Harry said.

“Of course you do,” Sirius said, “Even if you knew where we're going – which you don't – unlike the United States of America, you have to be seventeen – and have a British Ministry-appointed license -- to legally Apparate in Great Britain. Yes, even American citizens who can legally Apparate at fourteen if they know how.”

Harry snorted. “Brits are so old-fashioned!”
“Easy, pup,” Sirius said, grinning. “You're talking to someone who lived in Great Britain for nearly twenty-two years.”

“You still agree with me,” Harry said, echoing Sirius’ grin.

“True,” Sirius said, shrugging. “Second reason. Because you just received what appears to be a rather important letter. And – well – there's a couple articles in the Daily Prophet you need to read.”

Harry groaned. “Let me guess. It is pretty bad.”

“There's reasons we're meeting with Barnabas Cuffe today, pup,” Sirius said, “These articles are just the newest two.”

Harry groaned again. That didn't sound good at all. “I'll be out in a few minutes. Let me get dressed.”

“Your mother has asked you to wear a semi-formal outfit,” Sirius said, “You'll be officially representing House Potter today.”

Harry yawned and nodded.

“You don't look very awake, pup,” Sirius said, grinning, “Do I need to splash you?”

Harry raised two middle fingers in his Godfather/Honorary Uncle’s direction. Sirius barked out another laugh and backed out of the room, closing the curtain as he did. Harry sighed as he started to change into clothes. He really wanted to talk to Hermione to see what was so important. But it sounded as if he wouldn't have a chance until he returned from Diagon Alley. Hopefully she would forgive him.

Five minutes later, he left his bedroom, wearing semi-formal robes which had the House Potter crest laying on the left breast area of the robes. Lily, Sirius, Remus, and a very tired looking Rose were all sitting around the dining room table. When Harry sat down in the vacant seat, he found an envelope on the table in front of him. He picked it up and turned it over; his eyebrows raised when he saw the seal.

“Gringotts?” Harry asked, looking around at his family.

“Yes,” Lily said, “Which means it is very important. Sirius and I each received one too, so we have an idea of what it is, but you need to read it to make sure.”

Harry nodded and broke the seal. The envelope transformed into a piece of parchment in his hands. He began to read it.

To Mr. Harry James Potter, Heir Apparent of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter,

According to our Records here at Gringotts London Branch, at approximately eight thirty-seven on the evening of the thirty-first of October in the year nineteen ninety-four, the laws of magic, and the laws of the British Ministry of Magic, recognized you to be legally an adult.

In accordance to British Ministry of Magic law, I am happy to pronounce you as Lord Harry James Potter, Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter. You are required to meet with me, Keeper Ragnok the Sixth, House Potter Account Manager and Vault Keeper at your earliest convenience.
During the meeting, you will receive the Signet Ring of House Potter, and a discussion regarding House Potter business will be discussed between yourself and me. This includes, amongst other topics, re-opening the House Potter Accounts and Vaults which were closed on 1 November 1981. As it appears you have not taken an Inheritance Test on Great Britain soil, I would invite you to do so during the meeting.

You are welcome to invite those whom you trust to take part in the meeting.

I look forward to meeting the new Lord Potter.

May your Lordship be long and prosperous,

Keeper Ragnok the Sixth

Account Manager & Vault Keeper – Ancient And Most Noble House of Potter
Gringotts, London Branch

Harry blinked rapidly as he finished the letter, wondering if he had read the contents wrong.

“What?!” he asked, more to himself than to his family.

“What's wrong, sweetheart?” Lily asked.

Harry handed the parchment to his mother, who took it. Harry watched his mother as she began to read the letter. He was quite surprised when she merely smiled by the time she finished. She was supposed to be shocked! This was shocking news!

“Hmm,” Lily said, “Well, it seems our suspicions were correct. Harry is now Lord Potter, Head of House Potter.”

“You don't sound surprised,” Harry accused.

“We're not surprised, pup,” Sirius said, “Actually we were expecting it. Well, we were expecting it if it turned out you were named Ilvermorny Champion. Which you were. So we expected this.”

Harry stared at Sirius.

“The Triwizard Tournament was originally meant for seventeen year old students and older, Harry,” Remus said. “Only those students of age – those seen as adults in the eye of the Ministry of Magic -- could be named Champion. So... when the Goblet of Fire spat your name out, it created a binding magical contract, created by the British Ministry of Magic. Because you were named Champion, the Goblet of Fire deemed you of age.”

“So I am now seen as an adult in the eyes of the Ministry of Magic,” Harry said.

“Well, at the very least, magic and Gringotts sees you as an adult,” Sirius said, “The Ministry of Magic could try to appeal the decision.”

Harry nodded. “And because I am now considered an adult, I've received the title I would have inherited when I turned seventeen – when I became an adult. Lord Potter, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter.”
“Are you okay with this, Harry?” Lily asked.

Harry shrugged. “I suppose I am just surprised, Mom. I never expected this. Ever since you and Sirius taught me about Ancient and Noble Houses, and our family’s part in them, I knew I’d eventually take my place as Lord Potter. But --”

“You didn't expect it until you were seventeen,” Rose said.

Harry nodded. “So it appears we have to meet with our Account Manager today.”

“We're going to meet with him after we speak to Ted and Andromeda,” Lily said.

“But before we go to the Daily Prophet?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” Sirius said, “I, too, have been summoned to Gringotts. It appears my late father played a prank on me that I didn't know about. When my mother died a few years ago, I officially, and unknowingly, became Lord Black, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black. I thought I would never get the title, because I was kicked out of the family. It turns out that my father never actually kicked me out. Only my mother did. Mother died believing I wouldn't inherit the title of Lord Black. Ha! Anyway, as I believe I told you in the past, House Potter and House Black share the same Account Manager and Vault Keeper.”

“Ragnok the Sixth,” Harry said.

“Indeed,” Sirius said, “During our meeting, we can discover exactly how much of the Daily Prophet we actually own. Then we can flaunt that information in front of Barnabus Cuffe.”

“Flaunt however you want,” Lily said, heat in her voice, “The Daily Prophet deserves it!”

“Er... what?” Harry asked.


“It might inspire you during our meeting with the Daily Prophet today,” Sirius muttered.

Harry nodded and picked up the newspaper. The right side of the top-half of the front page had a large picture of the Goblet of Fire next to an article. The headline of the article, written in large bold letters, read:

“QUADWIZARD” TOURNAMENT? GOBLET OF FIRE NAMES FOUR CHAMPIONS! TWO CHAMPIONS ARE MINORS!

Harry began reading the article on the left side of the page.

Written by Rita Skeeter – Daily Prophet Journalist

Traditionally, the Triwizard Tournament pits three skilled wizards and/or witches, seventeen years old or older, against each other in three dangerous and life-
threatening tasks. However, during the Choosing Ceremony in the Great Hall of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the Goblet of Fire spat out four – yes, readers, you read that correctly – four names on Halloween evening, Sunday. But the surprising twists do not stop there. Two of the named Champions are only fourteen years of age. Yes! Two Minor-aged children have been entered into a tournament meant for students aged seventeen years and older!

In addition to one Ilvermorny Champion, and one Beauxbatons Champion, two Champions were named for the Host School, Hogwarts. Never before has a Host School been allowed two bites at the apple during the Triwizard Tournament. Is this an evil ploy by Hogwarts Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, in hopes to have an advantage over Beauxbatons and Ilvermorny? I'll let you decide that, readers.

The four Triwizard Champions are (in alphabetical order by school):

Beauxbatons: Fleur Delacour (17): The eldest daughter of French Minister of Magic Pierre Delacour, Fleur is a Veela. Will she use her Veela abilities as an advantage in the Tournament? Perhaps she will use her abilities to capture the influence of her two male competitors, both of whom are minors. Only time will tell.

Hogwarts: Angelina Johnson (17): Sixth Year Gryffindor, and Chaser on the Gryffindor Quidditch Team at Hogwarts. Will her talents on the broomstick assist her in the Tournament? Only time will tell.


And last but not least...

Ilvermorny: Harry Potter (14): Yes, you read that correctly, readers! Harry Potter, believed to have been murdered by You-Know-Who on Halloween of 1981 is alive and well! Even better than alive. He is the Ilvermorny Champion! More about Harry Potter, the return of him and his family – including his mother, Lily, who is also alive, in the article below this one, also written by yours truly!

You can expect more from yours truly about the Triwizard Tournament and its four Champions throughout next June! Next weekend: Exclusive Interviews with all four Triwizard (Quadwizard?) Champions!

Harry snorted softly. There was no way he was going to be interviewed by this woman. She was obviously a gossip-monger. He steeled himself and started reading the second article, which was
obviously about him and his family.

**LILY AND HARRY POTTER ALIVE! ALL ABOUT THEIR TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO WIZARDING GREAT BRITAIN!**

Written by Rita Skeeter – *Daily Prophet Journalist*

Thirteen years ago today, the British Wizarding World woke up to news that was both tragic and triumphant. The Dark Wizard we all know as You-Know-Who was finally defeated after his terrible reign of darkness, which resulted in the deaths of countless witches, wizards, Squibs Muggles, and magical creatures of all ages.

It was reported back then that James and Lily Potter and their fifteen-month old son, Harry, had been killed during the same attack that killed You-Know-Who, and long-time friend of the Potters, Peter Pettigrew, who was believed to be visiting the Potters at the time of the attack. It was believed that the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter – one of the oldest families in Wizarding Great Britain – had gone extinct due to one terrible attack. For thirteen long years, Wizarding Great Britain believed Lily and Harry Potter were dead.

Readers, I am thrilled to report this is not true.

For the past thirteen years, Lady Lily Potter, and her son, Harry, the Heir Apparent of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter, have been living across the pond in the United States of America. But that is not all. You see, Lily Potter was pregnant the night her husband was tragically murdered. Several months after she escaped with her son to America, Lily gave birth to daughter, Rose, now twelve. Lord James Potter's two best friends, Sirius Black, and Remus Lupin joined the Potters in America.

While in America, Harry Potter became a student at Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry at the tender age of eleven. Lady Potter, Black and Lupin all became Professors at Ilvermorny in the same time period.

At the moment, it is unknown to this journalist how fourteen year old Harry Potter became a contender in a Triwizard Tournament meant for seventeen year old students. But this journalist promises to discover that information soon, readers. What is known is this: on Friday evening, October 30th, the three Potters, Black, and Lupin made their triumphant return to Great Britain, by landing in some type of Muggle flying machine on the Grounds of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry! Nine Ilvermorny students were accompanying them. Lady Lily Potter is one of the judges for the Triwizard Tournament, taking place of the reportedly ill Ilvermorny Headmaster.

Readers can expect more information about House Potter from yours truly in the coming days. We at the Daily Prophet welcome House Potter back to Great Britain!
Harry scoffed as he set down the newspaper.

“There is no way I am letting that woman interview me,” he said, “She sounds like a gossip hound!”

“She also doesn't fact-check very well,” Lily said, “I know for a fact that Neville's Betrothed is named Ginevra, not Virginia. We're lucky she didn't get anybody else's names wrong.”

“Yeah!” Sirius said, grinning in the youngest Potter child's direction, “She could have called Rose 'Tulip' or 'Dandelion'!”

Rose glared playfully at Sirius.

“Where did she get all this information anyway?” Harry asked. “I didn't see any reporters here last night. Or the night before – she mentioned our arrival in the Thunderbird.”

“Technically, she called it a Muggle flying machine,” Remus said, with a wry smile.

“Given how backwards the British wizarding society is,” Lily said, “That's actually fairly impressive coming from her.”

“There isn't actually that much information there, Harry,” Sirius said. “Anybody inside Hogwarts could have written a letter to the Daily Prophet, giving Rita Skeeter a scoop. Or Ludo Bagman or Bartemius Crouch could have told her.”

“Or Dumbledore,” Lily muttered.

“Or Dumbledore,” Sirius agreed. “Notice some of her information is vague. Other bits are reaching or guesswork. It doesn't matter. That is the last article she'll ever write about us. Barnabus Cuffe will be taking over all articles for us or the Daily Prophet won't be writing about us at all. Especially not this gossip-monger.”

Harry, Lily, Remus and Rose all nodded in agreement.

“Well,” Lily said, “It is better to be early than late. So I think we should head off to the Leaky Cauldron now. You're in charge until we come back, Remus.”

Remus nodded. “I imagine we're all going to get several pieces of mail thanks to Rita Skeeter's articles. What should I do with them?”

“Burn 'em!” Sirius said, in an obvious joking matter.

“Separate them all into stacks for each person,” Lily said, “If there are any Howlers, however, the children are not to receive them.”

Remus nodded, then grimaced. “And what about any dangerous stuff, such as hex-letters? There is bound to be one or two. Or more.”

“You know how to spot them,” Lily said. “Dismantle the hexes and any other dangers, but keep the evidence. We can take them to the DMLE if they are life-threatening.”

“Good plan,” Remus said.
“Er... Remus,” Harry said, “Hermione might come by looking for me. She did say she had something important to talk to me about.”

Remus grinned. “If she or any other visitors come by, I'll take note, and tell them you will get back to them as soon as possible.”

“Thanks,” Harry said.

“Time to go,” Lily said, “Come on, kids – yes, that includes you, Sirius.”

Sirius huffed as Harry and Rose snickered.

“Do both of you have your wands?” Lily asked her children, who nodded, “Good. Harry, pocket your Gringotts letter, just in case you need it.”

Harry did as asked and stood up. Lily summoned her purse, and led Harry, Rose and Sirius out of the tent. Harry gave a great sigh of relief when he found that it wasn't raining. The walk to the Hogwarts Gates took about fifteen minutes. Once they stepped outside the invisible ward line, Harry and Sirius Apparated together, while Lily traveled with Rose. They appeared in an alleyway across the street from the Leaky Cauldron.

“Well, this does bring back memories,” Lily said, as she walked across the street toward the Leaky Cauldron with Harry, Rose and Sirius, “You might be interested to know this isn't your first visit to the Leaky Cauldron or Diagon Alley, Harry.”

“Oh?” Harry asked.

“Your father and I brought you here when you were just a baby, not even one year old,” Lily said, smiling.

Harry nodded. He noticed, with interest, that the crowd of No-Majes who were walking down the street, who were looking at the shops near the Leaky Cauldron, were looking from one side of the dingy restaurant, to the other side. Obviously, due to various Muggle Repelling Charms and other enchantments, No-Majes couldn't see the Leaky Cauldron unless they were accompanied by witches and wizards – usually the witch or wizard had to be holding the No-Majes' hand. What was also interesting was that none of the No-Majes seemed to notice when Harry, Lily, Rose and Sirius seemingly vanished from the middle of the sidewalk as they entered the Leaky Cauldron.

The Leaky Cauldron was dingy, but Harry couldn't deny that it had an inviting, welcoming atmosphere about it. A few Patrons of the restaurant were enjoying an early breakfast while talking to neighbors, or reading the newest issue of the Daily Prophet. Harry grimaced as he noticed a witch reading the article about him and his family, and he wondered if any of the Patrons would recognize him. After all, his mother always told him he looked like a young James Potter, who was rather famous amongst the British wizarding society due to the popularity of his House, and the Great Alliance.

Thankfully nobody seemed to take more than a passing glance at him and his family as they headed over to the bar, where a man was washing a glass. Harry thought the man was in his sixties, but due to Magicals living far longer than No-Majes, one could never be sure about somebody's age. When the man saw Lily, emotions lit up his face and he smiled.
“Lady Potter,” the man said, “You are a sight for old eyes. I could hardly believe it when I got your letter earlier today. But the Daily Prophet seemed to confirm that you survived that horrible night.”

“It is good to see you too, Tom,” Lily said, smiling.

The man – Tom – looked at Harry, with raised eyebrows, and he smiled. “Lily, this can't be the little baby boy you and James introduced me to about fourteen years ago. Can it?”

“This is indeed my son, Harry,” Lily said, smiling at Harry; she then smiled at Rose, “And this is my daughter, Rose. Harry, Rose, this is Tom, the barman and owner of this fine establishment.”

“Flatterer,” Tom said, grinning, “It is wonderful to meet the next-generation of the House of Potter. And, Sirius Black, you rascal. I’d recognize you anywhere.”

“Good to see you too, Tom,” Sirius said, “Is my cousin, Andromeda, and her husband here yet?”

“Indeed!” Tom said, “They just arrived a few minutes before yourself. They're in a private room and asked me to lead you there when you arrived. Come, come!”

Harry and his family followed Tom around the bar and over to a nearby door. Tom opened the door, and Lily led Harry and her family inside. The private room was small and simple, with a large table, and chairs placed around the table. Even though Ted and Andromeda Tonks had met him when he was a baby, Harry only recognized the Tonks because of a picture Sirius had showed him once.

When Andromeda saw them, she shrieked happily and jumped up from her seat. The next couple of minutes were spent with Andromeda hugging all three Potters, and her cousin, Sirius, and babbling about how happy she was to see them, and finally able to officially meet Rose whom she just about smothered with hugs, and commented how beautiful she was. Harry couldn't laugh when Rose blushed at the compliment. After all, Andromeda had also commented on how he was 'as handsome as his father', which made him blush too..

All the while, the barman, Tom, was waiting for the chaos to die down. He was ready with menus when Sirius and the Potters finally sat down at the table. After everybody gave their requested meals (Harry requesting a loaded omelet with a side of bacon, and orange juice), Tom left the room.

“Nymphadora will be so jealous we're meeting with you today,” Andromeda said, “When we received your letter last month about how you were coming back to Great Britain for the Tournament, Nymphadora was quite excited for the chance to see her cousin, and the Potters. Especially you, Harry. Do you know she held you when you were a baby? I have a picture of it in Nymphadora's bedroom. It is so cute. However, Nymphadora is currently in her last year at the Brighton Auror Academy, before she officially becomes an Auror in June. Those barbarians don't even let the trainees rest on Sundays! So, alas, she couldn't be here.”

“I'm sure we'll be able to see her sometime during Christmas Break,” Sirius said.

“Of course,” Andromeda said. “She'll be very happy to hear that. Look at me. I'm babbling about family. Obviously you're here for a very important reason. So I'll let you get to it.”

“Well, to begin,” Lily said, “I suppose we should clear the air about something. Ted, are you still willing to be the official Solicitor for the Ancient and Noble House of Potter?”

“I ask the same for House Black,” Sirius said.
“I wasn't aware I never stopped being the Solicitor of House Potter and House Black,” Ted said, grinning. “Of course I am still willing!”

“Excellent,” Lily said, “Because we need your expertise. I assume you read the Daily Prophet this morning and know that my son has been chosen as Ilvermorny Champion for the Triwizard Tournament.”

“Yes, indeed,” Ted said, grinning in Harry's direction, “Congratulations, young man. That is quite the accomplishment. Are you ready for the Tournament?”

“There's a lot of work to be done before the First Task comes around at the end of the month, sir,” Harry said, “But I wouldn't have entered my name if I wasn't ready to be Champion.”

“Good answer,” Ted said, approvingly.

Meanwhile, Lily was removing one of the Tournament Rulebooks from her purse. Obviously the inside of the purse was a lot larger than it looked, given that the book was roughly the same size as the purse itself.

“This is the official rulebook of the Triwizard Tournament,” Lily said, as she set the book in front of Ted. “It was given to us by Ludo Bagman himself. Sirius, Remus Lupin and I skimmed through the rulebook last night, and we couldn't make heads nor tails of most of it.”

“Let me guess,” Ted said, with a smile as he eyed the book, “It is full of Ministry mumbo-jumbo.”

“Yes,” Sirius said. “Even I can't translate it, and I grew up learning all about that type of stuff.”

“Thirteen years away from home has clouded your mind, cousin,” Andromeda said, grinning.

“Forgive me if I consider that a good thing,” Sirius said, with a smirk.

“So I assume you're hoping that I will be able to have more luck translating the book?” Ted asked.

“Yes,” Lily asked. “Are you familiar with the Muggle book series called 'For Dummies’?”

Ted laughed and nodded. “I assume you want me to turn this into 'Triwizard Tournaments For Dummies’?”

“Pretty much,” Lily said.

“I will do my best,” Ted said. “Next request?”

“One of the tidbits we were actually able to translate,” Lily said, “is this: when the British Ministry of Magic suggested bringing back the Triwizard Tournament, they added, removed, or modified several rules for the Tournament. One of the rules they made was that only contenders who were of age – who were considered adults – could become Champion. However, what they didn't take into account for was the MACUSA – the Magical Congress of the United States of America – allowing students aged fourteen years and up to participate in a contention tournament to decide the top-ten contenders for Ilvermorny Champion.

“In the end, amongst the Ilvermorny contenders, there were five seventeen year olds, four sixteen
year olds, and one fourteen year old – Harry. When my fellow judges heard that students under the age of seventeen were allowed, they – and I – decided unanimously to agree with the MACUSA decision. Albus Dumbledore went as far as to allow sixteen year olds to enter their names into the Goblet of Fire. However, a seventeen year old won out for Hogwarts in the end.”

“But what about Augusta Longbottom's grandson?” Andromeda asked, “Neville, I believe his name is. The Daily Prophet said he is also Hogwarts Champion.”

“Unfortunately, he is,” Lily said, “However, he says he did not enter his name into the Goblet, and we believe him. Apparently someone else entered his name into the tournament, and possibly under a different School than the three entered into the Tournament.”

“But why?” Andromeda asked.

“Assassination-by-Proxy,” Sirius said, frowning.

“They did it in hopes the Tournament would kill the boy?” Ted asked.

“It is a theory,” Sirius said, nodding, “He is the sole Heir Apparent of the House of Longbottom. It could be due to some type of grudge against the House.”

“Augusta Longbottom is a strong voice in the Wizengamot,” Andromeda said, nodding. “It does sound plausible that someone could want to silence her by threatening her Grandson. After all, Augusta is merely Proxy for the House of Longbottom. If her grandson is killed before he can have an Heir to his House, then the House will go extinct.”

“And House Longbottom would be removed from the Wizengamot,” Sirius said. “Removing Augusta's strong voice.”

“Plausible,” Ted said, nodding, “Definitely plausible.”

“We're getting off track a bit,” Lily said, “Anyway – there was no chance to change the rule about Champions having to be of age’ to be chosen. So, when Harry's name came out of Goblet of Fire, the artifact basically considered Harry of age – an adult. This morning, we received some letters from the House Potter Account Manager at Gringotts. According to the letter, when Harry was chosen as Ilvermorny Champion, he officially became Lord Harry James Potter – Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter. After this meeting, we're to meet with Keeper Ragnok the Sixth to confirm Harry's new position.”

“How do you feel about that, young man?” Andromeda asked Harry.

“As I explained to Mom and Uncle Sirius,” Harry said, “I expected to become Lord Potter when I turned seventeen. Three years early is a bit of a surprise, but I am willing to take on the title now if it is expected of me.”

Andromeda smiled approvingly. “You remind me so much of your grandfather, Harry. Your father wasn't as – shall we say – eager to take the responsibilities of his House. But Charlus Potter was a proud Lord Potter. Aunt Dorea – your Grandmother – loved to brag about her husband in letters to me. In fact, aside from Sirius, Dorea was the only family I was in contact with after my dear parents demanded Uncle Orion and Aunt Walburga to remove me from House Black when I married Ted.”

“Cousin, I think you'll be pleased to know that by the end of the day I will officially be Lord Black,”
Sirius said, “You and Nymphadora will be rightfully returned to House Black.”

Andromeda stared at Sirius. “But I thought Uncle Orion removed you--”

“Nope,” Sirius said, grinning, “He never officially kicked me out of House Black. Only dear Mum did. She died believing I was never going to be Lord Black – and I'm sure she died with a smile because of that thought.”

“Well, that explains why dear Cissy believes her son, Draco, is the future Lord Black,” Andromeda said, “Auntie Walburga would have told her he would earn that title. What a relief! That little cretin, who I unfortunately call nephew, does not deserve to grace the title of Lord Black. Thank you, Sirius. I could never repay you for this.”

“You and Nymphadora already have by being the two members of the House of Black I can still call 'family','” Sirius said, smiling.

“Thank you, Sirius,” Ted said, “This means so much to my wife and daughter, so, of course, it means so much to me. So, Harry as Lord Potter. I assume that news is going to grace the Daily Prophet soon enough. Are you expecting any opposition against Harry's new title?”

“You tell us, Ted,” Sirius said, “How will the Ministry of Magic and the Wizengamot feel about it?”

Ted chuckled. “It would depend. How interested is House Potter in bringing back Charlus Potter's Great Alliance?”

Harry suddenly found everyone looking at him, and he realized it was up to him to answer.

He cleared his throat. “I recently learned that the Great Alliance isn't as 'Great' as it used to be. Some of the Houses have broke away from the Alliance.”

“Yes,” Ted said, “House Longbottom is now in Dumbledore's Alliance. House Boot and House MacMillan have started their own Alliance. I can't speak for the other Houses. That will be up to you to speak to them. If I remember correctly, most – if not all – of the Houses have children who are students in Hogwarts at this current time.”

“Yes,” Harry said, “I recently spoke to Luna Lovegood, who confirmed that.”

“Well, there you go,” Ted said, “Meet with the next generation of the Great Alliance – more commonly known as the 'Children of the Great Alliance' – and see what they have to say. They may not be Heads of their Houses, like you, but they're more readily available to talk to you than their parents are. Through them, you could send a message regarding the future of the Great Alliance. As for opposition in the Wizengamot. Well, if the Great Alliance has any chance of returning, the Dark Alliance and and those in the Neutrals who are closer to the Dark Alliance than the Light – you might find opposition from them.”

“What would you suggest?” Harry asked.

“Replace those Houses who left the Great Alliance,” Ted said, “I'm sure House Black would join the Great Alliance. House Tonks – though we're simply a second-generation Minor House – would also be willing. But House Tonks is simply a Minor House, not a Noble one. I don't have a seat on the Wizengamot, so I'm not going to be of much help. You need to find some Allies amongst the Wizengamot who have seats and are willing to join the Great Alliance. Heck, some of your House's
Allies may have Allies of their own who might consider joining the Alliance.”

“I know this is overwhelming, Harry,” Lily said, “So we'll discuss all that later.”

Harry nodded. It was definitely overwhelming.

“Is there any other important issues regarding Lord Potter and the House of Potter?” Ted asked.

“Yes, now that you mention it,” Lily said. “Owing to the articles in the Daily Prophet, we're expecting a lot of post to greet us when we return to Hogwarts. Post ranging from simple letters welcoming us back to Great Britain, to Howlers from people who just like to rant. Then there is the Betrothal Contracts that we'll likely just cancel and ignore. And then there is the unfortunate possibility of hex-letters and other dangerous post. Ted, if we were to send you the dangerous letters, perhaps you could work with the DMLE to discover who is behind the dangerous letters, and perhaps bring them up on criminal charges.”

“I would be happy to do that, Lily,” Ted said.

“Thank you,” Lily said, “If we receive any, we'll remove the hexes and dangers and send them to you.”

“I look forward to it,” Ted said, “Truth be told, I'm more interested in the idea of the Betrothal Contracts. You may be surprised when I tell you I wouldn't be so quick to deny them.”

“Ted,” Lily said, “I am quite against Betrothing my children to someone they don't even know. I also believe they deserve to find their own true love, like I did with James!”

“I respect that, Lily,” Ted said, “I'm merely stating this: many of those offers of Betrothal are going to be from Houses who very well may be looking to ally their House with yours. Those who are willing to forget the Betrothals, but are interested in an Alliance might very well be the future members of the Great Alliance you're looking for.”

“It is a good idea, Lily,” Sirius said.

Lily sighed. “I suppose I'll consider it.”

“That is all I can ask,” Ted said, “Also... if some of the Houses get a little – defensive – about you denying their children the – shall we say – 'honor' of being Betrothed to your own children, tell them to come to me. I'll be able to handle it.”


“You don't need to worry about that, cousin,” Andromeda said, “Ted has faced many of those in the past, and he graciously allowed me to give them a piece of my mind! They know not to mess with me. And now that I'll officially be back in the House of Black, that message will come across ten-fold!”

Sirius grinned. “I'm pleased to see you're still intimidating after all these years, Andie.”

At that moment, Tom returned with platters of meals. He set the meals in front of those who requested them, and left the room after the guests thanked him.
“Is there anything else on the agenda of Solicitor business?” Ted asked, as everyone started in on their meals, “Or will the rest of the discussion be of innocent topics?”

“One last piece of business,” Lily said, “And it will be as important as the rest. We're planning on confronting Barnabus Cuffe in the Daily Prophet today.”

Ted raised his eyebrows. “I assume this is about Rita Skeeter's articles in this morning’s issue?”

“Just the latest reason,” Lily said.

“I am required to tell you that slander and libel laws still don't exist in Wizarding Great Britain, Lady Potter,” Ted said, “There is nothing I can do against Rita Skeeter in terms of what she wrote in the Daily Prophet. The British Ministry of Magic has always felt it is up to the public to decide what they want to believe or disbelieve what the Daily Prophet and other media outlets write or say.”

“We're well aware of this, Ted,” Lily said, “But we still have a plan of attack against the Daily Prophet. If we're correct, House Potter and House Black owns forty-percent of the Daily Prophet. We believe that would scare Barnabus Cuffe enough to do anything we ask.”

“It is possible,” Ted said, “Depends on what you wish to ask him.”

“We're going to request,” Lily said, “that Cuffe takes exclusivity on anything regarding members of House Potter, House Black, and Remus Lupin – and possibly others in the future. Not Rita Skeeter, not the other staff of the Daily Prophet, but Barnabus Cuffe himself. Only he can write articles about us.”

“And since Harry is part of the Triwizard Tournament,” Ted said, “Only Barnabus could write about it. Well, at least Harry's part in the Tournament. I can already foresee readers will be glued to the Daily Prophet to get more on the – what did Skeeter call it – 'Triumphant Return of House Potter’?”

“She promised more on the story in the coming weeks,” Sirius said.

Ted smiled. “I see. If she doesn't give out what she promised, readers could be calling for her head. That is an excellent strategy. A great work-around of the slander and libel laws. The question is... are you going to give Cuffe an offer he can't refuse?”

“Yes,” Sirius said, “House Potter is closely Allied with House Lovegood – who owns and writes most of the articles in the Quibbler. The Quibbler is the leading rival against the Daily Prophet and its sister magazines. If we give exclusivity to the Quibbler regarding House Potter –”

“That would seriously cut down what the Daily Prophet could write about the Triwizard Tournament,” Ted said, “Since the Head of House Potter is one of the Champions. If I was Cuffe, I would definitely agree to that.”

“Now here is where you come in, Ted,” Lily said, “Would you be able to actively work against the Daily Prophet? Whether it be that Barnabus accepts exclusivity, or whether it turns out the Daily Prophet is barred from writing articles about House Potter, House Black and Remus Lupin due to possible exclusivity to the Quibbler?”

“There is no actual laws barring exclusivity in the media – only slander and libel,” Ted said, “It is one of those little words we Solicitors love to use – loopholes. The Daily Prophet, Ministry of Magic
and the Wizengamot wouldn't be able to fight you on this. It isn't illegal, after all. Besides, the Daily Prophet has made deals for exclusivity in the past. Only they, and their sister subscriptions can have sit-down interviews with certain people like the Minister of Magic. The Ministry of Magic approved this for obvious selfish reasons.”

Sirius laughed. “And now because of that loophole, we can do the same exact thing... legally.”

“Exactly,” Ted said, “So yes... I would be able to actively work against the Daily Prophet. If Barnabus Cuffe agrees to exclusivity, I would painstakingly read every word, article and page in the Daily Prophet every day to make sure they aren't breaking the agreement. If the Quibbler gets exclusivity, I would make sure that there are no articles regarding any information that you would deem exclusive elsewhere. That is part of the job of me being your Solicitor.”

“Excellent,” Lily said. “I believe that is all we have to talk about regarding your solicitor duties. If you work up the paperwork, and send us it along with the bill, we'll be happy to sign agreements and pay you. Also, we'll write to you about everything that comes up regarding the topics we've discussed today.”

“I will fill out the paperwork by this evening,” Ted said, “And begin reading through this rulebook. It should only take me a few days to translate it into easy reading.”

“Thank you, Ted,” Lily said, “We knew we could count on you.”

“I'm always happy to help my favorite clients,” Ted said, grinning.

The rest of the conversation during breakfast consisted of catching up between the friends. Since they hadn't had much conversation besides an occasional letter in thirteen years, there was much to discuss during breakfast. Andromeda and Ted were eager to learn about growing up in America, and going to Ilvermorny, and Harry and Rose were happy to talk about it. The entire discussion lasted about an hour-and-a-half before it was decided that Harry, Lily, Sirius and Rose really needed to be getting to Gringotts.

With promises to meet each other again as soon as possible – and plans for Andromeda and Ted to attend Harry's First Task of the Tournament at the end of the month – the meeting ended, with happy hugs, and the Potter family and Sirius headed out of the Leaky Cauldron, and into Diagon Alley.

Chapter End Notes

And that is where the next chapter will start off! A lot happened in this chapter! I very much hope you liked it!

I'm sure this chapter will bring up questions of Neville's Lordship status. It will be touched on soon enough.

Factual Note: The 'For Dummies' books began release in 1991. So in '94, it would be quite easy for a Muggleborn like Ted to have heard of them.

Next Chapter: Meeting with Keeper Ragnok at Gringotts. Harry and Co. get some
shocking news and revelations – at least one revelation could be a tad controversial for some readers.
Surprises at Gringotts

Chapter Notes

I decided to post this chapter earlier than intended, because I know everyone is looking forward to the contents in this chapter! I very much hope you enjoy it... and don't yell at me too much about the controversial topics (shows puppy dog eyes).

Everything in this chapter regarding wizarding marketplaces, Gringotts, and “Wizarding City Halls” in the United States are not canon, and are my own creation. I refer to the MACUSA as the American Wizengamot. However, I've heard it is the American term for Ministry of Magic. For some reason a “Congress” screams Wizengamot, not “a building with a whole bunch of departments and staff” to me. The latter term is what I use Wizarding City Halls for.

Also, I have never visited, nor lived in Boston, Massachusetts. I hope I do not offend any of my Boston readers with what I write about your city.

Also, please note that in my story, unlike canon, Fleamont Potter is Harry's Great-Grandfather (Charlus Potter's father) instead of Grandfather.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sunday, November 1st, 1994

Even though the Potters, Sirius, and Remus were residing at Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for nine months of the year, they also had a home away from Ilvermorny which they spent the summers, and certain holiday breaks at, when they weren't on camping vacations. For the extended Potter family, home was in a No-Maj neighborhood in rural Boston, Massachusetts.

Unlike in Europe, wizarding marketplaces were not in “alleys”. Instead in each of the large cities around the United States, there was a 'one-stop-shop', which was usually either a shopping mall, or a tall building where witches and wizards could find everything they needed combined in one building. The buildings were, of course, wrapped in Muggle-Repelling Enchantments and other enchantments, so that the ignorant No-Maj, who didn't know about the Wizarding World, couldn't trespass into magical buildings.

Boston was just one of several cities which had one of these 'one-stop-shop' buildings. Harry and Rose had been there several times in their short lives. The only wizarding establishments in Boston aside from the marketplace was the Boston branch of Gringotts, and the wizarding version of the Boston City Hall, which housed the local Aurors, DMLE, lower magical judiciary systems, and other Departments. Wizarding City Halls like Boston's were located in every major American city.

Suffice it to say, Harry and Rose were rather amazed to find that Diagon Alley was an open-air marketplace in the middle of London, England. As he walked down the cobbled pathway through Diagon Alley with Lily, Sirius and Rose, Harry was doing his best to get a look at the names of
every single shop he passed. He recognized some store names, which obviously had franchises that reached American shores. But several of the shops were privately owned, and he didn't recognize them at all.

“I'm sure you'll have plenty of opportunities to explore Diagon Alley before we have to return to the United States in June,” Lily said to her two children, “But at the moment, we need to go to Gringotts.”

As she named the bank, she pointed to the building. Harry was only mildly surprised to find that Gringotts, London Branch looked almost exactly like its sister branch in Boston. Remembering his education in respecting Goblin customs, Harry pointedly looked away from the two sword-and-shield wielding Goblins guarding the front doors of Gringotts, as he walked past them and followed his mother and sister into the bank with Sirius tailing behind him. Much like the outside of the bank, the Atrium of Gringotts also looked nearly identical to its sister branch in Boston.

A Goblin met them as they entered the Atrium.

“How may Gringotts assist you today?” the Goblin said; Harry noted with interest that the Goblin only spoke directly to Sirius instead of looking at Harry, his mother or his sister.

“Keeper Ragnok the Sixth requested to meet with representatives of House Black and House Potter,” Sirius said, “We are here to answer that request.”

“Follow me, please,” the Goblin said.

Harry followed close by his mother and sister as the Goblin led them and Sirius across the Atrium. They arrived at a counter, where a Goblin was seated behind. The two Goblins spoke in their native language, Gobbledygook, for a few moments. Then the Goblin, which led Sirius and the Potters to the other Goblin, walked away. The Goblin at the counter turned to the Potters and Sirius.

“Greetings House Black, House Potter,” the Goblin said; he looked at Harry, then Rose, “To those whom are not familiar with me, my name is Keeper Ragnok the Sixth, and I am the Account Manager and Vault Keeper of both House Potter, and House Black. Would I be right to assume that you have no issues with combining the two meetings I had planned for House Potter and House Black together?”

“You would, Keeper Ragnok,” Sirius said.

When Keeper Ragnok looked at him, Harry did his best not to blush when he realized the Goblin was expecting an answer from him.

“You would, Keeper Ragnok,” Harry said, then added, “Time is money, after all. We should not waste either.”

Keeper Ragnok chuckled lowly. “No, we should not, young Potter. Very well spoken. If you will all follow me, please.”

Once again, Harry and Rose remained close by their mother as they followed the Goblin and Sirius across the Atrium, over toward a door, and into the adjoining room. The small room had a table, a few chairs and nothing else.

“Be seated,” Ragnok said.
The Goblin sat down on one side of the table, while Harry, Lily, Rose, and Sirius sat down in four chairs on the other side.

“Thank you all for answering my summons so quickly,” Ragnok said, “I believe we should begin with House Potter, since there is much to discuss. Thirteen years ago today, Ted Tonks requested an urgent meeting with me. He announced that, while James Potter had been killed, his wife and infant son survived. Of course, it was unknown at the time that House Potter had not only survived, but would continue to flourish with the birth of young Rose.”

Rose softly blushed when the Goblin said her name.

“Ted Tonks needn’t have informed us that you and your son had survived, Lady Potter,” Ragnok said, “As you may know, we have ways of knowing when our clients have died, and while we had been alerted that James Potter had tragically lost his life, we had no indication the same would be said for his wife and son. However, saying that, I was happy to have the confirmation James' family survived, when Mr. Tonks handed me a letter written by you, Lady Potter. As per your request made in that letter,-- the House Potter Accounts and Vaults were immediately placed on lock-down until we had permission from a member of House Potter for them to be opened again. Also, per your request, the Final Will and Testament you penned with your husband was placed in the House Potter Family Vault and could only be removed by a member of House Potter.

“Your letter had come at a very good time, Lady Potter. Because the following day, Albus Dumbledore met with me and requested I turn over the House Potter Accounts, Vaults and Final Will and Testament to him. Apparently he was under the belief that not only did James Potter die on that tragic Halloween evening, but so did his wife and son. Dumbledore believed that House Potter had become extinct – I believe that belief was shared with much of the British wizarding society. I, of course, knew Dumbledore was wrong, but I wasn't about to confirm that to him without the permission of House Potter. Permission I didn't receive.

“Albus Dumbledore has been quite persistent these past thirteen years. Every year on July 31st – young Harry's birthday, as you obviously know – Dumbledore met with me to once again attempt to convince me House Potter was extinct, and that the Lord and Lady Potter would want their former Headmaster to take charge of the House Potter accounts.”

Lily sighed. “How dare that – that interfering old fool! He knows that, had House Potter gone extinct, there were several others aside from Albus Dumbledore who James had chosen to take charge of House Potter. The Potter fortune would have been divvied up amongst our Allies, businesses we had partnerships in, and charities. Albus Dumbledore was quite low on that list, not on the very top!”

“Something we here at Gringotts are well aware of, I assure you, Lady Potter,” Ragnok said, “If House Potter had gone extinct, you could rest assured that the House Potter Account would have been properly and delicately handled.”

“Thank you, Keeper Ragnok,” Lily said. “I assume since my son has been named Lord Potter that he has more of a voice than I do when it comes to House Potter accounts?”

“Young Potter,” Ragnok said, to Harry, “I turn that decision over to you.”

“Until I finish my education,” Harry said, “My mother will have an advisory role, and fifty-percent decision-making power when it comes to House Potter accounts.”
Harry was relieved when both Lily and Sirius looked at him approvingly for making that decision.

“A smart and excellent decision, and one I much agree with,” Ragnok said. “Lady Potter, is there any thing you would like to begin with before we get down to business?”

“Yes, Keeper Ragnok,” Lily said, “Mine and my husband's Final Will and Testament. Is there any urgent business regarding the Will due to my husband's death?”

“As I am sure you know,” Ragnok said, “Your husband stated in his Will that if he were to pass on, and you were to survive his death, you would take control of all House Potter assets, until your son became of age. As we know, due to a loophole, that time has come. I do not think your husband's Will would override the decision your son just made to share decision-making with you.”

“What about Inheritances?” Lily asked, “I know my husband wanted to give away several items and a small percentage of the Potter Fortune in case of his death.”

“Given that the Inheritances have been sitting pretty – as you humans like to say – for thirteen years,” Ragnok said, “I don't think there is any real urgency for there to be an Inheritance and Will Reading Ceremony. You are welcome to plan the Will Reading on your own time and convenience. It could take place tomorrow, or in the days following your death – hopefully, many years from now. It hardly matters to me.”

“Very well,” Lily said, “I will think hard about it and contact you later about my decision. You may proceed with your plans for our meeting.”

Ragnok snapped his fingers and Harry jumped slightly as a piece of shimmering parchment – similar to the one he had seen in Albus Dumbledore's office – appeared in front of him. Two more pieces of parchment appeared in front of Rose and Lily.

“Lady Potter,” Ragnok said, “According to my records, you have never taken an Inheritance Test on British soil.”

“I never saw any reason to, Keeper Ragnok,” Lily said, “I'm first-gen – Muggleborn, after all.”

“There has been a recent influx in Muggleborn Inheritance Tests in recent years, Lady Potter,” Ragnok said, “These days, we encourage Muggleborn – or first-gens, as our American brethren like to call them – to take the Tests. Call it satisfying curiosities.”

“With all due respect, I believe you're not telling us everything, Keeper Ragnok,” Sirius said, “Something tells me you know more than you speak of.”

“I merely ask Lady Potter to take her Inheritance Test first before her children,” Ragnok said, “It may prevent any – ah – possibly nasty surprises.”

“Go on, Mom,” Harry said, “I'm rather curious now. It might be nothing. But what if it isn't?”

“Something tells me I'm afraid of what I'm going to find out,” Lily said. “But very well. I will take the Test first.”

Harry, Lily and Rose jumped when a knife appeared in Keeper Ragnok's hand. If Harry hadn't been educated in Goblin customs, and knew that even touching a wand in Goblin territory was considered
a threat, he might have reached for his wand.

“The Inheritance Test is a Blood ritual,” Ragnok said, “The Ministry will tell you that Blood rituals are very Dark. Nonsense... it is all about the intentions of the user. Some of these rituals are good, some are done for evil purposes. If a Blood Quill or Blood Blade –” he waved the knife in his hand – “is ever used on you outside of this bank, it is probably being done for evil purposes. Gringott's is the only location in which all of these types of rituals are legal, and only with a Goblin present. Now, with that said, Lady Potter – take the knife, and slice open your palm on your right hand. Do not fret, the cut will heal when the process is complete. Then drip the blood over the parchment in front of you. Young Potters, be watchful of what your mother is doing. You will be doing this shortly.”

Lily took the handle of the Blood Blade when it was offered to her. Harry watched as his mother did as requested. He winced slightly when his mother sliced open her palm. Her blood trickled onto the parchment, then the cut healed. Harry tried to look at the parchment, but it was blurry – so obviously it was only meant for his mother's eyes. Harry watched his mother's expression as she read it. It went from curiosity, to wonder, to shock.

Lily started to mutter, and Harry could barely hear his mother's words.

“Pureblood.... Ravenclaw... adopted?!?” Lily exclaimed. “Keeper Ragnok, what is this?!”

Ragnok placed his hands together as if in prayer, and he looked at Lily.

“In early January of 1960,” Ragnok said, “A group of magical mercenaries were hired by a man known as Tom Marvolo Riddle – these days he is better known as Lord Voldemort. Riddle was hunting down artifacts of the Hogwarts Founders. He was collecting them. The mercenaries tracked down a young couple in St. Mungo's. Apparently the mercenaries were posing as Healers. They stunned the couple, kidnapped them, and brought them to Tom Riddle. They were never seen again, though it was thought they were tortured for information about Rowena Ravenclaw's lost artifacts, and then killed. The young couple's names were William and Victoria Byrd. William was a descendant of Rowena Ravenclaw.

“The reason the Byrds were at the St. Mungo's was because Victoria had just given birth to a young girl. They didn't even get the chance to name her. Soon, it was thought that the parents had abandoned the baby, so the Healers brought the baby to a Muggle orphanage. Only a week later, was the baby adopted by a young couple who already had one daughter. The young couple were named --”

“The Evans,” Lily whispered, blinking her eyes, “I was the baby in St. Mungo's.”

“It would appear so, Lady Potter,” Ragnok said, “I wasn't exactly sure until your Inheritance Test. You, Lily Potter, are a pureblood witch born of the Minor House of Byrd, and descended from Rowena Ravenclaw.”

“So,” Lily stammered, looking at her children, “Harry and Rose are...”

“Purebloods,” Ragnok said. “Also, descended from Rowena Ravenclaw.”

“Oh,” Lily said.

“Are you going to faint, Mom?” Rose asked.
“No, sweetheart,” Lily said, “I am.... overwhelmed... but I’m not going to faint. My parents... m-my adopted parents just never cared to tell me. Of course they were killed in a car accident before I turned eighteen – of age in the No-Maj world – so perhaps they had been waiting until I turned eighteen. It would have been nice to know. I might have even taken an Inheritance Test back then.”

She cleared her throat. “So... I assume I am Lady Ravenclaw in addition to Lady Potter. Or is Harry...?”

“In the Ravenclaw Line, ever since Lady Rowena herself,” Ragnok said, “The Lady of the bloodline always takes the title of Lady Ravenclaw. So you are Lady Ravenclaw until your daughter becomes of age. It will be your daughter's role to pass on the Ravenclaw name. How about your children take their Inheritance Tests before we continue this discussion?”

Lily nodded. The Blood Blade was passed to Harry, then Rose, who each gingerly sliced their hands and blood trickled over the parchment before their cuts healed up.

Harry watched in awe as the blood seeped into the parchment, then disappeared. Then words began to form, in red ink, or rather, in Harry's blood. Harry then began to read the parchment as the words formed.

**Inheritance Test – Harry James Potter**

**DOB:** 31 July 1980  
**Parents:** James Charlus Potter (deceased)  
and Lily Marie Evans (adopted – original surname: Byrd)

**Blood:** Pureblood

**Official Titles of Lineage:**

**Ancient and Noble Houses:**  
House Potter – direct descendant - father  
House Peverell – direct descendant – father  
House Black – descendant – father/grandmother  
House Gryffindor – direct descendant – father  
House Ravenclaw – direct descendant – mother

**Minor House:**  
House Byrd – direct descendant – mother

The only two surprising Houses were Ravenclaw and Byrd, though those had been explained in the earlier conversation. His mother had told him about Peverell, Black, and Gryffindor, though the fact that the Potters were descended from Peverell and Gryffindor wasn't common knowledge in Wizarding Great Britain, because the Potters rarely ever boasted about it. Harry assumed his sister had the same Inheritance Test, though instead of 'direct descendant', she was probably second-in-line to him.

“Is there any significance to the fact we're descended from two Founders?” Harry asked Ragnok.
“I assume you're asking if you have any percentage of ownership of Hogwarts?” Ragnok asked.

Harry shrugged and nodded.

“Back in the 1500s,” Ragnok said, “the Wizengamot voted that the ownership of Hogwarts and Hogsmeade was to be handed over to the British Ministry of Magic, unless descendants of all four Founders together claimed rightful ownership to Hogwarts. You would not be able to claim ownership simply because you're the descendant of two of the Founders. As it is, both the Slytherin and Hufflepuff bloodlines have been confirmed to have died off. So unless the Wizengamot changes the law, the Ministry of Magic will continue to own Hogwarts.”

“Fine with me, to be honest,” Harry said, “We live in America. We attend Ilvermorny. We have no present connections to Hogwarts.”

Lily, Rose and Sirius nodded in agreement.

“Very well,” Ragnok said. “As confirmed by your Inheritance Test, you can claim the titles of Lord Potter, Lord Peverell, and Lord Gryffindor. As your sister is traditionally Lady Ravenclaw, then it is preferred she also claims the Ravenclaw descendant's House, Byrd, though as I mentioned, House Byrd is a Minor House.”

“Fine with me,” Harry said again, looking at Rose, who nodded.

“As I assume you know,” Ragnok said, “Sirius is the assumed Lord Black, to be confirmed in the near future. So it is up to him as to where you fall in line for the title of Lord Black.”

Harry nodded. “Er... so what does it mean to be Lord of three Houses?”

Ragnok leered at Lily and Sirius, then back to Harry. “You were never educated in the art of extending bloodlines?”

Harry blushed. “You mean that my children will inherit all three titles.”

“Yes..., but not the way you are thinking, I assume, Lord Potter,” Ragnok said, “I take it Lady Potter and – the assumed – Lord Black never taught you about the history of Polygamy in the wizarding world.”

“Polygamy?” Lily asked; looking from Ragnok to Sirius.

Sirius groaned. “I never expected it to be brought up. I assumed Rose would inherit one of the titles, and there would be no need for... I didn't expect five Houses! What Keeper Ragnok is trying to say Lily, Harry... is that in order for your children, Harry, to inherit your titles, they must have separate bloodlines through... their mother.”

“Oh, good Merlin, Sirius!” Lily said, “You can't be saying that to pass on not only Potter, but Peverell and Gryffindor, he'd have to marry three women? That makes no sense! He wouldn't have three titles to his name! James would have had to marry more women than just me!”

“The Last Generation Loophole under the Pureblood Heritage Act,” Sirius said. “It was passed after Voldemort's supposed downfall, and Andromeda let me know about it – ah – years ago in a letter. I might have mentioned it to you back then.
“As we discovered today, you're a Pureblood, Lily – so was your husband. So your children are Purebloods. So they fall under the Pureblood Heritage Act. According to Andromeda, the Last Generation Loophole is well known amongst Purebloods. Because Harry is the only surviving male Potter in the Ancient and Noble House of Potter, he is required to marry one wife per House he Lords over. Potter, Peverell and Gryffindor. That is, if he wants to pass on the Houses to his bloodline. Otherwise, he would be responsible for three Ancient and Noble Houses – three very old, very famous Houses – going extinct.”

Harry groaned. “So I'm doomed to marry three witches.”

“'Doomed' is a harsh word, Harry!” Sirius said, grinning.

“If I'm lucky, I'm going to have a girlfriend – one girlfriend! – next Saturday,” Harry said, “I'm not prepared for three!”

“Perhaps you would be pleased to know that I can make that decision easier for you, Lord Potter,” Ragnok said.

“How?” Harry asked.

“By way of an active Betrothal Contract,” Ragnok said.

“What?!” Lily asked, through her teeth, “What active Betrothal Contract?! James never told me about a Betrothal Contract!”

“Possibly because he never knew,” Ragnok said. “He did not create the Betrothal Contract. His grandfather – Lord Potter's Great-Grandfather – Fleamont Potter created the Contract. It was created after Fleamont saved the life of the Lord of the other House in the Betrothal Contract. The Lord owed him a life-debt. Back then, life-debts were usually dealt with Betrothal Contracts. It was decided that the firstborn son of House Potter, and the firstborn daughter of the other Lord's House would be Betrothed. However, both Houses only had sons – that was, until this generation.”

He snapped his fingers, and a piece of parchment appeared in front of Harry.

“The Contract has been updated for this Generation's Heirs,” Ragnok said.

Harry nodded, and began to read the parchment.

Betrothal Contract

Boy:
Name: Harry James Potter
DOB: 31 July, 1980
Parents: James and Lily Potter

Girl:
Name: Daphne Illiana Greengrass
DOB: 25 February, 1980
Parents: Castor and Illiana Greengrass
Harry swallowed. “Daphne Greengrass – her House is in an Alliance with House Potter. They’re members of the Great Alliance.”

“Daphne’s Great-Grandfather Cygnus Greengrass owed your Great-Grandfather Fleamont a Life-Debt,” Ragnok said, “And the Contract was created. It has been passed on to you and Daphne Greengrass. Miss Greengrass is a Pureblood – she’s your age, a fourth year student in Slytherin at Hogwarts. House Greengrass is a Neutral House and they have a seat on the Wizengamot. They have a second daughter, Astoria, who is not in any known Betrothal Contract at this moment in time. So she would be available for a Line Continuation Contract. So Daphne would be available to take on the Ladyship of one of your Houses.”

Sirius groaned. “Slytherin. Why did she have to be in Slytherin? Keeper Ragnok, you said the Contract is active? I assume notification of the Contract is on its way to Miss Greengrass’ parents?”

“The House Greengrass Account Manager would have sent the notice out as soon as Lord Potter was notified of the Contract,” Ragnok said. “As is required by Gringotts Law.”

“So that’s a yes,” Sirius said. “I assume there is no way to get out of the Contract?”

Harry didn’t like the grin Ragnok was giving him.

“None,” the Goblin said. “All the requirements have been set. A son of House Potter and a daughter of House Greengrass are alive, healthy and of able mind and body to bring forth the next generation. Your two Houses are still in a trusted Alliance. If we received any notification that was not still confirmed, I would have let you know. There is no reason for the Contract to be disqualified, or passed on to a future generation.”

Harry groaned. “Great. Just great. Hermione’s probably never going to forgive me. Here I am set to go on a date with her, and I am Betrothed to another – a Slytherin in Hermione’s year. She probably knows the girl!”

“Why is that a problem, Harry?” Rose asked. “It sounds as if you have to marry two or three girls. You could still court Hermione, and she could be one of your wives!”

“Polygamy isn't practiced in the No-Maj world, Rose,” Lily said. “And as Hermione is a first-gen...”

“Oh,” Rose said, in realization, “Well, you just have to convince her – if it comes to that, that is.”

Harry inhaled and exhaled. For Merlin’s sake, all he wanted was to go on a date with Hermione! Now he was going to have to tell her he was Betrothed to a witch Hermione probably knew much better than he did! He’d be lucky if the worst thing she did to him was turn down his proposal for a date!

“We will discuss this as a family,” Lily said, “And we'll work on contacting Miss Greengrass and her family as well. For now, let's move on.”

At that moment, Ragnok snapped his fingers and a mahogany box appeared on the table. He opened it, and Harry saw a pair of rings laying inside.

“This box, Lord Potter,” Ragnok said, “was taken directly from your Family Vault. I'm sure your mother would recognize it. These two rings are Signet Rings. The Potter Signet Ring will open the Potter Family Vault. The Peverell Ring is said to have powers of its own, but I do not know what
those are. The rings also signify your seat in the Wizengamot at the Ministry. You can now claim three seats, Lord Potter.”


“Lost, unfortunately,” Ragnok said, “Though there is a seat in the Wizengamot you may claim. Instead of using your ring, a drop of blood would confirm your seat to the Wizengamot. House Ravenclaw also has a seat on the Wizengamot. Lady Potter, you may claim said chair. and your daughter would take that seat when she becomes of age.”

Lily and Rose nodded. Harry opened the box, and his mother shuddered beside him.

“I haven't seen these two rings in thirteen years,” Lily said, her voice shivering with emotion. “They were on your father's finger when – when he died.”

“Upon the Lord's death,” Ragnok said, “The rings return to the House Vault until the next Heir can claim them. It is now your right, as Lord Potter and Lord Peverell to wear them.”

Harry nodded, staring at the rings.

You can make two rings blend into one,” Ragnok said, “or keep them as they are. Then when you need to show the ring to someone, just summon the ring to your finger.”

“Alright,” Harry said.

He picked up the Potter Family ring, then placed it on his ring finger. He placed the Peverell Family ring on his next finger, and studied them. The Peverell ring had the sign of the Deathly Hallows on it, and the Potter Ring had the House Crest he recognized – a Griffin spreading its wings above two swords, which were pointing to the left and right of the ring. With a single thought, the two rings merged together in a flash of bright white light.

“The rings have accepted you as the Lords of your House,” Ragnok said, “Congratulations. Is there anything else I can do in terms of House Potter?”

“May I have the information regarding House Potter properties, and business partnerships and stocks?” Lily asked.

Ragnok snapped his fingers and two thick folders appeared in front of Lily.

“Does House Potter still have a partnership with the Daily Prophet?” Lily asked.

“House Potter owns fifteen percent of the Daily Prophet,” Ragnok said, “And its sisters, Witch Weekly and Teen Witch Weekly. I can guess you're going to ask, Lord Black, so you may be interested to find House Black owns twenty-five percent of the same company.”

“Forty percent,” Sirius said, “Just as we predicted.”

Lily nodded. “That is all the issues I have for now. We have no plans to visit our Vaults today, but we may do so in the near future.”

House Black business didn't take nearly as long as the House Potter business. Sirius was confirmed Lord Black. He was pleased that he had no Betrothal Contracts to his name. Though Harry did notice with amusement his godfather also seemed a tad disappointed about that too. He figured Sirius was just hoping it would be an easy way to find a girl.

When asked who would inherit the title Lord Black, Sirius stated: “Unless I have an Heir of my loins between now and the time I pass, then the line of inheritance will be thus: Harry James Potter, Rose Lily Potter, Nymphadora Dorea Tonks.”

He was given his Ring and folders of property and partnership information.

“Notifications will be sent to surviving members of House Black before sundown to inform them of the new Lord Black,” Ragnok said.

“Brilliant,” Sirius muttered, obviously unhappy with this news, “Looks like I'm going to be showered with letters and Howlers. Mostly Howlers, probably. I am, after all, the white sheep of the Black family.”

With that proclamation, Keeper Ragnok signified that the meeting was done. Harry, Lily, Rose and Sirius thanked Keeper Ragnok, and after collecting their folders of information, proceeded to leave Gringotts.

“Okay,” Lily said, in a low voice only her family and Sirius could hear, “A lot of surprises and revelations discovered. What do we reveal to the public, Sirius?”

“We won’t be able to regain our Wizengamot seats until mid-December during the Winter Solstice session,” Sirius said, “So it is unnecessary at this moment in time to announce the Ravenclaw bloodline. Hell, it isn’t exactly common news that the Potters are descended from Gryffindor, so there is no need to announce that either. That you and your children are purebloods is something I would announce, as well as the fact that you were adopted, and originally born to House Byrd. You could have family you never knew you had, Lily.”

Lily nodded. “And Harry becoming Lord Potter?”

“It will be discovered one way or another,” Sirius said. “We should do it ourselves.”

“Very well,” Lily said, “Time to find out whether all this news will be in the Daily Prophet or the Quibbler.”

“Let’s go play with Barnabus Cuffe!” Sirius said, grinning.

The new Lord Potter, and his family started off in the direction of the Daily Prophet Headquarters.

Chapter End Notes
So yeah. A lot of surprises revealed in this chapter.

I know this chapter will have some controversy. Lily being adopted, born a Pureblood descendant of Ravenclaw, and Harry and Rose being Purebloods could be a hard pill to swallow for some. But it seemed like a good thing for me to do. I hope you liked Ragnok's tale of Lily's birth parents. I loved writing that.

So Harry is Betrothed to Daphne because of a life-debt between their Great Grandfathers. I had decided to do that before I even started writing this story. I am quite happy with how it is working out so far.

In the past, I've had reviewers tell me that the Peverell Ring was the Horcrux in the Gaunt Shack. That was not the Peverell Ring that was passed down to Harry, that was the ring passed down from Riddle's Peverell ancestor.

Next Chapter: The Potters and Sirius meet with Barnabus Cuffe. Then a PoV with Hermione Granger. Then the Potters and Sirius return to Hogwarts and a cliffhanger ends the chapter!
I made a mistake last Chapter, that several commented on. I wrote Rose would get the Lady Ravenclaw title when she turned of age. She won't. She'll get it when Lily passes away. Just clearing that up now.

Also! Several reviewers commented on that possible third House/third wife for Harry stuff. I do have one of three possible ideas for the third wife, but I haven't completely decided who it will be. One option is an original character from America (who Harry would have some past connection to). The other two options are canon characters, but I'm not going to commit to anything right now. I want to decide where my story is going to go first before that happens. I am still trying to decide what will happen after the Triwizard Tournament is over. The story could go one of two ways, and in two entirely different directions – which could also affect how I choose the third girl. So no commitments on third wife yet.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sunday, November 1st, 1994

The Daily Prophet Headquarters in Diagon Alley was easily one of the most noticeable buildings, if you judged by the outer décor. Only Gringotts rivaled in that category. The “Daily Prophet” logo appeared at least four different times on the building's face, including on its front windows, and above the doorway, as well as higher up along the wall.

The most surprising décor on the front of the building – in Harry's opinion – was the “news ticker” over the large front windows, which had news headlines moving horizontally before apparently disappearing into thin air. The British wizarding world was so old-fashioned and out-dated, that this “technology” was quite advanced. It was commonly seen in American wizarding buildings – as well as American No-Maj news buildings, but quite surprising to be seen in Diagon Alley. The ticker mostly showed off either headlines of the recent edition of the newspaper, or important tidbits in the articles. Harry grimaced as his name came across with “14 Year Old Ilvermorny Champion”, as well as “House Potter's Triumphant Return!”.

Harry followed his mother and sister into the Daily Prophet Headquarters, as Sirius tailed behind them. The Entrance/Reception Room of the Daily Prophet Headquarters was rather small and simple, and resembled a waiting room at a doctor's office. There were several chairs sitting against walls nearest the front door. Vendors were selling editions of the Daily Prophet, Witch Weekly, and Teen Witch Weekly.

Near the opposite side of the room, there was a reception desk, with a witch – obviously the receptionist – sitting there, reading the newest edition of Witch Weekly, and smacking her lips, as she chewed on some Drooble's Best Blowing Gum. Behind the desk, there was a door with the words “Barnabus J. Cuffe – Editor-In-Chief, The Daily Prophet” etched onto a golden plaque. There were also two other doors on the left and right side of the room.
“We wish to speak to Barnabus Cuffe,” Lily said, as they approached the desk.

The receptionist, young enough that she couldn't have been out of Hogwarts for very long, blew a bubble and popped it.

“Do you have an appointment?” she asked, in a bored monotone voice – she turned a page of the magazine, not even bothering to look up at Lily.

“That depends,” Sirius said, “Do two Ancient and Most Noble Houses, who own a combined forty-percent of the Daily Prophet, need an appointment with the Editor-In-Chief?”

The receptionist choked on her gum and looked up from her magazine.

“Would you please tell Mr. Cuffe,” Sirius said, “that representatives of House Potter – including the new Lord Potter – and Lord Black are here to speak with him? I happen to think he'll be pleased to meet with us right away.”

Harry hid a snicker as he watched the receptionist stumble as she stood up from her chair. She bustled over to the door, knocked on it, waited for a moment, then peered inside. After a few moments, she backed away and turned around.

“Mr. Cuffe will see you now,” the receptionist said.

“Thank you, ma'am,” Sirius said, with a wink.

This time Harry couldn't hide a snicker, as the receptionist blushed visibly. Harry followed his mother and sister through the doorway, with Sirius once again tailing them.

Harry stepped into an extravagantly-looking office. Near the back of the room, a magnificent mahogany desk stood, with a man in his mid-forties, dressed in business-attire robes, standing behind it beaming at them all. The walls were adorned with what appeared to be articles of past Daily Prophets, as well as moving pictures all of which had the same man with several people who were obviously celebrities and VIPs in Wizarding Great Britain. Behind the man's desk, there were shelves filled with trophies, medals and awards.

“Greetings!” the man said, “My name is Barnabus J. Cuffe, and I am the Editor-In-Chief of The Daily Prophet. But perhaps you know that already. You can call me Barney – most people do! Please be seated, and do introduce yourselves.”

There were already two chairs on the nearest side of the desk. Barnabus waved his wand and conjured two more identical chairs. Harry and Rose sat in the center chairs while Lily and Sirius took the outer chairs.

“It feels strange that we have to introduce ourselves, Barney,” Sirius said, “After all, our names our plastered all over one of the articles on the front page of today's edition of your newspaper. But as introductions are proper, I suppose we will oblige. Pleasure to meet you, Barney. Lord Sirius Orion Black, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black.”

Lily and Rose introduced themselves next. When Harry introduced himself as “Lord” Harry James Potter, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter, Barnabus looked absolutely shocked.

“Lord Potter – at fourteen years of age?” he asked, leering at Harry.
“When my name came out of the Goblet of Fire,” Harry said, “I was officially entered into a Tournament meant to be played by students who were deemed of age – adults. According to magical law, Gringotts law, and the law of the British Ministry of Magic – though we suspect they may argue against point – I have been officially deemed ‘of age’. Therefore, by law, I became Lord Potter, as was to be my privilege when I became an adult, since my father cannot take the title as he is no longer with us. We just met with my Account Manager at Gringotts, where my new title was confirmed.”

Harry raised his hand showing off his Lord Potter Signet Ring.

“Well, I can't find any faults in that information,” Barnabus said, “And I do agree the Ministry may not be happy that a fourteen year old wizard – an American citizen, no less – has claimed the title of Head of a long-thought extinct House.”

“My son has also been given the title of Lord Peverell,” Lily said, “Head of a House that was also thought to have gone extinct, simply because none of the Potters – until now – have decided to give out that information.”

Harry summoned forth the Lord Peverell ring as well. They would not be revealing the Gryffindor or Ravenclaw information yet.

“I-I see,” Barnabus stammered, “I assume it would be alright to announce this news in a future article in the Daily Prophet?”

“That would depend on where this conversation goes by the end of our meeting,” Sirius said, “And now we've finally arrived at why we are meeting with you, Barney. This morning we woke up to find two articles in your newspaper with information about either my godson, Harry, here, or members of House Potter, and House Black. Frankly we were quite surprised how the information got to be in the Daily Prophet.

“We were not aware of any media – the journalist in question being one Rita Skeeter, I believe – being present for the Choosing Ceremony last night nor the arrival of Ilvermorny and Beauxbatons on Friday evening. Miss Skeeter's article about – how did she put it? – House Potter's 'Triumphant Return’ had specific information about Ilvermorny's arrival, as well as House Potter. We were not met by Rita Skeeter about this. So I don't know where she got her information from.”

“I'm afraid I am not permitted to give out sources or company secrets, Lord Black,” Barnabus said.

“I completely understand, Barney,” Sirius said. “However, given Miss Skeeter's reputation, perhaps you wouldn't be surprised to find we disapprove of the way she wrote those articles about us.”

Barnabus cleared his throat. “Lord Black, if you're trying to accuse one of my journalists of libel and slander – well – I know you've been across the pond for thirteen years. I don't know how libel and slander is handled in the United States of America, but here --”

“We're well aware that there are no laws that state libel and slander are illegal, Barney,” Sirius interrupted. “Something tells me you had something to do with that.”

“Oh course not!” Barnabus exclaimed in outrage. “That is quite the accusation. Quite --”

“Yes,” Harry said, “Quite slanderous of my Godfather, is it not? Is that the word you were going to
use? According to you, that word doesn't exist in Wizarding British laws.”

Barnabus frowned.

“Then it wasn't you,” Sirius said, “Perhaps it was one of your predecessors in the Editor-In-Chief position.”

Barnabus sputtered. “What do you want, Lord Black? Why are you here?”

“Just as libel and slander are legal, so is exclusivity,” Sirius said. “We're here to offer you exclusive rights to media coverage of House Potter representatives, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, and anyone else we deem fit in the exclusivity category.”

“Well, why didn't you say so!?” Barnabus said, his expression brightening. “The Daily Prophet would be --”

“No!” Sirius interrupted loudly, making Barnabus jump, “No, no, no, you misunderstand me, Mr. Cuffe. I didn't say the Daily Prophet! I said you, Mr. Cuffe.”

“I am the Editor-In-Chief of the Daily Prophet, Lord Black,” Barnabus said, pointing to the nameplate on his desk.

“But you're also the occasional journalist,” Lily said, “You write articles for the Daily Prophet.”

“From time to time, yes,” Barnabus said.

“While your articles would be welcomed in the Daily Prophet, Mr. Cuffe,” Sirius said, “They would have to be written by you. All articles about House Potter representatives, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, and possibly others in the future, would have to be written by you.”

“And if I refuse?” Barnabus asked. “Lord Black, your godson – the Lord Potter – is a Champion in the Triwizard Tournament. My journalist Rita Skeeter is the lead journalist behind the Triwizard Tournament. I already gave her that privilege!”

“Well,” Sirius said, “Then either you'll have to revoke that privilege, or Rita Skeeter will only be writing about three of the four Champions. She wouldn't be able to write about Lord Potter's part in the tournament.”

Harry grinned as a thought crossed his mind. “I could always meet with my fellow Champions, and convince them to agree to exclusivity rights too, Mr. Cuffe. That would put an end to Rita's coverage of the Tournament. And it would be completely legal, all because the British Ministry made it legal for your newspaper to have exclusive one-on-one interviews with their Minister of Magic.”

“Barnabus, are you familiar with the Great Alliance – founded by my late husband's father?” Lily asked.

“Of course I am!” Barnabus said.

“Then perhaps you're aware of the Houses in the Great Alliance,” Lily said. “Houses which are in Alliances with House Potter. One of those Allies is House Lovegood – perhaps you know Xenophilius Lovegood, owner and Editor-In-Chief of the Quibbler?”
Barnabus blinked and stared at Lily.

“Given that House Lovegood is in an Alliance with House Potter,” Lily said, “It would be most proper to offer exclusivity rights to the Quibbler, so that we can help them gain popularity. If the other Champions agree with us on exclusivity – and we take it to the Quibbler – well, that would mean that... wow, only the Quibbler would be able to write about the Triwizard Tournament.”

“Isn’t the Quibbler chief rival of the Daily Prophet and its sister subscriptions, Mr. Cuffe?” Harry asked, innocently. “The Triwizard Tournament is the most important event between now and next June. Citizens of Wizarding Britain would flock to read and subscribe to the media source that is giving the details out about the Tournament.”

“Big brother, that is rude to say to the Editor-In-Chief of the Daily Prophet,” Rose said, grinning and obviously deciding to get in on the fun, “I mean, if the Quibbler gets exclusive rights, then you just told Mr. Cuffe that his chief rival is about to become more popular than his own newspaper!”

Barnabus stammered. He took a handkerchief from the front pocket of his robes and wiped his brow.

“Fine!” Barnabus exclaimed; then he cleared his throat, “I will take over as lead journalist for the Triwizard Tournament, and all articles involving House Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin --”

“And anyone else we ask of you?” Lily asked, “Mostly it would be Allies and friends of ours whose reputations we wouldn't want damaged by Rita Skeeter's quill. Unlike Miss Skeeter, you, Barney, are a great journalist. You know how to respectfully handle information, and give out truth instead of gossip. You write the facts, Mr. Cuffe. We appreciate that. With you taking over the articles about us, we wouldn't have to worry about contacting our solicitor – Ted Tonks – to speak to you about respecting members, friends and allies of two Houses who own a combined forty-percent of your company.”

Barnabus wiped his brow again. “I would be honored to take charge of the articles.”

“Excellent!” Lily said, “Our Solicitor – Ted Tonks – will meet with you soon to discuss the exclusive rights and bring up the important paperwork. I'm sure he'll also discuss with you how he'll painstakingly read every word and article in each edition of your newspaper to make sure you don't bend or break our deal.”

“I'll be happy to meet with him,” Barnabus said.

“We'll also talk to the other Champions about exclusivity too,” Lily said, “And with that our meeting is done. We'll be seeing you at the Weighing of the Wands, won't we? After all, you'll want to be there for exclusive interviews and photos.”

“Yes, I will be there,” Barnabus said, sighing. “Are you sure there isn't anything else I could do for you? Interviews about the Lord Potter and Lord Black status?”

“I tell you what,” Lily said, “You prove to us that you are holding up on your part of the deal. And we'll sit down with you for an interview that will knock the socks off of the British Wizarding world. Maybe even directly after the Weighing of the Wands ceremony.”

Harry grinned, realizing his mother had no plans at the moment to discuss her 'adoption', or that she – and in essence her children – were actually purebloods. That would be part of the future interview.
“I look forward to it,” Barnabus said.

“And we look forward to seeing no more articles about us from Rita Skeeter,” Sirius said, “We better go and let you return to your work. I'm sure you need to be meeting with Miss Skeeter to inform her she's no longer in charge of certain stories.”

Barnabus paled at that. Harry, Rose, Lily and Sirius stood up, said their farewells, then left Cuffe’s office and the Daily Prophet Headquarters.

“And that is how you handle Pureblood Politics, kids,” Sirius said, grinning, “So, Lily, I take it you changed your mind about informing Great Britain of your pureblood background?”

“Not at all,” Lily said, “That will be revealed in an interview with Mr. Cuffe once he proves he can be a good little boy.”

Sirius laughed. “Of course! I should have realized that.”

“Yes, you should have,” Lily said, “Come on, kiddies, we need to find an Apparation-safe area and return to Hogwarts.”

“Aw!” Harry complained, “Can't we explore Diagon Alley more?”

“No today, Harry,” Lily said, “We need go see how Remus is holding up the fort without us. We may have more post to deal with. And you, Harry, need to speak to Hermione, especially if she's waiting to tell you something important.”

“You have some important things to tell her yourself, pup,” Sirius said, “Such as this new Betrothal Contract, and other bits of information. You need to find out if she still wants to go on that date with you.”

Harry grimaced. Sirius had said all that in a non-joking matter, which meant he thought the topic was quite serious and important. If it was serious and important for Sirius Black, then it was definitely important for Harry Potter. He only hoped the conversation went well with Hermione. He really wanted to go on a date with her – Betrothal Contract be damned!

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**Hogwarts Grounds**

Meanwhile, the young witch in question was currently walking out of the front doors of Hogwarts, and onto the Grounds. She could see the grouping of five wizarding tents, and realized this must be where the Ilvermorny representatives were staying. But more important – where Harry Potter was staying.

Hermione really needed to talk with Harry about the Ravenclaw bullies and what Padma Patil had discussed with her the previous day. Harry needed to know that those Ravenclaw bints – especially Mandy Brocklehurst – appeared to be trying to poach him – she still wasn't clear on what that meant. They had tried to dissuade her, scare her from going on a date with Harry Potter!

Hermione Granger thought of herself as a strong and smart woman. But last night she had a revelation that terrified herself with how true it was. Hermione Granger was book-smart, she was not 'street smart'. Padma Patil had said it best, even if the truth had hurt. Hermione knew very little about
Pureblood Politics and Pureblood Heritage. Harry Potter – while a half-blood – had grown up as the Heir Apparent of an Ancient and Most Noble House. So it was assured he had been taught Pureblood Politics and Heritage, and information about Wizarding Houses by his mother and “Honorary Uncles” – whether they were purebloods or not, they had experience in the wizarding world. So Harry must know several things Hermione didn't.

Hermione didn't like not knowing things. She needed to know things. And if Harry Potter and his family knew things she didn't – well she was just going to have to learn from those who knew.

As she arrived at the grouping of Ilvermorny tents, she found one of the older Ilvermorny students, a witch, performing some magic Hermione didn't recognize. This sadly reminded her of the apparent substandard education Hogwarts had opposed to Ilvermorny.

“Erm... hello?” Hermione asked, shyly.

The witch stopped casting and turned around. She leered at Hermione, then gave a soft smile.

“Ah, I recognize you,” she said, “You're Potter's friend, right?”

Hermione bit her lip, wondering if “friend” was the appropriate term for her and Harry. She barely knew him, and yet they had three long conversations as of now. She barely nodded, though it wasn't a confident nod.

“Yes,” Hermione said, “I'm looking for Harry. Which tent is he staying in?”

The witch pointed at the nearest tent. “That has been deemed the House Potter Tent. But if you're looking for Potter, you won't find him in there right now. He, Rose, Professor Potter, and Professor Black are in Diagon Alley right now.”

“Oh,” Hermione said, frowning, disheartened, “I see.”

“But Professor Lupin is inside,” the witch said, “I'm sure you can talk to him and arrange a meeting. Come on, I'll escort you inside.”

Hermione nodded shyly, and followed the witch into the tent. Hermione had seen a wizarding tent before, and this one was just as magnificent, if not more-so. She was suddenly blinded by a bright, white flash. She shrieked, thinking someone was attacking her.

“Oh, dear,” Remus Lupin said, “I am so sorry about that. I didn't realize I had visitors.”

When Hermione could see again, she noticed that Remus was standing at a table, pointing his wand at a large pile of what appeared to be post.

“Welcome Miss Moore,” Remus said, “And – ah – hello, Miss Granger. It is nice to see you again.”

“She's looking for Harry, Professor,” the witch – Moore – said.

“Yes, I assumed so,” Remus said, smiling, “Come in, Miss Granger. You're excused, Miss Moore.”

Moore turned and walked out of the tent. Hermione slowly walked over to Remus. The Professor smiled softly and stored his wand in his pocket.
"I will refrain from using magic at the moment," Remus said, "I apologize once again for scaring you. Due to the articles in the Daily Prophet regarding Harry and his family, we've been receiving post all morning directed to all of us, though more toward Harry, and Professors Potter and Black. And I'm afraid some of the post is hex-letters and dangerous stuff. So I've been having to – ah – dismantle the dangers. That bright flash was part of that."

"That's horrible!" Hermione exclaimed, "Why would people send such dangerous post?"

"There's a lot of unpleasant people in this world, Miss Granger," Remus said, "Some of whom reside in Great Britain."

Hermione gave an unladylike snort. "Well, I can't deny that."

"We were expecting this type of post and were well-prepared for it," Remus said, "So it isn't much of a bother – at least for us. These dangerous letters will be sent to the DMLE for possible criminal charges."

"Well, that's good," Hermione said.

"Yes, it is," Remus agreed, "What can I do for you, Miss Granger?"

"Well – er – as your student said, I'm – ah – looking for Harry," Hermione said.

Remus smiled softly. "Yes, I was forewarned of such by Harry. He was expecting you."

"He was?" Hermione asked.

"Yes," Remus said, "He was expecting you to come by looking for him. Believe me when I say he really wanted to talk to you this morning. He understands you have something important to tell him."

"Yes," Hermione said, "Quite important."

"Well, unfortunately, he isn't here at the moment," Remus said, "He, his sister, Professor Potter and Professor Black have all gone to Diagon Alley. Unavoidable visit, I'm afraid. They were summoned by Gringotts for a meeting, and the Goblins of Gringotts do not like to be kept waiting. Plus they had other business they needed to tend to. But they should be back soon enough. I'm sure once I tell Harry that you were looking for him, he'll go and look for you immediately."

"Okay," Hermione said, "Um... well, tell him I'll either be in the Hogwarts Library or the Ravenclaw Common Room. If I'm in Ravenclaw Tower, then obviously he can't enter, so – er – I'll see him at mealtime."

"Very well," Remus said, "I will pass along the message. It was nice to see you again, Miss Granger."

Hermione nodded, and echoed the response. She asked to be excused, and when given permission, turned and started off back toward the entrance/exit of the tent.

"Miss Granger?" Remus asked; Hermione turned back to Remus, "Harry may very well hex me for saying this. But I know he is very much looking forward to your date next Saturday."

Hermione blushed and smiled. "Good. So am I, sir. Er... good luck on that... dismantling thing."
“Thank you, Miss Granger,” Remus said, leering at the stack of post, “I may find I'll need it.”

Hermione chuckled softly, and left the tent.

Ten minutes later, she was walking through the second floor corridor toward the Hogwarts Library, when her day suddenly became much worse. She heard a voice yell an incantation, and was blinded by a very bright white light. Then she felt a pain centered around her mouth.

She was just thinking about how familiar that voice was when her world went black.

_Rita Skeeter_ was happily humming to herself as she made her way toward the direction of the Entrance Room of the Daily Prophet Headquarters, and Barnabus Cuffe's office. She had just received a memo from Cuffe saying he wanted to meet with her about something important.

She figured it had something to do with the schedule pertaining to the Triwizard Tournament, which she was the lead journalist for the Tournament, when representing the Daily Prophet. She knew the next important event regarding the Triwizard Tournament was coming up – the Weighing of the Wands. Perhaps Ol' Barney had figured out when the event was taking place.

Or perhaps he wanted to meet with her, to congratulate her on her two front-page article in that morning’s edition of the Daily Prophet. She had expected such a compliment before now, but obviously Barney was a busy man, so she couldn't fault him for that.

“He's expecting you,” the receptionist – Rita couldn't remember the young woman's name – said when she saw Rita. “Head on inside.”

Rita smiled at the receptionist, walked over to the door to Barney's office, opened it, and stepped inside.

“Miss Skeeter!” Barney said, “Come on in. Shut the door behind you, and take a seat!”

Rita did as asked, and sat down in one of the two chairs on the nearest side of the desk.

“Is this about the schedule for the Triwizard Tournament, Barney?” Rita asked, “Because I'm still waiting for the schedule from Ludo Bagman or Bartemius Crouch. The Weighing of the Wands is coming up, and I am not prepared! I need to know if I have to change other plans.”

Barney sighed. “Miss Skeeter, I'm afraid I have some bad news for you. I have to take you off the Triwizard Tournament detail.”

“What?!” Rita shrieked, dumbfounded and flabbergasted, “You can't do this, Barney! You promised me! This is _my_ story! Who are you giving it to?! Nobody but me deserves it!”

Barney frowned. “Miss Skeeter, I'm afraid I have some bad news for you. I have to take you off the Triwizard Tournament detail.”

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Barney frowned. “Nobody, you say? What if I told you it is I who is taking over the coverage of the event.”

Rita laughed. “Oh, thank goodness, you're joking with me. Barney, you bad boy! That was a good
one! Barney, I know you miss writing articles – I don't know why, since you write a few every week. But you belong in this office! This is you, Barney! Leave the article-writing to me and the others!"

“I'm afraid I cannot do that, Rita,” Barney said, “I am not joking here. A few minutes ago, I had a meeting with Lily, Harry and Rose Potter, and Sirius Black.”

Rita's eyes widened. “Well, why didn't you say so? Are they still here? I could sit them down for an interview!”

“Rita, shut your yap and listen to me!” Barney thundered.

Rita blinked. Barney had never been this way with her. She was the star reporter of the Daily Prophet. Barney respected her for that!

“The members of House Potter and Lord Sirius Black sat me down and made me an offer I could not refuse,” Barney said. “They've given me exclusive rights to articles about them, Remus Lupin, and any friends and allies they deem under the category of exclusive. Not you, and not any other journalists, Rita. Only I can write the articles.”

“But Harry Potter is the Ilvermorny Champion!” Rita exclaimed, “That would mean that --”

“Yes,” Barney said, “It would. Because only I can write about Harry Potter – or in this case – Lord Potter --”

Rita spluttered and coughed at that revelation.

“-- then it is only prudent that the job of the Triwizard Tournament coverage be turned over to me,” Barney continued, “Otherwise, you'd only be writing about three of the four Champions – and that is if House Potter and Black don't convince the other Champions to give me exclusive rights too. So, I have no choice but take over the coverage.”

“But Harry Potter being given the title of Lord Potter is big news!” Rita growled, “Big! That should have been my story! Mine! Why did you agree with this?! You could have shot them down! You're Barnabus Cuffe!”

“Two reasons,” Barney said, “One, House Potter and House Black make up a combined of forty-percent ownership of the Daily Prophet.”

Rita gulped. That was news to her. Barney would never have denied a deal from someone with that much power in the company.

“Two, House Potter is in an Alliance with the Lovegoods,” Barney said. “The Lovegoods, as I'm sure you know, own the Quibbler, our chief rival.”

Rita snorted. That rag didn't deserve such an honor of being chief rival to the Daily Prophet and its sister subscriptions!

“So House Potter could have turned exclusivity over to the Quibbler,” Barney said, “Which meant the Daily Prophet couldn't write not just stories on House Potter, Black, Remus Lupin, and anyone else they choose, we also couldn't write about the Triwizard Tournament, because Potter's the Ilvermorny Champion. The Quibbler would be the leading source for the Tournament, and we'd take
a big dump in the ratings. Now do you see why I had to agree to exclusivity? Why I had agree with taking over the reins for the articles?”

Rita nodded. She hated it, but she saw the reasons why.

“I'm sure you'll find other stories you can write about, Miss Skeeter,” Barnabus said. “You're excused.”

Rita stood, and exited the office, grumbling under her breath. She wanted to scream out loud to the heavens! She was Rita Skeeter! She should not be denied the privilege to write about House Potter and Sirius Black, and the Triwizard Tournament!

She wouldn't let House Potter and Black win so easily. She would find something she could legally write that wouldn't break exclusivity rights. She was going to do some digging. Fortunately she had all the tools of the trade she needed to get what she wanted.

House Potter and Black would rue the day they messed with Rita Skeeter!

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**House Potter Tent**

After the long, fifteen minute walk from the front gate of Hogwarts to the Ilvermorny tents, all Harry Potter wanted to do was sit down with a glass of ice cold water and catch his breath. But when he walked into the House Potter tent, with Lily, Rose, and Sirius, he didn't know his already long day – and it wasn't even eleven in the morning yet! – was about to get much longer.

When he stepped into the tent, he found Remus standing near the dining room table, which was piled with several pieces of mail. The mail wasn't the most surprising thing in the room however. Luna Lovegood was standing beside Remus. Her usual dreamy expression – which Harry had gotten used to in the last two conversations he had with her – was gone. She now looked very stressed.

“Harry!” Luna said, “There you are! Hermione's been attacked! She's in the Hospital Wing!”

Harry Potter swore so loud, the Ilvermorny students in the Classroom Tent – who were meeting to plan their celebration party in Harry's honor – heard him.

Chapter End Notes

Cliffhanger! That was a fun chapter to write. I very much enjoyed writing the Daily Prophet scenes. I absolutely love my vision of the “outer décor” of the Daily Prophet Headquarters.

Hmm... so who attacked Hermione? It might be rather obvious. Aw well.

I've had a few complaints recently about how we barely know any of the other Ilvermorny students aside from Harry and Rose. That is – ah – sort of the point. Think of them as “red-shirts”, to coin a Star Trek cliche. Harry was always going to be the
Ilvermorny Champion in the story. The other students are there as the other delegates, supporters, and basically background noise. They'll have a small bit of significance – like Miss Moore's appearance here – but aside from that, they won't be seen much. In Goblet of Fire canon, only Viktor Krum and Fleur Delacour were focused on amongst the other schools, and the others were background noise. That will be the same in this story.

Next Chapter: Harry, Lily, Rose, Sirius and Luna go to the Hospital Wing. Spoiler alert: Hermione's... relatively okay! Next chapter is really, really fun. No, not all the discussion you want takes place next chapter -- some of it happens in two chapters. Harry wants to talk about it next chapter, but his plans change and then things get really fun.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter!
The discussion between Harry and Hermione regarding Harry's Betrothal won't take place until next chapter. But much is discussed here anyway between Harry and Hermione. Harry wants to discuss it in this chapter, but things go in a different direction that must be handled first.

Fair warning. Harry starts using his Lord Potter title. And he uses it well. It gets very, very fun! Oh, and there's a bit of bashing toward Ravenclaw, the Hogwarts Staff, and Hogwarts in general in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Previously on “The Ilvermorny Champion”...

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Sunday, November 1st, 1994

“WHAT THE BLOODY FUCK!” Harry Potter growled.

“Harry James Potter!” Lily exclaimed in a scolding tone.

“Sorry, Mom,” Harry muttered, “I've just had a long morning filled with revelations – some of which I'm not at all happy with – and now one of my newest friends has been attacked and is in the Hospital Wing! Where's the Hospital Wing, Luna? Take me there right now!”

“I'd be happy to take you, Harry,” Luna said, “But there's no need to be so urgent. And no need for such language either. Hermione's actually not that bad off. She was hit with a Teeth-Growing Hex, and then stunned. Apparently she was on her way to the library, because she was on the second floor corridor. Luckily, I had left the library when I did, because I found her Stunned in the middle of the corridor. I revived her and brought her to the Hospital Wing. She was calm enough to tell me to come here and speak to Professor Lupin.”

For someone who had given the breaking news in such a stressful manner, now Luna was sounding
quite calm as she gave her explanation.

“Luna,” Lily said, “I think you should have said that right away.”

“I was about to, when your son swore, Lady Potter,” Luna said, smiling.

Harry huffed. “Hospital Wing. Now.”

“I think I’d like to go too,” Lily said, “Rose, you’re of course welcome to come. I know Hermione is your new friend too. Sirius?”

“Something tells me I should go with you,” Sirius said, sighing.

“We’ll be back soon, Remus,” Lily said, “We have much to talk about.”

“Take your time,” Remus said, “I’ve been divvying up the letters and dismantling the dangerous ones, and I’m sure there are more to come. So I’m sure I’ll be busy enough that you’ll be back before I know it.”

“It was nice to see you again, Professor Lupin,” Luna said.

Luna then walked past Harry and left the tent. Harry followed behind her out of the tent with Lily, Rose and Sirius tailing him. They were met by a couple of the older Ilvermorny students.

“We heard Harry yelling,” one of the students, a seventh year Ilvermorny boy, said. “We came to see what was wrong.”

“Harry just received a bit of distressing news, but it was a misunderstanding,” Lily said.

Harry snorted, glaring only half-playfully in Luna's direction.

“A bit of a misunderstanding,” Lily amended. “Everything is fine now. We'll be back soon. Thank you for your concern, Mr. Samson.”

“Alright,” Samson said, “Yo, Harry! Don't plan on joining your girlfriend for dinner in the castle tonight. We're having a celebration, Ilvermorny style, tonight in the Classroom Tent and -- ow!”

The witch standing next to Samson smacked him upside the head. Harry scarcely recalled that the witch and Samson might have been dating.

“Be nice Stephen!” the witch said, then smiled at Harry, “You can bring your girlfriend along if you want, Harry.”

Harry was about to say Hermione was not his girlfriend, and there was a very good chance she likely wouldn't be going on a date with him either. But he noticed Luna had gotten bored of the conversation and had decided to start off to Hogwarts without them. He merely nodded, gave a halfhearted reply indicating he would attend the celebration, and then he headed off to follow Luna.

He faintly heard Lily say something to the older Ilvermorny students, before she, Rose and Sirius followed to catch up to Harry and Luna.

“Luna?” Harry asked, as they neared Hogwarts, “Do you know who attacked Hermione?”
“I have my suspects,” Luna said.

“Hermione didn't tell you?” Harry asked.

“I think she was trying to,” Luna said, “But she was talking so fast – I think due to stress and panic – and I couldn't understand much due to her hexed teeth. If she knows who it is, I'm sure she'll tell you when she can.”

Harry nodded. As he followed Luna into Hogwarts, and they trekked through the castle toward the Hospital Wing with his family, Harry's thoughts were whirling through his mind. Harry hated bullies and cowards. It was obvious that both Hermione and Luna were mistreated by their fellow students, if not outright bullied. And now someone had attacked Hermione. No matter whether his relationship with Hermione remained “just friends” or went beyond friendship, Harry still considered Hermione his friend. And nobody messed with Harry Potter's friends and got away with it.

Whoever attacked Hermione was going to pay. Now that he was Lord Potter, the opportunities were nearly endless. Duels of Satisfaction was just one of the possible outcomes. It didn't matter whether it was a wizard or witch. Either way, they were responsible for this cowardly attack, and when it came to that, there were no gender lines!

The trip from the tents to the Hospital Wing on the second floor took nearly twenty minutes. When Harry entered the Hospital Wing, he found Hermione sitting up in a hospital bed, speaking to the Hogwarts Healer, and actually looking as if she hadn't been harmed at all. When she saw Luna, Harry and his family, he grinned and waved at them. The Healer turned and smiled warmly when she saw Lily and Sirius.

“Hello, Lady Potter, Mister Black,” the Healer said.

“It is Lord Black now, actually, Poppy,” Sirius said. “But you, my dear, can call me Sirius.”

“Harry, Rose,” Lily said, “This is Madam Poppy Pomfrey, the Hogwarts Healer. She was also the Healer when we attended here.”

“That makes me sound so old!” Madam Pomfrey said, with a world-weary sigh; she smiled at Harry and Rose, “It is very nice to meet the both of you.”

“Nice to meet you too,” Harry said, as he walked over to one of the empty chairs near Hermione, and sat down, “How are you, Hermione?”

“Miss Granger is just fine, Mr. Potter,” Madam Pomfrey said, “She was attacked with a Densaugeo Hex, as well as a Stunner. But nothing else besides that happened, thankfully. Miss Granger and I both believe the Stunner was just so the culprit could get away without being identified. The Densaugeo Hex was the intended attack, meant to embarrass Miss Granger, and perhaps send a message.

“Miss Granger, I need to contact the Headmaster, and your Head of House. You may talk with your friends until Professors Dumbledore and Flitwick arrive. Please stay in bed. I'm still concerned about possible side-effects of the Stunner. Not probable, mind you. Merely caution.”

“Yes, ma'am,” Hermione said.

The Hogwarts Healer bustled away.
“How are you, Hermione?” Harry asked again.

“I am fine, Harry,” Hermione said, “Like Madam Pomfrey said. Actually I’m even better than fine.”

She opened her mouth and showed her teeth. She no longer had her bucked teeth, something which Harry commented on.

“Yeah,” Hermione said, “Madam Pomfrey told me to tell her when they were back to normal, and well... I let her make them equal to the rest of my teeth. So it was an improvement.”

“It could have been much worse, Hermione, if you don't mind me saying,” Lily said, “Luna told us she found you Stunned in the middle of a corridor. Someone could have... taken advantage of you.”

Harry narrowed his eyes and frowned.

“Possible, but that wasn't my attacker's intention,” Hermione said. “As Madam Pomfrey mentioned, the attacker did it only to embarrass me, and then she Stunned me, so she could run off without being identified.”

“She?” Harry echoed, “Sounds as if you do know who it is.”

“I recognized her voice,” Hermione said, sighing, “Mandy Brocklehurst.”

“And who, may I ask, is Mandy Brocklehurst to you?” Sirius asked.

“She's my fellow Ravenclaw – a dorm-mate and year-mate,” Hermione said, then she frowned, “She's also part of a group of bullies who've messed with me and Luna over the past couple of years.”

“Bullies?” Harry asked, frowning.

“Until today, they were just verbal insults and threats, Harry,” Hermione said, “Nothing too bad. I usually put up with it.”

“But something happened that made this Brocklehurst girl attack you,” Lily said, “Something recent. What?”

Hermione frowned and looked at Harry. “This is what I wanted to talk to you about, Harry. Mandy Brocklehurst overheard you asking me out to Hogsmeade yesterday. Obviously, she had been nearby hiding behind a bookshelf. She confronted me with the other bullies --”

“Who?” Harry asked.

Hermione sighed. “Cho Chang, Marietta Edgecombe, and Su Li.”

“Su Li, the Dueling Champion?” Sirius asked.

“Yeah,” Hermione asked, “You know her?”

“I've heard of her,” Sirius said, “A couple of my students at Ilvermorny dueled her in competitions, and talked about her. I had no idea she was a Hogwarts student.”
“Mandy, and her three friends,” Hermione said, “They confronted me yesterday afternoon. They – um – tried to dissuade me from going on a date with you, Harry. Told me to turn you down. They said that because you’re the Heir Apparent of an Ancient and Noble House, that I don’t deserve to go on a date with you. That girls like those four should be going out with you, and not a... a Muggleborn like me.”

“Pureblood supremacy bullshit!” Sirius muttered.

“Sirius!” Lily scolded him for his swearing.

“Thirteen years since I’ve been in England, and nothing has changed,” Sirius said, ignoring Lily, “Why am I so surprised? It's been this way for decades – no, centuries. Why should it stop now?”

“Anyway,” Hermione said, when she realized Sirius had stopped ranting. “Padma Patil – a fellow Ravenclaw in my year – she defended me. Actually, she defended you, Harry, more than me I think, since her House is allied with yours.”

“Good for her,” Lily said, approvingly. “For defending you and her Ally.”

“Padma told the girls that if I was going on a date with you,” Hermione said, “Then that meant it was House Potter business, and Padma had a right to defend me. She – er – told the girls that if they interfered while – um – you were interested in me, then they would be guilty of... poaching, I think?”

“I like this Patil girl already,” Sirius said, “She's a wise one. Poaching, Hermione, while pureblood nonsense, is actually one of those good pureblood nonsensical things. It can be good, or it can be bad. In your case, it is pretty good. It protects you while – as you said – Harry is interested in dating or courting you. If there is any chance – no matter how miniscule – that you'll be Harry's wife, nobody can interfere with that, because they would be interfering with Harry's choice when it comes to extending a bloodline.”

Hermione blushed pink as she looked in Harry's direction. Harry wondered if he still had a chance with her. Of course... he hadn't told her the bad news yet.

“And yet you believe Mandy still attacked you?” he asked. “Even after she was told off by Padma?”

“Out of the four girls,” Hermione said, “Mandy was the only one, after Padma defended me, to still tell me to turn you down. I recognized her voice, Harry. How could I not? I've listened to her rants and insults for three years now. I know her voice. It was her.”

“She's not going to get away with this,” Harry said, “None of them are!”

“Harry,” Lily said, “You should let the proper authorities handle this. If Hermione's Headmaster and Head of House are coming to speak to her –”

“I am Lord Potter, Mom!” Harry said, “That should mean something! It is my right to do something about this! You heard Hermione. These girls tried to poach me! Do you really think they'll be the last ones??”

“You're Lord Potter, Harry?” Hermione asked.

“Long story,” Harry said, dismissively, “I'll explain it later in more detail.”
Lily frowned, but it was Sirius who spoke up. “What do you want to do, Harry?”

“I want to put Hermione under House Potter Protection,” Harry said; he glanced at Luna, “Heck, Luna too, for that matter.”

“Harry,” Sirius said, “While I commend you for a good idea, House Protection is a very titchy business. Technically, Luna doesn't need it. Her House is already in an Alliance with you.”

“It would still send a message more than anything,” Harry argued.

Sirius nodded. “That it would. As for Hermione – wasn't it you who told me Hermione's simply going on a date with you? She's not --”

“Maybe not,” Harry interrupted before Sirius could embarrass him and Hermione both by saying 'wife', 'betrothed', 'intended' or anything like that, “But she's still my friend. Both Hermione and Luna are my friends. And – I'm sorry, girls for saying this – but it looks as if they've both had a history of bullying, and that is something I will not stand by idly for, and ignore!”

“What is House Protection, Harry?” Hermione asked.

“I'll take this one, pup,” Sirius said. “I've dealt with it before. Hermione, House Protection is sort of like an unofficial Alliance. Actually, in some ways, it is better than an Alliance. With an Alliance, you're not always guaranteeing that you're going to defend each other. Most Alliances have to do with Pureblood Politics. It just ensures that those Houses you're Allies with are going to vote on all the same laws, topics and what-not that you're going to in the Wizengamot, and you'll vote for the stuff that your Allies do too. Sure, some Alliances will defend each other. Some will stand by your side and fight alongside you to the death. But not everybody.

“That is House Protection, Hermione. If you're under House Potter Protection, Harry will fight for you. He'll fight for and beside you. He'll fight the battles you yourself can't win. When you're attacked, like today, he'll stand by your side, and defend you, even in the aftermath of the battle. If you're under House Potter Protection, anyone who threatens you – verbally or physically – is subject to hell from House Potter. House Potter could participate in a Duel of Satisfaction, or create blood-feuds with those who harm you. Verbal threats aren't as bad. Poaching and stuff like that goes under that category.

“Basically, Hermione. Under House Potter Protection, nobody would mess with you. Because if they did, they'd face House Potter wrath. I'm sure Harry would let everyone in this castle know it too.”

Harry grinned malevolently and nodded. Oh yes, ideas were forming in his mind quite nicely.

“What would have to happen to be placed under House Potter Protection?” Hermione asked.

“Hermione,” Lily said, “You need to put some thought into this. I know there are possibilities where your relationship – which is friendship now – with Harry could go. But right now you're just friends who might be going on a date.”

*Might?* Hermione mouthed soundlessly, questioningly toward Harry.

Harry merely smiled at her, and wished she hadn't caught onto that detail.
“You need to be sure this isn't a decision you're going to regret,” Lily said, “This needs to be a
decision made with your heart and brain in control. Not your hormones.”

Hermione blushed pink. “Even if we only stay friends, why would it matter whether or not I'm under
House Potter Protection, Lady Potter? We'd still be friends. Sure, anyone who really knows me
knows that I would tell you that I believe I could defend and fight for myself. A few days ago, I
would say the same thing. But I've come to a few realizations and revelations about myself. I'm
nowhere near smart or strong enough right now to deal with Pureblood Politics, or Pureblood
Supremacy. And obviously, I'm not ready to defend myself physically given that I was attacked and
defeated before I could even react.”

“As part of the House Potter Protection,” Harry said, “I would help you improve in all of those
categories.”

“And I'd be happy to help,” Sirius said.

Lily sighed. “Well, of course I'd help. This is just a decision that needs thought.”

“No,” Hermione said, “I've already decided. It doesn't matter whether I'm just Harry's friend or... or it
turns to something more. Harry's my friend, and nothing will change that.”

Harry smiled. That gave him some hope.

“Tell me what to do,” Hermione said.

“Me too,” Luna said. “I want this in addition to the Alliance my House has with House Potter.”

“Luna,” Lily said, “I think you should first speak to your father --”

“Daddy has given me permission to make my own decisions, Lady Potter,” Luna interrupted, kindly,
“I think he would approve either way. The only thing he wouldn't approve of is delaying the
decision because I had chosen to get further approval.”

Lily blinked. “Well, I can't find any arguments there. Very well. You take this from here, Sirius. I
just hope we don't come to regret this.”

“Do you have your wands handy, ladies?” Sirius asked.

Hermione picked her wand up from her bedside table. Luna removed her wand from her robes.

“You first, Hermione,” Sirius said, “Harry, you will repeat the words after me, then you will
Hermione. What is your middle name, Hermione?”

“Jean,” Hermione answered.

“Thank you,” Sirius said, “Touch your wand tips with each other.”

Harry and Hermione did so.

In a clear, carrying voice, Harry repeated Sirius' words as he said them. “Miss Hermione Jean
Granger, I, Lord Harry James Potter, Head of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Potter, offer
you the protection of my House. Do you accept?"

Hermione held herself importantly, “I, Hermione Jean Granger, accept the protection of House Potter, my Lord.”

“So mote it be,” Harry finished the vows.

The tips of their wands shone with bright white light, and Harry felt a warmth rise throughout his body, to his extremities. Hermione's eyelids fluttered. Then he did the same with Luna, and felt the same sensation, and Luna mimicked Hermione's movements.

“As Lord Potter, I welcome you to the protection of House Potter, Miss Granger, Miss Lovegood,” Harry said, unguided.

“Wow,” Hermione whispered, “That was... intense.”

“Indeed it was,” said the voice of Albus Dumbledore.

Harry turned toward Dumbledore's voice, as did Hermione, Luna, Lily, Rose and Sirius. Dumbledore, Madam Pomfrey, and the half-goblin Professor Flitwick – Hermione's Head of House, Harry recalled – stood there.

“Were those actions absolutely necessary, Mr. Potter?” Dumbledore asked.

“It is Lord Potter, Mr. Dumbledore,” Harry said, rising to his feet; Dumbledore looked quite shocked and astonished at this news, “And those actions were very necessary, yes. I don't know what kind of bullshit rules and guidelines you have going on in this school, Mr. Dumbledore, but in Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, nobody goes around hexing students! And rarely is there any long-term bullying, because bullying – even simple verbal bullying – doesn't go unpunished for very long! It would appear that Hermione and Luna have been bullied about as long as they have been students here! Did you know about this, sir?”

He pointed to Hermione and Luna's Head of House. “Did you know about this, sir? If you're the same Professor Flitwick Mom, Sirius and Remus told me about, then you've been Head of Ravenclaw House since before they were students here. Are you going to tell me you didn't notice any of the bullying your two students went through?”

“We did notice it, Mist – Lord Potter, excuse me,” Dumbledore said. “But I felt that letting students handle such issues teaches them to be stronger emotionally, mentally, et cetera, et cetera.”

“So you simply let Hermione and Luna handle multiple incidents of bullying,” Harry said, “Until finally, finally, you're here because she was hexed and Stunned? 'Oh, no. A student is in the Hospital Wing! I better make sure it isn't too bad'. You're lucky it isn't too bad. Hermione was Stunned and left in the middle of a corridor. A young teenage girl. A first-gen – excuse me, Muggleborn – who is obviously a target for that reason alone, left Stunned in the middle of a corridor. Something more serious could have happened to her!”

“Lady Potter,” Dumbledore said, “Are you going to stand here and let your son talk to me like this? I thought you raised him better than that.”

“Lord Potter is the Head of the House – my House, Albus,” Lily said. “He has every right to say what is on his mind.”
“And as a mother and her son?” Dumbledore asked.

“I would applaud him for what he is saying to you,” Lily said, “And say I agree with him. Why are you attempting to hush my son up, by speaking to me? Why are you not speaking to him, answering his very good points. Embarrassed to find that he has made some good points, Albus?”

“What has happened is quite unfortunate,” Dumbledore said, “Appropriate steps will be taken, of course --”

“Yes,” Harry said, “Yes, they will. Because you apparently witnessed it, Mr. Dumbledore, you now know that Hermione is under House Potter Protection. Which means everything regarding this incident becomes my business. I want to speak to Mandy Brocklehurst.”

“Mandy Brocklehurst?” Flitwick echoed.

“She's the one who attacked Hermione,” Harry said.

“Proof, Miss Granger?” Dumbledore asked.

“I recognized her voice,” Hermione said.

“I'm sorry, Miss Granger,” Dumbledore said, “That is not enough evidence.”

“Bullshit, Dumbledore!” Sirius exclaimed. “Check her wand for recent spells! Use your Pensieve and get a memory from her! I know you have a Pensieve! Get her to tell you the truth! This is serious business, Dumbledore! Hermione is under House Potter Protection. If your investigation and punishment does not live up to Lord Potter's expectations, he is in his absolutely legal rights to take it over! Harry knows how to handle punishment for those who hurt his friends and those under his Protection. He's well educated in that, Dumbledore. He will take care of it, if you don't.”

Dumbledore sighed and nodded. “Very well. Professor Flitwick, collect Miss Brocklehurst and bring her to my office.”

“Cho Chang, Marietta Edgecombe and Su Li too – do I have that right, Hermione?” Harry asked, looking back at Hermione.

“Yes, my Lord,” Hermione said.

“You have permission to call me Harry,” Harry said.

Dumbledore cleared his throat. “What do those three ladies have to do with this?”

“They attempted a poaching,” Harry said, “They tried to dissuade Hermione from going on a date with me.”

Dumbledore's eyes widened. Harry was quite sure he wasn't reacting to the poaching accusation. It appeared the bullies weren't the only one who disapproved of him going on a date with Hermione. He made a mental note to investigate this later.

“Padma Patil was an apparent witness and helped Hermione with that confrontation,” Harry said, “Bring those girls, and Padma, as well, to your office. I'd like to talk to them, and thank Padma, Ally
“You intend to go to my office?” Dumbledore asked, “I did not invite —”

“Well, invite us,” Sirius said, “All of us. If Lord Potter wants to talk to these girls about these incidents, he has that right, as they are being accused of crimes against those under his Protection.”

“Professor Flitwick, please find the girls in question,” Dumbledore said, “We will meet you at my office.”

Flitwick nodded, turned and left the Hospital Wing.

“Lord Potter,” Dumbledore said, “I hope I can persuade you to change your mind.”

“Mr. Dumbledore,” Harry said, “I hope I can remind you that interfering with House business is a serious offense and can lead to something as serious as a blood feud.”

Sirius and Rose snickered. Lily smiled in approval at Harry. Dumbledore frowned.

“Madam Pomfrey,” Harry said, “Is Hermione cleared to leave this wonderful room you lord over? I wish for her and Luna to accompany us to Mr. Dumbledore's office.”

“Let me check with my patient, Mist — Lord Potter,” Madam Pomfrey said, “Then I can answer that. Give us privacy.”

“I want Luna there with you,” Harry said. “House Potter Protection precautions, you understand.”

Madam Pomfrey looked bewildered at the suggestion, then sighed and nodded.

“I will keep constant vigilance like Professor Moody likes to say,” Luna said

“I'm sure you will,” Harry said.

He stepped away from the bed, as did Rose. Madam Pomfrey closed the curtain around herself, Hermione and Luna.

“You're excused, Albus,” Lily said, “We know where your office is. Is the password still Fizzing Whizbees?”

Dumbledore huffed quietly. Obviously he didn't like being dismissed. He turned and left the Hospital Wing.

“That was quite enjoyable,” Sirius said. “What is his goddamn problem, anyway?”

“I don't think he likes being told what to do in his own castle,” Harry said, “If it were up to him, Brocklehurst and those girls would get away with a slap on the wrist, even though Hermione could have been badly injured or worse. I'm going to make sure they get more than a slap on the wrist, even if I have to stand against Albus Dumbledore on this.”

“I'm not surprised,” Lily said; she crossed the short space between herself, and her son, and hugged him, “I'm very proud of you, Harry. You handled yourself very well. I am sorry I doubted you when it came to House Protection.”
“It's alright,” Harry said, “Thanks for what you said to Dumbledore when he turned the conversation over to you.”

“I knew exactly what he was doing,” Lily said, “He wasn't going to fool me. Thinking he can make me change your mind. Ha bloody ha! I haven't been able to change your mind since I stopped changing your diapers!”

“Mom, language!” Harry said, blushing at the diaper joke, as he backed away, ignoring Sirius and Rose's snickers.

Hermione and Luna exited the curtains, followed by Madam Pomfrey.

“Cleared to go,” Hermione said.

“Excellent,” Harry said, rubbing his hands together, “Let's go make life hell for some bullies.”

Given that the Headmaster's Office was on the same floor as the Hospital Wing, the trip took less than five minutes. Surprisingly, Professor Flitwick and the girls were waiting for them near the guardian. All of the girls looked quite shocked to see Harry, and all but Padma looked rather angry when they noticed Hermione and Luna were with him.

“That was quick, Professor,” Lily said.

“Luckily I caught them all on their way to the Great Hall for lunch,” Flitwick said, “The Headmaster is already upstairs. I was waiting for you, as an – ah – precautionary measure. Fizzing Whizbees!”

The guardian side-stepped, revealing the stairs behind it.

“Go on, ladies,” Flitwick said to the girls behind him.

Harry watched every girl as they started up the steps, wondering which one was Mandy Brocklehurst. It was almost laughably easy to pinpoint her, though. Two of the girls were of Asian heritage, so Harry was able to deduce they were Chang and Li. Padma was obviously the Indian girl. So it was one of the other two. Harry picked the one that glared at Hermione when she headed up the stairs. It was a fifty-fifty chance either way.

When Flitwick followed the students, Harry followed him, leading his group. Soon, everyone was standing in the central floor area near Dumbledore's desk.

“I'm just going to get right to it,” Harry said, deciding to take charge before Dumbledore could, “Alright ladies, do me a favor and tell me who is Mandy Brocklehurst. First girl to point her out might get to go on a date with me.”

Rose and Sirius laughed when all the Ravenclaw girls – including Hermione and Luna – pointed to Mandy. Harry was happy to say he had gotten it right.

“Hermione wins!” Harry said; not that anyone else had a chance – except, perhaps, Luna. Not that he was going to say that, of course.

Hermione grinned, and Sirius snickered.
“Miss Brocklehurst, front and center please,” Harry said.

Mandy frowned. When Professor Flitwick cleared his throat, Mandy stepped away from the group and moved to a more empty part of the floor.

“Do you have your wand, Miss Brocklehurst?” Harry asked.

“Lady Potter!” Dumbledore said, “Please kindly inform --”

“I'm not going to attack her, Dumbledore!” Harry exclaimed, “I just want to know she won't attack me. Does anyone in this godforsaken castle know what common sense means?!”

“It is in my pocket,” Mandy said.

“Thank you!” Harry said, giving a world-weary sigh, “Now, kindly say Densaugeo.”

“What?” Mandy asked.

“You heard me,” Harry said.

“Headmaster,” Mandy said.

“Miss Brocklehurst, do you know who I am?” Harry asked.

Mandy blushed. “Harry Potter, Heir Apparent of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter.”

“Close, very close,” Harry said, “I am Lord Harry James Potter, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter.”

Mandy's eyes widened, as did her friends. Padma merely looked impressed.

“Do you know what I can do as Lord Potter?” Harry asked, “For example, I can place somebody under House Protection. In fact, earlier, I placed Hermione and Luna under House Potter Protection.”

Mandy's expression turned fearful.

“Ah, so you know what that means,” Harry said. “Excellent. Now say Densaugeo.”

“Densaugeo,” Mandy muttered.

“Louder, Miss Brocklehurst!” Harry commanded.

“Densaugeo!” Mandy exclaimed.

“Hermione?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” Hermione said, “It was her, Harry.”

“You hear that?” Harry asked Mandy, “It was you, Mandy. Why am I telling you that? You know it was you, of course. You attacked Hermione! You hexed her and Stunned her, leaving her in the middle of the corridor, where she could have been assaulted in any manner of ways by other
unsavory types aside from yourself!"

"Why are just sitting there, Headmaster?" Mandy asked, "Potter can't do this!"

Harry growled and walked over to Mandy, staring her right in the face. "Oh, I think you'll find I can
do this. Why did you do it? Hmm? Jealous of Hermione, are you? Jealous of a Muggleborn witch far
smarter and far prettier than you? Jealous that I chose her to go on a date with. Jealous that this is the
only time you'll ever get this close to me? That the only memory you'll have of me being this close, is
me being pissed off at you?! Say it, Mandy! Say you did it!"

"I did it!" Mandy said.

Harry grinned and backed away a few paces. "You did it? You did what?"

"I hexed her," Mandy said, "I hexed her and Stunned her and left her there. She deserves it, the little
Mudblood – aah!"

Harry was now a foot away from Mandy, only this time his wand was out and pointed at her face.

"Lord Potter!" Dumbledore growled, "Back away from my student this instant!"

"Sirius?" Harry asked.

"He won't do anything," Sirius said, "I have my wand pointed at him."

"As do I," Lily said.

"Miss Brocklehurst," Harry said, "Not only did you just insult a friend of mine, you said a word that
used to torment my own mother when she was your age. Do you think I am going to just stand here
and let that pass? I don't know how you were raised, but your parents must have done a pretty piss-
poor job if they taught you it was okay to use insults like that. If they taught you it was okay to bully,
and attack somebody unannounced. To look down on others you believe are lower than you.

"I, on the other hand, was taught better than that, Mandy. I was taught how to respect people. I do
respect people. Especially my friends. But I also lose respect for those who don't deserve my respect.
Those like you. I was also raised with my future in mind. A future where I would be Lord Potter. So
I am well aware of what I can legally do to you. Are you?

"Mr. Dumbledore. What's going to be your punishment for her? A slap on the wrist? Loss of points?
One detention? No, don't answer me. You've lost your right to punish her. She attacked someone
under the Protection of House Potter --"

"She wasn't under your protection when Miss Brocklehurst hexed her, Lord Potter," Dumbledore
said.

"Semantics!" Harry growled. "She'd do it again! Or one of her friends would. I have to send a
message here and now! This happens no more!"

"Lord Potter," Dumbledore said, "I believe you are a young man who knows how to show mercy.
And right now I would ask you to prove that to me."

"Mercy? Fine I can show mercy," Harry said, "I'm going to let you choose your punishment, Mandy
Brocklehurst. One month of suspension, out-of-school, from Hogwarts, and expulsion from House Ravenclaw. Or you participate in a Duel of Satisfaction against me!”

Mandy glanced at one of her friends. Harry didn't need to look to know who she was looking at.

“No, no, Miss Brocklehurst,” Harry said, “There will be no replacements, stand-ins, or seconds. So don't even think about pitting me against your Dueling Champion friend. I'd wipe the floor with her, but right now I'm focused on you. You attacked Hermione. So it appears you can duel. Is that your choice? If so, then it would be a public Duel in the Great Hall in front of everyone. Good way to send a message, isn't it?”

Sirius laughed. Harry knew his Godfather had already known his strategy. He didn't want to duel Mandy. He could wipe the floor with her, but he didn't want to. He hoped she'd take Option A. He was just trying to play against her sense of pride and vanity.

“The f-first o-option,” Mandy stammered.

“So mote it be,” Harry said. “You heard her, Dumbledore. I want notification of the punishment being meted out by tonight. If Mandy is still here, and a Ravenclaw, tomorrow, then it is me against her in the Great Hall in a Duel of Satisfaction. I don't think you want to be responsible for Miss Brocklehurst's expulsion from not only Hogwarts, but Great Britain as well, on your hands.”

He probably couldn't do that. Probably. But it was fun to see Mandy's look of horror. Harry turned to Mandy's friends.

“Miss Chang, Miss Edgecombe, Miss Li,” Harry said, “Greetings.”

The three girls winced visibly. They just witnessed the verbal beat-down and punishment of their friend. A punishment not delivered by their Headmaster, but by the young man in front of them. What would happen to them?

“I'm going to seriously hope for your sake you had no prior knowledge of Mandy's attack on Hermione,” Harry said.

Cho, Marietta, and Su shook their heads rapidly.

“Good, good,” Harry said, “That's very good. So you're only guilty of bullying Hermione and Luna – both of whom are under my Protection – for a long period of time. Oh, and then there is that attempt at poaching yesterday.”

The three girls winced again.

“Professor Flitwick,” Harry said, “I'm going to let you decide their punishments. Not Dumbledore. You. Oh, except for one thing. All three girls are no longer Ravenclaws.”

“Lord Potter,” Dumbledore said, “That is too harsh for --”

“Either they're no longer Ravenclaws,” Harry said, “Or I am inviting Hermione and Luna to reside in the Ilvermorny tents from now until we leave. I believe we have another residential tent, don't we, Sirius?”

“Yes, we do,” Sirius said. “Hermione and Luna will be quite comfortable.”
“They can be Ravenclaws, Harry,” Hermione said, softly. “I like the second option better.”

“Are you sure?” Harry asked. “You'll still attend your classes, of course. You'll just be living in the tents.”

Hermione nodded.

“Me too, my Lord,” Luna said.

“I am fine with that, Lord Potter,” Professor Flitwick said.

Harry glared at Dumbledore, who frowned and nodded.

“Then I will leave the punishment for those three to you, Professor Flitwick,” Harry said; he turned back to the three bullies, “Congratulations, girls. Hermione, the girl you bullied for three years, just gave you permission to remain in Ravenclaw. A prime example of who is the better person amongst all of you.”

“Professor Flitwick,” Dumbledore said, “Please escort Miss Brocklehurst back to Ravenclaw Tower so she can collect her things, then bring her back here. Miss Chang, Miss Edgecombe, and Miss Li, you may go down to dinner. You too, Miss Patil.”

“Miss Patil stays here,” Harry said, “I'd like words with one of the Allies of House Potter.”

“Before you go down to lunch, girls, you will speak to me,” Professor Flitwick said, “We will discuss punishments before you go. Follow me girls.”

Professor Flitwick and the four Ravenclaw girls left the office.

“Hermione, Luna, Miss Patil, please come over here,” Harry said.

The three girls did as asked.

“Mom,” Harry said, “Privacy bubble.”

“Only if you promise to behave, Harry,” Lily said, grinning.

“Mom!” Harry gasped; why did she have to embarrass him in front of these girls?!

Sirius snickered. Hermione and Padma blushed visibly. Luna merely smiled dreamily.

“One Privacy Bubble incoming,” Lily said, “Meanwhile, the rest of us will have words with Albus.”

There was a flash of sparkles, and Harry knew the bubble was over them, though they couldn't see it.

“Privacy Bubble,” Harry said, “As you can probably tell, you can't see the bubble, and you can barely hear the voices outside the bubble, but it is indistinguishable muffled sounds. Same goes for inside the bubble too. The downside is we can still be seen – though we're as blurry as they are, so it doesn't help in battle situations.”

“Brilliant!” Hermione exclaimed, “I've never heard of it.”
“Well, no you wouldn't have,” Harry said, “It is my Mom's invention. She's good at spell-crafting in addition to Potions and other talents. She hosts a Spell-Crafting Club at Ilvermorny. Anyway, Miss Patil, it is a privilege to finally meet another Ally of House Potter.”

“I am honored to meet you too, Lord Potter,” Padma said, “And I am interested to know how you've come upon the title so early.”

“Aren't we all,” Hermione quipped.

“Long story, and I'll explain it soon enough,” Harry said, “Which brings us to one of the reasons I wanted to talk to you. Of the remaining members of the Children of the Great Alliance, how many do you know?”

“All of them,” Padma said.

“Excellent,” Harry said. “Then you can do me a favor. Please get in contact with all of them between now and next Sunday. On Sunday, I'm inviting all of the Children of the Great Alliance to my tent, to have a meeting regarding the Great Alliance, and to get to know all of you a bit better.”

Padma blushed, and Harry sighed.

“I meant that in a much more innocent way than it sounded,” he said, shaking his head, “That's what I get for growing up with Sirius Black. Second reason I wanted to meet with you. To express my deep gratitude. Hermione told me what you did for her and me yesterday. You respectfully defended one of your Allies, and Hermione at the same time, and I thank you for that.”

“No big deal,” Padma said, shrugging.

“Yes, it is,” Harry said, “But if that is how you want to look at it, then I will respect that. Third on the agenda. Will you be okay in Ravenclaw Tower? Or do you want the same option as Hermione and Luna? Those tents have three bedrooms after all.”

“I'm fine in Ravenclaw Tower,” Padma said.

“Even with Su Li as a dorm-mate?” Hermione asked.

“My House is Allied with House Potter,” Padma said, “Su Li isn't going to mess with me, not after she just witnessed what went on in here. I'll be completely fine.”

“And that's all I have,” Harry said.

“Aw!” Luna whined, “So there was no reason for your mother to tell you to behave?”

“Luna!” Hermione squealed.

“Well, poo,” Luna said, pouting playfully.

Harry blinked. Did Luna just flirt with him? He wasn't sure one way or another. Luna Lovegood was a confusing young woman!

“Finite!” Harry said.
The bubble popped – figuratively – giving them clear site of the others, and vice-versa.

“You done there?” Lily asked, “Good, so are we. If Hermione and Luna are joining us, we need to go to Ravenclaw Tower, and let them pack. Albus... adieu. And thank you for returning House Potter property.”

Harry blinked at that last declaration. He figured it would be explained soon.

“And do remember what we said to you, Albus,” Sirius said, “You would do good to take it seriously.”

Harry and the girls followed joined Lily, Sirius, and Rose as they left the office.

“Miss Patil,” Lily said, as they headed down the corridor toward the Grand Staircase, “You're welcome to join us or head off to the Great Hall for lunch.”

“We're going to be headed to the Great Hall either way,” Harry said.

“Are we?” Lily asked.

“Yes,” Harry said, “What better time to give an announcement to the whole student body of Hogwarts than during a meal time?”

“I'm not even going to ask,” Lily muttered.

“So what did you mean by House Potter property, Mom?” Harry asked.

“Did you forget the discussion we had with Albus the other evening,” Lily said, “regarding something he borrowed from your father before he died?”

Harry's look of realization made Lily smile. She took a silvery, shimmery fabric from her robes.

Hermione gasped. “Is that... an Invisibility Cloak?”

“This once belonged to my husband, and his father before him,” Lily said, “It has a rich history, but unfortunately, that is a House Potter secret. I am going to pass it along to Harry, as his father would have done. But first...”

Lily waved her wand along every inch of the Cloak. She grumbled and muttered several times.

“Tracking Charms?” Sirius guessed.

“And others,” Lily said, “That goddamned bastard. Sorry, Harry. Can't give it to you just yet. We need to know exactly what Dumbledore did to this.”

“Should have known,” Sirius said, “He gave that to you far too easily.”

“Yep,” Lily said, “And I didn't say a word about it, because I didn't want to give away any indication I suspected what I had.”

The large group went quiet as they headed toward Ravenclaw Tower. When they arrived, Lily and
Rose went inside with the girls to help them, while Harry and Sirius stayed outside.

“So... three girls and you under a privacy bubble,” Sirius said, “Anything happen?”

“Nothing like that happened,” Harry muttered.

“I need to check you for Memory Charms,” Sirius said, “You show symptoms of forgetting everything I ever taught you!”

Harry rolled his eyes and shook his head.

“Pup,” Sirius said, placing a hand on Harry's shoulder and looking – well – serious, “Your father would be goddamned proud of you. I am, proud of you. In the last hour or so, you have shown that you deserve the title of Lord Potter, even at fourteen years old. You commanded the stage in the Hospital Wing, and Dumbledore's Office – both of which are environments which you rarely ever want to tick off the one who lords over the place.

“You handled that confrontation with Miss Brocklehurst perfectly. You got her to admit what she did. Yes, you did threaten her, but you never harmed her. No one could fault you for that. Hell, Alastor Moody, who is currently in this castle, would have applauded your performance. He has been known to do that when he was an Auror, and people respected him for it!

“You were the Judge, Jury and Executioner, and when it comes to House Politics and bylaws, you had every legal right to do what you did and more. Though, I would question that 'expulsion from Britain” bit."

“That was sort of a joke,” Harry said, grinning, “Interesting that Dumbledore didn't question it though.”

“Which means he fears it could be done,” Sirius said, nodding, “Interesting indeed. Anyway, I could tell you didn't want to duel that girl. Probably because you'd wipe the floor with her.”

“Easily,” Harry said, “And I'm not saying that to be cocky.”

“You're saying it because it is fact,” Sirius said, “I know. Even though that Dueling Champion, Li, would put up a spectacular duel with you, you would probably beat her. Brocklehurst wouldn't stand an ice cube's chance in hell. Simply because everything I've taught you, and everything you've learned at Ilvermorny reaches far and above what anybody in this school could do. Hermione was correct to be angry at the substandard education Hogwarts has to offer. I'm angry too. I wish I went to Ilvermorny instead of this bloody school. The experiences outside of class is something I would never want to change, but education-wise, Ilvermorny's where it is at.”

Harry nodded in agreement.

“So... what do you have planned for the Great Hall?” Sirius asked.

“Now, Sirius,” Harry said, “Why would I ruin that surprise?”

“Fine, keep your secrets,” Sirius said, “But promise me one thing.”

Harry looked at him expectantly, wondering if his Godfather was going to go out-of-character, and tell him to be nice.
“Make sure Snape is there first,” Sirius said, “Because I want to see the look on his face.”

Harry merely grinned.

Several minutes later, Harry and company, including Hermione, Luna and Patil – Hermione and Luna with their belongings in tow – arrived at the Entrance Hall. Harry grinned when he heard the loud chatter in the Great Hall.

Excellent.

“Showtime,” Harry said.

Harry led the group into the Great Hall and studied the Head Table. Dumbledore wasn't there. Neither was Flitwick. McGonagall and most of the other staff was there. Including Snape. Good.

None of the Ilvermorny or Beauxbatons students were there, however. Even better. He didn't want to make a show in front of them. They did nothing wrong. They didn't deserve what was about to happen.

Harry pointed his wand to his throat. “Sonorous. Students of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry! May I have your attention!”

Most of the students turned toward him.

“Mr. Potter!” McGonagall exclaimed, standing up. “What is the meaning of this?!”

“Let Lord Potter speak, Minerva!” Sirius yelled.

Now all the students were looking at Harry. McGonagall's eyes were wide as she slowly sat down. Near her, Severus Snape was glaring at Harry. Harry ignored him and walked to the end of the Ravenclaw table. He stepped up to the top of the table.

“I am Lord Harry James Potter,” Harry said, “Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter.”

He raised his hand, so that his House Ring could be seen.

“I have been here at your school for less than two days!” Harry said, “And in that time I discovered something that appears to be a school-wide secret! Which is something that surprises me, given that my mother and Uncles – each of whom were students here at one time – told me that secrets don't get kept long in this castle. Here's the secret!”

Harry glared at the Ravenclaw table.

“THE HOUSE OF RAVENCLAW IS A HOUSE OF BULLIES!” Harry screamed, his voice ringing through the Hall owing to the Sonorous Charm.

There was cries of outrage from much of Ravenclaw table.

“SILENCE!” Harry exclaimed. “Cho Chang. Marietta Edgecombe, Su Li. Stand up and be recognized.”
The three witches stood up immediately, and without hesitation. There were surprised murmurs from those at the Ravenclaw table. Of course they were unaware of what the three girls had witnessed earlier, so they didn't understand why the three girls complied so easily.

But they would. Soon enough.

“Bully! Bully! Bully!” Harry pointed to each of the girls in turn, then waved a general hand, motioning to everyone at the table, “All of you are bullies! All of you at this table! Bullies! Now! None of you may have committed what is usually seen as an act of bullying. At least, by Hogwarts standards that is! Which are pretty piss-poor standards!”

More cries of outrage. Some of the Hogwarts staff were glaring at him.

_Time for a reality check for even the smartest people in this castle, Harry thought._

“Let me tell you this!” Harry exclaimed, “In Ilvermorny, where I come from, ignoring the bullying – letting it happen without reporting it – is as bad as bullying! In Ilvermorny, all of you would be bullies! Every last one of you at this table. This table! And everyone at the Staff Table!”

More glares from the supposedly professional staff members of Hogwarts. Harry couldn't fault them, though, given the current events. Still, they could have set better examples for their students.

“For three years, and a couple of months,” Harry said, “these two lovely girls here --”

He pointed to Hermione and Luna.

“-- have been bullied in Ravenclaw House!” he continued. “Bullied by those three witches who stood up. And another witch who is now suspended from this school for a month – and is no longer a Ravenclaw!”

Much of the Hall gasped as one.

“Mandy Brocklehurst is that witch!” Harry said, he pointed to Hermione again, “Earlier today she hexed Hermione, then Stunned her leaving her vulnerable in the middle of a corridor! Anything could have happened to her! I'm sure you can all use your imagination as to what could have happened to her!”

Some of the witches seated near him went green in the metaphorical gills. McGonagall and many of the Professors stopped glaring. Now they looked horrified. Reactions were the same around much of the Hall.

“Here's another revelation for all of you!” Harry said, “Listen to me, and hear every word I say! Hermione Granger and Luna Lovegood are under the official Protection of House Potter!”

Several students gasped and looked shocked.

“I'm sure many of you know what means,” Harry said, “Especially those of you who are part of a House, be it Minor, Ancient, Noble, or a combination of the above! For those of you who don't know what that means, let me spell it out for you. DO NOT FUCK WITH THOSE UNDER MY PROTECTION! DO NOT FUCK WITH HOUSE POTTER!”
Sirius snickered nearby. Harry would have smiled, but he didn't want to send the wrong message to students of Hogwarts. If he smiled, they probably would believe he was joking, which was far from the truth.

“Here’s your possible punishments if you do,” Harry said, “Duels of Satisfaction between me and those who cross me! And they won't be private. They'll be public! So everyone can witness your embarrassment and your crimes! Another possible punishment: blood feuds! No, I am not joking! And that is just the worst of what I could do to you. Suspension or expulsion from this school, and also being placed in DMLE custody is some of the other possibilities. A few minutes ago, I suspended Mandy Brocklehurst from this school for a month, and kicked her out of Ravenclaw. Not Dumbledore! Not Professor Flitwick! Me! A lowly American citizen who has visited your school for a Tournament. I did it! That is the power I hold!"

Harry jumped back down onto the floor.

“Do not cross me or those close to me,” Harry said, glaring at everyone in the Great Hall. “So mote it be. Finite.”

Harry walked out of the Great Hall, followed by his family, Hermione and Luna. Padma remained behind, but she was all grins as she looked at him. Harry smirked when he heard applause begin from somewhere in the Hall and it only escalated from there.

“You know I have to punish you for your language, Harry,” Lily said; then she hugged him. “There. A hug from your Mom in front of cute girls. Sound punishment.”

Harry merely grinned as Sirius, Rose, Hermione and Luna chuckled.

“I am so very proud of you, Harry,” Lily said.

“Thanks, Mom,” Harry said, “Let's go back to the tents. I have a long discussion with Hermione and Luna that can no longer be postponed.”

Hermione and Luna looked confused. Harry merely smiled. Then his smile turned into a grimace once he turned away from them. He wasn't looking forward to the coming conversation.

Chapter End Notes

Forget what I said a few chapters ago. I believe THIS is the longest chapter so far. And it deserves to be. I am so proud of this chapter. It was so much fun to write.

I know my readers will want to know about Lily and Sirius' talk with Dumbledore. It will be touched upon in a couple of chapters.

I have a confession to make. The Protection Vow and idea – hell, much of this chapter – was inspired by “Angry Harry and the Seven” by Sinyk. If you have not read that story, and want a whole story which inspired Harry's behavior in this chapter, read it!

Next Chapter: The much awaited discussion involving Harry, Hermione (and Luna),
and the subject of Betrothal Contracts. And other stuff.

I hope you liked this chapter!
Of Power, Politics, and Past Girlfriends

Chapter Notes

Thanks for all the response to the last chapter. It made me very happy! There were a few comments on Harry's complete 180 degree turn in the chapter from his behavior in the rest of the story. Hopefully the next couple of chapters will explain why...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sunday, November 1st, 1994

As Harry, Lily, Rose, Sirius, Luna and Hermione headed back toward the grouping of Ilvermorny tents, Sirius told the two Hogwarts students to leave their belongings in the House Potter tent for now. He would set up the tent soon enough, but he and Lily had things that needed to be discussed with Remus.

"Take your time," Hermione said, "It appears we're going to be busy anyway, and I'm far more interested in the conversation Harry has planned."

"You may take your conversation into your bedroom, Harry," Lily said, "But you will keep the curtains opened."

"Mum!" Harry groaned.

"I understand that you wish to have a private discussion, Harry," Lily said, "I do. I will place a Silencing Charm over your bedroom, but the curtains will remain open."

"You should probably agree with your mother, Harry," Luna said, "She has a fine point. You're a young man inviting two young witches into your bedroom after all."

Harry sputtered – it was bad enough his mother had to embarrass him, but now Luna was in on it!

"Fine!" Harry said, "Do what you want!"

"Thank you, I will," Lily said, "And thank you, Luna."

"You're quite welcome," Luna said.

Harry sighed and stepped into the House Potter tent. Remus looked mildly surprised to see Hermione and Luna accompanying them.

"Hello again, Miss Granger," Remus said, "I was quite concerned for you. Luna told me you were attacked earlier. Is everything alright now?"

"Yes, sir," Hermione said, "Thank you for your concern."

Remus smiled, then looked rather confused as he watched Harry leading the two girls into his
bedroom.

“No worries, Remus,” Lily said, “Harry's promised to keep the curtains opened. They're just going to have a much-needed conversation, and so are we. Rose, you're to stay out here with us. Harry's already going to have enough on his hands without you distracting him.”

“Aw!” Rose complained.

Harry smiled and walked into his bedroom with Hermione and Luna. He made sure to keep the curtain open.

“Thank you, Harry,” Lily said, “Silencing Charm up in three... two...”

Harry didn't hear her say “one”, so he knew the Charm was up. He crawled onto the bed and sat down on his pillow, giving the girls enough room to sit down. When he motioned for them to sit down, Hermione went slightly pink, and Luna merely smiled dreamily, but both girls sat down on the end of the bed.

“You put quite a show on in there, Harry,” Hermione said. “Not just in the Great Hall, but in the Hospital Wing and Headmaster Dumbledore's office too. Um... how much of it was you being serious, and how much was – um –”

“-- me blowing smoke out of my backside?” Harry asked.

Hermione glared playfully. “Thank you for that pleasant metaphor, Harry. But I was actually going to say... how much of it was you putting on a show?”

“Well – I suppose to answer your first question,” Harry said, “I would say that I'm never Sirius. I'm always Harry.”

Hermione blinked. It wasn't until Luna started giggling that Hermione finally got the joke.

“Oh, god,” Hermione rolled her eyes, “I do not envy you having to grow up with those kind of name puns! That is horrible! It is borderline child abuse!”

“Perhaps from your perspective,” Harry said, grinning. “Perspective. Now that is a great word. And it helps me answer your question. Depending on the perspective of each person who heard my message, I could have been serious or putting on a show. The whole point of my performance over the past hour or so was that I was sending a message. I am Lord Potter. More-so, I'm a fourteen year old wizard who is now a Lord. Two of the four bullies are older than the others, right?”

“Chang and Edgecombe are fifth years, if that is what you mean,” Hermione said.

“Then they're older than me in age,” Harry said, “That's the point I'm trying to get across. To some people, age is a big factor. To the older students in the Great Hall who were listening to me, at first sight, I probably wasn't going to be a big deal to them. If I just walked in there, walked up to the front of the Great Hall, and gave a speech like I'm Headmaster Dumbledore, I wasn't going to send a message to those who are older than me. Nor would I send a message to those who believe they're stronger or better than me. ‘Hey, it's a fourteen year old with a big mouth and nothing to show for it.' I wouldn't have gotten my point across very well in that case, would I? That would be a pretty piss-poor performance from me.”
“So you had to put on a show,” Hermione said, nodding, “Otherwise, you wouldn't get your point across.”

“Precisely,” Harry said, “You said you wanted to learn about Pureblood Politics, and all of that jazz. That's just one of the lessons. I've never watched a Wizengamot or MACUSA council session, or courtroom session. I think either the sixth or seventh year students in Ilvermorny get to watch Pensieve memories of old MACUSA sessions in Wizarding Politics class. But I have a pretty good imagination. There are two kind of people when it comes to Politics. Those who say something, and those who do something. Anyone can puff up their chests, give a good speech, and look good doing it. But if you don't show something for it, you're not going to be very successful. That is why Voldemort –”

Hermione and Luna both winced visibly. Harry took note of that for later. He didn't want to interrupt his own speech for something as simple as that.

“-- and his Death Eaters were so successful in the Great War,” he continued. “They didn't just walk into the Wizengamot and start yapping jaws, and showing nothing for it. They took what they wanted by force, and command and power.”

“You can't be saying we should follow in their footsteps!” Hermione exclaimed, aghast.

“Of course not,” Harry said. “What they did was sick and cowardly. However, they did send a message. Alright, maybe Voldemort is a bad similarity. The Great Alliance, then. From a simplistic perspective, one could argue that the Great Alliance was a true definition of those who puff out there chests, and talk pompously in a room of Lords, Ladies and Politicians. I would say it is a good argument, only I would add this. Why is the Great Alliance so famous? Why do people recognize it? There were many Alliances, and many powers in the Wizengamot. Why was the Great Alliance so famous? Because they showed power. They spoke, but they also proved that they were a force.”

“But aren't those who seek power considered Dark?” Hermione asked, in a small voice.

“Sirius once told me,” Harry said, “That during the Great War, Voldemort liked to boast on and on that there is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it. My view of power is summed up in a different quote. 'With great power, comes great responsibility.' If you wish to show power, you have to show that you can handle it responsibly. Notice that with all the power I showed today, I never once threw an offensive spell out. I never attacked anyone. The only spells I used enhanced my voice so everyone could hear me, then canceled the charm when I was finished.”

“But you threatened people,” Hermione said, “With Duels and blood-feuds. And you pointed your wand at Mandy Brocklehurst's face.”

“Yes, I threatened people,” Harry said, “But again, there's my point. Threats are just words. Words are not very dangerous, barring, of course, those used in incantations. The danger behind the threats is what people decide to do with them. My threats could have gone absolutely nowhere. But they didn't. People believed that I was serious. Mandy Brocklehurst believed my threats so much that, not only did she hang herself with her own noose, she also decided her own punishment. I didn't want to duel her, Hermione. I wanted her suspended and expelled from Ravenclaw House. That punishment – meted out in front of the three people she calls her friends – was a much more powerful message than defeating her in a duel.

“Notice how Chang, Edgecombe and Li cowered so easily after what I did to their friend? They didn't want that happening to them. Yes, House Protection helped. But again, House Protection is
just words. But the idea behind it is what caused such a reaction in the Great Hall. The idea of what it meant caused fear, and also gave a powerful message. However, saying that, I wouldn't be a very good Protector if I had nothing to show for it. What if I challenged someone to a Duel of Satisfaction and then lost? There goes any messages of power I have – they don't mean nothing if I don't back it up with actions.

"Then there was the students and staff in the Great Hall. Hermione, maybe you haven't realized this. But do you know how outnumbered I actually was in that room?"

"You weren't alone in there, Harry," Hermione said, quietly.

"No," Harry said, "No I wasn't alone. You're right. I had my family who would have helped had wands been turned on me. I had some friends, and House Allies who also might have helped me. But I would still have been outrageously outnumbered. And yet I sent my message across without a wand pointed at me, and nothing more than facial expressions and a few words of outrage and disagreement as opposition. And even though there were those who disagreed with me, I still got the message across. When I walked out, I left to loud applause.

"Nobody will harm you – either of you – ever again. Nobody will bully you. Nobody will insult you. Nobody will attack you. That was the whole point. Well, sorry, I should say almost nobody. There may be a few dimwits in there who didn't completely understand my message. Believe me, girls – none of those who ignored my first message will ignore the next one if they decide to cross any of us. And most of them won't get the same treatment Mandy Brocklehurst did. They already received a first warning. I don't like giving second warnings – it means my first was ignored or not taken seriously."

Hermione nodded, biting her lip thoughtfully. Harry focused on his Occlumency abilities, so certain parts of his body wouldn't embarrass him in front of two girls, both of which were attractive in their own right. How did Hermione not know what she did to him when she did that? And this wasn't in a public library or the Great Hall! This was in his own bedroom!

"Okay," Hermione said, "So I'm beginning to understand. Now that you're Lord Potter, you have privileges that you didn't have before. If you weren't Lord Potter, then --"

"Then your Headmaster would have said a lot more than he did," Harry said, "He would have been able to make several decisions that I don't think any of us would like when it comes to those who bullied you, and when it comes to you in general. And there was very little I could have done about it. Also, I couldn't place you under House Protection."

"But why are you Lord Potter?" Hermione asked. "I was under the impression such titles and responsibilities weren't given unless you were seventeen years old."

"Not seventeen, Hermione," Luna said, "That's just a general assumption, because seventeen is when most wizards and witches are considered of age."

"Of age' is the important thing, not a certain age," Harry said, "You have to be seen as an adult. The Triwizard Tournament was originally meant to be played by Champions who are seventeen years old or older. Those who are of age, considered adults. That was what your Ministry of Magic – the Ministry of the Host School -- decided. But what your Ministry didn't know was that the MACUSA had decided any student of Ilvermorny fourteen and older could be contenders for the Ilvermorny Champion. Your Ministry didn't foresee that a fourteen year old would be made Champion. So when my name was spat out by the Goblet of Fire, in accordance to your Ministry of Magic, I am
“Because the House of Potter originated in Great Britain, it doesn't matter whether or not I'm an American citizen. I was first in line -- heck, the only person standing in line -- for the title of Lord Potter. So when the Goblet of Fire spat out my name, I was considered of age by the laws of magic, Gringotts, and the British Ministry of Magic. Of course, the Ministry could try to appeal the decision. But we could and would fight it, and we could probably win. And as long as I am Lord Potter, I'm going to behave like Lord Potter.”

“So that's why you visited Diagon Alley?” Hermione asked. “To go to Gringotts and confirm that you're Lord Potter?”

“One of a few reasons,” Harry said, “But it was probably the most important.”

He grimaced and cleared his throat. “Unfortunately, while at Gringotts, something happened. Revelations were brought forth. A family secret was revealed that my father, and maybe even my grandfather, didn't know about.”

“What secret?” Hermione asked.

“Before you can understand that, I must tell you this first,” Harry said. “I am not just Lord Potter. I am the Lord of three Ancient and Most Noble Houses, and second-in-line for at least one more. Besides Lord Potter, I am also Lord Peverell and Lord Gryffindor.”

“Gryffindor?!” Hermione echoed; flabbergasted.

“Ooh, Peverell!” Luna said, grinning, “My Daddy will be very pleased to know he is in an Alliance with a descendant of his three idols.”

Hermione blinked, and visibly shook herself from the shock that Harry was Lord Gryffindor – that he was descended from one of the Founders of Hogwarts! She glanced at Luna.

“Sorry,” Hermione said, “Three idols?”

“Cadmus, Antioch and Ignotus Peverell,” Luna said, “The Three Brothers, who inspired Beedle the Bard's Tale. I know I've told you that story before.”

“Yes, yes,” Hermione said, “You've told me the story of the Deathly Hallows. And I told you I don't believe in that rubbish. I'm sorry, Luna, but I don't.”

Harry shook his head. He would have to explain it to her another time. But that time wasn't now.

“Are you familiar with the Last Generation Loophole of the Pureblood Heritage Act, Hermione?” he asked, bringing the conversation back to where he needed it to be.

“Um... I might have seen it referenced once or twice,” Hermione said, “But I ignored it because I'm a Muggleborn, so it doesn't concern me. I do know that the Pureblood Heritage Act was made to preserve magical bloodlines after so many Houses were thought to have gone extinct after the Great War. I know it was also a pretty bigoted law. They were trying to preserve the pureblood bloodlines more than anything else.

“Betrothal Contracts were in a big influx after the Act passed. I think that might have been how
Neville Longbottom and Ginny Weasley became betrothed. And also Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson. Though there has been rumors that the Malfoy-Parkinson Contract could be canceled due to Lord Malfoy's current situation.

Harry felt hope again rise in his chest. “And what are your opinions on betrothal contracts?”

Hermione blew out a breath. “While I understand they are necessary to assure the preservation of magical bloodlines, I also think they’re rather barbaric. They remove free will from so many people who should be able to find love on their own. Finding love – finding someone to spend your life with – it should be a natural choice, and not something that should be made with quills, ink and parchment. I know that a good majority of those contracts were made when those in question were not even old enough to put together coherent sentences, never mind the fact that they weren’t old enough to make their own choices.”

Hermione stared curiously at Harry. “Why do you ask?”

“I will answer that shortly,” Harry said. “One of the most popular sections of the Pureblood Heritage Act is known as the Last Generation Loophole. It has to do with those males who are healthy, and of able mind and body to produce the next generation of Heirs. But not just any particular male in that category. No, those males who have more than one lordship to their name. Someone like me.”

“Wait, stop right there!” Hermione said, “The Act is called the *Pureblood* Heritage Act. It targets Purebloods! Why should that matter to you? You’re a half-blood!”

“No, I’m not,” Harry said.

“Yes, you are!” Hermione argued, “Your father’s a pureblood, and your mother –”

“– is also a pureblood,” Harry cut in.

Even Luna’s dreamy expression had turned to one of complete shock, as she stared at him with wide eyes.

Hermione sputtered. “B-but – she's Muggleborn! There – there was a book on the Fall of House of Potter. I don't know whether or not you know about that. But in the book, it said Lady Lily Potter grew up with Muggle parents and a Muggle sister!”

“Yes,” Harry said, “She grew up with a Muggle family. But she was adopted. Something she didn’t learn until just today.”

And so Harry told Hermione and Luna the same story about the Byrds that Ragnok the Sixth and told him and his family. Hermione and Luna’s jaws had dropped by the end of the story. Hermione was torn between distraught at the fact that Lily’s parents had been so horribly murdered, when they had a very new baby, and shocked that Lily – and her children – were descended by the Founder of her House.

“You – your mother – you’re – Rowena Ravenclaw is your ancestor?” Hermione stammered.

“It would appear so,” Harry said, nodding.

“Descended from Gryffindor *and* Ravenclaw,” Hermione said, “Pinch me. Ow! That was figurative, Luna!”
“I know,” Luna said, grinning, “I just wanted to make sure you weren't dreaming. Though it would be fun to be a part of someone else's dream.”

Harry laughed. “Never, ever change, Luna.”

“So,” Hermione said, slowly, staring at Harry, “Because you're apparently Pureblood, you now have to follow the guidelines of the Heritage Act.”

“Yes,” Harry said, sighing, “Most importantly the Last Generation Loophole. Because I am Lord of three Houses, I —” Harry inhaled and exhaled “— I am required to marry one girl per House. So three witches. But as far as I can tell, only one of those has to be Pureblood. If I don't marry one witch per House, then I can't extend the bloodline for those Houses who I don't have a Lady to represent the House. I would be responsible for it going extinct. Lady Potter, Lady Peverell, and Lady Gryffindor must be three separate women, all of whom are capable of bearing children.”

“But,” Hermione stammered, “That's Polygamy, which is —”

“— legal in wizarding society, Hermione,” Harry said.

Hermione blew out a breath. “Of course it is. Why wouldn't it be? Wizarding society is completely backwards and old-fashioned! So of course Polygamy is legal!”

“There's more,” Harry said.

Hermione huffed. “Of course there is.”

“I still haven't told you the family secret,” Harry said. “My Great-Grandfather, Fleamont Potter, once saved the life of a fellow Lord, thus creating a life-debt. The Lord was named Cygnus Greengrass.”

“Greengrass,” Hermione echoed, “Related to Daphne Greengrass, and her sister, Astoria? The same Greengrass in the Great Alliance?”

“The very same,” Harry said; then he blew out a breath. “Back in my Great-Grandfather's time life-debts were commonly settled with Betrothal Contracts. From what I understand, when the Contract was set forth, one – and maybe both – Lords didn't have children yet. So my Great-Grandfather didn't know the Contract wouldn't become active in his life-time. The Contract was very specific. The eldest son of the House of Potter would have to marry the eldest daughter of the House of Greengrass. Two more Generations passed – all sons, no daughters. Then Daphne Greengrass was born. Then I was born.”

Hermione blinked and frowned. “So you're in a Betrothal Contract with Daphne Greengrass.”

Harry inhaled and exhaled. “Yes. She will become one of my three wives. But here's the rub. I haven't even spoken to Daphne yet. Even if you knew one thing about her, you'd know more about her than I do. Soon enough – though no meeting arrangements have been made yet – I have to meet with Daphne and her parents to set up the details of the Contract. ETA of wedding date, expected number of children, et cetera. More than likely, Daphne and I wouldn't marry until we're at least seventeen, and maybe not until after we finish our education.

“Hermione, this is what I want you to understand. I have no plans in the near future to ask Daphne Greengrass to be my girlfriend. She's only my intended – one of three wives. Hell, she might have a
boyfriend. I have no idea.”

Hermione murmured under her breath.

“Pardon?” Harry asked.

“It is rumored that Daphne Greengrass has a girlfriend actually,” Hermione said. “In the romantic sense. There's been no confirmation though. But it seems like more than just rumor-mongering. Sure, they've been seen accompanying one another in Hogsmeade, but they've been best friends since before they even became students. So they could either on dates, or just normal visits with their best friend.”

Harry blinked. That was unforeseen. And also very, very interesting.

“So... what does that mean for the Contract if – you know – she's a lesbian?” Hermione asked.

“Absolutely nothing,” Harry said, with a snort, “She'd still be required to marry me and give me the required number of children that is agreed in the Contract. It is horrible when you look at it from that perspective, but there you go.”

“So you can't marry her sister instead?” Hermione asked.

Harry shook his head. “Daphne's the eldest daughter, as was agreed in the original Contract.”

“So she doesn't even have to be attracted to you, nor does she even have to fall in love with you,” Hermione said, then snorted. “Figures.”

Harry sighed. “Hermione. I need to know something from you now. How do you feel about all of this?”

Hermione cleared her throat. “You want to know if, after all of this, I am still agreeable on going on a date with you?”

Harry winced at her tone and nodded.

“Let me get this straight,” Hermione said. “You have to marry three women. One of them has to be a Pureblood. So... that's Daphne, so that is taken care of. So the other two wives --”

“Could be Pureblood, half-blood, first-gen – Muggleborn – or No-Maj – Muggles,” Harry said. “The latter is frowned upon, because there is a small chance the children might not be magical. First-gen, or Muggleborn, while also frowned upon, it is for a different reason.”

“Because Muggleborn are frowned upon in general,” Hermione nodded, “So you would be legally allowed to marry a Muggleborn at least. You said you have no plans on making Daphne Greengrass your girlfriend anytime soon?”

“Well,” Harry said, “I would favor courting her at the very least for several months before we get married. But no – I don't intend on doing so anytime soon. Especially if she isn't single.”

“So at this moment in time,” Hermione said, “Even though you're in a Betrothal Contract, you're also single?”
“Very much so,” Harry said.

“And allowed to go on dates with other girls aside from Daphne Greengrass,” Hermione continued.

“Allowed and very willing,” Harry replied. “I would even settle with going out with only one girl, if turned out she'd become my girlfriend.”

Hermione blushed pink. “Harry... I'm still agreeable on going on that date with you.”

Harry blew out a breath and wondered whether or not he had been holding it in since he had gotten wind of his Betrothal Contract.

“But what about the three wives thing?” Harry asked.

“Are you going to ask me to marry you in the near future?” Hermione replied, with a raised eyebrow.

“Of course not!” Harry exclaimed. “I-I mean not that I wouldn't ever think about --”

He stopped when Hermione raised a hand to quiet him.

“Then I have quite a while to think about the – as you put it – 'three wives thing',” Hermione said, “There is no reason to think about it if we're only going on a date. Ask me again if it comes to the point where I'm your girlfriend for several months. I don't want to think about it now, or answer you now, because you wouldn't like my answer... and neither would I... probably. I told you... I've come to realize I know very little about the Wizarding world. I need to learn a lot more about it before I make any decision like that in the future.

“For now, we're going to have a first date. And then we'll see where life goes after that.”

“Brilliant,” Harry said, “This might not be the most appropriate time to ask, but would you be open to moving the first date up a bit. To like... tonight?”

Hermione's eyes widened. “Why tonight?”

“The other Ilvermorny students are going to throw a party in my honor,” Harry said, “An Ilvermorny Champion celebration party. I've already had two of my fellow Ilvermorny students tell me I'm allowed to bring my girlfriend.”

Hermione raised an eyebrow. “So you haven't even known me for forty-eight hours, and we haven't even gone out on a date yet. And there's already talk amongst your mates that I'm your girlfriend.”

Harry winced. “Um.... yes?”

“It appears you have quite the reputation, My Lord,” Hermione commented with an innocent smile. “Just how many girlfriends have you had?”

“Two,” Harry said, then added, “and-a-half.”

“And-a-half?” Hermione echoed, blinking.

“Much like you have Hogsmeade Villages,” Harry said, “Ilvermorny students also have visits to a
marketplace. However, American wizarding marketplaces are far different from British marketplaces. Actually, in this case, Hogsmeade is far better than the marketplace near Ilvermorny. It is a shopping mall, not an open-air market town like Hogsmeade. So all visits are to the wizarding mall. Mind you the mall near Ilvermorny is a three-leveled very large building with everything you can find in Hogsmeade, and probably so much more. The only downside is the lack of the open-air atmosphere.

“Anyway... like Hogwarts, we have once-a-month visits to the mall starting during our third year. So I asked out a girl on a date for the first visit, and by the end of the date, she was my girlfriend. We dated from September to the end of December. Then she went home for Christmas Break. And then when she returned from Christmas Break, I find out from her older sister, whom I also got along with – as a friend, mind you – that the girl cheated on me during Christmas Break.”

“Ouch! That's horrible!” Hermione exclaimed.

“Well, as you can imagine, I broke up with her immediately,” Harry said. “It was an ugly break-up. The usual, you know. Hexes thrown, rumors spread, comments made toward me about the size of certain parts of my body.”

Hermione's jaw dropped, and her eyes bulged.

“Wow,” Luna said, “Your ex-girlfriend was a right bitch!”

Hermione nodded, not bothering to correct her friend about her language. Harry, on the other hand, was rather surprised at his blonde friend's language. He didn't expect that from her.

“Yep,” Harry said, “Don't know where she got that information. I never showed her certain parts of my body! Anyway, I got over it quick enough to have a rebound date on the very next outing to the mall. History repeated itself. I had a new girlfriend by the end of the first date. She remained my girlfriend throughout the rest of the term – and then she broke up with me, and it was far better than the last break-up. Even with the options of Floo Travel, Portkeys, and Apparation, she didn't want to do the long-distance thing during the summer. We lived several hundreds of miles apart.”

“So there's the two girlfriends,” Luna said, “What about the 'and-a-half’?”

Harry smiled. “Ah, yes. Rebecca – or Becky, as she likes to called. I've known Rebecca since we were five years old. She's a No-Maj, a Muggle. She lives basically across the street from my house in Boston, Massachusetts. Close enough where I could go and play with her when I was young, and my mother and Uncles wouldn't ground me for going too far from the house.”

“Aw,” Hermione cooed, “So you were childhood sweethearts?”

“To be sweethearts,” Harry said, “We'd have to be boyfriend and girlfriend at some point in time. Nothing was ever made official. It wasn't until this past summer however, in early July, that I realized just how attractive she was. I admit, I fancied her – still do, I suppose. And I have suspicions that she fancies me too.”

Harry sighed and frowned. “In early July of this year, her grandmother passed away. They had the... the wake or whatever it is called... at her house. Her grandmother visited at least four times a year when I was younger, and I was well-acquainted with her. So I went over to her house during the wake and comforted her. I did what any good friend would do.”

Harry chuckled. “And while I was comforting her, and helping her soothe her grief, she kissed me.
And it is the first time she ever did anything like that. I was surprised, and figured it was the grief playing on her mind. So I backed away, and then she kissed me again. So, I kissed her back. While we never went on an official 'date', and while there wasn't any titles between us, we still did what any young couple did. Held hands, kissed occasionally, spent time together. It lasted until I had to go back to Ilvermorny. I don't even know if she's going to consider continuing all that next summer. My family suspects something happened between me and Rebecca, but they haven't said anything, and nobody at my school knows.”

“Whether or not she was your girlfriend, that was still quite sweet,” Hermione said, smiling, “So this 'reputation' you have – it stems from the two girlfriends you had during your third year – one which ended quite horribly.”

“If I have a reputation,” Harry said, grinning, “it is that I date a girl, and she's my girlfriend at the end of the first date.”

Harry tried not to wince at how bad that sounded. He would have to blame Sirius for that one. It was probably his Godfather's fault.

“I suppose we'll see if your reputation holds by the end of our first date,” Hermione said, echoing Harry's grin.

“This evening?” Harry asked.

“This evening,” Hermione echoed; then peered at Luna, “Will your mates believe both Luna and I are your girlfriends if you bring both of us?”

“If they do, then I'd correct them, and tell them you're my good friends,” Harry said. “And nothing more.”

Yet, Harry thought internally. He was feeling better than he had all day. Hermione still wanted to go on a date with him – and she was actually playfully teasing him about his 'reputation'. That was a very good thing!

“As long as everyone is clear on that,” Hermione said.

“Alright,” Harry said, “I think I'm done with my explanations. Is there anything you two wish to ask?”

“Loads!” Hermione said, eagerly.

Then Luna's stomach rumbled. She giggled. As did Hermione.

“But that can wait for another time,” Hermione said, “Is there anywhere to get lunch around here, or do we have to go back into the school?”

“The classroom tent is also the cafeteria,” Harry said, “Which might be occupied with the other students still planning my celebration.”

“Well,” Luna said, smiling. “We could always go to the Hogwarts Kitchens.”

“Luna,” Hermione said, sighing, “They're off-limits to students.”
Harry's eyes brightened. “If they are, then that rule changed in the years since my parents went here. My father and his friends broke curfew at least once a week just to visit the kitchens. I'm game! Take us to the kitchens, Luna!”

Hermione looked disapprovingly, but when she saw Harry looking eager, she gave in and agreed.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished! I hope you enjoyed the conversation. I was trying to be very delicate with the topics in this chapter. Especially Hermione's reaction.

The story of Rebecca has some possible minor importance. She could very well be the OC American love-interest if I decide to go that route. Yes, she's a No-Maj, but if she becomes a major part in the story, she'll get quite the introduction to magic. But... I am still up in the air for where the events will go for the post-graveyard future of this story. So many thoughts whirling through my brain about possibilities. Rebecca's only one of them.

Next Chapter: Lily, Sirius, Remus and Rose's discussion that went on during Harry, Hermione and Luna's discussion in this chapter. Also Dumbledore and Snape plots! Harry, Hermione and Luna's lunch in the kitchens will be briefly shown in two chapters! As will the Ilvermorny celebration!
Author's Note: The first half of this chapter takes place while Harry, Hermione and Luna are having their chat, as seen in Chapter 12.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Previously on “The Ilvermorny Champion”...

Remus smiled, then looked rather confused as he watched Harry leading the two girls into his bedroom.

“No worries, Remus,” Lily said, “Harry's promised to keep the curtains opened. They're just going to have a much-needed conversation, and so are we. Rose, you're to stay out here with us. Harry's already going to have enough on his hands without you distracting him.”

“Aw!” Rose complained.

Harry smiled and walked into his bedroom with Hermione and Luna. He made sure to keep the curtain open.

“Thank you, Harry,” Lily said, “Silencing Charm up in three... two...”

Sunday, November 1st, 1994

Lily waved her wand in a complex pattern and placed a modification of the known Silencing Charm around Harry's bedroom. It was a combination of Silencio, Muffliato – which she had learn from her childhood friend, Severus Snape – and the Privacy Bubble. Unlike the Privacy Bubble, you could be seen behind the modified Silencing Charm, but not heard. Perfect for mothers who want to make sure their sons behave with two girls in their bedroom, but also want to respect their privacy – at least when it comes to conversations.

“... one,” Lily said.

She smiled when she couldn't hear Harry's conversation, but could see him and his friends. They were separated at a comfortable and appropriate distance from each other. Harry might have argued about such things, but Lily knew he was only doing it because he thought she was embarrassing him in front of his friends. She might have been, but she was also being a mother.

Because that is what she did best.

“Rose, you can join our conversation,” she said, then she motioned to the living room area, “But
please be seated one of the couches or seats over there. It appears Remus isn't finished dismantling the dangerous letters, and I don't want you anywhere near them.”

“Yes, Mom,” Rose said, then sat down on the rocking chair.

“Lily,” Remus said, glancing at Harry's bedroom, “Are you sure you trust your son in his bedroom alone with two girls?”

“He might have been raised by Sirius,” Lily said, as she and Sirius joined Remus at the kitchen table. “But he was also raised by you and I. He knows how to respect girls, and knows the limits when it comes to girls in his bedroom.”

“Oi!” Sirius complained, “I believe I've been insulted!”

“You have,” Remus quipped, with a grin, “And I suppose I must agree with you, Lily. As long as we can keep an eye on him and the girls.”

Sirius snorted. “I didn't see either of you complaining every time Rebecca visited the house last summer.”

“You know full well I made sure Harry and Rebecca were where one of us could always see them,” Lily said.

“Not when he was over at Rebecca's house,” Sirius said, grinning.

“I trusted Rebecca's parents to take care of that part,” Lily said. “Besides, none of us can be sure what Harry and Rebecca were doing. For all we know, they still think the other has cooties!”

Sirius snorted. Loudly. “Really, Lily? Last summer... after Harry had two girlfriends in two terms of school... you think he still believes girls have cooties!”

“Harry didn't know those girls since he was five, Sirius,” Lily said, “Not like Rebecca. Friends from childhood act differently.”

“Oh, really?” Sirius asked, “Because I know for a fact that Snape didn't think you had cooties!”

“I'm not discussing Severus with you, Sirius,” Lily said. “Especially in front of my daughter.”

“You've told me about Severus, Mom,” Rose said.

“Not everything,” Lily said, “Some things will have to wait until you're older. Sirius, we have far more important things to discuss right now, not to mention we have to catch Remus up with everything we witnessed while we were in the castle. And we have this mountain of letters to go through. Now behave or I'm tying you up in that chair, placing you under a Privacy Bubble, and setting all the Howlers we receive on you – one at a time!”

Sirius pouted. “You play unfair, Potter.”

Lily smirked. “I think after more than two decades of knowing me, you'd know that already, Black.”

Remus cleared his throat. “I'm quite interested in hearing about what you witnessed in the castle. Sounds pretty important.”
Sirius snorted again. “Words won't express what we witnessed in the castle in the past hour, Moony. Not enough to give it the credit it deserves.”

“Well, we're going to have to try,” Lily said, glancing again at Harry's bedroom, “Because we don't have time to visit our Pensieve. Not right now anyway.”

“Come on,” Sirius said, “We could give Harry and the girls the privacy they deserve. They won't even know we're gone!”

“No, Sirius,” Lily said, glaring at Sirius.

Remus caused a distraction by eliciting a loud grunt. “Merlin, that has to be the sixth envelope with undiluted bubotuber pus we received already. And the third one with an exploding hex on it.”

“Let me guess,” Sirius said, “Open the envelope, and the pus explodes everywhere – on your hands and face. I might have to check whether or not dear cousin Bellatrix is still in Azkaban. She loved those types of letter-hexes.”

“Yeah, well, the trend seems to have gotten popular sometime in the past thirteen years,” Remus muttered. “Even after dismantling the exploding hex, you still get the rancid smell of the pus. Distract me from this for a few minutes. Tell me what happened in the castle.”

So for the next ten minutes or so, Remus sat there in various stages of expressions – shock, disbelief, humor, pride – as Lily, Sirius, and occasionally Rose, commented on what had happened over the past hour in Hogwarts. He did not comment or ask questions until they were finished.

“So... it was Harry's idea for the House Protection toward those two girls?” Remus asked, as he nodded in the direction of Harry's bedroom.

“Yes,” Lily said, “At first I thought it was an immature reaction. You know, something he wanted to do just because he is now Lord Potter. But he really put a lot of thought into this, Remus. He must have been thinking about his entire strategy between the time we left the tent with Luna, and arrived at the Hospital Wing. Then he simply modified his ideas to work with the current situations.”

Lily chuckled and shook her head. “I don't think James would have ever been able to do that. He was fairly good with battle strategy. Harry and I – and Rose – would have never survived that Halloween night if James wasn't good at battle strategy – he was the brains behind Operation GTFO. But thinking up a strategy involving crime and punishment, and then adapting for things he didn't expect or foresee? James couldn't have done that as efficiently as Harry.”

Sirius nodded. “I agree with that. The pup impressed me in there. Hell, in Dumbledore's office, he foresaw Dumbledore opposing him – remember, when Harry threatened Mandy after she said that word? He pointed his wand at Mandy's eyes, and Dumbledore thought he was going to attack her. Harry commanded you and I, Lily, to take offense against Dumbledore – commanded, as if it was second nature. And he's never done that before! To him, he might have thought he was asking us to do it, but it was a command more than a question.”

“I'm not surprised that Dumbledore thought Harry would curse the girl, especially if she said that word in front of him,” Remus said, “We all remember how James reacted to that word. Obviously Albus thinks Harry is just like his father.”
“He may look like James,” Lily said, “But he's also a combination of the three of us, because of what we taught him.”

“Yes,” Remus said, smiling, “Yes, he is.”

Lily sighed, sadly. “We have to face the facts. Harry's no longer the timid little boy who doubted himself when we told him of his future as Lord Potter. Today he is Lord Potter. And not just because he was given the title. When he heard his friend was attacked – I saw a change in him I've never seen before. I saw my son turn into Lord Potter, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter. And I watched him as he commanded the presence of every person he spoke to today. But... he also took care to listen to our advice, be it good or something that criticized him. Even against the criticism, he held himself well and argued well. True, he may have used some rather uncouth language at time, but most of it was to get his point across. I would do the same thing in his position.”

Sirius and Remus nodded.

“Hear, hear, Lily,” Sirius said, “He may be even more suited to the title of Lord than I am, and I'm over two decades older than him!”

Remus cleared his throat. “If I may, I think we are overestimating Harry, actually.”

“Really?” Sirius asked.

“Harry's always been defensive of his friends and family,” Remus said, “It is in his nature. But we have no idea how he is in front of a force like the Wizengamot. We can't raise our expectations of him just because of one impressive outing as Lord Potter. He has strengths, but I've also found weaknesses. Like James, Harry easily loses his temper – that is evident if what you said about his scenes in Dumbledore's office, and in the Great Hall live up to my imagination. I'll, of course, know if I'm right when I view your memories of it in the Pensieve.

“There's also one other thing. Something neither of you might have thought of, and neither of you will like. It sounds to me as if he was targeting not just the bullies, or those who ignored the bullying – but everyone. Even the ones who would have had no chance to witness the bullying. According to you, he was telling everyone not to mess with him.”

Remus sighed. “Some people will think of him as the bully because of his performance. I know you don't like to talk about some of the things that went on here during our days as students. I could peek my head out of the tent, and look at the exact spot where that confrontation with Severus took place after our OWL exams.”

Lily shuddered. She didn't like to think about that event. It was bad for everyone involved. Lily peered over at Rose, who was looking at their conversation with curiosity. They had told her much about their time at Hogwarts – including some of the Marauders' antics, some of which could be seen as bullying. But they hadn't told Rose yet about that event between Severus Snape, James, the Marauders... and her. They had only been able to tell Harry as recent as the previous summer. And his reaction to it was so bad, they had decided not to tell Rose yet. Harry's reaction to Mandy Brocklehurst's use of that word showed that it still affected him.

“We know what bullies are,” Remus said, “Because we used to be the bullies. From what you told me, Harry's toeing the line between bullying and Protecting.”
Sirius frowned. “He did go a bit overboard, I do admit. He sent his message across well, but there was a bit of grandstanding – and, okay, maybe bullying, in there too. Stuff like that isn't very welcomed in settings like Wizengamot Councils.”

“No,” Remus said, shaking his head, “No, it isn't.”

“Then that is what we will teach him,” Lily said, “He still has a lot to learn, and we'll teach him. We'll study, through our memories in the Pensieve, all of his actions that took place in the castle, then we'll sit down and give him the pros and cons of it. We'll treat it just like any other lesson we had with him and Rose when we taught them about Pureblood Politics and all of that as they were growing up.”

“I agree,” Remus said, nodding, “It will give us a better idea of his mind-set when it comes to his new position.”

Lily and Sirius nodded in agreement. Rose merely watched her mother and Uncles' discussion with interest.

“Next subject,” Lily said, “We need to seriously discuss Albus Dumbledore.”

“Uh-oh,” Remus said, “What happened?”

Lily reached into her robes and retrieved the Invisibility Cloak. Remus' eyes sparkled.

“James' Invisibility Cloak,” Remus said, “So Albus had it?”

“Well,” Lily said, “He had it today.”

“You think someone else had it aside from Albus?” Remus asked.

“On Friday evening,” Lily said, “When I asked Albus to give me James' Cloak, he said he didn't have it close by. Tell me, Remus – if you were Albus, and you had this Cloak in your possession, where would you put it – especially during the school term?”

“In my office,” Remus said, “Or the Living Quarters.”

“Given that his Living Quarters are in upstairs from his office,” Sirius said, “Which, mind you, can be entered from his office, that is pretty 'close by', isn't it?”

“So someone else had it,” Remus asked, “Who? Severus?”

Lily passed the Cloak over to Remus. “Use those heightened wolf senses of yours.”

Remus took the cloak, pressed it against his nose and inhaled.

“I smell Albus on it, of course,” Remus said, “And yourself. And someone else who seems... slightly familiar.”

“Could it be Neville Longbottom?” Sirius asked.

Remus slowly nodded. “That is why it seems familiar. It smells a bit like Frank Longbottom, so it makes sense it would be Neville. Neville had this in his possession?”
“It would appear so,” Lily said, frowning. “Albus had no right to give it to anyone else.”

Remus rubbed his chin. “If anyone had the right, it was Neville.”

“Excuse me?” Lily asked.

“Lily,” Remus said, “Albus thought you and Harry were dead. If he couldn't give it to you, who better than to give it to your godson? Sirius and I were 'missing' according to the word around here. So he couldn't give it to us. So he gave it to Neville as an Inheritance of sorts. A gift from his godmother.”

Lily sighed. “Well, I suppose I can see your point there. Fine, fine, I can't blame him for that. What I can blame him for though is at least two things. That Cloak is riddled with several different Charms that we will need take a look at. Tracking Charms and others.”

Remus nodded as he looked at the Cloak. “We shall be able to detect all the Charms and do away with them. Let's not discuss those Charms until we find them. And the other issue with Albus?”

“I could detect disapproval of at least two things from Albus when it came to Harry,” Lily said. “Albus didn't like that Harry's already Lord Potter. And he doesn't like that Harry's going on a date with Hermione.”

Remus nodded and looked thoughtful. “In the case of his disapproval about Harry's new title, well... perhaps he just believes Harry isn't old enough, mature enough, to be Lord Potter. That just comes back to him not knowing Harry. There's a lot of people who are going to be of the same mind-set, Lily.”

“While I agree with you, there has to be more to it than that,” Lily said.

“There probably is,” Sirius said, “Chilled Butterbeer, anyone?”

“Ooh, me, me!” Rose said.

Remus and Lily nodded. Sirius summoned four ice-cold butterbeers from the ice chest, and handed them around. Rose took hers then returned to her seat.

“As for Albus' disapproval of Harry dating Miss Granger,” Sirius said, “I think we can blame that on the Pureblood Heritage Act.”

“One problem, Sirius,” Remus said. “Harry isn't a Pureblood. The Pureblood Heritage Act is for Purebloods.”

Lily and Sirius peered at each other. Remus took a long sip from his butterbeer.

“Actually,” Sirius said, “He is. Lily discovered something at Gringotts today. She's adopted. She's actually a Pureblood.”

Remus turned his head just in time, because he spat out his butterbeer in surprise. Sirius and Rose laughed.

Remus coughed and stared at Sirius, then Lily.
“He's joking with me,” he said, “Right, Lily?”

“Nope,” Lily said, “I am the daughter of two purebloods who were kidnapped – apparently at St. Mungo's on the day I was born, then – and this is guesswork by Ragnok – tortured, interrogated and murdered. According to Keeper Ragnok, they were murdered by mercenaries working for Tom Riddle – also known as Voldemort.”

“Voldemort hired mercenaries?” Remus asked, “Why?”

“Because he was hunting Founder's artifacts,” Lily said, “You see, my father was descended from Rowena Ravenclaw.”

Remus coughed again. “What? Okay, I'm just going to stop drinking this until you're done with the surprises. Are there any more surprises?”

“Yep,” Lily said, “Harry's Betrothed to Daphne Greengrass due to a Life-Debt Betrothal Contract between James' Grandfather, and the Lord Greengrass at the time. The Contract requirements weren't met until Harry and Daphne were born.”

“And then there's the fact that – since he is the Lord of three Houses – Harry has to marry three wives thanks to the Last Generation Loophole,” Sirius said,

Remus coughed again. Loudly.

“Uncle Moony?” Harry asked, “Are you alright?”

Harry, Hermione and Luna had stepped out of his bedroom.

“He's fine, Harry,” Lily said, “We've just told him about some of the news we learned at Gringotts.”

“That would do it,” Harry muttered, then he cleared his throat. “Hermione, Luna and I just realized we haven't had lunch yet. So Luna's taking us to the Hogwarts Kitchens.”

Sirius grinned. “A lunch date with two girls?”

Lily pointed her wand at Sirius, and hit him with a minor stinging hex. He yelped in pain.

“You can go,” Lily said, “As long as you bring Rose with you.”

“Fine,” Harry said.

Rose squealed and followed her brother and their friends toward the door of the tent.

“Behave!” Lily said, in a sing-song voice to her children.

“We will!” Harry and Rose said in unison, before they left the tent with the girls.

Remus cleared his throat and looked between Lily and Sirius.

“I think you two need to explain everything to me,” Remus said, “And I mean everything!”
Lily and Sirius grinned at each other, then started in on their tale about their visit to the Leaky Cauldron and Diagon Alley.

**Albus Dumbledore's Office – Half-an-hour later**

Albus Dumbledore sat down in his comfortable leather chair, at his mahogany desk, with a tired sigh. His Potions Master and Spy, Severus Snape was standing near his Pensieve staring at it. Albus and Severus had spent much of the past hour inside the Pensieve, watching Albus’ memories of Harry Potter’s confrontation with him in the Hospital Wing, and the whole fiasco with the seven Ravenclaw girls in that very office. Also, Albus watched Severus’ memory of Harry’s outburst in the Great Hall. Albus was quite glad he was not there to have witnessed it first-hand.

When he woke up that morning, Albus had not predicted how bad his day would get, and it was only in the early afternoon! The only thing he had predicted was that he would be meeting with Lily and Harry Potter, in order to give them back the Invisibility Cloak. That task was done. However, it had not happened how he had wanted it to. He had planned a nice sit down meeting, where he would give them back the Cloak, explain to them why he had given it to Neville Longbottom, then he’d try to figure out what their intentions were for Neville Longbottom.

Then if he felt the conversation was going his way, he would have told them about the Prophecy. He couldn't know where the conversation would take him afterward, because it was hard to predict. Even then, his plans had all gone down the toilet! He was now going to have to work harder to get Lily and Harry Potter's trust. He knew from Harry's behavior toward him today, that the boy did not trust him at all. There was no way he'd be able to speak to them about the Prophecy anytime in the next few days.

But there were several months before they had to return to America. He had plenty of time.

His bad day had begun when Madam Pomfrey had written him a note telling him Ravenclaw fourth year Hermione Granger had been attacked by somebody, with a Teeth-Growing Hex and a Stunner. She was alright, with no major injuries, nothing Madam Pomfrey’s able hands and skills couldn't fix. But Albus had wanted to visit her anyway, so he talk to her and see if she knew who attacked her. If it was a Slytherin, or an important child of a Pureblood family, Albus wanted to convince her that she wouldn't press charges, nor would she raise a fuss with their foreign guests. Especially Harry Potter or his family – Albus was aware of Granger's growing friendship with Harry Potter.

Albus should not have been surprised when he found Professor Flitwick waiting for him near the Hospital Wing. Nor should he have been surprised to find the Potter family, Sirius Black and Luna Lovegood in the Hospital Wing. After everything he had witnessed concerning Hermione Granger over the past couple of days, he should have predicted this.

What he couldn't have predicted was that he'd be walking in on Harry – now Lord Potter – performing a House Protection Vow with Hermione Granger and Luna Lovegood, with the aid of Sirius Black.

“How the bleeding hell is Lily's son Lord Potter?” Severus asked, unaware Albus' were moving along similar paths. “He's fourteen years old! The brat shouldn't have gained the title yet!”

“The Triwizard Tournament originally accepted those students considered of age and adults,” Albus said. “I now realize there was no time to change the Goblet of Fire from not recognizing Harry Potter as of age due to his involvement in the tournament. As an adult recognized by the laws of magic, so
too would Gringotts recognize this, and they would contact Harry about him being Lord Potter. Obviously Harry and his family spent time in Diagon Alley and Gringotts this morning going over the terms of him taking on his title.”

Albus' eyes widened. How did he not realize this? If Harry Potter received a notice from Gringotts concerning Lord status, then either Neville Longbottom, or his Gran, Augusta, would receive the same thing. Neville fell under the same loophole Harry did! That was not good. Neville was angry with him. If Neville became Lord Longbottom, there was a chance the boy would remove his House from his Alliance – and possibly ask Lord Potter to return to the Great Alliance. Albus could not afford that. He needed to nip this in the bud before Neville went to Gringotts.

But first he needed to finish his discussion with Severus. Somehow he knew the conversation wasn't nowhere near over.

“So Lily's son is Lord Potter,” Severus muttered. “Obviously the brat has already decided to bandy about and play with his Lord privileges. House Protection with a Muggleborn? Overriding your privileges of Headmaster toward student to punish said student. Using his privileges to threaten and bully the whole student body and staff that if they challenge him, he'd start blood feuds and Duels of Satisfaction with all of them.”

Albus winced. He didn't need to be reminded of all of that. Only minutes before he had met with Severus, he had finished up being host to the parents of Mandy Brocklehurst. He had invited them to his office through his Floo Network – something he had the power to do. Mandy had ranted to Albus that he needed to overturn Harry's decision in a way where she wouldn't have to be in a Duel of Satisfaction. The Lord and Lady Brocklehurst were actually supporting Lord Potter's decision – this shocked Albus greatly. They agreed to the one-month out-of-school suspension, and to their daughter's removal from Ravenclaw.

Lord Brocklehurst had been furious with his daughter when he had heard that she tried to poach the new Lord Potter. He ranted to his own daughter how Lord Potter could not only ruin Mandy, but their entire House if he wanted to. Mandy had been horrified to find that her father was embarrassed by her. She left Albus' office with her parents looking extremely downtrodden. Albus had offered the Brocklehursts to leave through the Floo. But Lord Brocklehurst wanted his daughter to take a walk of shame out of Hogwarts.

This left Albus wondering what Miss Brocklehurst's attitude would be like when she returned. He also wondered which House she'd be chosen to go to, since she couldn't go to Ravenclaw.

“Obviously Potter has learned a lot from his father's friends, Black and Lupin,” Severus continued, “Especially Black. Lord Potter's attitude was likely inspired and coached by Black. It is just what he'd do while he was a student here, Albus. Create a fuss in the Great Hall. Notice that Black silenced Minerva when she tried to stop Potter. Attention-Seeking Black helping Attention-Seeking Potter.”

“And what about Lily?” Albus asked, peering at Snape through his glasses.

“What about Lily?” Severus echoed through his teeth.

“Did you simply decide to ignore Lily's actions toward me in the Hospital Wing?” Albus asked. “How she beat down my request to silence her son, and even encouraged him? How about in this very office? She pointed her wand at me, allowing her son to threaten Miss Brocklehurst with his. And she did it at Harry's command.”
“He asked Black to do it!” Severus said, “And Black did as the brat wanted, because he loved the opportunity of being an Attention-Seeker. Black hasn't changed since his days as a child and he's taught his best friend's spawn to act like he did... and still does!”

“No, Severus,” Albus shaking his head, “He might have been posing a question, but I could easily see it as a command, even if he did not. He commanded Black, and Lily followed in suit. Lily never admonished him once. Not even when he used uncouth language – which I'm sure she's against as all mothers are when their children use such words – did she admonish him the Great Hall. She stood there beaming at him, thrilled by what she saw.”

Albus didn't voice his suspicions that Lily might have admonished her son once they were out of the Great Hall. In the Great Hall, she may not have wanted to embarrass her son during his moment. But afterward... well, she was a mother, after all. Mothers never liked when their children used such uncouth language.

“I am aware of that last fact,” Severus said, “I was watching her so I wouldn't have to watch her brat!”

He sighed and pinched his nose. “What irks me is that I can't blame Black and Lupin for her behavior, because she would never let them change her behavior. Which only means she approved of whatever her late husband's friends taught her son over the last thirteen years.”

Severus clenched his fists and stared at the empty floor where Harry Potter and several others stood earlier that morning.

“Potter's actions toward Brocklehurst,” Severus muttered.

“What?” Albus asked.

“Potter was surprisingly low-tempered during much of his confrontation with Brocklehurst,” Severus said, “Until she uttered that word. Then he moved faster than he had elsewhere in the memories, and his wand was pointed at her eyes. Then he told her... Merlin-be-damned! He knows!”

“What?” Albus asked again.

“Lily told her son,” Severus seethed, “Sometime in the past thirteen years she told him about that day my friendship with Lily ended. She told her son about the moment I called her that word after being bullied by James Potter and his friends! She told him!”

“Are you so surprised?” Albus asked, “Perhaps it was recent when she knew Harry would be coming here. Perhaps, she, and her husband's friends told him and her daughter all about their days at Hogwarts and some of the people they would meet such as you and me.”

“Do you think she told him,” Severus said, in a soft voice, “Of how I... felt about her? I know she knew of my feelings for her.”

Albus raised an eyebrow. Felt... or feel, Severus? Present or past tense? Albus sighed. Severus always went beyond his reach to deny his greatest strengths.

“It is possible, of course,” Albus said.
Severus clenched his fists again. “What are you going to do about Potter gaining the title of Lord and Head of his House?”

Albus stared at Severus. “I don’t follow you.”

“Come on, Albus,” Severus said, “You can't tell me you're alright with Lily's son being Lord Potter. He stood in the Hospital Wing and in this very Office – your Office! – telling you what to do. Something – I can admit – he has the right to do because he is Lord Potter and those under his Protection were being harmed and bullied. He suspended one of your students for a month, and expelled her from Ravenclaw! He nearly expelled three others from their House, and would have done so if Granger hadn't decided to she wanted to join Potter in his tents. Four purebloods, punished by Potter because they bullied a Muggleborn! You wouldn't just sit here and let that happen! Especially since he overruled you meted out punishments which is your job! What, Albus, are you going to do about it?”

Albus sighed and pinched his nose. “The Wizengamot is the only capable power that can prevent Harry from taking his title before he turns seventeen. The Light Alliance – even those who vote with me when it comes to laws and decisions I want made and passed – aren't going to stop him, because he's bringing back another vote on their side!”

And possibly more than one depending on how many Houses he is now Lord of, Albus thought internally.

“As much as I'd like to, I can't vote against Harry,” Albus said, “Nor can I convince my Allies too. Not only would I lose his and Lily's trust to the point where I wouldn't be able to get it back, it would bring questions forward I can't answer! The same goes for those in the Neutral Alliance who ally themselves with the Light when it comes to votes and decisions!”

Which is why I need to get to Augusta Longbottom and convince her to deny Neville's adult status, Albus' internal thoughts continued.

“So Potter is going to run amok around Hogwarts whenever something doesn't go his way,” Severus said, “The little hypocrite is going to bully everyone, even though he rants on and on about punishing bullies! Simply because he is Lord Potter. Granger and Lovegood are untouchable. How many more students will be under House Potter Protection by the end? The Children of the Great Alliance? Two of which are my Slytherins, Daphne and Astoria Greengrass. Do I need to tell you what my Slytherin students will do if the Greengrass sisters fall under House Potter Protection! Do I, Albus?

“One wrong move that any student does to anyone connected to Potter, and we're going to have Duels of Satisfaction in the Great Hall! Do you really want this to happen in front of the Ilvermorny and Beauxbatons Students? The Ministry representatives? The media? We're lucky none of them were in the Great Hall!”

Albus sighed. He needed to stop Severus' rants before he got going. He couldn't delay urgent meetings any longer.

“I will strive to take care of all of it, Severus,” Albus said, “I assure you.”

Severus huffed. “Maybe we'll get lucky, and Potter will die in the First Task.”

Albus frowned. “That crosses the line, Severus. I thought you wanted to mend your friendship with
his mother. What if she got wind of that?”

Severus winced visibly. Albus smirked – he knew exactly how to hurt even the hardest of brick walls when he wanted to.

“Food for thought,” Albus said, “You may be excused. I am very busy today, and cannot be a gracious host any longer.”

Severus nodded, then turned, his cloak billowing as he walked over to the door. Before Severus could open the door, it opened by itself. Minerva McGonagall stepped inside. Albus groaned under his breath. He couldn’t meet with Minerva! He needed to contact Augusta! Severus left the office, and Minerva walked over to her.

“I assume Severus was here to inform you about the incident in the Great Hall?” Minerva asked.

“Yes, Minerva,” Albus said, “In fact, I viewed the scene in my Pensieve, so you don’t need to tell the story to me. I assume you agree with Severus on the matter when he says Harry – Lord Potter – was being too harsh in the Great Hall? I saw how he called you and the rest of the staff bullies. Severus went as far as to call Lord Potter a bully.”

“Harsh he may have been, Albus,” Minerva said, “But he brings up some pretty good points. We’ve been ignoring bullies and other similar issues for far too long. Nearly the entire student body was in the Great Hall to hear Lord Potter's tirade. By dinner, everyone will be talking about it. Several students applauded Lord Potter! Many think he has very good points!

“We'll be lucky if the issues of bullying aren't voiced in the Daily Prophet in tomorrow's edition! Students are also wondering just how different Ilvermorny is than Hogwarts. Whether or not – if you believe it – Ilvermorny is better than Hogwarts! We're lucky the Beauxbatons students weren't there to witness the scene!

“Albus, we need to do something about the bullying and the other issues. I had terrified Gryffindors meeting with me since Lord Potter's tirade, afraid they had done something, or could do something, that would put themselves in a Duel of Satisfaction or a blood feud with House Potter!”

Albus pinched his nose. He was getting a migraine. “I am very busy right now, Minerva. Call a Staff meeting for tonight after dinner. We'll discuss it there.”

Minerva huffed. “Oh yes. We will most certainly discuss it there.”

She turned and walked out of the office before Albus could officially excuse her. Albus groaned, stood up and walked over to his Floo.

Hopefully his meeting with Augusta would go better than the last few hours of his day had been.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished. I had a couple reviewers telling me “Harry's a bully”. (One even went
as far as to say Dumbledore wasn't the villain in the Headmaster's Office scene in the previous chapter. It was Harry.) So I brought that up in this chapter, and it will be a future plot in the story.

I almost had another scene involving Severus, but I thought about it, and I decided I didn't like where the plot of the scene was going. Maybe it will be a deleted scene later on. We'll see. Don't worry, it wasn't the Severus and Lily confrontation. That will come... sometime soon. I still haven't exactly decided what I want to do with it.

Next Chapter: Harry, Hermione, Luna and Rose in the Hogwarts Kitchens. Four (semi-?) popular characters show up (not just in the kitchens)! Oh, and I lied! Ilvermorny Celebration is in TWO chapters. Would you forgive me for that if I told you Dobby and Daphne show up next chapter?
Growing up being raised by three former students of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, one tends to hear several stories about the wonders and fun one could have in the castle – especially if those telling the tales were troublemakers. Sirius and Remus – though the latter would deny it vehemently, if you accused him of it, while the former would take it as praise and thank you for it – were troublemakers in their Hogwarts days. Harry and Rose loved listening to their Honorary Uncles' stories of fun, mischief, and pranks that the two Marauders had with their late, and much loved, father.

Harry and Rose relished in the tales of their Honorary Uncles and father sneaking out of Gryffindor Tower, breaking curfew, and prowling through Hogwarts to certain destinations. One of those destinations was the Hogwarts Kitchens. Hearing Sirius Black utter the words “Tickle the Pear” might mean something quite a bit different to those who didn't know any better. But Harry and Rose finally discovered what their Godfather really did mean when they saw their friend, Luna, literally tickling a pear, on a portrait that had a bowl of fruit on a table.

When the pear giggled, so did Harry and Rose. And when the portrait swung open, revealing a door way which led them into the Hogwarts Kitchens, full of House-Elves and delicious aromas, the Potter siblings felt as if they were in one of the tales that their Uncles had told them.

A House-Elf bounded over to the young teens when he saw them. The elf was wearing a pillow-case and looked very happy to see them.

“Missy Moon!” the House-Elf said, “Missy Moon's Miss Grangy! Dobby is so happy to see you! You brought friends, Missy Moon!”

Harry stared at the elf, trying to figure out what the elf – Dobby – had called Luna and Hermione. 

Missy Moon... moon... ah! Harry thought, nodding, Luna's another word for moon! And Grangy? Perhaps the elf wasn't good with names, first or last? Or perhaps he had misheard Luna when she had originally introduced her friend.

“Hello, Dobby, my friend,” Luna said, kindly, “These are my two newest friends, Harry and Rose Potter.”

“Dobby is honored to meet Missy Moon's Harry and Rose!” Dobby said, grinning at the Potter siblings, “What can Dobby do for you?”

We're all here because we missed lunch, Dobby,” Luna said, “Would you, perhaps, have any leftovers from the meal?”

“Dobby would be happy to serve Missy Moon and friends!” Dobby said; he motioned to a nearby
As Harry sat down at the table with Hermione, Luna and Rose, he noticed that Hermione was frowning as she looked around at the elves. He remembered the night he met Hermione and Luna, and remembering Hermione's opinion on House-Elves. He also remembered her talking about SPEW.

“Dobby used to belong to the House of Malfoy,” Luna said, “But when Lucius Malfoy got arrested this summer, Lord Malfoy apparently accidentally gave Dobby a piece of clothing during his arrest, setting Dobby free in the confusion. I think Dobby tricked his Master into doing it, but he denies it.”

“How can House-Elves trick their Masters?” Rose asked, “I've never heard of that being accomplished.”

“Oh, Dobby didn't like his Masters,” Luna said, “Every day, they treated him unkindly, and he wished to leave. I think it was his constant wishes that granted him his freedom.”

“If Dobby is free,” Harry said, “Then why is he working here?”

“Oh, he's simply volunteering to help out a friend of his,” Luna said.

The elf in question approached their table, and placed platters of food samples left over from the afternoon lunch.

“Dobby?” Luna asked, “Where is Winky? I don't see her.”

Dobby peered sideways toward a pile of blankets Harry had not noticed before. Luna stood and walked over to the blankets, then moved them. Harry's eyes widened when he saw a sleeping House-Elf – possibly female – snoring and surrounded by several butterbeer bottles. Harry winced as he saw the bottles. Butterbeer wasn't healthy for House-Elves.

“Dobby,” Luna said, “I told you. You shouldn't be embarrassed about Winky. She's going through a difficult time and she needs comfort and help. Letting her get drunk on butterbeer, and feeling sorry for herself isn't going to help her. Neither is ignoring her and covering her with blankets.”

“Dobby promises Missy Moon to strive to help Winky,” Dobby said, “Enjoy your meal, Missy Moon and friends. Dobby must be getting back to post-lunch clean-up.”

Dobby walked away. Luna sighed, shaking her head, and sat back down at the table.

“Winky used to be Bartemius Crouch's elf,” Luna said, “He gave her clothes this summer, and she hasn't taken it very well at all. She still believes he is her Master. Dobby found her and brought her here, to work in the castle.”

“House-Elves shouldn't have to work at all!” Hermione complained, “This is why I founded SPEW. So I can work toward a future where they can have better lives!”

“Still haven't found a better name for it yet?” Harry asked.

Hermione glared at him.

“I'm going to regret saying this,” Harry said, “But would it surprise you to know that my family has a
House-Elf back in Boston?’

Hermione’s eyes widened, and her eyebrows narrowed. “You own a House-Elf?’

“‘Own’ is a pretty harsh term, Hermione,” Harry said, “We consider Chrys – that's her name -- part of the family. She joined the family as a elfling and Rose and I playfully refer to her as our little sister. That is how we feel about her when it comes to her part in the family. I can see you have a pretty low opinion on house-elvess. Not low in the sense that is how you look at them, but low in the sense that you know very little about them.”

Hermione frowned. “I've been doing my research. Reading books...”

“By which authors?” Harry asked. “Some books about House-Elves don't shine the greatest of lights on them. Simply because the Author of the book didn't write it to give a good opinion of House-Elves, they wrote it for the money. They didn't bother with unbiased opinions or facts. You rarely ever find books that tell the best things about House-Elves. For example... did you know Hogwarts could be considered sentient in some ways owing to how much magic it has? Mom, Sirius and Remus told me about Hogwarts' defense system with the various coat of arms. Magic like that has to come from somewhere, doesn't it?”

“The castle's been around for a thousand years or so, Harry,” Hermione said, “With how much magic is cast every single day in this castle, there is no reason why it wouldn't collect some of that magic to power its own defenses, wards, et cetera and so forth.”

“Listen to yourself, Hermione,” Harry said. “You just said magic gets cast every single day. Students go home for the summer. So does much of the staff. Who, then, is giving the castle magic to sustain itself during that time?”

Rose pointed a finger at various House-Elves bustling around the Kitchens.

“The House-Elves?” Hermione asked with wide-eyes.

“Hogwarts just doesn't have a large number of house-elvess because they can cook food and clean, Hermione,” Harry said, “House-Elves unconsciously sustain magical residences, with little to no harm to themselves. The magic they donate, they regain while they sleep. The British Ministry of Magic likely has two or three times the number of House-Elves stationed here, because it is so big.”

“Hermione,” Luna said, “Remember the tales of how House Weasley used to be paupers before they ascended into being a Noble House? Even now, they're still probably the poorest Noble House in Great House. Why do you suppose that?”

“Didn't Malfoy once say the Weasleys have more children than they can afford?” Hermione asked. “Harsh, but it seems like it could be accurate.”

“It isn't just the children,” Luna said. “They don’t own a House-Elf because Molly Weasley doesn’t want one. And yet, their House has to sustain magic, or it would probably fall over. Wards are expensive, even with their eldest son – a Curse Breaker and Ward Builder – doing much of the work on them a few times a year. The Wards they have to use to power not only the defense of their residence, but the magic to sustain their own home, are quite expensive. They would save a lot of money by buying a house-elf to do one of the Ward's jobs for them.”

Harry nodded in agreement. “That is why you find it common for most rich Houses to have one, if
not several House-Elves. We own one, because we live in a two-story home with four bedrooms. Manors use several House-Elves. Witches and wizards need House-Elves as much as House-Elves need us.”

“So what you're saying is,” Hermione said, “is that SPEW would never become accepted, because it would be costly.”

“SPEW would probably put Wizarding Britain into an era similar to America's Great Depression,” Harry said.

Hermione's eyes widened, and she uncharacteristically swore. “Oh bollocks.”

“Now do you see why nobody wants to join your club?” Luna asked.

Hermione nodded slowly as she looked down at her meal.

“I know when you first think of House-Elves, it is easy to see slavery,” Harry said. “Freeing House-Elves isn't the answer. Giving them pay-days and vacations might be acceptable. But don't be offended if none of the House-Elves want pay-days and vacations. It isn't in their nature.”

Hermione merely nodded again. Harry knew she didn't like where the conversation had gone, so he decided it was time for a change of subject. The conversation turned to their childhoods. Hermione and Luna's childhood stories were as interesting as they were different. Hermione raised in the No-Maj world, while Luna was raised as a witch in Wizarding Britain. For nine years, Luna had both of her parents, and then her mother had died in an accident. That her mother had died was the only thing Luna mentioned of the event. Neither Harry nor Rose pressed for details.

They knew Luna's mother had died, because their mother – was friends with hers – and their mother had locked herself in her bedroom for several hours when she got the news, from a day-old edition of the Daily Prophet, of the death of Pandora Lovegood. Their mother had told them that her friend had died in an accident, and her daughter was there to see it. But they listened to Luna as if that was the first time they heard the news, because Luna was their friend.

In return, Harry and Rose entertained Hermione and Luna with more stories of their childhood. One particular story had to do with how their House-Elf Chrys was well-skilled in Glamour Charms, and could look like a human child. She usually posed as Harry and Rose's cousin who likes to occasionally visit, whenever Rebecca or other No-Maj friends visited.

“Rebecca never once has asked why our 'cousin' Chrys is always visiting at the same time Rebecca comes over,” Harry said, grinning. “Nor has she never asked why she's never met Chrys' parents. We think it has to do something with Chrys' magic.”

Luna giggled at that, and even Hermione gave an amused smile.

“I've always wanted to ask an American wizard or witch this,” Hermione said. “Did... You-Know-Who's threat ever reach American shores?”

Harry sighed. “First of all, Hermione, his name is Voldemort.”

Hermione and Luna winced.

“To answer your question,” Harry said, “His threat never reached American shores, but the tales of
the Great War did. Luckily for my family, America knew what happened to Voldemort on Halloween of 1981, but they didn't know we had a part in it. If they did – the fact that we're alive probably wouldn't be news today here in Great Britain. It would be old news.”

Hermione nodded. “I suppose that makes sense. After all, before you went to America, I can’t imagine House Potter was as well-known there as it is here.”

“It wasn't known at all,” Harry said, “Which is why Mom, Sirius and Remus decided we should live there.”

“Why did you never return to Great Britain before now?” Hermione asked.

“Because we fell in love with America,” Harry said, smiling.

Rose nodded in agreement. Hermione nodded and smiled.

“You know, I'm rather confused as to why you're afraid of Voldemort's name, Hermione,” Harry said. “You didn't grow up hearing about him from your parents like some half-bloods and most purebloods in Britain did. Half-bloods – those who grew up in the wizarding world -- and Purebloods fear Voldemort's name for one simple reason. Do you know what a Taboo is?”

“I've seen it referenced,” Hermione said.

“Voldemort,” Harry simply said.

He then cringed visibly and looked over his shoulder. Then he turned back and grinned at Hermione's confused expression.

“If the Great War, was still going on,” Harry said, “Voldemort or his Death Eaters would have appeared behind me, because I said his name. Well... perhaps not, because the wards around here are so strong. That is an example of the Taboo. It puts a sort of Tracking Charm on a word. If you link that Charm to a... a ring for example.” He lifted his ring and showed it to Hermione. “The ring would become warm or glow bright. You say a keyword, and you're instantly taken to the location the Taboo was said. Now imagine a Taboo on the word Voldemort.”

“That's why the name is feared?” Hermione asked.

“That is why the name used to be feared,” Harry said, “According to what my mother and Uncles told me about the aftermath of the evening Voldemort disappeared due to my father, the Taboo was done away with by Unspeakables of the Department of Mysteries. That was back in November of 1981. Thirteen years later, whenever Voldemort's name is said, people react badly. Why? Because even thirteen years after Voldemort's death, disappearance, what-have- you, his influence is still around because witches and wizards have not been able to move on. However, first-gens, like you Hermione, never grew up with that fear. So why do you fear his name?”

“Because he's not dead, Harry,” Hermione said.

“Yeah, that's what my parents told me over the years,” Harry said. “But where's the proof?”

Hermione frowned. “You don't know about the Philosopher's Stone incident, do you? The night Voldemort appeared for the first time in over a decade.”
Harry's eyes widened. Meanwhile, Rose grabbed his arm with her nearest hand and it was obvious she was shaking.

“Tell us everything, Hermione,” Harry said.

His mother and Uncles were going to need to hear about this.

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**Slytherin House – Fourth Year Girls' Dormitory**

Fourth Year Slytherin Daphne Greengrass was sitting cross-legged on her bed, staring at an envelope in front of her. The envelope was from her father, the Lord Castor Greengrass. She had received the envelope during lunch, and she had not opened it yet.

In addition to the arrival of the post from her father, lunch had been quite interesting in other ways. She had been enjoying lunch and talking with her fellow Slytherins about the Triwizard Tournament, listening to Draco Malfoy jeering Neville Longbottom – even though Longbottom couldn't hear him – and discussing that he was thinking of making badges that said “Longbottom Stinks”. He was considering putting “Angelina Johnson – The TRUE Hogwarts Champion”, but he really hadn't wanted to show favor for a Gryffindor. Draco's Betrothed, Pansy Parkinson had asked Draco who he was supporting if not Hogwarts, and he had mentioned something about possibly supporting Harry Potter.

And it was as if Draco's words had summoned the Ilvermorny Champion. Harry Potter had walked in with his family. But what was surprising was that Hermione Granger, Luna Lovegood, and Padma Patil had joined him. Well, Daphne didn't find it too strange Lovegood and Patil was seen with Potter. Their Houses were Allies of House Potter – just like her own House was. But what was Granger doing with Harry, aside from being Luna's friends. There had been rumors that Harry Potter had asked Granger on a date to Hogsmeade Village the following Saturday. Had those rumors been true?

Then Harry Potter put on an impressive show of power and command. Revealing he was now Lord Potter was something Daphne had found very, very interesting, and she had planned on telling her father about that. That the new Lord Potter had placed Granger and Lovegood under House Protection was absolutely shocking. That was, until, he explained why he had done it.

Looking back at it, Daphne had to admit she probably would have done what Potter did, had she been in his position. The fact that Granger had been Stunned and left in the middle of a corridor – that chilled even the nicknamed “Ice Queen of Slytherin” herself. No witch – not even a Muggleborn – deserved to be left in such a vulnerable situation.

“You still haven't opened that envelope, Daphne?” a very familiar voice asked.

Daphne smiled warmly when she heard that voice. She looked up and saw Tracey Davis step into the room. Tracey was Daphne's girlfriend, in every sense of the word. Both in friendship, and in the romantic sense. Daphne considered herself bisexual, but she knew Tracey was what one would call a “Witches' Witch” – a 'safer' phrase in wizarding society than “lesbian”.

Tracey was a rarity. Most daughters of Pureblood Houses wouldn't dare to be anything beyond bisexual. They had their Houses and bloodlines to think of, of course. Luckily for Tracey, she had an older brother who was now married with a child on the way. The House of Davis would successfully continue onto the next generation, without Tracey's help – barring anything bad
happening to Tracey's brother or his child.

Daphne didn't have that luxury. She was the eldest daughter of a House with no sons. She was destined to be the wife of a Pureblood wizard, and bring in the next Generation, bearing the surname of the House she married into. Her sister, Astoria, was doomed to a Line Continuance Marriage, where she'd have to marry someone who already had a wife, keep her surname, and her children would carry on her name.

But for now, Daphne was happy to have Tracey as her girlfriend. Daphne considered herself and Tracey lucky. Their relationship was still relatively secret in Hogwarts. Oh, there were rumors of their romantic relationship. But Daphne and Tracey had been careful. They didn't kiss and snog where someone else could see them. And if they held hands while walking through Hogsmeade Village during dates – why wouldn't two girls, who were best friends since the tender age of four, hold hands? Girls who were best friends – and showed no signs of romantic feelings – did it all the time! So they were fine with rumors.

As long as Daphne's parents didn't find out, everything was fine. She shivered at the thought. They wouldn't support the fact that she was attracted to witches – even if she was also attracted to wizards. She had a duty to do as the eldest daughter of her House. One that didn't support anything pertaining to a witch's attraction toward witches.

“'The last time Daddy wrote to me,’ Daphne said, ‘It was to tell me Greenie died.’

Greenie had been Daphne's personal nanny House-Elf. Greenie had been purchased by Daphne's father as a birthday present for Daphne's first birthday. The House-Elf was only a couple months younger than she was. She had grown up with that elf. Greenie had been her first best friend. She loved Greenie. Daphne cried for hours when she received that letter.

“The letter before that,” Daphne said, “It was to tell me Grandmother was ill in St. Mungo's with Dragonpox. I'm lucky Gran is still alive. What if... what if this letter is to tell me she's dead?”

“Daffy, you're being cynical,” Tracey said.

Daphne glared at Tracey. She hated that nickname. The first time she ever met Tracey, the girl misheard her when she introduced herself. Tracey thought her name was Daffy. Over a decade later, the name still stuck!

“Your father can give you good news, you know,” Tracey said.

Daphne looked around to see if any of her other dorm-mates were there. When she detected nobody, she turned back to her girlfriend.

“If this is bad news,” she said, “I'm not kissing you for a week.”

Tracey smiled in a way that made Daphne tingle in certain places. “Really? Can you resist me that long?”

“I will do my best,” Daphne said, with another glare.

Tracey rolled her eyes. “Just open it, Daffy.”

Daphne cleared her throat, and snatched the envelope from the bed. She turned it around and found
the House Family Crest pressed into a wax seal, confirmation it was from Lord Greengrass. She broke the wax, and the envelope transformed into a piece of parchment. She inhaled and exhaled and started reading the letter.

“What the bloody fuck!?” Daphne exclaimed when she finished the letter.

“What?!” Tracey demanded, as she stood from her own bed, then crossed to Daphne's and sat down on the end, “Is it your Gran...?”

Daphne offered the letter to Tracey who immediately took it and began to read. Daphne looked away from Tracey. She didn't want to see her girlfriend's reaction.

When Daphne was seven years old, her father had taken her to Gringotts in London to meet with the House Greengrass Account Manager. Before the visit, her parents had discussed several topics with her. One topic was the Pureblood Heritage Act. It was during this topic she also learned about Betrothal Contracts. Several Pureblood Houses in Wizarding Britain were taking advantage of the Act, Lords of Pureblood Houses were Betrothing sons to daughters of other Pureblood Houses.

Tracey's brother was in a Betrothal Contract because of this. Tracey had not been Contracted yet. “Yet” was the important word. Being a lesbian didn't matter if you were placed in a Betrothal Contract. A witch didn't need to fall in love with her husband – love and attraction wasn't a necessity. Being of able mind and body to bring in the next generation of wizards and witches was. Oh, sure, Tracey's father, the Lord Davis, had received offers for Betrothals to his daughter, but he hadn't answered one yet. Again... “yet” being the important word.

As for Daphne Greengrass, when it came to Betrothal Contracts, that was a whole new oddity in itself. Occasionally around Greengrass Manor over the past several years, envelopes would arrive at the Manor. However, before Lord Greengrass, his wife, daughters or house-elves could even touch the envelope, it would burn up and disappear. Not every piece of post did this. Only some of them did. Daphne's father seemed to know what the letters were, but he never said anything about them. But every time the letter burned, Lord Greengrass would look at Daphne with the same strange expression.

It was as she sat in bed, that Daphne now realized what those letters were over the years. They were offers of Betrothal Contracts for her. And now she knew why they burned up. Daphne was already Betrothed. None of the other Contracts could be accepted.

When Tracey finished the letter she set it down on the bed and stared at it. That she hadn't immediately ran out of the room crying and screaming was rather encouraging for Daphne.

“Well,” Tracey said, glancing at her girlfriend with a wry smile. “Am I not getting any kisses from you for a week?”

“He knew, you know,” Daphne said, “He knew about the Contract.”

“Potter?” Tracey asked.

“My father,” Daphne said, through clenched teeth.

“Oh,” Tracey said. “So you think he knew about the Betrothal Contract penned between your Great-Grandfather, and Potter's Great-Grandfather?”
“Those letters that randomly showed up at Greengrass Manor, then went up in flames before they could be read,” Daphne said, “Every time they burned up, Daddy gave me this... look. Actually, no. Not every time. It started after the second incident. Because shortly after the first incident, I bet whoever sent the first Contract contacted my father, and asked him why he hadn't gave a reply, be it acceptance, or be it denying the Contract.

“So Daddy realized that the letter was a Betrothal Contract. And he knew why the letter burned up. Because I was already in a bloody Betrothal Contract! I can't be Betrothed to two boys, Tracey!”

She nearly shouted those last two sentences. But she had kept herself calm. Just what she needed. One of her room-mates – like Pansy – finding out she was in a Betrothal Contract.

“Well, Potter confirmed today he is Lord Potter,” Tracey said. “Which means he visited Gringotts since returning to his homeland. Possibly as recently as today. I imagine his Account Manager let him know about the Contract --”

“And once he learned of the Contract,” Daphne said, “The House Greengrass Account Manager sent out notification of the Contract to my father.”

“And your father wrote the letter about it to you,” Tracey said, nodding.

“Out of all the Children of the Great Alliance,” Daphne said, “I never expected I would be the one to be Betrothed to one of the sons of the Alliance.”

“Daphne,” Tracey said, “Longbottom, Boot and MacMillan are no longer members of your Alliance. And until Friday – everyone thought Potter was dead. So...”

Daphne threw her pillow at Tracey. “Shut up, you hag! You know what I mean!”

Tracey laughed and threw the pillow back at Daphne, who caught it. “You expected to get Betrothed to someone like Nott or Zabini?”

“I thought I was lucky enough to escape the Betrothal Contract Curse,” Daphne said.

“Curse' being that everyone and their sister seems to be getting offers of Betrothal Contracts these days,” Tracey said, nodding; then she sighed deeply. “One of these days, my father is going to accept one of those Contracts. And the only way to stop that is to announce I'm a effing Witches' Witch, and face the music.”

“Tracey, I know where your mind is right now,” Daphne said, “I'm not effing breaking up with you because of this bloody Contract. Rumor is Potter's got his eyes on Hermione Granger – why, I don't know – so it appears he may have a girlfriend soon. He ain't looking for another one. And if he asks me, I'll tell him I am happily taken!”

Tracey smiled softly.

“According to the letter,” Daphne said, “Daddy says he plans on asking Lord Potter and his mother to meet him next Saturday in Hogsmeade for a meeting to discuss the Contract. With any luck, I won't have to get married until I finish my education here at Hogwarts. Even if I am required to let Potter court me, there is nothing that says he has to court me starting as soon as the Contract is agreed upon. I'm not breaking up with you, Tracey. Are you... breaking up with me?”
Tracey grinned. She cast her wand, and the curtains around Daphne's bed closed, hiding them both from view. Tracey then crawled up toward Daphne, pounced on her and claimed her lips. Daphne sighed, happily, and just as happily returned her girlfriend's kiss. Thirty seconds later, she backed away.

“Does that answer your question?” Tracey asked, huskily.

“Yes, it does,” Daphne said, “I'd love to snog you for the next several hours, Trace. Merlin, would I! But I need to find Potter, and introduce myself. And clear the air with him about a few things too. You're welcome to come along and introduce yourself too.”

“No thanks,” Tracey muttered, “Not right now. Daphne? Does this mean your father's letter was bad news or good news?”

Daphne didn't know the answer to that. So she smacked her girlfriend playfully with her pillow, then retreated from her bed, leaving her dormitory and a giggling girlfriend behind.

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**Hogwarts - Entrance Hall**

Harry entered the Entrance Hall of Hogwarts with Rose, Hermione and Luna, with full intentions of returning to the Hogwarts Grounds and the Ilvermorny Tents. He really needed to talk to his mother and Honorary Uncles about what Hermione told him about Voldemort.

He feet away from the large oak doors that separated himself from the Grounds of Hogwarts, when he heard a loud voice.

“Potter!” the female voice called to him, “Hey! Potter!”

Hermione swore under her breath. Obviously she knew who the voice belonged to. Harry turned and found a very attractive blonde-haired Slytherin witch walking over to him from the direction of the dungeons. She looked at him, and Rose, then she looked at Hermione and Luna.

“Granger,” she said, “Luna.”

“Hello, Daphne,” Luna said, kindly.

Harry's eyes widened. So this was his Betrothed, Daphne Greengrass. Well, that explained why she called Luna by her first name. Given that their Houses were Allies, they might have grown up knowing each other. Calling Hermione by her last name on the other hand. That irked him.


Harry gulped. She said the last word in a whisper. She had received word of the Betrothal Contract. Well, this would prove interesting.

“Can I talk to you in private?” Daphne asked.

“I don't think that is wise,” Hermione said.

“Granger, Lord Potter is my Ally and my Betrothed,” Daphne said, in a low voice, obviously fearing
“I'm not going to do anything to him. He's safe with me.”

“I'll grant your request,” Harry said, lowering his voice too, “If you grant mine.”

“Which is?” Daphne asked.

“Call Hermione by her first name,” Harry said, “I don't like when people use last names in friendly conversation. It doesn't send a friendly message across.”

Daphne stared at Harry for a second. Then she nodded curtly, and looked at Hermione.

“You'll get your boyfriend back safe and sound, Hermione,” Daphne said. “I'm sure you can survive a few minutes without being able to snog him. I need to talk to him about something important. Okay?”

Hermione went pink at the term 'boyfriend', and then red at Daphne's mention of snogging. “Fine.”

“Go back to the tents,” Harry said, “All three of you. I'll be back soon.”

“And if Mom asks where you are?” Rose asked.

“Tell her the truth,” Harry said, “I'm with my Betrothed.”

Rose sighed and nodded. She glanced at Daphne for a moment, before she turned and led Luna out through the doors. Hermione glanced between Harry and Daphne for a moment, before she, too, followed Rose and Luna.

“What do I call you then?” Daphne asked. “Lord Potter... My Lord?”

“Harry,” Harry said, smiling.

Daphne shrugged and nodded curtly. “Follow me, Harry.”

“You shouldn't be so mean to Hermione, Daphne,” Harry said, as he followed Daphne as she led him across the Entrance Hall and back into the dungeons. “I know rumors have been spread around. But, for your information, we haven't even gone on a date yet. She isn't my girlfriend, so obviously we haven't even kissed yet.”

“Could have fooled me,” Daphne said, “She was defending you from another girl like a jealous girlfriend.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Daphne, I'm sure you embarrassed her.”

“Well, I'll leave it to you to apologize to her then, shall I?” Daphne asked. “You're her Protector, aren't you? Comfort her and tell her you're sorry about how the big bad Slytherin girl treated her, and maybe you can even get that first kiss you want.”

“Yes, I am her Protector,” Harry said, “You would do well to remember that.”

“Yes, yes, I was there when you basically told everyone to be nice to her,” Daphne said. “Message well and truly received.”
Harry sighed. He already didn't like where this conversation was going. Plus he was going to have to probably deal with Hermione complaining to him about Daphne. Daphne was Betrothed to him! If he wanted his relationship with Hermione to be successful to the point where he hoped it would go, that meant Hermione and Daphne were going to have to get along. That wasn't starting out well.

Soon, they walked into a room. Harry was rather surprised to find it was a bathroom. Even more surprised to find there were no urinals. Daphne walked around the bathroom, opening doors to stalls, and obviously looking to see if they were alone.

“This is a girl's bathroom,” Harry said, when Daphne walked back over to him.

“Oh, really?” Daphne asked, “I hadn't noticed. What, My Lord. Are you afraid to be seen in a Witches' Bathroom? I chose to bring you in here, because it is the best and closest available room that provides privacy.”

“Anybody could walk in here,” Harry said.

“Would you feel better if we stepped into a cubicle?” Daphne asked, raising her eyebrows and grinning.

Harry snorted softly. Cheeky little witch. Two could play this game.

“Well, it depends,” Harry said, slowly, “The last time I walked out of a cubicle in a witches' bathroom, I had lipstick kiss marks all over my face, and neck. Are you offering to recreate that memory?”

Daphne blinked. “I don't wear lipstick that leaves marks.”

Harry laughed. “Nice to meet a girl who can keep up with me. Can we begin the main reason why you dragged me in here? I'd like to get back to my tents.”

“Before Gran – Hermione comes looking?” Daphne asked. “Or Mummy?”

“I'm just going to forget that you said that,” Harry said.

Daphne snorted. “Whatever makes you happy. Here's the rub, Harry. During lunch – before you made a scene in front of most of the Hogwarts student body and much of the staff – I received a letter from my father. I read it a few minutes ago, and then I came looking for you. The letter informed me of a time when your Great Granddaddy saved mine and then decided to do the selfish thing and create a Betrothal Contract with him that wouldn't become active in their lifetimes.”

“Selfish?” Harry echoed, “Life-Debts bred Betrothal Contracts back then. As far as I can tell neither of our Great-Grandfathers had children at the time. Fleamont Potter obviously believed he had just cemented the next two generations of his bloodline and the Greengrass bloodline. Greengrass, who he had recently made an Alliance with that still exists today.”


“Then why did you say that?” Harry asked.

“Because I'm bloody upset and things tend to spit from my mouth when I'm upset, Potter!” Daphne snarled.
“My Godfather, Sirius Black, always told me Slytherins think before they talk,” Harry said; Daphne’s only answer was a glare. “Why are you upset?”

“Because I'm currently in a relationship!” Daphne said, “I don't need a Betrothal Contract in my life.”

Harry raised his eyebrows. “Did you not hear what I told you about Hermione? I am very close to having a relationship of my own, Daphne. I have no intentions of courting you anytime soon, so you can keep courting your girlfriend and I got no problem with that.”

“How the _fuck_ do you know I have a girlfriend, Potter?” Daphne demanded.

“Aside from the fact that you just told me?” Harry replied with a grin.

“I swear to Salazar, if you weren't in an Alliance with my House, I'd hex you where you stand,” Daphne said.

Harry chuckled. “I actually believe you. Daphne, I didn't know you had a girlfriend. I only heard rumors.”

“Gran – _Hermione_ told you, didn't she?” Daphne asked.

“If your confrontation with her didn't hurt my chances,” Harry said, “There's a chance she'll be my girlfriend. So I told her about the Betrothal Contract, so I could know if she's still interested in dating me. She asked me if I'd have to court you because you're Betrothed to me. I told her you probably had a boyfriend.”

Daphne snorted. “And she told you there were rumors I had a girlfriend, not a boyfriend. Figures.”

“Yes, she told me there was a rumor of you dating a girl,” Harry said, “though she wasn't sure, because apparently the girl is also your best friend. Hiding your relationship in plain sight by frolicking through the village like best friends. Nice one, Daphne. Do you kiss in plan sight too?”

“_Fuck_ you, Potter,” Daphne snorted. “I'm not going to be responsible for your next wet dream.”

Harry laughed out loud. “I might have to say a prayer to Great Granddaddy and thank him for starting the chain of events that led me to this moment. I found my soul-mate.”

Daphne blushed furiously. Then she looked away when she realized she was blushing. Harry laughed under his breath. He had finally broken through her brick wall exterior! Yes, Sirius was _definitely_ going to _enjoy_ this when he told him about it later.

“I have no problems with you having a girlfriend, Daphne,” Harry said, “A friend told me recently that love, and finding someone who loves you is a natural thing in life. I am sorry the Betrothal Contract has to interfere with that.”

Daphne shrugged. “There's a reason I'm bisexual, and not a lesbian. I knew I could never have a long-lasting romance with a witch. I have a duty as the eldest daughter of my House. Now it appears my duty is to give the House of Potter its next generation.”

Harry decided not to mention yet that she may not be Lady Potter, but Lady of one of his other two
Houses. She was already close to blowing her gasket, and the news that she'd be one of three wives might make Mount Daphne erupt.

The way she was treating Hermione told him that she wouldn't be happy at the moment that there was a chance – no matter how big or small at the moment – that Hermione could be not only one of three wives but also Lady Potter, which Daphne just assumed she would be. He would let that news break another time. Even though he knew she'd likely be just as mad at him then.

“However, saying that,” Daphne continued, “My girlfriend knows about our Contract, and she still wants to be my girlfriend. I have every intention of being with her for as long as possible, Potter. So don’t even think of courting me until a few months before the wedding. Because, if you expect to court me any sooner than that – sod our Alliance, I'd hex you anyway!”

Harry chuckled. “Message well and truly received.”

Daphne sighed. “The other reason I wanted to speak to you was that my father wants to arrange a meeting with you and your mother for next Saturday in Hogsmeade. He said he was sending you and your mother a letter too. I expect he wants to come to a mutual agreement as to what time to meet him next Saturday. I'm expected to join the meeting. So try to arrange a time that doesn't interfere with my planned date with my girlfriend. My... my parents don't know I have a girlfriend, and I don't want them to know yet. Keep that in mind.”

“I'm also planning on having a date – hopefully with Hermione – next weekend,” Harry said, “So I understand your concerns. I will do my best to arrange a good time. Any suggestions?”

Daphne sighed. “I suppose noon would work. I could do a late lunch with my girlfriend then.”

“I will do my best to persuade your father for a noon meeting,” Harry said.

“Thanks,” Daphne said, “Thanks for... for being understanding about me having a girlfriend. Like I said, I'm bisexual, so there probably won't be any issues regarding failed attraction between me and you, when it comes time for us to be married.”

“Are you saying you're attracted to me?” Harry asked, grinning.

“I'm not satisfying your ego with an answer, Potter,” Daphne said.

Harry chuckled. Then a thought crossed his mind. “Have you spoken to Padma Patil today?”

Daphne raised an eyebrow. “No. Why?”

“I gave her the task of speaking to all the current members of the Children of the Great Alliance,” Harry said, “But since we're talking, I can give you the message instead of her. Next Sunday, I'm inviting the Children of the Great Alliance into my tent for lunch, so I can formally meet all of you, and we can have a discussion regarding the Great Alliance.”

“Wouldn't it be better to speak with the other Heads of House?” Daphne asked.

“No,” Harry said, “For one, the Children of the Great Alliance are here and more readily available. Two. We're the future of the Alliance. We all need to be acquainted with each other, and learn to work together, so we can prepare for that future.”
“I grew up with every single member of the Children of the Great Alliance, Harry,” Daphne said, “Except you. We went to social parties together, and during most of them, we hung out together to get to know each other. So we're well acquainted.”

“Then I guess I have some catching up to do,” Harry said. “One of the things I want to do is discuss new Houses in the Alliance. We'll take suggestions – we need to make up for those we lost.”

“I have a suggestion already,” Daphne said, “My girlfriend's House. I'm keeping her identity a secret from you until next Saturday – you'll likely know it then. She's part of a Neutral House, and Noble, like mine.”

“Invite her to the meeting,” Harry said, “We'll take a vote amongst the members about whether or not to send an offer to the Lord of her House.”

“Alright,” Daphne said, “Do I have to bring my sister?”

“I'm bringing mine,” Harry said.

“Fine, she'll come along,” Daphne said, “I just don't think she's ready.”

“Then it will be a great learning moment for her,” Harry said.

Daphne nodded. “Point. Is that all?”

“Yeah,” Harry said.

“Good,” Daphne said, “I'm done here. You leave first. I don't want to be seen walking out with you. People would get the wrong message if they saw us together.”

“So you're okay with them seeing me walking out of here,” Harry said.

Daphne feigned a look of deep thought, then nodded. “Yep. Pretty much.”

Harry chuckled. “It was very nice to meet you, Miss Greengrass.”

“You too, Lord Potter,” Daphne said, then added after a moment, “Good luck with Hermione.”

Harry was rather surprised at that. Maybe there was a chance for Hermione and Daphne to co-exist. Hopefully Hermione felt the same way. He didn't want to think about the alternative.

Harry bowed his head lightly, turned and left the bathroom. Thankfully nobody saw him. He headed back toward the Entrance Hall. He had a lot of things to tell his family. And he needed to make sure Hermione wasn't mad at him. And if she was... maybe he'd take Daphne's advice.

Earlier That Afternoon – Longbottom Manor

Augusta Longbottom, Neville Longbottom's grandmother, and Lady Regent of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Longbottom was making her way toward the sitting room of Longbottom Manor. One of the Longbottom House-Elves had just told her that Albus Dumbledore's Head was in the Floo.
Augusta had an inking she knew what Albus wished to talk to her about, so she steeled and prepared herself for the conversation. This would be the second conversation she would have with Albus via Floo Network in two days. Yesterday, she had a very late evening meeting with him, where Albus had announced to her that Neville had found himself to be the Fourth Champion in the Triwizard Tournament. Albus told her that he suspected there was foul play done, and that he didn't suspect Neville entering his own name.

Augusta had ranted to Albus, demanding that he find a way to get her grandson out of the dangerous tournament. Albus told her that there was no way that could be done. He also told her that he had planned for Alastor Moody to help Neville throughout the tournament. Augusta had accepted Moody's help, but had also said she would be arranging her own tutors to come to Hogwarts to help Neville. She could tell Albus wasn't happy about that, but in the end he gave in.

She stepped into the sitting room, and smiled kindly when she saw Albus' head in the Floo, looking at her with a kind smile of his own.

“Good afternoon, Albus,” Augusta said, as she crossed the room over to the Floo, “What may I do for you?”

“Greetings, Augusta,” Albus said, “I was wondering if you had received any interesting letters from Gringotts today?”

Augusta smirked. How predictable Albus Dumbledore could be.

“I have,” Augusta said, “My Account Manager informed me that Neville was now qualified for the title of Lord Longbottom, because he's entered in that Merlin-be-damned tournament of yours!”

“It isn't my tournament, my dear,” Albus said.

“You still agreed to let Hogwarts take part, Albus,” Augusta said. “I suppose you believe I should tell my Account Manager that I'm not allowing Neville to take on the title of Lord Longbottom until he becomes seventeen.”

“I do, Augusta,” Albus said. “I don't think he is ready. I believe he's too immature at the moment. He's also too preoccupied with the Tournament. He already has a title of one of two Hogwarts Champions to contend with. He's not ready for another title like Lord Longbottom. Also... I happen to believe that there could be a real threat to Neville's life in the Tournament. Someone might have entered him to kill him.”

“Yes, I thought of that myself,” Augusta said.

“Becoming Lord Longbottom may only paint a bigger target on young Neville's back,” Albus said. “I am hoping he will be ready to face the Tasks in the Tournament. I have no hope that he'd be prepared for other dangers. It would be too overwhelming for him.”

Augusta sighed. “Albus, I'm not going to make my decision right this moment. I'm going to write to my Account Manager and tell him, I will give him my decision a week from today. I am going to speak to Algernon about it, and some of my trusted friends, and then I'll speak to Neville face to face next Saturday in Hogsmeade about it. On Saturday, after I speak to my grandson, I'll make my decision, and then I will inform you about it. Whether I will be telling you Neville isn't ready to be Lord Longbottom, or whether I will be telling you I will be taking Neville out of Hogwarts, so he
could visit Gringotts with me on Sunday, to accept his new title, I do not know yet.”

Suddenly, one of the Longbottom House-Elves appeared.

“Sorry for interrupting you, Lady Longbottom,” the elf said, “But Lady Molly Weasley is attempting to contact you via the Floo Network, and is being blocked.”

“Thank you, Aggie,” Augusta said; the elf bowed and vanished, “As you heard, I must end this meeting now. Adieu, Albus.”

Albus frowned and nodded. “Very well. All I can do is ask you to think wisely and carefully about this. I will see you soon. Adieu, my Lady.”

Albus disappeared from the flames a moment later. Half-a-minute later, Molly Weasley’s head appeared.

“Greetings, Molly,” Augusta said, “Sorry if you had trouble getting in. Albus was just speaking to me in the Floo.”

“Apology accepted, Augusta,” Molly said. “Have you received any letters from my youngest son, Ronald. Or perhaps a letter from your grandson about Ronald?”

“No, I have not,” Augusta said, “Should I have?”

“Oh, dear, I hope not,” Molly said, “I assume you already know about your Grandson being in the Triwizard Tournament?”

“Yes, Molly, I do,” Augusta said, “Albus told me last night, quite soon after it happened. He assured me that Neville didn’t enter his name into the Goblet of Fire, and that someone with dangerous plots toward my grandson is responsible. Though Albus does not know who it is.”

Molly sighed. “Arthur had told me that was probably what had truly happened. I wanted to believe that too, but these days it is hard to know what to believe. Ron told me that Fred and George entered their names into the Goblet of Fire too, so I thought they might have convinced Neville to do the same! I intend to send Howlers to Fred and George about my disapproval of them doing something so dangerous. It is good to know Neville isn’t as foolish as my own sons. But the dear boy. This is terrible.”

“It is,” Augusta agreed, “We’ll handle it as we usually do. What does this have to do with Ron?”

“Ron wrote to me a very angry letter,” Molly said. “He believes Neville was lying to him when your grandson told him he didn’t enter his name into the Goblet of Fire. Ron called your grandson – his own god-brother – a liar and a cheat. He told me that Neville doesn’t deserve to marry Ginny. He told Neville to stay away from Ginny.”

“And what do you feel?” Augusta asked.

“Neville is a sweetheart!” Molly said, “He always has been. I have always approved of him being my daughter's future husband, and I still approve. I will writing a stern letter – maybe even a Howler – to Ron telling him to apologize to Neville. I will also send dear Neville a letter to assure him that I don’t share Ron’s sentiments, and that I still approve of him and Ginny being a couple – they’re so darling as a young couple, are they not? Innocent, of course, but preparing for that next step when
they're old enough. I wish Arthur and I had been as lucky as them to be together when we were their age. It wasn't until we were sixteen that we knew we were perfect for each other.”

“Should I write to your son about my own disapproval toward his actions?” Augusta asked.

“No, no, he'd only take it badly,” Molly said, “He needs his mother's stern, but loving, voice, to help him see the error of his ways.”

“Very well,” Augusta said.

“Augusta, if you need any help with Neville being in the Tournament,” Molly said, “Arthur and I are here for him. It is our duty as his godparents. Charlie said something about the First Task weeks ago. I could see if he knows anything about it.”

“I appreciate and accept the offer,” Augusta said. “Did you hear that Neville's other Godmother is back from the dead?”

“Yes,” Molly said, sighing. “I have. I want to write her a letter about Neville concerning godmother status, but I am having difficulty how to put it into words. Ah well. I am quite happy the Potters are alive. I will be encouraging my children to try and make friends with Harry and his sister. It could do well for the Light Alliance in the future.”

“Yes, it would,” Augusta agreed, “I am going to encourage Neville to do the same. Is that all you needed? I am quite busy.”

“Of course, of course!” Molly said, “I am busy around here too, even without no children around. Much knitting to be done for Christmas! I am still angry the children won't be coming home for Christmas. But, alas... the Yule Ball will help them for the future regarding social events. I will speak to you later. Remember, if you need anything especially regarding Neville's part in the Tournament, do not hesitate.”

“I will not,” Augusta said. “Farewell, Molly.”

“Farewell, Augusta,” Molly said.

Molly's head vanished from the flames. Augusta sighed and headed back to her private office. She had letters to write, and things to think about.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished. The last scene was a last minute addition to the chapter, because reviewers wanted to see Augusta and Albus' discussion, and I figured I also needed a way to have Molly's reaction to her son's letter.

How did you like both of Daphne's scenes? I absolutely loved writing them. Daphne and Harry's discussion was so fun! By the way, I thought about having Warnings about “Minor Fem-Slash” in this chapter, but thought it was too spoiler-ish for just a simple
thirty-second snog between the two girls.

For those wondering about Dobby and Winky, they won't have too much significance in this story. For the sad, simple reason that Harry and Dobby don't have the same relationship they had in canon. But I included the elves in the chapter so my readers could know what happened to them, and for an easier way for the House-Elf discussion to begin.

Next Chapter: Harry speaks to his family about Voldemort and Daphne. Then he speaks to Hermione about Daphne. And then finally, the Ilvermorny Celebration – also known as Harry's first date with Hermione!
Chapter Notes

Author's Note: I feel as if I need to explain something, before you read this chapter, because I feel a part of this chapter is going to be a tad controversial for some readers. As I have been known to do in the past with other stories, when I write in the late hours of the night (which I did with this chapter), my ideas and writing tend to go in bizarre directions. The conversation between Harry, Rose, Lily, Sirius and Remus in this chapter is just the latest in that type.

The conversation has to do with Harry and Rose's future love-lives. It is sort of controversial, and I've taken some liberties with something Sirius discusses. I have decided on the next girl added into Harry's growing Harem. Now that I'm writing one, I've firmly decided it won't be a big Harem. When I started this story, I had no intentions on having a harem – originally it was Harry/Hermione/Daphne. That changed when I added a third wife, who is unknown at the moment. With that said... I have firmly settled on a limit in this story of four girls for Harry. The third should be evident by the time you finish this chapter, as should her future in Harry's life. The fourth (the third wife) is still up in the air between two girls which I've given clues to already according to guesses from reviewers.

Also! I know since Rose is twelve, that her topics of her future love-life is a titchy thing. But I hope I have handled it well in this chapter. With that said, Fem-Slash is discussed openly during the discussion. Fair warning given.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Harry and Rose were currently sitting in the sitting room of the House Potter Tent. Lily, Sirius and Remus were sitting at the dining room table, and had been opening and reading their letters – though they had left Harry's and Rose's letters alone; there were a several for Harry, and only a couple for Rose – while the two Potter Siblings had been eating lunch in the Hogwarts Kitchens with their friends. Now the adults were all looking at Harry and Rose as they told them the same story Hermione and Luna had told them of Voldemort's recent appearances in Hermione's first and second year as a Hogwarts student.

Meanwhile, Hermione and Luna were now in their tent which had been erected between the time the girls returned with Rose, and Harry returned from speaking with Daphne. The two Ravenclaws were getting settled into their new bedrooms and 'living quarters'. Harry had yet to see Hermione, nor Luna, since he had returned from the castle, and he hoped Hermione simply wasn't avoiding him.

The end of Harry and Rose's story was met with a minute of silent thoughts by their mother and Honorary Uncles. Voldemort was a touchy subject amongst the Potters, Sirius and Remus. James Potter's sacrifice, saving Lily, Harry and an unborn Rose at the same time, still loomed through their thoughts often. Rumors that Voldemort hadn't been killed in the explosion that killed James Potter and – unknowingly to James and Lily at the time – Peter Pettigrew -- who had been the Potters' Secret Keeper, and betrayed them by telling the Secret of their location to Voldemort – had been taken as just that: rumors.
Amongst the three adults “what ifs” and other questions had been asked and discussed. What if he had survived? How would he have accomplished it? Had he somehow been able to escape Potter Cottage before the explosion that demolished the house went off? If so, then how did he know Lily and Harry – who had been two of his three targets – were gone? Or had he just hoped they had died in the explosion when he couldn't kill them? Question after question with very few answers.

Harry and Rose had been told that Voldemort was 'most likely' dead, but that there were rumors he had survived. But because there was no news of Voldemort causing terror again like he had during the Great War, there was a good chance he was dead. And if not, then he was very weak to the point where he couldn't cause terror.

“So let me get this straight,” Remus said. “Voldemort was on the back of the Defense Professor's head, and when the Defense Professor died, Voldemort escaped in some kind of vaporous form?”

“That is basically what Hermione said Neville told her,” Harry said. “She believes Albus told Neville that.”

“Well,” Remus said, sighing, “That explains a lot. Voldemort spent the years between getting blown up and meeting the Defense Professor as either a vaporous being, or a Leech. Probably a Leech, meaning he Leched himself onto others to survive, possessing them. Probably going from host to host until his possession sapped their strength. I'm going to say he probably used creatures he found in forests to possess.

“Then the Defense Professor somehow came upon him and Voldemort Leched onto him. I don't know whether it was by chance, luck, or it was planned. Then he targeted the Philosopher's Stone hoping it would help him return to a human form.”

“Luckily, Neville, Hermione, and the Weasley twins stopped him,” Sirius said, “We might have to talk to the Weasley twins to get their version of it. And perhaps Neville. Especially since it looks like the Weasley twins, and Neville were involved in both incidents when Voldemort attempted to return.”

“But the Chamber of Secrets incident wasn't really Voldemort, was it?” Harry asked/ “If what you said Hermione and Luna told you – once again, hearing about it from Neville – was true,” Remus said, “Then I think Voldemort was involved in a few ways.”

“What do you mean?” Lily asked.

“We learned – from what Hermione and Luna told Harry and Rose,” Remus said, “that Tom Marvolo Riddle – Voldemort – opened the Chamber of Secrets fifty years ago, when he was just a teenager, only a couple years older than Harry. We also know Lucius Malfoy was originally behind the entire plot this time around, which would later lead to his arrest. You, Sirius and I know quite well that Lucius Malfoy is a Death Eater.”

“The question is whether Malfoy was doing it for himself or for his Master,” Sirius said.

“And whether or not he gave Ginny Weasley that diary knowing it would lead to the opening of the Chamber of Secrets,” Remus said. “It was an illegal, Dark artifact after all. Malfoy could have just been trying to get Lord Weasley in trouble by giving the man's daughter a Dark artifact. Lord Weasley has a seat on the Wizengamot, on the Light Alliance. People have done worse to remove
opposing votes from the Council. That Ginny opened the diary, was possessed by it, and opened the Chamber of Secrets could have been an unfortunate coincidence.”

Remus sighed. “And then there is that diary. From what you told us, Harry, that Hermione told you, Neville's story is that the diary did several things. First, it wrote back to Ginny using Tom Riddle's personality when she wrote in it. Second it possessed her in a way that it gave her the ability of a Parselmouth. But the possessions weren't strong enough until she continuously wrote into it. Literally poured her soul into the diary through her words.

Then Tom Riddle appeared as a manifestation in front of Neville, his Great Uncle Algernon Croaker, and the Weasley twins. A Manifestation that threatened to take over Ginny's body and mind completely, spoke conversations -- not memory recordings, mind you, but actual conversations – with Neville, Croaker and the Weasley twins, and then he commanded a Basilisk.”

“That's no normal manifestation,” Sirius said, “And it appears it came from a diary. A diary... that was destroyed by a Basilisk fang which then destroyed the Riddle manifestation and snapped Ginny Weasley out of her possession. There are very few pieces of Dark magic that need something as dangerous and potent as Basilisk venom to destroy it. And if it the one I'm thinking of, then it explains why Voldemort survived when James blew the monster up. What is more horrifying is that if he is still around, then the diary wasn't the only one. Which means there could be several.”

“If I'm following the same line of thought as you,” Remus said, “It isn't the type of discussion we should have with Harry and Rose in the room.”

“Aw, Uncle Moony!” Harry complained.

“No, Harry,” Lily said, “If Remus said it isn't for your ears, then I'm in agreement. You may be Lord Potter, but that doesn't mean you're old enough for everything, young man.”

Harry sighed and nodded. He knew he couldn't win against his mother when it came to arguments like this.

“I believe we'll leave the rest of the topic about Voldemort for when young ears aren't listening,” Lily said, ”Thank you for telling this to us. It is quite important, and definitely something we needed to know. If Voldemort is still out there, then this just means we have to be vigilant, and look for the signs of when he could show up next.”

“I agree,” Sirius said, “Now, Harry. I'm interested in your conversation with Daphne Greengrass.”

“Have you received a letter from Lord Greengrass, Mom?” Harry asked.

“I have actually,” Lily said, “I recognized the surname, of course, and read it, feeling it could have something to do with the Betrothal Contract. I was correct. Lord Greengrass has requested a meeting for next Saturday, but has asked us to confirm a time for the meeting. He says that we can invite anyone involving the five of us in this room right now.”

“Daphne believes she has to be at the meeting too,” Harry said, “Which now that I think about it, it is probably appropriate that she is in attendance. Anyway, she – um – has a date planned and she doesn't want the Betrothal Contract meeting to interfere with it. She's asked that we request the meeting for noon.”

“A date, huh?” Sirius asked, “So she has a boyfriend?”
Harry cleared his throat. “A girlfriend, actually.”

Lily, Sirius, Remus and Rose looked at him with expressions of surprise.

“As Lord Potter, I am deeming that as an House Secret,” Harry said, “Daphne told me that her parents know nothing about her relationship with her girlfriend. She was very secretive about it, not even mentioning the girl's name to me.”

“Not hard to understand why,” Sirius said, “She's afraid of her parents' reaction.”

“So... is Daphne... a lesbian, Harry?” Lily asked, slowly. “I'm only asking out of concern for the Betrothal Contract.”

Harry shook his head. “Bisexual. She confirmed to me that she would be fine with marrying me. Said something about no issues when it came to proper attraction and all that. Only she told me she doesn't want me to court her until a few months before the wedding. It appears she wants to keep this girlfriend as long as possible.”

“Hmm,” Sirius muttered, looking thoughtful.

“I know I'm going to regret this,” Lily said, “But what are you thinking about, Sirius?”

“I'm simply wondering how close Daphne is with this girl, Lily,” Sirius said, “How serious their relationship is.”

“Serious enough that she doesn't want me to court her until closer to the wedding date,” Harry said, “She seems very close to this girl, especially if how defensive she was about the relationship was anything to by. She's... she's scared to lose the relationship, I think. Why, Sirius?”

Sirius cleared his throat. “I haven't talked about certain parts of my family history. Everyone here knows how touchy I am about it. One of those topics I never touched upon is one of my Great-Aunts – my father's Aunt. She was burned off the family tapestry, booted from her House, and rarely ever talked about amongst the family for one reason only. She was a Witches' Witch.”

Harry noticed his mother and Remus looked surprised. Even they hadn't heard about this.

“After she was kicked out of the family,” Sirius said, “She must have tried to mend fences. Because, she settled down with a husband, just so she could have a child with the bloke. Extending bloodlines. Important even without Heritage Acts. It was her duty of course. She thought it would get her back into the family's good graces. But here's the rub the family couldn't forgive. She also had a girlfriend when she married her husband. Her girlfriend became what is known as a Wife's Consort. Once she realized she wasn't going to get her name and face back on the tapestry – after she gave her husband an Heir – she spent the rest of her life romancing her Consort, raising her son, and basically ignoring her husband. Her husband was just fine with that – after all, he had his own Mistress.”

“Goodness, Sirius,” Lily said, “Why did you never say anything?”

Sirius shrugged. “Like I said – you know I don't like bringing up family history.”

“So why bring it up now?” Harry asked.
“The Witches' Consort thing?” Remus asked.

“Daphne could go somewhat down the same route as my Great-Aunt,” Sirius said, he then looked at Harry, “only... there's a better chance she might have a better relationship with Harry than my Great-Aunt had with her husband.

“But I could just be blowing smoke,” Sirius said, ‘I'm making assumptions here. We don't know where Daphne's relationship with her girlfriend could go. For all we know it could end in heartbreak, especially if the girl is a Pureblood – considering who Daphne is, it is very likely – and the gets involved in a Betrothal Contract. But... if she doesn't, and their relationship survives... there's no reason Daphne can't have a Wife's Consort. Hell... or she could be Harry's second or third wife. And there you go! Problem solved for both Harry and Daphne!”

“Thank you for suggesting a way to help Daphne, Sirius,” Harry said, “But I don't think that is going to happen. Like you said, her girlfriend could end up in a Betrothal Contract. Which seems likely, if she's a Pureblood, due to the Pureblood Heritage Act.”

“Maybe, maybe not,” Sirius said, “You could always talk to Daphne about it, and see what the situation is. We may find Daphne's girlfriend may be agreeable with it. If so, then we construct a Consort Contract, and there's that problem solved. We would simply add the possibility that she could be one of your other wives.”

“We’?” Harry asked, “Wouldn't that be more of Daphne's job?”

“Wife's Consort is still a member of the House the Wife married into,” Sirius said, “Which means you would still be her Lord, even if you're not in any sort of relationship with her. So it would be up to you, because it concerns your Betrothed. That is an unfortunate loophole in the whole thing. A husband could deny their wife a Consort, because it means their wife isn't... more focused on them. It might not surprise you that there are those – even those whom are part of a Betrothal Contract Marriage -- who don't like it when their Wife has someone on the side. It is, unfortunately, the wizard's decision in the end.”

“After all, that is why magical societies are usually coined the wizarding world,” Harry said, echoing a phrase he had heard several times from his mother and Uncles. “Many wizards tend to believe they have more power than witches do.”

“Exactly,” Sirius said.

Harry nodded. “What do you think, Mom?”

Lily looked at Sirius and adopted a thoughtful expression.

“Sirius’ idea – while a bit odd and potentially problematic – does have merit,” Lily said.

“Really?” Harry asked, surprised; his mother was supporting his Godfather's crazy idea.

“For all we know Daphne's girlfriend is a true Witches' Witch,” Lily said. “Which means there's a possibility she will have a lot of issues when it comes to her family. A Consort Contract seems like it could work, if the girl doesn't become one of your wives. If we could help her in anyway, then I'd support it.”

Lily looked over at Rose. “After all, I put a lot of thought into same-sex relationships in wizarding
Rose blushed and smiled.

Harry, of course, knew what his mother meant. Ever since Rose had come out as bisexual, her sexuality had been openly and respectfully discussed amongst the family. Unlike a portion of the wizarding world, there were no issues amongst those types of topics in the extended Potter household.

“Do Wife's Consorts really exist, Uncle Padfoot?” Rose asked.

“Yes, they do, sweetheart,” Sirius said.

“Awesome,” Rose said, her expression brightening.

“That eager to find a girlfriend, are you?” Harry asked, grinning, “Didn't you say you liked the sister of the Beauxbatons Champion?”

Rose squeaked and slapped her brother playfully on the chest. Lily, Sirius and Remus chuckled at the sibling's antics.

Harry cleared his throat. “We don't even know who Daphne's girlfriend is. Daphne was... well, she was very... cautious when discussing her girlfriend with me. I think we need to give it some time before we discuss anything with them.”

“I agree,” Lily said, “But we'll always keep the option open. I just have a bad feeling when it comes to the reaction of the parents of Daphne's girlfriend, especially if my worries are correct.”

“You mean if she's a true Witches' Witch,” Sirius said.

“Yes,” Lily said. “If she goes the route your father's Aunt went. Kicked from the family.”

Sirius’ expression brightened. “Such an event could be easily remedied, but we'll leave that be unless it becomes necessary.”

“Alright,” Lily said, “So we'll be watchful. This concerns an Ally and a future family member – Daphne – of House Potter, so it concerns the rest of us. We'll help her however we can.”

There were four nods of agreements from the others in the room.

“I'll write back to Lord Greengrass and confirm our requested meeting time for next Saturday,” Lily said, “With that said, I think we need to discuss options. You're the future husband, Harry, and it was your Great-Grandfather who originally offered to start the Contract. So your preferences will be heard. Preferences such as ETA of wedding date... number of desired children. Any anything else.”

“Wedding... anytime after both Daphne and I finish our education,” Harry said, “I suppose if I needed to set an actual date. Well, Rose will still be in school, and you will all be teaching. So either the following Christmas Break after Daphne and I finish our education, or the following summer. Gives us plenty of time for Courting either way. Children... at least one son, I suppose. No maximum requirement of children. And then there is one other thing. Daphne moves in with me no later than one month after her education ends so we can begin the courtship. As for which House she'll represent. She's a Slytherin, so Gryffindor is probably out of the picture. Potter... maybe, but I'd like
to leave that for a wife I find naturally, and not through a Contract. So... probably Peverell.”

“Very well handled,” Sirius said, “I believe Lord Greengrass would be happy with that. I’d add two things, but leave it unsaid until it becomes necessary. First, Daphne has permission for Wife’s Consort, if it comes to that. Second... House Greengrass is in the Neutral Alliance. If anyone is going to understand how to handle a House once predominantly Dark it would be Daphne. On the off-chance I don’t settle down with someone and have an Heir... Daphne would be a fine Lady Black.”

“Sirius,” Remus said, “If you want an Heir to your name, you have a pile of Betrothal Offers sitting in front of you! There's no reason you have to assume you're shoveling off your title to Harry. Harry doesn't need a fourth title or wife anyway!”

“Daphne's girlfriend could be the fourth wife, and we could avoid the drama of the Wife's Consort!” Sirius argued.

“Harry doesn't have anyone for his Third wife option, Sirius,” Lily said. “we already discussed that. So that is still open.”

“I'm just talking possibilities!” Sirius argued.

Lily sighed and shook her head. “You just don't like commitment when it comes to romance, Sirius.”

Sirius huffed. “Fine. I'll take a second look at these Contracts. But don't yell at me if I choose someone a decade younger than me. Anyone older, and you throw in a risk of gold diggers, and black widows. No offense, Lily. Ow!”

Lily had hit him – again – with a minor stinging hex.

Harry cleared his throat. “The Wife's Consort part of the Contract – would there be a way to do so without Lord Greengrass' knowledge?”

“Sure,” Sirius said, “If you don't want to make the Contract official until Daphne's seventeen and can finalize the Contract without her father's permission.”

“Of course, then you're risking angering not only your future father-in-law, but also an Alliance member,” Remus added.

Harry groaned. “Well, we don't want to do that.”

“Which means you need to talk to Daphne and her girlfriend before the Betrothal meeting,” Lily said. “So you can know whether we can add the Wife's Consort option onto the Contract.”

“Great,” Harry muttered. “That will go bloody well.”

“Language!” Lily scolded, “I blame you for that Sirius. That word is a British swear. Where else would he know that one?!”

“From you or Remus?” Sirius asked innocently, then yelped when Lily got him with another stinging hex.

Harry chuckled. “Are we done here? I need to speak to Hermione about something.”
“We're done for now,” Lily said. “Are you going to her tent to speak to her?”

“Yes, Mom,” Harry said, “And I promise you I'll behave.”

“I believe you,” Lily said, “Don't let me regret that though. I want you back here in less than half-an-hour. You have letters you need to read and possibly reply to.”

“Yes, Mom,” Harry said.

“I'll know where Hermione and Luna's tent is,” Rose said. “I'll take you there, and distract Luna.”

“Distract Luna how?” Harry asked as he stepped out of tent with Rose, and out of his mother's hearing range.

“Well,” Rose said, “I was thinking I'd snog her a bit and we'd play house.”

Harry stammered and looked at Rose. She merely grinned.

“I knew that was what you meant by that question, big brother,” Rose said, “I do not fancy Luna that way. I told you that.”

She then smiled. “Are you making sure whether or not I'm going to steal her from you?”

“Rose!” Harry yelped.

Rose laughed, “Come on, Hermione and Luna's tent is over here.”

“Where did my innocent little sister disappear to?” Harry asked. “You've been rather open about the subject of romance and girls these past couple of days. Especially in there with the whole Witches' Consort thing. I thought for a moment Mom was going to tell you off for that, even though I know she's supportive of your – er --”

He paused. He really didn't want to say the word 'sexuality' to his sister.

“ – beliefs in that topic.” he continued, deciding to go with the safe terms, “You're twelve, Rose. Just because I am Lord Potter, and I have a Betrothal Contract to my name, doesn't mean you need to grow up too so suddenly.”

“The girl I fancy lives in France, Harry,” Rose said. “If there is any chance I could be with her, I have to take it before the end of the tournament, before we return to America. Or I'll probably never get another chance. After all, we have vacation homes in France. Long-distant letters, and occasional visits would still work out for a relationship while we're young. Not every one is like Cassie and you.”

Cassie was Harry's second girlfriend who broke up with him due to long-distance issues.

“Touche,” Harry quipped, “So you want to take the chance when the opportunity is there – even though you're only twelve?”

“Yes,” Rose said, simply. “And that's all I'll say about my future love-life. We need to go save yours.”
“Save mine?” Harry asked, then winced. “Hermione's not happy about what happened between her and Daphne, and she blames me... right?”

“A bit,” Rose said, nodding. “She was fuming after she left the castle. Fair warning. We're here.”

Rose stepped into the tent. Harry inhaled and exhaled, and followed his sister inside. The tent was almost identical to the House Potter tent. Hermione and Luna were in the living room – Hermione on a sofa, and Luna in a chair. When Harry caught Hermione's eye, she crossed her arms and looked at him. Yep. She was a bit angry with him.

“I need to talk to you, Hermione,” Harry said, “In private.”

Hermione merely nodded.

“Come on, Luna,” Rose said, “Show me your new bedroom.”

Harry deliberately grinned in Rose's direction, and she raised a middle finger at him, before following Luna into the Ravenclaw's new bedroom. Harry merely laughed. Hermione looked confused, as she glanced between him and Rose.

“Secret joke between siblings,” Harry explained.

“Must be nice,” Hermione said, “I don't have any of those.”

Harry took a chance by sitting next to her on the sofa. When she didn't hex him or push him off, he relaxed.

“You're angry with me,” Harry said, “I can tell.”

“Only a bit,” Hermione said. “Was it wrong of me to try to stop Daphne from speaking to you privately?”

“That depends,” Harry said. “Daphne was right when she said she's one of my Allies. There was no chance of her harming me. And yes, I know why you were so defensive. My mother and Honorary Uncles told me all about the House of Slytherin and its students. I do not blame you for believing Daphne might have had bad intentions for me, since she's a Slytherin.”

“I didn't believe that, Harry,” Hermione said, “I'm being honest. Believe it or not Daphne is one of the nice Slytherins.”

“Nice?” Harry asked, blinking. “She called you by your last name. She... she made you look like some kind of cheap and easy girl. Obviously she was under the impression you were obsessed with snogging me or something.”

“Harry – with all the experience you've had with girls,” Hermione said, “what with two-and-a-half girlfriends, and growing up with your sister and mother – you still don't understand how their minds work. Daphne made those comments because she's jealous of me.”

Harry blinked. “Really?”

“Did you tell her that you can marry three girls, including her?” Hermione asked.
“No,” Harry said, “The conversation wasn’t going that way. I decided that was something to discuss when I earned her trust and friendship.”

“Does she know we’re going on a date?” Hermione asked.

“She's heard rumors about it,” Harry said, “So I confirmed them.”

“Then she believes I’m trying to steal you from her,” Hermione said. “You're in a Betrothal Contract, and yet you’re going on a date with me. At the moment, she knows two things. She's Betrothed to you, and she's going to be your one and only wife. And yet you're focused on another girl who isn't her. She's jealous.”

“A solid argument,” Harry said, “But there is one big hole in it. The rumors about her having a girlfriend are true.”

Hermione's eyes widened. “Oh.”

“Yes,” Harry said. “So if she was jealous of you, wouldn't she be hoping I would court her since we're Betrothed? She literally said if I don't wait to court her until a few months before our wedding, she would hex me. She's dedicated to her girlfriend right now. She's not jealous of you. She was annoyed because you were standing between her and a important discussion with her Betrothed. Actually... I think she was encouraging me to date you.”

Hermione blinked. “What?”

“She told me, and I quote,” Harry said, “Comfort her and tell her you're sorry about how the big bad Slytherin girl treated her. 'Her' means you, by the way.’”

“How is that encouraging you to date me?” Hermione asked.

“She also said I might get a kiss out of it,” Harry said.

Hermione blushed. “Oh.”

Harry decided to cut her a break. “So why are you angry with me?”

“Because you pushed me away without getting my opinion about it,” Hermione said. “I'm going on a date with you, and you let her walk all over me. You're supposed to be my Protector.”

“What if I told you I was giving you a chance to defend yourself?” Harry asked.

Hermione frowned. “Well, all I did, was do as what both of you asked and walked away.”

“I defended you after you left,” Harry said, “I told her she embarrassed you. And that we haven't even gone on a date yet, so she shouldn't have teased you about snogging me.”

Hermione smiled. “Thank you, Harry. You also did ask her to call me by my first name. You're forgiven.”

“Awesome,” Harry sighed in relief.

“But know that there is a chance – however small at the moment,” Hermione said, “that she and I are
going to have to get along in the future, if things go down that road. We have to learn to co-exist. I can't do that if you keep protecting me from her, nor if you keep pushing me away from her.”

“We can worry about that later,” Harry said, “After I tell her the 'three wives thing'.”

Hermione nodded. Then she leaned over to him and kissed him on the cheek.

“There,” Hermione said, “There's the kiss for 'apologizing for the big bad Slytherin'.”

Harry grinned. “Is there more where that came from?”

Hermione playfully glared. “When is the celebration party?”

“Um... seven maybe?” Harry said, “I haven't actually found out.”

“You do that,” Hermione said, “That's me telling you to 'shoo', by the way. I need to figure out what I am going to wear to the party – to our first date.”

“Already?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” Hermione said, “Now go! Rose? We're done. Distraction over.”

As Harry stood up, Rose walked out of Luna's bedroom with Luna.

“That was a fun distraction,” Luna said.

Harry blinked. “Um... do I need to ask?”

Rose and Luna giggled.

“Told you he'd react funny if you said that,” Rose said. “Luna was showing me her latest articles for the next edition of the Quibbler.”

“I figured she would be interested in it,” Luna said.

“Oh?” Harry asked. “What is it about?”

“The history of Veelas who were Witches' Witches,” Luna said, with a tone of discussing the weather.

Harry coughed. “Yep. Right up Rose's alley!”

“Oi!” Rose complained. “You're going to pay for – hey! Get back here!”

Harry had run out of the tent before Rose could say anything. He knew all too well never to make her angry. She was definitely her mother's daughter.

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_The Ilvermorny Tents_

Later that evening, Harry was waiting patiently outside the door of Hermione and Luna's tent. He
was dressed in one of his formal robes, appropriate for a celebration like he was the one he was about to attend. On the left breast of his robes were the three Crests of the Houses was now Lord of – the House Potter Crest was in the center, and was the biggest of the three. And the smaller Peverell and Gryffindor Crests were on either side of the large one.

As Harry waited for his date, he thought about what had taken place over the past couple of hours. When he returned to the House Potter tent after his discussion with Hermione, he had started in on reading his post. Many of the letters were a combination of welcoming him back to Great Britain and congratulating him on becoming Ilvermorny Champion. Some of the letters also had offers of Alliances. He wondered if they already knew he was Lord Potter, then he realized it was possible they decided to ask him instead of his mother. The British Wizarding World still thought she was a first-gen, which wasn't true, but also the undeniable fact that she was a woman. So since he was 'the man of the house', he had been contacted about Alliances, instead of his mother. As had been alluded to that afternoon, some Purebloods and Half-Bloods were just sexist like that.

His mother suggested he write the names of the Houses who offered Alliances onto a piece of Parchment, and they would discuss it later. Those who simply wrote congratulations on becoming Ilvermorny Champion, and/or were welcoming him back to Great Britain, Harry replied to and set them aside to send them out later with the owls.

Luna had exited the tent earlier. She playfully joked that she was Rose's 'date'. Rose, who had been waiting with Harry, blushed pink, then took Luna's arm in hers and marched her over to the Cafeteria/Classroom Tent where the celebration was taking place. Lily, Sirius and Remus – the chaperones – were already in the tent as well.

The tent flaps opened, and Harry cleared his throat and took on an appropriate stature as expected of Lord Potter greeting his lady. Hermione stepped out of the tent. While Harry's outfit was formal, Hermione's outfit was casual. She was wearing a No-Maj style t-shirt and jeans that showed off curves which were seemingly nonexistent while in her bulky school robes.

“Wow,” Hermione said, when she saw him; she gazed at his outfit, “You look very dashing, My Lord.”

“And you look very beautiful, Miss Granger,” Harry said. “Your school robes don't do you justice at all.”

Hermione blushed pink. “I think that's the point. They're supposed to be modest.”

“How is the British Wizarding society so old-fashioned?” Harry asked, “American Wizarding society isn't anywhere near as bad.”

“Definitely needs to be investigated,” Hermione said, “Did you know there is no such thing as a two-piece bikini in Witches' Swimwear options at British clothing stores?”

“That... somehow doesn't surprise me,” Harry said; he offered a hand, “Shall we go? We're missing my own party.”

“We shall,” Hermione said, then took his hand in hers.

The pair walked over to the Cafeteria/Classroom Tent. Music coming from inside the tent could be heard as they neared the opening. American style of Wizarding Pop Music was playing – and it was much more modern-styled than music on the British Wizarding Wireless.
“Ladies first,” Harry said.

Hermione smiled and, still hand-in-hand with Harry, led him into the tent. They were met with loud applause and cheers from the Ilvermorny students, Harry's family, and Luna. Hermione let go of his hand and joined in the applause. The tent was decorated quite nicely. On the long cafeteria-style table, there were several dishes of food usually found during Ilvermorny Feasts, as well as a few finger-foods for those who didn't want to sit down with a spoon, fork and knife to eat a meal. Above the table was a large banner in Ilvermorny colors, with words that read:

“CONGRATULATIONS LORD HARRY POTTER – ILVERMORYN CHAMPION”

Obviously word had gotten around the Ilvermorny camp that Harry was now Lord of his House. The music lowered, and Harry winced slightly as he realized they were expecting a speech. When the music quieted down, so did the cheers and applause.

Harry cleared his throat and looked around at the group. Sure, in front of a massive group of strangers in the Great Hall, he was able to give a commanding speech, but now in front of his own peers – though none were his class-mates – he had stage-fright. Typical.

Then he looked at Hermione, and he calmed down instantly.

“When I got the letter in early August,” Harry began, “Regarding the Triwizard Tournament, and contention tournament at Ilvermorny, I had doubts about the whole thing. Sirius – Professor Black – he spent much of August putting me through a boot camp to prepare me for the contention tournament.”

Sirius grinned and bowed comically.

“I think all of you – the Ilvermorny students at least,” Harry said, “have had the pleasure of being taught by him. So take those lessons and double the intensity. No! Triple it! That is what he put me through. It was tough, but by god, it worked! Because when it came time for the contention tournament, I no longer had any doubts. Even though I should have been scared – terrified – that I was the only fourteen year old in the tournament, facing twenty-nine older students, I wasn’t. Not a bit. There were a few people who doubted I would even place in the top ten. Raise your hands if you were one of them. Come on. Don’t be shy!”

Several laughed, including Remus, Sirius and Rose. And when four seventeen year olds raised their hands, the other Ilvermorny students jeered them until Harry raised his hand to stop them... but also for another reason.

“Yes, I’m raising my hand too,” Harry said, “Because I doubted myself too. I’m sure all of you were shocked when I placed third in contingency. Believe me, I was shocked too. Standing here as Ilvermorny Champion, I am still shocked. Still in disbelief. I stand by what I’ve said in the past – as recent as Friday. There are some here who deserved being Champion more than me. I know... some of you will say I underestimate myself, given my age – especially when you’re two or three years older than me. But I would have been content – happy even – if I was a spectator. Either way, I had earned my spot in the top ten, and had the privilege of joining all of you here at Hogwarts for the tournament.”

He glanced at Hermione who went slightly pink, when she caught his eye. “Especially because if I stayed at Ilvermorny, I wouldn’t have had the opportunities to meet the people I have in the past
couple of days. I suppose my point is that even though I am Champion – I can't do this alone. I'm going to be getting help from my mother, and Professors Black and Lupin – but I will need your help too. This celebration is a good start. Your support would help me a lot. Because we're ten – eleven, sorry, Rosie – Ilvermorny students in place where we're outnumbered by a lot. Can you all scream loud enough to be heard over the Hogwarts students?"

The Ilvermorny students cheered in response.

“Well, that answers that,” Harry said, “At the very least, I'll recognize all of you! Thank you for your support. Now this is a celebration. Let's celebrate!”

Harry grinned when everyone applauded and cheered. Lily, Sirius, Remus and Rose beamed at him. But it was Hermione he was looking at, and her smile was the brightest of them all in his opinion.

Five minutes later, he was seated at a circular table, with Hermione, Luna, Rose, and a few Ilvermorny students.

“So, Harry,” Samson – the same boy who had spoken to him earlier that day, “We've heard rumors of you having a bit of fun at the expense of the Hogwarts staff and students.”

“Oh?” Harry asked, “And where did you hear those rumors?”

Samson's girlfriend – Serena, Harry remembered – snorted softly. She pointed at the two other Ilvermorny boys sitting at the table. Harry realized one of them was Serena's twin brother.

“Alex and Sebastian,” Serena said, the latter being her twin brother, “for those who don't know their names – these two idiots told us they were going off to the castle to do some exploring. Turns out they were actually trying to find a couple of British witches to woo. During their search – which failed, mind you –”

Alex and Sebastian glared at Serena.

“Should I let you two tell the story?” Serena asked, then glanced at Sebastian, “What about you, brother?”

“A couple of boys saw our school robes, and realized we're Ilvermorny students,” Sebastian said. “So naturally, they asked us if we knew you, Harry. We told them the truth – you're Professor Potter's son, and Ilvermorny Champion – that's as much as we'd tell them. Then the boys asked us... er...”

“They asked us if you were all talk and no action,” Alex said, frowning. “Naturally, we thought they were just taunting an opposing school's Champion. So we told them 'no'. What else would we tell them? We couldn't let them insult our Champion!”

“And then they told us what happened during their lunch,” Sebastian said, “Dude... if they were telling the truth... you just sent a powerful message to your fellow Champions. That's awesome.”

Harry shrugged and looked at Hermione, then Luna. They smiled, and he smiled back, then looked back at the Ilvermorny students.

“Hogwarts has a serious bullying problem,” he said, “Nothing that happens here would ever be allowed in Ilvermorny. Hermione, she --”
He paused and looked at Hermione.

She cleared her throat. “A girl in my year who bullied me. Today, she hit me with a Teeth-Growing Hex, and Stunned me, leaving me vulnerable in the middle of a corridor.”

“Good Merlin!” Serena said, aghast.

“The Hogwarts Headmaster was likely going to simply punish the girl with a slap on the wrist,” Harry said. “Hermione and Luna were targets of bullies since they started attending school. When I asked Dumbledore about it, he said he wanted Hermione and Luna to handle it because it would make them stronger mentally and emotionally.”

The four older Ilvermorny students at the table looked disgusted.

“Hermione and Luna are under House Potter Protection,” Harry said. “And the scene I made in the Great Hall was to get my point across that nobody should mess with them.”

“Well, you made your point if those two boys were anything to go by,” Sebastian said. “Good for you. Show these Brits how we Americans do it.”

“Even those who are British-born!” Serena agreed with her brother, raising her bottle of butterbeer in toast.”To Harry Potter, the British-born American who is going to wipe the floor with the British!”

She glanced at Hermione and Luna, then winked. “No offense to you two, of course.”

“A great man once said 'The British are coming!'” Alex said, “Well, I am modifying that. ‘The Americans are coming!’”

Laughter and cheers rang out around the tent.

The celebration lasted two-and-a-half hours. There was much fun, conversation and celebration during the entire thing. It ended when Lily announced that it was nearing curfew. Everyone needed to be going to bed, because the first day of the planned classes would begin tomorrow morning – and Hermione and Luna needed to be up in time for their classes in Hogwarts.

Harry walked hand-in-hand with Hermione, slowly, toward her tent.

“So?” Harry asked, “How did you like that?”

“That was the best party I've ever been to,” Hermione said, then sighed, “At least filled with teenagers. Admittedly, that isn't too surprising. I never liked joining Ravenclaw's parties when they won a Quidditch Match. I was usually off studying or doing homework or something. So this is easily the best party I've ever been to. Americans truly do know how to throw a good party.”

“I am glad you liked it,” Harry said. “I'm rather surprised there wasn't dancing going on.”

“I'm rather glad,” Hermione said.

“You don't dance?” Harry asked.

“I dance well enough,” Hermione said, “But there was bound to be slow dancing, and I'm saving
that experience with you for the Yule Ball.”

“Oh,” Harry said; then he realized what she said, “You mean --”

“My answer to your Yule Ball invitation yesterday is ‘yes’, Harry,” Hermione said, smiling, “I would love to go to the Yule Ball with you. And if you’re up to it, I would be happy to going on dates between now and then too.”

“So, next Saturday in Hogsmeade,” Harry said.

“You're still my date to Hogsmeade,” Hermione said, grinning.

“Is this a bad time to tell you,” Harry said, “that part of our date will be interrupted by a Betrothal Contract meeting at noon? You’re probably not invited. Sorry.”

“That doesn't bother me,” Hermione said, “I will plan to go shopping for girl stuff with Luna that you won't be comfortable with while we shop and explore the village.”

“Best date ever!” Harry exclaimed.

Hermione's laughter rang through the night, and it was a beautiful sound.

“And we're here,” Harry said, rather disappointed; he didn't want the night to be over.

They were at the tent. As Harry tried to figure out if he should just say good night, or something else, he realized then and there he really wanted to kiss her.

“Harry,” Hermione said, “I know what you want to do. And you have my permission --”

Before she could finish her sentence, she was interrupted by Harry softly placing his lips on hers. She remained still for just a moment, before she moved her lips against his. Harry placed a soft hand against her cheek and continued to kiss her. The kiss lasted for about thirty seconds before Harry backed away.

“Wow,” Hermione whispered, opening her eyes and looking at him.

“Hermione,” Harry said, “There was only one other girl I've ever kissed who wasn't my girlfriend. And that was my childhood best friend. I'd like her to keep that honor. Which means... would you do me the great honor of being my girlfriend, Miss Granger?”

Hermione blew out a breath. “Yes, Harry. I would love to be your girlfriend. Especially if it means I can kiss you again. You really know how to give a girl a first kiss she'll remember.”

Harry grinned and leaned toward her and kissed her again. She happily kissed him back.

“I suppose that reputation of yours holds some merit,” Hermione said, grinning as she backed away. “Girlfriend after the first date.”

Harry echoed her grin. “I better go before Mom sends a search party. I will see you tomorrow. Good night, Hermione. I wish you the sweetest of dreams, and know that I sound selfish if I hope they're all about me.”
Hermione chuckled softly. “Good night Harry.”

Harry gave her a quick peck on the lips, and she smiled and retreated into her tent. Harry backed away, keeping an eye on the tent just in case she came back out. When she didn't, he turned and headed toward the House Potter tent. When he stepped inside, Lily, Sirius and Remus were sitting in the living room, and Rose was standing at the door of her and Lily's bedroom. They were all looking at him, expectantly.

He gave a deliberate look of slight disappointment, and crossed the tent. He stepped into his bedroom, then turned and looked at his family, who had rather disappointed looks on their faces.

“Hermione's my girlfriend, by the way,” Harry said, “Did I forget to mention that? And yes, we kissed. Good night everyone.”

Rose cheered, Sirius raised a fist in celebration, and Lily and Remus smiled. Harry smiled at his family, then stepped backwards into his bedroom, and closed the curtains.

Three minutes later, he crawled into bed in his pyjamas and laid there, staring at the ceiling. He let his thoughts wander about Hermione, their first date, and everything that happened in front of Hermione's tent.

He wandered off to sleep, dreaming of Hermione and a future that was beginning to look more promising as each moment passed.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished. The Ilvermorny Celebration happened basically how I wanted it to. We met some more Ilvermorny students, Harry and Hermione had a nice time, and their night ended with the promise of more dates to come, a few first kisses, and the pair becoming an official couple.

How did you like the chapter? So much I want to hear your opinions about. The conversations between the extended House Potter, as well as the end of Harry and Hermione's date!

As you can guess, I have plans to have Tracey be Wife's Consort for Daphne. What that will mean for Harry, well, we'll see where it goes. There will also be a third wife. Sorry to those who hope it is Fleur's sister is to be Rose's love interest, and Fleur with Harry would make it too weird. I have two good options for the fourth girl, but won't go into details, other than I've left clues as to who it could be.

The very long and very eventful – understatement! – First of November is finally over. I don't know if anyone realizes this. But November 1st lasted... about 8 chapters. That is how much happened in one day. That even made me pause and take note. Hopefully that doesn't happen again.

Next Chapter: One of my biggest secrets regarding Harry in this story is revealed! And that is all I'll say about that!
Hermione Granger was lost in her thoughts as she walked throughout the dungeon corridors on her way toward the Potions Classroom for the first lesson of the day. All morning, ever since she had woken up for the first time in one of the Ilvermorny tents, Hermione had been unconsciously rubbing a thumb or finger against her lips at random times, and thinking about the kisses she had with Harry.

Hermione's first-ever 'time of the month' had come while she was at Hogwarts a couple short weeks before Christmas Holidays of her first year. She had written to her mother about it, then during Christmas Break her mother had sat down and given her an important Talk about boys. Her mother was a dentist, and like many parents who work in the medical field, Emma Granger got very clinical about her talk. It was rather awkward, but Hermione, ever the information sponge, listened to everything.

Ever since that somewhat awkward conversation, she had always dreamed of having her first kiss. But there was absolutely no boy in Hogwarts who had caught her fancy. Thank goodness that an American wizard – British-born though he may be – literally flew into her life and chose her to be his girlfriend.

Hermione giggled to herself for what seemed like the hundredth time since Harry became her boyfriend. Hermione never considered herself to be very giggly or fancy-free. But being the girlfriend of a very handsome wizard was giving her a very safe, and very welcoming buzz.

Hermione's morning had been rather fun already. After dressing into their very modest school-robes, Hermione and Luna had shouldered their knapsacks and had left their tent and were immediately met by Harry and Rose waiting outside their tent. Hermione and Luna had expected to go into the Great Hall for breakfast, but Harry had invited them into the Classroom/Cafeteria Tent for breakfast, which they accepted gratefully.

Hermione knew she wouldn't be able to take all meals with the Ilvermorny students. She had to face the Ravenclaw House sometime, so she could figure out how the situation was following Harry's outburst in the Great Hall the previous afternoon. But she had accepted breakfast in the Ilvermorny tent for one simple reason. So she could spend more time with her new boyfriend. After breakfast, Hermione and Harry had shared a kiss before they had to go their separate ways for classes. Hermione could still feel Harry's kiss on her lips.

“Hermione!” a voice called out.

Hermione jumped out of her thoughts, and turned around. Padma Patil was standing there. Hermione realized they were in the middle of the dungeon corridor.

“Wow, Hermione, you really must have been deep in thought,” Padma said, “I called your name three times.”
Hermione blushed pink. Padma smiled, and obviously noticed.

“Do those deep thoughts have to do with homework?” Padma asked, then grinned, “Or with certain a foreign Champion known as Lord Harry Potter?”

“Maybe,” Hermione answered, simply.

Padma laughed lightly. “Alright, keep your secrets.”

“What do you want, Padma?” Hermione asked, “We're going to be late to class, which is never good with Professor Snape.”

“Then let us walk and talk,” Padma said; “First, I wanted to know if you'd sit with me during Potions today?”

Hermione raised her eyebrows, shocked. “Really?”

“It would give us time to talk about things while we work on today's Potion,” Padma said. “I think you should be caught up on a few things, since your absence since yesterday afternoon from the castle in general has caused you to miss out on several things.”

“Well, as you know, Luna and I are now sleeping in one of the Ilvermorny Tents,” Hermione said. “Last night, I went with Harry to an Ilvermorny Celebration in his honor as their Champion. So I missed dinner in the Great Hall. And I missed breakfast because --”

“-- you were with Harry?” Padma asked, raising her eyebrows and grinning.

“-- and Luna and Harry's sister,” Hermione said, “And the rest of the Ilvermorny students.”

“Well, you missed an entertaining breakfast,” Padma said, “Not as entertaining as lunch yesterday, mind you, but it was still entertaining. First, Malfoy's been handing out badges that say 'Longbottom Stinks'. Interestingly enough, he hasn't thrown his support in for Angelina Johnson yet, but you know, Slytherin and Gryffindor rivalries. The badges got confiscated... from everyone. Summoning Charms in the Great Hall by Professors McGonagall and Flitwick. Badges flying from all four tables. Malfoy got two weeks detention with McGonagall for... get this... 'bullying Neville'.”

Hermione's eyes widened, then she smiled. “Harry's message got through?”

“Ooh, yeah, it did,” Padma said. “Anyone who had badges -- nearly two dozen in multiple year-groups -- were placed in a combined mass detention for this evening, for accepting the badges, and not reporting them to the staff. Five from our year – Parkinson, Crabbe, Goyle, Zachariah Smith, and Ron Weasley – it was most out of any of the years.”

“Malfoy's minions, and the Hufflepuff and Gryffindor Idiots,” Hermione said, then whistled, “Changes, they are a-coming.”


“Oh, god!” Hermione said, giggling. “Those are horrible! I don't think their mother even needs to amplify her voice!”
Padma grinned. “Fred and George's Howlers were all about how foolish they were for entering their names into the Goblet of Fire, and how dangerous of a decision it was. What if they had been picked? They could have died!”

“Their mother's words?” Hermione asked.

Padma nodded. “Yep. Then Ron – well, it seems that on Saturday, he must have really effed something up between him and Neville, because his mother's Howler was all about telling him off for calling Neville a 'liar' and a 'cheat'. Explains why he got caught with one of Malfoy's badges. She explained to him – and hell, anyone in the Hall who heard it – that Neville wasn't responsible for putting his own name in the Goblet. Then she yelled at him for trying to break up Neville and Ginny, by asking her to cancel their Betrothal Contract.”

Hermione shook her head. “That boy is such an idiot, I swear. Why he hasn't failed back a year, I do not know.”

“Because very few students have ever fallen back a year at Hogwarts,” Padma said, “Even idiots like Ron Weasley. Well, after the Howler was done, Ginny starts yelling at Ron about her part in Molly's letter, and that girl has her mother's pipes. Ron was laughed out of the Great Hall, though he ran off because Neville and Ginny were threatening to hex him all the way to the Hospital Wing. All they got was a warning from McGonagall, but since no hexes were actually thrown, it was just for causing such a public fuss.”

“Wow,” Hermione said, grinning.

“And it doesn't end there,” Padma said. “Headmaster Dumbledore then stood up and told everyone that Neville didn't enter his name into the Goblet. Interesting how he waited for that news to get around already, before announcing, instead of doing so yesterday morning at breakfast. Isn't it?”

“Mmm, yeah,” Hermione said. “Interesting.”

They were now standing outside the Potions Classroom, which surprised Hermione. She couldn't believe she had been so lost in gossip with Padma Patil, that she didn't know she had arrived to the classroom. Since when did Padma Patil – hell, anybody – gossip with her?!

Hermione pondered this as she followed Padma into the classroom, and she smiled when they sat down at the same pair of desks. She was trying to hide the blush in her cheeks – blush from the simple fact that someone was actually happy and willing to sit with her in class.

Harry Potter had already changed her life in several ways, and he'd only known her a bit over two days! What did she do to find such a perfect boy for a boyfriend?

Snape and his billowing cloak entered the classroom and headed toward his desk. He waved his wand at the blackboard and wrote several lines on it.

“Next week,” Snape drawled, “You will be working on a Shrinking Solution. It is a very complicated brew. Therefore, I am going to give you something a little less complicated this week, in hopes that perhaps it will prevent a few disasters next week. This week, with those seated beside you, you will be brewing the Antidote to the Shrinking Solution. The instructions are up on the board, and also in your books. Miss Granger?”
“Yes, Professor?” Hermione asked.

“I trust you and Miss Patil are able to get along?” Snape replied.

“Yes, sir,” Hermione said.

“Good,” Snape said. “Because I would not want such a long-lasting Alliance between House Potter and House Patil broken because you couldn't get along with her, and Lord Potter got word of it. Lord Potter might decide to blame me because of the seating arrangements I am not responsible for. Do make sure you continue to get along.”

The entire classroom was silent, and many of Hermione's classmates were staring at her. Obviously they were thinking about her being under the Protection of House Potter, as well as the incident in the Great Hall the previous afternoon.

“Yes, sir,” Hermione said.

“Now get to work,” Snape said. “Everybody.”

Hermione and Padma quickly put together a strategy on what to do, and decided Hermione's Cauldron would be used. So while Hermione unpacked her Potions equipment, Padma collected the ingredients from the supply closet needed for the Potion not usually found amongst a student's personal supply.

All the while, Hermione was thinking of Snape's message to her. She wasn't sure if he had been insulting her and Harry, or what his intentions were. She thought back to Padma's explanation of the punishments meted out for bullying earlier that morning at breakfast. It appeared all the staff, perhaps Snape, were trying to do their best to avoid any more incidents that would offend Harry.

Hermione smirked privately. Yes. Changes were indeed coming to Hogwarts.

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**Hogwarts Grounds Near Ilvermorny Tents**

Harry and Remus – or rather, Professor Lupin at the moment, since Harry was currently in a one-on-one lesson with him – were standing on an open patch of earth on the Grounds near the Ilvermorny Tents. Inside the Classroom Tent, Professor Potter was having a one-on-one Potions lesson with Rose.

A hundred feet away from Harry and Professor Lupin, Professor Black had the sixth and seventh year Ilvermorny students together for a lesson on Advanced Dueling Strategy. The twins Sebastian and Serena were currently partnered in a two-on-two duel against Serena's boyfriend, Samson, and Sebastian's best friend, Alex. Serena and Sebastian were a dueling force in Team Dueling. Whether or not it was because they were twins – which was rumored to give them certain magical advantages when working together – they never confirmed it. There was a reason the twins placed first and second, and Harry placed third, in the contention tournament. Their skills at dueling was just one reason.

It was the first round of classes of the first modified three-Professor Ilvermorny lesson plan.

Professor Lupin was looking more pale than usual. And for good reason. Tonight was the Full Moon. He would be fine to handle three classes, then he would have to prepare himself for the
transformation that evening. Harry's mother was so skilled at brewing the Wolfsbane Potion so well that they even improved her friend's life when it came to his transformations. Once his mother had joked that she would put it on the market, except it would be copyright infringement. It was the same Potion – she just did a better job at brewing it than its inventor, Damocles Belby.

“During our lessons between today and the First Task, Harry,” Professor Lupin said, “We're going to work on strategies against various creatures you may be facing during the Task. Once we figure out exactly what you're facing, all lessons will be focused on that Creature. Until then, we're going through the – ah – usual suspects of Magical Creatures. The first... Dementors.”

Harry blinked. “You really think they're going to pit me against Dementors in front of a crowd of spectators, most of whom are innocent students?”

“A good question,” Professor Lupin said, “Now let me ask you one of mine. Where are most of the Dementors located at the current moment in time?”

“Azkaban Prison,” Harry said.

“And who owns the most control over Azkaban Prison in the world?” Professor Lupin asked. “I'll give you a hint: it isn't the International Confederation of Warlocks.”

“The British Ministry of Magic,” Harry answered, after a moment of thought.

“Ten points to Wampus,” Professor Lupin said, grinning.

Harry laughed. Unlike Hogwarts, Ilvermorny didn't have a House Points System. Houses did enough to create enmity between students. It didn't need the extra ingredient of House Points added into it. Less enmity created more peace. More peace created less incidents. Less incidents made them a much better school than the one currently standing several yards behind Harry.

But since they were at Hogwarts, Remus – Professor Lupin – decided to be funny.

“Yes,” Professor Lupin said, “The British Ministry of Magic. Because Voldemort used Dementors so heavily in the Great War, the British Ministry of Magic was given control of them – and Azkaban Prison, where their main nest was – from the ICW in hopes to remedy the Dementor threat around Great Britain. It worked... somewhat. But the British Ministry of Magic never gave back that control. Now, as the Host Ministry behind the Host School of the Triwizard Tournament, I believe there is a good chance that they might send a swarm of Dementors for the First Task.”

“A Swarm?” Harry asked, “Not one or two?”

“Anyone skilled enough could fight off two Dementors, Harry,” Professor Lupin said, “It takes a powerful wizard or witch to survive a swarm.”

“More like a team of powerful wizards and witches,” Harry muttered.

“Mmm, that is true,” Professor Lupin said, then he winked, “But the Triwizard Tournament is supposed to be entertaining.”

Harry snorted. “Great. Now I'm terrified you're right.”

“That's perfectly alright, Harry,” Professor Lupin said, “That is what the next couple of lessons are
for. I know you're quite familiar with the Patronus Charm because I taught you it. So let's see it. If I remember correctly, you have a recent happy memory to use for a good Patronus.”

Harry blushed lightly. He removed his wand from his robes and pointed it in front of him. Then he closed his eyes, and let a vision of his first kiss with Hermione float to the front of his mind. He could feel her kiss on his lips.

“Expecto Patronum!” Harry exclaimed.

He opened his eyes, and they widened in surprise. The silvery feline creature in front of him was familiar to him. There was just one problem.

“That's not my Patronus!” Harry exclaimed. “My Patronus is Prongs – Dad's Animagus!”

Professor Lupin smiled. “Have you cast a Patronus since completing your recent achievement?”

Harry didn't need Remus to clarify he meant by 'recent achievement'. It was staring at him in the face. He shook his head slowly.

“If I remember correctly,” Professor Lupin said, “After your achievement, you commented that it was the happiest you ever felt in your life. You were so proud of yourself. Happiness and pride like that can change a Patronus. I think we both know why it changed into this.”

Harry nodded slowly.

“It is a strong Patronus, Harry,” Professor Lupin said, “But here's the real challenge. Can you pull off several Patronuses at once. A Swarm of Patronuses against a Swarm of Dementors?”

Harry's eyes widened. “Is that even possible?”

“Rare, but possible,” Professor Lupin said, “But you're not just going to be going up against a Creature during the First Task. You're going to be going up against your competitors, for important points. A Swarm of Patronuses would absolutely blow away the judges, by how impressive it is.”

Harry nodded. He could almost picture the scene. But could he do it?

“And now you know your main assignment for the next couple of lessons,” Professor Lupin said, “Let's get to work, shall we?”

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**Hogwarts – Great Hall**

For the first time since breakfast the previous morning, Hermione was planning on having a meal in the Great Hall. It was lunchtime, and she had just finished up with an excellent Ancient Runes lesson. But the lesson wasn't the most interesting part of her time in the class that morning.

Daphne Greengrass and Tracey Davis – Daphne's rumored girlfriend – were two of her class-mates in the Mixed House lesson. And Daphne was actually being **nice** to her. Not only did Daphne call her by her first name, she also **apologized** for her behavior in the Entrance Hall the previous day.
“Harry already apologized for you, Daphne,” Hermione had said.

“I'm sure he did, because I asked him to,” Daphne said, “But I'm also apologizing on my own. So I'm sorry for my behavior. It was rude of me. I was focused on the planned conversation with Harry, but that is no excuse for being rude to you.”

“Is this about me being under House Potter Protection?” Hermione asked. “Is that why you're apologizing?”

“You don't need to be Protected to receive apologies, Hermione,” Daphne said.

“Nor do you need to be Protected to accept them,” Hermione countered. “I accept yours.”

And then the girls parted ways and sat on opposite sides of the classroom. Tracey was mostly indifferent to Hermione, but she did call her by her first name at one point. Though there was that moment Tracey did glare at her, before Daphne had noticed and stopped her. Hermione realized Tracey might be mad at her for bandying about the rumor of their possible romance so freely, if only to Harry. When their relationship went public, she'd apologize to Tracey for that.

Hermione's reverie was interrupted as she saw Harry waiting outside the Great Hall, his hands clasped together behind his back, and smiling at her. However, it was a tired smile.


“Tough tiring lesson with Remus,” Harry said, “Then an equally tough, tiring lesson with Sirius. I don't recommend it to anyone who didn't grow up with them. Maybe I'll tell you about it. Where's Luna?”

“Hospital Wing,” Hermione said.

Harry coughed and narrowed his eyes. “What?!”

“Calm down, Harry,” Hermione said, “Her time of the month started today. She's there for this month's care package. Madam Pomfrey helps her, because her father has no idea what to do about it.”

Harry coughed again. “Do me a favor. Next time don't speak so bluntly when you mention the Hospital Wing. Give a wizard a heart attack, why don't you?!”

Hermione winced. “Sorry. Are you escorting me to the Cafeteria Tent again? Because I was looking forward to British food today.”

“Cheeky, Miss Granger,” Harry said, grinning, “I would not deprive you of your British delicacies. I was actually hoping to join you.”

“Only if you agree to sit with Padma,” Hermione said, “She invited me to sit with her for lunch.”

“I would be happy to sit with her,” Harry said, “I was planning on speaking to her anyway. I'm pleased to see you're welcomed back amongst your classmates. Has Su Li caused any problems in class with you?”
“None at all,” Hermione said. “Very refreshing. Let's go on inside.”

“Holding hands, or no?” Harry asked.

Hermione sighed. “Not right now. I like our privacy. It is alright for the Ilvermorny students to know, because they were doing some welcomed teasing.”

“And Hogwarts students might not be so welcoming,” Harry said, frowning.

“Perhaps – or perhaps they'll just surprise us,” Hermione said, “But I like the privacy. But don't even think that gets you out of sitting next to me.”

“Never crossed my mind,” Harry said, smiling; “Lead the way.”

As soon as Hermione and Harry stepped into the Great Hall, most of the students in the Hall were looking in their direction. At least there weren't that many – third through fifth years dined together for Lunch on Mondays. Hermione wondered whether they were just staring at Harry, or both of them. She ignored the stares, and led Harry over to the Ravenclaw Table, where they sat down across from Padma. Hermione found Su Li sitting, not with the fourth years, but with Cho Chang and Marietta Edgecombe. All three girls were ignoring her and Harry. Hermione was just fine with that.

“Good afternoon, Miss Patil,” Harry said, as he started dishing food onto his plate.

“Good afternoon, Lord Potter, Hermione,” Padma said. “I'm surprised to find you eating British food. Rumor is you seem to loathe it.”

“Rumors spread like wildfire around here,” Harry said, “It must be a real fine treasure hunt trying to find the true ones.”

“This one is true, Harry,” Hermione quipped.

Harry sighed and shook his head. “Thanks for revealing a dark secret of mine.”

Hermione giggled. Her boyfriend had a wonderful sense of humor.

“Please call me Harry, Padma,” Harry said, “You assisted Hermione in a time of need. You have earned that right.”

“There's also the fact I'm one of your Allies,” Padma said, with a smirk.

“True,” Harry said, “But my reason means so much more to me. Though you do bring up a reason why I am sitting here with you – aside from dining with Hermione, that is. Have you had any luck with the task I asked of you yesterday?”

“Some,” Padma said, “My sister Parvati, Susan Bones, and Hannah Abbot knows and have agreed to attend. Oh, and Luna of course. I haven't talked to Daphne Greengrass and her sister yet. Maybe I should.” She glanced across the Hall. “She is here Should I go speak to her now?”

“Not necessary,” Harry said, “I found myself in the pleasure of her company yesterday. Long story. I invited her and her sister. She accepted for both of them. She's also bringing a friend. I suggested such, after I told her we need to bring in more Allies into the Alliance.”
“I could ask around,” Padma said.

Harry shook his head. “We'll take suggestions and make decisions on that next Sunday.”

“Right,” Padma said, “Sunday. You told me what day and where. But not what time, so I didn't pass that message around.”

“Lunch,” Harry said, simply.

“Duly noted,” Padma said.

“Egad, I just realized!” Harry exclaimed, “Am I the only wizard in the Children of the Great Alliance?”

“Did you just say 'egad', Harry?” Luna asked, as she sat down on Hermione's other side at the table.

“Hi, Luna,” Hermione said, “And yes, he did.”

“Yep,” Padma answered Harry, “You're the only wizard amongst a veritable coven of witches. Neville Longbottom, Terry Boot and Ernie MacMillan were the only other boys, and their Houses left the Alliance. Before you came back from the dead, we called it the 'Witches' Alliance'. Children of the Great Alliance is a mouthful.”

“Surrounded by witches,” Harry said. “How very lucky I am.”

Hermione cleared her throat, and glared at Harry. She didn't want to hear him talking about being alone in a room with several witches who weren't her! And yes, she was aware of how much she sounded like a jealous girlfriend.

“That includes you, Hermione,” Harry said.

Hermione blinked at that. “You don't mean you're inviting me into – Harry! I'm not even in a House!”

“Yes, you are,” Harry said, “Under the Protection of House Potter, you're a member of House Potter.”

Hermione blushed pink. “Oh.”

“Even if that weren't the case, so what?” Harry said. “You're a very smart witch. The Great Alliance deserves a smart mind like yours. Luna and Padma – no offense, ladies – are in a Minor House, and as such hold no seat amongst the Wizengamot Council. But they're welcomed into the Great Alliance because of the support and advice they can give. Why should you be any different? And don't say the 'M' word.”

“Magic?” Padma asked.

“Muggleborn,” Luna said.

“Oh,” Padma said.
Harry cleared his throat. "Blood does not matter in the Great Alliance. And it never will!"

Hermione smiled at her boyfriend. "Thank you, Harry. I would be honored to join."

Harry merely gave her a dazzling smile that made her heart flutter.

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**Hogwarts Grounds – Late Evening**

Hermione, Luna and the Ilvermorny students were all in bed, in deep slumber. That is, all except for Harry Potter. He was standing near the doorway of the House Potter tent, with his mother and Sirius standing in front of him.

"Promise me you will be careful this evening, Harry," Lily said.

“I promise, Mom,” Harry said.

“You'll stay close to Padfoot at all times?” Lily asked.

“Yes, Mom,” Harry said, annoyed, “This isn't my first time doing this, Mom! You know that!”

“This is your first time in the Forbidden Forest, Harry!” Lily said, “It is far more dangerous than the other locations. I don't even know how the Centaurs will react – Merlin, I should have thought more into this. No. Not tonight, Harry. Next month. Too many unknown risks tonight!”

“Lily!” Sirius exclaimed. “The Centaurs accept me. They'll accept him. He's going to be with me all evening. He won't be out of my sight.”

Lily sighed. “Maybe I should just give Rose a Potion that will put her out for the night, and go with you.”

“Chrys isn't here to watch her,” Sirius said, “You are.”

Lily growled under her breath. Then she grabbed her son and hugged him.

“If you come back with any injuries, you're grounded until you're married,” Lily said.

“Is Hermione ready to walk down the aisle yet, pup?” Sirius joked, grinning.

“Sirius,” Harry groaned as he backed out of his mother's hug. “We'll be fine, Mom. I'll see you later.”

“Fine,” Lily said, “Be careful. I love you.”

“I love you too, Mom,” Harry said.

“And I love the both of you,” Sirius said. “Come on, pup. Before we miss Moony's howl.”

“I'm not a pup!” Harry exclaimed.

He chased after Sirius into the dark night of the Hogwarts Grounds. The Full Moon was shining bright down onto them and the Forbidden Forest in the distance. Good. Very good.
“No,” Sirius said, sighing, “No, you're not. You go first.”

Harry grinned, and sprint forward onto the open Grounds. Then he jumped into the air.

And landed on four paws.

Harry Potter was an Animagus. He had been training with Remus, Sirius and Lily in secret during much of his third year at Ilvermorny. It had cut some good snogging time with his girlfriends, but it was so worth it. A week before the final Full Moon of the school term, Harry achieved his first transformation.

And Shadow was born.

Shadow was a very appropriate name. Because Harry's Animagus was a legendary Shadow Panther. Black as a shadow, the only difference from legends old, was that Harry had green eyes like his human form instead of black.

Shadow bounded across the grounds toward a spot he had found.

“Shadow!” Sirius yelled, “Get back here!”

Shadow smirked and dove into the shadowy darkness behind one of the Ilvermorny tents. Shadow Panthers were named so because they could Shadow Jump – literally vanish into one shadow, and leap out of another. Shadows were chilly and pitch black. You didn't want to spend very long in them. To do so was quite dangerous. When you jumped through one shadow, you needed to have another one in mind for the destination. One that wouldn't disappear by the time you got there. Which was why, for safety reasons, you wanted a second shadow in mind just in case.

Shadow's destination was Sirius' shadow that crawled upon the ground in front of him. Shadow leapt out the – well, the shadow and landed on the ground in front of the man. Sirius yelped in surprise.

“God damn it, Shadow!” he exclaimed, “You do that every time, and I still haven't gotten used to it. Why couldn't you be a dog or a house cat??!”

Shadow smirked again. Magical Creature Animagi were very rare. Sirius was one, a canine of superstition known as the Grim. Neither Sirius, Remus nor Lily ever thought Harry would also achieve a Magical Creature form. How very wrong they were.

In addition to Harry's Shadow, and Sirius' Padfoot, there was one other Animagus amongst the family: Tiger-Lily – Lily's Animagus form – a Bengal Tiger. Moony – Remus – was a werewolf. Rose was the only one who couldn't turn into an Animal yet, and she was absolutely jealous that she had to wait until her third year, just like her brother had.

“Don't tell this to your mother, or I will prank you every day for a week,” Sirius said. “But your mother was right to worry. There are several dangers in the Forbidden Forest. Centaurs are just one of them, and at least they can be diplomatic when they want to be. None of the others will be diplomatic. They'll just try to kill you. So stick close to me and relative closeness to Moony. I don't think I need to tell you this – but while his bite may not turn you when you're Shadow, it still hurts.”

Shadow snorted. He had heard that before. Moony had only lunged at him once – during their first Full Moon Run. And that was because the wolf wasn't familiar with Shadow. Shadow had dodged
easily by traveling from one shadow to another. Moony had respected Shadow ever since.

“I believe your father is looking down on us tonight, Shadow,” Sirius said, looking into the sky, “Wish he could join the Marauders in the Forbidden Forest like the old days, except this time his own son is coming along. Prongs will be riding with us tonight. In spirit.”

Shadow nodded solemnly.

“Enough sap!” Sirius said.

He barked out a laugh, ran forward, leapt into the air, and transformed into Padfoot. Shadow ran over to him and leapt about ten feet in the air over the Grim, landing a few feet away on his other side. Padfoot gave an annoyed bark. Shadow could almost hear the words “Show-Off” in Padfoot's bark.

Then Moony howled.

Padfoot howled into the night, and Shadow gave a loud yowl.

And Shadow Panther and Grim raced off into the deep dark of the Forbidden Forest to play with Moony.

Chapter End Notes

Ta-da! And Harry's biggest secret has been revealed. Aah, I am so happy with the scene beginning from Shadow's entrance to the end of the chapter. It went absolutely perfect.

I absolutely love stories where Harry is a Shadow Panther Animagus. I wanted to do one of my own. There is one major reason I wanted Harry to be a Shadow Panther. Can you figure it out? Side-note: I had thought about making Harry a Wampus. But that damned creature is so confusing, I decided against it. I like Shadow Panthers more.

So what do you think of the chapter overall?

Next Chapter: A minor time-skip, with a summary of notable events during the skip. The Weighing of the Wands. An interview with Barnabus! Harry's wand type will finally be revealed! Also, some headway begins to be made regarding one character's romance in this story!
Tuesday, November 3rd, 1994

Early Tuesday, about six-o-clock in the morning, Harry and Sirius entered the House Potter Tent, slightly tired, but happy and healthy, after their Full Moon Run with Moony the previous evening. They had run through the Forbidden Forest for about four hours before they headed to the Shrieking Shack to sleep for the evening. They had only gotten about four hours of sleep, but it was worth it.

They had frolicked through the forest, and while they heard the Centaurs and other creatures off in the distance, none ever approached them. The moonlight through the trees had given provided several shadows for Shadow to jump through, and he enjoyed himself greatly. The various small harmless critters and birds didn't like it much though. Most scurried when he appeared suddenly from shadows.

Lily was sitting at the kitchen table, waiting for them. Lily jumped up from her chair, strode over to Harry, hugged him, then started casting Diagnostic Charms on him.

“Mom, I'm fine!” Harry complained.

“Hush, Harry,” Lily said, as she ran her wand around his body, “Or I'm going to make you strip naked in full view of Sirius and I – and maybe Rose if she wakes up and comes out of her bedroom while you're naked.”

Harry sputtered. Sirius snickered and walked over to the tent's small kitchen and poured a couple mugs of coffee.

Lily sighed in relief when she was finished. “Well, the only thing wrong with you is the lack of a good night's sleep. I bet I got more sleep than you did, and I stayed up for a while, worried about
"Harry’s class schedule has Remus teaching his first class today,” Sirius said. “Remus is probably going to be asleep until lunchtime. Harry can sleep during the time when he usually would have his first lesson.”

“Can’t I have breakfast first?” Harry asked, as he sat down at the dining room table; he muttered his thanks to Sirius when his Godfather gave him a mug.

“Do you only want to eat because you’ll be eating with Hermione?” Lily asked, raising an eyebrow.

Harry sipped the coffee, then nodded. “She has Astronomy this evening at midnight, and she’ll be sleeping in tomorrow since she doesn’t have class until ten-o’clock. So I’ll miss breakfast with her tomorrow. I can’t miss it today. We decided breakfast would be the one meal we wouldn’t miss with each other, because it gives us privacy until our relationship becomes public to the Hogwarts students.”

“Privacy how?” Lily asked. “You had breakfast with Luna and Rose yesterday.”

Harry took another sip of his coffee, then smiled. “A goodbye kiss before we separate for classes.”

“I don’t remember you being this sappy with your first two girlfriends,” Sirius said.

“Hush, Sirius,” Lily said, “I think it is very sweet. If she’s awake now, you can have breakfast with her, Harry. However…”

“What?” Harry asked.

“How are you going to explain the dark circles under your eyes?” Lily asked.

Harry groaned. Hermione had noticed he was tired yesterday. She’d surely notice today.

“Glamour Charms?” Harry replied.

“So, you’d be lying to her?” Lily asked.

“I can’t tell her about Shadow yet,” Harry said, “It is a House Potter Secret.”

“Maybe not for very long,” Sirius said, “Remus was discussing practicing strategies with you using Shadow for the Tasks.”

Harry sighed. “If it turns out I’ll be using Shadow. I’ll tell her. As long as I’m not doing any blatant lying about it, she should forgive me for not telling her, especially since it is a House Secret.”

“Glamour Charm then,” Lily said, “But you have to cast it.”

Harry nodded. He was okay with facial Glamour Charms. Hiding the dark circles under his eyes were simple. After finishing his coffee, he changed his clothes into something proper for breakfast with Hermione, went over to the bathroom and cast a Glamour on his eyes. Promising he’d be back soon and then he’d take a nap for a few hours, he left the tent and headed over to Hermione’s.

He called her name when he arrived at her tent, and smiled when she answered him. When she
appeared from her tent, he gave her a kiss in greeting. They had a nice breakfast, and Harry told Hermione about Remus’ lesson the previous day. Hermione was astounded he could do a Patronus, and she nearly jumped up to find Remus and ask him if she could learn from him. The only saving grace that stopped Hermione from finding out Remus was “ill” at the moment, was her surprise at seeing Harry's Patronus. She remained in her chair and grinned at the Patronus. When she asked him what it was, he told her it was a panther, and felt bad for the half-lie.

They parted ways after breakfast with a brief, wonderful kiss. Owing to the Glamours, she had never noticed he hadn't gotten enough sleep the previous evening. Harry slowly walked back to his tent, as he watched Hermione's retreating figure head up toward the castle. Then he stepped back into the tent. Rose could only greet him with a good morning, before Lily shooed him off into his bedroom. Shortly after, he dozed off, beginning his nap, with thoughts that he didn't like how wrong it felt lying to Hermione.

Tuesday afternoon after classes, while Harry and Rose were hanging out with Hermione and Luna, Lily, Sirius and Remus sat down at the dining table and studied the Invisibility Cloak. They found several disturbing Charms. Tracking Charms that would let the caster know where the Cloak was at any particular moment. Eavesdropping Charms allowing for the caster to listen to whatever was in the Cloak's vicinity. Lily was quite happy she had predicted that the day she had received it, and had placed a Muffling Charm on it, which prevented the Eavesdropping Charms to work. There was a Charm that Remus discovered let the caster look be able to see through the Cloak at all times – even though the Cloak was supposed to be legendarily impenetrable against that.

“Unless done with the Elder Wand which is rumored to have helped create it,” Remus said. “Albus has the Elder Wand.”

“Makes sense,” Lily said. “Certainly confirms James' suspicions. Does it belong to Harry since he is Lord Peverell?”

“Could he summon it from Albus with his Peverell Ring?” Remus asked, then shrugged, “It is possible. I don't know if we want to find out yet or not though.

Lily, Sirius and Remus spent the next hour dismantling the foreign charms on the Cloak. Lily gave it to Harry later that evening – after lecturing him to be careful with it. And to not go into any witches' bathrooms or places he was forbidden to go. Sirius was hit with a stinging hex after saying “You can go to those places as long as you don't get caught.”

On Tuesday evening after dinner in the Great Hall, as Harry, Hermione, Luna and Rose were on their way toward the Grounds of Hogwarts, Minerva McGonagall had met them, and told Harry that the Weighing of the Wands Ceremony would be taking place at nine-o-clock on Friday morning. Harry and Lily were to meet with Minerva at a quarter to nine, where she would lead them to the designated room. Harry promised he would tell his mother that, and that is exactly what he had done when he returned to the tent.

But first he had spent a few minutes outside Hermione's tent talking with her, and sharing a few kisses before she had to go into her tent. She needed to work on homework for a bit, and get a brief nap, before she needed to go to the Astronomy Tower at midnight.

After hearing the announcement of the date for the Weighing of the Wands, Lily, Harry, Sirius and Remus discussed their promised interview with Barnabus Cuffe. They decided to keep the
Gryffindor and Ravenclaw bloodlines a secret, so they could use it as a surprise at the Winter Solstice Wizengamot Council Session they had already planned on attending. Lily's adoption story – and her, Harry and Rose's true blood-status would be revealed, however.

They decided to offer Cuffe to interview them right there in the House Potter tent after the Weighing of the Wands Ceremony. Harry was elected to write the letter to Cuffe that invited him to the interview.

Wednesday afternoon, after classes, Lily, Remus and Sirius sat down with Harry and gave him a test interview with questions that Barnabus Cuffe might ask. By the end, Harry felt he was ready.

Thursday morning, Harry received a reply from Barnabus Cuffe saying that he happily agreed to the invitation and looked forward to the interview. Thursday afternoon, he met privately with Daphne, catching her before she went into the Great Hall for lunch. It was quite the interesting discussion...

“My family and I request to meet with you and your girlfriend sometime tomorrow,” Harry said.

Daphne's eyes widened, then she narrowed her eyebrows dangerously. “I understand why they might want to meet me before the Betrothal Contract. But why my girlfriend?”

“How serious is your relationship with your girlfriend?” Harry asked. “If given a chance, would you want to be with her for a lifetime? Serious enough that you would reveal your relationship to both your and your girlfriend's parents by Saturday?”

“Why are you asking me this?” Daphne asked.

Harry decided to get to the point. “Ever heard of a Wife's Consort?”

Daphne's eyes widened to the size of saucers. Then she stammered. “I... I need to talk to my girlfriend. I'll send you my owl to your tents this evening with a letter – whether it be accepting or declining your invitation.”

Harry merely nodded, and Daphne walked away, looking uncharacteristically emotional.

Later that evening, Harry received a letter from Daphne. She agreed to a meeting at eight-o-clock on Friday evening in the Ilvermorny Tents. She confirmed she would bring her girlfriend.

Friday, November 6th, 1994

Dressed in one of his best formal outfits, Harry walked with his mother toward Hogwarts Castle. Sirius and Remus had given the students the day off of class for “Ilvermorny Champion business”, and they were preparing the House Potter Tent for the interview with Barnabus Cuffe. Rose was also practicing a test interview with her Honorary Uncles, in case Barnabus asked her anything.

Only the House Potter crest was on the left breast of Harry's robes; He didn't want to publicly reveal his Lordship of one of the other two Houses until the interview with Barnabus, and the other until mid-December.

Out of the corner of his eyes, Harry noticed in the distance the Beauxbatons Headmistress Madame Olympe Maxime and her Champion, Fleur Delacour, walking toward the castle. Judging by how fast Fleur's lips were moving, it appeared she was talking in rapid French. Fleur caught him looking at
her and Harry could see a light smile upturn her lips.

“I wonder what Hermione would say if she caught you staring at the Beauxbatons Champion,” Lily said, as they approached the front doors of the castle.

Harry blinked and looked away from Fleur. “I wasn't staring. I was – ah hell – it sounds bad either way. I was reading her lips, and realized she was talking in French to Madame Maxime.”

“So you were staring at her lips?” Lily asked, grinning.

“See!” Harry said, sighing, “It does sound bad when you say it.”

“I won't tell,” Lily said, “Actually I was testing you. I was rather surprised you were able to answer me. If I'm correct, Fleur was using a mild Allure on you.”

“‘Allure?’” Harry asked, “Oh, right... she's a Veela. I almost forgot. But, if she was using an Allure...”

“Then you were able to resist it,” Lily said, “Like a side-effect of your Occlumency skills. Well done. I wouldn't think too much on the reasons behind her Allure. She's probably just trying to make you slip up and embarrass yourself during the Weighing of the Wands. Means she's rather intimidated by you.”

“Interesting,” Harry said, “If you're right.”

“If I'm right,” Lily agreed. “You ready?”

“Yes,” Harry said, “From what we've read, the Weighing of the Wands is going to be the easiest thing I do today. Show my wand to the expert, and then take a few pictures. Barnabus' interview will be far more eventful.”

“Did you give your wand a proper cleaning?” Lily asked.

Harry winced at his mother's – probably unintentional – innuendo. “Yes, right before we left the tent.”

*And thinking of Hermione when you did it, Pup!* Harry could almost hear Sirius in his head.

“If I am correct,” Lily said, “The Wand expert is Garrick Ollivander. He's the best expert in the world. He hasn't seen me since I was eleven years old, but I have no doubts he'll know exactly who I am. So he'd notice anything off about your wand, even if he didn't make it.”

Harry merely nodded, unsure how to reply. Harry and Lily reached the door the same time as the Beauxbatons Headmistress and Champion.

“Madame Potter,” Madame Maxime said, “My Champion would like to speak to you and your son in private before we enter ze castle.”

“Very well,” Lily said, rather warily.

“More personal zan Triwizard business,” Madame Maxime said, obviously noticing Lily's wariness.
She then backed away and Fleur walked over to Harry and Lily.

“Bonjour, Madame Potter, Lord Potter,” Fleur said, “I am meeting you as a request by my sister, Gabrielle. Madame Potter, my sister has – ah – noticed your daughter from afar. Ze same age as Gabrielle, non? Twelve?”

“Yes,” Lily said “Rose is twelve.”

Fleur smiled. “Gabrielle is not wanting to go to ze 'Ogsmeade Village tomorrow. She 'as 'oped zat Rose may stay on ze Grounds instead of go to ze Village too. If so, zan Gabrielle has requested a... ah... picnic with Rose on ze Grounds tomorrow afternoon. It can be near your tents if you wish. Gabrielle would simply like to get to know someone her age.”

“I will speak to my daughter when we return to the tents,” Lily said, “And talk to her about your sister's invitation. Whether she accepts or not, I'll send a letter to you by owl.”

“I will be watchful for ze owl,” Fleur said, “Zank you, Madame Potter. I will see you shortly.”

She turned and walked with her Headmistress into the castle.

“Did Gabrielle just ask Rose out on a date through her sister?” Harry asked.

“She could just want to get to know somebody her age,” Lily said. “Like Fleur said.”

“Oh she could have been lying to her sister,” Harry said, “And is hoping for a date without her sister's knowledge.”

“I suppose Rose will just have to find out,” Lily said. “We'll tell her to try not to get her hopes up. But it did sound like a date request. Gabrielle choosing a picnic over a visit to the village.”

“While several couples are on dates in the village,” Harry said. “Yes, including me and Hermione.”

Lily sighed. “I expected Rose to be the one to ask Gabrielle out. This is quite surprising. But if it is a date, then Rose is getting her wish. Come on, Harry. We'll discuss this later. We shouldn't keep Minerva waiting.”

Harry nodded and walked into the castle's Entrance Hall with his mother. Minerva was waiting there with Madame Maxime and Fleur.

“Follow me, please,” Minerva said. “I will explain what I can as we make our way to the designated room.”

Minerva led them, not toward the Grand Staircase, but through a corridor on the other side of the Entrance Hall. As she led the foreigners, she explained the basis of what was going to be happening – a wand-expert would be checking the wands to see if they were in proper working order, then the Daily Prophet would be taking some photos of each Champion and the judges. Basically what Lily and Harry knew already. The only thing Minerva didn't know was that Barnabus would be interviewing Harry and his family in the House Potter Tent, so of course that went unsaid.

Soon they reached a door. Minerva opened the door, and Harry followed Fleur, Madame Maxime and Lily into what appeared to be an unused classroom. Ludo Bagman, Barnabus Cuffe, an unidentified Daily Prophet cameraman, and Angelina Johnson – one of the Hogwarts Champions –
were already there.

“Ah!” Ludo said, brightly when he saw them, “Here are the Beauxbatons and Ilvermorny Champions and their beautiful school representatives. The fourth Champion is not here yet, and neither is Headmaster Dumbledore, nor is the wand-expert whom I believe is being escorted by Albus. Make yourselves comfortable. They should be here momentarily!”

“Lady Potter,” Barnabus said, “Would it be alright if I speak to you momentarily?”

“No, now, Barney!” Ludo said, chuckling, “No need to be so quick with interviews yet!”

“It is alright, Mister Bagman,” Lily said.

“Thank you, Lady Potter,” Barnabus said, “How about we move away from eavesdroppers? Your son is welcome in the discussion too, of course. No, no pictures yet, Bozo.”

“Er... Bozo?” Harry asked, when they were away from prying ears.

“A nickname,” Barnabus chuckled, “His real name is Bob Zonko III. So, Bozo for short.”

“Zonko?” Lily echoed.

“Yes, the eldest son of that Zonko,” Barnabus said, “By birthright, he should be the next owner of the joke shop when his father passes. But he's a Squib, so his father gave that privilege to Bozo's brother. So I hired Bozo. Anyway. I was pleased with your invitation for an interview. Would I be right to assume that you wish to lead me and Bozo to your Quarters after the ceremony here?”

“Yes, sir,” Lily said, “That is the plan. Our whole family will take part.”

“Wonderful,” Barnabus said, smiling at Lily, then Harry. “I look forward to the interview.”

He bowed respectfully, then walked back over to his cameraman. At that moment, Albus Dumbledore entered with Neville Longbottom and an elderly wizard, who had a mysterious aura about him. Harry realized this was the wand-expert

“Wonderful!” Bagman said, “We're all here now!”

“Bartemius couldn't make it, Ludo?” Dumbledore asked.

“No, unfortunately not,” Ludo said, with an annoyed sigh, “Busy man, he is. Very busy, indeed. He'll be here for the First Task, though. That is a guarantee. Let us get underway then!”

“May I introduce Mr. Garrick Ollivander?” said Dumbledore, motioning to the wand-expert, as the man sat down in a chair. “He will be checking your wands to ensure that they are in good condition before the tournament.”

“Mademoiselle Delacour, could we have you first, please?” said Mr. Ollivander.

Fleur Delacour swept over to Mr. Ollivander and handed him her wand.

“Hmm,” he said.
He twirled the wand between his long fingers like a baton and it emitted a number of pink and gold sparks. Then he held it close to his eyes and examined it carefully.

“Yes,” he said quietly, “nine and a half inches... inflexible... rosewood... and containing... dear me...”

“An ’air from ze ’ead of a Veela,” said Fleur. “One of my grandmuzzer’s.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Ollivander, “yes, I’ve never used Veela hair myself, of course. I find it makes for rather temperamental wands... however, to each his own, and if this suits you...”

Mr. Ollivander ran his fingers along the wand, apparently checking for scratches or bumps; then he muttered, “Orchideous!” and a bunch of flowers burst from the wand tip.

“Very well, very well, it’s in fine working order,” said Mr. Ollivander, scooping up the flowers and handing them to Fleur with her wand. “Miss Johnson, you next.”

Fleur returned to her Headmistress' side, as Angelina walked over to Mr. Ollivander.

“Ah, now, this is one of mine, isn’t it?” said Mr. Ollivander, with much more enthusiasm, as Angelina handed over her wand. “The hair from the tail of a particularly kind female Centaur – she actually resides in the Forbidden Forest. Her clan, especially her father, disapproved of its use, but I did save the Centaur's life once while I was collecting ingredients one day – with Albus' permission of course.

“So it was sort of a life-debt. It was either some of her tail-hair or a Betrothal Contract. Oh, oh, I'm joking! I would have never done that! Ha! That gets the same reaction every time I tell the tale! No... she agreed to giving away a few strands of her tail-hair... wow, that was... nearly three decades ago. Time flies...

“Hmm... cedar. Ten inches. Supple. In fine working order, as it should be. You take care of it, I am happy to see.”

“Yes, sir,” Angelina said, “I always respect my wand.”

“I am happy to hear so, Miss Johnson!” Mr. Ollivander said.

He sent a stream of silver smoke rings across the room from the tip of Angelina's wand, pronounced himself satisfied, and then said, “Mister Potter, if you please. Or is it Lord, now, if the rumors tell me correctly?”

“It is,” Harry said.

“Congratulations, lad, on a deserving title,” Mr. Ollivander said, “I have a wonderful memory, Lord Potter. I remember the day your mother walked into my fine shop.”

He smiled over at Lily. “It is so good to see you alive and healthy, my Lady. My condolences on your loss.”

“Thank you, Mr. Ollivander,” Lily said, with a kind smile.

Harry offered his wand to the expert, who took it, and studied it.
“Ah,” Mr. Ollivander said, nodding, “A wand from the Noble Collection. I admit myself jealous of some of the ingredients Nathaniel Noble is able to collect. I really should go to America to collect some. But I'm afraid Nathaniel wouldn't be so happy about that. You don't steal from another wand-maker's zone. Improper, that is. Immoral.

“Ah, yes, and this is just one example of Noble's talent. A combination of two woods! Two! So astounding. The first is deadwood, very brittle. You know, Lord Potter, if this wand was just made out of deadwood, the wand would have broken after about a year's use.”

“Yes,” Harry said, “Mr. Noble said the same thing. So he used --”

“Shadowthorn,” Mr. Ollivander interrupted, “To remedy the brittleness. Yes, yes – a fine approach. An interesting combination indeed. And... hmm... the hair from the mane of a Wampus. Very tricky to obtain. The Wampus is rare to catch anyway. And they must be alive at the time the hair is removed, for the hair to work right in the core of a wand. A shame they reside mainly in North America. Twelve inches. Nice and springy. Good for spell-chain systems in dueling. You treat it regularly?”

“Just cleaned it today,” Harry said.

“Very good,” Mr. Ollivander said. “If this wand ever breaks, come by my shop in Diagon Alley. I am sure there is one there which has your name on it.”

Harry merely nodded. He hoped it wouldn't come to that. He loved his wand.

“Avis!” Mr. Ollivander exclaimed, and giving proof of the spell-chain he spoke of, he used different styles of the Avis charm, as several different species of birds flew out of the end and through the open window into the watery sunlight. “In fine working order. Which leaves... Mr. Longbottom.”

Harry walked back over to his mother, who smiled. He smiled back, stored his wand in his robes, watched Neville hand his wand over to Mr. Ollivander.

“I remember the day you walked into my store, Mr. Longbottom,” Mr. Ollivander said. “Well, walk is the wrong word. Run may be the better word. With your Gran, Augusta, hurrying after you. Lady Longbottom yelling you already had a wand. And I told her, how could you have one? You didn't come to me! And, ah, I had sensed your father's wand on you. It would have never worked well for you, my boy. I said that then and I stand by it. Where is that wand, may I ask?”

“Um... above the fireplace in the sitting room of my Manor,” Neville said, “Beside a photo of my father.”

“A fine place to put it,” Mr. Ollivander said, “I do hope one day he can hold it once again. It belongs in his hand. That's where I put it after all. I still remember the day. Just like I remember the day I placed this wand in your hand. Let's see. Containing a single hair from the tail of a particularly fine male unicorn... must have been seventeen hands; nearly gored me with his horn after I plucked his tail. Cherry... Thirteen inches... pleasantly springy. Treated well?”

“Yes, sir,” Neville said.

“Mmmmm,” Ollivander said.

He made a fountain of wine shoot out of it, and handed it back to Neville, announcing that it was still
“Thank you all,” said Dumbledore, “Gryffindors, you may go back to your lessons now — you might as well go to the second-scheduled lesson of the day, as the first is almost over...”

The man named Bozo cleared his throat loudly.

“Photos, Dumbledore, photos!” cried Bagman excitedly. “All the judges and champions, what do you think, Barney?”

“Er — yes, let’s do those first,” said Barnabus Cuffe, “And then perhaps some individual shots.”

The photographs took a long time. Madame Maxime cast everyone else into a shadow – the Shadow Panther inside Harry wanted so badly to appear, jump out of the shadow and scare everyone -- wherever she stood, and the photographer couldn’t stand far enough back to get her into the frame; eventually she had to sit while everyone else stood around her. Fleur was smiling pretty, looking beautiful, standing behind her Headmistress' chair. Angelina and Neville were standing on either side of their Headmaster, and Lily stood between Harry and Ludo Bagman.

Harry never liked taking pictures – outside of family pictures that is -- but he smiled as well as as he ever did.

Then there were individual photos, and photos with the Champions and their respective School representative. Interestingly enough, to Harry, Neville didn't look very pleased to be standing next to his Headmaster. Something to take note of for later, Harry decided.

Finally it was time to leave. Albus Dumbledore was very shocked, rather confused, and slightly angry when Barnabus Cuffe and Bozo didn't accept his offer to escort them out of the castle. Instead the Daily Prophet representatives left with Harry and Lily, leaving a thoughtful Dumbledore in their shadows, staring at them as they made their way to the Entrance Hall.

Ten minutes later, Harry and Lily led the Daily Prophet representatives into the House Potter Tent. Remus, Sirius and Rose were there waiting, and they jumped up when they saw Barnabus Cuffe.

“An enchanting tent, you have!” Barnabus said, looking around. “Makes for some nice photo backdrops, though perhaps it would be better to take them outside on the Grounds with view of the castle.”

“Oh, but our Champion doesn't attend Hogwarts, Barney,” Sirius said, “So why should the castle be in our photos?”

“An excellent point,” Barnabus said, nodding. “Bozo! Look for a good place to take photos in here while I do the interview.”

Bozo nodded. Barnabus sat down in a chair when offered, and Lily, Harry and Rose sat together on the longer of the two sofas, while Sirius relaxed on the other sofa, and Remus sat in the remaining chair.

“I'll be using a Dicta Quill, you understand,” Barnabus said, as he removed his supplies from his briefcase, “Makes for better interviews.”

“As long as it doesn't write down words we don't say,” Sirius said, “Then we're fine with it.”
“No, no, that's what a Quick-Quotes Quill does,” Barnabus said, then went quite red in the face, “Not that we have any of those, mind you. Ahem... how should we begin this?”

“I assume you're writing two separate articles?” Lily asked. “An article about the Triwizard Tournament, and then our family's interview?”

“Yes, of course,” Barnabus said.

“Then you may start with Harry's interview as Ilvermorny Champion,” Lily said, “And then we'll give you some information for the other interview, and you can ask questions you take from the information. And others, of course.”

Barnabus adopted a thoughtful look, then he nodded. “I can agree to that.”

“Excellent,” Lily said, “You ready, Harry?”

“Yes, Mom,” Harry said, “You may begin, Mr. Cuffe.”

“Barnabus, or Barney please, Lord Potter,” Barnabus said, “Especially if you insist I call you Harry.”

Harry nodded and relaxed back onto the sofa.

“Ilvermorny had a most interesting way of choosing its contenders for the Tournament,” Barnabus began the interview. “Not done before in past Tournaments. Would you please describe that for the British readers who would have never heard of such a strategy, and how you found yourself in contention which lead you to where you are now?”

So Harry began with the day he received a letter from Ilvermorny which announced the contention tournament, which allowed wizards and witches fourteen years old and up to compete. Then he discussed how Sirius had helped him train for the tournament using the boot camp strategy. Then he discussed the contention in some length, and how he was the youngest to compete, and how the rest were older. Then how he placed third in the tournament.

“I find it curious, Harry,” Barnabus said. “Am I to understand that the MACUSA allowed someone as young as fourteen to enter a contention tournament that would place them in a dangerous tournament meant for seventeen year olds?”

“Perhaps they decided the Ilvermorny students are taught a better curriculum,” Harry said, shrugging, “And decided that someone as young as fourteen had a better chance in the Tournament then someone as young as fourteen would when taught at Hogwarts or other schools.”

“Is that a slight against Hogwarts Champion Neville Longbottom?” Barnabus asked.

“Why would it be?” Harry countered, “I didn't single out Neville. I spoke of schools in general. I don't believe in slighting others who don't deserve it. I am just giving my honest opinion.”

“Third place in the contention tournament is impressive,” Barnabus said, “But you didn't place higher than that. So why are you the Champion and not those two students who placed higher?”

“My mother told me a few days ago that if the point of the tournament was to pick the Champion who would be in the Triwizard Tournament,” Harry said, “Then only the Champion would have
placed their name into the Goblet of Fire. All ten delegates had an equal chance, just like the numerous Hogwarts students who had a chance. I don't know why the Goblet picked me out of everyone.”

“Do you believe there was perhaps some foul play in it?” Barnabus said, “Like the rumors of foul play in Champion Longbottom's case?”

“Of course not!” Harry exclaimed. “I entered my name into the Goblet of Fire. Neville did not! I was surprised when my name came out. I don't know why the Goblet picked me. Ask me that after the Tournament is over. Maybe I'll have the answer then.”

“I will mark my calendar, Lord Potter,” Barnabus said. “And how do you think your chances are in the tournament?”

“I consider myself to have enough talent to compete,” Harry said. “Much of that comes from the lessons I learned from my mother, and Sirius Black and Remus Lupin. They're still teaching me and training me. I suppose it depends on how I stack up to the other Champions in the end. Do I believe I have a chance to win? Yes. Will I win? I don't want to spoil it for your readers. Save that for the post-Tournament interview, Barnabus.”

Lily, Rose, Sirius and Remus chuckled. Barnabus gave an amused smile.

“You are a pleasure to interview, Harry,” Barnabus said. “And how do you feel about your fellow Champions?”

“I don't know them at all, sir,” Harry said. “I can't begin to answer that right now.”

Barnabus nodded. “I heard an interesting story from Rubeus Hagrid, Harry. He says you had a rather interesting time last Sunday in the Great Hall of Hogwarts during lunch. He says you put on a show.”

“What does that have to do with the Tournament, Barnabus?” Lily asked.

“Were you putting on the show to intimidate your fellow Champions, Harry?” Barnabus continued.

“It had nothing to do with the Tournament,” Harry said. “It was House Potter business. So I hope you can accept my answer of ‘no comment’.”

Barnabus blushed lightly and nodded. “I think that is the end of that interview. Thank you, Harry.”

“You're welcome,” Harry said, “I look forward to rereading my interview word for word – at least those questions I did give an answer for – so I can review how I did.

Barnabus chuckled and nodded. “Of course, of course! Let us move on to the other interview. You said you had some things to tell me first before I asked some questions?”

“Yes,” Lily said. “Let us start with some tidbits from our meeting at Gringotts that we can give you. Mind you, we can't give you out every piece of information. And we have some secrets we like to keep. So if there are tidbits we reveal later that aren't revealed today, I hope you won't raise a fuss about it.”

“Of course I won't!” Barnabus said, “I am quite familiar with the need for confidentiality, and when
to give out the right information at the right time. Explain whatever you feel the readers of the Daily Prophet are ready to know.”

“Well, first off we'll start with some information that shocked even me,” Lily said. “I came across some personal revelations that nobody told me about in all my years of life. I, Lady Lily Potter – and my children Harry and Rose – are Purebloods.”

Barnabus' eyes widened and he glanced at his Dicta Quill, obviously to make sure it was working correctly, and writing what was said.

Lily told Barnabus nearly everything Keeper Ragnok had told her about her adoption from her parents' kidnapping to their rumored murder – though keeping out the information about Ravenclaw and the reason for the kidnapping being the interrogation about Founder's Artifacts – and then her going to an orphanage under the name of “Jane Doe” until her parents – those she knew as her parents – adopted her and named her Lily.

“Your parents never told you that you were adopted?” Barnabus asked.

“Never,” Lily said. “Not even after they found out I was a witch. I guess they were planning to tell me when I turned eighteen – considered of-age in Muggle society. Sadly they died in an automobile accident before my eighteenth birthday. I never saw reason to take an Inheritance Test until Keeper Ragnok suggested so last Sunday. Nobody ever told me my children are Pureblood, even during the yearly Hospital Check-ups in America.”

“Thank you for revealing this to me, Lady Potter,” Barnabus said. “I am sure it will cause waves amongst the readers. Any more shocking announcements?”

“A Potter Family Secret until now,” Harry said, “I am the Lord of three Houses, though I respectfully choose to keep one of those Houses a secret for strategic reasons. I am Lord Potter and Lord Peverell.”

“Peverell as in the name of the famous Three Brothers which inspired Beedle The Bard's Tale?” Barnabus asked.

“Yes, sir,” Harry said; he showed Barnabus the his Lord's ring as proof.

“A Pureblood Lord of Three Houses,” Barnabus said. “Am I correct to assume you fall under the category of those affected by what is known as the 'Last Generation Loophole' of the Pureblood Heritage Act?”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said, “I am required to marry three women to extend the bloodlines of all three Houses.”

“Women?” Barnabus asked. “Not Witches?”

“Nothing in the Pureblood Heritage Act prevents me from marrying a Muggle, Barnabus,” Harry said. “I am only required to marry one Pureblood of the three.”

Barnabus nodded and quickly checked his Quill's process again.

“Any particular young women on your mind, Harry?” Barnabus asked, “Do you have a girlfriend? Or are you a single bachelor?”
"No comment until it is publicly revealed in a style of my choice – which isn't the media," Harry said. "No offense, Barnabus."

"None taken, Lord Potter," Barnabus said, "Any other nuggets to reveal?"

"Aside from the fact that I have officially become Lord Black, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black," Sirius said, "Nothing more."

Barnabus nodded, glancing at his Quill again.

"I assume you will be claiming the rightful seat of House Black during the Winter Solstice Session in the Wizengamot, Lord Black," Barnabus said, then glanced at Harry, "But even as a Lord, you're still fourteen years of age, Lord Potter. Only those seventeen and older may take their seat. Do you have a Proxy in mind?"

"My mother," Harry said, "will be Proxy. I won't reveal exactly how many seats she'll be claiming for strategic purposes."

"That should make the political minds of the Wizengamot nervous," Barnabus said, grinning. "I like that. Makes for better articles. And what about you, Lord Black? Do you have an Heir to your name back in America who will be the future Lord of your House? Do you have a Lady waiting for you?"

"No," Sirius said, then grinned, "But I am currently looking for anyone interested in the job."

"What about you, Lady Potter?" Barnabus asked. "Did you find love after the tragic loss of your husband?"

"No," Lily said. "My dearest loves are my children, and my late husband. Nobody else has been able to find any room in the space they take up in my heart. I don't know if that will change in the future, but unlike Lord Black I am not actively searching."

Barnabus nodded. "Tell me about your lives in America. The three of you teach at Ilvermorny, is that right? Why did you stay in America? Why did you never return to your homeland until now? Why did you let nobody know you were alive and well?"

Over the next few minutes Lily, Sirius and Remus answered those questions, and a few more.

"Miss Potter, I hope you don't mind I ask one question," Barnabus said, turning to Rose; who blushed and shook her head. "This is your first time in Great Britain, is it not? How do you find it? To your liking?"

"I haven't explored very much of it yet, sir," Rose said. "I believe a famous person once said 'It is a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to stay'. I feel the same way."

"Wasn't that quote referring to a cemetery, Rose?" Harry asked, grinning.

Rose grinned. "Yes, big brother. I believe it was."

Harry, Lily, Sirius and Remus laughed. Barnabus simply looked confused.

Barnabus cleared his throat. "I believe that completes the interview I had in mind. Let's take some
pictures, and then we'll be done.”

“Yes, I am sure you have interviews with the other Champions to get to,” Harry said.

Barnabus stammered. “Ah, yes. Other interviews. I actually am a very busy man today! I will be writing to the other Champions this afternoon, and if I get answers to the questions, I'll add them into the article! If not, there will be a follow-up article with them. Bozo!”

Several pictures were taken. A Group photo of everyone, plus Barnabus. Then single pictures of everyone. Lily with Harry and Rose. Harry and Rose together. Sirius and Remus together. Sirius and Lily together – for what reason, Barnabus never commented – and the children with Remus and Sirius. Then Barnabus with one-on-one pictures with Harry, Lily, and Sirius – those were for this personal collection. Remus wasn’t asked, and Lily didn’t allow Rose to have one with Barnabus – Harry figured she was just being a mother.

Finally, after receiving incentives of future interviews if the articles were good reads, Barnabus and Bozo left the tent and started making their way off the Grounds.

The extended family sat down at the dining room table with bottles of butterbeer.

“Good interviews?” Harry said.

“You did very well, Harry,” Lily said, “Very good answers.”

“Some which might come back to bite you, though,” Sirius said. “Not revealing your status with Hermione and Daphne, for example.”

Harry shrugged. “What is the worst that can happen? I'll just turn down the girls that ask, be it face-to-face, or letters.”

“A fine idea,” Remus said. “And the fact that you revealed the claim to numerous seats in the Wizengamot, without revealing who they were? Was that on purpose?”

“Yes,” Harry said, “Barnabus was right. It would make the political minds of the Wizengamot nervous, and that could work in our favor.”

Sirius barked out a laugh. “Mister Padfoot approves of Mister Shadow's line of thinking!”

“What I wouldn't give to be in Albus Dumbledore's mind when he reads the articles,” Lily said. “You should have seen the look on his face when he heard Barnabus was coming with Harry and I. He knew we were going to be interviewed.”

“Do you think he wanted to prevent it?” Remus asked.

“Probably,” Lily said, “Or at least come with us to witness the interview so he can know what we revealed before anyone else does.”

Sirius laughed. “Which was quite a lot. Ooh, I cannot wait to see the articles tomorrow, and look at some of the reactions of those around Hogwarts. Pureblood Lily and the Potters! Harry, Lord of multiple houses, future husband to three wives!”

Harry groaned. “Why did we agree to reveal that?”
“Because you already revealed it to your girlfriend,” Lily said, “And we're revealing it to Daphne tonight. So no surprises for those who will and may be your future wives.”

“Right... that meeting is tonight, isn't it?” Harry said. “That will be interesting. But I am curious about one thing. Rose... which Marauder coached you to give that quote in your answer. You're not one to give quotes out in speeches.”

Rose grinned and looked at Remus.

Remus smiled shyly. “I thought it might be fun. Plus it gave Rose something to say.”

“Never question why Moony is a Marauder,” Sirius said, laughing. “He may be a stickler for rules, but he is a Marauder. We didn't just let him in because it gave us an excuse to become Animagi.”

Remus glared at Sirius playfully.

“There was something else I wanted to say to Rose,” Harry said, feigning a look of deep thought, “What was it? Darn... can't remember.”

“Harry!” Rose whined, “Your memory is excellent. Quit teasing me, big brother!”

“Oh, right!” Harry said, “Mom and I were approached by Fleur Delacour. You remember her, Rose. Your crush is her younger sister.”

Rose went pink and her eyes widened as she looked at Harry. “What did she say?”

“Well, it depends on whether or not you want to go to Hogsmeade tomorrow,” Harry said.

“Why wouldn't I?” Rose asked.

“Oh,” Harry said, feigning disappointment. “Then I guess Mom needs to write to Gabrielle and tell her you decline going on a picnic with her on the Grounds tomorrow. Hogsmeade Village is probably a better – mmmph!”

Rose had covered Harry's mouth with her hand.

“Gabrielle invited me on a picnic tomorrow?” Rose asked.

“Yes, she did,” Lily said, since Harry couldn't answer.

“Like... a... a d-date?” Rose asked.

“Maybe,” Lily said, “But it may just be a friendly invitation. So don't get your hopes up. Should I tell Gabrielle you accept?”

Rose moved her hand away from Harry's mouth so she could raise them in celebration as she squealed in happiness.

“Yes, yes, yes!” Rose squealed.

She stood up, and babbled incoherently of needing to find something to wear for the picnic.
Harry, Lily, Sirius and Remus laughed. Then Sirius wiped fake tears from his eyes.

“My little princess is going on a date,” Sirius said. “At twelve! She beat you Harry, when it came to age, at getting a date!”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Because you embarrassed the one girl I tried to ask out that year, by congratulating me in front of the whole House! No wonder she said no!”

“I forgot about that,” Sirius muttered, then waved a dismissive hand, “Stop taking the focus off of Rose, Shadow. It is rude. A date at twelve. No one ever doubt my teaching skills again! Here is proof that I taught her so well!”

“Unfortunately,” Lily said, though she was grinning. “Okay... I need to write a letter to Fleur and her sister telling them Rose accepts the invitation.”

“Understatement!” Harry and Sirius said in unison; then grinned at each other.

Lily smiled. “Also, we have an important meeting tonight with Daphne and her girlfriend. This could be life-changing stuff for not only Daphne and her girlfriend, but for Harry too. So let's discuss it, while I write the letter.”

And so they did. Harry was becoming very nervous as the meeting approached. He knew Daphne was very secretive and cautious about her girlfriend. How would she – and her girlfriend – react to their ideas?

Chapter End Notes

And that will be discovered next chapter!

Shadowthorn is a fictional tree/plant/etc. I've seen it used in elf-lore, and I liked the name. So I used it. Deadwood is basically dead tree bark from any particular tree. In this case, desert trees.

Perhaps you caught the reference to Noble Collection, the real-life Harry Potter wand-makers?

Before anyone asks, Sirius and Lily will NOT have a romantic relationship. But there might be insinuations of it from others.

Next Chapter: The meeting with Daphne and Tracey. And maybe the Daily Prophet articles and Dumbledore's reaction. Betrothal meeting, Rose and Gabrielle's picnic, Harry and Hermione's second date, and Neville and Augusta's meeting will probably span TWO chapters, but none of it next chapter.

Hope you liked this chapter!
Strengthening Relationships

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: A few reviewers asked me if I have a backlog of chapters, and I just keep publishing them constantly. The answer is no, at least not at the moment, and at least not with the last six chapters or so. For example, this chapter was finished the night before it was published, right before I went to bed. And I have yet to start the next chapter at the time this chapter was published. When I'm on a roll, know where the story is headed, and have some free time to do so, I can write pretty quickly and easily.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Friday, November 6th, 1994

Dressed in the same outfit he wore for the Weighing of the Wands, Harry was standing outside the House Potter tent, as he waited for Daphne and her girlfriend. In the distance, he could see two girls walking toward him. One of them had blonde-hair, so he knew it was the two Slytherins.

As he waited for them to approach, he thought about his girlfriend. He had just finished up having dinner with her in the Ilvermorny tent, where he discussed the Weighing of the Wands Ceremony, and the interview with Barnabus. They also discussed plans for what they should do at Hogsmeade. Soon it was nearing eight-o-clock when Daphne and her girlfriend had planned to come to the House Potter tent.

Harry escorted Hermione back to her own tent, and had a nice kiss. When Hermione tried to tell him 'good night', Harry promised he would come see her before she went to bed. She told him she'd meet him in the same spot at nine-thirty – which would give Harry ample time to meet with Daphne and Tracey, and Hermione enough time to do homework – where she could only say good night with a kiss. Hermione giggled and promised she would. Harry had then pecked her on the lips, and watched as Hermione retreated to her tent. Then he walked back to his tent, where he was now standing.

Harry's reverie broke, as Daphne and her girlfriend walked up to him.

“Lord Potter,” Daphne said, “Good evening. This is my girlfriend – and best friend since we were four – Tracey Davis.”

Tracey Davis was a beautiful brunette with striking blue eyes, behind horn-rimmed glasses, which were looking at him with a critical gaze. She was slightly shorter than Daphne, but was just as attractive as her girlfriend.

“Nice to finally meet my girlfriend's Betrothed,” Tracey said.

“Tracey,” Daphne said, “You make it sound like he has been deliberately avoiding you.”

“I suppose I have,” Harry said, “If only to keep a respectful distance until Daphne introduced you, Miss Davis.”
"You can call me Tracey," Tracey said.

"If you call me Harry," Harry said, "Both of you. Same goes for those you'll be meeting, after proper greetings and introductions."

Tracey nodded. "Is Granger in there?"

"Tracey!" Daphne scolded.

"Sorry," Tracey said, "Is Hermione in there?"

"No," Harry said, "This is only a meeting between the two of you and me and my family. Shall we go inside?"

"Yes," Daphne said. "We can't be here very long. We don't need anyone in Slytherin House noticing we're gone too long. Library excuses only go as long as someone doesn't notice we're not there."

"Then I promise to keep our meeting as short as possible without too much exposition," Harry said.

He motioned toward the tent, and the Slytherins hesitated for a moment before they stepped into the tent. Harry followed them in. Dressed formally, all four members of Harry's extended family stood from their seats in the sitting room as the girls and Harry entered. Harry's family introduced themselves, then Tracey and Daphne followed suit.

"You may sit together on the sofa if you wish," Lily said, "Would you two like bottles of butterbeer?"

The girls accepted the offer and sat down on the offered sofa. Harry sat down with her mother and sister, while Remus and Sirius sat down in the chairs. Lily summoned several bottles of butterbeer and set them on the coffee table separating the sofas and chairs, and each person seated took one.

"If you don't mind," Lily said, "I think I'll begin this meeting. First of all, we thank the both of you for coming this evening. I know how secretive you are about your relationship. So much so that your parents do not know. Am I correct?"

Daphne and Tracey slowly nodded.

"Do not give up hope on the chance that your parents will accept your relationship," Lily said. "I know there are those who do not approve of such relationships, because they do nothing to help better future generations of Houses and bloodlines, especially amongst purebloods. Everyone inside this room finds that belief utterly disgusting, and say 'so what?'"

Daphne and Tracey raised their eyebrows as they looked around at everyone nodding in agreement with Lily.

"Perhaps it would encourage the both of you to know that my own daughter, Rose, is bisexual?" Lily asked, "And is actively interested in starting a same-sex relationship of her own? Something we accept happily?"

Daphne and Tracey looked shocked as they looked at Rose who smiled kindly. Rose had given permission to her mother to inform Daphne and Tracey about her sexuality.
“So as you can see,” Lily said, “There is hope that your parents will accept your relationship. Tracey – I can call you that, right?” Tracey nodded. “If you were to send owl post to your parents inviting them to meet you at Hogsmeade tomorrow, would they come, and would you be alright with doing that.”

Tracey cleared her throat and looked at Daphne. “I wrote to my parents earlier today and told them I wanted to say something very important to them. They... they haven't answered back yet.”

“If they meet with you tomorrow,” Lily said, “Would you be up to asking them to meet with us when we also meet with Daphne's father for the Betrothal Contract?”

Tracey nodded. “I could ask them, but I don't know if they would accept.”

“Have you decided whether or not you're going to tell your parents about your relationship tomorrow?” Lily asked.

“We... we wanted to make that decision after we met with you,” Daphne said. “We wanted to know why you were so interested in talking to us, and why you suggested we reveal our relationship to them.”

“Tracey,” Lily said, “Do you believe your father will place you in a Betrothal Contract?”

“I wouldn't be surprised if he made it my birthday present for my fifteenth or sixteenth birthday,” Tracey said. “My fifteenth birthday is in January. But... if I reveal my sexuality, and my relationship, I believe he may tell me I am Betrothed by this time next week, and that I have accept to be courted by the boy right away. My older brother is married, and has a child on the way. The next generation of the House of Davis is already beginning. But my father will want me to do my part in bringing forth the next generation.”

“So... your father hasn't accepted a Betrothal Contract yet?” Sirius asked, “There's absolutely no Contract with your name on it that is official?”

“None to my knowledge,” Tracey said. “Why?”

“Because I'd like to offer you a Contract,” Harry said.

Tracey frowned. “A Betrothal Contract?”

“Not if that isn't what you want,” Harry said. “No... it would be a Consort Contract. Not my Consort. Daphne's when she becomes my wife. A Wife's Consort. But since I am her future husband, and you accept the Contract, you would be a member of my House. Therefore it is my job to pen the Contract, not Daphne's nor her father's.”

“What would I be required to do as a Wife's Consort?” Tracey asked.

“Not much,” Harry said, “Dedicate yourself to being involved with Daphne for what will likely be the rest of your life.”

“So you want no children from me?” Tracey asked.

“You'd never even have to kiss me, if you didn't want to,” Harry said; “Forget all the other intimate
stuff. I would never visit your Quarters if you didn't want that, and if Daphne wanted to spend several nights with you, she would be welcomed to do so, encouraged even. However, if you ever want a child – even if you want to raise them more with Daphne than I, and let the children have two mothers – I would do my part. As a Wife's Consort, your children would take the Davis or Greengrass name, even though they would have my blood. But they would always be a member of my House."

“Harry,” Daphne said, “Husbands whose wife also have a Wife's Consorts, always end up with a Mistress on the side.”

“Yes, unless said wife is not their only wife,” Harry said.

Daphne and Tracey's eyes widened in shock as they looked at him.

“Harry,” Daphne said, “Are you telling me...?”


“Gryffindor?!” Tracey yelped.

“I do hope your Slytherin pride isn't hurt by that,” Sirius said, grinning.

Tracey snorted. “Words only said by a true Gryffindor.”

“Thank you for that compliment, Miss Davis,” Sirius quipped.

“Three Houses,” Daphne said, “Three wives. So is that why you got your eyes on Hermione?”

“Hermione's my girlfriend,” Harry said, grinning at Daphne and Tracey's mild surprise, “She has been since Sunday evening. Whether or not she'll be my wife is her choice, and I am likely not to know her decision for several months, maybe years. But yes, she's very, very high on the list of possible wives. She'd be a fine Lady Potter.”

“So I'm not going to be Lady Potter?” Daphne asked.

“I'm following in the footsteps of my father, his father, et cetera,” Harry said, “And marrying someone of my choice, and they'll be Lady Potter.”

Daphne nodded. “So Peverell or Gryffindor.”

Tracey snorted. “Don't need to ask which one you would choose.”

“Gryffindor?” Sirius asked grinning.

Sirius laughed, and Harry grinned when the Slytherins glared at him.

Sirius cleared his throat. “There's something else I wanted to talk to you about, Miss Davis. And know this is just a very slim possibility, but it is an open offer. On the possible chance that something life-changing happens to you tomorrow regarding your family. Life-changing in a bad way.”

“Such as?” Tracey asked slowly.
“Your father disowns you when you announce your sexuality to him,” Sirius said.

Tracey looked quite emotional and also horrified. “Oh. Well... it has been on my mind as a possibility. Why do you bring that up?”

“Because if it happens,” Sirius said, “I would offer you a blood adoption into the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black. Officially you would be my daughter. If I don't marry and have an Heir, you would officially be first-in-line for Lady Black.”

Sirius cleared his throat again. “However, saying that, it would come with a... proviso.”

“Oh?” Tracey asked.

“Harry's offer to you about children would not just be a suggestion,” Sirius said. “If I don't have a wife, with the chance of an Heir on the way, I would ask you to bring forth the next generation of the House of Black... and I'd ask you to do so with Harry. Though his offer of the child still having two official mothers would still stand.”

Tracey stared at Sirius in silence for a long minute, obviously thinking. She had to remove her glasses because tears were coming to her eyes.

“I have a question,” Tracey said. “If I become your adopted daughter, what would happen for my future? Such as the rest of my education. Where I live. So-and-so.”

“Well,” Sirius said, “It would be up to you with much of it. If you want to continue to be a Hogwarts student, you could do so. Though you’d be living with us in America when we return. If you want to go to Ilvermorny instead, we would help to transfer you there.”

“Daphne, if you wish to change schools if Tracey does,” Harry said, “I would – with your permission – force a proviso in the Betrothal Contract that requires you to be a student in the same school as me.”

“Then I could go to school with Tracey still,” Daphne said, “And... live with you during the summers?”

“And you'd be able to visit your parents for a vacation if you wish,” Harry said.

“While we're still here at Hogwarts until June,” Sirius said, “And the adoption strategy takes place, I'd ask you to live in the same tent where Hermione and Luna are currently living.”

“Daphne,” Harry said, “You'd get the same offer if that happens.”

“If Tracey gets disowned and becomes Lord Black's daughter,” Daphne said, “It would definitely be better for us to no longer be in the Slytherin dungeons. Hell... we might accept your offer once our relationship becomes public even if our parents accept our relationship. Oh, Merlin! What will happen if my...?”

“If your parents disown you,” Harry said, “You would live with us.”

“Blood adoptions for both of you girls would be rather strange,” Sirius said, “Especially if you're going to be... married. I know my House has a history of in-House marriage, but this would definitely be a first!”
Tracey and Daphne giggled. Daphne looked at Remus.

“What about you, Remus?” Daphne said, “In the blood adoption sense.”

“That wouldn't be wise,” Remus said, slowly.

“Why?” Daphne said.

“Because, Miss Greengrass,” Remus said, sighing. “I am a werewolf.”

Daphne's eyes widened. “Oh, I see. That's... cool.”

Tracey slowly nodded. “Yeah. Cool.”

Remus smiled wryly. “Thank you for thinking so. And not running out of here screaming.”

“You can't be too bad if Lady Potter allowed you to help her raise her children,” Daphne said, smiling.

“Nope,” Lily said, “He isn't that bad at all.”

Remus went slightly pink at that.

“So,” Sirius said, “Do you accept my offer, Miss Davis? If things go very south, tomorrow? I do hope they do not. But on the off-chance.”

“I accept your offer, Lord Black,” Tracey said, “If things go south, you have permission to inform my parents of your offer to me... even before they try to disown me. Maybe it will make them think twice.”

“I would be happy to do that,” Sirius said.

“So do the both of you accept the idea of a Consort's Contract?” Harry asked. “I understand you’re fourteen and this could be expecting way too much of both of you.”

“Harry,” Daphne said, “I'm a fourteen year old witch with a Betrothal Contract. I had a feeling I'd be in a Betrothal Contract at one point in time ever since my parents told me about the Pureblood Heritage Act. I learned to prepare for commitment at the tender age of seven years old. Tracey and I both sat down on the same evening we became a couple, and we promised each other we wouldn't let Betrothal Contracts and boys ruin our relationship.

“You saved both our lives yesterday, when you mentioned the words 'Wife's Consort' to me. We wouldn't be agreeing to go public with our relationship – heck, I would not have brought Tracey here and revealed my girlfriend to you – if both of us weren't ready for commitment. Even at fourteen.”

“What I have with Daphne,” Tracey said, “I cried myself to sleep the night I realized my relationship with her was only temporary. I'd get a few months or a few years of fun, with her, before my father forced me into a marriage with a boy who I would never be attracted to. Who I would forced to have their children – and go through the steps that made that possible, which as I'm sure you can guess is not something I'm eager to do – and live the rest of my life with in what would probably be an
unhappy marriage.

“Harry – Lord Potter. If I had to sacrifice a year or two of intimacy with anyone, just to produce a child or two, so that I could spend my life with my best friend... I'd do so. And right now, you're the only boy I'd do that with. Because you're the one that gave us this offer. I don't see myself falling out of love with the one girl whose been there for me since the age of four. I want to be a Wife's Consort of Daphne... I've wanted that for so long. I just never realized it until Daphne told me those words yesterday.”

“Even if it costs you your family?” Harry asked.

“Family who doesn't accept me one-hundred percent isn't family,” Tracey said, venomously.

“I completely agree,” Lily said. “I know exactly where you're coming from. Except for me, it is that I'm a witch. Of course... the difference between me and you, is that the person who I'm speaking of, isn't truly my sister by blood.”

“What do you mean?” Daphne asked.

“And that's where our next announcement comes in,” Harry said, “We wanted to tell you this before you could see it in the Daily Prophet. My mother was adopted when she was a week old. She's a Pureblood witch – and so are my sister and me.”

Daphne and Tracey's jaws dropped.

“That explains why you have to marry three women,” Daphne said, “I was rather confused. Because the Last Generation Loophole is a Pureblood law in the Pureblood Heritage Act. You're a pureblood.”

“So I have to follow the laws of the act,” Harry said, nodding.

“Ho-lee Merlin,” Tracey quipped. “How long have you know this?”

“Since last Saturday,” Lily said, “I knew nothing of my adoption until then.”

She then explained the same story she had told Barnabus Cuffe earlier that day, except with the addition of the Ravenclaw information. Daphne and Tracey's jaws dropped.

“So you're descended from Gryffindor and Ravenclaw?” Daphne asked, looking at Harry.

“Yes,” Harry said, “But due to House Ravenclaw bylaws, Rose will be Lady Ravenclaw when my mother passes away in the distant future. She will pass on the Ravenclaw title and bloodline to her children.”

Rose smiled and nodded. “And I would be happy to do so. Even if I am someone's Second Wife.”

Tracey whistled. “Any more revelations? Are you Lord Slytherin too?”

“Because I would be your Lady Slytherin!” Daphne said, grinning.

“Nope,” Harry said, “Only the descendant of two Hogwarts Founders.”
“I have a question I just thought of,” Tracey said. “Daphne invited me to the Children of the Great Alliance meeting. What would happen if I am disowned tomorrow?”

“The House of Black will be joining the Great Alliance,” Sirius said, “You'd sit at the table as the future Lady Black.”

Tracey nodded. “So either way I’m invited on Sunday.”

“Yes,” Harry said.

“I'll be here,” Tracey said.

The second-to-last topic they discussed was their plans regarding the Betrothal Contract. Daphne accepted every one, including that she'd move in with him immediately after finishing her education. They also agreed to adding the Wife’s Consort Contract into the Betrothal Contract, and – on the off-chance Tracey became part of the House of Black, Daphne agreed to the earlier stipulation that she'd attend the same school as her Betrothed.

The last topic was discussing the strategy that would reveal Daphne and Tracey's relationship to their parents, which included inviting Tracey's parents into the Betrothal meeting, then creating a 'confrontation' that would either end with Lord Davis accepting Tracey's lifestyle, or Lord Black announcing he would be adopting her.

Then Harry offered the two girls one last thing. House Potter Protection. After half-a-minute's thought, both girls accepted, though they both also said they could and would protect themselves, and didn't expect him to protect them in every confrontation. Harry promised he'd only step in at the most heated confrontations. Then they performed the ritual that brought both girls under his Protection.

When the meeting was over, Harry escorted the Slytherins out. Almost immediately as soon as they stepped out of the tent, Daphne shocked Harry by pouncing on him and hugging him.

“Thank you for what you did for us tonight, Harry,” she said, as she held her head on his shoulder, still hugging him. “You gave us a gift tonight. Whatever happens tomorrow, I owe you a debt that cannot be repaid. Thank you. We will always have your back, and if we're ever mean to you again, remind us of this evening.”

Daphne kissed him on the cheek, then backed away.

“I hope you don't expect me to hug you,” Tracey said, “And definitely my lips are going nowhere near you. But I support everything my girlfriend just said. Thank you.”

“You're both welcome,” Harry said.

“We'll see you tomorrow at the Three Broomsticks,” Daphne said.

“Good luck to us all,” Tracey quipped.

Harry and Daphne laughed and agreed. They exchanged farewells, then Daphne and Tracey headed back toward the castle. Harry watched them until they stepped into the castle. Then he looked at his wrist-watch. Nowhere near Hermione's requested time to meet her. He told Lily he was going to visit Hermione. She told him to be on his best behavior, and be back before ten-o'clock. He agreed and
walked over to Hermione's tent. When Hermione told him he could come in, he walked in and found her sitting at her dining room table, working on homework.

“I hope you don't mind me visiting you until, at the latest, ten-o-clock,” Harry said.

“Of course not,” Hermione said, “Luna's taking a bath. So if you have to go to the bathroom, you'll have to return to your tent.”

“Or pee on the Grounds,” Harry joked.

“Harry!” Hermione admonished him, before giggling.

Harry grinned, walked over to the table, and bent down to her for a sweet kiss. It lasted for about thirty seconds before Harry backed away and sat down at the table.

“Ten-o-clock, huh?” Hermione asked. “If you behave – which means no more pee jokes, mister – I might let you tuck me into bed.”

“If I did that,” Harry said, “I wouldn't be allowed ten feet from this tent. Wide berths all around, or I'd be in danger of stinging hexes from Mom.”

Hermione giggled. “We'll settle for a good night's kiss then. So... how did your meeting with the Slytherins go?”

Harry gave a summary of the entire meeting. Hermione was wide-eyed and hadn't looked down at her essay since he began his explanation.

“I... I don't know what to comment on first,” Hermione said. “How big is the chance Tracey's father could disown her tomorrow?”

“I have no idea,” Harry said. “I don't know Lord Davis. If he's a bigot – ninety-percent, and that is a kind percentage, because I would hope there would be a chance he'd choose his daughter over his beliefs. But... Tracey won't be without a family no matter what happens. She'll just either be a Davis or a Black by the time she goes to bed. Well... maybe not officially a Black. Only the Wizengamot Council can make a Blood Adoption Ceremony legal, and the next session isn't until the middle of December. But she'd be considered a Black if her father disowns her.”

“So... there's a possibility Tracey and Daphne could be my room-mates?” Hermione asked.

“I think you should count on it,” Harry said. “They fear retribution in the Slytherin House once their relationship goes public.”

Hermione nodded. “I'd be happy if they're my room-mates – as long as they respect Luna and I.”

“They will,” Harry said. “There's nothing they wouldn't do for me after tonight. They told me so. They know you're my girlfriend, and they would do nothing that would make me angry.”

Hermione smiled. “So... Tracey would be Daphne's Wife's Consort in the future. What does that mean for you?”

“Not too much,” Harry said. “Sirius' proviso would require I become sperm donor for one or two children by her. Aside from Tracey's children being members whichever of my Houses Daphne
marries into, if they merely see me as Uncle, and Daphne and Tracey their mothers, I would be just fine with that. I think I'd have enough children who call me father. Uncle would be fine by me. But other than that... she wouldn't have to enter my bedroom if she didn't want to. And Daphne would be welcomed to spend as many nights with her as she'd want, because I wouldn't be lonely what with the two other wives I'm expected to have.”

Hermione nodded again. “And Daphne...”

Harry didn't need her to make herself clear. “I wouldn't start courting her until the day after she finishes her education – be it at Hogwarts or Ilvermorny. And I wouldn't care if she has a girlfriend while I court her. Because I would hope I'd have one too.”

“So neither of the girls would interfere in... our relationship,” Hermione said.

“Courting doesn't mean required intimacy, Hermione,” Harry said, “If Daphne doesn't want to be romantically involved with me until our honeymoon, she has that right. Tracey... I feel I might have to drag her kicking and screaming into my bed if it comes to the point where she wants or has to start conceiving a child. But...”

“But..,?” Hermione asked.

“I am required three wives,” Harry said. “We both know what that means.”

“If I end up being your second,” Hermione said, “There's going to be another girl involved romantically with you sometime between now and a few years from now.”

“Unless a Betrothal Contract comes into the picture,” Harry said, “Two of the wives will be chosen as naturally as they should be.”

“Will you be actively searching for another girl during our relationship?” Hermione asked.

“Only after I know,” Harry said, “that I have your complete trust and permission to do. Otherwise I'd feel as if I am cheating on you. But know that as long as you accept me, as long as I have the honor of being the love-interest in your life, I will never ignore you for the benefit of somebody else.”

Hermione smiled. “I can live with that. Love-interest, huh? Not using 'specific words' such as boyfriend?”

“Nope,” Harry said, smiling, “It sounds way too... too...”

“Permanent?” Hermione asked.

"Or maybe not permanent enough," Harry said. "There may come a time where that promise I just gave you goes beyond the title of boyfriend. But for the foreseeable future, I am honored to be your boyfriend."

Hermione grinned. "You better do a good job of it, My Lord. Do you know how many girls in the history of romance ever got married to the only person they ever dated?"

“Probably a lot less than those on the other end of the scale?” Harry replied.

Hermione nodded. “Just something to think about. Remember... you're my first boyfriend.”
“And I will always cherish the fact that mine were the first lips to touch yours in a romantic way,” Harry said, smiling.

Hermione giggled. “I really should be finishing this essay.”

“Definitely,” Harry said, “This is our first weekend as a couple, and I would hate for homework time to cut down on – what do you Brits call it – snogging time?”

“Snogging time?” Hermione asked. “We have not snogged yet. Snogging, by definition, is a kiss lasting a lot longer than what we've been doing.”

“You're right,” Harry said. “Just tell me when and we'll find out if we're good at snogging.”

Hermione sighed and shook her head. “I'll find some free time in my calendar. Now, stop distracting me. Be a good 'school days' type boyfriend and watch me while I work on my homework.”

“Yes, ma'am,” Harry said.

Hermione grinned and resumed her homework. It lasted for about a minute. Because after a minute, she started chewing on her bottom lip, and Harry groaned. Out loud.

Hermione jerked her head up and looked at him. “Are you alright?”

“Mmm,” Harry said, “I don't know. I have been keeping a secret from you since the day I asked you out. And it is the perfect time to tell you.”

“While I am doing homework?” Hermione asked.

“Especially if you're doing homework,” Harry said. “Are you aware you bite your bottom lip?”

Hermione nodded slowly. “I've had that habit since I was in primary school. It happens when I'm deep in thought.”

“So,” Harry said, slowly, “You did it last year – the first year of prime dating time?”

“Yes,” Hermione said. “What's your point?”

“Good Merlin, how am I your first kiss and your first boyfriend?!” Harry asked. “Do you not realize how attractive you are when you bite your lip?”

Hermione blushed a deep red. “What?”

“You bit your lip in the library when I was working on asking you out,” Harry said, “And I had to refrain from kissing you in the middle of the library. That is how cute you look while doing that.”

Hermione continued blushing and covered her face with her hair as she looked down at her homework.

“And now I've embarrassed you,” Harry said, “I'm sorry.”

“It is alright,” Hermione said, “I've just never realized until now how attractive you really find me.
You're the first ever boy to look at me like that. Like I'm attractive. Believe me, I've looked. Absolutely nobody else looked at me like that. Even when I – you know – started developing in certain parts of my body. My buck-teeth, and my wild hair were what people noticed, and I knew they didn't find it attractive. After all, who would kiss a beaver? I'd probably make their lips or tongue bleed if they tried to kiss me.”

“Hermione,” Harry said.

“What?” Hermione asked.

“You had buck-teeth on the day I asked you out,” Harry said. “You still have that wild mane of hair. Are you still going to believe nobody found you attractive even with those features?”

Hermione blushed again. “Why are you so good to me?”

“It might take several years to explain that,” Harry said.

“That was rhetorical,” Hermione said.

“Oh, good,” Harry said.

Hermione waved her head around, moving the hair away from her face. Then she – deliberately – chewed on her lip again. And Harry leaned over to her and kissed her again. Not a moment later, they were interrupted by a surprised squeak. Harry backed away, and looked away as soon as he heard the bathroom curtains close.

“Luna?” Hermione asked. “Were you just about to walk out of the bathroom in naught but your skin like you've done twice this week?”

“Yes,” Luna said, behind the curtain, in a voice Harry could barely hear.

“Harry's looking away,” Hermione said, “I'm sorry I didn't tell you he was here. He didn't see anything, did you, Harry?”

“My eyes were closed and my lips were preoccupied,” Harry said, grinning.


A few moments later, Harry heard curtains open, the sound of footsteps, then curtains close elsewhere. Harry turned back around.

“I'm going to have to wean her out of some of her habits,” Hermione said, grinning, “before our Slytherin friends become our room-mates.”

“Just don't blame me if she turns up naked one of these days in my plain view,” Harry joked, grinning to make his joke clear.

Hermione sighed and shook her head. “You're incorrigible.”

“That is the first time someone' has ever used that word for it,” Harry said. “But I've been called worse.”
“Yes,” Hermione said, “You told me as much when it came to your ex-girlfriend. I promise not to
hex you, start nasty rumors, or insult certain body parts of yours if our relationship ever turns south.”

“Um... thanks,” Harry said. “I hope that is a big 'if’.”

Hermione merely smiled and resumed her homework. A minute later, she once again bit her lip.

“Speaking of weaning,” Harry teased.

“You wouldn't dare,” Hermione said in a mock-threatening voice, still working on her homework.

“Oh, definitely not,” Harry said. “Far too cute to make you stop.”

“Stop distracting me,” Hermione said. “Or I'll postpone our second date so I can do my homework.”

“Duly noted,” Harry said.

Luna chose to come out at that moment, dressed in a sun-yellow sleeping gown. She was carrying a
text-book, homework and writing supplies.

“Good evening, Miss Lovegood,” Harry said.

“I will do my best to refrain from being nude in your eyesight in the future,” Luna said, looking at
him with the same dreamy expression she usually had, as she laid out her homework things.

Hermione snorted softly, but continued her essay.

“Um... thanks, Luna,” Harry said.

“Just be sure to tell me if there ever comes a time when being nude in your eyesight becomes
appropriate,” Luna said.

Hermione snickered softly. Harry blushed. He could never tell if Luna was flirting with him, or if she
was saying these things in a way she thought was regular conversation.

“I'll... be sure to do that,” Harry said.

All conversation stopped as Luna joined in on working on her homework. Harry relaxed in his chair,
arms crossed, as he watched the girls do their work. He felt quite happy to just stay there, spending
time with Hermione, even if they weren't talking about anything.

This went on until ten minutes till ten. Hermione had finished the homework she been hoping to
finish. She put away her homework, then walked back over to Harry. She took his hand, pulled him
up from the chair, and led him outside their tent. Then she kissed him, and it was one of the first
times she took charge. Harry relished in her kiss. Hermione did not back away until she had to
breathe – she had not perfected breathing from her nose while kissing.

“I will see you tomorrow for breakfast,” Hermione said. “Be here to escort me to breakfast early
enough that I have enough time to prepare for our date before we have to go to the carriages.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Harry said.
This meant he would need to be up quite early, if he wanted to read Cuffe’s articles and, perhaps, discuss them with the family if necessary.

“I will see you then,” Hermione said. “Good night.”

Harry smiled and kissed her again – a short, but sweet kiss.

“Sweet dreams, Hermione,” Harry said.

This had become one of their rituals over the past week. They had gotten so used to it. But neither wanted the ritual to end. Harry’s eyes followed Hermione as she retreated back into the tent. Harry smiled and returned to his tent. He said good night to his family, then headed into his bedroom. Once in his pajamas, he crawled into bed.

A lot of things were going to be happening tomorrow. He only hoped he would be ready for it all. And that everyone in his life would make it out unscathed.

Chapter End Notes

Well, that ending sounded like they were about to head into the Battle of Hogwarts. Nope... close though. Less bloodshed! Maybe.

I'm sorry! I didn't get everything I wanted in this chapter. Harry's scene with Hermione completely ran away with itself! It just started writing itself! Yes, that happens! And it is odd and awesome at the same time. But I'm sure you don't mind. Well, maybe a little, since some key scenes some of you are looking forward to may have to wait for an extra chapter!

I was so very nervous about the Tracey and Daphne meeting. But I think it went well. Believe it or not, I won't know my decision regarding Tracey's future until Lord Davis makes his decision. Because I don't know what it is yet! Either way has possibilities. Do I want to make House Davis – sans Tracey – a villain in this story? Or do I want them to be in the Great Alliance? Do I want Tracey to be an adopted/blood daughter of Sirius Black? Choices! Whatever I choose is going to affect this story greatly!

Tracey's “Boys! Ick!” personality may or may not change as she and Harry become better friends. I really want to be delicate with her storyline, and I will only make her slightly bisexual if I feel it is something the Tracey in my story would do. For now, she's a definite Witches' Witch. If I made her bisexual, her fear of a Betrothal Contract would not be as serious as it is right now.

Luna's “flirting” does not cement her future in Harry's love-life. If she isn't, then this isn't flirting, it is Luna being... Luna. If it is... she's having fun doing it! And Harry's just a poor, confused boy who doesn't know Luna enough to know better. Both are fun to write. I loved her entrance into this chapter.

Next Chapter: The Daily Prophet Articles, Dumbledore's reaction, and maybe some of the beginning of the Hogsmeade visit. We'll see where it goes. I know there are scenes
you're waiting for. I know! I just have to get there!

I hope you enjoyed this chapter.
Saturday, November 7th, 1994

Harry was awoken by a vibrating pillow. It wasn't a Sirius Black prank, however. It was Harry's own Alarm Charm.

During Sirius' “boot camp” in which the man had a knack of waking up Harry very early in the morning in the rudest of ways, Remus gave him a tip on how to wake up before Sirius had a chance to enter his bedroom. Sirius thought Harry had quickly learned how to sense someone coming near him while he was asleep – it was true, he did learn that eventually – but at first it was due to the Alarm Charm. All Harry had to do was vision the exact moment in time he wanted to wake up in his mind, and cast the charm on his pillow. Then the pillow would vibrate at that precise moment of the day.

It was six-o-clock in the morning, around the usual time the Daily Prophet arrived at the House Potter tent. There were four hours to go until the carriages would begin leaving for Hogsmeade village. Harry figured he had an hour to read the Daily Prophet articles, and talk with his family, before he had to meet Hermione as promised for breakfast.

Harry yawned as he stepped out into the main area of the tent. Lily, Sirius and Remus were awake, and at the table, sipping on mugs of coffee and talking quietly. Harry spotted the Daily Prophet newspaper in the middle of the table. He walked over to the kitchen, poured himself a mug of coffee, then walked over to the table and sat down.

“A pajama kind of morning, is it, Shadow?” Sirius asked.

“I believe Hermione's of the opinion,” Harry said, “that she doesn't want to reveal to me what she's going to wear to our date until I pick her up for the date. And because I am meeting her for breakfast in about an hour, I think she'll probably wear her sleepwear to breakfast. So I am doing the same thing.”

“Harry,” Remus said, “You didn't bring that many formal outfits. And you're going to have to wear one for the Betrothal meeting. I think Hermione's seen you in every formal outfit you have.”

“I know that,” Harry said, “She does not.”

Lily smiled. “I think that means we're going to have to find you a new outfit for the Yule Ball. Something she hasn't seen you in.”

“Which means I have to find something in Hogsmeade or Diagon Alley,” Harry muttered. “Which means I have to resort to British fashion.”

“It is a British Ball, Harry,” Lily said.
Harry nodded, then eyed the newspaper again; he grimaced when he saw his own face looking back at him, “Any of you reading that?”

“Take it,” Sirius said. “We've taken a look at it already. Besides, it is your mug on the front page.”

Harry glared playfully at his Godfather. He sipped from his mug of coffee, set it down, then picked up the newspaper and straightened it out so he could see it properly. Like last Sunday, both front page articles focused in some ways on him. The headline in large bold letters above the article and his picture read:

**THE WEIGHING OF THE WANDS CEREMONY: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE ILVERMORNY CHAMPION LORD HARRY JAMES POTTER!**

Harry grimaced at the title. It was clearly obvious Barnabus Cuffe had either not interviewed the other three champions yet, or had decided not to include them in the front page article. He began to read the article:

**Barnabus J. Cuffe – Editor-in-Chief, The Daily Prophet reporting**

Some of our readers may have been looking forward to another tantalizing article from the one-and-only Rita Skeeter when it comes to reporting on the Triwizard Tournament.

However, I'm afraid I must disappoint. I, Barnabus Cuffe, will be taking over the reins for the reports on the Triwizard Tournament. But don't let that discourage you! I am happy to announce that I have been guaranteed some revealing one-on-one interviews with the Champions of the Triwizard Tournament. For the next four days, you will find an exclusive interview with one of the four Champions. Today we focus on Ilvermorny Champion, Lord Harry James Potter.

Yes, that is right, the young Champion has gained his Lordship! You can read more details about that in my other front-page article, where I interview Lord Potter, his family, and a couple men who he calls his “Uncles”. This article solely has to do with The Weighing Of The Wands Ceremony, and the interview with Lord Potter, with his views on the Triwizard Tournament.

We begin with the Weighing of the Wands Ceremony. Friday morning, I was invited to the Ceremony, as the only media representative on hand. It was quite the honor. All four Champions, and four out of the five judges were in attendance. Bartemius Crouch was mysteriously absent. Also in attendance was Garrick Ollivander, the famous wand-maker, who owns a quaint little shop in Diagon Alley in London. The famous wand-maker was given the honor of 'official wand-expert' for the Weighing of the Wands Ceremony. And who better then he? Nobody!

During the ceremony, wands were weighed, and found in working order,
Garrick Ollivander told some interesting tales about the two wands he had the privilege to make, and even had some insight into Lord Harry Potter's own fascinating wand made and bought in America! For more information on the Champions' wands, and the stories behind some of them, turn to Page 2!

After the wands were weighed, pictures were taken of the Champions and Judges, including the picture of Lord Potter next to this article. You may feast your eyes on all those pictures, and meet the Champions on Pages 8 and 9.

After the Ceremony, I sat down for an exclusive one-on-one interview with Lord Harry Potter. The entire interview can be seen on Page 2. In the interview, you can read about how he came to become one of the two youngest Champions in Triwizard Tournament history, what he feels about Champion Neville Longbottom's mysterious entrance into the Tournament, and his own chances at winning the entire thing!

Lord Potter is a fine young man, and I am honored to have had the privilege to meet him. It was one of greatest interviews I've had the pleasure to host. I take this opportunity to once again thank the new Lord and wish him the best of luck in the Triwizard Tournament!

Harry turned to page two, and skimmed through his interview with Barnabus. It was word-for-word of all the questions he had answered, and the 'no comment' answers he gave were not added. Harry was quite fine with that. He wasn't sure how he had done, but reading Barnabus' words that he, himself had said now made him happy at his performance.

He turned back to the front page, then began reading the second article, which had to do with him and his extended family. The article was at least twice as long as the first, and the interview wasn't even on the front page!

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH LILY, HARRY, AND ROSE POTTER AND SIRIUS BLACK AND REMUS LUPIN; THE 'EXTENDED POTTER FAMILY' TELLS ALL AND REVEALS SEVERAL SHOCKING TRUTHS!

Barnabus J. Cuffe – Editor-in-Chief, The Daily Prophet reporting

On Friday morning, I, Barnabus J. Cuffe, had the distinct honor and privilege to sit down with what has been coined the 'extended Potter family': Lily, Harry and Rose Potter, and the children's “Uncles”, Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, in what would be one of the most revealing and shocking interviews I would ever have the privilege to take a part of.

Thirteen years ago, Lily and Harry Potter fled Britain after the tragic death of the much loved and remembered Lord James Potter. With
Sirius Black and Remus Lupin tagging along, they moved to the United States of America. Eight months later, Rose Potter came into this world, and the Potter family thrived when nearly everybody in their homeland thought they had perished.

“We had suspicions that [You-Know-Who] might have somehow survived the night my husband defied him for the very last time,” Lady Lily Potter said, in part of the interview I had with her and her family, “If he hadn't survived, then we feared his followers would come after us, if it was discovered we had survived the attack which ended in their 'Master's' Death.”

Keeping the safety of her children in mind, Lady Lily Potter made no plans to return to Britain until she could confirm her children would be safe once they returned. While Lady Potter never confirmed their identities, she says there were some in Great Britain who knew she and her son had survived the night her husband died. But everyone else believed she and her son were dead, and her late-husband's House extinct. To Lady Lily Potter, she was just quite fine with that, thank you very much.

“Family means everything to me,” Lily said.

Family. Lady Potter revealed some shocking truths about her family to me yesterday. Truths she only found out less than a week ago. After taking an Inheritance Test for the first time at Gringotts in London, Lady Lily Potter – believed to be a Muggleborn witch – is actually a Pureblood Witch adopted by a Muggle family at an orphanage, when she was barely a week old, and didn't have a real first name. Her parents were reportedly kidnapped from St. Mungo's on the very same day Lily was born, and believed to have been tortured and murdered.

There you have it, folks. Lady Lily Potter, and her children, Harry and Rose, are Purebloods. Which means Harry Potter falls under the Last Generation Loophole in the Pureblood Heritage Act. Harry is not just Lord Potter, but also Lord Peverell – the same Peverell whose Three Brothers inspired Beedle The Bard's famous tale – and another House which Harry has chosen not to disclose at this moment in time.

“I respectfully choose,” Harry had to say, “to keep one of those Houses a secret for strategic reasons.”

Further into the interview, Harry told me that his strategy is centered around the Winter Solstice Wizengamot Council Session which
is taking place next month. Harry, only fourteen, is not legally allowed to claim his seat in the Council, nor vote on decisions, until he becomes seventeen. So he chose his mother, Lady Lily Potter, as Proxy for those seats. When asked how many seats, Harry said:

“I won’t reveal exactly how many seats she’ll be claiming for strategic purposes.”

It would appear our young Lord is already digging his heels into the tantalizing world of Pureblood Politics, and is trying to create some mischief for the Wizengamot Council Session.

Those who are familiar with the Last Generation Loophole, may have already figured it out, but the young Lord of three Houses, is required by law to marry three women, who will be the three Ladies of those houses. In Harry's own words, he said that he is only required to marry one Pureblood witch, and this journalist believes that Harry may have eyes on either Muggleborn witches, or even a Muggle girl. Nowhere in the Pureblood Heritage Act prevents Lord Potter from making that choice. As for whether Lord Potter is actively searching for candidates for those three wives? That answer is still up in the air. Harry's own words:

“No comment until it is publicly revealed in a style of my choice – which isn't the media. No offense, Barnabus.”

I took no offense to that. I hope the young ladies reading about the young Lord don't take offense either. Don't get your hopes up, ladies. Lord Potter may not be an eligible bachelor! If he was, he would have said so, I believe!

To those ladies too old for a young lad like Harry Potter, do not fret. Lord Potter's Godfather, Sirius Black, the recently confirmed Lord Black, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black is, in fact, a confirmed bachelor. When asked if he had a Lady and family waiting for him back home in America, Lord Black had this to say:

“No. But I am currently looking for anyone interested in the job.”

Lady Lily Potter on the other hand is not actively searching to replace her late husband, commenting that the late James Potter, and her children, hold much of the space in her heart.

As for whether or not the 'extended Potter family' have plans to stay in Britain for a while. I believe the young and mischievous Rose Potter said it best:

“It is a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to stay.”

You can read the full interview on Page 2, as well as several pictures of the
Harry turned to Page 2 again, and read through the interview, which was once, again word for word, which was fine by him. He turned back to the front page, and frowned as he looked at the article again. Something irked him as he looked at it.

“Something wrong, Shadow?” Sirius asked.

“I don't like the way Barnabus said something in this article,” Harry said. “He didn't lie, but it sounds as if he was making a bigger fuss than need be.”

“Which part?” Remus asked.

“This part,” Harry said, “this journalist believes that Harry may have eyes on either Muggleborn witches, or even a Muggle girl. Nowhere in the Pureblood Heritage Act prevents Lord Potter from making that choice.”

Remus smiled. “Yes, we saw that too. You believe it could cause problems. Cause people to start talking.”

“Talking about how that law needs to be changed?” Sirius asked.

“Especially since the article specifically says I may have my eyes 'on a Muggle girl,’” Harry said, “I never actually said that. But it might not be a lie.”

“If someone brings it up to the Council,” Sirius said, “We'll fight it. They're not changing it just so you can't have a chance to court Hermione long enough to marry her. No way.”

Harry nodded. There was a brief distraction, when an owl flew into the tent, dropped a scroll of parchment in front of Lily, then flew away. Lily opened the scroll, and read it.

“From Ted Tonks,” Lily said, then glanced at Harry, “I wrote to him last night while you were visiting Hermione, after Daphne and Tracey's visit. We decided we need a Solicitor if things go south with Tracey's family. Ted has confirmed that he'll meet us at half-past-eleven in the Three Broomsticks so we can prepare for the noon meeting.”

Harry nodded. “Good. He'll be a welcomed voice.”

“We thought so too,” Lily said.

As Harry waited for the clock to tick to seven-o-clock, he talked with his family about the articles, and his Hogsmeade plans – in addition to the meeting with Houses Greengrass and Davis – while he flipped through the newspaper, and looked at all the pictures of both the Wand Weighing Ceremony, and his own family, while trying not to focus on whether or not he took some good pictures, nor that every wizard and witch who had interest in the Daily Prophet would be seeing these pictures and the interviews by day's end.

During the conversation, however, something happened that made Harry, Lily and Remus stop what they were doing. Sirius received owl post, and he grabbed the envelope from the and opened it as the owl flew away. Sirius looked at it... and went absolutely white in the face.

“What's wrong, Sirius?” Lily asked.
“It is an offer for a Betrothal Contract I had not foreseen,” Sirius whispered.

“One that seems to have scared even you,” Remus said, “Who is it?”

“The one person our age who I'd actually probably accept a Contract from,” Sirius said. “The one person I never expected to get an offer from because I thought she would have found somebody in the past thirteen years. The one person who got away.”

“Ooh,” Lily said, grinning, “You mean the one person who you had the guts to ask to marry you, and she rejected you for her career.”

Harry grinned. He had heard this story before.

Sirius went pink in the cheeks and nodded. “I believe I might have found Lady Black. Amelia Susan Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. She got the job she always wanted. And now she wants me.”

Hogwarts – Headmaster's Office

Meanwhile, Albus Dumbledore slammed a closed fist in agitation on the picture of Harry Potter, which continued to smile up at him from his front-page picture in the Daily Prophet. Fawkes squawked, the Sorting Hat huffed, and sleeping echoes of Headmasters and Headmistresses swore at him when the noise woke them up.

Albus Dumbledore was absolutely seething. So many revelations, so many secrets about Harry Potter and his family that he did not know were now revealed for every single person in Great Britain to see. Albus had foreseen an interview with Barnabus Cuffe and Harry Potter coming. After all, why would the man and his cameraman agree to walk out of the castle with Harry and his mother? But Albus thought the man was just interested in an interview regarding the Triwizard Tournament. That was only half the truth.

Harry and his ‘extended family' had also participated in another interview, one that was sure to make waves across Great Britain in ways that could change society in a way Albus couldn't foresee, and perhaps in ways he didn't want to see. Albus knew he should have gone with his gut and demanded to Lily and Harry Potter that he participate in the interview, with the excuse that he was responsible for Barnabus Cuffe's safety whilst at Hogwarts. But he had not wanted to lose their trust any further. Such a request might only make them angry, and he couldn't afford that.

That Lily Potter, and her children, were actually Purebloods was not something Albus was prepared for. He would have never foreseen it coming. There had been no indication, no hints of Lily's blood-status. Nor that she had ever been adopted, nor that she was born at St. Mungo's. Adopted by the Evans under a “Jane Doe” status, before finally receiving a true first name, explained why her true family history had never been discovered. Lily's real parents were kidnapped on the very same day Lily was born, likely before they could fill out any forms and records for the child. The information would have not made it to the British Ministry, but Gringotts likely would have had it due to their own styles of magic and the way the Goblins worked.

Part of Lily’s revelation about her true parents confused Albus. Why had Voldemort hired mercenaries to track her parents down? She never said why. Did she know? Why was Voldemort interested in a couple from a Minor House, even if they were Purebloods. Were they a couple who
had previously defied him, refused to have joined by his side, and escaped before he could kill them, then he had finally tracked them down? Or was it something more?

Albus was missing something important. Some key piece of information. He believed himself an expert in all things Tom Marvolo Riddle, also known as Lord Voldemort. Now he couldn't figure out why Voldemort had hired mercenaries, when the man's modus operandi would have seen him stalking through St. Mungo's with his Death Eaters, terrorizing the whole hospital just to find a couple of targets. Of course, that had been 1960, and Voldemort was not yet the threat he had been.

Albus was perturbed. He needed to investigate this. Surely there were Healers still at St. Mungo's who were on hand on the day of Lily's birth. Perhaps the answers lay there.

Albus made mental note to contact St. Mungo's later – or perhaps he'd go to the Ministry to search for records of Healers stationed at St. Mungo's on the day Lily was born. Even if they had retired, he should be able to find them.

Satisfied with his plan, he moved onto the next issue. Harry Potter's part in the Last Generation Loophole of the Pureblood Heritage Act. If Harry was a Pureblood, that meant he had to follow the Act.

Harry was now the Lord of three Houses. Potter and Peverell were obvious, but the third. Albus didn't know. Fleamont, Charles, and finally James – all three of whom he had known – never confided in him the secret third House. It was a House Potter Secret. Family Secrets were almost impossible to discover without being told from one of the Family members. Albus thought back to the interview. Harry had plans to reveal the House in the Winter Solstice Session, claim his seats, and give his mother Proxy. She was a Pureblood, so she would be allowed. There was no doubt the Great Alliance would be returning soon.

Another part of the interview and Barnabus' article intrigued Albus, but also angered him. Harry had to marry three wives. But Harry seemed to have plans to only marry one Pureblood of his three wives. Muggleborn and Muggle wives were options for him. Albus had thought that with Harry's birth, that House Potter had lost its Pureblood history. But House Potter was still Pureblood. Unless Harry had his say.

"Granger," Albus muttered, "The signs are clear. Harry and Granger are now a couple."

His ingenious spy system around the castle had spotted Harry and Granger share a kiss in a hidden corner – or rather, they thought it was hidden – of the castle. But a portrait had been nearby, and portraits always answered to their Headmaster.

"By law, Harry has a right to marry Granger," Albus said; then he smiled like Dr. Seuss' Grinch. "Unless the law is changed, to the point where all who fall under the Last Generation Loophole must marry Purebloods. But it cannot be I who suggests the change. I need to speak to one of the 'usual suspects' who would be willing to parrot the law. Whether it will pass or not, is the question. But even if it wouldn't, it would still throw doubts upon the society, and perhaps encourage them to jeer Harry's relationship with Granger.

"An anonymous hex-letter or Howler in the Great Hall to Granger might put her romantic interests away from Harry. But the timing and the planning must be right. It has to wait until the whole of society learns Granger is with Harry. So there are more suspects than those inside Hogwarts... or Harry would tear a hole through Hogwarts looking for the one responsible."
Albus had already started making headway into the problems voiced by Harry when he had raged through Hogwarts the previous Sunday. Albus had hoped it would allow Harry to trust him more, by letting Harry see that he was trying to help spread the boy's message. If Harry believed a student was responsible for the letter toward his girlfriend, all trust would be lost.

Rose Potter's quote in the article about Britain being a “nice place to visit, but not to stay” was something that played in Albus' mind. Her views were likely shared with the whole family. If Harry did not stay in Britain... Albus' plans would fall to pieces.

Albus sighed and tapped his fingers. He needed to get down to breakfast. He had plots and plans to take care of today. He hoped he could perhaps find a way to influence Neville Longbottom to decline his Gran's offer of Lordship. The boy needed to focus on the Triwizard Tournament.

Hogwarts – Dungeons – Potion Master's Office

The Hogwarts Potions Master, Severus Snape, poured a vial of Calming Draught into his morning tea, stirred it into his mug, and sipped from it. He basked in the calming influences of the Draught. He didn't even trust his Mastered Occlumency skills to calm him down at the moment. Not right now. Not after what he had read in the Daily Prophet. He slid a finger across the face of the beautiful auburn haired woman who had haunted his dreams since he was a young teen just discovering the fascinations of girls and women.

He could not believe his eyes when he read Barnabus Cuffe's words, or the words of Lily Evans – Potter, Severus forced his thoughts to correct itself, even though he didn't want to. After all, Lily wasn't an Evans was she. Not by blood. It turned out she had been adopted, and named, by the Muggle couple who had found her in an orphanage when she was a week old. Lily, it turned out, was a Pureblood.

How had Severus not foreseen this? He remembered that horrible sister of Lily's, who looked nothing like her. How could someone so kindhearted, so sweet, and so loving, have an absolute hag for a sister. She wasn't Lily's real sister. Now that made a great deal of sense.

Lily's revelation of her blood-status brought one thought far closer to the front mind than anything else. The one thought, the one memory, he had tried to do away with by putting it away in Albus Dumbledore's Pensieve. But even memories which were stored away had a knack for returning, especially those which affected you most. Severus deemed this as is 'Worst Memory'. The day he called Lily a Mudblood, the day he lost the friendship of the greatest person he had ever known.

“Does it matter?” Nine-year old Lily once asked, as she and Severus laid on the banks of a pond and watched butterflies, “Being a Muggleborn?”

“No,” Severus had said.

It had been a lie. Of course it mattered. More than one such as innocent and sweet as young Lily needed to know. And that lie was revealed the day he called her that word.

And now it could have prevented had he known Lily's secret that even she wasn't privy too. Lily was a Pureblood. Her blood-status made her better in the eyes of the British Wizarding World than even him. And yet since the day since she had officially entered the Wizarding World, every step she took insulted those who believed she was Muggleborn, someone who wasn't welcomed in their world. Now she was the Lady in a House whose bloodline on her late-husband's side was one of the
longest-lasting in Wizarding Britain. When her son was born, it was thought that Lily had been responsible for giving birth to the child who had stopped a House from being Pureblood no longer. Lily had simply done her part to extend the House's Pure line even further.

October 31st, 1981. Severus remembered the day. The day the he strode down the Godric's Hollow Lane and found a house absolutely destroyed, and the only recognizable body was Peter Pettigrew who was dead, the entire front of his body charred from facing the explosion that had brought down the house, and as far as Severus had known, had killed the last of House Potter.

But not Voldemort. Severus' Dark Mark had twinged the very same night others believed Voldemort was dead. Severus knew better.

To Severus, he had lost the only girl he had ever been in love with. Dear, sweet, kind, Lily was dead. And Voldemort was responsible for it.

Severus had gone to Albus Dumbledore, yelled at him about how the man had promised to protect the Potters, and had been lectured back at how they had trusted the wrong person.

"The wrong person?" Severus asked.

"Sirius Black," Albus said.

"I do not think so," Severus said.

"I am surprised at you," Albus said, "Defending Black?"

"No," Severus said, "Presenting more damning evidence. Peter Pettigrew is dead."

"He could have been in the house during the explosion," Albus said.

"No," Severus said. "He was blown across the street from the explosion, the front of his body charred. No markings of the Killing Curse. Pettigrew was not there before Voldemort arrived, and killed by Voldemort when he arrived. Pettigrew had come with Voldemort. He had stood in the Potter's front yard, and waited for his one-time best friends to be killed. Pettigrew was the Secret Keeper."

"You call him Voldemort now?" Albus asked.

"I will only call him the Dark Lord in front of those who believe I should be doing so," Severus said. "Voldemort has betrayed me. I begged him to spare her life. And he didn't. She's gone. Dead. Her son too. The House of Potter is extinct. Because of him. I will end him, Albus."

"No... Neville Longbottom will end him," Albus said. "I was obviously wrong about the Prophecy. And so was Riddle. But you can play your part."

"And I will," Severus said, "This I swear."

"So mote it be," Albus said.

And from then on, he had become Albus Dumbledore's spy, and Potions Master. Waiting for the time when he would help to get his ultimate revenge on the monster who stole his girl away. Not James Potter. James Potter was dead.
Voldemort was not.

And no longer were Lily and Harry Potter.

Severus didn't know if he would ever regain Lily's friendship. But he would never experience another day like he had that October night. Voldemort would die before he could finish the Potters off.

Severus raised his cup in toast.

“So mote it be, indeed,” he muttered.

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**Hogwarts – The Great Hall**

Breakfast in the Great Hall of Hogwarts was an interesting affair. It was the day of the Hogsmeade Village. Students – those third years and higher -- would usually be discussing their plans for the trip to the Village. This was not the main topic of the breakfast discussion.

The two front page articles were the main discussion. The main point of gossip was the fact that Harry Potter was rumored to be the most eligible Pureblood bachelor, with three wives in his Future. The Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter – once thought to have gone extinct, as well as had their Pureblood lineage history destroyed when a Muggleborn gave birth to Harry Potter – was now available to continue its Pureblood history and bring forth another generation of powerful Pureblood Potter wizards and witches.

Several girls of all ages inside the Great Hall – some of whom even had boyfriends and dates they had been looking forward to having fun with at Hogsmeade, until this article came out – were fantasizing of being the next Lady Potter. The fact that they would have two other wives was not that bizarre. It was not common, but it happened. While sharing their future husband's bed was not a popular option, it still meant they would be in his bed. Even sharing him was a tantalizing option.

“Figures,” Cho Chang scoffed, as she stared at Harry Potter's face on the front page of the newspaper, “There’s a chance he could continue his Pureblood legacy, and now it’s possible he’s giving that option to the Mudblood.”

“Cho!” Marietta hissed, “Not so loud! You know that word --”

She went silent when Cho glared at her. “Yes, I know that word has now been barred, thank you very much for reminding me, Marietta. Another privilege taken away from me, in addition to looking down upon those less deserving than me, and being courted a Lord who I deserve to marry. Another privilege lost. So much for Pureblood Heritage changing Wizarding Britain for the better. Potter has the legal right to marry Granger, or Lovegood, or even a Muggle! That's not right at all.”

“What do you believe is right?” Su Li asked.

“In a perfect world,” Cho said, “Potter would marry the three of us. Which is what should happen.”

“Yeah,” Su Li said, “And now you messed it up by backing Brocklehurst.”

“Hey!” Cho hissed, “You suggested we be friends with her, cousin. She's your dorm-mate!”
“Careful, sweetheart,” Su Li said, smiling, “You know not to make me mad.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Cho growled. “Save your 'Dueling Champion' Speech for the next time you do something stupid to tick Potter off.”

Over at the Gryffindor table, a Hogwarts Champion was talking to two of her friends.

“What do you think, girls?” Angelina asked Katie Bell and Alicia Spinnet. “Think Lord Potter would like to start a Quidditch Team of children with three Gryffindor Chasers?”

Katie Bell giggled. “That would be the day, wouldn't it? Please, you've heard the rumors Potter's with that Ravenclaw fourth-year. Also, he's American, Angie. I'm sure he has one or two American witches in mind who he's grown up with. Besides... anyone who he picks would likely be required to move to America and attend Ilvermorny with Lord Potter, so he could court them. My parents would never support it.”

“Mine either,” Alicia said. “There is way too much competition in America than there is in Britain for the family business. Much more profit in Britain. Nope. The Minor House of Spinnet is settled down in Britain, and so is the only child.”

“But we wish you the best of luck, Angie,” Katie said, “You got more of a chance than we do, because you're one of the Champions.”

“Yeah,” Alicia said, then grinned, “Just don't outclass him in the Tournament. That is an instant turn-off.”

Angelina groaned. “Well, there goes my fantasies.”

“Fantasies?” Fred Weasley asked, sitting down across from Angelina, “What fantasies?”

“Tell us your fantasies, my lovely,” George said, sitting down next to Angelina, “I will fulfill them.”

Angelina rolled her eyes.

“Sorry, boys,” Katie said, “You couldn't fulfill this one. Your name isn't Harry Potter.”

“But it could be,” George said.

“Yeah,” Fred said, “We have figured out a way to get back into the Tournament. Harry Potter was chosen as Champion. So we change our names to Harry Potter. Boom. Champions in the Tournament.”

Angelina rolled her eyes. “You just love your mother's Howlers, don't you?”

“Yes we do!” Fred and George announced in unison.

A few seats down, Neville Longbottom and his Betrothed, Ginny Weasley, were torn between reading the Daily Prophet, and listening to the conversation amongst the Gryffindor Quidditch Team. They were also ignoring Ginny's other brother, Ron, who was glaring at Neville while pigging out on his breakfast. The only comment Ginny had made about her youngest brother, was that it was the first time she had seen him multitask at anything, and the first time he had some focus on something
more than the food in front of him.

“So what do you think of the articles, Ginny?” Neville said, before drinking from his glass – he had been avoiding Goblets since Saturday – of orange juice.

“Harry Potter's rather handsome,” Ginny said, “I hadn't noticed.”

Neville choked on his juice, and spluttered “What?!"

“You asked,” Ginny quipped.

“I asked about the articles,” Neville said.

“Oh, right... they're great,” Ginny said, “Better than Rita's work anyway. Say, when are you going to be interviewed by Barnabus Cuffe?”

Neville grumbled. First he had suspicions that Harry's Godfather had put his name in the Goblet, and now his Betrothed, and girlfriend, was crushing on Harry Potter himself. And here he had serious thoughts of speaking to Potter's mother about perhaps getting some help with the Tournament. Yeah, he'd meet with Harry. To tell him to stay away from Ginny!

“Mr. Longbottom?” a voice said.

Neville turned and found Headmaster Dumbledore standing behind Ginny, and smiling at him.

“I see you've read the fascinating article between Barnabus Cuffe and Ilvermorny Champion Harry Potter,” Dumbledore said, “Barnabus also said he was going to be showing interviews with the other Champions, including you.”

“Oh, yeah,” Neville said, “He wrote to me yesterday. Gave me a list of questions to answer. So I answered them and sent them back to him. I expect it will be in the Prophet by Tuesday. I hope you approve of my interview, sir?”

“I think it was very nice that you gave an interview, Neville,” Dumbledore said. “I look forward to it. It shows how focused you are on the Tournament, Mr. Longbottom. I trust you are? Focused, that is.”

“Yes, sir,” Neville said, “It is all I can think of.”

Aside from that meeting with Gran concerning possible Lordship, Neville thought.

“Hey!” Ginny said, “What about me?”

“And Ginny,” Neville added to Dumbledore.

“Yes,” Dumbledore. “Between the Tournament, your girlfriend, and classes, you have plenty to focus on, Mr. Longbottom. I advise you not to place any more distractions on your plate. It would make your life much too busy. Remember that. Focus and few distractions will help you get through this Tournament.”

Neville blinked. “I... thank you for the advice, sir. I'll remember that.”
Dumbledore smiled, his eyes twinkling behind his glasses. “Have a wonderful time in Hogsmeade today, both of you. It should be a lovely day for a growing romance.”

“Thank you, sir,” Ginny said, “We will.”

Dumbledore smiled again and walked toward the table. Neville watched the man, with thoughts washing through his mind.

*I do need to focus on the Tournament, Neville thought, And classes. Both are very important. Something needs to go. Ginny or early Lordship status. I'll discuss those two options with Gran today. She should help decide which is far more important to my future.*

“So an interview in the Prophet by Tuesday!” Ginny said, smiling, “I cannot wait to read it. Are you going to make me wait, or will you give me a sneak peak?”

“What would you give me in return?” Neville asked.

Ginny grinned and leaned over to his ear. “A sneak peek. If you know what I mean.”

Neville blushed red, and grinned like a fool. He coughed and stammered. “I-I'll think about.”

“You do that,” Ginny said, “You look very handsome in photos. Not as handsome as in real life, but very handsome. Did I ever tell you that? I get tingles from thinking how envious girls are of me when looking at these pictures of you. Though I wish I could make everybody else's pictures of you blackened out. Only I deserve the honor of gazing at you.”

Neville was still blushing smiling as he saw her looking down at a photo of him in the newspaper. His girlfriend/Betrothed always knew how to cheer him up. That helped him a little with the thoughts moving through his mind.

Chapter End Notes

Hmm. Moves are being made. Plots are being plotted. How will the wheels turn?

I think I made a mistake at some point when it came to informing how Neville will be treated in this story. He is going to be Minor Bashed only. Not Severe. It is mostly toward his distrust toward the Heroes of the story. Oh, and Ginny is not a villain in this story. She was teasing Neville about Harry. She's not more interested in him than Neville. She's dedicated to Neville.

I look forward to your opinions on this chapter. Especially the articles, and the different points-of-view and opinions regarding Harry and Lily in this chapter. Oh, and Sirius making headway toward his own future! I love Black Bones. Why wouldn't I include it in this story?

Next Chapter: Hogsmeade Visit Part 1! That's all I can say. I don't know what all will be in it. But it will be AT LEAST a two part Chapter Arc!
Author's Note: This chapter begins the storyline of Rose and Gabrielle's relationship. They are twelve years old, so there won't be much 'romance'. More like puppy love for the foreseeable future. There will be occasional pecks and light kisses, no lingering kisses or snogging. I will be delicate about this. However, saying that, Gabrielle also knows her history of lesbians when it comes to Veela, and there is an interesting story behind it. And also a dark history and culture involved with them...

Note: Not all Veela are Witches, so calling lesbian Veela “Witches' Witches” doesn't make sense. I'll call them lesbians. So there is going to be a lot of talk about such topics during Rose and Gabrielle's scene in this chapter. Fair warning.

Saturday, November 7th, 1994

At half-past-nine, Hermione Granger walked out of her bedroom, after making sure she looked beautiful and proper for her date with Harry. Just as she had for her first date with Harry, she was dressed in a Muggle t-shirt and jeans, both of which showed off her curves, but not being too revealing.

“Luna!” Hermione said, realizing her best friend was not waiting for her, “Are you ready?”

“You go on ahead with Harry, Hermione,” Luna said, sticking her head out of the curtains from her bedroom, “I'll catch a carriage on my own.”

“Are you sure?” Hermione asked, “Harry wouldn't mind. And you'd likely end up in a carriage with somebody you don't know.”

“Doesn't matter,” Luna said, “Nobody would do anything. They know I am under House Potter Protection.”

“If you're sure,” Hermione said. “Meet me at the Three Broomsticks at noon. Harry has that Betrothal meeting to attend, which means you and I will have time to do something together. We'll do some girl-focused shopping, things Harry won't want to shop for.”

Luna smiled. “I'll see you at noon. Have fun, Hermione. Don't do anything I wouldn't do.”

Hermione smirked. “Says the girl who struts through the tent in naught but her skin.”

Luna's giggles were loud enough to be heard even as she closed the curtain, retreating back into her bedroom.

Hermione shook her head, smiling, and headed out of the tent. She was not surprised at all to find
Harry waiting for her. She happily accepted a sweet kiss from him, which she returned. It lasted only for ten seconds, but she didn't mind. There would be plenty more today, she knew.

She had always heard the sitting area near the Shrieking Shack was a nice place for romance. Of course... she knew those rumors mostly had to do with a more... adult-style of romance, nothing she was anywhere near ready yet, of course. But maybe she could have her first snog with him there. That sounded nice. Perhaps as a reward if their date went well. Heck, she realized from the way he described what was going to happen during the Betrothal Contract meeting, he might need a way to wind down if it did get really heated. So a nice snog would probably help a lot.

“You look so beautiful,” Harry said, then grinned, “Try not to bite your lip, or I might do things we'll both regret.”

Hermione echoed his grin. “Promise? You look handsome, by the way.”

She noticed he was wearing the same clothes he wore the night his name came out of the Goblet. But she wouldn't tell him that. He probably only brought a few formal outfits. She was quite sure he hadn't planned to go out on too many outings requiring such clothes. Just formal events, definitely not dates, aside from, perhaps, the Ball. She was fantasizing so much about what he might wear for the Yule Ball, she barely felt him take her hand and start leading her across the Grounds.

She looked over her shoulder, looking around for Harry's family. “None of your family is coming yet? I thought Rose might accompany us, and maybe your mother as her chaperone.”

“I didn't tell you, did I?” Harry replied. “Rose has a date.”

Hermione blinked and stared at him in surprise, then she remembered she was walking, and focused on not tripping as she walked, and bringing him down with her.

“A date?” she asked, “With who? She's twelve!”

“The sister of the Beauxbatons Champion,” Harry said. “She's twelve too.”

Hermione nodded. He had told her about his sister's sexual preferences. She thought it was rather cute.

“The little blonde girl who was hanging around the Champion?” Hermione asked; he nodded, she did too, “I see. Who asked who out?”

“Gabrielle – through her sister, Fleur,” Harry said, then laughed, “Which is funny, since Rose was trying to decide on how to ask her out. I don't actually know if it is date. Gabrielle invited her on a picnic on the Grounds. Even suggested somewhere near the tents, for Rose's sake.”

“Beautiful day for a picnic.” Hermione said, smiling, “They'll have fun. You don't know if it is a date?”

Harry shrugged. “I guess Rose will have to find out for herself. However... Gabrielle did ask her to have a picnic on the same day couples are going on dates in the village.”

Hermione giggled. “So it may be a date. How cute. Do you think they would be a good couple?”

Harry shrugged again. “Rose knows that distance would separate them. But... she understands she’s
too young just yet for a real proper relationship. So long-distance letters, and occasional visits are fine with her for now.”

“Occasional visits?” Hermione echoed.

“Vacations,” Harry clarified. “We have actually never been outside of the States before, except for that time we went to Hawaii, which is technically part of the States. So a change in scenery would do some good.”

“Hawaii is a State,” Hermione said, sticking out her tongue.

“Cheeky,” Harry said, grinning. “I know that. It is just not in the continental America. Anyway, Gabrielle and her sister are the daughters of the French Minister of Magic, Pierre Delacour. I think they may live in Nice, France, when they’re not in Paris. Which would be nice – no pun intended. We have a Chateau in France I've never been too, but Mom and Dad were there for their honeymoon.

“Nice is nice – no pun intended,” Hermione said, then stuck out her tongue again, “Especially since the words are pronounced differently. If you go, I'd love to come along.”

“I would definitely not stop you,” Harry said. “So yeah... occasional visits – vacations to Nice, so Rose could hang out with Gabrielle. Between that and long-distance letters, they should be okay for a while if things get serious between them.”


“Aah, and there's my mad-genius plan,” Harry said, laughing in fake malevolence. He cleared his throat. “I'm planning on convincing you between now and June how Ilvermorny is better than Hogwarts, so you'll attend, so the only distance I'd have to worry about would depend on which House you're in, and how far I'd have to walk to meet you each morning.”

Hermione smiled. “I'll certainly give it a lot of thought. There's also convincing my parents.”

Harry waved a dismissive hand. “Let Mom, Sirius and Remus convince them.”

“Right – recruitment meeting,” Hermione said, remembering Remus saying that once, “Where are they by the way?”

“Remus is staying here with Rose and any of the Ilvermorny students who stay behind,” Harry said. “Mom and Sirius will go down around eleven or so.”

Hermione nodded. “So no chaperone for our date?”

Harry snorted. “I didn't have chaperones for my past two girlfriends. Definitely none for us. Mom isn't that smothering.”

Hermione grinned. “Unless we give her a reason to be.”

“Oh, definitely,” Harry said, nodding. “And then we'll have stalkers, rather than chaperones.”

Hermione laughed out loud. She absolutely loved her boyfriend's sense of humor. As she stopped laughing, she realized they had gotten very close to the carriages. Hermione narrowed her eyes as
she noticed several girls looking envious in her and Harry's direction.

*Yeah, he's mine, bitches,* Hermione thought.

Hermione was well aware how much she sounded like a jealous girlfriend. But in Harry's own words, he had said he wouldn't be interested in other girls until she trusted him enough to do so. She trusted him... but she wanted him to herself as long as possible. Daphne – and in essence, Tracey, though she didn't worry Hermione too much – was already close enough to her boyfriend. And she was only starting to get used to that.

Speaking of the two Slytherins. Hermione spotted Daphne, and saw her looking at them. She nodded toward a carriage. Harry saw them too. The girls stepped into the carriage.

“I believe we have some riding buddies,” Harry said, “You want to join them?”

Hermione nodded. Harry led her over to the same carriage, and helped her inside. As she sat down across from Daphne and Tracey, she saw him staring at something to his right.

“What's wrong, Harry?” Hermione asked.

“Huh,” Harry said, as he stepped inside and sat down next to Hermione, “I always wondered how the carriages were pulled.”

“They pull themselves,” Hermione said, “Like always.”

“No they do not,” Daphne said.

“There's no horses or anything pulling them!” Hermione argue. “Oh, you mean magic. That's what I mean too.”

“Not magic,” Harry said, “Thestrals.”

Hermione's eyes widened. She had read about Thestrals. The creature you could see if you had seen somebody die.

“Ooh,” Hermione said, nodding. “Er... who did you –? Merlin, never mind. That is so rude of me!”

“Long story, Hermione,” Harry said, “And that's all I'll say for now.”

Hermione nodded, and clutched Harry's hand in hers. “So they're really Thestrals.”

“Listen closely, as the carriage starts moving,” Tracey said.

As if on command, the carriage began moving. Hermione focused on her hearing.

And then she heard a very light horse's snort. Followed by the clip-clop of horseshoes.

Her eyes widened. “Holy shit!”

Harry chuckled when Hermione covered her mouth, after she swore. She started blushing profusely.

“Wow,” Tracey quipped. “Hermione does know how to swear.”
“That was a Thestral?!” Hermione asked, after lowering her hand.

“Mmm, yep,” Daphne said. “If you want more proof, Harry can help you pet one of them when we arrive. You can feel them, you can hear them --”

“And you can ride them,” Tracey said.

“-- you just can’t see them,” Daphne said, “Unless you saw someone snuff it. Don’t ask us either, Hermione.”

“I won’t,” Hermione said. “That was so very rude of me. Um... by the way. I’d like to apologize to the two of you for telling the rumor of you two being a couple to Harry. He and Luna were the only ones I told. I swear.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Daphne said, “We understand why you did it. And Harry’s knowledge of it gave us quite the gift. I assume he told you about it?”

“Yes,” Hermione said. “I wish you two the best of luck today. Whatever happens, I’m here for you.”

“Thank you, Hermione,” Daphne said.

Tracey echoed her girlfriend.

The four friends discussed their plans for Hogsmeade as the carriage made its way to the village. When the carriage stopped, Harry stepped out first, and helped all three witches out. Tracey hesitated briefly when Harry offered her his hand, but she took it, and he helped her out. He respectfully let go from her hand as soon as she was on solid ground.

“My parents sent me a letter at breakfast finally,” Tracey said. “They’ll be at the Three Broomsticks at ten minutes til noon. Daphne and I will inform them that I want to join the Children of the Great Alliance meeting tomorrow, but I wish for my father to get permission from you, Harry. My father – selfish as he is – will probably expect you want something in return, because he tends to believe others are just as selfish.”

“Then I will tell him all I want is for him to listen to your explanation,” Harry said. “That should begin the events.”

“Harry – Lord Potter,” Tracey said, “I apologize upfront for anything my father will say to you during the meeting. I apologize to you and your family. Please pass along the message.”

“I will,” Harry said.

“Harry?” Tracey said, “Remember something important – and pass it along to Lord Black. The House of Davis is a Noble House, nothing more.”

Harry smiled, “Thank you, Tracey.”

“We will see you later,” Daphne said.

“Be seeing you,” Harry said, “Enjoy yourselves, and remember --”
“If anybody says anything about us that we can't handle,” Daphne said, “Tell them we're under your House Protection. We know, Harry. But we can take care of ourselves.”

"I know," Harry said; but he also knew there was a reason they wanted to leave the Slytherin dungeons.

“Good,” Daphne said. “Enjoy yourselves.”

She turned and the couple walked into the village hand-in-hand. Harry offered Hermione his hand, she took it, and led her into the village.

“Harry,” Hermione said, “I am the one leading you around, remember? You know nothing about the village.”

“Right,” Harry said, “Lead away, Milady.”

Hermione started leading them into the village. “Harry... what did Tracey mean by her House being Noble, nothing more?”

“It means Sirius and I – as Lord Black and Potter, respectively – hold more respect on the metaphorical political beanpole than Lord Davis,” Harry said, “If he starts getting mouthy, we can remind him who his betters are. It would give us the upper hand.”

“Which could help Tracey in the end,” Hermione said, nodding.

“Well,” Harry said, “It is still up in the air. If Lord Davis disrespects Tracey, I will defend her.”

“Try not to lose your temper, Harry,” Hermione said.

“No promises,” Harry said. “Remember my lecture about power... and age? Lord Davis is much older than me.”

Hermione nodded. “He will look down upon you, even though you have a higher House than him, because of your age.”

“Sometimes a temper can be a good thing,” Harry said, “If you can control it. Enough about that. I'm dedicating too much time away from our date to that. I don't want to dedicate any more. This is about you and me. Take me to your favorite shops. Those you won't be going to when I'm busy elsewhere.”

Hermione smiled, and led him deep into the village, as they began their second date.

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*Hogwarts Grounds Near Ilvermorny Tents – About an hour later*

“Do you remember how to tell whether you are under a Veela's Allure or not?” Lily asked.

Rose groaned. She was currently standing outside her tent with her mother and Uncles Sirius and Remus. Gabrielle would be walking over to the tent any minute now. She kept looking toward the Beauxbatons Camp to see if she could see Gabrielle. But the young Veela was not approaching just yet.
Rose was wearing a white, flower-print pinafore dress, and sandals. She was so thankful the weather was good for it. She had spent twenty minutes in front of the mirror in her bedroom, and had to go through all her training bras to find one that could hide behind the shoulder straps of her dress. She had been so happy when she started developing in her chest, but the Merlin-be-damned training bras were so annoying! She kept adjusting the straps so they’d be hidden behind the straps of her dress.

Finally, her mother felt sorry for her and made the bra straps transparent with magic. She could still feel them, but as long as she didn't shrug much, she wouldn't have to adjust the straps much. At one point, she had even asked if she could go bra-less. The look on her mother's face immediately made her say she was joking, even though she wasn't.

“Yes, Mom!” Rose said, annoyed, “Really? You think she's going to put me under an Allure? If you thought that, why did you accept in the first place?”

“Don't mind your mother,” Sirius said, then grinned, “She's just being... your mother.”

“Lily,” Remus said, “I am sure Gabrielle won't hurt her. The girl won't even be able to summon flames until she completes her next Ascension at thirteen years old. At twelve, her Allure isn't that dangerous. Rose has begun her Occlumency training as of last summer, and her training has prepared her with enough defense to notice an Allure.”

Remus chuckled and shook his head. “Really, Rose should be flattered if Gabrielle even tries to put an Allure on her. It means she holds some attraction to Rose. Which means she is attracted to witches.”

“See!” Rose said, “I'd welcome her Allure! I'm sure I can protect myself enough to not be... intoxicated against it, I think is the right word.”

“Yes, Rose,” Remus said, “Very good.”

Lily sighed. “Fine, fine. Promise you'll be watching them, Remus.”

“I promise,” Remus said; Rose frowned, and Remus smiled, “I will not spy, or eavesdrop, Rose. I'll be a chaperone, just as a precaution. I will not interfere with any of it.”

Rose sighed and nodded, resigned to her Uncle's decision. “Fine. Are you satisfied? You need to go or you're going to be late!”

“She's right,” Sirius said, “Come on, Lily.”

Lily gave Rose a quick hug, then walked off toward the direction of the gates with Sirius.

Remus cleared his throat. “Your date approaches.”

Rose looked toward the direction of the Beauxbatons Camp and saw Gabrielle walking over, unchaperoned to them.

“Oh, bother,” Rose said, suddenly, nervous. “What if she doesn't speak English well? I don't speak French! I didn't put much thought into this – I was focused more on –”

“How cute she is?” Remus asked.
“Uncle Moony!” Rose squeaked. “That makes you sound like a pervert!”

Remus chuckled. “I am sure she knows your main language is English. Wait and see how her English is. She may surprise you. Don’t be so nervous. Be yourself. Get to know her, and let her get to know you. And Rose? She may just want to be friends.”

“I know,” Rose said, sadly, “I’m ready for that.”

Remus smiled. “I’m sure you'll have a nice time either way. I will be watching through one of the tent’s windows, but – once again – only in the chaperone sense. I’ll be doing teacher duties much of the time.”

“So... request the blanket to be in the view of a window,” Rose said.

“Please,” Remus said.

He then stepped into the tent. Rose inhaled and exhaled, and turned to Gabrielle. A few moments later, Gabrielle arrived. She was carrying a picnic basket.

“Good morning,” Gabrielle said, “My name is Gabrielle Delacour. Thank you for accepting my invitation.”

Rose blinked. Gabrielle's English was perfect. Better than her sister's!

“Hi,” she said, shyly, “I am Rose Potter, Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter. Thank you for offering. I was happy to accept.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you, Rose,” Gabrielle said, “Where would you like to have our picnic?”

Rose led Gabrielle over to an open area of the Grounds about twenty feet from her tent, in plain view of the window. Gabrielle removed a blanket from the basket and spread it out on the ground. It was the color of the Beauxbatons School Flag. Gabrielle sat down.

“Please be seated,” Gabrielle said, “Wherever you want. You may sit beside me if you wish.”

Rose went slightly pink, and sat down a few feet from Gabrielle. She crossed her legs, as she had been trained to do as a proper young Lady of her House, when she was wearing a dress like the one she had on today. She patted the hem of her dress down onto her lap, and watched as Gabrielle started taking food from her basket.

“My sister and I visited the Hogwarts Kitchens earlier today,” Gabrielle said, “And the polite House-Elves there filled my basket with lunch foods. I didn't know what you would approve of, so I requested common American cuisine, and some French delights as well. I hope it is to your liking.”

“I am sure it will be,” Rose said. “Gabrielle, your English is incredible. You speak so plainly. I can still hear your accent, of course. But the dialect is perfect. Your sister is – um --”

“Less experienced in the language?” Gabrielle asked.

Rose nodded.
“When my father heard about the Triwizard Tournament,” Gabrielle said, “And discovered my sister's intentions of becoming a contender, he talked to me about it. I begged... begged him to let me go with my sister. But I spoke no English then. It was all French. My father told me I would be meeting several English wizards and witches who knew no French. So I dedicated myself to studying English. I wanted to be perfect so my father would have no reason to stop me from going. In the end, I did better than my sister's teachings. I could go, but I had to promise to help my sister with her English.”

Rose giggled. “That's so awesome! Good job! I was so afraid you'd be speaking to me in French and I don't know French.”

“I would not have invited you on a picnic if you could not understand me, Rose,” Gabrielle said. “That would have been pointless, and rude of me.”

Rose chuckled. Yes, I suppose so.”

“Bon appetite!” Gabrielle said, motioning to the spread in front of them.

Rose's mouth watered as she looked around at the food. There were things for deli sandwiches, as well as some finger foods. Even the French food was finger foods, especially the dessert.

“Even I know what that means!” Rose said, grinning, then started to make a deli sandwich.

“I did not want to bog us down with silverware,” Gabrielle said. “It would make a picnic too complicated. It makes it easier to eat and talk. And it isn't too filling.”

“I heard French witches were rather picky about that type of thing,” Rose said.

“Perhaps,” Gabrielle said, “But that is not what I meant. It means we can we can eat as much as we want as long as we want. I don't expect us to be done in an hour and – poof – picnic over! No, no! I want to spend an afternoon with you.”

“Oh,” Rose said, blushing pink. “I would love to spend all afternoon with you. I've got nothing else planned.”

Gabrielle smiled. “I suppose you're wondering why I invited you on a picnic?”

Rose finished putting together her sandwich and bit into it. She chewed and swallowed.

“Well,” she said, “It was either one of two things. You wanted to be my friend, and get to know someone your age. But...”

“But...?” Gabrielle asked.

“There are a lot of kids your age around here,” Rose said, “I mean – a friendly lunch with one person is cool, but if you wanted to make friends, a group outing might be more fun. It is what I would do. So... you asked me for a specific reason.”

“Yes,” Gabrielle said. “Do you know what that is?”

Rose gulped and cleared her throat. “Is it because of the way I kept looking at you whenever you were in the same area as me?”
“You are a smart young witch, Rose Potter,” Gabrielle said, “And you are very cute. That is two things I like about you.”

Rose blushed pink. Did Gabrielle just call her cute? Wait... Gabrielle liked her?

“You also know what you want,” Gabrielle said, “You're very straight-forward. My mother says I am rather straight-forward too. Rose, I believe you know what I am.”

“A... Veela,” Rose said, “Like... half-Veela.”

"There is no half- or quarter- when it comes to Veela, Rose,” Gabrielle said. "You are either Veela, or you are not. We Veela mate with humans because it means our off-spring will be also be magical. But, only our daughters would be Veela, there are no male Veela. In some Veela colonies long ago, Veela did rituals that prevented them from having sons.

"Why?” Rose asked.

"It did nothing to further our kind,” Gabrielle said, "and men were not welcome as permanent in some colonies -- you'll understand why soon. It is out of practice mostly these days.” Now, do you know one of the Veela's abilities. A couple hints. It is nothing to do with the Allure, and I am too young to create Fireballs until my next Ascension at thirteen, and Avian Transformations, when I complete the following Ascension at seventeen. So what can I do?”

Rose thought back to her studies about Veela. She frowned and shook her head.

“You don't know?” Gabrielle asked. "That is alright. From the moment of their First Ascension – at the age of eleven, Veela have an ability that make them aware of a person's attraction toward them. It gives us early warning about whether we start friendships with them or not. If we are wary of their attraction, we avoid that person. If they get too.. forceful – that is where our Allure helps. Allure does not just make a person's attractions rise and inhibitions lower. If we do not like the person, our Allure will scare them away.”

“Cool,” Rose said.

“It is very useful,” Gabrielle said. “Now, attraction does not immediately mean romance. It just could mean they have the slightest feeling for you. An eleven year old can fancy you, but may be too immature to do anything about it. So it rarely ever matters. Mostly at the age of eleven, it is a time of training that ability. As you can guess, it is in a Veela's nature to be beautiful. And I admit... also vain. Vanity is a weakness in Veela. We always want to feel beautiful and be beautiful to attract a mate. Because we are creatures of love, and lust, and sexuality. It is in our nature.

“So... most Veela always find it easy to spot when somebody is attracted to them. This is thanks to what is known as – in English, you would call it an Attraction Sensor. My sister told me she counted at least three dozen boys of all ages attracted to her beauty in the Great Hall on the first night we were there. When she was picked as Champion, that count nearly doubled.”

“Good Merlin!” Rose exclaimed.

Gabrielle snorted. “How many of those felt any desires of true fancy and love for Fleur, do you think? How many felt lust?”
“Most of them for the latter category?” Rose guessed.

“Yes,” Gabrielle said, “Thankfully Veela can sort out those categories. That is the benefit of the Attraction Sensor. It is like different colors. Red for lust, pink for fancy and feelings of love. She said she counted three boys who felt any fancy for her. She didn't say whether she was attracted to them. Now! Here’s the real question. How many boys did I count as attracted to me?”

Rose frowned, disheartened. She didn't want to know. Because that would mean...

Gabrielle made the universal hand signal for 'zero'.

“Zero?” Rose asked. “That can't be right. I imagine several boys thought you cute, even if you are a little young.”

“I wouldn't know,” Gabrielle said. “Because my Attraction Sensors have never shone on boys. Never. It took me several months to know why. It took me that long to ask my mother. She looked at me in disbelief, and thought I was joking. I told her I was not. So she took me on a trip, and and brought me to a beach. It was in France, and um... some of the common beaches there are... nude beaches.”

“She took you to a nude beach?” Rose asked, in disbelief. “Did she make you...?”

“Yes,” Gabrielle said. “But only once. So she could make a point. I was so nervous I didn't notice a crucial piece of information. I did as mother asked, figuring it was a training thing, and she'd be there to protect me. The problem was... there were no boys there. Mother showed me a sign, and on the sign it said... 'Lesbian Celebration Day – Girls Only Allowed'.”

Rose's eyes widened.

“Five teen girls of various ages lit up in red auras when I strode onto the beach in naught but my skin,” Gabrielle blushed. “Red, not pink. Mother asked me what I was seeing. I told her 'red colors, Mama'.”

“Lust,” Rose said.

“Yes,” Gabrielle said. “However, it was likely none of them were really serious about their intentions. Even fantasies fall under the category of lust. For example, Rose... say you were a color in my spectrum... say pink... fancy, or a feeling of love. I could also sense whether or not you were having a dirty fantasy about me at that moment in time. So there would be spots of red if that happened. Lust.”

Rose blushed. “Is that a bad thing?”

“Non,” Gabrielle said, momentarily reverting back to native tongue, “Sometimes it is useful. Forgive me if I – ah – speak in hypothetical tongue for a moment. Such an ability would be quite useful when we're older. Combine that ability, with my ability to sense when you are... ah... horny? It will let me know when it is the appropriate time to have some fun with you. But that is for when we are older. I would never encourage you to do such things at our age.”

“Hypothetically?” Rose asked; she could hardly breathe; Gabrielle seemed to be flirting with her... at least that is what she thought was going on. Damn her inexperience!
“Of course,” Gabrielle said, grinning. “Definitely hypothetically. Where was I? Ah, yes, those lovely girls on the beach. In the girls’ defense, they didn't know how old I was, just that I was beautiful to them. Sometimes Veela can’t help to be attractive, even at the tender age of eleven. But that is why Mom was there. To keep anyone from approaching me. She told me I could put my bikini back on. Mother said nothing, and let me swim. I noticed those girls admiring me. But I was still confused. Back then, I was so... ignorant. So... oblivious. Until we went back home. And mother explained to me the definition lesbian, and its association with our kind. Before that moment, the word 'lesbian' was almost forbidden in my dictionary. It was not something Veela normally discuss unless the subject comes up for a reason.”

Rose's heart was beating. Really, really fast.

“Now, Rose,” Gabrielle asked, smiling. “Would you like to know how many girls I saw light up in the Great Hall? Well, I am afraid I cannot tell you. I must keep that a secret. Mother told me not to give that away, because it is such a personal thing. I could only speak of it if I spoke to a girl who lit up in a color, and I could only tell them about their color.”

“Me,” Rose said, blushing; she was beginning to understand. Gabrielle had not been speaking in hypothetical tongue. That was just a cover. Everything began to make sense now.

“You,” Gabrielle said, with a smile. “And you... lit up pink.”

“Oh, Merlin,” Rose whispered. “Gabrielle, I... if I had known, I --”

“You would still be pink,” Gabrielle said. “Nobody can help what they feel. It is the choices we make. Do you remember what I said about a Veela's choice when it comes to choosing what to do about the colors they see?”

“You can avoid them if you want,” Rose said.

“Am I avoiding you?” Gabrielle asked.

“No,” Rose said.

“No,” Gabrielle said. “I have a confession, Rose. I lied to my sister. I told her I wanted to get to know you as a friend. My sister does not know my secret. Mother has not told her yet. I will tell her depending on how this picnic goes. Rose... my intention was for this picnic to be a date. If that is not what you want, I understand. Sometimes I read the signs wrong. I am a young Veela. I am still training.”

“You didn't read the signs wrong,” Rose said; she inhaled and exhaled; she had prepared for this moment, but never thought it would come. “I was attracted to you from the moment I saw you. But I knew it was rare for Veela to be a lesbians.”

“Mother doesn't know if I am a lesbian,” Gabrielle said, “She says I might be bisexual. But... Veela who are bisexual – our wiring is different. We don't notice whether boys are attracted to us. The colors in that case... means we are attracted to them.”

“That is highly useful,” Rose said.

“Yes, but it is for a specific reason,” Gabrielle said. “But to understand that, you have to understand the story my mother told me about Veela who were lesbians and bisexual.”
Anticipating story-time, Rose relaxed on the blanket and picked at some of the food, taking bites, but concentrating on Gabrielle.

“Would it surprise you to know,” Gabrielle said, “that the most famous story of lesbian and bisexual Veela originates out of the island of Lesbos in Greece?”

Rose raised her eyebrows, though she wasn't all that surprised. “Didn't the island get its name from the ancient celebrations of lesbianism that took place there?”

“Mmm, yes,” Gabrielle said, nodding. “What most don't know, is it was Veela, who participated in those celebrations. Several centuries ago, there was a secret, hidden encampment consisting mainly of Veela who were lesbians. Some were bisexual. The completely straight ones were booted out.”


“Well, booted is the wrong word, sorry,” Gabrielle said. “Encouraged to go out and start their own covens and camps. No straight Veela could stay, you see. For a reason. We'll get to that part soon. Those who were bisexual were chosen as mothers of the encampment. The camp was run by the local Queen Hippolyta. She was bisexual. In fact, many of the Veela were related to her in some way. But to them, it was in no way inbreeding. Because Veela are women, and can't impregnate each other. Inbreeding, no. Incest, yes. But not siblings... cousins.

“Hippolyta started a tradition passed along amongst the bisexuals. At the start of every season, a group of chosen bisexual Veela would go out amongst one of the villages on the island, and power up their Allures. Really power them up. They would lure a group of men back to camp. Then there was a week-long celebration. An orgy of sorts. Where they would celebrate fertility. Bisexual Veela made love to one man they chose, not more than one. Only one. And they would also make love to the lesbian Veela. When the celebration was done, the men would leave, and forget they were ever there. They never came back, and the Veela didn't want them.”

“So... is that why straight Veela weren't allowed?” Rose asked.

“Because they wouldn't participate in the orgies,” Gabrielle said. “Or if they did, it would be with the men, and that would take away from the reason the men were there. So they were 'encouraged' to leave to prevent such a thing. Also, like I said, it encouraged them to go out and start their own families.”

Rose nodded. She understood that.

“Life went on. The Veela did what they usually did. Jobs, took care of the camp, took care of the children conceived and born from past celebrations, and so and so. A couple weeks after the celebration was when the bisexual Veela started to show symptoms of pregnancy. There would be another week long of celebrations, except this time there were no men. All women. Just celebrating a successful fertility ceremony, and making love. And several months later, another group of children for their camp were born. By the time those children were born, two seasons passed, two more bisexual hunting parties were pregnant after fertility ceremonies.

"No boys were born. Remember the ritual I told you about? Hippolyta's invention. It is known as Hippolyta's Curse, when Veela have no sons. Hippolyta's colony had all daughters. All Veela. Few witches, because back then on the Isle of Lesbos, it was hard to tell between Muggle and wizard. Most wizards didn't reveal their abilities out of fear. But all wizards and men fell under the powerful
allure, that held them in the erotic trance for a week. Mostly it was a game of roulette.”

“So the Veela raped the men?” Rose asked.

Gabrielle sighed. “I didn’t say Hippolyta was famous for her beliefs or lifestyle. But she is mine and Fleur’s so many-many great Grandmother. Many Veela these days originate from those Veela who were booted from the camp because they were straight.”

“Wow,” Rose said, “That is incredible. Kind of sad in some ways, but also... erotic. Are there encampments like that these days?”

“Yes, but they do not follow Hippolyta's beliefs,” Gabrielle said, “It is easier to find wizards these days. Especially volunteer wizards. So there is less rape involved. My mother told me this story, because there was a chance I might be invited to live at one of these encampments when my sexuality comes out. But that is only once I reach my Avian Ascension, and childbirth becomes possible for me. And also, most of those colonies, covens and camps don't invite Veela like me... if I am already committed to a mate.”

“Oh,” Rose said, “Do you want to be committed to a mate?”

“Very much so,” Gabrielle said. “I would even become a second-wife, if my female mate were to marry a husband. However... this is where my story comes in. I would want my female mate to marry a man I am attracted to. Because those I am attracted to, are those who would truly accept me for what I am. A Veela bisexual who wants a female lover.”

“Would your mate have any choice in the man?” Rose asked.

“Very much so,” Gabrielle said. “If my mate is not attracted to the man, I would not choose them.”

“Did you know I am bisexual, and not solely a Witches' Witch?” Rose asked. “When you noticed me?”

“No,” Gabrielle said. “But I thank the gods that you are. Because that makes me feel so much better about my attraction for you.”

Rose blushed. “Gabrielle... um... I don't know if you realize this. But I am going back to America in June. If we... start anything... and we last that long... we'd have to resort to long-distant relationships for a while. Letters, and vacations. My family has a Chateau in Nice.”

“So does mine,” Gabrielle said.

“So I could visit for vacations,” Rose said, “Or... perhaps you could visit me. I'm just saying...”

“Rose,” Gabrielle said, “I know we are young. I am not expecting you to be so dedicated to me right away. I would wait as long as it takes before we can be together for life, if that is what you would want. Because you are my ticket from moving into a Veela Colony of bisexuels and lesbians.”

“You make it sound like a prison,” Rose said.

Gabrielle said. “To those who don't want to go there... it is. But Veela who are lesbians... are – how you say – the black sheep of the species? The elders – those who are in charge of the laws of Veela – enforce these colonies, in the belief that lesbian Veela would choose to find love with others of their
kind in the colonies. Bisexuals are more respected – as long as we provide a daughter or two to further the species."

“Good Merlin,” Rose said, “Even amongst Veela – creatures of love -- same-sex relationships are frowned upon.”

Gabrielle shrugged. “Blame it on Granny Hippolyta and her Harem. Most of us do. Rose... if I do not ask, I am going to regret it. Even though we are only twelve, that does not matter to me. Would you like to be my girlfriend?”

Rose grinned. “I would love to be your girlfriend, Gabrielle.”

If Rose expected her first kiss due to this declaration, she didn't get it. Gabrielle merely smiled, and resumed eating. Rose wasn't too disappointed. There was still plenty of time on their date for a first kiss. She happily joined in as Gabrielle offered to play a little game of get-to-know-you-better.

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**The Three Broomsticks**

At ten minutes to noon, Tracey and Daphne walked into the Three Broomsticks. They found both sets of their parents talking to each other near the bar where the owner/barmaid was serving drinks. Tracey inhaled and exhaled. Time to get the show started.

“Daphne, there you are!” Lord Castor Greengrass said as they walked over to their parents. “Lord Potter and his family are already in the private room. Madam Rosmerta told me where we're supposed to go.”

“Hold on, Daddy,” Daphne said, “I'm sure you're wondering why Lord Davis is here?”

“I was about to ask you that question, daughter,” Tracey's father, Lord Derrick Davis said. “I understand Daphne is here for a Betrothal Contract meeting. But why I am here?”

“Lord Potter has invited me to a Children of the Great Alliance meeting tomorrow afternoon,” Tracey said, “But he knows you make such decisions, and he wants you to give me permission to him face-to-face. I believe he might even offer House Davis a spot in the Great Alliance.”

“Lord Potter told me that he is looking for Houses as new members,” Daphne said.

“Since Lord Potter is here to meet with Daphne,” Tracey said, “As she is my friend, she has given us permission to begin the meeting with the request.”

Lord Davis stared at Tracey, then turned to Lord Greengrass.

“You are part of this Great Alliance, are you not, Lord Castor?” he asked.

“Yes, I am,” Lord Greengrass said, “I have not given any notice of resignation, so if it is truly returning, then my House stands with the Alliance. I'm sure yours would be a welcomed voice and House.”

Lord Davis sighed. “What is there to lose? This will be quick either way. And it could be profitable. Let's go. Lead the way, Lord Castor.”
Tracey glanced at Daphne, who smiled when she saw her looking. Tracey smiled, then inhaled and exhaled as she followed the adults with Daphne toward the meeting room.

Whatever was about to happen... Tracey knew; it would change her life forever.

Chapter End Notes

The bait is set! What will happen?

Whew boy, that Rose and Gabrielle scene kept going on and on. I didn't realize how long it was until I checked. But it was important to understand Gabrielle's lifestyle and history. I very much hope you liked that scene.

I know I didn't focus much on Harry and Hermione's date. I will focus on that more coming up.

Next Chapter: We begin with Harry's Point-of-view moments before the final scene of this chapter, as the Greengrass and Davis Families arrive. Then the Confrontation. Then whatever happens... the Betrothal Contract meeting will follow. I don't know if this will be a two or three-part Arc. But I do know by the end of it, there will be: Neville and Augusta's meeting, more of Harry and Hermione's date, and more of Rose and Gabrielle's date.
Hogsmeade, Part 2

Chapter Notes

Egad! I realized too late! For the past two Chapters, I labeled the wrong date! The last two chapters were the same date as this one (Saturday, November 7th, 1994). Some of you may have seen the right date, because I edited it when I noticed it. But before that, it was the wrong date on the last two chapters. Corrected now! Also something that needed corrected. In Tracey's PoV last chapter, I originally said it was close to eleven. It was actually close to noon. It has since been corrected.

Food for thought for this Chapter: Were Hogwarts Professors Chaperones in Hogsmeade during visits? Were Professors Flitwick, McGonagall and Hagrid in PoA there as Chaperones, or to meet with Cornelius Fudge?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Saturday, November 7th, 1994

Harry Potter sipped from his bottle of butterbeer as he stared at the mahogany surface of the table in front of him in deep thought. Seated on either side of him at the elongated table were Lily, Sirius, and their Solicitor Ted Tonks. Five minutes ago, he had found them out in the main part of the Three Broomsticks restaurant – which, in his opinion, was far more beautiful than the Leaky Cauldron in Diagon Alley. Sirius had already arranged for a private room, and that is where they currently were. Across the table were four chairs, and that is where Daphne Greengrass and her father – or perhaps both parents – would be seated. But if their plans worked, then Tracey Davis and her parents would also be there – if only temporarily.

Harry smiled as he thought back to how his day had gone so far. Hogsmeade was a beautiful village. It would be hard to appreciate the wizarding shopping malls back in America when open-air markets like Hogsmeade were the absolutely perfect location for a romantic date. Especially when the weather was perfect, like today. However, there was one major problem Harry noticed about Hogsmeade, and he voiced it to Sirius and his mother.

“Why isn't there a security presence in Hogsmeade?” Harry asked.

Ted Tonks was the one to answer, and looked shocked at the question. “Because we're in an era of peacetime, Harry. No threats have been made.”

“Isn't Lucius Malfoy a known escaped fugitive from Azkaban?” Harry asked, remembering seeing an article about that very thing in the Daily Prophet.

“He has not been sighted anywhere near Hogsmeade,” Ted said.

“He is a wizard!” Harry exclaimed, “He can Apparate! Or Floo! Or ride a broomstick. He doesn't need to walk here!”
Ted frowned. “You do make good points. But why are you so worried about him?”

“He isn't, Ted,” Lily said, “He originally spoke of security presence. In America, hired security at all entrances of any magical building, during all working hours, every day. Round the clock for government buildings.”

Harry nodded. “And more are hired when it is known that students from Ilvermorny are visiting the shopping mall. Especially when two-thirds of the next generation of young witches and wizards are going to be in the area. I haven't even seen a chaperone. Have you?”

Ted frowned. “I suppose you do make a good point, Harry. During the Great War, Hogsmeade was subject to two devastating attacks by.... by Voldemort and his followers.”

“Yes,” Sirius muttered, “I remember one of them very, very well.”

Lily sighed. “I suppose the British Ministry simply doesn't feel the need to start a panic by placing security around the village.”

Harry snorted. “If just seeing security starts a panic, I'm starting to see why many people are so afraid around here.”

“The war still looms heavily on many minds, Harry,” Sirius said – well, – seriously. “A healthy amount of fear and paranoia is good sometimes. Ask Alastor Moody. He is an expert on paranoia, though he knows no fear. Besides, it is probably better that people are paranoid given what we know.”

“Given what we know,” Harry echoed, “Why the lack of security?”

“Because nobody else knows it,” Lily said. “And we can't – forgive the pun – go on a witch-hunt spreading information around like that without proof.”

Harry conceded the point.

“There was another thing I thought of whilst I was on my date with Hermione,” he said.

“Something besides Hermione?” Sirius asked, grinning.

Harry nodded. “Yes, but my focus was only off her, because she was having a restroom break. We know we want to make some provisos in this Betrothal Contract. Add a possible Consort Contract to it. Daphne's title of 'Lady' will probably be Peverell, not Potter. But... is that possible? I mean Great Granddaddy Fleamont made the contract with House Potter in mind.”

“Betrothal Contracts that pass two generations before they become active,” Ted said, “those with specific instructions, usually. While they can't be destroyed or ignored – their provisos and details can be changed to suit modern laws and beliefs. You have nothing to worry about. Don't worry about the deal made by Fleamont Potter and Cygnus Greengrass. The only detail that cannot be changed is the First Son marries First Daughter proviso. The original agreement. Everything else became outdated.”

“Well, that's a relief!” Harry chuckled.

Suddenly, the door to the room opened. Harry made to stand up, but Sirius placed a hand in his
shoulder, keeping him seated. Harry had wanted to stand to greet Daphne and Tracey, and he had told Sirius this earlier, but Sirius said Lord Davis would take it the wrong way. Standing in greeting was one of respect. Lord Davis was a Noble House – and had to earn respect from an Ancient and Most Noble House. So only Ted Tonks stood in greeting, as he was part of a Minor House.

Daphne, Tracey, and four adults entered the room.

“Lord Black, Lord Potter, Lady Potter,” Daphne said, once the door was closed, “May I introduce my parents, Castor and Illiana, the Lord and Lady Greengrass of the Noble House of Greengrass.”

Harry thought Tracey might introduce her parents. But before she could speak, her father did.

“Lord Black, Lord Potter, Lady Potter,” Lord Davis said, “A pleasure to meet you. I am Lord Derrick Davis of the Noble House of Davis. This is my wife, the Lady Elizabeth Davis.”

“A pleasure to meet you Lord Davis, Lady Davis,” Sirius said. “Lord Castor, Lady Illiana, it has been many years. Please be seated.”

First names. Harry smiled. Which meant Daphne's parents were well met with Sirius. Lord Greengrass and his wife sat together on one end of the row of chairs, while Daphne took a seat across from Harry.

“It is nice to see you again after so long, old friend,” Lord Greengrass said, “Lady Lily, a delight. My very late, but nevertheless meaningful condolences on the loss of Lord James. We were in mourning for a week after it happened. As is tradition for family and friends.”

“Thank you, Lord Castor,” Lily said, “I am glad to see you well. And you, Lady Illiana. This is my son, Lord Harry James Potter.”

Lord Greengrass smiled at Harry. “It is good to see you again after so many years. You were but a baby in your mother's arms when I saw you last. And now you look just like your father.”

“Nice to meet you, Lord Greengrass,” Harry said.

“Please,” Lord Greengrass said. “First names. Or Lord Castor and Lady Illiana if you must. Remember, you rank higher than myself. My House is two generations from being Ancient and Most Noble. Nearly there. But we are still humble while we wait. So Lord and Lady are not necessary, though respected amongst Allies, of course.”

“Yes, as I was taught,” Harry said.

“I am glad your mother and Godfather taught you in your father's stead then,” Lord Castor said.

Lord Davis cleared his throat. He looked rather agitated – perhaps because he had not been offered a seat?

“Lord Potter,” he said, “my daughter tells me you have invited her into a upcoming meeting for the – ah – Children of the Great Alliance, was it?”

“I have, Lord Davis,” Harry said.

“I would give her my permission,” Lord Davis said, “But I also ask that perhaps you grant the House
of Davis into your Great Alliance.”

“I will think on it,” Harry said. “But we believe in a majority vote, Lord Davis. My fellow members of the Alliance would have to accept in majority in a meeting tomorrow. However, as incentive, I might be able to encourage it, if you do me a favor.”

“I am listening, Lord Potter,” Lord Davis said.

“There is a reason your daughter brought you here to interrupt a Betrothal Contract meeting,” Harry said, “Instead of discuss with me a proper time for a different meeting. Because she has a request that has to do with the Betrothal Contract meeting.”

Lord Davis glanced at his daughter, then looked at Harry.

“Are you interested in agreeing to a Contract between my daughter and yourself, Lord Potter?” Lord Davis asked; he actually looked interested – Harry gave him credit for that.

“Yes,” Harry said, “But not a Betrothal Contract.”

“What kind of Contract then?” Lord Davis asked. “Lord Potter, I read Barney Cuffe’s article about you. I know you have positions open for three wives. Even with the Contract involving Lord Castor’s daughter, you have two open positions. There is no need for a Consort or Concubine Contract for my daughter.”

“Ah, but there is desire for a Consort Contract,” Harry said. “But not for me. For Daphne.”

Lord Castor and Lady Illiana's eyes widened as they turned to Daphne. Daphne held her head high.

“Excuse me?” Lord Davis asked. “I fear I misunderstand your intentions, Lord Potter.”

“Perhaps you have not heard of the Wife’s Consort Contract?” Harry asked.

“Wife’s... Consort?” Lord Davis asked, in disbelief. “Lord Potter --”

“Tracey?” Harry interrupted, “Your father is confused. Perhaps you can calm his confusion?”

“Father, Mother,” Tracey said; she inhaled, then exhaled. “I have been involved in a romantic relationship with another witch for about a year now. You should know her. She is my best friend.”

Lord Castor and Lady Illiana looked toward Daphne.

“Daphne?” Lady Illiana asked, “Young lady, is this true? You know better. You knew from the age of seven you had possible Contracts.”

“I am quite agreeable on the Contract between Lord Potter and I, mother,” Daphne said. “It doesn't concern me much, as I am bisexual, and admit to some attraction to Lord Potter.”

Harry tried his best to hide his blush.

“But I am also attracted to my best friend,” Daphne said, looking at Tracey. “And we have been together, a couple, for roughly a year now. Tracey is an admitted Witches’ Witch, and therefore has requested to Lord Potter to take part in this, so she may take her place by --”
“What place?!” Lord Davis demanded loudly.

Lord Davis was absolutely fuming. His face had been turning red and purple ever since his daughter told him she was in a romantic relationship with a witch. But he had been interrupted several times before he could speak. But now he spoke.

“My daughter has no place in Daphne’s future with you, Lord Potter!” Lord Davis began his rant, ”‘Witches’ Witch’! Absolutely rubbish! Teenage fantasy rubbish. There is no such thing as a Witches’ Witch! It is just what some girls who are one of many wives of husbands like to say, so they can get off with their sister-wives to entertain their husband!

“They say it to feel better about themselves, and hold their head up high so they’re not embarrassed in front of those who would sneer at them. Some teen magazines like to encourage the practice, so of course teens are listening to the fantasy. Tracey, you are not eligible for a Line Continuation, you won't be a sister-witch, nor a Consort, nor will you have one. I won't allow it. So there is no need for such practices.”

“But,” Tracey stammered.

“No!” Lord Davis growled. “You have a duty to your House. You've known that since you were seven! And yet you've been engaging in silly practices with a girl? No offense to your daughter, Lord Greengrass. None whatsoever. I do not speak for her. I am sure you already have your own lecture ready.”

“What duty?! ” Tracey asked, “The next generation of our House is on its way! I don't need to do my duty!”

“Do not raise your voice to me, young lady!” Lord Davis snarled, “You do have a duty. To bring forth the next generation of your future Husband's House! At home, I have several Contract offers waiting with your name on them. I just need to pick the best one that will help prosper our House! That will take less than a week. A week from now, you will be Betrothed, and you will accept to be Courted by your future husband! You will do away with this... relationship... with Lord Castor's daughter! It is disgusting! You should be ashamed of yourself! Because I most certainly --”

“Lord Davis!” Sirius barked, standing up.

Harry smirked. Sirius had told him one should only stand if they needed to rise themselves above those better, if such didn't know they were better. He also said it was Pureblood Politics nonsense, but it worked with those who dedicated their lives to it.

“WHAT?! ” Lord Davis growled.

Sirius stared dangerously at Lord Davis. “Excuse me? Do not raise your voice to me. You are the Lord of a Noble House. I am a Lord of an Ancient and Most Noble House that has been around since before the Great Granddaddy of the founder of your House was was even sperm!”

Harry snickered softly. Daphne and Tracey were doing their best not to.

“I know, Lord Black,” Lord Davis said, as he stared at the table, “I apologize. Do you have something you wish to say to me?”
“Yes,” Sirius said. “As you may know, I was nearly disowned from my own House. I was disowned by my dear Mother, but not by my Father. But my mother kicked me out of the house, and I had to live elsewhere. So I know the signs of somebody who could be threatening to disown their own child from their House.”

“Ridiculous,” Lord Davis said, “I am just reminding my daughter of her duty —”

“Yes,” Sirius said, “Her duty. To be the dutiful wife of a husband, who would use her at his every whim.”

“When they are married,” Lord Davis said, “That is their business.”

“Don’t you even know your own daughter?” Sirius asked. “Witches’ Witch being fiction? What rubbish! Do you want me to use the proper term? Lesbian.”

Lord Davis curled his lip. “My daughter is not —”

“She is!” Sirius said, “She has been in a romantic relationship with her girlfriend for several months —”

“A year, Lord Black,” Tracey said.

“A year,” Sirius said, “A year she has kept this from you. Do you know why? Because she is afraid of your reaction. And from what I’ve heard, she was right to be. Do you know what a lesbian is?”

“A woman who lays down with women,” Lord Davis said.

“Such a simplistic definition,” Sirius said. “A lesbian is a woman who is attracted to women. And not men.”

“She doesn’t need to be attracted to her husband,” Lord Davis said. “Has thirteen years away from your homeland made you forget about the common life of Betrothal Contract marriages around here? Not even half of those married from Betrothal Contracts are happily married. That is not the point. They have a duty. My daughter does not need to be happily married, or love her husband, or be attracted to him, to lay down with him or give him children from her womb. Many wives might not love their husbands, but they would raise their children, and be happy about it.”

“That is what you expect for your daughter?” Lily asked.

“I expect her to do her duty, Lady Potter,” Lord Davis said.

“I should challenge you to a duel where you stand,” Harry suddenly snarled.

He couldn’t take it any more. Lord Davis’ vision of his daughter was nothing more then a broodmare and mother.

“Excuse me, young man?” Lord Davis asked.

“He is Lord Potter, Lord Davis,” Sirius said, “Also of an Ancient and Most Noble House. Are you going to disrespect him because of his age?”

“He just threatened to duel me!” Lord Davis said.
“Because you are upsetting somebody under my House Protection,” Harry said, “Yes... your daughter.”

“What?” Lord Davis asked. “I never asked --”

“You didn't need to,” Harry said. “Apparently you are below me, after all. I will challenge you to a duel if you continue to disrespect a friend of mine, and also one under my Protection. I don't care if she is your daughter. In fact, that really shouldn't matter. Because you don't care about her happiness, her life. You don't love her enough to let her make her own choices. She's an object to you. A tool to help further your Alliances and your House. I won't allow it. So either challenge me out on the street in Hogsmeade... or disown your daughter immediately. Because *when* you lose to me – that is my price. But not the only price. When you lose, I will go in front of the Wizengamot, and call for your House to be dropped to below Minor, and its expulsion from Britain! Do not test me!”

Lord Davis shook his head. “You say you care for my daughter, and you want her to be disowned. You may be a Lord, but you are uneducated. I don't know what they teach you at Ilvermorny, but obviously it isn't enough. You obviously don't know what would happen if she is disowned. She'd lose everything. Everything!”

“No,” Harry said, “She'd gain something. A real family who supports her.”

“I am offering her a Blood Adoption into the House of Black,” Sirius said. “That would be an Ascension from your House to mine. If you're worried about her losing a dowry, or Inheritances. I'd give that to her. I would give her what she deserves. Not what I think she deserves.”

“Your answer, Lord Davis?” Harry asked.

Lord Davis stared at Harry for half-a-minute, and Harry stared back, knowing he was being challenged to see who was the stronger-willed person.

“I, Lord Derrick Vernon Davis,” Lord Davis began, then turned to his daughter, “disown Tracey Elizabeth Davis from the Noble House of Davis. So mote it be.”

Harry looked at Tracey, whose eyes fluttered, as the magic from the vow coursed through her. When her eyes returned to normal, she did not look sad. She merely smiled at her father, then walked over to Daphne, and hugged her. Lady Davis looked emotional, but had never said a word during the entire confrontation.

“Have a House-Elf deliver all of her belongings from your residence to me, Lord Davis,” Sirius said.

Lord Davis sneered. “Do you really believe –?”

“We could take it to the Wizengamot, Lord Davis,” Ted Tonks, speaking for the first during the confrontation. “Nothing that personally belongs to her falls under dowries or Inheritances lost due to her being disowned. If this goes to the Wizengamot, it would go to her anyway, and you would be heavily fined. If it was destroyed in the mean-time, you could face prison time, or be subject to punishment by House Potter or House Black, as they have both offered her a position in their Houses.”

“Fine,” Lord Davis snarled, “I want nothing that belongs to her anyway. She has nothing to do with my House anymore!”
“I will expect it by the end of the afternoon,” Sirius said. “Remove yourself from this room. We have other business to tend to.”

“Come, Elizabeth,” Lord Davis said, “We're leaving. Now! Goodbye and good riddance Tracey No-Name!”

Lady Davis did as asked, not looking twice at her disowned daughter, as she stepped out of the room. Daphne had stood and was by her girlfriend's side before the Lord and Lady Davis had even opened the door to leave. She pulled Tracey against her, and Tracey cried into her shoulder. Harry wasn't sure if it a cry of was sadness, or relief.

“Tracey Black,” Sirius said, looking at Tracey, as he finally sat back down. “Never Tracey No-Name. Ever.”

Tracey looked at Sirius with a tearful smile, then buried her face back in her girlfriend's shoulder.

Lord and Lady Greengrass stared at their daughter comforting her girlfriend. Lord Greengrass then cleared his throat and turned to Harry.

“Lord Harry, did you know about my daughter's... relationship with Tracey?” Lord Greengrass asked.

“Yes, sir,” Harry said.

“You seemed well-prepared for this confrontation with Lord Davis,” Lord Greengrass said. “Very well-prepared.”

“Last night,” Harry said, “I met with your daughter and Miss... Tracey. We discussed what would happen today. We discussed – to use a grand chain of metaphors – all the paths we might wander down, and even those not traveled, and those we hoped would never be even constructed. Let's just say this was one of those we hoped wouldn't be constructed. But we planned for it.

“Lord Greengrass. I do not want a repeat of just happened. We're in an Alliance. According to Daphne, you never left that Alliance, even when the rumors sprang forth that the House of its founder was extinct. You kept it going, as did some of our Allies. I thank you for that. I consider your daughter a friend. What happens between now and the end of this meeting will tell me whether or not you also deserve that title.

“You heard the offer earlier. Daphne has agreed to everything we will discuss in the Contract, as well as the added proviso of Wife's Consort. My House Solicitor and good family friend, Edward Tonks --”

Ted smiled. “Call me Ted. Everyone does.”

“-- has told me that everything but the reason I'm Betrothed to your daughter can be changed in the Contract,” Harry continued. “I don't think I need to tell you what your daughter feels about her girlfriend. You can see it. How they feel about each other. They chanced being disowned for their beliefs to bring forth this announcement to you. Tracey got disowned for it. They did not make this decision with loose tongues and hormones. Both convinced me, my mother, and Sirius that they want this. Even at fourteen years old.
“They want what, you ask? A Wife's Consort Contract added into the Betrothal Contract. Only necessary, that we discuss it here because the Wife is Daphne. Now, there's nothing you need to worry about when it comes to betterment of Houses and new generations. Daphne's agreed to bear at least one child, perhaps more, by me. You'll have your grandchildren you wish from your eldest daughter.

“And perhaps you'll have more than just Daphne's. There is a possibility of Tracey accepting to have a child or two. But while it would be from me... your daughter and Tracey would be their mothers to her children, while I would be the favorite Uncle who stays around and never leaves. 'Daddy'... maybe when the truth is revealed when they're older. But I will have enough children who will call me Daddy.”

Illiana had tears in her eyes and was looking at Daphne and Tracey with smiles. She stood, walked over to the girls and wrapped them both in hugs.

“Well, I think my wife just spoke for me,” Lord Castor said, “You, Lord Harry, are a well-spoken, well-educated and – if I may – a very intimidating young man.”

Sirius snickered. Ted chuckled. Lily smiled.

“Only to those who decide to cross me or those I care about,” Harry said, shrugging, “At least when it comes to that third part.”

“I've always looked at Tracey as a daughter,” Lord Castor said, gazing at the girls and woman in his life. “I suppose as... Wife's Consort... she'd be a daughter-in-law.”

“I believe so,” Harry said, “So can I call you a friend, Lord Castor?”

“You can call me anything that doesn't make me your enemy,” Lord Castor said, grinning. “I would not want to be on the wrong side of your gaze in the Wizengamot Council. I would not survive. I'd be happy to agree to the Wife's Consort Contract proviso.”

Daphne and Tracey squealed. They walked over to Lord Castor, hugged him around the shoulders and neck, at different times. Daphne kissed him on the cheek, and the girls sat down as did their mother.

“One question, however,” Lord Castor said, “Before we begin with the Contract discussion. How exactly will Tracey become Miss Black? The Winter Solstice Session is over a month away, and only the Wizengamot can make a Blood Adoption Ritual legal. Lord Davis will likely have a contingent ready to argue against it, in simple revenge against both of you, Lord Potter, Lord Black, and Tracey.”

“We'll be ready,” Sirius said. “Until then... I have already planned contingencies. I will be speaking to Albus Dumbledore and her Head of House, Severus Snape – though I don't look forward to it – about her name change, even before the adoption comes around. I will not have anyone call her Tracey No-Name. I made a promise I'd be here if she was disowned. She will also remove her things from Slytherin House, and bring them to a tent – wizarding tent, of course -- at our Quarters, where two of Lord Potter's friends – also Hogwarts students are already staying.”

“Which brings up something else,” Harry said. “Daphne? Would you like to talk about that?”

“Yes, Lord Potter,” Daphne said. “Daddy – before very long, mine and Tracey's relationship will be
known around Hogwarts. Around Slytherin. They will not like that.”

“No.... they won’t,” Lord Castor said, frowning. “Too many whelps – mind my language – from the loins of Dark Pureblood supremacists and bigots. I imagine you want to escape to the same tent in question as Tracey?”

“Yes, Daddy,” Daphne said.

“You have my permission,” Lord Castor said.

“Thank you, Daddy,” Daphne said.

“Let us begin the reason we're here,” Lord Castor said.

Lily removed a large scroll of parchment from her purse and placed it on the table. It was the Betrothal Contract.

“Three generations ago,” Harry said, “My Great Grandfather, Lord Fleamont Potter, saved the life of your Grandfather, Lord Cygnus Greengrass. It created a Life-Debt, which bred this Betrothal Contract. Little did he know, it wouldn't become a reality until Daphne and I were born. The First Son and First Daughter Clause is still active. But everything else is open to discussion.”

“As you are my daughter's husband,” Lord Castor said, “You may bring up your provisos.”

Harry inhaled and exhaled, remembering the discussions.

“Wedding date is open for discussion,” Harry said, “But it won't happen until after Daphne and I are finished with our seven-year education. My sister will still be a student – so it will either have to be during Christmas Break the winter after we finish our education. Or the Summer months after.”

“I am fine with the Summer after,” Lord Castor said. “Makes for a better honeymoon, and more time to prepare wedding. Also, better weather. Exact date can be left until after my daughter's education is done.”

“Unless Daphne permits otherwise,” Harry said, “I will not begin courting her until exactly one month after our education ends. Then I ask that she moves in with me, where ever it be I am living at the time.”

“A long courtship,” Lord Castor.

“Maybe even longer if we begin it sooner,” Daphne said, “It is fine with me. Either way, I'm sure Harry will allow me to stay with Tracey.”

“Of course,” Harry said, smiling at the girls, “There's a good place to continue. Wife's Consort. I'm not exactly educated in the details behind how that comes to be. But I imagine it will become official on our wedding date.”

“Fine by me,” Lord Castor said, “Though I move to offer a contingency. If my daughter's relationship with Tracey ends before the date of your wedding, the Consort Contract proviso will be terminated.”

Harry glanced at the girls. They nodded.
“Fine by me,” Harry said. “Now... Daphne's future title. I'm sure Granddaddy Fleamont wanted her to be Lady Potter. I believe he either forgot the tradition, or ignored it, but before and after him, Lady Potter was given to a girl whom Potter men fell in love with, without the aid of Contracts. The Tradition continues.”

“Of course,” Lord Castor said.

“I have two other titles,” Harry said, “One you probably know from Barney Cuffe's article. Lord Peverell. The other is a House Secret I am turning into an Alliance Secret as of this moment, because it will bring forth the betterment of the Great Alliance. I am also Lord Gryffindor.”

Lady Illiana raised her eyebrows in shock. Lord Castor whistled. “Quite the weight on your shoulders there, Lord Potter. I'm going to say Daphne already knows --”

“-- and has turned her nose up to it,” Lady Illiana said, “As she has done to things she dislikes since she was in nappies.”

“Mum!” Daphne squeaked, going red in the face.

“Hush, daughter,” Lady Illiana said, “I have pictures. Your husband will probably want to see them sometime.”

Harry grinned when Daphne glared playfully at him.

“I am offering the title of Lady Peverell,” Harry said.

“A fine name to pass on to my grandchildren,” Lord Castor said. “I accept.”

“Excellent,” Harry said.

He looked at his mother, who had been penning everything on the Contract as the discussion continued. Then he looked at Daphne.

“Expectations of number of Children?” Harry asked.

“My daughter, Astoria, will be in a Line Continuation Contract,” Lord Castor said. “It is up to her to bring forth the next generation of Greengrass. But my wife dreams of many grandchildren to smother and play with.”

“As do I, Lady Illiana,” Lily said, grinning.

“At least one son to pass on your Lord Peverell title to, Lord Harry,” Lord Castor said. “If you have three daughters, and then a son – then that's four children. After a son, you can have as many children with my daughter as you can handle.”

“One last thing,” Harry said. “However, this isn't really Contract stuff. Daphne and Tracey's future education. Either way, I think we both know they'll be together. Sirius, you're going to be Tracey's future Daddy --”

Sirius grinned at Tracey, who smiled prettily.
“And may God help both of you!” Lily quipped, to laughter.

“– what say you, Sirius? If the girls want to stay at Hogwarts?” Harry asked.

“I would be happy if Tracey were able to live with you Lord Castor,” Sirius said, “During the final week of summer before schooling begins. And any holiday breaks, except most of summer and we split up Christmas and vacations.”

“And if Tracey chooses the school of her soon-to-be father,” Lord Castor said, “Then I imagine Daphne will want to join her future husband and Consort?”

Daphne nodded.

Lord Castor sighed. “I would like to copy Lord Sirius' offer for his future daughter, and take it for mine.”

“Very well,” Harry said, “Anything else you'd like to add?”

“Nothing I can think of,” Lord Castor said. “You know how to handle Betrothal Contract meetings, Lord Harry. I give you that.”

“Which is odd,” Harry said, “Since I never expected to find myself in one.”

“Life works in mysterious ways,” Lord Castor said, glancing at his daughter, “I came here expecting to plan a time when my daughter would get a husband. I really didn't expect she'd also be getting a Consort. Why not just make her one of your wives?”

“Because she doesn't want to marry me, Lord Castor,” Harry said, glancing at Tracey, “She wants to marry your daughter.”

Tracey and Daphne grinned. Lord Castor nodded.

“And... done!” Lily said, “This should be passable to Keeper Ragnok and your Account Manager, Lord Castor. Would you like Ted to look at it, as a middleman?”

“I trust your abilities, Lady Lily,” Lord Castor said.

“Then all it needs is your signature, my son's, and mine and Sirius' as witnesses,” Lily said. “Tracey, you will likely have to sign it when – sorry – your surname becomes official.”

Tracey nodded. The signatures were signed, and the Contract was finished.

“My son or I will present this to Keeper Ragnok soon,” Lily said, “And he should be able to give a copy to your Account Manager –”

“Steeltooth,” Lord Castor supplied.

“I believe our meeting is finished,” Harry said.

He stood and offered a hand, which Lord Castor shook and accepted. Lord Castor and Lady Illiana hugged Daphne – and Lady Illiana hugged Tracey too. Then Daphne's parents left after proper farewells.
“Harry, Tracey, Daphne,” Sirius said, “Meet me at the House Potter Tent when you return from your dates. We will meet with Headmaster Dumbledore and Professor Snape.”

Tracey went emotional again, and walked over to Sirius. She hesitated slightly, then hugged him around the waist. Sirius froze for a moment, before patting her on the back.

“Thank you, Sirius,” Tracey said. “I will never, ever be able to repay you for this. Ever.”

“You're welcome, Tracey,” Sirius said, “A great man and equally great wife and son took me in when I ran away from home and thought I was disowned. I promised I would never see someone treated how I was. Even worse that it is a fourteen year old girl. You will always have a home, Tracey.”

Tracey sniffled, hugged Sirius for a few more moments, then backed away. Harry noticed a slight look of shock on Daphne's face as she looked at her girlfriend. He wasn't sure what that was all about.

“Harry,” Lily said. “You know I don't like to repeat myself. But I am going to repeat what I have said... countless times in your lifetime. You have made me so very proud today. Standing up for Tracey in front of Lord Davis – and in essence Daphne in front of her own father – I knew I didn't need to step in. You handled yourself very well.”

“Thanks, Mom,” Harry said. “Are you going back to the tents yet?”

“I promised your sister I wouldn't interfere in her picnic,” Lily said. “Walking past her picnic to go into the tent – might be interference. I haven't visited Hogsmeade in a long time. I'm going to do my own exploring.”

“And I would be happy to accompany you,” Sirius said.

“Just don't call it a date,” Lily snarked. “You got your own to set up already.”

Sirius grinned. Harry stood, as did Lily. Harry hugged his mother, then his godfather, and shook Ted's hand.

“Ted, thank you for your help with Lord Davis today,” Harry said.

“Don't mention it, Lord Harry,” Ted said, “Though a bit of luck with the Missus might help. I promised I wouldn't get into a yelling match without her here with me. And she ain't here.”

Harry laughed. “Good luck. If anything, tell her you did me a great favor.”

“She'll accept that,” Ted said, “Thanks.”

“Now, go on,” Lily said. “I am sure Hermione is waiting. We'll see you later. All three of you.”

Harry grinned. Daphne and Tracey said goodbye, and they headed off out of the private room.

What none of them saw was a water-beetle, hiding in a plant outside in the corridor. She knew her target was inside the room. But the room was muffled, so she couldn't hear a word. The parents of her target had stormed out earlier, the father calling her target a “Merlin-be-damned Witches'
Whore!

Rita Skeeter in Animagus form followed her target and who appeared to be the target's same-sex romantic partner. The partner being someone that she couldn't touch, article-wise, due to damn exclusivity because she was a House Potter Alliance member. But the other one...

It was time to follow a couple witches on their Hogsmeade date. Rita Skeeter had found her next story!

Chapter End Notes

Dun-dun-dun!!! Rita Skeeter ain't going down without a fight!

Ooh, that was a fun chapter to write. Now! I know some of you won't like that I had Lord Davis be a total jerk. But it works so well for a future idea in my story. And it brings forth other ideas too. Especially the Tracey and Sirius dynamic.

Next Chapter: The Hogsmeade Arc finishes up. Two chapters until the – as someone called it – “Harry and the Witches Alliance meeting”, and also Albus and Severus meet with Harry, Sirius Tracey and Daphne about the news. But that is in two chapters.
One of my reviewers decided to tell me they believe Rose and Gabrielle have a “Mature Relationship” in this story. If this does not pertain to you, you may skip the rest of the author's note.

I feel like I've repeated this too often. So one last time. Their relationship is going to be nothing more than puppy love – aka, little friendly dates where they may share a peck on the lips or two, but nothing more; just two girls who are beginning to realize who they are when it comes to sexuality (Oh, no, I mentioned sexuality, amongst 12 years old, burn the witch – er... wizard!) and sharing it with someone else who understands them, and also likes them. I am not going to be doing anything “Mature” with them... anytime in the Triwizard Tournament storyline! So get a grip! Stop making it more than it is!

I have an absolutely beautiful, and innocent storyline for them planned coming up that has little to do with romance, and more along the lines of Hurt/Comfort. Part of that is in this chapter, and works perfect for this time-period in canon.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, November 7th, 1994

Neville Longbottom and Ginny Weasley were sitting in one of the private meeting rooms at the Three Broomsticks. His Grandmother, Augusta, would be there any moment. They had spent the last two-and-a-half hours walking around Hogsmeade Village, holding hands, and visiting shops. Once or twice, after Neville had offered to by something for her, Ginny had accepted then she had dragged Neville down alleyways in between shops for a nice little snog in reward.

“Neville,” Ginny said, “Are you going to tell me about that interview you had?”

Neville sighed. “I will after the meeting with Gran,” Neville said.

Ginny grinned. “Did you say anything about me?”

“Maybe,” Neville said, in a sing-song voice.

“Well, I hope so,” Ginny said, “Because if you did, I might just have to take you up to the Snog Spot near the Shrieking Shack for that sneak peak I promised at breakfast.”

Neville's cheeks heated up. Before he could answered, the door of the room opened. He and Ginny instantly stood as Neville's Gran walked into the room, the stuffed vulture on top of her nearly brushing the top of the doorway. Augusta raised her eyebrows in surprise when she saw Ginny.

“Miss Weasley?” Augusta said.
“Yes, Lady Augusta?” Ginny asked.

“This meeting is only for House Longbottom ears,” Augusta said. “So unless you have both been keeping a secret from me, you need to leave. Neville will see you shortly.”

“Yes, ma'am,” Ginny said.

She pecked Neville on the cheek, then walked out of the room, curtsying to Augusta as she passed her by.

“I am happy to see your relationship is still strong, Grandson,” Augusta said, as she sat down across from Neville. “It is strong, am I correct?”

“I think so,” Neville said. “Though sometimes...”

“Sometimes what?” Augusta asked.

“This morning she called Harry Potter handsome,” Neville said.

“Lord Potter is a very handsome young man,” Augusta said, “Like his father and Grandfather before him. Why should that make you have doubt about your relationship with Ginny? Do you believe Ginny fancies Lord Potter?”

Neville frowned and shrugged.

“Ginny was testing you, Neville,” Augusta said, “She wanted to know whether you'd get jealous. Did you pass or fail?”

“I think I failed,” Neville said.

“And yet she seems very happy now,” Augusta said. “Your picture was in the Daily Prophet several times too. I should know. All of them are now in my scrapbook. Did she look at them?”

“She said I looked handsome,” Neville said, “Not as handsome as in real life, but handsome. She was envious that others could look at them.”

“Then she feels the same way about you that she did before she called Lord Potter handsome,” Augusta said. “Ginny does not fancy Lord Potter any more than any of the other silly girls do up at the castle. But I can tell by the way she kissed you that she wouldn't do anything to betray you. Sometimes we females like to tease boys we love. That is all.”

Neville blushed and smiled.

“And yet I still sense doubt in you, Grandson,” Augusta said, “So what is wrong?”

Neville sighed. “Something Headmaster Dumbledore said.”

“And what did that old codger say that made you doubt Ginny?” Augusta asked, narrowing her eyebrows.

“Nothing – he approves of my relationship with her – he encouraged me to focus on her,” Neville said, “But that's just it. Focus! He said I need to keep my focus dedicated to few things. The
Triwizard Tournament, and classes. They take up so much time this year. And after them, Ginny takes up the rest aside from personal hygiene and sleeping time.”

“So?” Augusta asked, “What is the issue?”

“You're here to talk to me about obtaining my Lordship, aren't you?” Neville asked, “That is what you explained in your letter?”

“Yes,” Augusta said, “I am here to see whether you will accept it now or later.”

Neville frowned. “I'd have to choose Ginny or my Lordship, Gran. I need your help.”

Augusta sighed. “Do you remember when we used to take those metaphorical rides on Time Turners?”

“We hop in time one year from that moment in time,” Neville said, grinning. “Even though that is impossible.”

“Let's take another ride, Neville,” Augusta said. “It is November 7th, 1995. What are you focused on in your life if you choose Ginny?”

“OWLs, Classes and Ginny,” Neville said.

“OWLs and Classes can fall under the same subject with enough focus, Neville,” Augusta said.

“You're right,” Neville said. “So that brings some focus elsewhere.”

“Another ride,” Augusta said, “This time you chose your Lordship. No Ginny. Hmm.. between now and then. I could see the Betrothal canceled if that happens. So what is going on now, Lord Neville?”

“OWLs and Classes,” Neville said, “Lord Longbottom duties.”

“Not old enough for Wizengamot Council, Grandson,” Augusta said. “How many duties are you really handling, right now?”

“Not enough to take up too much time,” Neville said.

“And Ginny?” Augusta asked.

“She might have a new boyfriend,” Neville said, “and the rest of my focus is pining over her, and jealous of her boyfriend.

“Is it Lord Potter?” Augusta asked.


“Do you have a girlfriend?” Augusta asked.

Neville shook his head.

“Ginny isn't just a Betrothal girlfriend!” Neville argued. “Don't you understand that, Gran! I --!”

Neville blinked, as a realization poured over him. Augusta smiled.

“Back to reality,” she said. “Can you make your choice now?”

“I am going to wait to claim my Lordship until after the Tournament, Gran,” Neville said, “Will Keeper Lockjaw accept that?”

“I think he might even say it is a mature decision,” Augusta said. “As would I. Ginny is not something that can wait a year. Your Lordship is. You can get your Lordship back. Ginny...”

“Once she's gone, she's likely gone,” Neville said.

“I believe this meeting is over,” Augusta said. “Go see Ginny. And Neville? Make sure she isn't joking with you before you raise your temper at her in the future.”

“Yes, Gran,” Neville said.

“Now come around here and hug me,” Augusta said.

Neville smiled, rounded the table, and hugged his Gran.

“Go and win this Tournament, Neville,” Augusta said, “Neville Longbottom Lord Longbottom, Triwizard Champion. A good name. One I can be proud of.”

Neville blushed, and his resolve strengthened.

“Now go and see Ginny,” Augusta said. “I will see you for the First Task.”

“Bye Gran,” Neville said, “I love you.”

“I love you, Grandson,” Augusta said.

Neville smiled and hurried from the room. Ginny was sitting on a bench down the corridor. Neville walked over to her, pulled her from the bench, and kissed her better than he ever had.

“Wow,” Ginny said, after backing away a minute later. “Hi Neville. Good meeting?”

“I love you, Ginny Weasley,” Neville said.

Ginny grinned. “I love you, Neville Longbottom. Now take me to the Snog Spot.”

“What about the sneak-peak?” Neville asked.

“Oh,” Ginny said, “You're getting a sneak-peak.”

Neville grinned and led Ginny out of the Three Broomsticks. Neville had felt he had definitely made the right choice.
“Hermione?” Luna's voice came from the other side of the half-door.

Hermione was currently standing in front of a mirror in one of the changing rooms of the “Whimsical Witches Clothing Store.” She was trying on bras that would give her chest a bit more of a lift. She remembered Harry talking about her curves being hidden in her school robes, and she wanted to improve that. She was standing sideways, trying to imagine wearing her robes and seeing if it improved it.

“Mmm?” Hermione asked.

“Harry's done with his meeting,” Luna said, “Luckily, I was following a Flutterby around the store, and it went outside at the same moment Harry came upon the store. I told him you were in here. He asked me why you were in a Boy's Clothing Store.”

Hermione sighed. Enchantments were around the shop that made Witches be able to see and walk into this store, and Wizards go into another. She couldn't wrap her mind around that magic. Alternate Dimension Enchantments?

“Did you tell him what the store was to witches?” Hermione asked.

“Yes,” Luna said. “I told him he needed to turn into a witch if he wanted to come and find you. He's cute when he blushes, isn't he?”

“Yes, yes he is,” Hermione said. “So he's waiting for me?”

“Yes,” Luna said.

“Bugger,” Hermione muttered under her breath. “Tell him five minutes.”

She twisted her waist, checking all sides from the front.

“It should be enough,” she said to herself, “Hmm... at least it would approve my casual wear.”

Satisfied, she put her shirt back on, picked up her shopping bag, and walked out. She grabbed three more identical bras, placed them in the bag and walked over to the counter. She placed everything on the counter.

“All of this,” she said; then she pulled down her neckline to show the bra, “Plus this one. Sorry. I just had to put it on.”

“Witches have walked out of here wearing more than just bras they just bought, dearie,” the receptionist said, “As long as you buy it.”

She paid when the receptionist gave her the cost, collected her purchases, then headed out of the shop. Harry and Luna were talking. He smiled his dazzling smile when he saw her.

“Notice anything new?” Hermione asked.

“I don't see any new clothing you're wearing,” Harry said.
“You can't see it,” Hermione said grinning.

She turned to her side, to show off her profile and curves. Harry's eyes went to the right spot... then immediately moved back to her eyes. Hermione grinned. Success!

“Hermione,” Harry said, “You know you didn't need to do that.”

Hermione pouted. “Don't I look good?”

“Cheeky witch trying to catch me up with a trap question,” Harry quipped. “You looked good before, you look good now.”

“I'm glad you approve,” Hermione said, “Besides, it is more for a less modest look while wearing my school robes. Several girls do it.”

Harry sighed. “Hermione. I'm not looking at those girls. I am looking at you. Don't ever feel you need to change for me. You'd change what made me notice you.”

“Should I go ask Madam Pomfrey for my buck-teeth back?” Hermione asked.

“Your decision,” Harry said.

“I kiss better without them,” Harry said.

“Really?” Harry asked, “Who did you kiss when you had them?”

“My pillow?” Hermione joked.

Harry laughed out loud, then pulled her to him and kissed her. She grinned and kissed him back.

“Hmm,” Hermione said, when she was done, “Much better than a pillow!”

“I'm going to go find that Flutterby,” Luna said, “Bye!”

Hermione did a double-take. She had forgotten her friend was there. She was too focused on Harry. And now she felt really, really bad.

“You don't have to go, Luna,” Hermione said.

“But the Flutterby would miss me,” Luna pouted.

“Fine,” Hermione said. “If you find it, come back and find us.”

“Okay,” Luna said, “Oh, and the Snog Spot is occupied right now.”

“Snog Spot?” Harry echoed.

Hermione blushed. She had planned on going there. “How do you know?”

“Saw Neville and Ginny going up in that direction,” Luna said.

“Neville and Ginny?” Hermione asked. “They're... fourteen and thirteen!”
“What's so bad about that?” Harry asked, “They’re just going to... wherever this place is to snog it sounds like.”

“Ginny said something about a sneak-peek,” Luna said, thoughtfully.

Hermione blinked, then decided she didn't want to know. “Thanks, Luna.”

“Do you want me to come find you, even if you are at the Snog Spot?” Luna asked.

“Would we be doing something besides snogging?” Harry asked.

“It's a nice place to relax after winding from a bit of fun,” Luna said.

“How do you know?!?” Hermione demanded.

“I heard someone say they went up there to sit and talk with their friend after shopping,” Luna said.

“... and relax after having fun,” Hermione realized.

“A fun time shopping,” Luna said, “What did you think I meant?”

“Go find that Flutterby, Luna,” Hermione said, sighing, “Before it takes so long, you miss the carriages.”

Luna grinned. She waved goodbye and walked away.

“The Snog Spot isn't a place to snog, is it?” Harry asked.

“It is,” Hermione said, then winced, “And more.”

“Were you going to take me there?” Harry asked, feigning innocence.

“Not to do the 'more' stuff,” Hermione said, glaring playfully at him. “Besides, it isn't very private. Anyone can walk up on you.”

“How do you know?” Harry asked, grinning.

“Um,” Hermione said, “Mandy Brocklehurst has told so many stories in my hearing range about the Snog Spot, that I'm quite sure she's a slut in all the ways that doesn't count loss of virginity?”

“Wow,” Harry said, “Been keeping that one in very long, Hermione?”

“Yep,” Hermione replied, “Because you've been distracting me... by being nice, then being my boyfriend, then a nice boyfriend. And then there is the kisses. And classes. And homework. And kisses.”

“You said 'kisses' twice,” Harry supplied. “I think I better continue to distract you. Your mouth is too cute to be dirty.”

Hermione back-handed him in the chest playfully.
“Violent,” Harry said, grinning, “Were you really wanting to snog me?”

“Impress me for a couple more hours and I might snog you in a carriage,” Hermione said, “More private than the Snog Spot. It is your turn to lead me around the Village.”

Harry took her hand that wasn't holding her shopping bag, and they started walking down the street as Harry looked around at the storefronts, choosing a shop.

“We haven't gone to the candy store yet,” Harry said. “It might not be as full as it was when we first got here.”

“Well, I am hungry,” Hermione said, “and exploring is better than sitting down and eating.”

“And you like chocolate,” Harry said.

“My parents are dentists,” Hermione quipped.

“And...?” Harry asked.

“And I like chocolate,” Hermione conceded, “But only because I rarely get any at home.”

“Chocolate it is,” Harry said. “Do you want to hear about what happened with Daphne and Tracey?”

“Is it going to make me mad?” Hermione replied.

“Mad how?” Harry asked, slowly.

“Challenge anyone to a duel?” Hermione asked.

Harry frowned and opened his mouth, then closed it. Hermione sighed, and decided to save him.

“I'll let Tracey and Daphne tell me,” Hermione said. “And see if your challenge was justified. Tell me one thing. Did Tracey and Daphne at least get out of it unscathed?”

Harry sighed. “She's disowned from her House, a couple steps closer to spending her life with the girl she loves, a couple steps from becoming Tracey Black – unofficially she is Tracey Black. Daphne's Betrothed to me, and in a Wife's Consort Contract with Tracey. Is that a yes or no?”

“Are they happy?” Hermione asked.

Harry nodded.

“Then it is a yes,” Hermione said. “I'll find out everything else from them. It sounds as if you had a successful meeting.”

“Now, entertain me with a couple hours of shopping, and you'll get that snog in a carriage,” Hermione said.

Two hours later, the couple shared their first snog in a carriage as it made its way back to Hogwarts. Luna had found her Flutterby, said goodbye to it – which was apparently her whole point of finding it – and had rode in a carriage behind them, with the excuse she didn't want to interrupt their snogging. Hermione was pleased to say she had succeeded for once in breathing through her nose.
And she really, really liked French kissing.

She also liked giggling afterward at Harry's green-in-the-gills expression when Luna asked Harry whether it would be a normal kiss or a French kiss when Gabrielle and Rose had their first kiss. Hermione wasn't sure how Luna had known she and Harry had a French kiss. It would be the only reason her friend would mention it.

Later that evening, Hermione would realize Luna's Flutterby antics were her having trying to have fun by herself when her best friend was on a date. The “Flutterby” had probably led her all around the village – like Hermione would have if she had accompanied Luna. Hermione vowed to invite Luna to accompany her and Harry next time. Even if it meant less snogging. She didn't want to lose her best friend because she had a boyfriend.

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**Hogwarts Grounds near Ilvermorny Tents**

The American and French finger foods from the picnic baskets were all finished, as was the six-pack of butterbeer. Rose and Gabrielle were now laying spread across the picnic blanket, with their heads near each other, and they were watching clouds roll across the sky. Rose hadn't gotten that first kiss she wanted yet, but she hardly cared. She had spent the last three hours getting to know her new girlfriend. Gabrielle entertained with stories of Beauxbatons. She was an excellent story-teller, which was obvious after the Hippolyta story. Rose talked of Ilvermorny, and growing up in Boston.

“May I ask a personal question, Rose?” Gabrielle asked.

“Sure,” Rose said.

”'When did you know you were bisexual?’” Gabrielle asked. “You don't have to answer.”

“You told me when you knew you liked girls,” Rose said ,”So I am okay answering. It was around the second week of my first term at Ilvermorny last year. I was sitting in my bed, doing homework. And suddenly one of my room-mates walks out of our dormitory bathroom, with a towel around her waist. She's the eldest in our year, so she was starting to develop. And... I was staring at her. Another girl, one of my friends, called my name. Apparently she called it three times before I stopped watching my half-naked dorm-mate walk across the room.

“Thankfully, my best friend didn't realize what was going on. She just thought I was thinking about an answer on my homework. I'm not even attracted to my dorm-mate. But...”

“It made you realize you had been staring,” Gabrielle said.

“No at first,” Rose said. “It took me a week.”

“Or you just refused to believe it at first,” Gabrielle said. “Doubted yourself. 'I was jealous of her early developments while I'm still flat-chested.' 'She surprised me by walking out topless, and I just stared in shock.'”

Rose giggled. “Then I started catching myself staring at other girls.”

“And boys?” Gabrielle asked.

“No boys I like right now at my school,” Rose said, “So... no. It took me a week to realize that I was
staring at girls. And three more days before I finally spoke to my family about it. Thank Merlin they were at school with me. Because they helped me realize it was okay to feel what I feel. I would have exploded had I had to wait until Christmas Break to speak to my family about that. Letters wouldn't have said it right.”

“We are both lucky we had family nearby when our revelations hit us,” Gabrielle said.

“Yes,” Rose said. “Gabby? What... what are we... exactly?” Rose felt Gabrielle move, and suddenly, Gabrielle's face was above her, blocking her view of the clouds.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“You asked me to be your girlfriend,” Rose said, “My mother has girlfriends. She calls them girlfriends. But I know they aren't the romantic type. Now I am wondering what type of girlfriend I have and...”

Rose stopped talking. Gabrielle's lips were suddenly on hers. Rose's brain went fuzzy. Gabrielle's lips were so very soft. Rose moved her lips back and forth and kissed Gabrielle back. At least she hoped that was what she was supposed to do. The kiss barely lasted five seconds, before Gabrielle backed away... it felt like longer...

“Wow,” Rose whispered. “I have that type of girlfriend.”

“I am sorry I made you doubt my intentions, Rose,” Gabrielle said. “I was not sure if you believed you were old enough to be kissed. Or I'd have kissed you when you said you'd be my girlfriend.”

Rose pecked Gabrielle on the lips, and backed away.

“Does that answer your question?” Rose asked.

“Oui,” Gabrielle said.

Rose's heart fluttered. She liked it when her girlfriend spoke French.

Gabrielle laid down horizontally next to Rose, and laid her head back down on the blanket. Then Gabrielle gently grasped her hand in Rose's closest one. Rose grinned. This was the first time they had held hands. Rose looked up at the clouds again, and wondered if they were as soft as her girlfriend's lips.

“I see a cloud that looks like one of your tents,” Gabrielle said.

Rose smiled. Off and on for the past hour as they laid on the blanket and talked, they randomly pointed at clouds that looked like different shapes.

“That one,” Rose said, pointing, “Looks like a mermaid.”

Rose felt Gabrielle's hand squeeze hers tight, and the Veela's body shivered.

“Gabby?” Rose asked, turning to look at her girlfriend, “What's wrong?”
“Veela and Mermaids are mortal enemies,” Gabrielle said. “We're creatures of fire. They're creatures of water. They... there are mermaids in the lake down there. On the first night we were here. Fleur and I were both awakened by a horrible sound. It was a mermaid's song. Several mermaids. Above the water, it is just a screeching sound. Horrible. I crawled into Fleur's bed, cuddled up to her, and we knew... Fleur and I knew... they had sensed our presence; They were giving us a warning.”

“A warning?” Rose asked, frowning.

“Do not go near the water, Veela,” Gabrielle said, “For you are made of fire.”

“So... Veela can't swim?” Rose asked.

“Oh, we can swim,” Gabrielle said. “We're just unwelcome in a mermaid's encampment.”

“Unwelcome?” Rose asked.

“I believe it was an Italian who once wrote 'Abandon all hope, ye who enter here,” Gabrielle said. “Good motto for Veela who wish to swim into mermaid encampments.”

“Oh,” Rose said.

“Thestrals,” Gabrielle said.

Rose squinted at the clouds. “I don't see it.”

“Because you haven't seen death,” Gabrielle said, “They're pulling the carriages.”

Gabrielle was sitting up. She was still holding onto Rose's hand, but with her other, she was pointing. Rose sat up, and saw the carriages. Then she saw her mother and Uncle Sirius get out of a carriage. A few carriages away, Harry and Hermione... then Luna, in a carriage behind them. Then Rose spotted Daphne and Tracey. Good. Rose wanted Gabrielle to meet them...

Wait. Why were Harry and Sirius following Daphne and Tracey into the castle when her mother, Luna and Hermione were heading their way? Harry and Hermione were usually joined by the hip during their free time, ever since they started dating. Rose had hoped she and Gabrielle could be the same way. Something was wrong. And it had to do with Daphne and Tracey. The meeting, perhaps?

“Is our date over?” Gabrielle asked.

“Maybe,” Rose said, “But I don't want you to go yet. Can you stay?”

“Until Fleur comes and gets me,” Gabrielle said.

“Good,” Rose said. “Because I want my family to meet my girlfriend. And two of them seem to be delayed in returning.”

“Do you think it would improper to let your mother know we're girlfriends from a distance?” Gabrielle asked, grinning.

“How?” Rose asked.

Gabrielle licked her bottom lip. Rose had to look away so she wouldn't kiss her girlfriend.
“Yes!” Rose hissed, with little heat, “Very improper!”

“Shame,” Gabrielle said, grinning, “It would have been a memorable introduction.”

“Introducing you as my girlfriend isn't?” Rose asked, raising an eyebrow.

Gabrielle shrugged, and smiled. “It'll do.”

“Mischievous little Veela, aren't you?” Rose giggled.

Gabrielle's response was merely a wink.

Soon Rose introduced her girlfriend to her mother, Remus, Luna and Hermione. Rose blushed when Remus said he knew it after he saw Gabrielle kiss her. Lily hit him with a stinging hex – which she rarely did to him – and told him he shouldn't have watched something so private. When Remus stammered and said he had looked out at them at the wrong moment, it only made Lily glare at him. But her expression softened when she saw her daughter laughing with her new girlfriend at Remus, right along with Hermione and Luna.

Hermione and Luna then went back to their tent, to prepare for their new dorm-mates' arrival, and to put away their purchases.

The sight of Rose and Gabrielle leaning against the back of the sofa, pointing at clouds out the window, and talking in whispers was a heartwarming sight for Lily. She knew her daughter may be young for romance. But to Lily, it almost didn't resemble romance. It reminded her of a time when two children were pointing at things, smiling and whispering, and giggling. It had been butterflies instead of clouds. Of course... those two kids she remembered never did anything like kiss... though one wished they had, while the other would never echo their friend's feelings...

She only hoped her daughter’s relationship went better than how the relationship of those two children had turned out.

She knew Gabrielle was at least bisexual, if not a lesbian. It was good that her daughter found someone she could identify with. She'd have to watch them, of course, and perhaps talk to Rose about it. But somehow she knew this was good for Rose. How could it not be?

Rose looked absolutely happy. And there was nothing better to see for a mother than her child happy.

Chapter End Notes

Cue the 'awws'... or the rants about 12 year olds pecking kisses.

Finally we are done with the Hogsmeade Arc. Did I ever mention dates are along the same category as birthday parties when it comes to things I do not like writing much? It is bad since I love writing romance. Dates just do little for the plots... Hogsmeade visits
don't work for plots, unless they end in FIRE! PANIC! DEATH EATERS!!! (And yet I just spent three chapters there. S)

Speaking of fire, I am probably in danger of some burns when it comes to Neville and Augusta's meeting. Augusta cares for Neville. Neville cares for Ginny. Neville's “Ginny or Lordship” status was a weakness to Augusta. She likes Ginny, Betrothal or not. So... when it came to it, Ginny now and Lordship in a year was much better than Lordship now, and Neville being heartbroken due to it. Yes, Albus' manipulations started it. It was a minor victory for Albus. But constant losing for a villain gets old... according to reviewers anyway.

Ginny's “sneak-peek” was letting Neville see her topless for a few moments. Nothing more. So don't get no ideas of thirteen year old Ginny shagging Neville for him saying he loved her. If any one thinks Ginny's sneak-peek is too much... then I was a lucky teen boy when I was Neville's age!

Next Chapter: Sirius, Harry, Daphne and Tracey meet with Severus and Albus, and the Children of the Great Alliance meeting.
The Children Of The Great Alliance

Chapter Notes

A guest reviewer actually gave me a happy thought! I had a revelation. Read Luna's part in Harry and Hermione's date in the previous chapter. Now imagine the Flutterby is Rita Skeeter. It isn't, but imagine! I wish I had thought of that.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, November 7th, 1994

Sirius stepped out of the Thestral-drawn carriage, following Lily as she stepped out too.

“Ooh, how cute is that, Sirius?” Lily asked.

Sirius almost proved all the times she insulted his lack of loquacity by saying “huh?” when he saw what she was obviously looking at. His Goddaughter, Rose, was sitting on a picnic blanket so close to a blonde-haired girl that it appeared they were holding hands.

“They're still having a picnic?” Sirius asked. “How long have they been there?”

“They probably finished eating long ago,” Lily said, “And are just talking and getting to know each other. Ten Galleons says they're girlfriends already.”

“You really think so?” Sirius asked.

“Look how close they are,” Lily said. “Holding hands. Hmm... if you were passing time on a picnic with fluffy white clouds in the sky, what would you do?”

“You don't want to know, Tiger-Lily,” Sirius quipped.

“As twelve year olds!” Lily exclaimed.

“Ooh, right,” Sirius said, “Lay down, and look up and look at the sky?”

“And look for shapes in the clouds,” Lily said.

“Something you and Snape did way back when?” Sirius asked.

“Hush,” Lily said, “You better be nice to him.”

“I better be nice to him?” Sirius asked. “You're avoiding him!”

“He still feels something for me that I never have and will never return, Sirius,” Lily said, “So I have my reasons. You're helping two of his students – one who is this close to being your daughter -- inform him and Albus of a deep secret and informing him they're moving out of the dorms he lords
over. This is about Tracey and Daphne, not me. Speak of the devil, there they are. Kids!”"

Sirius turned and saw Tracey and Daphne with Harry, Hermione and Luna, and when they heard Lily, they headed in their direction.

“Guess we all arrived at the same time,” Harry said, “You see Rose and – what's her name – Gabrielle?”

“Don't you tease her, Harry James!” Lily scolded, “Nor you Sirius Black! Rose has found somebody to spend time with – even if she's just a friend.”

“We'll behave,” Sirius said. “Harry, Tracey, Daphne. We need to go see Headmaster Dumbledore and Professor Snape.”

“Now?” Lily asked.

“Yes, now,” Sirius said. “Before other students notice us, and rumors start to go around. Somebody had to see Lord Davis fuming as he stormed away from the room. Sorry, Tracey.”

“Doesn't matter,” Tracey said. “Have you received my things from my house?”

“No yet,” Sirius said, “If they're not here in a couple hours, I'll... do something I'll likely regret is what I'll do. I need to take my mind off of bigots. A man who hates my guts will change the scenery nicely. Come on kids.”

“Hates your guts?” Tracey asked, as Sirius led her, Daphne and Harry into the castle.

“You don't want to know,” Sirius muttered.

It was not even something he had told Harry yet. ‘Oh, hey, Shadow. I once nearly led Severus Snape into Moony's den, and Moony nearly turned Snape or killed him, if your dear old dad hadn't saved his life!' Yeah... that would go real well.

When they arrived into the Entrance Hall, Sirius was shockingly relieved to find Severus there with Minerva waiting for students to come in.

“Black,” Snape said, “What are you doing with two of my Slytherins?”

“If you would escort me, my godson and your two Slytherins to the Headmaster's office, I can explain,” Sirius said.

“You can explain now,” Snape said, narrowing his eyes.

“Professor Snape,” Tracey said. “Please listen to him. This isn't life or death. But it is close. And it could affect the House of Slytherin greatly if not remedied quickly.”

Snape looked at Tracey, and frowned. He then nodded, turned and led them up to the Grand Staircase without a word. Silence. Sirius didn't like it. It was too eerie. But he didn't trust words coming out of his mouth in front of his godson, his soon-to-be daughter, and her girlfriend, especially when his arch-nemesis from his teenage days was there with them. So he let silence reign. His thoughts were loud though, as he tried to figure out how to explain all of this to Albus and Snape.
“Ice Mice,” Snape said, as soon as they approached the stone gargoyle, before heading up the stairs first.

Harry and the girls followed Snape, and Sirius followed behind them. Soon, they entered Albus' office. Albus was reading a letter, and looking particularly happy about something. Sirius wasn't sure whether that was a good thing or a bad thing.

“Sever – Professor Snape,” Albus amended to proper decorum, once he saw the two Slytherin students following behind Snape with Lord Potter and Lord Black. “This is an unexpected visit. Lord Potter, Lord Black, I was thinking of writing to you, but here you are. I wanted to congratulate you and your family on some excellent reading material on the front page of the Daily Prophet. May I ask why you are seeking my presence.

“Miss Davis,” Snape said; he paused when he heard Tracey hiss, and looked at her, “Pardon, Miss -”

“Do not use that surname around me ever again, Professor Snape,” Tracey interrupted. “It does not belong to me anymore.”

Sirius noted Snape's eyes widening in surprise as he looked upon Tracey. Albus was staring at Tracey.

“Albus,” Sirius said, “I better not be seeing any attempts at trying to divulge Tracey's news before she can tell it.”

Snape's expression was back to a glare. “What does she have any concern –?”

“If we may all sit down,” Albus interrupted, obviously noting Sirius' glare at Snape.

“I think I'll stand,” Sirius said.

“As will I,” Snape said.

Three chairs appeared on the closest side of Albus' desk. Daphne sat in the middle with Harry and Tracey on either side. Sirius stood behind the chairs.

“This afternoon,” Tracey said, “I was officially disowned by Lord Davis from the Noble House of Davis.”

Thanks to his slightly-enhanced hearing due to his Animagus, he could hear Snape curse under his breath.

“I am so sorry, my dear,” Albus said, “What would ever give him cause to do that?”

“I revealed to him that I am a Witches' Witch,” Tracey said.

Severus cursed under his breath again. Sirius also noted a look of realization on the man's face. Snape seemed to already be getting the point of the meeting.

“I also revealed to him,” Tracey said, “That I have been in a secret romantic relationship with another witch for over a year.”
“I am that witch,” Daphne said. “I am bisexual, but the reason for admitting that to you and Professor Snape is still as important as Tracey’s own reason.”

“Their relationship will never be completely accepted inside Slytherin House when it is revealed, Albus,” Snape said. “They are lucky to have kept it a secret so long. There are students in Slytherin – many of them – who were raised by their families to look down upon girls in Miss – Tracey’s situation. That she is not interested in any of them romantically – and never will be – will be an issue. Not to mention that she is also disowned.”

“She may no longer be a Davis,” Sirius said, “But she is not a No-Name.”

Snape turned to Sirius. “What did you do, Black?”

“Tracey and I have agreed to take part in a Blood Adoption,” Sirius said. “It only needs to be approved by the Wizengamot during the next council session – which is the Winter Solstice.”

“And if it isn’t approved?” Snape asked.

“I have no doubts it will be,” Sirius said. “I will do everything I can between now and then to make sure of that.”

“Perhaps I could be of some assistance?” Albus asked.

“If I need your assistance,” Sirius said, “I will ask for it. I am not asking right now.”

“Severus, do you fear for the safety of these two girls?” Albus asked.

“I fear I would not be able to persuade the Slytherins to leave them alone,” Snape said.

“What do you suggest?” Albus asked.

“Move them into Living Quarters,” Snape said.

“Unnecessary,” Sirius said. “Tracey will be living in the same Ilvermorny Tent as Hermione Granger and Luna Lovegood. As will Daphne. She has been given Lord Castor Greengrass' permission.”

“Proof?” Snape asked.

“I could have my father write you a letter, Professor,” Daphne said, “Either way, I will be joining Tracey in the Ilvermorny Tents tonight.”

“Mr. Dumbledore?” Harry asked.

“Yes, Lord Potter?” Albus asked, “You've been surprisingly silent. Comments?”

“Daphne and Tracey are under House Potter Protection,” Harry said.

Snape snorted. “Of course they are. Are you going to leap onto the Slytherin table tonight during dinner, and rant to the Slytherins are they are all bullies?”

“Isn’t that your job, sir?” Harry asked.
Sirius, who had opened his mouth to tell Snape to leave his Godson alone, now closed it. If he could cheer out loud without letting Snape and Albus hear it, he would. Bravo, Shadow!

“It is,” Snape said, “Which is why I would ask you to let me do it.”

“Go right ahead,” Harry said. “Will you be the one responsible for revealing to the whole castle of Tracey and Daphne's secret? Because I think you would need their permission first.”

“I can send a clear enough message without revealing who the message is about,” Snape said.

“Really?” Harry asked. “So it isn't going to be obvious it is the two Slytherins sleeping in one of my tents, and no longer living inside Slytherin House?’’

One of Snape's eyes twitched.

Sirius decided this was a memory Lily and Remus would have to see for themselves. A simple explanation did not work well enough!

“Professor?” Sirius asked Snape, “Your reply?”

“Professor?” Sirius asked Snape, “Your reply?”

“How would you do it then... Lord Potter?” Snape asked.

Harry shrugged. “I wouldn't. It isn't my job. My job as Tracey and Daphne's Protector is to make sure they're not affected by the aftermath of their secret being revealed. That is going to be difficult in itself. They won't be sleeping in the same House as those who you yourself have deemed as threats to them, sir. But they will be in classes. And I can't do anything to protect them there.”

“Lord Potter,” Albus said. “You seem to be doing your best to improve International Magical Cooperation by helping Hogwarts with some of its errors that Ilvermorny has fixed. What would Ilvermorny do in this situation?”

“I can hardly compare, sir,” Harry said. “The students of Ilvermorny have known about bullying and other threats being illegal since they arrived at the school. Your improvements in the rules around here have been up for less than a week. The students haven't adapted enough. And that isn't if you count the nurturing those students your Professor mentioned have experienced all their lives toward looking down upon everything that my Protected represent when it comes to their secrets. There is no comparison between Ilvermorny and Hogwarts in that. Hogwarts has to deal with the blow back of this. You are the Headmaster. Can you think of something?’’

“The obvious complete removal from the school for both girls,” Snape said.

“Ignore the situation, and harm the girls' education because of their sexuality?” Harry asked. “Ignoring the situation doesn't improve it. What if Tracey's not the only Witches' Witch around here? Going to remove them all. A Hogwarts Holocaust! Punish all homosexuals and bisexuals! Throw them all out of the school! Make a ward that lets none of them in! How about your guests? What if one of them falls under that category? There you go! You suggest removing these girls from this school, and offend a possible Witches' Witch amongst Ilvermorny or Beauxbatons when the truth is revealed! So much for International Magical Cooperation!”

“Nobody will be removed from these Grounds based on their sexual preference, Lord Potter,” Albus said. “That is a promise. Severus. You will find a way to handle any and all students who are offended by what might be discovered about the two girls in front of me. Or I will handle it. Which
means Slytherins will be removed from this school. And it won't be these two. I won't have our foreign guests insulted or offended by homophobia! Especially if it concerns them personally! Take care of it!"

Snape's expression seemed pained. “I will do my best, Headmaster.”

“Tracey... I'm going to need a surname to use for you during your lessons until your situation improves,” Albus said.

“Black,” Tracey said, “Tracey Black.”

Snape's disgusted sneer couldn't wipe the large grin from Sirius' face.

“Do you have any issue with that, Severus?” Albus asked.

Snape’s “No” sounded a bit forced in Sirius' opinion.

“I will inform the rest of the staff of your chosen surname,” Albus said, :A house-elf will have your belongings taken from your dormitory, and placed in the Entrance Hall when you arrive there, Miss Greengrass, Miss Black.”

“Thank you, sir,” Daphne said.

“Excuse me,” said a voice.

Sirius' eyes turned to the Sorting Hat. He had not heard that voice in a long time but he recognized it still. Everyone aside from Harry looked at it too, for they recognized it as Sirius had. Harry only looked when he realized who was speaking.

“Before Miss Greengrass and Miss Black leave,” the Hat said, “I would like to remedy their situation when it comes to remedying their problems involving classes and taking meals in the Great Hall.”

“How would you do that?” Albus asked.

“I would like to offer them a Re-Sorting,” the Hat said.

“Nonsense!” Severus sneered, “They are Slytherins --”

“Don't make those disgusting facial expressions at me, boy!” the Hat said, “Or I'll Re-Sort you in Gryffindor where you belong! Lord Potter schooled you in the debate you had with him. He left you speechless. Why? A common case of talking before you think! Gryffindor indeed!”

Sirius snickered. Harry whispered to him. “I think he just insulted you too as a Gryffindor, Sirius.”

“He insulted Snape too,” Sirius said, in a carrying whisper, “So I forgive him.”

“If you think we need to be Re-Sorted – er – sir?” Daphne said, “We'll take up your offer.”

“Excellent!” the Hat said, “Now get over here, Gryffindor Snape! And place me upon Miss Greengrass' head!”

“Headmaster,” Severus said.
“Do as the Hat asks, Severus,” Albus said, “I am most curious, I must admit. I've always said we sort too early, after all.”

Severus huffed. He snatched the Hat from its shelf, then walked over to Daphne, and gently put it on her head.

“Hmm,” the Hat said, “Well, you are a natural Slytherin. But you're as loyal as a Hufflepuff, smart as a Ravenclaw, and as brave as a Gryffindor – especially for confronting a great fear! Hmm... oh, I've always wanted to do this. I just never had a chance. Headmasters and Headmistresses have always been picky about House Points, and always petty when I tell them it only breeds enmity nobody needs. How many songs have I sung which says so?! But no... they tell me to sing about the Founders! And the Houses! And...”

Albus cleared his throat. “Miss Greengrass is waiting.”

The hat scoffed. “See... always hushing me up. Daphne Greengrass.... I Re-Sort you to.... HOGWARTS!”

The color of Daphne's tie changed to a mixture of all four House colors, with the Hogwarts Crest at the top. Albus and Severus stared at the hat in disbelief.

“Hogwarts, Hat?” Albus asked.

“Hogwarts,” the Hat echoed, “She can sit at whatever House table she wants to, sit with whichever side with whichever House in her classes sits. You could even change her schedule so she doesn't even have to deal with the Slytherins. And since she is moving to the Ilvermorny Tents, well, she can sleep there for now. If she comes back to Hogwarts next year, she'll have her own Quarters. Gryffindor Snape! Miss Black's head now!”

Snape was still staring at the hat, confused at its declaration. He sighed and placed the hat on Tracey's head.

“HOGWARTS!” the Hat said almost immediately, then as Tracey's tie changed to match Daphne's, “Everything I said goes for her too.”

Albus sighed. “Well, if you're sure. Anyone else you wish to sort?”

“Miss Granger and Miss Lovegood,” the hat said, “By Monday before classes, if you please. Mister Potter?”

“I'm a Wampus, Mr. Hat,” Harry said. “And not a hat person.”

“Very few who sit under me ever are,” the hat said. “Yet they wear those black monstrosities that resemble Dunce caps!. I believe your godfather once transfigured every one of those caps during a Start-Of-Term Feast to Dunce caps. Didn't he keep your hat normal, Gryffindor Snape?”

“The Marauders were trying to blame me,” Snape said.

“Finally acknowledging a Marauder Prank, Snape?” Sirius asked.

Snape narrowed his eyes.
“Thinking before you act again, Gryffindor Snape,” the hat said, “Place me back upon my shelf! Before I change your tie and crest!”

Snape grumbled, but did as requested.

“Thank you, Severus,” the hat said.

“Finally you call me by my proper name,” Snape said.

“Yes, because you reverted back to your Slytherin roots,” the hat said. “Grumbling and complaining when you don't get your way.”

Snape glared at the hat. Sirius laughed out loud. Harry, Daphne and Tracey snickered.

Albus sighed again and shook his head. “Is there anything any of you wish to tell me?”

“Astoria!” Daphne yelped. “I completely forgot – I am the worst sister.”

“I had wondered what you were going to do about her, Miss Greengrass,” Snape commented.

“Does she know about your sexuality, Miss Greengrass?” Albus asked.

“No,” Daphne said, “Bugger.”

“I suggest you tell her, before she finds out from somebody else,” Severus said.

“She's going to have to join us in the tent,” Daphne said.

“No problem,” Sirius said, “Aside from sleeping arrangements. I suppose Hermione and Luna could sleep in the same bedroom, and Astoria could have her own. If you two are rooming together, that is.”

We'll discuss it before bed,” Daphne said.

“I will have a house-elf find her and have her meet you in the Great Hall,” Albus said, “With her belongings.”

“I'm sure she'll be happy about that,” Daphne said, sarcastically.

“Please keep us informed of what is happening regarding preventing backlash toward Miss Black and Miss Greengrass,” Sirius said. “Perhaps a casual announcement that they are under House Potter Protection would be a good start.”

“Severus?” Albus asked. “What do you think?”

“I will consider it... Lord Black,” Snape said.

“Please tell me if it requires a school-wide announcement, Severus,” Albus said, “And not just based in Slytherin.”

“Yes, Headmaster,” Snape said.
“You are all excused,” Albus said.

Two minutes later, Sirius, Harry, Tracey, Daphne and Snape were in the corridor.

“Miss... Black,” Snape said. “I am truly sorry what happened to you concerning the House of Davis. If you had come to me about this before now, I may have been able to prevent this.”

“I am coming to you now,” Tracey said. “Prevent others from giving me the same disrespect Lord Davis gave me this afternoon.”

“I will do my best,” Snape said. “I will attempt to modify both of your class schedules to where your contact with Slytherin House is minimal, and you will have new schedules by Monday. Have Miss Granger and Miss Lovegood bring your sister when they wish to be Re-Sorted, Daphne. You, of course are welcomed to be there to watch.”

“Thank you, sir,” Daphne said.

“Try to be a better father than Lord Davis, Lord Black,” Snape said. “Miss Black may not survive such another disappointment.”

“You do not have to worry about that, Snape,” Sirius said.

Snape nodded curtly. “Excuse me. I must gather my Slytherins and decide what to tell them. Your belongings should be in the Entrance Hall ladies. Tell me if anything is missing.”

“Yes, sir,” Daphne said, and Tracey echoed her.

Snape's cloak billowed as he turned and headed down the corridor.

“That went better than expected,” Sirius said.

“Harry,” Tracey said. “What is a... Hollow Cause?”

Harry exchanged a glance with Sirius that basically said “What the hell?!”

Sirius sighed as he tried to figure out how to explain that to Tracey and Daphne, and how to explain to Harry how British wizards and witches didn't know about one of the worst events in the history of the world.

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**Sunday, November 8th, 1994**

Sunday. Noon. Harry stepped into the House Potter Tent with Hermione on his arm. That had been Sirius' advice as a proper introduction to the Lord of the Great Alliance, and his girlfriend, to the Children of the Great Alliance. Be the very last of the Alliance to sit down. Well, not exactly the last. Two would be introduced when the meeting began – one was Hermione.

The other was Tracey. However, the planned explanation about what happened the previous day was already happening inside the tent. Daphne and Tracey were explaining it already. It was originally planned for Tracey to have closed herself behind the curtains of Rose and Lily's bedroom,
then reveal herself and do the explanation. But gossip and news moved as fast as a Snitch around Hogwarts. Professor Snape had revealed Daphne and Tracey's relationship, and Tracey being disowned – and that they were under House Potter Protection – to the Slytherins before dinner the previous evening. By dinner... everyone in Hogwarts knew. Though none knew the entire story. So the Patil twins, Susan Bones and Hannah Abbot had come down fifteen minutes earlier than expected to get the story.

Harry and Hermione had been in Hermione's tent with her dorm-mates when Sirius had come in saying the Alliance members were concerned for Daphne and Tracey. So Daphne, Tracey, Astoria and Luna went into the House Potter tent to explain the story. Hermione wanted to go, but Sirius told her that, as Harry's girlfriend, they needed to make an entrance, and to arrive nearly 'fashionably late'.

The small dining room table was now an elongated rectangle to fit every single member of the Children of the Great Alliance at the table. The only adult in the tent was Lily. Sirius and Remus were in the Classroom Tent working on “Teacher Duties”. Lily was serving plates of lasagna and salad, and bottles of butterbeer. She had insisted on staying as chaperone, but would maintain a respectable distance from the meeting.

Daphne was sitting at one of then ends of the table. Her future husband was Lord of the Great Alliance, and as such she had that right. Her sister Astoria sat at her left. Harry had “officially” met Astoria that morning. He had met her after the meeting in Dumbledore's Office, but only as “Lord Potter”. Last night, Daphne and Tracey explained everything to her. That morning, she met him, and hugged him, saying she was happy to meet her “future brother-in-law”. Tracey sat to Daphne's right, as her future Consort.

When Lily had served every seat at the table, and Daphne and Tracey's story wound down to a close, Harry walked over to his end of the table with Hermione. He pulled back the chair to his right, and Hermione sat down. Rose was seated on his left. Harry remained standing. Around the table, the other members sat. Luna Lovegood, Padma and Parvati Patil. Susan Bones and Hannah Abbot.

Harry thanked his mother for the meal, and the rest of those seated joined in thanks. Lily smiled, accepted the thanks, then walked over to the living room, and sat down in a chair, and started working on “teacher duties”. Respectable distance indeed...

“You have all been getting to know one of the newest members of the Children of the Great Alliance, Tracey Black,” Harry said; Tracey stood in introduction, as everyone toasted her, “I suppose my sister, Rose, and I would fall under the category of necessary introductions. I think you all know who I am. Lord Harry James Potter, of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter.”

After Harry was toasted, he continued. “As for my sister...”

He looked at Rose, and she stood. up.

“Rose Lily Potter,” Rose introduced herself, “Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter.”

Harry led a toast as those around the table followed, raising their bottles of butterbeer. Rose sat down.

“Now,” Harry said, “All of you were present one week ago in the Great Hall around this moment in time, for my... outburst.”
There were amused smirks from everyone at the table.

“I announced two ladies were under my Protection,” Harry said, “The first – though she was second to take the vow – volunteered, though she did not need to, as an Ally of House Potter. Luna Lovegood.”

Luna smiled from where she was seated.

“The second,” Harry said; he looked at Hermione, who stood up “Hermione Granger. As my Protected, she qualifies as a member of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter. As such, she qualifies as a Child of the Great Alliance. Also, as my friend and girlfriend, I'd welcome her even if she wasn't my Protected, because she's got a smart mind useful for Alliances like ours. Welcome, Hermione, to the Great Alliance.”

He toasted her with his bottle of butterbeer. Hermione blushed as all the girls toasted her, and she sat down. They started in on their lunch.

“Tracey,” Harry said, “Have you discussed your soon-to-be-father's plans during the Winter Solstice Session?”

“Just that he plans on asking for the Blood Adoption Ritual,” Tracey asked.

“Tracey is a part of our group,” Harry said, to the group, “Because Lord Sirius Black is going to reclaim his House's Seat at the Winter Solstice Session. He will announce his House's relocation from the Dark to Light Alliance. And he will also ask my mother and House Seat Proxy, for permission to grant him permission into the Great Alliance. My mother will, of course, accept. But that doesn't matter much today. Lord Black and Tracey are already members. The Acceptance in front of the Council is just political showboating.

“Then Lord Black will ask for the Council to grant him permission for the Blood Adoption Ritual with Tracey. We already have reason to believe Lord Davis will object, just to be petty toward me, Sirius, and Tracey for embarrassing him. He'll gather Allies and supporters to vote against Sirius and Tracey.

“Between now and then, all of you here – bar Hermione, Tracey and my sister – need to contact your families about this. Luna, Padma, Parvati, your Houses are Minor. Yes. But I'm sure your families have Alliances of your own in the Wizengamot that might be able to help us. That goes for all of you. Gather Alliances, those who have seats on the Council. This is for two future members of the Great Alliance, of a powerful House politically speaking and otherwise.”

Several nods were given around the table.

“One of the reasons I called this meeting,” Harry said, “was to try and gather more Alliances. Before Tracey was disowned, we had hoped House Davis would be in the Alliance. That was not to be. My Family Solicitor – Ted Tonks – his wife is Lord Black's favorite cousin. The Tonks House could join the Alliance, but they’re minor, so we have no more votes in the Council with that. We do have some good minds however. So... any suggestions?”

“We could try to convince Houses Longbottom, Boot and MacMillan to return,” Luna said.

Susan shook her head. “Auntie Amelia's tried and failed. I know it could be different what with news of the House of Potter back from extinction. House Longbottom is with Headmaster Dumbledore.
Houses Boot and MacMillan are in their own Alliance, and trying to gather to a point of making themselves our equals. Apparently the Lords Boot and MacMillan are trying to steal Great Alliance strategies. They're nowhere near enough votes to equal us.”

“They went back to Neutral Alliance when they left us,” Daphne said. “They were originally there, but went Light when Harry’s Grandfather formed the Alliance and started looking for Allies. Now they leave and return to the Neutrals. The problem is... they may become a problem in the future. If they gather enough amongst the Neutrals to vote with them, that stops Neutrals going the way of House Greengrass – supporting the Light Alliance, with most of the votes.”

“And the Light Alliance will begin losing those Neutral votes that could help against the Dark Alliance voting,” Harry said, “If Boot and MacMillan wanted, they could bring Dark Alliance members into their Alliance and...”

Padma groaned. “They'd get the power to vote against us.”

“We seriously need more votes,” Parvati said, “The Great Alliance used to be a powerful threat. Unstoppable.”

“So remind everyone again of that threat,” Hermione said. “Luna... you could run a series in the Quibbler about the Great Alliance. Weekly articles – interviews with each House of the Alliance – the children, not the adults. Each House would discuss goals, new laws they could work on passing. Between now and the Winter Solstice Session – with that news going out. We could garner votes for the Great Alliance. And House Black may not be the only House who requests your mother grant them a part of the Great Alliance, Harry.”

Harry smiled at Hermione, and noticed the nods and grins around the table.

“Luna?” Harry asked.

“I would be happy to do that if everyone agrees to do interviews,” Luna said.


“This has nothing to do with what we promised to the Daily Prophet,” Harry said. “We never promised Great Alliance exclusivity. We just can't be interviewed. Everyone else but Sirius can.”

“It would work,” Luna said.

“If it doesn't I'd just speak with Barney Cuffe, and discuss the deal,” Harry said; he raised his hand. “Show of hands.”

Unanimous vote. A few minutes were spent on the schedule of interviews. As they continued the lunch meeting, each member around the table discussed things they would like to be seen in the future of Wizengamot Council meetings. Laws brought forth. What laws should be shot down.

Harry went last.

“As you all probably read in the Daily Prophet interview with me, Rose and our family yesterday,” Harry said, “I discussed three Houses – having to marry three wives. During Daphne's discussion with you earlier, she revealed herself as the first – the future Lady Peverell. The future Lord Potter will be someone I choose without Contracts. My parents fell in love naturally. So will I and my Lady
Rose giggled when most of the eyes around the table moved to Hermione, which made her blush.

“I'm not saying anything,” Hermione said. “Harry's just my boyfriend, and that's as far as he is in the romantic aspect for the foreseeable future.”

“So... what's the name of this other House?” Susan asked.

“Gryffindor,” Harry said, simply.

Parvati Patil, the one Gryffindor, dropped her fork on her plate. The others stared at him.

“Really?” Susan asked.

“Yes, I am Lord Gryffindor,” Harry said.

“Any choice for Lady?” Parvati asked.

“No,” Harry said, “And that is where the issue comes in.”

Luna looked on dreamily, while Padma, Parvati, Susan and Hannah blushed.

“I think you said that wrong, Harry,” Hermione said.

“I'm not looking for a Lady Gryffindor at the moment,” Harry amended; very slight looks of disappointment – Harry rolled his eyes when Rose giggled. “Heck, the title Lady Potter is also in possible jeopardy.”

“Er... how?” Padma asked.

“Oh, Merlin, I'll say it,” Hermione said, with an agitated sigh. “Several girls were looking at me jealously while I was on a date with Harry yesterday. Several pureblood girls jealous of a Muggleborn on the arm of Britain's newest eligible bachelor. The Last Generation Loophole only says Harry has to marry one pureblood.”

“Which is me,” Daphne supplied.

“Pureblood, half-blood, Muggleborn, Muggle,” Hermione said. “He could chose any of those. Harry made the mistake of spelling that out in his interview. Barnabus Cufle decided to showboat with that fact. Now... out of all those girls who looked at me jealously – who are envious of me – how many would do anything to break us up?”

“A good majority, probably,” Padma said.

“How many have parents or relations on the Wizengamot Council?” Hermione asked.

“Several,” Susan said.

“What if someone decides to bring forth an idea to modify the Last Generation Loophole – you could really get specific: Ancient and Most Noble Houses must marry Pureblood witches to continue the assurance that the Houses are untainted by Pureblood like they have been for many generations.”
“Hell, they could simply say,” Harry said, sarcastically “Anyone with the initials 'Harry James Potter' must marry purebloods!”

“So I take it you want that shot down so badly it never comes back for a possible vote?” Susan asked.

“You bet I do!” Harry exclaimed.

“If Tracey's Blood Adoption passes,” Daphne said, “We should be able to deny this one.”

“Not necessarily,” Padma said. “Not all girls jealous of Hermione are going to be members of Dark or Neutral-Dark Houses.”

“Well,” Luna said, grinning. “You could always go back into the Great Hall, and go all 'Angry Harry' and command all those girls to never mention any of that to their families.”

“Or you'd duel them all!” Parvati said, grinning.

Harry shook his head as titters and giggles echoed around the table. He even saw his mother crack a smile.

“Only as a last resort,” Harry snarked. “And I'd charge money for audience. At least I'd get profit out of it.”

More titters and giggling.

The meeting lasted another half-hour, and consisted mostly of the girls getting to know Harry, Rose, and Hermione as new members of the Alliance. When asked, Tracey said they all already knew what mattered to her in her life. All of the members were surprised when Rose told them she was bisexual, and even more surprised when they told them who her girlfriend was.

“But don't spread it around,” Rose said. “Veela lesbians and bisexuals are frowned upon in their society except in certain circles.”

The group was agreeable and happy for Rose.

Finally, the meeting came to an end.


“We did call it the Witches' Alliance,” Daphne said. “We could still use that.”

“Sure if Harry turned into a witch,” Hermione said, grinning.

“You and Luna sharing jokes, sweetheart?” Harry asked his girlfriend.

It was cute watching Hermione blush and glare playfully at him at the same time.

“Or Harry's Harem!” Luna said.
“Luna!” Hermione growled, then sighed, “Might I remind you, Harry's sister is involved in this group.”

“Harry's Harem plus Rose?” Luna amended.

Harry sighed when the girls tittered and giggled yet again.

“CGA for short works for me,” Harry said. “Ladies, I have already written to some of your families. I've personally thanked Daphne's parents. I want to thank all of you and your families for keeping the Great Alliance going strong even though you thought the House of its founder was extinct. From the bottom of my heart... thank you.”

“It was mostly our idea,” Padma said, grinning. “After all, we'd be a powerful coven of witches once it came our turn to rule over the Great Alliance!”

“Yeah,” Susan said, “So even the political part went south, we'd still have the power.”

Harry wasn't sure whether they were joking. So he simply thanked them again and the meeting broke up, as certain girls talked to others. Harry relaxed in his chair and sipped from the last of his butterbeer.

“So... Hermione,” said Parvati, who was closest seated to her. “Which of us – in addition to Daphne and whatever Tracey's part is in the whole deal – would you want as a sister-wife?”

Hermione sighed. “Why don't you just all roulette date Harry?”

“Or go with Luna's idea,” Rose said, grinning; she had been listening in, “Harry's Harem.”

“Not helping, Rose,” Harry said, “Go find Gabrielle and look for white cotton pillows and rabbits in the fluffy clouds.”

“Mom, he's making fun of my relationship with Gabby!” Rose whined.

“Harry James” Lily scolded, still focused on her work. “I thought I told you not to do that.”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“Don't roll your eyes at me, young man,” Lily said; she hadn't looked at him – he never figured how she could do that.

Rose stuck out her tongue at Harry, stood up and walked off.

“Pillows and rabbits?” Parvati asked.

“Yep,” Harry said, grinned. “They'd be looking until the clouds disappeared.”

Hermione and Parvati groaned.

“I give up,” Hermione said. :You can have him, Parvati. He's yours.”

Parvati shook her head. “Not if he's making jokes like that for the rest of my life! You better find him a better joke book.”
“Christmas gift taken care of!” Hermione exclaimed.

Women, Harry sighed, and gulped down the last of his butterbeer.

Chapter End Notes

The ONLY other CGA member who has a chance at Harry is Luna. The others were teasing. Aside from Parvati, who heard Lady Gryffindor and started salivating. But it won't be her!

Ugh... my vision of the CGA meeting was going to be so much better. Ah well. It was a necessity for the plot.

No, I did not forget Rita's article. Monday editions get more viewers than Sunday.

Next chapter: I am writing this after finishing a crucial scene for the next chapter. Next chapter will make you rage. It might make you cry. And that is if you're able to get past the warning at the start of the chapter. The end is a much needed comic relief. And none of the emotions have to do with Rita Skeeter.
Chapter 24: No Title

Author's Note: Yes. You're getting ANOTHER chapter today. Why? Because this is one I want to release early. And I have the next chapter finished anyway, so I have something ready for tomorrow. No this chapter has no title. Any title would spoil it.

Please heed the warning below. Part of this chapter may be very dark and disturbing for some readers. If you do not want to read this, pass the line breaks when it cuts off mid-scene. For those who do read it... writing it made me cry. Screw anyone with a rusty screwdriver who EVER does this. EVER!!! I needed it for my story. Those who read it will understand why. But... I wish I didn't. This is one of the most emotional pieces of writing I have ever wrote that affected me while writing.

Warning: Tale of Child Molestation.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Monday, November 9th, 1994

Harry yawned as he stepped out his bedroom in only his pajamas. As his usual tradition over the last few days, he walked over to the coffee pot, and poured a mug of coffee. He then walked over to the dining room table, sat down, and reached for the Daily Prophet – it wasn't there. Then he realized Sirius wasn't there earlier. Remus and Lily were sitting there, looking at the morning post.

“Daily Prophet hasn't arrived yet?” Harry asked.

“Hmm, nope!” Remus said.

“Owl must be late,” Lily said.

“Where's Sirius?” Harry asked.

“Got another letter this morning from Amelia Bones,” Remus said. “So he left to go to lunch – breakfast! Sorry...”

“Lunch or breakfast?” Harry asked.

“Breakfast of course,” Lily said, “He has classes today. He'll be back by then. He promised.”

Harry sipped on his mug of coffee. He was being pranked. His mother and Remus' answers sounded very scripted. He took another sip, and stretched his other hand backward toward his ear, and grabbed his wand. He pointed his wand in the air.

“Accio Daily Prophet!” Harry exclaimed.
The Daily Prophet flew from Remus and Sirius' bedroom. Harry grabbed it, then stood up and backed away before his mother and Remus could grab it.”

“Daily Prophet Owl is never late,” Harry said. “What am I going to find in here? Where's Sirius?”

“Walking Padfoot,” Remus said, “Even put the leash on.”

Padfoot. Which means he left in a hurry to get to past the Anti-Apparation Wards.

“Harry,” Lily said, “Even if we told you, you're not going anywhere. Sirius is taking care of it. It is his business, not yours.”

Harry frowned. Sirius' business, not...

“Tracey!” Harry said.

“He's taking care of it, Shadow,” Remus said.

“Both Daphne and Tracey get the Daily Prophet, Remus!” Harry said, “I can go in there and – you didn't take their papers, did you?”

Remus and Lily stared at each other. Harry sighed.

“You didn't take it from them – because you didn't know, they had subscriptions” Harry said. “Quit playing games. If Sirius kept me here, it means he wants me to help Tracey. If she's awake, and has read whatever was said about her – I'm going to go there facing screaming or crying girls. Let me know what I'm prepared for!”

Remus took a square of newspaper colored parchment from the pocket of his robes, and put it on the table.

“There is a hole in this newspaper, isn't there?” Harry grumbled.

He picked up the square of parchment, and put the newspaper down.

“Before I read it,” Harry said, “How many pages was this into the newspaper? If Tracey is reading from front to back. Will she find it?”

“It is in the Daily Prophet's Teen Witch Weekly preview article page,” Remus said. “She was planning on hiding it there from Barnabus Cuffe. But someone else amongst the Teen Witch Weekly staff decided a Rita Skeeter article should have a preview in the Daily Prophet – to sell more magazines.”

“Rita,” Harry seethed.

He turned over the parchment so it showed the article. He was already fuming at the blaring bold title.

**FOURTEEN YEAR OLD WITCH DISOWNED FOR BEING A WITCHES' WITCH, DATING FELLOW HOGWARTS FEMALE CLASSMATE!**
A lovely Saturday Afternoon at Hogsmeade Village attracts all kind of students from Hogwarts, looking to shop for candy, jokes, and plenty of other goodies. But many students aren't just looking for candy, jokes and goodies; they're looking for love!

A fourteen-year old Slytherin witch named Tracey is one of those looking for love. In all the very wrong and very scandalous places, it turns out. Such as amongst her own dormitory! That's right. Tracey is a Witches' Witch dear readers.

Why am I not revealing her last name, you ask? At the moment, she has none. Tracey No-Name, formerly Davis was disowned from the Noble House of Davis for being a Witches' Witch.

Tracey No-Name was seen holding hands and sharing kisses with an unidentified Slytherin witch.

There was more. But Harry had ripped the article in shreds, deciding he couldn't read any further.

"An Unidentified witch," Harry hissed. "She knew who it was."

"Of course she did," Remus said, "But House Greengrass is a known Alliance member. Tracey isn't. Rita believed she had full reign of writing Tracey. But – oh – she is wrong. And Rita is going to pay for that. Sirius will make sure of it."

"Now go make sure Tracey is okay, Harry," Lily said. "Do I need to go with you, so I know you're going in there, instead of Shadow going toward the gates?"

"Sirius can take care of this one," Harry said. "I have my own problems to deal with. Like making sure Tracey isn't going to do something stupid today."

"We're already planning on removing her from class today," Lily said, "Daphne too. And perhaps her sister."

Harry nodded. If Snape told the Slytherins, then they knew who the unidentified Slytherin was. Neither Tracey nor the Greengrass girls would be welcome in class until tempers calmed. Harry stood, and rushed out of the tent, then hurried to the coined "Hogwarts Five" tent.

"Can I come in?" Harry asked.

"Yes!" rang three different voices.
Harry stepped into the tent. Hermione and Daphne hurried over to him. Astoria was slouched on a sofa, looking upset. Luna was standing near a curtain... dancing.

“What is Luna doing?” Harry asked, looking at the dancing blonde.

“Sending Tracey happy vibes,” Luna said.

“She's a real moon-child, that one,” Hermione quipped.

Harry laughed, then sobered. “I assume you read the article. As did Tracey. Where is she?”

“Bedroom,” Daphne said.

“Behind the curtain Luna's dancing near,” Harry said, nodding in realization.

“She won't let anyone in,” Daphne said, “Besides you.”

“Me?” Harry asked, shocked.

“I already know the story she's going to tell you,” Daphne said. “I've known it since... well... I can't say. I've already talked her ears off about it over the years. But it has all come rushing back.”

“Why me?” Harry asked.

“You or Sirius,” Hermione said.

“Sirius is... dealing with Rita,” Harry said, “Don't ask me how. If he didn't even come to comfort Tracey, then it can't be anything good he has in store.”

“Harry,” Daphne said, “You're not going to like what Tracey's going to tell you. None of it. Just listen to her. Don't... don't touch her. Sit on the other bed. Don't... comfort her unless she touches you first.”

“Okay,” Harry said, “Again. Why me?”

“You protected her from Lord Davis,” Daphne said, “She trusts you... enough that she can tell you. I think she just wants to tell it to someone new. Hermione, Astoria, Luna... she's not ready for them to know.”

Harry nodded. He inhaled and exhaled, then walked with Daphne over to the curtain. Luna backed away, but continued to dance.

“Tracey,” Daphne said, “Harry's here.”

“Come in, Harry,” Tracey said, her voice barely high enough for him to hear.

Daphne parted the curtains, and Harry stepped into the room. Tracey had her knees against her chest, her arms wrapped around her legs, and her chin resting on her knees. Her eyes were red and blotchy, and her face was also red. She didn't have her glasses on.

“Sit down on that bed,” Tracey said.
Harry moved onto the bed, and sat down on the bed, then slid back onto it.

“I am so sorry, Tracey,” Harry said, “Sirius is --”

“-- taking care of it,” Tracey interrupted. “I know. I hope he kills her.”

“Even if it means he goes to Azkaban?” Harry asked.

“Damn it,” Tracey muttered. “Why would he have to go to Azkaban for doing a civil liberty to the entire world?”

Harry chuckled. “Daphne said you wanted to tell me something. Take as long as you need. My mother and Remus are going to make sure you, Daphne and Astoria won't be expected in class today. I won't be expected either, as long as I am helping you. I will be here as long as you want me in here.”

“I want to tell you why I am a Witches' Witch, Harry,” Tracey said. “Daphne is the only other person who knows. Most girls like me... experts will tell you its something with the... metaphorical wiring in your brain. That they were wired differently than straight girls. Me... mine doesn't work like that. Mine is a defense mechanism. Do you know why I support Sirius' proviso of children from my... my womb?”

“Because you want to be a mother?” Harry said.

“I can be a mother to yours and Daphne's babies or any of your wives' babies,” Tracey said. “That just means the children see me as a mother who takes care of them in addition to their own mother. I want to have children from my womb. I want to... to have sex with one boy – eventually – and it will probably be with you. I want to... so I know.”

“Know what?” Harry asked.

“That I am not fucked up for life,” Tracey said.

“Are you telling me you believe your – Lord Davis' speech the other day?” Harry asked.

“This has nothing to do with his speech,” Tracey said. “My father played very little part in this. I don't have proof beyond guessing to say more than that. You know I've been best friends with Daphne since we were four. At least it feels like that long.”

“Yes,” Harry said.

“Starting when we were six, she'd sleep over once a month,” Tracey said, “At eight, twice a month.”

“That's not that much,” Harry said.

“Thank Merlin it wasn't more,” Tracey said; starting to rock back and forth, “Thank Merlin it was random, and – and it wasn't more. My – my brother – not my brother anymore – not for a while. Not to me. Trevor. His name is Trevor, and that's all I'll use now. Not brother. Trevor is... he's seven years older than me. When I was six – one night, I was asleep in my bed, and I had this really weird dream. Like I was being tickled. On my waist, on my chest, below... I woke up and... my pajamas and panties were down. I... thought I had tried to stop the tickling, and pulled them down.”
Harry's eyes widened. He was starting to realize...

“The dreams would be reoccurring,” Tracey said. “Same tickling dreams. And I'd wake up. Pants were down. Happened once, maybe twice a month. Kept happening. But only for... for five different months. June... July... August.... December... Easter holiday. When I was eight, it was the first time in memory, I woke up in the middle of the dream. And it wasn't a dream. My – Trevor – he – he was doing the tickling. My waist, my chest... below. But it wasn't... tickling. Rubbing. I heard a whisper... and I went back to sleep. It wasn't until I became a student, I realized. Sleeping charms. He... never caught. Restriction for Underage Wizardry... not caught with our Manor Wards. No...

“Sometimes, I'd... wake up, and find my waist was... sticky. I thought it was glue. Like from my art set. It went on until... I was nine... and Daphne... Daphne stayed over during summers, June that year was last time. Then Daphne and I had sleepovers at each other's houses and... I insisted, but Daphne... dear sweet, innocent Daphne, who didn't know why, still helped me insist! She helped me! All because I wanted to get away, or have her there protecting me! Thank Merlin, he's a coward, and didn't try to go for us when we were together.

During those months. One week here, one week there. Two weeks here... two weeks there. I never said why. And it never happened again. Middle of school year, first year, had my first time of the month. I cried like a baby when Madam Pomfrey said everything was fine down there. When she noticed nothing wrong. I'm – he – he never – I'm still a virgin.”

Harry wanted so bad to go and comfort her. She reminded him of Rose. Sitting there, upset in her bedroom, when storms were going on. Harry and Rose's bedrooms were next to each other. Harry's bed and Rose's bed shared walls. And he heard Rose crying every time. He would go into her bedroom, comfort her, until she stopped crying, stopping being scared... and he'd wait till she slept, kissed her forehead, and went back to bed.

How could someone...?

“How could someone do that to their sister?” Harry muttered. “Rose... I'd...”

He slammed his fists against his eyes to stop the incoming tears. And he saw red.

Harry lowered his hands and looked at Tracey. “Where is this asshole ?”

“Harry,” Tracey said. “Trevor – he...”

“He what?” Harry asked, “Is his baby a girl? Huh? Six years from now... he won't be at Hogwarts. No months he's away at Hogwarts stopping him. Where is this asshole ?”

“Harry,” Tracey said, “I wanted --”

“You wanted what?” Harry asked. “Daphne said you wanted to talk to me or Sirius. Sirius wouldn't let you lie to him. So why me?”

“I had hoped I'd –” Tracey said, then sighed, “Not today.”

“Not today what?” Harry asked.
“Do you know why I could hug Sirius that day that he and I became a family?” Tracey asked.
“Because my – Lord Davis never, ever did what – he never did. I'm sure of it. I hugged Sirius and it gave me hope. But it was false hope. Because Sirius isn't – you're his age. I want to... to be able to touch you, and have you touch me – you took my hand for a moment in Hogsmeade to help me from the cart and – I thought – but... I was just distracted. I was not thinking of your hand... so it didn't matter... I was thinking of Daphne, and --

“Do you know why I fell for Daphne? Not because she was my best friend. Because she saved me. By encouraging her parents and my – and Lord and Lady Davis to have sleepovers. And it was those sleepovers that – that created the wire in my brain. The defense mechanism. Fall for the one person you trust, Tracey. Even if she's a girl. She won't hurt you. She's not a boy. Girls are safe. Daphne is safe. Those thoughts just played over and over, and Tracey the Witches' Witch was born. But... Harry, I'm *not entirely* a Witches' Witch. I am trying to go to a point where a boy – a boy I will trust, who will not hurt me, or do something I won't want. And you're the only boy that qualifies. This is why I told you. Because you are my only chance at being able to trust a boy again. I... can't even get near any boys. And nobody but you and Daphne now know why. Daphne's helped. She's.... helped keep boys from going to close to me.

“I still freak out. One time, a boy's cloak accidentally touched mine, when he walked by my desk in Potions, and I nearly upended the Cauldron. Daphne stopped it. She knows how. I will never stop being in love with her. She's the person I trust to keep me safe. And I want you to be in that category. Won't be for a while. I pictured you coming in here, and sitting there. I pictured me going over to you and crying into your shoulder. And I want to. But I feel as if my... my butt has a sticking charm on it.”

Harry chuckled lightly. “I understand. Tracey? Why didn't you want Daphne in here?”

“Because I knew you'd ask me to help you find Trevor,” Tracey said. “Daphne – Merlin, I love her – but she's not a Gryffindor; the hat, it might have said – but she's not brave enough to even speak of confronting him. Unless she had another voice.”

“Mine,” Harry said.

“I can't deny both of you at the same time,” Tracey said, “Please don't ask me to. He's – he's got a baby coming – his wife really loves him, even if it is a Betrothal. I would know if she didn't love him. It isn't Love Potions or... anything evil. She loves him, she's got a baby on the way... and her parents are dead. If I get any inkling he'd do it again, I'd do something. But this is for her. For her baby. Until I know there is a time when he doesn't respect her or that baby, I can't allow anyone to hurt them – yes, *them*. She'd be a pariah, she and her baby if he's gone. No one,... Sirius might try to help, but... I can't. I'm sorry. Not until I know he'd hurt them.”

“There's more, isn't there?” Harry asked.

“Don't make me say it,” Tracey said.

“The newspaper article,” Harry said.

“Get out,” Tracey said.

“You don't want another article that reveals a secret,” Harry said.”

“OUT!” Tracey cried. “Please! If you want to help me trust you. Out.”
“I am so, so sorry,” Harry said.

He stood, and walked out of the room.

“It isn't her story that has her hiding, Daphne,” Harry said, “It is the secret that is upsetting her. The revelation in the newspaper. Everyone knowing. If it happens again...”


“I'll do everything to help her,” Harry said. “But if Sirius finds out about this. She won't be able to stop him. He'd...

“He'd go to Azkaban.”

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**Diagon Alley – The Daily Prophet.**

Sirius Black kicked open the front door of the Daily Prophet Headquarters. He wanted to get somebody's attention so they would tell him to go. And wouldn't you know it, Barnabus Cuffe was talking to that pretty receptionist.

“Sirius,” a voice said, that wasn't Barnabus'.

Sirius turned and looked toward the voice. Ted Tonks was sitting in a chair, looking at him.

“I knew you'd be here,” Ted said, “As soon as I saw that article – her name --”

“Don't try to stop me, Ted,” Sirius said; he turned and saw Barnabus looking at him in fear. “Where is she?”

“Lord Black,” Barnabus said, “I'm taking care of this. This isn't your --”

“Not my problem, Cuffe?” Sirius asked, “You're goddamned lucky I had enough wits after reading that article that I decided to come alone, instead of wait for my Godson! Unidentified Slytherin Witch. Do you know who that is? Daphne Greengrass.”

Barnabus' eyes widened. “I didn't know...”

“Tracey is going to be my adopted daughter, Cuffe,” Sirius said, “Tracey is already my daughter.”

Barnabus leaned back against the receptionist's desk before he could stumble.

“Do you know what is going to happen to her?” Sirius asked, “What I have to take care of?”

“Lord Black,” Barnabus said, “I will write an apology and publish it every day for two weeks. I will retract what she wrote. I will write a wonderful article about Tracey. Some good things for people to read.”

“WHERE IS SHE!?” Sirius growled.
“Sadie, contact the DMLE,” Barnabus said. “My office, the Floo. Let ’em come through.”

Sadie hurried into Barnabus’ office.

“Is that a threat?” Sirius asked, “After what I and my Godson gave you –?”

“Not for you, Lord Black,” Barnabus said, “For her! For Skeeter! She's an Unregistered Animagus. A beetle. It is how she found out about Tracey. She'll go away. During her trial, they can make her spill everything she knows. She'll be ruined. Never write another article.”

“WHERE IS SHE?!” Sirius growled again. “I want to speak to her before she goes to Azkaban. She wrote one too many articles. This could ruin my daughter.”

“She could fly away, Sirius,” Ted said. “She's a bug.”

“She's definitely a bug,” Sirius said, “That needs to be squished.”

“You'd never find her,” Ted said, “Let DMLE and Aurors put up Anti-Animagus Wards. Then you can talk to her when she is under arrest.”

“You just don't want me to threaten her,” Sirius said. “She needs to know she hurt my daughter!”

“Her trial,” Ted said, “Tracey can be a material witness.”

“Oh, right, sure... like she'd accept that,” Sirius said. “Confirm to all of Great Britain Rita's right!!”

The office door opened. Amelia Bones walked out and Sirius was suddenly calm.

“Amy,” Sirius said.

“Quit ignoring my letters, Black,” Amelia said.

“Amy, she – she wrote about my daughter,” Sirius said, “I.. I have to...”

“Daughter?” Amelia asked.

“Tracey,” Sirius said, “She's... I'm... adopting her. Rita, she has to pay! Do you know what those students in Hogwarts will do to her?!”

Sirius only realized now that Aurors had followed Amelia out of the office.


“Where is she, Barney?” Amelia asked.

“’At her desk,” Barnabus said.

“Anti-Animagus Wards around the whole place,” Amelia ordered the Aurors. If she escapes, pay-docks, and unpaid time leave.”

“Harsh,” an Auror said.
“Less harsh than what Lord Black would do,” Amelia said, “if he finds her out in the open after what she wrote about his daughter, Savage.”

The Auror, Savage – Sirius recognized that name – huffed, but nodded and set to work.

“I wouldn't be able to keep you out of Azkaban, Sirius,” Amelia said, “No matter how justified. What she wrote about your daughter – I'm sad to say is not a crime.”

“What about claiming responsibility for what could happen to my daughter due to this?” Sirius asked.

Amelia sighed, then her expression brightened. “I can promise she could be in constant watch of a Senior Auror-in-Training when she is not somewhere you can protect her. You'd like this one.”

“Nymphadora,” Ted said.

“What say you, Ted?” Amelia asked.

“No one better,” Ted said. “She'd have a chance to watch your Godson in the Tournament. She'd just sit with Tracey, and her girlfriend.”

“Nymphadora could guard both girls,” Amelia said.

Sirius sighed. “Fine. She's hired. But I will be paying her from my pocket. She's missing her last year in Training after all.”

“Works for me,” Amelia said.

“Wards up, Boss,” Savage said.

“Wait here, Sirius,” Amelia said, “And you can say what you want to her. Barnabus?”

Barnabus led Amelia and Savage, and two other Aurors through a door. Sirius wilted and walked over to Ted, then sat beside him.

“I felt like I could kill,” Sirius said, “Throughout the entire journey. I wanted to kill her. Tracey's going to be so ashamed of me. Almost in Azkaban before I could adopt her. Great Merlin. I am not ready to be a father, especially to a... a teen.”

“Yes, you are,” Ted said, “Or you'd have never agreed to it. Besides, you are a father. A Godfather to a teen, and nearly a teen. You raised them in James' place. A Godfather doesn't start one's job when both parents die, Sirius. We were both there when Harry schooled both Lord Davis and Lord Greengrass. Which person taught him how to do that?”

“Me,” Sirius said.

“You're not ready to be a father?” Ted asked.

“I'm not ready to face my daughter,” Sirius said.

“I've ticked off my daughter more times than I can count,” Ted said, “Notice how easy I can say her
first name. She hates her first name. She had a real temper at several points in her life. I called her by her first name this one time, when she was thirteen, after I caught her with a boy in her room. She was angry at me, not for telling her off about the boy, or yelling at the boy... but for her name. Then she changed her appearance for a week to... to look like a common street hustler because she knew I'd be angry.

“And then there was when she was sixteen. Think I don't know what it is like to have a daughter who is attracted to girls?”

“Nymphadora?” Sirius asked.

“She experimented,” Ted said, “For three summer months, when I wouldn't take down Anti-Boy Charms from her doorway in her room.”

“Boys couldn't go in,” Sirius said, “But Girls?”

“Girls,” Ted agreed. “I couldn't block my own daughter from her room. She won that fight. Then she went back to liking boys, and as far as I know... no more girls. But it is there. So I know what is like. Sort of... Nymphadora will help her, Sirius. But so will you.”

“As long as she doesn't make Daphne jealous of her,” Sirius said. “Those two are in love.... and are life-mates. No joke.

Ted nodded. “I will write Nymphadora a long letter telling her to not even joke about flirting with either of them.”

“I'll tell her the same,” Sirius said.

Sirius stood as soon as the doors opened again. Savage and another Auror, a tall black man, were clutching the shoulders of a woman with short, curly blonde hair.

“Unhand me, you brutes!” the woman said, “I am...!”

“Rita... Skeeter,” Sirius said.

Rita turned to Sirius, “Lord Black... looking handsome today. Help an innocent witch out? You might find you'll get that Lady Black you want – aah! Who did that? Who hexed me with a stinging hex? Brutality! I am innocent!”

Sirius grinned when he saw Amelia pointing her wand at Rita's back.

“Innocent?” Sirius asked. “Tracey.... you called her No-Name. I told her no one would ever call her that. Ever! Her name is Tracey Black, soon-to-be adopted daughter of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black. Her girlfriend. You knew who she was. You couldn't say her name. Because she has exclusivity.” Tracey has exclusivity as --”

“She ain't your daughter yet!” Rita said, “Fair game!”

“-- she is Protected by House Potter,” Sirius continued. “Protected starting the night before you spied on her with her girlfriend.”

Rita's eyes widened. “I didn't know --”
“Didn't do your research properly,” Sirius said. “If Tracey gets injured or harmed in anyway due to backlash or retaliation from your announcement to Great Britain – I will see you thrown through the Veil. You would be responsible for it. You!

“Now... go to Azkaban and join the other soul-sucking monsters. You won't be kissed, don't worry. You have no soul. Get her out of my sight, before I do something I will regret.”

“March of shame, Aurors!” Amelia said, “Through Diagon Alley!”

Sirius grinned as he watched Rita struggle as she was taken outside.

“Don't worry,” Amelia said, “Anti-Animagus Cuffs.”

“Sexy,” Sirius said, “You wanna use those on me next?”

“You accepting a date?” Amelia asked.

“When?” Sirius asked, “As long as it is Three Broomsticks. I don't want to be this far from my family again.”

“I am free Friday at seven-o-clock in the evening,” Amelia said.

“I'll see you there,” Sirius said. “Amelia? Congratulations on getting your job you wanted.”

“Congratulate me when I have the man I want where he won't get away,” Amelia said. “I made a mistake a long time ago, Sirius. I could have had both. I chose one. And it wasn't you. I am still young enough to have that family we wanted. A few months of dates – show me you're still the man I knew back then – and you will have a Lady.”

Sirius smiled. “I look forward to the first.”

Amelia smiled, said farewell and left.

“Want to know why she never married in these past thirteen years?” Ted asked, when Amelia was gone, “You never asked her after the first time.”

“I'll keep that in mind,” Sirius said. “Thank you, Ted. Once again, you've been a lot of help. I'll see you for the First Task if not before.”

“Know what he's facing yet?” Ted asked.

“No,” Sirius said, “But I have a feeling we'll know soon.”

11 DAY TIME-SKIP

Friday November 20th, 1994.
Albus Dumbledore was escorting Ludo Bagman through the Forbidden Forest toward their destination. The following day, the four creatures the Triwizard Tournament Champions would be facing for the First Task would be arriving and an area had been set off for them to stay at until the task. But first, before that could happen... Albus and Ludo had their own task to accomplish...

“... but the ICW insists we speak to the Centaurs about it,” Ludo Bagman was saying. “That's what I told Minister Fudge. It was chaos in there, Albus! Dolores Umbridge was there, and – is it me, or does Madam Umbridge have a – minor dislike for Centaurs, Albus?”

“I'm not sure 'minor' is the proper word,” Albus said.

“Perhaps not,” Ludo agreed. “Anyway... as I was saying, Dolores was there. Bartemius was there, because I had to drag him along. Amos Diggory was there, of course. And Madam Bones – I have no idea how she heard about it. But for some reason, she wanted to be a part of it. What does she have to do with this?”

“Madam Bones has always been diplomatic,” Albus said, “Perhaps Amos brought her along. He needed another voice to support this.”

“Perhaps,” Ludo said. “Well, it got interesting. Fudge wanted to know our decision. Bartemius had no wish to speak to the Centaurs, but he understood why it may be necessary. Amos and Amelia agreed, and when they did, it was majority decision either way, because I agreed to. But Dolores – oh, Dolores – she says we should just tell the Centaurs, that if they don't accept, then the Ministry is going to send a force into this Forest, and... wipe 'em out! That's what she said. 'Wipe them out!' She told Amelia to send her whole force in here, and kill 'em all. Then there would be no opposition for this. Amelia was seething. Amos was looking at her in disbelief. And Fudge was stammering and telling her to be quiet, the decision had been made. And then I got picked to be here to speak to the Centaurs. So here we are. And thank you for the help.”

“Don't mention it,” Albus said.

“Really, it was needed,” Ludo said, “I'm nervous as a first year sitting under the Sorting Hat. But this is needed, because if we don't speak to the Centaurs, and get them to agree to let us keep four Dragons out here – GREAT MERLIN! WHAT IS THAT?!”

Albus snorted, but wisely said nothing. They had walked upon the Ilvermorny's vehicle the delegates had arrived in. It was sitting in the same clearing meant for the dragons.

“That's the Thunderbird,” a voice said.

Albus turned to the voice as Sirius Black stepped out of the back door of the vehicle, and came into their view.

“And that is what the Ilvermorny delegates flew in on,” Sirius said, “You would have known that had you arrived earlier on the night we arrived, Mr. Bagman.”

“Lord Black,” Ludo said, “Unexpected seeing you here. Or... this.”

“Aah, just making sure the forest hasn't turned the thing wild,” Sirius said. “We need it to get back home in June, after all.”

“Why is it out here, Lord Black?” Albus asked.
“Well, I was looking for somewhere to place it,” Sirius said, “And found this clearing.”

“Well, you should have asked me first, Lord Black,” Albus said, “I would have helped to find a proper place for it. This clearing is for the...”

“Yes, the Dragons,” Sirius said, “So I heard. Four of them. So... one for each Champion. For the First Task. Interesting. Very interesting.”

“You won't tell your Champion, I trust?” Albus asked.

“Hmm?” Sirius asked. “Oh. No... no, definitely not. He has to be prepared to face the unexpected, right? That's what the first task is about. I'll be sure to find a place elsewhere to park this. Need it for the dragons, of course. Dragons! Fascinating...”

“Yes, well,” Ludo said, “You do that. Come on, Albus. We do need to meet with the Centaurs.”

Albus smirked, as he watched Sirius walk back into the vehicle. Of course he had known Sirius would be here. Of course he had known the vehicle was here. He knew everything that had to do with Hogwarts, and the Forest was part of Hogwarts, of course. Which was why he brought Ludo this way... which was not a short-cut to the Centaur camps.

And of course Sirius would tell Harry. The man was the boy's Godfather, after all. And a Marauder.

House Potter Tent – Thirty minutes later.

Harry was sitting at the dining room table, doing homework, thinking about Hermione, and talking to Lily, Remus and Rose. He was also sipping on a bottle of butterbeer.

“DRAGONS!” Sirius exclaimed in a very loud voice, running into the tent, “FOUR DRAGONS! THAT IS THE FIRST TASK!”

Harry spat butterbeer all over his homework.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished.

This chapter made me cry manly tears while writing it. Boy, was some of this chapter tough to write. (THE scene, Harry thinking about Rose after THE scene, Harry's “He'd go to Azkaban.” – the latter for no real reason which surprised me).

So... Tonks has come into the story! Ahem... time to upset some readers including one faithful reviewer who writes long reviews... Tonks will very likely NOT be the third wife. Will she be with Remus? I have no idea! (looking at you, aforementioned but not identified reviewer, who doesn't like Remus/Tonks. I think you know who you are... no
lecturing me about why you don't like it. It may be unnecessary!) Heck, Remus and Tonks both might have no. romantic interest that are focused in my story. Or... I might have Tonks with an Ilvermorny student (NOT HARRY OR ROSE!). We'll see....

The post time-skip scenes were written two days before I wrote this chapter. I'm so glad it worked.

Some may be disappointed I am sticking with canon tasks. But the First Task (Harry's part anyway) was thought up several days ago, and I still love my idea. It will be AWESOME!

Next Chapter: Notable scenes during Time-skip. We (sorta) meet Tonks – who has spent the last couple weeks with the Ilvermorny/Hogwarts Five Group! So she's already familiar with everyone. With four days before First Task, Harry finds out what he is facing. A Dragon. (But doesn't discover just yet which one) And then Hermione and other Characters get one specific revelation. Also... Sirius has a lot of fun next chapter with the new woman in his life.
Eleven Days Later

Chapter Notes

For those confused about the Chapter Title, it means “before the time skip last chapter” because the two final scenes in last chapter are revisited in this one. So basically if the chapter ended without the time-skip, we'd be at this moment now.

Last Chapter, I accidentally brought Auror Dawlish back from the dead before I noticed it. (It has been several chapters since I wrote Malfoy killed him and it was one sentence. So yeah!) It was soon changed to Savage, but those who saw the Auror accompanying Amelia as Dawlish instead of Savage, it has been changed.

Warning: Adult Situations

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Eleven days had passed since Rita Skeeter was arrested for being an Unregistered Animagus, and Tracey had revealed a dark secret about her past that left Harry shaken to tears.

Amelia Bones had given a swift trial to Rita Skeeter with the minimal amount of Wizengamot Council needed for a minor criminal hearing. There was one major reason she was given a swift trial. She had spent one night in a holding cell on Level 10 of the Ministry of Magic. A load of Howlers had been sent to the Ministry for Rita, and they kept piling on Amelia Bones' desk. After giving them to Rita Skeeter, and listening to five of them about how, amongst several other things, Rita had irreparably damaged the reputation of a fourteen year old witch because of her careless hunt for fame, she had moved for a quick trial, because she wanted no more post that was not hers.

Amelia had listened to five, because all five came from the parents of Daphne Greengrass – Tracey's girlfriend – and others in the Children of the Great Alliance. One came from Lily Potter herself. Amelia enjoyed that one particularly. Lily knew how to use swearwords – and her kids had likely never heard them before because she never had to Howl at them with such disrespect.

Amelia moved the trial to the same afternoon as the Howlers' arrival. Rita Skeeter was found guilty of being an Unregistered Animagus by unanimous decision, and was sentenced to five years in Azkaban. The following evening, during their first date (she had found a free evening and had immediately wrote to Sirius for an earlier first date – he accepted the date) in over fourteen years, Amelia and Sirius would go on five dates. The last two dates ended at Bones Manor with a climactic conclusion.

Harry and Hermione – while nowhere near as adventurous as Harry's Godfather – had started a new tradition while having their designated 'couple time'. Finding places on the Grounds of Hogwarts or Hogwarts castle itself to practice snogging. A hidden corner of the library, far from the sight of Madam Pince was Hermione's favorite. Down by the lake where there was a beautiful grove of trees not connected to the Forbidden Forest was Harry's favorite. They didn't always 'just snog' though, they also talked about their days, and different things in their life the other wasn't privy to yet. But Harry had yet to tell her about Shadow. Of course, they still also had their breakfast traditions before
classes during the week.

Rose and Gabrielle's 'couple time' consisted mostly of Gabrielle and Rose finding hobbies to learn together. The couple also occasionally shared kisses, but usually just a lingering peck as a hello and goodbye to begin and end their 'dates'. They would switch hobbies every other day. Rose was teaching Gabrielle how to cook. She was shocked Gabrielle didn't know how. The Classroom Tent kitchen literally became a classroom, and it wasn't uncommon for the Ilvermorny students to find the young couple cooking things when they visited the Classroom tent to study every other afternoon between classes and dinner.

Gabrielle was teaching Rose 'French' – Rose had really wanted to learn it. The first day they had begun the lesson, they were in the House Potter tent, and Sirius was their 'chaperone' for the outing. Gabrielle had asked Rose why she wanted to learn.

“So we can have secret conversations in French!” Rose said, grinning.

“I know French, Rosie,” Sirius said, “I'd understand your conversations.”

“Aw!” Rose pouted, “That kills the whole point!”

“Nah, learn French,” Sirius said, then grinned. “I'm not always going to be your chaperone. Plus, You can whisper sweet French nothings in your girlfriend's ear.”

“Ooh, Mon Dieu, Oui!” Gabrielle said.

“My god, yes!,” Rose guessed.

“Oui, Tres Bonne!” Gabrielle said.

Sirius snickered. “Um... maybe practice less suggestive French with her, Gabrielle. Or I'll be blamed for this.”

Gabrielle blushed prettily, making Rose peck her slightly warm cheek. She couldn't wait to learn French... and maybe suggestive French in a couple years. Normal French was okay... because she loved listening to her girlfriend speak it – which was why she requested the lessons.

During the afternoon of the same day Rita Skeeter's last article for five years came out, Harry, Hermione and Luna had escorted Astoria to the Headmaster's Office for the Re-Sorting. Daphne had stayed behind to keep an eye on Tracey, who had still been nearly catatonic in her bed. By the time the Re-Sorting was done, the “Hogwarts Five” were all sorted into – as the hat said – “HOGWARTS!” and all had the same identical ties. Hermione, Tracey and Daphne had the same exact classes, since they had chosen the same extra classes in their third year. As Severus had promised by some miracle, he had been able to get all five students into lessons where they weren't with Slytherins.

But Daphne and Tracey still feared Slytherin backlash. Luckily, their fears had been swept aside when their new bodyguard, the Senior Auror-in-Training – and Sirius' Cousin – Nymphadora Tonks arrived early on Tuesday – the day the girls would go back to class after taking the day off to handle their emotions from the article. They learned pretty quickly that their bodyguard didn't like being called by her first name. Calling her Tonks was just fine. Albus made absolutely no fuss about Tonks being their bodyguard. It had solved some of his problems with Tracey and Daphne hanging around some of the students. Tonks stayed in a hidden corner in every single classroom the girls took classes
in, keeping watch on not only the girls but the students around them to see how they acted toward
the couple.

The first issue turned out to be the very same day Tonks had arrived. Since Tracey and Daphne
didn't have much interaction with Slytherins, Draco Malfoy knew nothing of their bodyguard before
lunchtime. So as Tracey and Daphne were headed to the Great Hall for lunch, with Tonks staying a
proper distance behind in case of danger, but allowing the girls privacy, or to give those innocent
students a chance at conversation. Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson had confronted Tracey and
Daphne. Draco made a comment about Daphne and Tracey giving him some entertainment when
Tonks intervened. Draco had been shocked to see his cousin there, even more shocked to know she
was the girl's bodyguard. He had also seemed to have forgotten a key piece of information.

“I was informed your Head of House told you and your fellow House-Mates,” Tonks said, “That
Daphne and Tracey are under House Potter Protection. As I understand it, Lord Potter does not like
off-white comments about those under his Protection.”

Draco's face went red, then even paler than he had been.

“Run off, little Cousin,” Tonks said. “Make the same mistake again, and I won't just tell Potter, I'll
make sure you can't run away from this trained Auror like Dear Daddy did.”

Draco went red then purple, and he turned and walked away with Pansy. Tracey and Daphne had
lunch in the Classroom Tent instead that day. Word soon got around about Tonks, and nobody else
messed with her, Daphne, Tracey or Astoria – and they were already well-learned in not messing
with Hermione and Luna.

Barnabus Cuffe kept part of his promise. He gave a retraction of the article about Daphne, the day
after Rita's arrest. He apologized to Tracey for Rita Skeeter's article. And announced Rita Skeeter's
arrest. All three of those were on the front page that day. The following day's edition announced Rita
Skeeter was in Azkaban.

Luna on other hand had other ideas. She asked for interviews from her friends, from Harry's family,
and Great Alliance – in addition to the interview discussed during the first CGA meeting – about
Tracey. They all gave very nice things to say about Tracey. Tracey didn't know until the Quibbler
came out and then she started to be cheerful again. These were good articles for her. And she loved
them. Many students in Hogwarts began treating her and Daphne as if Rita's article never came out.
Some others did not. But Tonks was there, and so were Professors. Any homophobic slurs were met
with swift punishments and threats of suspension.

Over the eleven days, Harry and Remus upped their training, going through possible creature
strategies for the First Task. Ironically, they would soon discover, that none of the creatures Remus
instructed Harry about were anything near what Harry would really be facing...

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Friday November 20th, 1994.

Sirius Black groaned in an exhausted but happy way, as he sank down onto the elongated seat,
panting as if he had been running in his Animagus form. But he had just finished up with an even
more exciting work-out. Amelia Bones inhaled and exhaled, as she wrapped herself in her traveling
cloak and laid her head on Sirius' shoulder. The rest of her clothes were on the floor beneath them.
“I cannot believe we just shagged on the same seats where students had been sitting not a month ago!” Amelia exclaimed.

Sirius laughed. “If they knew the Thunderbird was out here, I think I know a seventeen year old couple who might have done the same thing if they had a chance.”

Amelia smacked him on his bare chest. “I thought you were just going to show me this contraption so we could possibly use something like it for the DMLE. Although why we would need it is something I can't fathom.”

“That was just an excuse to get you out here and shag you, Amy,” Sirius said, “I would likely be fired my Headmaster Winston if I gave you much information about this. It is his baby. I would be lying if I said it wasn't a fantasy of mine at seventeen years old to have you in the Forbidden Forest.”


“Been there, done Felicity Crock,” Sirius said.

Amelia gasped and sat up. She looked at him. “Felicity! My dorm-mate?! She never said a thing to me, even when you and I began dating.”

“She was long before I was interested in you,” Sirius waved a dismissive hand; she'd smack him if he told her he only remembered her name, because she was a very good at what she did. So nice, he had her thrice, but that was it!

“Why did you never bring me up there?” Amelia asked.

“That was James and Lily's spot when you and I began dating,” Sirius said. “James called it that year. Marauder Code – Don't steal another Marauder's Claim – Girl or Shag Location. Course, it was rarely ever a 'Shag' location. More of a 'heated snog and a bit more' if James was telling the truth.”

“And you never said this to Lily?” Amelia asked.

“Never,” Sirius said.

“That... would explain on more than one occasion,” Amelia said, “you taking me to a broom closet on a floor above when there was one feet from where we started snogging..

“Marauder Claim,” Sirius said, “That was also James' – never used it. Lily was too dignified for them. But... he wanted it just in case. It was their main Head Student patrol zone.”

“Why did you never tell me all this – you know – back then?” Amelia asked, “When we first dated?”

“Because I thought this discussion we're having now,” Sirius said, “Would be a conversation of reminiscing, after several years of being happily – hey!”

He had heard voices in the forest.

“I hear those too,” Amelia said.

“Good hearing, Amy,” Sirius complimented, “Stay here.”
Sirius hurriedly threw his clothes on, and moved over to a hidden spot near the door. He watched Amelia hide under a Disillusionment Charm, and her clothes did too. He could still see light shimmers detecting her, because he knew where she was.

Then he heard the voices again.

“Don’t mention it.” That was Albus Dumbledore.

“Really, it was needed,” That was Ludo Bagman, “I’m nervous as a first year sitting under the Sorting Hat. But this is needed, because if we don’t speak to the Centaurs, and get them to agree to let us keep four Dragons out here – GREAT MERLIN! WHAT IS THAT?!”


“That’s the Thunderbird,” Sirius said, stepping out onto the ramp, “And that is what the Ilvermorny delegates flew in on. You would have known that had you arrived earlier on the night we arrived, Mr. Bagman.”

“Lord Black,” Ludo said, “Unexpected seeing you here. Or... this.”

“Aah, just making sure the forest hasn’t turned the thing wild,” Sirius said; making an excuse; better than telling them he was here shagging his girlfriend; though he found it humorous, lying to his old Headmaster about such subjects – very much like the good old days, “We need it to get back home in June, after all.”

“Why is it out here, Lord Black?” Albus asked.

“Well, I was looking for somewhere to place it,” Sirius said, “And found this clearing.”

“Well, you should have asked me first, Lord Black,” Albus said, “I would have helped to find a proper place for it. This clearing is for the...”

“Yes, the Dragons,” Sirius said, “So I heard. Four of them. So... one for each Champion. For the First Task. Interesting. Very interesting.”

“You won’t tell your Champion, I trust?” Albus asked.

Yes, actually, Sirius said. I am leaving to tell him as soon as Amelia and get dressed. Shame... hoped for another round...

“Hmm?” Sirius asked. “Oh. No... no, definitely not. He has to be prepared to face the unexpected, right? That’s what the first task is about. I’ll be sure to find a place elsewhere to park this. Need it for the dragons, of course. Dragons! Fascinating...”

Ah, there we go, Sirius said, I can bring her back out here after I tell Shadow, and show her how this thing flies... and we can have some more fun!

“Yes, well,” Ludo said, “You do that. Come on, Albus. We do need to meet with the Centaurs.”

Sirius waved, and watched Albus and Ludo walk off deeper into the forest. Amelia was visible when she turned around and was getting dressed. And she didn’t look surprised as he did.
“You knew about the dragons, didn't you?” Sirius asked.

“Amos Diggory – he needed an extra vote to make sure Bagman spoke to the Centaurs about the Dragons,” Amelia said, “Dolores Umbridge – an absolute hag – was all about bringing in Dragons into the forest without telling the Centaurs. I had to promise Bagman and Crouch I wouldn't tell you – they don't know we're dating, but they know we're friendly.”

“Do you know what kind of Dragons?” Sirius asked.

Amelia shook her head. “No, Sorry. But you can always return to the clearing here to look for yourself.”

Sirius nodded. “I need to go tell Harry about the Dragons. Then I'll come back and fly this elsewhere.”

“I'll go with you,” Amelia said. “And I'll come back with you to see this thing fly.”

“Really?” Sirius asked.

“I figured you'd want to bring me back for another round,” Amelia said, grinning.

“Oh Merlin, yes please,” Sirius said, “However, I think you should wait here, Amelia. I am going to be running back this time in my Animagus form.”

He knew Amelia could protect herself if it came to it. And he'd be back as soon as he gave the news.

Amelia strapped her boots, then stood up. “Good. So will I.”

Sirius stared at her. “You're a –?”

She transformed in front of him – clothes and all – into a German Shepherd.

Sirius laughed. “Of course you're a dog. That explains how you heard Albus and Ludo.”

Amelia 'woofed' in agreement.

A canine... like me. Another reason to fall back in love with you, Amy, Sirius thought. I have no idea what we're going to do when the end of June comes around though. A discussion for another time.

He transformed into Padfoot, then they ran out of the Thunderbird, and raced each other to the Ilvermorny Tents.

Harry was sitting at the dining room table, doing homework and thinking about Hermione. He was doing homework tonight, because he wanted to spend the weekend with Hermione. However, something in his gut told him he wouldn't have much time to spend with her, because he'd be too focused on preparing for the Task.

“Maybe I should have done my homework with Hermione,” Harry muttered.

“Hmm?” Lily asked; she was helping Rose with a complicated question in her homework at the
coffee table in the living room.

“I'm just wondering if my time with Hermione is going to be limited between now and the Task on Tuesday,” Harry said, “Why Tuesday, by the way? Why the middle of the week?”

“You'd expect the weekend if you didn't pay attention to the date,” Lily said.

“Prepare for the unexpected,” Remus supplied.

“Unexpected seems likely right now, Remus,” Harry said.

“I'm racking my brain for what we're missing, Harry,” Remus said.

“Might be hopeless,” Harry said, “We might not have any time to prepare when we figure out what it is anyway.”

Harry sipped on his bottle of butterbeer.

“DRAGONS!” Sirius exclaimed in a very loud voice, running into the tent, “FOUR DRAGONS! THAT IS THE FIRST TASK!”

Harry spat butterbeer all over his homework.

Harry and Rose both swore. Lily didn't reprimand them. She looked at Sirius in absolute horror.

“Ah, bugger,” Remus said, “I wouldn't have guessed that, Harry. Didn't think they'd be so mental.”

“Please tell me you're joking,” Lily said.

“No,” Sirius said, “Was at the Thunderbird. The clearing I landed in. It is for dragons. Albus and Ludo came upon the Thunderbird, and I overheard them, then talked to them about it. Albus didn't want me to tell Harry, but of course I was going to! Dragons!”

Suddenly, Harry heard a barking sound. A German Shepherd stepped into the tent and sat down beside Sirius.

“Hey, girl, there you are,” Sirius said, “I thought I lost ya!”

“Please tell me she – she, right? – isn't a stray you found in Hogsmeade,” Remus said.

“Yep!” Sirius said, “We played. Me as Padfoot. Rolled around a bit.”

“Rolled around,” Remus said, “Sirius, please don't tell me you mean --”

Sirius laughed out loud, and suddenly the dog began to stretch. A few moments later, the human form of Amelia Bones appeared there. In her clothing, thank goodness. Harry was well-met with Amelia – as was Rose – Sirius had brought her to visit the tents and the family before three of their five dates.

“He does mean that, Remus,” Amelia said. “As humans though.”

“Ho-lee Merlin,” Lily said, grinning, “Amelia Bones, an Animagus! Your German Shepherd is
“Back away, she's mine!” Sirius grinned.

“Were you in the Forbidden Forest too, Amelia?” Harry asked, “With Sirius?”

“He was showing me the Thunderbird, Harry,” Amelia said; Harry did not notice the light blush in her cheeks; Remus and Lily did, however.

“We have to go back out there soon,” Sirius said, “Like I said, the clearing is for the dragons, Got to move it elsewhere. Anyway, we just raced back to tell you about the dragons.”

“Raced?” Lily asked, “How fast is she?”

“About as fast as me,” Sirius said, “She only came in here late, because that was the plan – Remus, you fell for the whole 'stray dog, rolled around' gag!”

Remus groaned.

“Hmm... I bet I could beat her,” Lily said; she seemed to be distracting herself from the dragon news.

“You, Lily?” Amelia asked.

“I could too,” Harry said.

“You'd cheat, Shadow Jumper!” Sirius barked.

“Shadow.. Jumper?” Amelia asked.

“Show her, Harry,” Remus said. “We're using it for the Dragon. It is the best way to do it.”

“Let's go outside,” Harry said, standing. “Any shadows?”

“Along the forest,” Sirius said.

All six in the tent went outside.

“I hope none of the girls come out here,” Harry said.

“Harry... you're going to need to tell the girls soon,” Remus said. “Four days away. If they show up... ripping off plasters and all that.”

“I... am... so confused,” Amelia said.

“Ladies first,” Harry said to Lily.

Lily smiled, then turned, and ran into the open Grounds. She jumped and transformed into the Bengal Tiger.

“Oh my god,” Amelia gasped, with a grin. “She's beautiful.”

“I'm starting to think a couple of witches I know are like my Goddaughter,” Sirius snarked, “Your
“Harry's turn – wait, what?” Amelia said.

Harry grinned, and ran forward a few feet off to the side of his mother. He jumped and transformed, then landed on four paws.

“Is he registered?” Amelia asked Sirius.

“In America,” Sirius said.

“In Great Britain?” Amelia asked.

“Uh...” Sirius paused.

“MACUSA granted Diplomatic Immunity,” Remus said.

“That should work.” Amelia said, nodding. “So he's a panther – wait... Shadow, Shadow Jumper. Oh, my god. Sirius, you mean —”

“Do your stuff, Shadow!” Sirius said.

“Practice multiple jumps, Harry,” Remus said, “We're going to practice that! A whole row of of shadows against the tree line."

Harry saw them. He ran around Tiger-Lily, then ran over to the shadows, and concentrated on several shadows. Multiple jumps – tricky. But Remus was right. He needed to do this.

He ran to a shadow and dove inside it.


Remus and Sirius applauded. Amelia applauded as well, more shocked clapping than amazement though.

Then there was a lot more clapping. Shadow turned toward it. Hermione was staring at him in shock.

Shit. Hope she wasn't mad. Well, like Remus said. Ripping off band-aids. It made things hurt less.

He thought about his argument as he walked slowly over to her. Family Secret. She was part of House under his Protection. But Family. She wasn't... not yet. Hopefully she'd understand.

Here goes nothing.

“H-Harry?” Hermione asked, eyes blinking.

Shadow nodded, blinking his green eyes. His Animagus signature. She stared into his eyes.

“Oh, Harry,” she gushed. “You are gorgeous.”

Harry transformed back into his human form. Thank God he mastered Clothed Transformation.
“As are you,” Harry said.

“Jumping in and out of shadows,” Hermione said, staring at the shadows, “You disappeared into shadows, like... in thin air! You're... not a normal Panther.”


“And your mother is a Tiger,” Hermione said, glancing at the Bengal Tiger, “Makes so much sense. So protective of her cubs.”

“I wanted to tell you,” Harry said, “Family Secret. But now... I have to use it for the First Task.”

“You know what you're facing,” Hermione realized.

“Just found out,” Harry said. “Dragons.”

“DRAGONS?!” Hermione screamed. “HARRY JAMES POTTER! YOU BETTER BE –!”

Harry took her around the waist and kissed her into silence. He hoped the others weren't watching. Especially his mother. After a thirty second kiss, he backed away.

“Mmm,” she said, smacking her lips from the kiss; “I feel better. Dragons, Harry?”

“Dragons,” Harry said.

Hermione hugged him tightly. “I'm going to hold onto you until Wednesday. You're not facing Dragons.”

Lily cleared her throat. Harry winced. She had turned back to human form. And had heard enough of it. And had maybe watched him kiss his girlfriend into silence.

“Perhaps we better go inside,” Lily said.


“Nights are getting colder,” Lily said. “You can hold him until Wednesday in the tent. We have much to talk about. And all the girls are going to be there too.”

Hermione sighed and backed away from the hug. She took his hand, and they followed Lily. Grim and German Shepherd were back. They walked him to Harry and looked at him.

“Sirius,” Harry whispered to Hermione, pointing at Padfoot, then pointed at the Shepherd. “Madam Amelia Bones.”


“They have to go to the Thunderbird,” Lily said. “Don't be long, Sirius, or you'll miss a good discussion.”

Padfoot woofed, and brushed up against Amelia. Then the dogs ran off into the forest.
“They’re not coming back soon,” Harry said, “Are they?”

“Nope,” Lily said. “Doesn’t look like it. I’m happy for them. They’re getting back what they should have never lost.”

Still hand-in-hand, Harry and Hermione followed Lily into the House Potter tent. The girls were scattered around the living room. Lily sat down with Remus and Tonks at the table. Hermione dragged him over to the one empty chair, and pushed him into it. Then she sat in his lap. He blushed and looked at his mother, who merely smiled.

“I’m sitting here,” Hermione said, “And not letting you up until the First Task is over. You are not facing a Dragon.”

Apparently Remus had told everyone else about the Dragons. Because nobody reacted too oddly.

“I am afraid it isn't that simple, Hermione,” Remus said, “Harry has to compete or he loses his magic. I understand Hermione. Yes, dragons. It does seem insane. But look at this logically. I don't think you're going to have to face a Dragon, Harry. Just get past it. It will likely be guarding something. Dragons are famous for guarding real treasures in the wild. Gringotts has one deep in its Vault Tunnels. It guards important Vaults. Like House Potter's Family Vault. So the Dragon will be guarding something. You just have to figure what it is, and how to get it. I think I already gave you the how.”

“Shadow,” Harry said.

“I am sure everyone here saw him,” Lily said. “Harry is a legally registered Shadow Panther Animagus. It is a Magical Animagus which are rare. Sirius is a Grim Animagus. Another rarity.”

“Ohay,” Daphne said, “I get the gist here. We all saw Harry disappearing into shadows. I believe an Arena is being built for the First Task. They're likely hiding it with magic and wards, so nobody – especially the Champions – could see it. The Quidditch Pitch is likely too big, and it isn't an enclosure to hold a dragon. So it has to be an enclosure of some sorts. Audience seating – open air. Possible chance of several shadows there.”

“But you can't assume there will be,” Hermione said. “It could be a cloudy day.”

“Harry could create sunlight,” Luna said.

“Lumos Solem,” several voices said as one.

“Good one, Luna,” Remus said, “We'll use that as a strategy to practice.”

“One huge problem,” Tracey said. “And I mean big. There are several species of dragons. You can't just base one strategy for all dragons.”

Remus smiled. “Your father-to-be already gave us that answer. Within the next couple of days – maybe tomorrow – the four dragons will arrive in the Clearing where Sirius coincidentally landed the Thunderbird. So he can go there, and bring some of us there. To see which dragons are being used.”

“The biggest and the baddest,” Tonks said, “The meanest. This is supposed to be entertainment after all.”
Hermione laid her head down on Harry's chest. “Nope. You're staying right here until Wednesday, Harry.”

“Loss of magic,” Harry reminded her.

“Stop making sense,” Hermione said, “That is my job.”

“I promise you, Hermione,” Remus said, “He'll be well-prepared. I will strap him into bed on Monday night if isn't. Any questions or further ideas?”

Hermione raised a hand. Remus nodded. “I've been meaning to ask you. Could you teach me how to cast a Patronus. Harry said you taught him.”

Tracey, Daphne, and Luna all nodded. Obviously Astoria knew she wasn't powerful enough for one.

“After the First Task,” Remus said, “I would be happy to attempt to teach those who wish to try. My time is dedicated to helping Harry right now. However... you may not be powerful enough right now. There are many who can't cast Patronuses in their entire lives. But I will teach you.”

“What about Animagi?” Hermione asked.

“That would take a lot more time than we have available with everything else going on,” Remus said. “Not just myself, but Lily and Sirius.”

“Oh,” Hermione said, disappointed.

“But I will keep your request open in the future when it could become possible with enough time. But once again, not everyone is capable.”

“If anyone is,” Harry said, “It is Hermione.”

“I believe so too,” Remus said, “Anything else?”

“Can I take this information to Gabrielle?” Rose asked. “To Fleur?”

“A good idea,” Lily said. “We'll go together.”

“Well, if Fleur is going to know,” Harry said, “It should be fair everyone knows. Neville and Angelina too.”

“That will be your job, Harry,” Remus said; Harry nodded, “No more suggestions or questions? One last thing and then the meeting is over. Please keep Harry's Animagus a secret until the first task. It would really help him surprise the judges and his competitors.”

It was mutually agreed by everyone. Then the meeting broke up. Lily and Rose left to go find Gabrielle and Fleur.

“I assume you're staying in this chair with Harry until Wednesday, Hermione?” Daphne asked, grinning.

“It will be difficult but I will manage,” Hermione said.
“Should I go find a supply of nappies?” Tracey joked.

“Very funny,” Hermione said, rolling her eyes.

Hermione's tent-mates and Tonks headed out of the tent.

“I am going to see if I brought my book on dragons,” Remus said. “Maybe in the Classroom Tent. If I leave you two alone for a few minutes, will you behave? And yes, I am aware I'm asking this when you're all over him, Hermione.”

Hermione blushed. “You're just trying to embarrass me, Remus. I am resolute!”

“I know,” Remus said, “And it will be fun to watch. Harry... have you told Hermione about the Marauders, and how you were raised by two, and the son of another?”

“Yes,” Harry said. “I told that story during one of our breakfast 'dates'.”

“Ah well,” Remus said, as he stood and headed over to the door. “He gave you fair warning then, Hermione.”

“Fair... warning?” Hermione asked, looking from Remus to Harry.

Remus grinned and laughed, then stepped out.

“Hmm,” Harry said, “Tracey's joke did give me an idea.”

Hermione frowned and looked at him. “What do you mean? I'm not going to wear --”

“Are you sure?” Harry asked, “Because it might help when I....”

And then he started tickling her around the waist. She cracked up laughing.

“Harry!” Hermione giggled, as she started wiggling against his fingers. “You're not... going to... ah! - - make--”

“I'm not?” Harry asked; as he continued tickling her.

“Ugh, you're incorrigible!” she squeaked as she jumped off of him.

“I win!” Harry said grinning, as he stood up.

“The only victory I want you to win right now is the First Task,” Hermione said.

“I will,” Harry said, “I feel really, really good about this now.”

“Do you?” Hermione asked.

“Definitely,” Harry said. “I outsmarted you, didn't I? A dragon has got to be a hell of a lot easier!”

Hermione glared playfully at him, then sighed. “Dinner is in an hour in the Great Hall. I need to go finish my essay.”
“We’re going to the Great Hall tonight?” Harry asked.

“You need to talk to the two Hogwarts Champions,” Hermione said. “You know. Fleur will know as soon as your mother and Rose explain it to her. Tonight. Equal preparation. Fairness. As you said.”

Harry nodded. “You know. I had planned on making this night all about you and your best friend. You rarely get those since I came into your life. Luna chasing anymore Flutterby?”

“No,” Hermione said. “And you'll be training all weekend with Remus. I can spend much of that time with Luna when I'm not watching you train. Tonight may be our last occasion to spend together before the Task.”

“Then I accept the change of plans,” Harry said.

They sealed it with a kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Finished. I ALMOST had Albus finding out (in secret) of Lily and Harry's Animagi, but decided against it. He'll be surprised along with every one else in Hogwarts. Remus will Harry's training behind a spell-creation or two of Lily's... basically a Ward, you'll see. So nobody will see a Shadow Panther training aside from those in the know.

So this chapter was basically an extension of the final two scenes of last Chapter to kick off the First Task/Dragon Arc in the story.

I apologize now, and in the future if I slaughter(ed) the French language.

Next Chapter: Lily and Rose talk to Gabrielle and Fleur about the First Task. Harry and Hermione speak to Neville (and Ginny), and Angelina. And then it is time to meet the Dragons. I am deciding whether I want to show too much training or not, because it could really spoil my plans for Harry's strategy in the First Task. I'll think on it.
Friday November 20th, 1994.

Lily Potter and her daughter, Rose, strode across the Hogwarts Grounds between the Ilvermorny Tents and the Beauxbatons camp. The Beauxbatons camp was similar to the Ilvermorny one, with several tents set up in a circle around the Beauxbatons carriage in the middle. Lily was reminded of stories of Covered Wagons – though the tents didn't resemble anything like Covered Wagons -- in the days of Settlers venturing along the Oregon Trail. The tents protecting the Carriage and its ginormous horses which were lounging in their makeshift stable.

Lily had been trying to keep her mind off of the news of Dragons, so she wouldn't scream, rage and cry in front of her children. She had rarely ever sworn in front of her children, even when they did things to deserve it. She knew how to rage, and she knew how to swear. The most recent time she had done so was making the Howler she had sent to Rita Skeeter about the hag's article outing Tracey to Great Britain. Thankfully Sirius had muffled her language from her children.

Now, Lily couldn't stop thinking about Dragons. Remus had been right. Neither she, Remus, Sirius, nor Harry had predicted something as mental as Dragons would be used. But Lily knew she shouldn't be so surprised. Dragons were a challenge, and the tasks were supposed to be challenging, and entertaining. It was obvious Remus was planning a weekend filled with training Harry for the First Task. Harry would likely spend little time with his girlfriend or friends during the training. Lily, of course, would volunteer to help too, as would Sirius. All three taught Harry almost everything he knew, both before and during his time at Ilvermorny.

Lily had a few ideas herself of suggestions for Harry's strategy in the First Task. Also she would be brewing some medical Potions in her Cauldrons as precaution. She knew Madam Pomfrey would be on hand to assist the Champions if they were injured, but Lily would also help as much as she could.

She just hoped Harry wouldn't need it.

As they arrived at the Beauxbatons camp, Lily followed Rose toward Gabrielle and Fleur's tent. Lily had been there a couple times, but Rose had been there every other day. The twelve-year old couple had been exchanging visits to each other's 'camp' every other day, spending three hours between classes and afternoons during weekends, and nearly all day when the visiting day fell on a weekend. One day, Ilvermorny, one day, Beauxbatons.

When her daughter was spending time with her girlfriend at the Beauxbatons Camp, Lily knew she needn't worry about watching the pair – Fleur had promised ages ago that she would be chaperone. Lily had argued a bit with her, saying she could do it so Fleur could focus on her classes and the Tournament. Fleur had just waved away her offer, saying it gave her an opportunity to know her sister's girlfriend.

Gabrielle and Fleur were sitting at their dining room table when Lily and Rose entered their tent. The tent was lavishly decorated – much more so than other tents, since Madame Maxime had deemed this 'The Champion's Tent'. When Gabrielle saw her girlfriend, she jumped up from the table, ran over to
her and the girls shared a hug and a very light peck on the lips. They were speaking in whispers, some of which was the French language that Rose had learned so far. Lily had told Rose not to mention 'dragons', until Lily could reveal it to Fleur. She knew some French – not as much as Sirius did – but she knew she needed to learn more if her daughter would be carrying on French conversations with her girlfriend.

“This eez a surprise, Madame Lily;” Fleur said; her English was still not as good as her sister's, “I zought dear Rose would be ‘ere later. A dinner date instead of afternoon visit.”

“I'm afraid I'm here for more of a reason to escort Rose to your tent, Fleur,” Lily said, sighing. “Lord Black – Sirius – he, by lucky chance, discovered what exact creature is being used in the First Task. My son knows, and he wants all three of his competitors on equal grounds in knowing what the creature is. So Rose and I are here to tell you. Harry will be telling the two Hogwarts Champions.”

Fleur's eyes went large. “And what am I to be to be face-to-face wiz zis Tuesday?

Lily inhaled and exhaled. “A dragon. Four of them. One of them for each Champion.”

Fleur and Gabrielle both gave French expletives. Lily wasn't surprised Fleur knew them. But Gabrielle...

She raised an eyebrow at Gabrielle. “I trust you have not been teaching those swearwords to my daughter, dear Gabby?”

“No, Madame Lily,” Gabrielle said, blushing pink. “I know you would not approve.”

“I would not,” Lily said, “Rose, those French words better not be in your vocabulary in the future.”

“Yes, Mom,” Rose said.

“Mon Dieu!” Fleur gasped in her native tongue. “Toutes mes excuses, Madame Lily, for mine and my dear sister's language. We were just surprised.”

“Understandably so,” Lily said, “As was I and my own two children. They were giving their own expletives when they heard the news.”

Gabrielle giggled when Rose went pink.

“I did not reprimand them,” Lily said, “and I dare not reprimand you.”

“Do you know which species of zees beasts ze Champions will be face-to-face wiz?” Fleur asked.

“I do not,” Lily said, “However, they will likely be in the Forbidden Forest either by tomorrow or Sunday evening. Sirius and Remus will be there to see which species have been brought, and I am betting my son will want to go with them. If you wish to go with them, I would stay with your sister and my daughter in either my tent or this one while you go.”

“I will speak to Madame Maxime about it,” Fleur said, “Mes plus profond mercies for revealing zis news to me.”

“Think nothing of it, Fleur,” Lily said. “I would not want you to have to go into a task against a creature so dangerous unprepared. I will go now back to my Tents. Would you be so kind to escort
my daughter back to my tent when her visit here is finished?

“Oui, Madame Lily,” Fleur said, “It will be my repayment for zis news.”

Lily bowed her head respectfully and turned to her daughter.

“Do I need to tell you to behave?” she asked Rose.

Rose and Gabrielle both shook their heads. Gabrielle had quickly come to see Lily as another mother over the past week or so.

“Then I will see you later,” Lily said, “Enjoy yourselves.”

She said farewell, and received another gracious ‘Merci’ and farewell from Fleur, before she left the tent and headed back to her own. She wilted and groaned when she saw Severus Snape walking slowly toward her. He had met her midway in between the Beauxbatons Camp and her own.

“I expected you to approach me one-on-one long before now, Severus,” Lily said.

“I was... unsure what to say,” Severus admitted.

“How about ‘hello, I'm glad you didn't die when your husband did, Lily,’?” Lily asked. “Or have you still refused to talk about James in my presence or in letters as you did a decade-and-a-half ago?”

“My deepest condolences on your loss, Lily,” Severus said. “And yes, I am very glad you, and your son, did not perish on the same night as him.”

“Surprising,” Lily said, “According to my son, you do not appear to like him very much. The few confrontations between himself and you have not been well-received.”

“I am only admitting this to you because I believe it is no revelation to you,” Severus said, “I look at your son and see the same teen who bullied me on these same Grounds and corridors many years ago. I do not need to tell you how much your son looks like your husband did at his age.”

“You gave as much as you received, Severus,” Lily said, “I believe I told you once that I kept expecting confrontations between the Marauders and you and your friends before they finished their education, and it just never happened. Until later on when they were in duels for their lives.”

Severus winced. “I do not like to think about those memories. They are almost as difficult to remember as –”

“-- as that day after our Defense OWL?” Lily asked.

“-- as the day I saw the complete destruction of your cottage in Godric's Hollow,” Severus continued, softly, “And felt my heart shatter. I have a new ‘Worst Memory’ these days, Lily. Even with you standing alive and whole before me, it still shakes me to my core to remember the day I started to live a life in a world without you in it.”

“Your heart,” Lily echoed; then cleared her throat. “I trust you saw my interview a couple weeks ago with Barnabas Cuffe?”

“I did,” Severus replied.
“Then you read the words I said about my heart,” Lily said, “And how there is no place in it since it is filled by my children and my late husband.”

“And Black and Lupin?” Severus asked.

“Friends, Severus,” Lily said, “No. Better. Brothers. I have never felt anything in the romantic sense for them. I have not fallen for anybody in the romantic sense since my husband died, and I cannot see a future where that will change. No, my feelings have not changed for you in time since you last saw me. I have only ever seen you as a friend, and that has not changed. I cannot return the feelings you have for me. Even in a world where James Potter no longer lives amongst us. I see his ghost every day.”

“His ghost?” Severus asked, his eyes wide, and searching; apparently he was looking for the ghost of his arch-enemy.

Lily rolled her eyes. “A metaphor, Severus. I wish it wasn't. It would make me feel better about his presence in my life. I have not stopped grieving for him, though it has lessened leagues more than it did in the weeks and months since his death. But I have never stopped loving him, and that will never change.

“I would be fine with friendship, Severus. Not like when we were children. Not like when we were teens. But friends. That is what I would like our relationship to be now. But I will never return the feelings you have for me. And if you cannot accept that, then I cannot accept a friendship. Nor can I accept one if you continue seeing my son as his father for very much longer. Because he is not. No, that's a lie. He is like his father. Not the bully. But the loyal, kind, and good man.”

“No a bully?” Severus asked, “After that outburst he showed –”

He winced and stopped when Lily glared at him.

“That was not bullying, Severus,” Lily said, “And I have done my best to tell him that in the days since the incident. He was protecting his friends, and their future. He wanted to stop every bad thing from happening to them, and he did so by taking an action. That is how my son is like his father, Severus. James is dead, because he sacrificed himself for me. He stayed in a house, knowing it would explode, and he told me to take my son and leave. He stayed behind in an exploding house, so he could attempt to end the life of the monster who was hunting the two people he loved more in life than anybody else, including those he calls brothers.”

Severus frowned, and for the first time ever, Lily caught emotion on the man's face when it came to the subject of James Potter. An emotion that was not anger, fury, or hate. Emotion deserving for a man who protected the woman Severus loved.

“Your husband did not succeed, Lily,” Severus said. “Voldemort is not dead.”

“We know this,” Lily said. “Hermione told us about the Philosopher's Stone and Chamber of Secrets incidents. We're expecting him to come back sooner or later.”

“Soon, Lily,” Severus said, then clutched the arm Lily knew had the Dark Mark, “Every day I feel a heat I have not felt since before the day your husband only half-succeeded. He will return within a year. I fear he is currently attempting to find a way back to a real body.”
“Have you been in contact with him?” Lily asked.

“No,” Severus said, “And when he does contact me, I will only work with him, so he does not know I have betrayed him and only wish his death, so he cannot finish the job he attempted on that Halloween night.”

“I believe you,” Lily said, “Thank you.”

“Lily,” Severus said. “Albus has a secret involving you and your son. I cannot tell it. But it involves him.”

Lily translated Severus' words: Voldemort. Not Dumbledore.

Lily sighed. “And he has not come to my yet, why?”

“Because he is trying to gain the trust of you and your son,” Severus said. “Do you really think Nymphadora Tonks would be here otherwise if Albus wasn't trying to give you and your son everything you want so he can earn your trust?”

Severus was trying to tell her something but he was also trying to keep secrets.

“My husband's Invisibility Cloak?” Lily asked.

“Would have been with Neville Longbottom to this very day had Albus not needed you and Harry,” Severus said.

“Both Harry and I?” Lily asked. “Or Harry?”

“Harry cannot remain in Great Britain without you, can he?” Severus asked.

Albus wanted Harry to return to Great Britain. Permanently. Or at least until something happened. Not good. Not good at all.

“So you've become his spy instead of Voldemort's?” Lily guessed.

“Only until the bastard is dead,” Severus said.

Lily raised an eyebrow. “Which one?”

Severus did not answer.

“Did he ask you to come speak to me?” Lily asked.

Severus did not answer.

“Thank you, Severus,” Lily said. “I think I will let him give me and Harry a few more gifts before we speak to him.”

“Please give your son my good wishes for his coming Tasks,” Severus said.

Lily nodded. Severus gazed at her for another moment, before he turned and started heading back to the castle. Lily sighed, and headed back to her tent without another glance at Severus. Sirius and
Amelia were back and were at the dining table with Remus when she returned to the House Potter tent. Harry wasn't there.

“Harry?” Lily asked.

“Homework finished,” Remus said, “In Hermione's Tent until the two go to the Great Hall for dinner, where he'll tell the two Hogwarts Champions. Rose?”

“Staying for dinner with Gabby and Fleur,” Lily said. “Fleur knows. Much French swearing was heard. From Fleur and Gabrielle. Rose either knows none of those words, or doesn't want me to know.”

Sirius snickered. Amelia and Remus grinned.

“I have something more important to tell you than that though,” Lily said.

“Is this about Severus meeting you on the Grounds?” Remus asked. “Sirius and Amelia just told me. They saw you while coming back here in their Animagi forms.”

Lily sighed, and glared playfully at Sirius and Amelia.

“What was so important Gryffindor Snape had to say to you,” Sirius said, “that you didn't notice two dogs running across the Grounds?”

Remus and Amelia's lips twitched. Sirius had told Lily and Remus about the “Gryffindor Snape” story, and Amelia had apparently heard it too.

“I have so many things to tell you,” Lily said, "You're going to want to stick around Amelia.”

Lily sat down at the table, and began to tell her three friends everything.

Hogwarts – Headmaster's Office – Fifteen minutes later

“I trust you gave Lily my message?”

“Yes.”

“And?”

“She says she is going to wait until you shower her and her son with more gifts before she meets with you.”

“I interrupted Sirius Black and Amelia Bones' romp in the Forbidden Forest so I could give Lily's son a another gift! How many do I have to give them?”

“Many, likely. And kindly refrain from speaking to me about Black's love-life.”

“Did you at least tell her Voldemort is returning soon?”

“Yes.”
“And?”

“I told her I wanted the bastard dead. She said nothing. I think she already knew.”

“And she hasn't come to me even then?”

“Is that rhetorical?”

“Thank you, Severus.”

“Fuck you, Dumbledore. You went too far with this request. Getting tortured by Voldemort I can handle. My heart tortured by Lily, I cannot. Never ask me to speak to Lily or her friends again without my permission. When I want to speak to Lily again, it is my choice.”

“So the discussion went well?”

“Go fuck yourself, Dumbledore. With the Elder Wand.”


These things were quite common in the Headmaster's Office as of late.

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*The House Potter Tent – After Lily finished revealing her news*

“Merde!” Sirius swore.

“Now I know who to blame if Rose starts swearing in French,” Lily said. “And it isn't two French Veela.”

The conversation involving Lily's discussion with Severus had gone... well. The middle of it was cut off by Amelia's shock that Voldemort was not dead. Then a conversation about the Philosopher's Stone. Amelia knew about the Chamber of Secrets. She had been the one to arrest Lucius Malfoy. She didn't know about Voldemort being on the back of Quirrel's head, or attempting to get the Philosopher's Stone Dumbledore had hidden it at Hogwarts. Amelia swore about Dumbledore and risking the lives of students including her niece, Susan.

Then the conversation about Severus resumed.

“I cannot believe Snape revealed all of that to you,” Sirius said. “Was it to get into your knickers?”

Lily glared at Sirius, none too playfully. “No. I believe Albus ordered him to do it. I don't think he planned our reunion to be in the middle of the Grounds on my way back from the Beauxbatons camp. Albus has something to tell me and Harry. And it has something to do about Voldemort. And whatever it is, Albus is trying to keep Harry in Great Britain.”

“Albus was the one who asked you and James to move from Potter Manor to Potter Cottage with Harry,” Remus said. “Right?”

“Potter Cottage was James' wedding gift to me,” Lily said. “In case I got tired of living in a Manor. Mostly it was going to be a summer home away from the Manor. Hardly anyone knew about it. We
had not moved into it before Albus suggested we move to a safe-house. James offered Potter Cottage.”

“Because you were targeted by Voldemort?” Amelia asked.

“He gave the same message to Frank and Alice Longbottom,” Lily said.

“That sounds pretty specific,” Amelia said. “He never told you why he believed you were targets?”

Lily shook her head.

“Well, it appears he wants to now,” Amelia said. “And it involves your son. And... I think... Neville Longbottom.”

“Neville Longbottom?” Sirius asked.

“Harry isn't the only boy Albus has some strange interest in,” Amelia said. He's kept a really strange close relationship with Neville over the years.”

“I suppose we'll know when we found out what it is,” Remus said. “When?”

“When Albus least expects it so we can surprise him and maybe shock information out of him,” Lily said.

“By finding more information to tell him that he doesn't think we know,” Sirius said, nodding. “Clever.”

“I thought so too,” Lily said.

“So Dumbledore wants Harry to stay in Great Britain?” Sirius asked. “Can I just hope this is some strange desire to have Lord Potter attend Hogwarts for his last three years of his education?”

“Probably not,” Lily said.

“Merde,” Sirius swore again.

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**Hogwarts – The Great Hall**

Harry was sitting at the Ravenclaw table with Hermione, Luna, Padma, Tonks, Tracey, and the Greengrass sisters – all but Padma allowed, now that they had permission, to sit at any table they wanted-- eating dinner and watching the two Hogwarts Champions to see which one would leave the Great Hall first so he could talk to them.

Aside from Padma, this grouping of teens, and twenty year old Tonks – and occasionally Rose and Gabrielle – were a common sight in the Great Hall during some meals, especially dinner. However, they occasionally sat at Gryffindor – to eat with Parvati – or Hufflepuff – with Susan and Hannah – so get to know the members of the Great Alliance better. Especially Susan, since Sirius was dating her Aunt.

The first dinner they had sat at the Gryffindor Table had been interesting. Ron Weasley had complained – loudly – about three 'Snakes' at the table. Daphne had showed him her tie, revealing
she was no longer a Slytherin. When Ron said “Once a Snake, always a Snake”, Tonks had turned her eyes completely red and glared at him. Ron upended his goblet of pumpkin juice and fell backwards off the his seat in fear – to much laughter from those who saw the scene. Then McGonagall had come along and had taken fifty points away from Gryffindor and had given him a week of detentions. He had been avoiding the former Slytherins and Tonks ever since then.

“So what are you doing this weekend, Harry?” Padma asked.

“Training for the First Task,” Harry said, “I found out what I'm facing, and no, I'm not telling you what it is. Word would get around, and the judges – aside from my mother, who already knows – would know I know and I'd probably get in trouble. Fleur knows, and I'm also telling the two other Champions soon.

“Hopefully Longbottom can keep his mouth shut,” Tracey said.

“A braggart?” Harry asked.

“Hmm... I suppose not,” Tracey said. “If he tells his Betrothed, she might tell people though.

“Like her twin brothers,” Padma said, “who would parade it around.”

“Or her mother,” Hermione said, “who would send a Howler to Dumbledore, in the middle of the Great Hall, about endangering her future son-in-law --”

“Even though they are Allies?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” came several voices amongst the group of friends.

“and then everyone would know,” Hermione finished.

“What is the chance of letting Neville know, and not his Betrothed?” Harry asked.

“They have sticking charms linked to each other's elbow,” Daphne said.

“More like love hand-cuffs,” Luna said. “Furry purple ones.”

“Kinky,” Tonks quipped.

“So no chance,” Harry said. “Well, I could just threaten his Betrothed into silence --”

“No,” Hermione, Daphne and Tracey said.

“-- or I could not tell Neville --” Harry continued.

“No!” Hermione said.

“-- or I could tell Ginny to scram,” Harry said. “Tonks... want to scare another Weasley?”

“Ginny doesn't seem a coward like her brother, my Lord,” Tonks said.

She had called him “My Lord” often as a joke. He couldn't get her to stop. And when he tried to call her by her first name as revenge, she gave him the same red eyes she gave Ron Weasley.
wasn't a coward like Weasley. But he stopped anyway.

“Tell her to scram,” Daphne said. “And if she argues, tell her that Neville is going to be learning what he is facing in the Task. If she doesn't leave, he won't know... and it will probably kill him. And if she tells him to tell her... he could get in trouble for knowing the task information early.”

“That will work,” Harry said. “Thanks.”

Daphne smiled. Angelina Johnson and her the two girls she hung around with stood and started walking out. Harry stood up, said he'd be back and hurried after them.

“Angelina!” Harry yelled, as soon as he entered the Entrance Hall.

Angelina and her friends were at the bottom of the stairs leading toward the Staircase.

“I need to talk to you,” Harry said, “In private.”

“Go on, girls,” Angelina said.

Katie and Alicia smiled at Harry, then turned and headed up the stairs.

“Finally come to ask me to be your Lady Potter?” Angelina asked, approaching Harry.

“Sorry, my dear,” Harry said. “But no. I've come to tell you what we're facing in the first task. Dragons. Four are on their way here with handlers, I assume.”

Angelina cursed under her breath.

“Common response,” Harry said.

“Do you know what types?” Angelina asked.

“No,” Harry said, “But if you want to know, they'll likely be in the Forbidden Forest come tomorrow night or Sunday.”

“Why are you telling me?” Angelina asked.

“I found out by luck,” Harry said. “My mother knows, and she is likely one of two Judges – her and Maxime – won't be upset we know – and told Fleur earlier. I will be telling Neville by the end of the night. Equal chance. Equal preparation time.”

“Thanks, Potter,” Angelina said. “Got a date for the Ball?”

“Yes,” Harry said.

“Damn,” Angelina said, snapping fingers. “Save a dance if you can. As thanks.”

“If I can,” Harry said. “I might have a line-up. I got a lot of girls, and most of them are just friends.”

“Most – so... the brunette Ravenclaw?” Angelina asked.

“Yes,” Harry said.

“You too,” Harry said.

Angelina nodded once, turned and headed up the stairs. Harry returned to the Great Hall. He kissed Hermione’s cheek when he sat back down with her.

“What was that for?” Hermione asked.

“For not even thinking about coming with me, and trusting me to be alone with another attractive girl,” Harry said.

Hermione smiled prettily.

“She wants a dance at Ball for this, though,” Harry said.

Hermione raised her eyebrows. “What did you say?”

“I told her I might be busy all night,” Harry said.

Several snickers from girls were heard.

“That was not innuendo!” Harry said, “I told her I was thinking of dancing once with many of you, and that was why.”

A few girls blushed.

“Do you know how to dance?” Daphne asked.

“I should,” Harry said, “After all the hours I spent in lessons with Rose taught by Mom.”

“Are there pictures?” Hermione asked.

“Not telling,” Harry said.

“Definitely pictures,” Daphne said.

Harry scowled, and thanked the stars the photo albums were at home in Boston.

Neville – nor Ginny – had not left by the time Harry, Hermione and the girls were finished. So Harry and Hermione stayed behind, sitting on the steps going toward the Staircase so they could catch Neville. They talked while they waited.

“I am surprised you have not been more upset about me not telling you about Shadow before today,” Harry said.

“I suppose I was preoccupied,” Hermione said, “by the voice screaming in my head 'Harry is crunchy and tastes good with ketchup'!”

Harry laughed out loud.
Hermione grinned. “I do understand it was a Family Secret, Harry. And yes, I do know the difference between Family and House Secrets, and that while I am a member of your House, I am still a good distance – and a lot of consideration between us both – from being thought of as a member of your family. While I am upset, because you've been telling me so much, I do understand. If – and that is a moderately large 'if' – we do get married, there better be no more secrets.”

“If we get married, you'll likely know most, if not all, of my secrets by then,” Harry said.

Hermione smiled. “Harry? I have been wanting to ask a question, but it seems like an odd topic. Rebecca, your... 'and-a-half' girlfriend. Do you still consider her that?”

“I don't know,” Harry said. “I've only been with her when I've been single. But now that I have a third wife on the horizon – and possibly second, if you do not take it – to search for.”

“She's a candidate?” Hermione asked.

“One of many,” Harry said, “Yes, I have been judging girls I know on their chances of candidacy. You rank slightly lower than Daphne and Tracey, only because they're pretty much a sure thing, though Tracey is a 'and-a-half wife'.”

Hermione laughed. “I like that. I am okay to be third on the list. Where does Rebecca think you are?”

“I told her there was a chance I'd be in Britain for a while for a school event,” Harry said.

“Does she know anything about your schooling – that she can know?” Hermione asked.

“I go to a boarding school she has no chance of attending – and boy, did she get angry when I couldn't tell her why,” Harry said. “And that I am gone for most of the year.”

“Do you ever contact her when you're not near her?” Hermione asked.

“Sometimes,” Harry said.

“But not since you've been here?” Hermione asked.

“I haven't had an opportunity to be near a phone which can reach across the ocean,” Harry said.

Hermione nodded. “Will you?”

“Maybe for Christmas holiday,” Harry said, “And I will likely tell her about you, though don't ask me to predict her action. She's unpredictable. Especially since she's an 'and-a-half girlfriend'.”

Hermione raised an eyebrow. “So she is still --”

“My best friend since I was a kid who I am attracted to,” Harry interrupted. “And on the list.”

Hermione nodded. “Got it. How big of a list?”

Harry's attempt to answer was cut off when he saw Neville and Ginny walking out of the Hall. Harry and Hermione stood up.
“Pot – Lord Potter,” Neville said, “Greetings.”

“Hello, Neville, Miss Weasley,” Harry said, “Any chance we can speak, Neville, without Miss Weasley present?”

Ginny glared at him. Neville squeezed her hand and she stopped.

“What for?” Neville asked.

“I found out what we're facing in the First Task,” Harry said.

“So tell us,” Ginny said.

Harry sighed. “I am going to tell Neville, Miss Weasley.”

“Why not me?” Ginny asked.

“Because if you tell anyone,” Harry said, “Neville and I could get in trouble from those judges who don't like us finding out what we're facing, when we're supposed to go on facing the unknown. So... either you go away, and also don't think of asking Neville what the creature is... or you will be responsible for your Betrothed not knowing, and possibly getting killed because of it. And definitely placing fourth in the points because three other Champions were more prepared.”

“Your girlfriend knows, doesn't she?” Ginny asked.

“I trust her,” Harry said. “I don't know you, and your repeating attempts to stay here tell me I shouldn't.”

Ginny sighed, kissed Neville on the cheek, and walked alone up the steps.

“Please don't try to eavesdrop, Ginny,” Neville said.

Harry heard an agitated grunt and loud footsteps going up stairs.

“I hope this is good,” Neville said. “Because it is going to get me lectured at by a girl who knows how to lecture.”

“Dragons,” Harry said.

“That will do it,” Neville said. “Please tell me this isn't a joke.”

“Why would I joke with you?” Harry asked.

“Sabotage?” Neville asked.

“You think I'm trying to sabotage you?” Harry asked. “Is that why you turned down my mother's offer to help you.”

Neville frowned. “I suspected Sirius Black of putting my name in the Goblet.”

“Why?” Harry said, through his teeth; narrowing his eyes.
“Dumbledore said whoever did it put Durmstrang on a slip of parchment – my name was in my handwriting,” Neville said. “During the meeting after we were chosen --”

“Sirius mentioned that strategy,” Harry said. “Neville – my Godfather did not put your name in the Goblet. He is a master strategist. He knows things you won't ever think of in your whole lifetime.”

Neville nodded. “Sorry. I was being paranoid.”

“Apology accepted,” Harry said. “Fleur and Angelina know about the Dragons. Four of them. One for each Champion. No idea which species. But if you want to know, they'll likely be in the Forbidden Forest come tomorrow night or Sunday.”

Neville gulped. “Great.”

“I suppose I could tell you the species when I find out,” Harry said. “For a price.”

“Name it,” Neville said.

“I want to meet with you, and Ginny's twin brothers,” Harry said. “Ginny can come if she wants. Hermione and Luna told me about the Philosopher's Stone and Chamber of Secrets events. I told my mother and Honorary Uncles. We want first-hand stories.”

Neville thought for a moment, and nodded. “I'll speak to the Weasley twins about it.”

“Then I'll find you when I know the species, and we can work out a meeting time.” Harry said; he offered his hand, “Technically I suppose I'm your God-brother. But I hear you have plenty of those. So I offer friendship.”

They shook hands. Neville thanked Harry and walked up the steps. Hermione was standing by the steps during the conversation. Now she walked over to Harry and kissed him on the cheek.

“I have been trying to figure which House you'd be in at Hogwarts ever since you denied the Hat the opportunity to tell you,” Hermione said. “That was a very Slytherin move making a deal with him. Did you make that deal with Angelina? Is that why you may dance with her?”

“No, she made me that offer,” Harry said. “She has nothing I want, except possibly friendship. Neville has information. All four Houses, like you. That's what the Hat would tell me.”

Hermione nodded. “I believe so too. Good to know.”

“Good to know?” Harry asked.

“Because like you are recruiting me to Ilvermorny,” Hermione said, “I am trying to find out whether you could attend here.”


“Ah, it was a selfish thought, anyway,” Hermione said. “I am doubting my parents would ever let me go. Even with a recruitment meeting, and better education.”

“Never say never,” Harry said, smiling.
“You just did,” Hermione said.

“Substandard education deserves such an answer,” Harry said.

Hermione nodded. She took his hand, and they headed back onto the Grounds of Hogwarts.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished! I know! No Dragons! Severus Snape walked into my chapter, and changed my plans!

I absolutely loved everything to do with the Severus and Lily, and Severus and Albus discussions. That was so enjoyable to write. I was so nervous about Severus and Lily's discussion, and it was just perfect to me! I know everyone was looking forward to it. I hope you enjoyed it.

People asked about Rebecca. There's my current plans for her. A phone call during Christmas Break.

New favorite quote in story: “I suppose I was preoccupied by the voice screaming in my head 'Harry is crunchy and tastes good with ketchup'!” – Hermione Granger

Next Chapter: Dragons! But probably not the First Task yet. Also, Neville, Fred and George (and possibly Ginny) speak to Harry and Co. And Fred and George meet the Marauders!
Saturday, November 21st, 1994

Saturday afternoon, Harry, Remus, Lily, Sirius and Hermione were standing in the large open area of the Grounds behind the the Ilvermorny tents. They were currently under what Lily had coined a “Notice-Me-Not Dome” Ward. The Ward was a literal, invisible dome that was absolutely perfect for what they were doing. It was constructed with a very complicated rune array set in a circle. However big the circle was, the dome would be that big, and the height varied in size. They were completely invisible inside the dome, but they could see outside it, so they would know if anyone came near them. They also couldn't be heard outside the dome, but could hear all outside it. Magic spells curses, et cetera, bounced harmlessly off the sides of the dome, but didn't leave the dome.

Remus, Sirius, and Lily had been working with Harry for about five hours now. Hermione had been there for the past two hours, behind a protective ward inside the dome so she wouldn't be harmed by spells. She had spent the rest of the day – aside from breakfast – with Luna, as had been planned. Rose was spending the day with Gabrielle at the Beauxbatons tent. After promising Fleur to not give away any of her preparation secrets, Rose was allowed to watch with Gabrielle. Mostly she only did it, so Fleur could be her and Gabrielle's chaperone, since her mother and Uncles were busy.

“Well,” Harry said, panting, as he returned to human form after his latest shadow-jumping practices. “At least we know the 'Lumos Solem' trick works. There were plenty of shadows, and the sky is pretty cloudy.”

“Shadow Jumping can be done with magic-made shadows,” Remus said, nodding, “Very good to know. Interesting that we've never tried that before today. Next on the agenda is the Freezing Charm, Harry. I believe you know how to cast it?”

“Glacius,” Harry said, nodding. “But... I can't use my wand in my Animagus form.”

“You won't always be Shadow during the Task, Harry,” Sirius said. “You might not be able to carry whatever you're retrieving in your mouth.”

“So... when I get to the object,” Harry said, “I will not be able to Shadow Jump away from the Dragon.”

“You could,” Lily said. “We know you can only bring your wand. But you could transfigure a sling or something to carry it in, and hold the sling in your mouth. We can practice that with rocks, and sticks. And you can try to carry it in your mouth, while carrying something. Maybe a small boulder.
You can see if you can carry objects like that while Shadow Jumping.”

Harry nodded.

“We’ll do the Transfiguration stuff tomorrow since there are other things I’d like you to try to transfigure too,” Lily said.

“Anyway,” Remus said, “The Freezing Charm will hurt any dragon. So a powerful one should give you enough time to make your escape out of the arena. If you can’t hold the object in your Shadow form that is.”

Lily grabbed a large branch, resembling a staff, from the ground near her – she had taken it from the forest’s edge – and moved to the center of the dome, then pushed it into the ground, making it stand up on its own.

“Test your Freezing Charms on that until it shatters,” Lily said. “That should be enough to damage a dragon enough to give you enough time to get away from it.”

Harry nodded. Suddenly Remus shuddered visibly, and turned around to the forest.

“Moony?” Sirius asked, “Something wrong?”

Remus regained his senses and turned back to the others. “The Dragons have arrived. I just heard a growling sound that could only be them. Very low from here, but I imagine they’re loud when we get close.”

Harry, Hermione and the three adults exchanged glances.

“And we can’t hear it,” Harry said, “Unless we’re close, because of sound muffling charms?”

“Which won’t exactly work on me,” Remus said, nodding. “Those kind of charms are common in dragon reserves, so of course they’d be used here.”

“Okay,” Sirius said, “I suggest we wait until this evening between dinner and bedtime to go and see which species there are. Remus and I will go with Harry, Lily. Yes, Harry needs to go to see them for himself. From what you and Harry said, two of the other three Champions will see the Dragons for themselves.”

“And it gives Harry another advantage,” Lily said, “I know. We need to figure an exact time. So I can go tell Fleur and she can go with you, and I can watch Rose and Gabby.”

“And I can find Angelina and offer she come with us,” Harry said, “Neville won’t come. He’s scared of either the Forest, the Dragons, or both.”

“Eight-o-clock,” Sirius said. “I imagine there are several handlers in the forest with the Dragons, and the dark of night will hide us from them. We’ll use charms to hide our scents from the Dragons.”

Harry nodded. Lily had told him about a scent-hiding charm he could use for the task. It worked for another strategy she said she was cooking up, but hadn’t revealed.

“Eight-o-clock, it is then,” Lily said. “Practice the Freezing Charm, and then we’re finished. Then I’ll go to Fleur, and you can find Angelina.”
Harry nodded. He inhaled and exhaled, then pointed his wand at the branch, and cast the Freezing Charm.

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**The Forbidden Forest**

At eight-o-clock that evening, Harry, Sirius, Remus, Fleur Delacour, and Angelina Johnson were standing at the edge of the Forbidden Forest. Sirius promised them that it was a straight ten-minute trip by foot to the clearing where the Dragons were.

“I don't think I need to tell any of you that we need to be careful tonight,” Remus said. “Not only near the clearing, but during the entire time we're inside the forest. Mademoiselle Delacour, perhaps you can answer a curiosity of mine. I may be a Professor who is an expert in subjects as Veela, but I don't know everything. Can Veela such as yourself guard oneself against sense of smell? Can you mask your scent?”

“Non,” Fleur said, “But scent-masking charms will work. I assume that is what you're doing.”

“Yes,” Remus said. “Harry knows the scent-masking charm, do the two of you?”

Fleur nodded. Angelina shook her head. Remus taught her the Charm, and the wand movements. Then all five of them cast the charm on themselves. The wand movement resembled spraying oneself with bug spray.

“We will use this once again when we get near the clearing, just in case,” Remus said. “Let's get going.”

Eight minutes after they entered the Forbidden Forest, Sirius said that he could hear men talking in loud voices. Remus' nod told Harry he could too, but didn't want to reveal he was a werewolf to Angelina and Fleur. Harry's enhanced hearing due to his Animagus from wasn't as good as Sirius' hearing was. However, a minute later, he now could hear indistinct voices, though he couldn't always make out what they were saying.

“I 'ear zem now,” Fleur said.

Harry raised his eyebrows. So he had as good hearing as a Veela. That was good.

“Let's stop for a moment,” Remus said.

“Yeah,” Sirius said. “I think I can make out Albus Dumbledore's voice.”

“The Headmaster!” Angelina whispered. “Should we turn back?”

“No,” Remus said. “We are close, and this would have been for nothing if we don't see those dragons. I trust Disillusionment Charms work on you, Mademoiselle Delacour?”

Fleur nodded. Remus cast modified Disillusionment Charms, which would allow those under the Charm to see others under the same Charm. He explained the modification to Fleur and Angelina, who were amazed at it.

“Scent-Masking Charms again, please,” Remus said.
Harry cast the Charm on himself again. As they resumed their walk, Harry wondered if his present status – disillusioned and scent-masked – would work as a back-up plan in the task.

Soon, they came upon the clearing. Flame-lit torches stood around the clearing, lighting up the whole space in the dark. As Harry got a better view through the space of trees on the edge of the clearing Harry saw what he came here to see.

Four fully grown, enormous, vicious-looking dragons were rearing onto their hind legs inside an enclosure fenced with thick planks of wood, roaring and snorting — torrents of fire were shooting into the dark sky from their open, fanged mouths, fifty feet above the ground on their outstretched necks. There was a silvery-blue one with long, pointed horns, snapping and snarling at the wizards on the ground; a smooth-scaled green one, which was writhing and stamping with all its might; a red one with an odd fringe of fine gold spikes around its face, which was shooting mushroom-shaped fire clouds into the air; and a gigantic black one, more lizard-like than the others, which was nearest to them.

At least thirty wizards, seven or eight to each dragon, were attempting to control them, pulling on the chains connected to heavy leather straps around their necks and legs. Mesmerized, Harry looked up, high above him, and saw the eyes of the black dragon, with vertical pupils like a cat’s, bulging with either fear or rage, he couldn’t tell which... It was making a horrible noise, a yowling, screeching scream...

“Swedish Snort-Snout,” Remus whispered, and pointed at each dragon in turn, “Chinese Fireball, Common Welsh Green. And... and a Hungarian Horntail.”

“Wow,” Angelina whispered, “Those are... big.”

Harry nodded. Suddenly, he heard Albus Dumbledore talking to a handler that was not working amongst the dragons. He could hear their voices due to his enhanced hearing.

“Good evening, young Mr. Weasley,” Dumbledore said, “I wondered if I might be seeing you tonight.”

“Headmaster, you can call me Charlie,” Charlie Weasley – obviously an older brother of the Weasleys attending Hogwarts – said, “I am no longer your student.”

“Then I ask that you call me Albus,” Dumbledore said.

“I volunteered for this for selfish reasons, I admit.” Charlie said, “My youngest four siblings are here, of course. And my god-brother slash sister’s Betrothed is a Champion. So I will definitely be watching Neville in the First Task.”

“It’s no good!” yelled another wizard. “Stunning Spells, on the count of three!”

Harry saw each of the dragon keepers pull out his wand. “Stupefy!” they shouted in unison, and the Stunning Spells shot into the darkness like fiery rockets, bursting in showers of stars on the dragons’ scaly hides —

Harry watched the dragon nearest to them teeter dangerously on its back legs; its jaws stretched wide in a silent howl; its nostrils were suddenly devoid of flame, though still smoking — then, very slowly, it fell. Several tons of sinewy, scaly-black dragon hit the ground with a thud that Harry could
have sworn made the trees behind him quake.

The dragon keepers lowered their wands and walked forward to their fallen charges, each of which was the size of a small hill. They hurried to tighten the chains and fasten them securely to iron pegs, which they forced deep into the ground with their wands.

Dumbledore and Charlie's conversation – which had paused during the action, as Charlie went into help – now started again when he returned to the Headmaster.

“Sorry, Albus, for that,” Charlie said.

“You're doing your job,” Dumbledore said. “And an impressive job, it is. I can see why your mother worries about you.”

Charlie laughed. “She'd worry about anything I do that doesn't involve an office and paperwork in the British Ministry of Magic. Did I say worry? I meant 'complain'.”

Harry could hear Dumbledore's low chuckles.

“They should be okay now,” Charlie, “we put them out with a Sleeping Draught on the way here, thought it might be better for them to wake up in the dark and the quiet — but, like you saw, they weren’t happy, not happy at all — they've been waking up some all day, but a few Stunners tend to calm them down again.”

"So that is why I detected sound-muffling charms coming in?" Albus asked.

"Aye," Charlie said. "Don't need the Champions hearing the growls, or other students hearing it and telling the Champions. Task is supposed to be facing the unknown. Though why against Dragons being the unknown, I do not get. It is mad!"

“What breeds are these, Charlie?” Dumbledore asked. “I'm afraid dragons were never one of my areas of expertise.”

“Really?” Charlie asked. “I know you're an expert when it comes to using their blood?”

“Their blood, Mr. Weasley,” Dumbledore said, “Not their species. Dragon blood is dragon blood no matter which species bleeds.”

“This is a Hungarian Horntail,” said Charlie, pointing to the one near him and Dumbledore, “There’s a Common Welsh Green over there, the smaller one — a Swedish Short-Snout, that blue-gray — and a Chinese Fireball, that’s the red. Could you tell me why we had to bring nesting mothers?”

“I'm afraid not,” Dumbledore said.

Remus gasped. “Of course! Nesting mothers! I should have known!”

Harry focused back on Dumbledore and Charlie's conversation.

“How is my sister's Betrothed, by the way?” Charlie asked.

“He's well enough,” Albus said.
“Just hope he’s still well after he’s faced this lot,” said Charlie grimly, looking out over the dragons’ enclosure. “I didn’t dare tell Mum what he’s got to do for the first task; she’s already having kittens about him…” Charlie imitated his mother’s anxious voice. “‘How could they let him enter that tournament, he’s much too young! I thought they were all safe, I thought there was going to be an age limit!’”

“Yes, I remember the Howler she sent me,” Dumbledore said.

Charlie laughed. “How many do you predict you’ll receive before Tournament’s end from her alone?”

“However many I deserve, I assume,” Dumbledore said.

“You find out who put his name in the Goblet of Fire yet?” Charlie asked, “Heard that from Mum too.”

“No,” Dumbledore said. “I’m still looking. I feel I am missing something. Something I am overlooking. Some piece of information unavailable to even me.”

“Come on,” Remus said. “Let's get back before Lily, Rose, and Gabrielle start to worry.”

Harry took one more look back at the Dragons, and turned and followed Sirius, Angelina and Fleur, as Remus tailed behind.

“Which one do you want to face, ladies?” Harry asked.

“Anything but that bloody Horntail,” Angelina muttered.

“Oui!” Fleur exclaimed in agreement. “I do not dare answer no more zan zat. I do not want to... 'ow you say?... jinx myself?”

“Yeah,” Harry said, nodding. “I agree. No jinxing myself.”

“At least we know which dragons to prepare for,” Remus said. “That makes it easier.”

“Not really, in my case,” Angelina said. “My strategy is the same for any dragon. Those beasts included. Harry? Do you want me to tell Neville, or will you do it?”

“I'll do it tomorrow at breakfast,” Harry said; which meant breakfast, for once, would be in the Great Hall with Hermione. “I promised him I would. He's giving me something in return – sorry, cannot say what.”

“Alright,” Angelina said. “Probably better you do it. I've been getting some comments from some fellow house-mates saying I shouldn't help Neville so much if I want to win.”

“That sounds rather selfish,” Harry said.

“It probably is,” Angelina said. “Harry? Thank you for not being selfish. This helps me a lot. To know what I'm facing. And I wouldn't have wanted to walk out here alone. So thank you for inviting me.”

“No problem,” Harry said. “Equal chances.”

“Except for Neville,” Angelina said.

“That's his fault,” Harry said. “At least he knows what he is facing, and he'll know the species.”

“True,” Angelina said, nodding, “So... er. Mr. Lupin?”

“Remus, please,” Remus said.

“Remus,” Angelina said, “You said something about nesting mothers?”

“We know you have to retrieve something during the task,” Remus said, “They'll be guarding eggs. The item you're retrieving must be something egg-shaped.”

“Stealing an egg from a mother dragon,” Angelina said, “That's... that's just fantastic.”

“Fantastic?” Fleur echoed.

“Sarcasm,” Angelina supplied.

“Ooh, 'ard to tell in English dialogue for zose who aren't used to eet,” Fleur said.

“Even worse,” Sirius said, “I fear there will be real eggs to in the nests, in addition to the fake one.”

“Mon Dieu!” Fleur said, “Insanité!”

“Agrred,” Sirius said, “Which means it will be hard to get the dragon away from the nest.”

Harry gulped. The First Task just became much more difficult.

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**Sunday, November 22nd, 1994**

Harry was currently standing outside the House Potter tent with Hermione and Luna, as they waited for Neville, Ginny Weasley, and her two brothers, Fred and George. Inside the tent, Lily, Sirius, Remus were preparing for the visit. Rose was once again with Gabrielle at the Beauxbatons Tent.

It was ten minutes to eleven on Sunday morning, and the meeting with the four Gryffindors would be at eleven, if they kept the expected meeting time. And Neville kept his promise. Earlier that morning before breakfast, Harry had told Neville about the species of Dragons. Neville also said he hadn't talked to Ginny about Dragons at all, even after she begged him, and threatened to stop kissing him for a week. The kiss Harry saw between the couple told him she hadn't gone through with her threat. After breakfast, Neville told him that he'd meet Harry and his family at the tents with Ginny, Fred and George at eleven.

“So are you planning on sitting on Harry's lap like you did on Friday, Hermione?” Luna asked.

“I'd rather not show such a public display of affection around four people I hardly know, Luna,” Hermione said.
“Oh,” Luna said, “I thought you might have wanted to attempt another shot at keeping him away from the First Task, after he told us about the Dragons this morning.”

“Now that I've seen a few of Harry's strategies,” Hermione said, “I'm feeling much better about it.”

“Well, that's too bad,” Luna said, “Because I was thinking of offering we both sit on his lap. He wouldn't be able to tickle us at the same time.”

“Oh?” Harry asked. “That sounds like a challenge.”

“Are you saying I can sit on your lap then?” Luna asked.

“I'm with Hermione on the public display of affection around four relative strangers,” Harry said.

“So I can sit on your lap when you aren't around strangers,” Luna said. “Got it.”

“Luna,” Hermione groaned. “He didn't say that. And we really need to find you a boyfriend. So you can stop flirting with mine.”

“Even though he is looking for a third wife?” Luna asked.

“There's no promise that those who become his girlfriend right now will be his wife in three or four years, Luna,” Hermione said.

Luna merely smiled dreamily. Harry didn't know what to say. Luckily he found a distraction.

“Our guests are coming,” Harry said, pointing at Neville and the three gingers accompanying him.

“Thank goodness they didn't bring Ron along,” Hermione said.

“I would have sent him away anyway,” Harry said, “I don't know the Weasley twins at all. Anything you can tell me?”

“They like to joke around,” Hermione said. “They like their pranks.”

“And they have a talent of twin-speak,” Luna said.

“Twin-speak?” Harry asked.

“You'll know it when you hear it,” Hermione said.

“Sirius and Remus will like them, I think,” Harry said. “Is Ginny normally as much of a – well – a bitch as she was yesterday?”

“From what Hermione told me of what happened with her,” Luna said, “She was just angry at you that you convinced Neville he wouldn't tell her about the dragons. She's like her mother – very stubborn, and easily hot-tempered. But she isn't always a bitch. I've known her since we were very little. I believe I've told you before we live on different sides of the same village.”

“Stubborn and hot-tempered,” Harry said, “Must come with red-heads. Maybe just the female half of the species – the red-heads, not the entire female half, mind you.”
“Good save,” Hermione said, grinning, “Don’t let your mother or sister hear that, though.”

“Promise you won’t tell them?” Harry asked.

“I’ll consider it blackmail material,” Hermione said.

“I should keep you away from Sirius,” Harry said.

Hermione giggled. Neville, Ginny and the twins arrived.

“Lord Potter!” one twin said, “We finally meet at last.”

“It is our greatest pleasure to meet you, My Lord,” the other said, “We humbly introduce ourselves...”

“Fred Weasley,” the first twin said.

“George Weasley,” the second twin said.

Harry studied both of them. “I think it is the other way around.”

“You're right,” Ginny said.

Fred sighed. “Neville, dear god-brother...”


“You need to run for the hills,” Fred said.

“Because you will never get one past our sister,” George said.

“Idiots,” Ginny said, “Harry, if I may call you that. I did not get a chance to apologize for my actions last night. I understand now you were doing what you did for a reason. Thank you for helping Neville.”

“No problem,” Harry said. “Especially if Neville and your brothers help us.”

“We're always happy to help!” Fred said.

“You just want to tell your story to someone who hasn't heard it,” Ginny said.

“Run for the hills, Neville!” George said.

“Point the way, please, Harry,” Neville said. “Before these two drive us insane. Notice I can hardly ever get a word in when accompanied by them?”

“You wound us, God-brother!” Fred said.

“Really, really, hurts!” George said.

Harry was beginning to understand what Luna meant by twin-speak. He sighed and led everyone
inside. Lily, Sirius and Remus were at the dining table.

“Hello everyone,” Lily said, smiling, “Come sit down. We have butterbeer and cookies – excuse me, biscuits – for refreshments on the table.”

“Thank Merlin we didn't bring our brother!” Fred said.

“We wouldn't get any of those!” George agreed.

“Twin-speak,” Sirius said, grinning, “That must entertain a lot of people.”

“More like annoy,” Ginny said.

Neville, Hermione and Luna nodded in agreement. Fred and George clutched their hearts and gave mock-pained expressions. Harry sat between Hermione and Luna on the sofa, while Neville and Ginny took another sofa. The twins took chairs. Each teen collected a couple cookies and a bottle of butterbeer.

Lily, Remus and Sirius introduced themselves, as did the four Gryffindors.

“Did you make these, Lady Potter?” Ginny asked, as she swallowed a bite of the chocolate chip cookie. “They're good!”

“You don't need to, Lily,” Ginny said, “I saw a Mind Healer the summer after it happened. Mum refused it, but Neville's Gran and Great-Uncle Algie insisted, and paid for it. The Healer told me to discuss it, and I am willing to prove it, so I can continue to get better from it.”

“Thank you,” Lily said, “First we'll discuss the Philosopher's Stone incident, which you had no part in, I believe? All we're interested in is Quirrel's and Vol – sorry – You-Know-Who's part in it.”

“We don't know it was Quirrel at first,” Fred said.

“Thought it was Snape,” George said.

“Found him limping after the troll was let into the castle,” Fred said.

“We know about the troll,” Harry said, before the twins could get too far.

“Let's just tell them about that night we went down the trap-door,” Hermione said, “Neville found out Professor Dumbledore was leaving the castle that day. So he told me and Fred and George about that, and we figured the Stone was in danger. We knew about the first obstacle, the Cerberus.”

“The first obstacle was that door,” Neville said.

“Obstacle?” Fred asked.
“We opened it with a simple Alohomora!” George said.

Sirius snorted. “Some obstacle.”

“Maybe it was weakened from Quirrel already getting in there?” Remus asked.

“Perhaps,” Fred and George said.

“Before we stepped inside, Fred and George started singing,” Hermione said.

“Sorry, Hermione,” Ginny said, “These two can't carry a tune.”

“Hey!” Fred and George exclaimed in unison, clutching hearts again.

“It worked enough to put the Cerberus asleep,” Hermione said. “For a bit. It woke up as we dropped down the hole, onto Devil's Snare.”

“Lucky for you, my Neville is good with plants,” Ginny said.

“We used the Sunlight Charm so we could get past it,” Neville said, “Next room was flying keys, with a couple of brooms.”

“Our specialty!” Fred said.

“Could have used Ginny though,” George said, “She's a good Seeker.”

Ginny blushed and smiled.

“Next was a huge chess set,” Hermione said, “Fred and George got us through that. Nobody got hurt, but there was at least one near miss. Next obstacle would have been a troll, but it was unconscious or dead. Didn't care to check. Next was a logic puzzle involving Potions. My specialty. But... Fred and George took that from me.”

“There were flames guarding each door as soon as we went into the room,” Neville said, “Fred and George taught us to use Flame-Freezing Charms. The twins left through the door we came in, after we told them to get help. And Hermione and I went forward.”

“Luckily, I didn't go all the way into the last room,” Hermione said. “Neville wanted me to keep back, so that I could come in as back-up in case something happened.”

“And I confronted Quirrel,” Neville said. “Quirrel lectured about bringing the troll into the castle, and trying to find ways to get rid of me. I asked him why. He didn't tell me. He told me to help him get the Stone, which was in a mirror. The mirror showed your deepest desires. I saw it once before. Saw my parents healthy and happy. This time... I saw me. Holding the stone. And then... the stone was in my jeans pocket. Tried to tell Quirrel a lie. Then a voice told him I lied. I backed away from him, and Quirrel took off his turban, and revealed You-Know-Who on the back of his head.”

“I saw it,” Hermione said. “It was so ugly. I don't know what it was, aside from... Voldemort.”

The Gryffindors winced. Harry smiled. She had been able to say the monster's name more lately.

“A Leech,” Remus supplied.
“That's what Professor Dumbledore said,” Neville said. “You-Know-Who... he tried to tell me to give him the Stone. I said no. I couldn't let him get it. He then told me to give it to him. He wouldn't kill me, he said. I knew that was a lie. Called him a liar. Then he told me. He said I was destined to defeat him.”

Lily, Sirius and Remus exchanged glances. Then Harry saw Lily look at him, before looking back at Neville.

“Dumbledore later told me You-Know-Who was lying to me,” Neville said. “Trying to distract me, so he could get the Stone. I told him to come and get it. And...”

“Headmaster Dumbledore ran right by me,” Hermione said. “I don't know if he even saw me at that moment. He just went down to where Neville and Voldemort was, and he sent this powerful ugly-looking spell – not the Killing Curse – at Quirrel and Voldemort. Voldemort saw it coming. Quirrel didn't. The spell hit him before Voldemort could say anything. Quirrel was set on fire, and...”

“In the smoke, there was this other weird smoky vapor thing,” Neville said. “I remember it. Because it screamed and tried to come at me. Dumbledore threw a spell at it, and it dodged it, but missed me too, and flew away. Quirrel was dead. Burnt to ash. The Stone was safe. But... Dumbledore said later he destroyed it. And …that's it.”

“Thank you, Neville,” Lily said, “That is a lot of help.”

“Why is it help?” Neville asked.

'I'm afraid we can't say – aside from the fact that You-Know-Who could come back soon,” Lily said.

“We wish to be prepared.”

None of the Gryffindors looked surprised.

“Neville's Great-Uncle Algie basically told us Riddle wasn't dead,” Ginny said. “He knew Riddle would come back.”

“So you call him Riddle?” Remus asked.

“Yes – his real last name,” Ginny said. “Tom Marvolo Riddle. The Chamber of Secrets incident started the day Lucius Malfoy gave me that damned diary. I thought Mum had bought it, and just didn't tell me anything. A surprise for my birthday. It was second-hand, which a lot of our stuff does tend to be. So I didn't notice anything off. I should have noticed that... once I got back here to Hogwarts, the diary had more of a pull than it did at home. Back then, I was too ignorant to notice it was influencing me to write in it. Also scared... scared to tell anyone about my black-outs, and everything else happening to me. Not even my brothers.”

“We didn't help much,” Fred said.

“We just ignored her,” George said, “That was a mistake, and we all got lectured for it.”

“Us,” Fred said, “Percy. Ron.”

“Can we just skip until the last bit?” Ginny asked. “I did bad things I had no control over. You don't need to hear all about it.”
“We can skip it,” Lily said.

“Once the mystery started,” Neville said, “Fred and George convinced me to do my part. We figured out the last mystery, why couldn't we figure out this one? Except this time... we didn't include Hermione.”

“Luna and I were already doing our own investigating,” Hermione said. “But we didn't get the answers we were looking for until late in the second term. I got Petrified by the Basilisk, a week before the mystery ended, though it would be a bit longer before I got resuscitated.”

Ginny winced. Harry knew she had nothing to blame for, but she looked at him and Hermione apologetically.

“Thankfully, Luna wasn't with me on that day,” Hermione said.

“I had to go pee,” Luna said; a few in the room snickered at her bluntness; she frowned, but not at them. “I found Hermione and Penelope Clearwater when I returned from the bathroom. Petrified. Hermione had been in the library, I knew that. She wouldn't have left unless she found something. I found the book she was looking in. A page had been torn out. So I visited the Hospital Wing, and found the page in her fist. I took the information to the three people she told me to, if she ever got in trouble – Neville, Fred and George.

“Before I became friends with Hermione. I talked to Myrtle, the ghost in the second floor girls' bathroom. I talked to her after Hermione got Petrified, and she told me she kept hearing loud noises coming out of her bathroom. I took the information to Neville – the page, and also to talk to Myrtle. And he discovered the same bathroom was the opening to the Chamber of Secrets.”

“My Great-Uncle is a Parselmouth,” Neville said, “The Chamber could only be opened by one. I contacted him about it. By some lucky coincidence, he arrived at Hogwarts about ten minutes after Ginny had disappeared.”

“George and I were using this... tool we have,” Fred said. “Useful. Let's us know where people are.”

Harry saw Remus and Sirius exchange a look of raised eyebrows.

“We noticed Ginny was missing, and Neville was heading to the bathroom with his Great-Uncle,” George said, “So we hurried and went after them.”

“And arrived just in time to see Algie open the entrance,” Fred said. “We went down with Neville and Algie, because – hey – it was our sister missing.”

“Uncle Algie brought a rooster with him to help defeat the Basilisk,” Neville said, “When we entered the Chamber, we found Ginny... laying on the floor, unconscious and dying.”

He wrapped his arm tighter around Ginny, and held her against him.

“We were met by this... ghostly-looking thing,” Neville said, “It was glowing. Looked like a teen boy. He spoke and told us he was a memory, locked away in a diary. But this wasn't a memory – he was talking to us. Algie said that too, to the ghost. The ghost said his name was Tom Marvolo Riddle, and that he was a special memory. He did this little wand-waving trick, and wrote his name in mid-air which changed to 'I am Lord Voldemort.'”
“For a scary monster,” Fred said.

“Bloke was an arrogant, pompous show-off,” George said.

“We told him that too,” Fred said. “He didn't like it.”


Fred and George bowed, comically.

“Riddle didn't like being taunted,” Neville said, “So he summoned the Basilisk.”

“The look on his face when Algie pulled out the rooster,” Fred said.

“The Basilisk keeled over once the rooster crowed,” George said.

“And Riddle was like 'No! My little pet!' Fred said.

“It was not his pet,” Neville said.

“And it was not little!” Ginny said.

“Well, not those words exactly,” Fred said, “More like... 'Nooo!'”

“With several more o's,” George said.

“Riddle threatened to kill us,” Fred said.

“So we taunted him,” George said.

“Algie, meanwhile, summons the diary from Ginny,” Fred said.

“Summoned a fang from the Basilisk,” George said.

“And stabbed the diary!” Fred and George said.

“Riddle screamed,” Neville said, “And... exploded... in a bunch of light. And the diary...bled oily stuff.”

“Still not sure why Algie did it,” Fred said.

“Because it was cool, brother,” George said. “And he's cool.”

“And it worked,” Neville said, “Ginny woke up as soon as the diary was stabbed. We all left the Chamber, and Algie took the diary. Algie said something about cutting up the Basilisk. Don't know if he ever did it.”

“Did he ever show it to Dumbledore?” Remus asked.

“The diary or the Basilisk?” Neville said, “Oh, the diary. No. Even made a point to make me tell him nothing about it.”
“Thank you,” Lily said, “You all did very well. With the stories, and with both events.”

“Now, boys,” Sirius said, “Please reveal the Marauder's Map.”

Harry's eyes widened. He had heard stories of the map. Several times.

“What Map?” Fred asked innocently.

“No Map here,” George said.

“Boys,” Remus said, “You said you used a tool which could tell you where people were around the castle.”

“No we didn't,” Fred and George said, grinning.

“I think they did, Moony,” Sirius said.

“They definitely did, Padfoot,” Remus said.

“Prongs wouldn't like liars,” Lily said, grinning, “Wormtail was a liar.”

Fred and George's jaws dropped.

“Moony?” Fred said.

“Padfoot,” George said.

“Where's the map, boys?” Remus asked. “We don't want it back. We just want to see it again.”

Fred and George jumped up and walked to the adults. Fred took a wad of parchment from his robes and handed it to Remus.

“We found it, James,” Remus said, looking at the ceiling.

“James?” Fred asked.


Fred and George looked from Harry back to Remus and Padfoot. Then they started bowing.

“We're not worthy!” Fred said.

“Teach us everything you know!” George said.

Harry, Lily, Hermione and Luna cracked up at the grins on Remus and Sirius' face.

“Now I know who to blame for inspiring those two idiots,” Ginny said.

“You really don't want the map back?” Fred asked.

“Well,” Sirius said, “It would just go to Harry. And he doesn't go to Hogwarts. So keep it. How did
you filch it from Filch anyway? He took it from us seventh year.”

“Got it first year,” George said.

“Got in trouble,” Fred said, “Wound up in his office. Our friend, Lee, made a distraction with Peeves, and Filch ran off to take care of it.”

“So we searched his office,” George said, “And found the map.”

“Then you earned it,” Remus said.

“We, Mister Padfoot, and Mr. Moony,” Sirius said, “pass the torch onto you, Fred and George Weasley, the newest Marauders.”


Chapter End Notes

To those of you wondering, no I didn't give too many spoilers during the training regarding the First Task. I left out a couple of the most important parts that will be used in the Task.

Yes, I am using the same Dragons. I thought about using a Night Fury, but those are much too small!

Next Chapter: Lily, Remus and Sirius discuss a few new facts they got from the stories. Then the First Task!
Sunday, November 22, 1994

Lily, Sirius and Remus were still sitting at the dining room table in the House Potter Tent. Neville and the three Weasleys had left ten minutes ago. Harry, Hermione and Luna remained for a bit because Hermione wanted to know about the Marauder's Map. She thought it was an amazing invention. After that, Harry, Hermione and Luna left for lunch.

Now the three adults of the 'extended Potter family' were sitting there in silence and deep thought.

“Voldemort told Neville it was his destiny to kill him,” Remus said. “So why did Voldemort go after Harry?”

“Because originally Voldemort did believe that Harry was destined to kill him,” Sirius said, “And Harry died. But Neville survived an attack by Voldemort's Death Eaters. Voldemort must have heard about it from Quirrel or someone, and he thought – 'this boy defied my followers, defied me. He survived. Harry didn't. It must be Neville.'”

“This sounds eerily like there is a Prophecy involved,” Remus said. “A Prophecy regarding either Harry, Neville or both – defeating Voldemort.”

“And Dumbledore knows it?” Lily asked; “That's the secret Severus talked to me about. A
Prophecy?"

Remus and Sirius nodded. Lily sighed and slouched back in her chair.

"I want to talk to Algernon Croaker," Remus said. "If that diary is what we think it is – a Horcrux – then Algie has to know. He's an Unspeakable. It is his job to know these things."

"Of course he knows," Sirius said, "Why do you think he kept the diary from Albus? Because it was something Unspeakables should know about, and not Albus. At least in Algie's opinion."

"Algernon is not just going to tell us, Remus," Lily said. "We have to find a reason to speak to him."

"Neville?" Sirius said.

"No," Remus said. "If there is a Prophecy, it has to be in the Hall of Prophecies."

"Unless Albus destroyed it," Sirius said.

Remus shook his head. "Only those who the Prophecy is about can touch it. Harry – possibly Neville – and Voldemort. Voldemort couldn't do it. No one told Neville about it."

"It is still there," Lily said. "Well, we could get the information from Albus. Then we could tell Algernon we know about it. Harry can destroy it. And we tell Algernon we know what we know."

"I'm supposed to be the master strategist here!" Sirius whined.

Lily grinned. "So it is a good plan?"

"An excellent plan," Sirius said.

"Now when do we speak to Albus about the Prophecy?" Remus asked.

Lily, Sirius and Remus contemplated this in silence for another minute.

"I want to be showered in more gifts from Albus," Sirius said. "He'll help Harry survive the Tournament that way."

"Let's see if he is going to give us more gifts," Lily said. "When he stops for a while, we'll go meet with him."

"Again, master strategist here!" Sirius said, "Quit stealing my thunder! Strategy is all I got that neither of you have. Aside for humor. And good looks. And a sexy girlfriend who loves to --"

"And modesty," Remus interrupted Sirius before he could say something dirty.

"Are you saying neither of you are modest?" Lily asked, "Did you hear that, Lily?! He just said – Lily? Why are you – ? Wait, no –! Ow!"

Lily had hit him with a stinging hex. Sirius had said he was the only good-looking one. He deserved that one.
Tuesday, November 24th, 1994

Harry was staring at the full plate of food in front of him. His mother had surprised him by making him pizza for lunch. He loved when she made home-made pizza. This explained why she had disappeared for a few hours the previous afternoon. Grocery shopping for Harry's before-task meal.

“Harry James Potter,” Hermione said, “Your mother made that delicious pizza for you, and you haven't eaten a bite.”

She had been pacing back and forth, after eating a couple slices of the pizza, and only now had realized Harry's full plate. Harry winced. Then he winced again when he saw his mother looking at him with raised eyebrows. She was putting together a case of precautionary medical Potions and Draughts. That didn't make Harry feel any better.

Sirius, Remus and Rose were there too. Rose had wanted to go to the Task with Gabrielle, but Lily told her she needed to be here to support Harry, and that Gabrielle had already planned to sit with her at the Task. Rose agreed, with resignation.

“Can I have it for a post-task celebration meal instead?” Harry asked. “If I eat it now, I'll throw up, and waste your good work, Mom.”

“You need to eat, Harry,” Lily said, “Severus said he'd be here around noon to escort us to the arena.”

“I thought Hagrid was escorting us?!” Sirius asked, “Why Severus!”

“Hagrid is volunteering to take the Beauxbatons,” Lily said, then smiled, “I think he fancies Madame Maxime.”

Sirius laughed. “Imagine the kids those two would have!”

“Severus will be here in --” she checked her pocket-watch. “About twenty minutes. And he doesn't like being late. So twenty minutes. Or fifteen.”

“Great,” Harry said, “The countdown to my doom.”

“That's it,” Hermione said, “I'm sitting on you until Wednesday.”

“Thanks for the charming innuendo, Hermione,” Remus said.

Hermione blushed. Lily shook her head. Sirius snickered. Harry laughed.

“That wasn't innuendo!” Hermione said.

“I know – but saying so made Harry feel better,” Remus said.

“So would Hermione sitting on him,” Sirius supplied, “Ow!”

Once again, like numerous times in his life, Sirius had received another stinging hex from Lily Potter.

“I'll eat one slice,” Harry said. “I won't throw up one slice.”
“Deal,” Lily said.

“Do we need to go over your strategy and back-up plans while you eat?” Remus asked.

“That would make me throw up,” Harry said. “Besides, we went over it earlier today.”

“Duly noted,” Remus said.

“Eat!” Hermione said.

Harry refrained from saying ‘yes, Mom’, and took a bite of the pizza. It was delicious. It still took ten minutes to finish one slice, because he wanted to keep it down. By then, Remus had gone to collect the Ilvermorny students. Sirius had gone to collect Hermione's tent-mates, including Tonks. When he was finished, he went to his bedroom and quickly put on the Ilvermorny Tournament Jersey outfit his mother had surprised him with that morning. When he was finished, he pocketed his wand, stepped back out, and froze. Severus Snape was standing just inside the tent.

“Ready, Lord Potter?” Severus asked, glancing in his direction.

The man had surprised him – and everyone who heard the man -- by calling him Lord Potter yesterday during dinner, personally wishing him luck during the Task. Harry had decided to think of the man by his first name until the man didn't deserve it anymore.

Harry made a noncommittal grunt. He walked over to Hermione, took her offered hand, and followed Severus out of the tent with Lily and Rose behind him. The other Ilvermorny students, Daphne, Tracey, Astoria, and Luna were waiting for them with Sirius and Remus.

“Tonks has gone off to find her parents – they're coming, remember?” Sirius said, “They'll meet us there.”

“Follow me, everyone,” Severus said, “And please do keep up.”

Harry, Hermione, and his family followed Severus, with the large group tailing him. He gazed up in the sky, as he walked.

“Cloudy,” Harry said, “Great.”

“We prepared for this, Harry,” Hermione said. “You'll be fine.”

“Yes,” Remus said, “We practiced that particular strategy for all types of arena sizes, remember?”

Harry nodded.

“Preparation, Lupin?” Severus asked. “Lord Potter was supposed to face the unexpected. That is his Task.”

“None of the Champions are facing anything they don't already know about, Severus,” Lily said. “Everyone is on equal ground. Besides, we know it was Albus who made sure we'd know what Harry was facing.”

Severus didn't say anything. Which pretty much confirmed everything his mother said. But Harry wasn't too interested in what others were saying, nor did he put much thought into it either, even if it
was important. He was interested in holding his girlfriend's hand like it was a life-line, and keeping the piece of his mother's pizza from coming back up.

It was only then he realized he could now see the arena in the distance. Before now, he couldn't see it, and he had even looked for it earlier that day. A portion of the Forbidden Forest had been cut down, and a small Colosseum-like building – though quite large by certain standards -- was in its place. Something seemed strange at first sight though.

“Is the arena... made of wood?” Harry asked, weakly. “Wood?! Really?!”

“Wood and stone, Lord Potter,” Severus said, “Enchanted to be fire-proof.”

*And what about dragon-proof?* Several thought, but didn't speak aloud.

“They cut away part of the Forbidden Forest!” Daphne exclaimed.

“Eh... no big loss,” Tracey said.

“It will grow back, Miss Greengrass,” Severus said. “The British Ministry promised the Centaurs that.”

The walk to the arena took ten minutes. Severus told most of the group to head on through the entrance, but only the older Ilvermorny students did, after giving their good wishes to Harry. The rest stayed behind, to Severus' obvious displeasure. He led them over to a smaller tent-like building connected to the arena. The Tonks family was waiting outside.

“Say your temporary farewells to everyone here, Lord Potter,” Severus said, “Aside from your mother, and sister, nobody else is allowed with you inside. Not even you, Miss Granger.”

Hermione huffed. Harry nodded. Severus walked away. Andromeda surprised him slightly by giving him a hug. Tonks did too. But theirs weren't the most surprising. Tracey gave him a brief hug that lasted for moments before she backed away. Harry exchanged smiles with her. He was gaining her trust. Daphne looked slightly surprised with her friend, but also happy as she hugged Harry too, and kissed his cheek. Luna hugged him also, and kissed him on the cheek as well. The Tonks and all of Hermione's tent-mates aside from Hermione headed on inside, after Daphne told them they'd be sitting with the Ilvermorny group, and Remus told them they'd catch up soon, and sit with them.

“Your strategies we worked on will work with any of the four dragons,” Remus said. “But be careful when you get close. Remember. Caution. You may be able to distract the dragon, but maybe not.”

“I know,” Harry said, nodding.

“You're going to surprise nearly everyone in there,” Sirius said, “But don't listen to anybody else. Nobody is there. Just you and the dragon. Just focus.”

Harry nodded again. He turned to Hermione, and she pounced on him and gave him a kiss that lasted nearly a minute before Lily cleared her throat.

“Remember, Harry,” Hermione said, glaring at him, as she backed away, “I want to dance with you at the Ball. Don't disappoint me.”
“Wheelchair?” Harry asked.

“What do you think?” Hermione said, through gritted teeth.

“That’s a no then,” Harry said.

Hermione just glared again. Harry pecked her on the lips, and she still glared at him, though her lips twitched slightly. A small victory.

“I will see you soon,” Harry said. “Alive and healthy.”

“Promise?” Hermione asked.

Harry merely pecked her on the lips again, and this time she kissed him back for ten seconds.

“That wasn’t an answer,” Hermione said, “But I’ll take it.”

“Gotta go,” Remus said. “I see Minerva coming with Neville and Angelina. And if I understand what Hagrid is doing, he's trying to look for the dragons. So Fleur is here already. Come on, Hermione.”

The half-giant groundskeeper was standing on the edge of the forest nearby, with his hands cupped over his eyes like binoculars. Harry snorted. Hermione hugged him, and walked off with Remus and Sirius, looking over her shoulder at him.

“Come on, kids,” Lily said, “We'll stay with you Harry until we have to leave.”

Rose nodded. Harry did too, then gulped, and followed them into the tent. Fleur, Gabrielle and Madame Maxime were there. Barnabus Cuffe and Bozo were there too, as was Ludo Bagman. Bartemius Crouch was not there yet.

Rose and Gabrielle smiled at each other, but didn't move to each other. They had obviously agreed this was family time. Barnabus, however, approached Harry.

“No interview right now, Barney,” Lily said.

“I merely want to speak to Harry; no interviews yet,” Barnabus said.

Harry nodded. Barnabus walked over to him.

“I'd like to do a face-to-face apology for breaking my promise,” Barnabus said. “My part in Miss Black's misfortune in the newspaper is something I deeply regret. If you wish to stop our interviews, say so.”

“Meet us at the tents an hour after the Task,” Harry said. “Apologize to Tracey face-to-face there. If she allows you to interview me more, I'll give you one then.”

Barnabus nodded. “I accept that. Thank you, and good luck today.”

“Thanks,” Harry said.

Barnabus walked back over to Bozo. Neville and Angelina had arrived during the brief discussion.
“Good!” Ludo said. “All four Champions are here! Now we’re just waiting for Albus and Barty.”

Harry thought Ludo’s words would have acted as summons for the other two judges. Instead, he heard hundreds upon hundreds of pairs of feet could be heard passing the tent, their owners talking excitedly, laughing, joking... Harry felt as separate from the crowd as though they were a different species.

“And there they are!” Ludo said.

Harry turned to the tent’s entrance, and saw that Dumbledore and Bartemius Crouch had arrived.

“Yes, we’re here,” Dumbledore said,

“Excellent!” Ludo said, clapping his hands once. “Glad you could make it, Barty.”

Crouch merely glared at Ludo. Ludo wilted slightly, before shaking himself and grinning.

“Well, now we’re all here — time to fill you in!” said Ludo brightly. “When the audience has assembled, I’m going to be offering each of you this bag” — he held up a small sack of purple silk and shook it at them — “from which you will each select a small model of the thing you are about to face! There are different — er — varieties, you see. And I have to tell you something else too... ah, yes... your task is to collect the golden egg!”

So Remus was correct. An egg-like object would have to be retrieved, and Dragons liked guarding treasures. Harry glanced at the other Champions. Angelina nodded at him when she saw him looking. Fleur smiled at him. Harry wondered if they were silently thanking him for helping them get that information right. Neville just looked nervous.

And then — it seemed like about a second later to Harry — Bagman was opening the neck of the purple silk sack.

“Ladies first,” he said, offering it to Fleur.

She put a shaking hand inside the bag and drew out a tiny, perfect model of a dragon — a Welsh Green. It had the number two around its neck. She gave a determined glance at it. Gabrielle was staring at it with a mix of shock and fear.

Harry was next. He looked at Ludo. “Really? You said ladies first. Angelina...?”

“Hmm?” Ludo said, then jumped when he saw Angelina glaring at him, “Oh! I obviously meant Beauxbatons first. Yes. Go on, Harry. Visiting Champions first before hosting champions! Proper decorum!”

“It’s Lord Potter,” Harry said, annoyed at the man’s version of ‘proper decorum’.

Ludo’s smile wilted. Harry sighed, and put his hand into the silk bag and pulled out the Hungarian Horntail, and the number three. It stretched its wings as he looked down at it, and bared its minuscule fangs.

“Three, huh?” Harry asked. “Horntail’s not the finale?”
Ludo merely smiled and moved to Angelina. Harry glanced over his shoulder at Lily and Rose. Rose was clutching her mother and staring at the small dragon in her brother's hand. Lily was just looking at him.

Angelina picked the Swedish Short-Snout, and would be going first. Angelina had a mix of determination, and a grim expression. She didn't like going first.

“And last but most certainly not least, Mr. Longbottom,” Ludo said.

Neville winced, and dipped his hand into the bag. He lifted it up and showed the very bright red dragon, The Chinese Fireball. Neville would be going last.

“The Fireball,” Angelina said, “Kind of like your girlfriend, Neville! Red and fiery!”

Neville gave a small smile. Harry realized Angelina was trying to cheer him up. Make him think about his girlfriend in a time of need and help.

Or maybe she was trying to distract him.

Crouch seemed to think so. “Your fellow champion's going up against Dragon, just like you, girl. He don't need to be thinking about girls right now.”

“Definitely not!” Ludo agreed. “Focus, Champions! You have each pulled out the dragon you will face, and the numbers refer to the order in which you are to take on the dragons, do you see? Now, I’m going to have to leave you in a moment, because I’m commentating. Ms. Johnson, you’re first, just go out into the enclosure when you hear a whistle, all right?”

Angelina nodded briefly.

“Madame Maxime, Lady Potter, Headmaster,” Ludo said, “I'm sure you wish to give your Champions words of encouragement. But do hurry up about it. The task will start soon and we need our judges!”

A whistle blew. Angelina jumped.

“That's not your whistle, Ms. Johnson,” Ludo said, “That's for me. Good lord, I got to run!”

Angelina glared daggers at the man as he dashed out of the tent. Crouch snorted and followed Ludo.

“Champions,” Dumbledore said. “Good luck. I am sure the Task ahead will be very entertaining for us all. May the best Champion win.”

He glanced at Harry, then Neville, then turned and walked out. Harry turned to Lily and Rose. Rose pounced on him in a hug. Then she giggled when the tiny Horntail model growled at her.

“It ain't so bad, Harry,” Rose said, looking at the model. “It is cute.”

“This one is cute, Rose,” Harry said. “I dare you to tell me the big one is.”

Rose huffed. “If you die, Harry. I'll kill you. And steal your girlfriend.”

Harry grinned. “Then Hermione would kill me. Twice dead isn't fun. Here, Rose. Take this model
until I can get it back from you.”

Rose held open her hands and the model jumped into them. Lily cleared her throat, and clutched Harry in a hug.

“Be careful, Harry,” Lily said. “I know you can do this. Just... be careful.”

“I will, Mom,” Harry said, “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Lily said. “Your father will be watching you. Make him proud.”

“I'll make you all proud,” Harry said.

Lily smiled and kissed the top of his head. He hoped the other Champions weren't looking. Lily backed away.

“Neville,” Lily said, “Good luck.”

“Thanks, Lady Potter,” Neville said.

“Good luck to all of you,” Lily said. “Gabrielle, you sitting with Ilvermorny, or Beauxbatons?”

“With Rose!” Gabrielle said.

“With Ilvermorny then,” Lily said, “I needn't have asked, I suppose. Come on then. I'll take you two to join them, before I join the other judges.”

Madame Maxime had already left. Lily, Rose and Gabrielle wished Harry and Fleur good luck again, then left the tent.

Harry sat down on an available bench. Angelina was pacing back and forth. Fleur was staring off into the distance, looking at nothing. Neville was sitting on a bench near Harry, staring at the model of the Chinese Fireball in his hands.

“Ready, Neville?” Harry asked.

“I should have gone with you into the forest, Harry,” Neville said. “I would have been more prepared. But... I have a strategy. Professor Moody, Gran, and Uncle Algie agree it will all work. So I'm trusting them. So... yes, I'm ready. You?”

“Yes,” Harry said, simply.

“Wish we could watch each other's performances,” Neville said.

“My family has a Pensieve,” Harry said. “We'll watch their memories of the Tasks.”

“Deal,” Neville said. “Something to look forward to.”

“Yes,” Harry agreed.

Something to look forward to. That was a good distraction. Still focusing on the Tournament. Everything else could come later.
Then the whistle blew. And Angelina stood up, and walked down the small tunnel, on the other side of the room, to face her Task.

Chapter End Notes

You know. I had full intentions on doing at least the first two Champions performances this chapter. But I have some good plans for next chapter, involving Champions, and spectator discussions. If I put it all here, it would be too long.

Next Chapter: The First Task! I PROMISE!
The First Task

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: I have two personal milestones to announce that is simply selfish boasting. I have realized I recently passed – in the past couple of days or so – 4 Million published words on FFN. I have been publishing on FFN for about a decade now. Also this story passed 1000 reviews (On FFN) in less than 30 chapters. Thank you all who reviewed!

Imagine most of what Ludo Bagman says is in CAPS LOCK. It got too annoying, so I stopped before I started, and wrote normally.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“You haven't been bit till a dragon does it.”
— Tamora Pierce, Emperor Mage

Tuesday, November 24th, 1994

Katherine “Katie” Bell, one of Hogwarts Champion Angelina Johnson's two best friends was sitting on an uncomfortable wooden bench, one of the several seats, as she stared at the Colosseum-like arena. Surrounded by several wooden benches, which sat hundreds upon hundreds of spectators, was a large open space where the Champions would be facing their creatures. There were large boulders scattered around the arena in strategic places. Obviously for hiding behind. Katie didn't like the sound of that. One one side of the arena, there was a long open tunnel, leading into the arena. On the other side, there was a large iron-wrought gate, and behind it a darkened space. Katie didn't like how big that gate was either.

She wanted to complain about something, so she wouldn't worry about Angelina.

“This seat is so uncomfortable,” she whined, moving her hips to stop her butt from going numb. “It is like they want to make us stand up and cheer for the Champions the thing hell-bent on killing them.”

“Are you a witch, Katie?” Alicia Spinnet – Katie and Angelina's other best friend said.

She tapped the bench with her wand and Katie suddenly felt more comfortable.

“Cushioning Charm,” Katie said. “Right. Sorry! My mind is too occupied worrying about Angie. Why didn't she tell us what she's facing? She knows! She said so!”

“She knows,” Alicia agreed, “She also knows if anyone found she knew, she'd get in trouble. I wish we knew what she knows. That gate over there is just too damn big. Way too big.”
Katie agreed, but before she could say so, she was interrupted by a loud voice.

“Good afternoon!” The Sonorous enhanced voice said, “and welcome, one and all, to the First Task of the 1994 Triwizard Tournament here at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry!”

The arena roared in applause and cheers.

“I am Ludo Bagman!” Ludo said, “Judge and Commentator for this Tournament! Before we the First Task underway, it is time to make introductions! Beauxbatons Judge and Headmistress, Madame Olympe Maxime! ... Ilvermonry Judge, Lady Lily Potter … Hogwarts Judge and Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore … and Bartemius Crouch, Judge and Head of the Department for International Magical Cooperation!”

Cheers were heard around the crowd from various groups as each name was said – no cheers and little applause for Crouch, however.

“It is my honor to introduce our three very special guests from the British Ministry of Magic!” Ludo said, “Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Amelia Bones! … Senior Undersecretary for the Minister of Magic, Dolores Umbridge... and British Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge!”

Various levels of respectful applause for the Ministry guests.

“And all the way from France!” Ludo said, “The French Minister of Magic – and father of Beauxbatons Champion, Fleur – Pierre Delacour!”

The Beauxbatons crowd cheered, as many others applauded respectfully.

“The First Task of the Triwizard Tournament pits Champions against the unknown!” Ludo said. “Until a few minutes ago, none of the Champions knew what they were facing --”

“Oh, really?” Katie quipped.

“-- and they have come in unprepared,” Ludo continued.

“Doubt it,” Alicia said.

“It is natural for humans, including wizards and witches, to fear the unknown,” Ludo said, “Can they overcome the fear and challenge today? What does everyone here believe!”

More roaring cheers and applause.

“Well, let's see!” Ludo said.

He cast his wand toward the iron-wrought gate. Silence reigned, as the gate slowly rose, and vanished from sight. Eight wizards came in, but it wasn't them everyone was looking at. A green Dragon was being pulled along, snapping and growling at its handlers. Several shrieks, screams and also cheers and applause were heard around the arena.

“No,” Katie said, “No, no, no! Not a Dragon! ARE YOU BLOODY MENTAL YOU JERKS?!!!”

Katie had stood up by the end of her rant. Alicia pulled her back down, and the two girls held onto
each other in a hug. Two of the handlers set a nest of eggs down, while the others chained the
dragon at the nest.

“Great Merlin!” Alicia was screaming, “NESTING MOTHERS?! ARE YOU ALL INSANE?!”

Katie held onto her best friend, and watched as the handlers walked backwards, wands at the dragon,
as they headed back out of the arena, and the gate closed.

“Witches and Wizards!” Ludo said, “Feast your eyes, upon the Common Welsh Green Dragon!”

“Please don't be first,” Katie whispered, as Ludo gave some features of the Dragon, as if he was
talking about a broom during a Quidditch match. “Please don't let Angelina be first...”

She winced as a whistle sounded. Then she looked toward the tunnel. And waited.

Please don't be first...

More seconds passed.

Please don't be Angelina...

“The first Champion, witches and wizards!” Ludo announced, “Hogwarts Champion Angelina
Johnson!”

Katie and Alicia swore. Then they whimpered as they saw Angelina. All around them, people were
cheering. Why were they cheering?

Angelina looked around the arena, then her eyes locked onto the dragon. She raised her wand at the
sky, and said something the girls couldn't hear. She then ran over to a boulder and hid behind it,
away from the dragon.

“She did a Summoning Charm!” Ludo said, “What is she summoning into the arena? Will it work?!”

Katie and Angelina shrieked as the dragon snorted a ball of fire. The aim was off, and it hit the
ground several feet from the boulder Angelina hid behind. Katie winced as she heard a sizzling
sound.

Then she heard a whooshing sound and looked up. A broomstick – Angelina's broomstick – was
flying through the air. Angelina climbed up onto the boulder, and caught the broomstick, and flew
off into the air, just as another fireball from the Dragon hit true, and the boulder was surrounded in
flames. Angelina had been there seconds earlier. Now she was climbing high in the air upon her
broom.

“Flying!” Alicia said, grinning as she looked up at Angelina. “We should have known!”

“Come on, Angelina!” Katie said, “You got this!”

Please don't die...
Elsewhere in the arena – Ten minutes later

Rose Potter cheered with everyone else as Angelina Johnson's task was over. Ten minutes after she began, her finally was able to grab the golden egg. The display was impressive. She had been flying around the dragon trying to make it dizzy. Finally, after several minutes, the Dragon made a mistake. She waved her tail like a baseball player ready to hit a home run, and swung. And she missed. The momentum of the Dragon's tail, caused it to fall over onto its back, away from her eggs. Then Angelina had dived. The Dragon tried to spit a fireball, but from the gagging sound that followed, it choked on the gaseous liquid that kindled the fire. That made it dizzy.

Angelina then grabbed the golden egg, and went back into the air. Then she dived toward the tunnel. The Dragon had gotten up as Angelina made it to the top of her arc in flight. And as Angelina flew toward the tunnel, the Dragon spat a fireball at her. The fireball missed, because Angelina swerved... but she couldn't course-correct, and she crash-landed, entering the tunnel. The landing as she crashed made everyone wince. It sounded like she hit a wall in the tunnel, then the ground. Thankfully, the dragon couldn't reach her, and a handler had come in, just as the Dragon spat a fireball at the tunnel, and had used an impressive shield to block it from going down the tunnel.

Angelina was safe, though possibly injured. The crowd gave a sigh of relief... then had cheered.

“What a showing from our first Champion!” Ludo said, “As the Healers bring out the Common Welsh Green, and bring back in the next dragon, let's talk about Champion Johnson. Her performance shows why she plays Quidditch. She loves to fly! She's probably alright, don't worry. The Hogwarts Healer will tend to her. I think she landed right outside the Medical Tent which has an entrance in the tunnel... or maybe she landed inside the Tent.”

He gave a nervous chuckle then cleared his throat.

“The points will be announced after everyone has had their chance!” Ludo said, “Goodbye, Common Welsh! Thanks for taking part!”

He laughed again.

“And thanks to the Dragon Dome in Wales for lending us their beautiful dragon!” Ludo continued. “Now, everyone knows now what our Champions our facing. So let us present the next Dragon. Coming all the way from the – ah – I can't pronounce that name – well, coming from a reserve in Sweden – the Dragon which calls the Country home, and is named after it. Witches and Wizards! The Swedish Short-Snout!”

“Fleur's next,” Gabrielle said, nervously, frowning as she watched the Swedish Dragon being escorted in.

Rose wrapped an arm around her girlfriend, and held her close.

“She's got a good strategy,” Rose said.

“Now she does,” Gabrielle said, “She changed it at the last minute. You didn't see her practice that. She didn't like the first one.”

“Oh,” Rose said. “Well, I'm sure she's going to do awesome. If she changed it, she likes her new idea better.”
“Yeah,” Gabrielle said.

The Swedish Short-Snout was now chained up above its nest.

A whistle sounded. Rose kissed Gabrielle's cheek.

“She'll be okay, mon Ange,” Rose said, the last two words in French.

She had given Gabrielle a new nickname recently. “Angel” -- because she looked like an Angel when the sun shone down on her hair. Gabrielle loved it, and she loved it more that Rose could say it in French. Gabrielle smiled, then looked down at the tunnel.

“Witches and Wizards!” Ludo Bagman said, as Fleur appeared in the tunnel entrance, “I present to you, the second Champion! From Beauxbatons – Fleur Delacour!”

Fleur stepped out of the tunnel. She summoned forth a large fireball in one fist. The Swedish Short-Snout shot a fireball toward her. And Fleur shot her own. The Fireballs met in mid-air in the center... and exploded in a great fireball. As the fire exploded, and everyone cheered, Rose and Gabrielle were looking at Fleur. She was raising both hands up into the air. And then she began to transform.

A few moments later, she was now in her Harpy form. Rose's eyes widened as she looked at Gabrielle's sister, as if it was the first time she had ever seen her. Because it was the first time she had seen the Harpy. This is what her girlfriend would be able to turn into when she turned seventeen.

Fleur cast another quick fireball toward the dragon. Then she flew high up into the air above the crowd, and above the dragon.

“Good Merlin, she's a Harpy!” Ludo Bagman exclaimed.

“Well, duh, you English buffoon,” Gabrielle quipped.

Rose and the rest of the crowd watched, as Fleur began casting different types of ice magic at the Dragon. Freezing Charms, Ice Shards, Ice Showers – she seemed to know all the ice magic in the book. The Dragon panicked, trying to dodge the ice, and shoot fireballs at the ice. Fleur would shoot precise, tiny balls of fire from her free hand at each fireball from the Dragon, and the ice still fill on it. It growled and began to back away into the corner, back from the eggs, as Fleur continued her onslaught of fire and ice. Each time she cast with wand and hand, she moved a few feet further toward the nest. When she neared the nest, she cast a very large ball of ice at the Dragon.

And the Dragon fainted into unconsciousness, the ground below quaked as it fell. Fleur landed, grabbed the golden egg, then flew back into the air, and landed at the tunnel. She bowed, and walked back into the tunnel.

She was finished in less than five minutes.

The crowd was shocked into silence, before it began roaring into applause.

“What a Dominating Performance from the Beauxbatons Champion!” Ludo announced. “Handlers! Get in here! And make sure this dragon is alive! Nobody doubt a Harpy against a Dragon! Especially one who knows Ice Magic!”

“And that is why Veela are commonly hired at Dragon Reserves,” Gabrielle commented, “Fire-
proof, and talented in Ice Magics.”

“Wow,” Rose said, “I can't wait until you can do that!”

Gabrielle blushed prettily.

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**Nearby – Arena**

Sitting behind Rose and Gabrielle were Sirius Black and Remus Lupin.

“That... was impressive,” Remus said. “Fire and Ice. A fine combination. And perfect for Fleur.”

“Hmm,” Sirius said.

“You're staring at the Judge and VIP Booth, Sirius,” Remus said, “Go see her.”

“Lily?” Sirius asked.

“Amelia!” Remus said, “I know you're upset she didn't tell you she was coming.”

“I'm thinking of Lily,” Sirius said.

“Amelia will be pissed,” Remus quipped, “And Lily will hex you.”

“What?” Sirius replied, “No, not like that. She needs to sit next to Bagman.”

“Trying to hook those two up?” Remus asked.

“What?” Sirius asked again, “No! Bagman is going to be commentating during Harry's task.”

“Yeah,” Remus said, slowly, “And...?”

“*And...* he might tell the Dragon where Harry is,” Sirius said, “You know Harry's strategy! If Ludo tells the Dragon where Harry is during... I need to go to Lily and tell her to do something!”

“Well, stop wasting time!” Remus growled. “Go!”

“I'm going, I'm going!” Sirius said, “Thinking I'm dumping Amelia for Lily, and thinking Lily likes Ludo. Screw you, Moony.”

Remus snickered. Sirius rolled his eyes and stood, then hurried off. The dunderhead Bagman was not going to be the reason Shadow got squished by a ton of Dragon.

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**The Ilvermorny Champion – Three minutes later**

Harry was now standing at the entrance to the tunnel. He had heard cheering and ran over to the tunnel, and nearly screamed. A Harpy had been standing in the tunnel. She then transformed back into Fleur. Fleur blew him a kiss, when she saw him, and walked into the Medical Tent. Harry was worried. Why did she go in there? She didn't look hurt... Angelina was hurt. He knew that. Madam Pomfrey said she'd be fine. Fleur looked okay, however.
A whistle sounded. Harry inhaled and exhaled, and barely heard Neville wish him good luck. He slowly walked down the tunnel, going over his strategy in his head. He walked to the end of the tunnel, but not at the very end. He didn't want the dragon to see him yet. The sky was still cloudy. So he would need to take care of that obstacle. But maybe not first. He needed to distract the Dragon. He saw the very large boulders and grinned.

And then he walked into the arena amidst loud cheers and applause. Harry glanced at the Hungarian Horntail. It was enormous. Which wasn't a bad thing. Not at all. Ludo was absolutely silent. Why wasn't he saying anything? He was talking during Angelina and Fleur's Tasks.

Harry hurried over to the nearest boulder. There were at least six there. Good. He would need all of them. He raised his wand in the air, then started casting the Patronus Swarm. He had been working on this for several days. This was a part of his strategy long before the Dragon was revealed to be the Task. Back when he thought it would be Dementors. Seven Shadow Panthers emerged from his wand, one after another and started to scatter around the arena as distraction. Had it worked. Fireball at one of the Patronuses. Yep. Distraction worked.

He cast a few more Patronuses, mindful of exhaustion. He needed to be careful. He then pointed his wand at a nearby boulder and concentrated as he cast. He grinned when the boulder transformed into a black panther. Not a Shadow Panther, but it looked like him. He then repeated it four more times. Leaving his boulder the only one untransformed. Five transfigured Shadow Panthers ran around the arena, with their ethereal clones. The Dragon was roaring in annoyance. Harry pointed his wand up in the air.

“LUMOS SOLEM!” Harry screamed.

He grinned as the whole arena above him became bright as day. A large shadow – or rather, connected small shadows covered most of the arena. He backed away from the boulder, cast another Transfiguration, and the panther joined its mates.

Then Shadow joined the pack.

Whether the crowd around the arena gasped at the revelation that Harry Potter was an Animagus was unknown. Probable, but Shadow didn’t hear them. Ludo may or may not have been talking. Harry didn't hear him. He merely concentrated, glancing at his destination, then sank into shadows.

This would be the riskiest Shadow Jump he would probably ever do in his life. He was not leaping from shadow to shadow. He was venturing through the Shadow dimension, and going to one destination a great distance from where he entered. It was dark. It was chilly, and every moment passed by only became chillier. He knew he would have to spend a bit of time in the Hospital Wing after this. Frostbite, cold chills, other ailments were all possible. But it was the only thing that would work.

Finally he reached where he hoped was his destination. He didn't leap. He crawled out of the dimension, and found himself face-to-face with a Dragon.

Well, the underbelly of the Dragon anyway. Exactly where he wanted to be. Right next to the nest. From the sound of the fireballs, going everywhere but on him, the distraction was still working. He transformed quietly as he could back into Harry. Then he found a stone nearby, and transfigured it quietly into a sling. He found his prize, the golden egg, in the center of the nest of eggs. He took it,
wrapped it in the sling, and transformed again. He picked the sling up and into his mouth.

Uh-oh. No. No, no, no! The Lumos Solem spell was done. The shadows gone.

What to do? What to do?

Run, Shadow, Run!

He slunk backwards behind the dragon, making sure not to touch it with his fur. When he was free, he started running toward the exit. The Patronuses were gone. Three panthers were boulders again. Three panthers left.

Nope. Fireball. Four down. Two left.

Run!

Shadow ran. And ran. Fireball. Another boulder reappeared. More running. Fireball. Another... nope, everything was getting hotter. It was coming at him. The dragon had found him.

Shadow leaped away from the fireball. He dodged more fireballs. Serpentine, Shadow! Serpentine! Out-serpent the serpent!

Run! Fireball! Heat!

Tunnel. Safety. Loud cheers. Victory!

He slunk toward the Hospital Tent. Then when he entered. He growled at Madam Pomfrey, dropped the sling with his prize, turned back into Harry.

And fainted from the chills wracking through his body.

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**Judges and VIP Booth**

Lily Potter could have kissed Sirius Black. She had told him his fears about Ludo ruining Harry's strategy, so she had walked over to him as the Horntail entered.

Her conversation with Ludo went something like this.

“Hello, Lady Potter,” Ludo said, after canceling his Sonorous Charm. “Shouldn't you be seated with the other judges?”

“I'm going to sit with you, Ludo,” Lily said; adopting a fake, flirty manner, and hoping it worked. “And maybe guest commentate for my son.”

“Sure, I guess that might be okay,” Ludo said.

Lily conjured a chair and sat down.

“Just one problem,” Lily said. “I don't commentate well.”
She jabbed her wand into his ribs. He yelped.

“And neither do you,” she said, “Listen. You are going to be silent throughout my son's Task. He is going to be doing a risky strategy. And if you alert the Dragon of his presence, the Dragon will squash him. Then I will squash you, and throw you to the Dragon. Understand?”

Ludo nodded. He was silent for Harry's whole task. Which was terrifying, incredible, horrifying, awesome, hard to watch, and hard to look away from. Lily was going to yell at her son.

After Harry escaped into the tunnel, she could see Hermione, Remus, Sirius, Rose and Gabrielle leave their seats to go see Harry and Fleur. They would take care of Harry. She still had a job to do.

“Excellent commentary, Ludo,” Lily said, “Best one so far.”

“I didn't say anything – that was the most brilliant thing I ever saw – and I didn't say --” Ludo said.

“And yet everyone heard you,” Lily said. “You were so inspired, you stayed silent. And everyone loved it.”

Lily stood up and walked back to her seat, leaving Ludo stammering.

“Was that necessary, Lady Potter?” Albus asked.

“Yes,” Lily said, simply.

“So... your son is an Animagus,” Albus said.

“Didn't predict that, did you?” Lily said, “Just shows you don't know everything. Looks like we were the one to give you a gift this time.”

Albus frowned and stared back at the arena. Lily smiled and turned to Madame Maxime, who began commenting on her son's performance. She did notice Bartemius Crouch was still wide-eyed as he stared into the arena. Obviously he didn't expect that. Good points from him, perhaps?

In the Arena

“Ginny?” Fred said.

“Shut up...”

“Neville's next,” George said.

“Shut up...”

“He's going to face a dragon,” Fred said.

“SHUT UP!” Ginny growled, “Stop talking! I know he's next. I know he's facing a dragon. Now shut up, or go sit with Katie and Alicia.”

“They're with Angie,” George said.
“So go see her too!” Ginny growled. “Don't you want to make sure she's going to be able to dance at the Ball?”

“I haven't asked her yet,” George said.

“So go do that!” Ginny growled. “You're more annoying than Ron.”

“Thanks!” Ron said, behind her.

“SHUT UP!” Ginny growled. “I will place Bat Bogeys on all three of you, and tell Mum to send Howlers to all of you for a week, simply telling you to shut up! Unless. You. Shut. Up!”

She was nervous. She was upset. Her boyfriend was about to face a dragon. And she was surrounded by idiots.

Another idiot had decided to start talking again. Ludo Bagman, who had been silent during Harry's Task, was now introducing the last Dragon. Ginny stared at the gate, and her eyes widened, at what she saw.

“It it is red,” Fred said.

“And fiery,” George said.

“A Chinese Fireball!” Fred and George said, “Just like Ginny!”

“Shut up,” Ginny said yet again.

“But it looks just like you!” Fred said.

“Neville will fall in love with it!” George said.

“Howlers,” Ginny said, “For a week. Telling you to SHUT! UP!”

The dragon was soon chained above its eggs. Oh Merlin. Oh God. Oh Merlin. Oh God.

Ludo was introducing Neville. Ginny stood up and leaned against the railing in front of her.

“She's going to jump!” Ron said. “Stop her!”

She turned and cast a Bat-Bogey Hex on Ron. He fell out of his chair, and onto the ground, screaming. Dean and Seamus seated beside him, exchanged looks, and stood up and started clapping. For Ginny, then for Neville, as everyone joined in.

Neville entered the arena. And then he started taunting the Dragon. Ginny's eyes widened. What the bloody hell was her boyfriend doing. The Dragon shot a fireball at Neville. She shrieked, but Neville dived behind a boulder. The Fireball missed. Neville stood up, and started taunting the dragon again. Then he ran toward a boulder closer to the dragon.

The dragon was getting angry.

“Neville, stop angering it!” Ginny yelled.
“No!” Fred said, “Keep at it!”

“He knows what he's doing, Ginny,” Fred said, “He obviously wants to get her from her nest.”

Ginny almost told the twins to shut up again. Then her eyes widened as the Dragon started moving toward Neville, away from her eggs.

“Terra Vita!” Neville growled.

Vines. Great, thick, green vines pushed up out of the ground, and wrapped themselves around the dragon's snout.

“Herbology Magic!” Fred and George exclaimed.

Ginny grinned as the vines dragged the Dragon by its snout onto the ground.

“Terra Vita Maximus!” Neville exclaimed.

Gigantic Vines emerged on either side of the dragon, and wrapped around its wings and body. It was pinned to the ground. It cried and whinged.

Neville walked by it and over to the nest. He picked up the Golden Egg, then started walking back to the tunnel. Then he turned to the dragon, and showed it the Golden Egg. The Dragon calmed down, obviously noticing the egg was a fake. Its babies were fine.

Then Neville turned and walked into the tunnel.

“That...” Fred said.

“Was the best thing...” George said.

“Neville has ever done,” Fred said.

“When's the wedding, Ginny?” Fred and George asked.

Ginny grinned. “Shut up...”

Ginny was happy. Her boyfriend, Betrothed, and future husband was a Dragon-Slayer. Her own knight in shining armor.

Chapter End Notes

--giggles-- And that is how you defeat Dragons everybody. Perhaps not Angelina's Task. She was okay. But the other three. I loved writing this chapter.

Pierre Delacour was a last minute addition. Which is why he wasn't in the Tent last
chapter with his daughters.

Next Chapter: The Aftermath. Medical Tent stuff. And the points are revealed. And other stuff. There is a reason I had VIPs visit. Um... I have no idea how the points are going to go. This is tough!
Tuesday, November 24th, 1994

When Harry awoke, he kept his eyes closed at first. He wasn't as cold as he thought he would be after traversing the shadow dimension. He felt kind of warm. Though he still felt chilly in places.

Then he sneezed.

“He's awake!” Hermione's voice screamed.

Someone was speaking French. Harry recognized Fleur's voice. She was okay! He opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was something orange. He realized immediately it was fire. Then he realized Fleur was standing above him, with fireballs in her upturned palms. She was moving her inflamed hands back and forth.

“Don't worry, Harry,” Hermione said, “She's just keeping you warm.”

Hermione was sitting beside him in a chair. Remus and Sirius were sitting on either side of the Hospital bed. Rose and Gabrielle were sitting in neighboring chairs.

Ah, right. The Medical Tent. He did remember slowly walking into the tent as Shadow.

“You didn't want to cuddle with me, Hermione?” Harry asked; his voice was sort of raspy, but he could speak. “That could keep me warm.”

“He can still flirt!” Sirius said, “Thank Merlin!”

“He's going to be okay,” Remus said, sounding relieved.

“Neville still doing his task?” Harry asked.

“Just finished up,” Remus said, “Madam Pomfrey looking over him. Points will be decided in ten minutes.”

“There you are, Potter!” snarled a voice.

It wasn't Madam Pomfrey. It wasn't one of his other friends. It wasn't his mother.

A squat witch appeared, being quickly followed by Amelia Bones, and a man with a bowler hat.

“Harry Potter,” the woman said, “You are under arrest!”

“No, he is not, Madam Umbridge!” Amelia said.

“He is an unregistered Animagus!” Umbridge said, “Do your job and arrest him!”
“He is registered in America,” Sirius said, “And as such...”

“Ha! America! Not in Great Britain!” Umbridge exclaimed, “Arrest him.”

“As such, he has MACUSA granted Diplomatic Immunity,” Sirius finished.

Umbridge spluttered and stammered.

“That is what I was trying to tell you,” Amelia said.

“Dolores, it is time to leave,” the man in a bowler hat said, “You are upsetting international magical relations –”

“And you are upsetting my patient!” Ah. There was Madam Pomfrey. “Out! Get out, Dolores Umbridge!”

“Not before she apologizes to Harry,” Sirius said, “And addresses him as Lord Potter.”


Harry glared at her.

“Brilliant job, Lord Potter,” the man in the bowler hat said, “A great achievement. Animagus at fourteen. A magical Animagus. As British Minister of Magic, I, Cornelius Fudge, give you my deep apologies. Come, Dolores. We will talk about this.”

Dolores turned and walked out of the medical tent, followed by the British Minister of Magic.

“ Weird,” Harry said, “I just hallucinated that a pink toad tried to arrest me, and the British Minister of Magic apologized and said I did a great achievement. Who did I glare at? I'm sorry for whoever it really was.”

Everyone around him laughed.

“That really happened,” Hermione said, “You glared at the pink toad.”

“Oh, good,” Harry said.

“Sorry about that,” Amelia said.

“I should think so!” Madam Pomfrey said, bustling over to Harry, “Thank you Mademoiselle Delacour, you may stop. Lord Potter... while you make an adorable Panther, please never come into my Wing again and frighten my patients. I understand why you did it. Don't do it again. Thank goodness you transformed back though, do you understand how hard it is to coax an unconscious Animagus into their human form? And very impressive doing so with your clothes remaining on.”

Harry blushed. Sirius and Rose snickered.

“Mademoiselle Delacour's assistance with her flames helped keep you from getting frostbite,” Madam Pomfrey said, “Luckily she was here and uninjured when you entered, and she was able to
help right away. But your body temperature is still lower than it should be. I heard you sneeze, so you are definitely ill. You will be spending at least the rest of the day until tomorrow morning in the Hospital Wing.”

“I have to get my points,” Harry said, “And I promised Barnabus Cuffe an interview.”

“And he needs to get yelled at by his mother,” Sirius said.

“And my girlfriend,” Harry said, glancing at Hermione, who nodded.

“And sister,” Rose said.

“And a whole bunch of friends,” Hermione said.

“You can sit in a wheelchair, and have someone wheel you out to get your points,” Madam Pomfrey said. “Champion Johnson is doing the same thing. Got a busted leg. She'll be fine by tomorrow. And the interview... if you're quiet, and it is brief... Cuffe can meet you in the Wing.”

“And the yelling?” Harry asked.

Madam Pomfrey grinned. “Happens tomorrow. No raised voices in my Wing.”

“Oh, thank goodness!” Harry exclaimed out loud, then winced. “Sorry.”

Madam Pomfrey glared, then handed him a vial. “Pepper-Up Potion to get through the Points Ceremony. Don't mind the steam coming out of your ears for the next few hours. It tickles, it isn't a great fashion statement so a few girls tell me, but it is harmless. I'll go get the wheelchair.”

“You hear that?” Harry asked Hermione. “No yelling at me.”

“I can rant at you quietly,” Hermione said, “It sounds more dangerous that way.”

“So can your Mom,” Sirius said, “She just likes screaming when mad.”

“Damn,” Harry muttered, then grinned, “Well, I'm about to have steam coming from my ears. So I won't be able to hear low voices.”

“He got you both there,” Remus said, grinning.

Hermione glared at Harry. Harry grinned. He drank the vial, and turned up his nose, as he swallowed.

“Why are Potions here so disgusting?” Harry asked.

“Keeps you from wanting to get addicted to them,” Madam Pomfrey said, as she returned with the wheelchair. “Get in the wheelchair, Lord Potter. Points coming up soon.”

He giggled suddenly, as the steam started pouring from his ears. “It tickles!”

Sirius laughed. Remus, Rose and Gabrielle snickered. Hermione rolled her eyes, and Fleur simply shook her head. Obviously she thought it wasn't too funny. Madam Pomfrey snorted, and walked off to another patient.
Harry stood and limped over to the wheelchair and sat down. His feet felt like they were asleep and numb. Now he knew why he was going to be wheeled around. Hermione rolled him across the Medical Tent, as the others followed. He saw Neville sitting on a bed. He had an empty vial in his hand.

“Oh, Neville?” Harry asked.


“Going to have to delay that Pensieve Date,” Harry grinned.

“We'll figure it out,” Neville said.

“Pensieve Date?” Hermione asked.

“We're going to watch each other’s tasks,” Harry said, “In my family Pensieve.”

“Ooh, I am in!” Angelina said.

Harry turned and saw Angelina in a wheelchair, with her leg in a cast, above the floor. Her two best friends were with her.

“Oui!” Fleur said, “Me too!”

There was a very loud whistle.

“Onward!” Harry said, “Back into the arena!”

“The dragons are gone, right?” Rose asked, to raucous laughter.

The Points Ceremony

The judges' decisions went on as followed:

Total out of 50 Points.

Angelina Johnson, Hogwarts Champion:

Madame Maxime: An impressive use of a broomstick against a dragon. But your maneuvering was rough, and you took the most time to get the egg. And you got injured. 6/10

Lily: A smart strategy against the dragon, using its own strength against it. Points off for length of task, and injury. 8/10

Albus: An impressive flight, Champion Johnson! But it took you a lot of time, and you did crash, and injure yourself. 7/10

Crouch: I got bored after seven minutes of watching you fly around. The rest wasn't great. Your dragon was stupid, and you got lucky because of it. Well, maybe not... because you got injured! At least you got your prize. 5/10.
Bagman: You can fly, Champion Johnson! Impressive! Ever think of joining up professionally? Come see me after the Tournament is over, if you want a job in the Pro Quidditch Leagues. Work on your landing however. 8/10

Total: 34/50

Fleur Delacour, Beauxbatons Champion:

Madame Maxime: An excellent use of your natural talents. Quick, and dominating. Great defense and offense against the Dragon. 10/10

Lily: An impressive use of your fire ability, combined with ice. Immediately faced your foe without fear or hesitation. Quick, and you got your prize. But the dragon was injured. 9/10

Albus: You are well-practiced when using your Harpy ability, combined with wand-work, which is a feat in itself. I have to wonder if you had lost focus however, and whether or not you cared if you harmed the dragon. If you had killed it, that would bring some trouble for your Father, when dealing with Sweden. 7/10

Crouch: A dominating performance, but I agree with Albus. You could have killed the dragon. Lucky it is alive. But we'll have to watch if it stays that way. But you got your prize. 7/10.

Bagman: Amazing right from the get-go. Natural abilities against a dangerous foe. You knew what you wanted to do as soon as you saw him. And... you got your prize. The dragon will be fine, don't listen to the other judges about that. 10/10

Total: 43/50

Lord Harry Potter, Ilvermorny Champion

Madame Maxime: An impressive feat, an Animagus at fourteen. And a magical one. Excellent strategy using the talent of your Animagus. However, the Shadows disappeared, and you fled with your tail tucked, but at least you had your prize. And you obviously got injured. 7/10

Lily: Excellent use of Transfiguration and Patronuses. You could have done another Sunlight spell before turning back to your Animagus form. However, saying that, returning to the shadows might have hurt you or killed you. So that might have been what you were thinking, which gives you points rather than losing them. And you had everybody entertained. 8/10

Albus: I believe your Animagus shocked us all, Lord Potter. Well done with such a feat. I wonder if you could have used other strategies, without revealing such a big secret, however. But that isn't important. An impressive showing, with some mistakes, though quickly remedied with quick decisions. Your skills of adaptation are impressive. That transfigured sling to carry your prize was not something even I'd have thought of. Your injury did not come from the dragon – in fact, you dodged so well to get away from further injury! -- so I only take one point away for that. 9/10

Crouch: It was an impressive show of power from a young wizard. You have earned your Lordship,
by showing you are powerful like the Lords of Great Britain. But you have much to learn. Next time
you might survive unscathed. But as Dumbledore said, it was not the dragon who injured you, and
as Lady Potter said, you prevented doing further harm to yourself. And you also got your prize. 9/10

Bagman; I was, and am, still speechless! I am worried about your health though. Ah well, Madam
Pomfrey will fix you up! 9/10

Total: 42/50

Neville Longbottom, Hogwarts Champion

Madame Maxime: You could have been burned, or killed, at anytime with your taunting. While it
was paid off, it could have been done another way. Too young and immature to deal with such a
serious Tournament. Next two Tasks, I want to see you be more serious! Impressive Herbology
magic, a quick time, and you got your prize, but I still give you a 7/10.

Lily: You proved why you are a Gryffindor. Brave, but also foolhardy. Another strategy would have
worked better to get the Dragon away from its eggs, and been less risky. However, saying that, it
was a good idea to get the dragon away from the eggs, or they would have been harmed when the
dragon was dragged down by the vines. Also, the Herbology magic was nice, you didn't get injured,
and you got the prize. 8/10

Albus: An excellent showing! You have a bright future in Herbology, which isn't just about plants
and gardening. You showed all the students the benefits of Herbology, and how it has its own
branch of magic. Quick, no injuries, defeated your dragon, and got your prize. The taunting was a
little disconcerting though. You had me worried there! 9/10.

Crouch: Kept me watching throughout, wondering if you were going to slip up, and the Dragon
would take advantage. Taunting was risky, and paid off, but could have killed you. But like Potter,
impressive for someone so young... uninjured, got your prize, and it was quick. 9/10.

Bagman: For someone so young, you showed why you shouldn't be underestimated! But those
taunts could have killed you! I don't like commentating about people dying, Champion Longbottom! 9/10

Total: 42/50

First Place As Of First Task: Fleur Delacour – 43 Points
Second Place As Of First Task: Harry Potter, Neville Longbottom – TIED – 42 Points
Fourth Place As Of First Task: Angelina Johnson – 34 points

Hogwarts – Hospital Wing

An hour after the points were handed out, Harry, Hermione, Lily, Rose and Remus were in the
Hospital Wing. Harry was relaxed in a Hospital bed. Hermione and Rose was seated on his right,
Lily and Remus on his left. Sirius – and Amelia, who had stayed behind with Sirius, instead of going
back to the Ministry -- had escorted Barnabus Cuffe to the Ilvermorny Tents, so that Barnabus could
talk to Tracey about Rita Skeeter's article. If Tracey gave him her OK, Sirius and Amelia would escort Barnabus to the Hospital Wing to interview Harry.

Hermione and Lily were both obviously angry at Harry for becoming ill, and almost getting killed, but they hadn't said anything yet. He wasn't sure if they were still figuring out their lecture, or if it was the steam still pouring from his ears from the Pepper-Up Potion. Of course, there was his mother's points she had given him.

“Mum?” Harry said, “Are you not ranting at me, because you did when you gave me your points decision?”

“That was what I could say in front of everyone,” Lily said. “Tell me the truth. Did you have intentions of going back into the shadows if the Sunlight Charm remained.”

Harry winced. Just as he did when he heard her original explanation. “Um... yes.”

“You're lucky you're not in third place, Harry,” Lily said. “I should have dropped at least a point for that.”

“I know,” Harry said, looking down at his lap.

“Do you?” Lily asked. “Grounded from being Shadow until the next Full Moon. So one week.”

“The Full Moon?” Hermione asked.

Remus grinned. “You haven't told her?”

“Um...” Harry said, wincing.

“Harry James Potter,” Hermione said, through clenched teeth.

“On Full Moon nights,” Harry said, “I spend the nights with Padfoot and Moony when they run when Remus is in his werewolf form.”

“Did you do so last Full Moon?” Hermione asked.

Harry winced again and nodded.

Hermione blinked. “Could have told me when you revealed Shadow to me. But if you're with Sirius and Remus, then obviously they have their reasons for letting you run with a werewolf – no matter how friendly.”

“Animagi can't get turned when bitten,” Remus said.

“And Moony respects me because he's never gotten near me,” Harry said.

“And you would never be allowed if your mother didn't give permission,” Hermione said, “So I obviously can't say anything about the dangers.”

Lily cleared her throat. “Harry... never spend so long in the shadows ever again. Ever. You're lucky Fleur was here with her fire, and Madam Pomfrey was on hand too. I didn't even make Pepper-Up Potions! I didn't expect you to do something like that! I thought you'd at least jump out sometimes
She had kept her voice below the respectable Hospital Wing volume, and it was still scary.

“But you also did a very nice job, Harry,” Lily said, now smiling.

“Then why was Ludo Bagman silent?” Harry asked.

Remus laughed. “Sirius’ idea. Didn’t want Ludo telling the Dragon where you were. ‘Wow! Lord Potter has emerged under the Dragon!”

“Imminent death by squish!” Rose said, “Harry Potter the pancake!”

Lily playfully glared at her daughter. “So I sat next to him, jabbed my wand in his ribs and threatened him. He was speechless because of it, and because he thought you were awesome.”

“So that’s why he said that,” Harry said, chuckling.

“Yes, being speechless was a very impressive feat for him,” a voice said.

Albus Dumbledore appeared at the end of the large dividers between the beds.

“Hello, Mr. Dumbledore,” Harry said, “Thank you for your kind words and points today.”

“I meant every word, Lord Potter,” Dumbledore said, “Every word. It was impressive, but... you could have kept that secret of your Animagus to be revealed in a more serious situation. Now everyone who duels you will prepare for you to become your Animagus. Anti-Animagus Wards could be used, for example.”

“Er... what duels, sir?” Harry asked.

“I’m simply speaking hypothetically, Lord Potter,” Dumbledore said. “A precautionary warning in the future.”

Lily and Remus exchanged glances.

“Oh,” Harry said.

“Why are you here, Albus?” Lily asked.

“Two reasons,” Dumbledore said, “The first – I heard Dolores Umbridge and Minister Fudge confronted you earlier, Harry.”

Lily had already heard that. “Yes. They did. I will be speaking to our Solicitor about her. She’s very lucky Ted wasn’t there! I am going to ask him to begin an investigation on her. Amelia said she couldn’t do it. Fudge wouldn’t let her. Ted can do it though. And perhaps the MACUSA, since International Magical Cooperation was vulnerable because of her! I won’t have her speak to my son like that. Ever.”

“She performed poorly today, from what Cornelius told me,” Albus said, sighing. “Unfortunately, she didn’t do much wrong, aside from make mistakes.”
“What about harassing foreign delegates?” Harry asked. “Like Mom said. International Magical Cooperation. I am ill, Mr. Dumbledore. She could have made it worse.”

“Yes, well – Cornelius did mention that,” Dumbledore said, “He is docking her pay for two weeks. No suspension. She's important in her job for him apparently.”

“What is a Senior Undersecretary?” Hermione asked, “I never heard of it.”

“I believe it is a Chief Advisor,” Dumbledore said, “But since he sees me as that – which I am grateful for -- he needed another title for her.”

“Well, Ted will find something on her,” Lily said. “And the other reason?”

“Have you opened your clue yet?” Dumbledore asked. “The other three Champions have been told how to open their clues, the most recent Champion Johnson just moments ago.”

Angelina was also in the Hospital Wing – now that she was in a more permanent residence – at least for a night – she could take Skele-Gro, to mend her broken leg.

“It won't tell you the clue outright,” Dumbledore continued, “you have to figure out the secret behind it before you can get the clue. But it will help you prepare for the second task on the twenty-fourth of February. The egg is hinged in the center, and can be opened by lifting the top.”

“Um... Hermione brought the egg,” Harry said, as he eyed the egg in Hermione's lap; she was holding onto it for safe-keeping.

“It is very loud, and Madam Pomfrey wouldn't appreciate that,” Dumbledore said, “Lady Potter, I hear you do an impressive Silencing Charm. Please cast the charm around us.”

Lily hesitated, glancing at Dumbledore, then did as was asked.

“Why do you want to be here when he opens it?” Remus asked.

“I feel it will cause a humorous reaction,” Dumbledore said. “I need a little humor after watching the Tasks, I was fearing for the Champions' lives, and didn't get much humor out of it. Harmless humor here.”

“He can stay for this, I suppose,” Harry said, “Hermione?”

Hermione turned the egg around, looking for a way to open it. Then she did, and lifted it up. There was very sharp shrieking sound. Hermione immediately closed it.

“No... no!” Rose suddenly said, standing up. “No!”

She ran out of the Hospital Wing. Lily following her as well, looking rather confused as she did it.

“That was... interesting,” Dumbledore said, gazing after Rose and Lily.

“And not at all humorous,” Hermione muttered, glaring at her Headmaster. “Rose didn't think so anyway.”

“There is only one reason Rose would react like that, and not when it concerns family,” Remus said.
“Gabrielle... and in essence, Fleur. And I can understand why. Can you, Harry?”

Harry frowned. The sound had seemed familiar. He needed another listen.

He looked at Hermione. “Hermione? Open it again.”

Hermione did so. Harry listened to the sound, for a few seconds, before he waved at Hermione. She shut it. Harry did recognize the sound.

“That field trip you took me and my year-mates on, Remus,” Harry said. “To the lake. We heard shrieking. The same shrieking. You said it was Merpeople.”


Dumbledore hurried away. Remus narrowed his eyes in Dumbledore's direction.

“I know why he ran off,” Remus said. “He doesn't want to be confronted with the issue that will be at hand.”

“Issue?” Hermione said.

“If the Second Task involves Merpeople,” Remus said, “That is not good for Fleur. Veela and Merpeople... are arch-enemies.”

Harry and Hermione's eyes widened. He understood Rose's reaction now. The second task, whatever it was, was very dangerous for Fleur.

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**Beauxbatons Champion's Tent**

Gabrielle Delacour was sitting on the sofa, thinking about the First Task, and her girlfriend's reaction to Fleur's Harpy form. There would be a party in one of the Beauxbatons tents, the following afternoon, to celebrate Fleur getting first place in the First Task. Fleur with her prize, the Golden Egg, in hand, sat down next to Gabrielle. She started speaking in French, and Gabrielle placed a finger on her lips, silencing her.

“Speak English,” Gabrielle said, “You need to practice dialect, and pronunciation. You don't practice when you're only speaking to French-speakers, especially those who can understand and speak English, like me.”

Fleur frowned, then sighed and nodded. “You are correct, sister.”

“Where's Papa?” Gabrielle asked.

“Speaking to Madame Maxime,” Fleur said. “E'll be back soon. E's staying ze night before 'e goes 'ome. E wants to speak to ze Potters, but 'e knows they're busy with 'Arry being ill.”

“Mama didn't come,” Gabrielle said, frowning, “I wanted her to meet Rose.”

“Papa is going to invite ze Potters and their extended family and maybe friends to ze New Year's Eve Celebration in France zat Papa is 'osting at ze Manor in Paris,” Fleur said, “Mama can meet Rose zen.”
“You didn't tell me that!” Gabrielle said, frowning, “Neither did Papa.”

“E zinks you'd ruin 'is invitation by telling Rose,” Fleur said, “'E doesn't like 'ow much you've told 'er about Veela. Granny Hippolyta, ze colonies. Zings like zat.”

“I had to,” Gabrielle said, “She needed to know to understand what I am.”

“I know,” Fleur said. “Papa just feels doing such was improper for such a new relationship. Mama did not tell 'im until zey were married.”

Gabrielle frowned. “Mama does not have the same sexual preferences as me! Papa didn't have to worry about Mama going off to colonies! Rose needed to know, in case...”

“I zink zat is what is scaring Papa more, sister,” Fleur said, “E believes you are too young for such strong feelings for anuzzer person.”

“He is not a Veela,” Gabrielle said, “He does not understand completely how we already know when we found the one.”

“ave you told Rose zat?” Fleur said.

“No,” Gabrielle said, frowning, “She's too young, the relationship is too new. I don't want to scare her away. And... she underestimates herself when it comes to long distances in the relationship. So I have to be cautious. I know I want her to be the one. But I know I have to wait a while until she knows too. Maybe a long while.”

“Very mature of you,” Fleur said, smiling, “Tell Papa zat. 'E'll understand. Now cheer up. You can 'elp me figure out ze clue. I 'ave not opened it yet.”

“Open it then!” Gabrielle exclaimed.

Fleur did as was asked. Then the shrieking came, which was so familiar to the two sisters.

The two Veela were so shocked and frightened by the unexpected sound, and what it meant for the future ahead, they fainted and slumped over onto the sofa.

Luckily, Rose and Lily had entered the tent at that exact time.

Chapter End Notes

Cliffhanger! I hope you don't mind how I did the points format. It would have been too clunky otherwise, just doing a bunch of cheering, jeering and stuff from spectators and such.

Question for reviewers: Once I get done with the current post-First Task scenes that will be taking place in the next couple of chapters, is there anything you'd like to see before
now and the Winter Solstice Session? Ted's investigation against Umbridge won't be too quick, but he will have some strategies. That will be voiced in the Winter Arc (Winter Solstice, Christmas, Yule Ball, New Year's Eve). Anything else between First Task and Winter Solstice? Anything that can't be voiced in a 'Time-Skip' summary?

Next Chapter: Lily's view as she enters the tent. Then after everything is sorted, we meet Pierre Delacour, and discuss a few topics. Also Barnabus' interview with Harry. And more!
Tuesday, November 24th, 1994

Lily Potter hurried after her daughter, Rose, who had not stopped to take a breath, since she ran out of the Hospital Wing. Hogwarts students that they had passed hurriedly paused and looked at them in confusion – a few of them who saw Lily's emotional daughter asked her if Harry was alright, as they passed by – that he was in the Hospital Wing was not a secret in the castle. She merely said “Harry's fine” to anyone who saw them. Obviously they thought Rose was distraught due to her brother's health.

Finally, Rose stopped to catch her breath on the front steps outside the large oak doors of Hogwarts Castle.

“Rose Lily Potter!” Lily scolded her daughter, “Have you not heard all the times I've been asking you to stop and explain yourself? By dinnertime, everyone around here is going to believe Harry is on his deathbed – they're believing you're so distraught because of that! Now tell me what has you so worried!”

“It is... Gabby... Mom,” Rose said, trying to catch her breath, she took a deep breath and exhaled, “Not just Gabrielle, but Fleur. Gabby told me, on our very first date, about the Merpeople. The very first night Gabby and Fleur were here, Merpeople surfaced in the Hogwarts lake, and started shrieking threats to Gabby and Fleur. They could hear it all the way at their camp. Gabby said that the Merpeople warned them not to come down to the water. And if the Second Task has to do with Merpeople and the lake --”

“Fleur will be in danger,” Lily said.

“I have to warn them!” Rose said, “If they open that egg without knowing –!?”

She turned and started running off again toward the Beauxbatons Camp. Lily started after her again. Now she knew why her daughter was in such hurry. She prepared herself to be ready for anything – Harpies, fireballs... anything! And she needed to get to the tent first!

She lunged forward and transformed into Tiger-Lily. She charged on, gaining ground on Rose, before finally passing her. By the time Rose got to the Beauxbatons Champion's tent, Lily was already there and in her human form again. Rose looked confused, obviously wondering why Lily wanted to get there first.

“I will go in first,” Lily said, “Fleur could be in her Harpy form if she hears Merpeople shrieking. Or she could be summoning fireballs. Hearing what is in the egg will be unexpected for them and --”

Lily's eyes widened as she heard the same shrieking from her son's egg in the Hospital Wing. She grabbed her wand from inside her robes, and hurried inside, with Rose behind her. She aimed her wand forward ready to strike at anything which could harm her daughter.

And found Fleur and Gabrielle as they began to faint and slump over on the sofa in their living room.
“Gabby!” Rose cried.

“Let me check on them,” Lily said; trying to speak over the shrieking sound of the egg, “You may only do more harm. Stay here.”

Rose nodded, looking quite emotional. Lily walked over to the Veela sisters, still gripping her wand. She remembered the Harpy during the First Task and did not want to be face-to-face with her. The Harpy’s last opponent lost the battle, and was lucky to have survived.

Lily inhaled and exhaled, then knelt down near the couch. First, she closed the egg, to stop the shrieking. Then she checked the two girls’ pulses in their necks with two fingers, and smiled. Just unconscious, likely from shock. Given Rose’s explanation and what she knew about Veelas and Merpeople, it was easy to see why.

Hoping the Medical Charm coined by Healers as “Resuscitation From Fainting” worked against Veela, Lily cast the Charm on Fleur. Fleur blinked her eyes open. Lily sighed in relief, and cast the same spell on Gabrielle.

Fleur began rambling in French, and Lily could understand very little of it. Gabrielle leaned over to her sister – slowly, due to recuperating from fainting – and placed a finger on her sister's lips.

“English,” Gabrielle said, “Thank you, Lady Lily.”

“Thank Rose,” Lily said. “We opened Harry's Egg a few minutes ago. As soon as she heard the shriek, she hurried to come here. We arrived just as you fainted.”

Gabrielle grinned at her girlfriend, stood and walked over to her. Gabrielle hugged Rose, and then gave her their longest kiss yet as a reward, which lasted fifteen seconds. It would have been longer, but there was the sound of someone clearing their throat. Lily, who had been looking at Fleur, to give her daughter privacy, turned back around. Rose and Gabrielle had split apart, and were now looking toward the tent entrance. Lily stood up as she recognized the French Minister of Magic – and the father of the Veela sisters – Pierre Delacour. Madame Maxime was coming in behind him.

“We heard shrieking and came as fast as we could,” Pierre said, looking around at everyone, “What happened?”

“The clue, Papa,” Gabrielle said, “The Golden Egg from the First Task. Fleur and I opened it, and we heard Merpeople shrieking.”

Pierre’s eyes widened, and an angry expression formed on his face. Obviously his closest three family members were Veela, he knew they were arch-enemies of Merpeople.

“We fainted,” Gabrielle said, “Lady Lily and Rose were already on their way, and arrived as we fainted. Lady Lily resuscitated us.”

“I owe you a debt of gratitude, Lady Potter,” Pierre said, smiling at Lily. “I should have been here, but I had to speak to Madame Maxime.”

“No debt, Minister Delacour,” Lily said.

“Pierre,” Pierre said, “You've earned that.”
“Lily then,” Lily said, smiling. “Are you aware of the ah – relationship my daughter has with Gabrielle, and in essence, Fleur?”

“Fleur has told me and her mother in letters about Gabrielle's relationship with your daughter,” Pierre said, nodding.

“So perhaps you understand that Rose and I are quite familiar with both of your daughters,” Lily said. “As I was explaining to your daughters, we opened my son's Egg a few minutes ago. As soon as my daughter heard the shriek, she hurried to come here. Gabrielle told her about the Veela and Merpeople.”

Lily noticed as Pierre raised his eyebrows in Gabrielle's direction.

“Yes, I did, Papa,” Gabrielle said, “I told Rose about how Veela are arch or mortal enemies with Merpeople, Papa.”

Pierre sighed. “I admit I am not exactly thrilled with how much information Gabrielle has given away of Veela secrets to your daughter, Lily. But this time, it seems to have helped a great deal. Thank you again. I was actually planning on talking to you and your family. Please, sit and make yourselves comfortable. Let me check on my daughters and we will talk about important things. Ah, where are my manners? I remember Fleur telling me about your son being injured. Do you need to return to him right now?”

“No, he is in good hands,” Lily said. “We can stay for a little while. I was hoping to meet you when I heard you were here for the Task. I was expecting to see your wife too.”

“Ah, Appoline decided to stay home,” Pierre said. “She does not like English politics. And she knew I'd be meeting English politicians.”

Lily chuckled. “I think your wife and I might get along.”

Pierre chuckled too. He then turned to Madame Maxime and spoke something in French to her. She had a determined look, but also one that showed humor. Then Madame Maxime left. He then spoke some French to Gabrielle, and she walked back over to the couch with Fleur.

“Madame Maxime will be back soon,” Pierre said, “After we finish here, I am going to meet with Albus Dumbledore about the Second Task, and see what is really going on.”

“Should I come with you?” Lily asked.

“No, no,” Pierre said, waving a hand dismissively. “I can take care of it. Please, sit! Do you want something to eat or drink?”

“We're fine,” Lily said.

Lily and Rose sat together on a sofa, while Pierre checked on his daughters' health. After about three minutes of speaking to his daughters in French whispers, and moving his wand over them, he stood and sat down in a chair.

“Fleur and Gabrielle are fine,” Pierre said, “Obviously they're in shock. But thank you again for being here, Lily. And you, Rose.”
“You're welcome,” Rose said, and Lily echoed her daughter.

“Rose, I assume Gabrielle told you about her and Fleur's first night here?” Pierre asked; Rose nodded. “Being married to a Veela, and having two beautiful daughters who are Veela, one tends to understand much about them. I know just about everything my wife knows when it comes to Veela. Including Merpeople.

“The summer Fleur turned six years old, she really, really wanted to go visit the beaches of France and go swimming. So... my wife went away for three whole days... with an excuse that she was meeting with a friend who had a traumatic experience. My wife was the one going through a traumatic experience – the possibility of our eldest daughter being threatened by Merpeople just because she wanted to be a normal little girl and go swimming in the ocean. My wife visited every single beach in France – and risked her very life, and could have started another war between Veela and Merpeople – just so she could figure out which beaches had swimming areas where there were no Merpeople.”

“I think I would do the same thing if I was in your wife's position,” Lily said.

“Me too,” Pierre said, smiling, “But I had to stay home and watch the girls. Luckily I was just a politician back then, and not the French Minister of Magic. Also, it was the summer. So I had a nice father-daughter three-day holiday. From what I have come to deduce since hearing about this clue the Golden Egg has given us, the Second Task has something to do with Merpeople. Now... perhaps you know this already. If you don't, it is a gift from us to you for your son. Merpeople shrieks is just a translation above land of their dialogue. When you hear it under the water, it turns to the native tongue of the listener. So English for you, or French or English for us. Whichever we understand clearly enough to translate.”

“So... put the egg in a bathtub, something, and duck our head under it,” Lily said.

“Yes,” Pierre said. “Now, I will be listening to that clue. I have thoughts of what it could be, and if I am right I am going to tear some holes into some of the judges around here. Not you – and not Madame Maxime – because neither of you seem to know what it is about. But Albus Dumbledore is hosting, it is his lake he lords over. So he has to know. This task – I believe – could endanger one or both of my daughters. If I am right, I will do everything I can in order to get the task changed to something else.”

A dueling tournament,” Lily said.

“That would do it,” Pierre said, nodding. “Anything that doesn't endanger innocent victims.”

“So you fear there could be hostages?” Lily asked.

“In past Tournaments, there has been for the second Task,” Pierre said. “I did my research when my daughter wanted to be a contender. Usually, it is someone the Champion cares for. Family, loved ones, romantic interests. So for your son – you, your daughter... does he have a girlfriend?”

Lily nodded as her eyes widened. “Good Merlin. No innocents should be harmed in this!”

“I agree,” Pierre said, “And I will do everything I can to stop it. Everything! I think my wife could have some ideas.”
Fleur giggled and spoke in rapid French to Pierre. Lily understood “Mama”, “Harpy”, and not much else. She truly needed to work on her French!

“Yes,” Pierre said, “Like that one. I won't spoil it. But that is a fun idea, and it would stop the Second Task from being in the lake. Now, I believe that topic is through. I wish to make a request from me and my wife, Appoline, to you. Lady Lily, if you could find the time, I would invite you, your family, and friends that come up to a guest list of twelve people total – any age – to my New Year's Eve Celebration in Paris at Delacour Manor.”

Lily's eyes widened. She looked at Rose, who was nodding rapidly.

“Any age?” Lily asked.

“Any age,” Pierre said, “It will be family-friendly. And if you or your son or daughter have any friends they might like to bring, please feel free to do so.”

“When are you leaving to go back to France?” Lily asked.

“Tomorrow morning,” Pierre said.

“I will speak to my family about it,” Lily said, “And have an answer for you by tonight. They'll likely say yes.”

“I do hope so,” Pierre said, “My wife would love to meet Gabrielle's – ah – girlfriend, and her family.”

“There is no problems, I trust, with that topic?” Lily asked, raising an eyebrow.

“No, no,” Pierre said, “My wife and I are supportive of Gabrielle's lifestyle.”

“Then I believe we would love to meet her,” Lily said, smiling.

“If I may,” Fleur said, “I 'ave a question. Why did ze judges during ze task believe I was going to kill ze dragon?”

Lily frowned. “That was not our decision to bring up that topic, or make you lose points from it. Dolores Umbridge came over to us, and ranted on about how you needed to be punished for nearly killing a dragon in front of so many innocent students.”

“Let me guess,” Pierre said, “She ranted on about a 'terrifying Harpy'. I've dealt with that mad woman before when it came to my wife and daughters. She is a bigot to everything that isn't a perfect Pureblood. Even has a bit of hate for half-bloods, because of Muggle or Muggleborn parentage. Definitely hates so-called 'half-breeds' and 'unnaturals' – like my wife and daughters, according to her. I don't think she was upset about the Dragon being harmed, Fleur. You did a dominating job in that task, and she probably figured the judges were going to give you a very high score. She hoped to knock you down a peg or two, just for being a Veela and a Harpy.”

“Having earned First Place must have twisted her knickers into a knot she couldn't undo,” Lily said.

Rose, and the three Delacours laughed, and Fleur also beamed at that.

“Umbridge tried to have my son arrested for being an Animagus – she didn't know he is a legal one,”
Lily said. “She's got some problems, that hag. Hey... that gives me an idea. I am going to speak to my Solicitor about her. I was thinking of bringing the MACUSA into this. How would the French Ministry feel about speaking to the MACUSA and – ah – informing Madam Umbridge they don't like her trying to start things with their civilians?”

“I bet Cornelius Fudge would get rid of her once he got wind of that,” Pierre said. “I am in! Give me the name of your Solicitor, and I'll join him on this – pun intended – witch-hunt.”

Lily grinned. Dolores Umbridge would rue the day she messed with the Potters and Delacours.

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**Minister of Magic's Office -- British Ministry of Magic, London**

British Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge, was sitting in his very comfortable leather chair, behind his mahogany desk. Dolores Umbridge, his Undersecretary was seated on the other side, staring at him in silence, because he hadn't said a word since she had come in on his invitation.

Cornelius was deep in thought about what had happened at Hogwarts, regarding the woman sitting in front of him. About an hour-and-a-half ago, he had informed her after her second outburst – about or toward yet *another* foreign guest – in as many minutes, that he would be speaking to her. But he hadn't done so immediately. He had to meet with Albus Dumbledore, as well as Bartemius Crouch and Ludo Bagman.

He had also wanted to meet with French Minister of Magic Pierre Delacour, before anyone else could tell him about Dolores' rant about the man's eldest daughter, so he could do so and apologize on her behalf. But he hadn't been able to get in touch with the man. He knew someone else would tell the man, and wouldn't that be fun to deal with *that* issue when Delacour confronted him?!

He sipped on his glass of Ogden's Old Firewhiskey – his second glass, not that he'd admit it out loud – and looked at Dolores.

“You've had an interesting day already, Dolores,” Cornelius said.

“We both have!” Dolores tittered, “The First Task was a joy to watch! Most of it anyway.”

“I'm not speaking about the First Task, Dolores,” Cornelius said, “I am speaking of the two outbursts you made today.”

Dolores went red-faced and opened her mouth then closed as Cornelius raised a hand to stop her.

“I don't want to hear a word until I am finished!” Cornelius exclaimed. “You've already spoken plenty! First you insulted the eldest daughter of the French Minister of Magic. I don't care what she is, I don't care if it offends your prejudices, I don't care if it turned out she *had* murdered that dragon in front of all the innocent kids in the world, not just those seated in the stands. All four of those dragons could have died today and it would be legal, because they were ready to kill! Nesting mothers! I can't believe we chose nesting mothers! Who is responsible for that?! No, don't speak.

“The French Minister of Magic is not someone I want to mess around with. He's been in office far more years than I have. Has far more popularity, especially with the ICW, and he could start a war with us, just because we upset his daughter – his wife, and two daughters are Veela! If I hear you speaking to him or about him or his daughters *ever* again, you will be fired! And maybe brought up on charges for inciting a possible war. Nod and say nothing if I make myself clear.”
Dolores went red again and nodded.

“Then there was Lord Potter. *Lord Potter!* We thought he was dead! We thought his House extinct! And you saw what he told Cuffe! He has plans for the Winter Solstice Session, and now we’ve offended him! Yes, he’s fourteen. Yes, he can’t take his seat, but his *Pureblood* mother can! And she will do anything for him and to protect him! You’ll be lucky if she doesn’t call for you to be sent through the Veil – for no real reason at all! Madam Bones *told* you that Lord Potter was a legal Animagus in America, that he had MACUSA granted Diplomatic Immunity!

“He is a foreign guest! International Magical Cooperation! You’ve damaged it! Possibly irreparably. The MACUSA, and probably the French, will be in my office by the end of the Tournament. I guarantee it! They could go to the ICW and have me fired! If I even feel that is a possibility, you will go down first. Because you are responsible. Two weeks pay-dock, Dolores. You're lucky I need your assistance with the Tournament. But only with British citizens! Do not speak to any of our foreign guests. I forbid it! Why did you go after Potter? He's a *Pureblood*! We know this now!”

Dolores’ face regained her normal color. She had been red for Cornelius' entire rant. “His Godfather, Sirius Black. Remember the investigation we did. How we thought he was the Potter Secret Keeper?”

Cornelius sighed. “That quickly went away when Peter Pettigrew was discovered to have the Dark Mark. We figured they gave it to Pettigrew, and he betrayed the Potters. Lord Black is obviously very friendly with the Potters, so obviously he didn't betray them.”

“He could have them confounded!” Dolores argued.

“Dolores – we both know what Remus Lupin is,” Cornelius said, “Because it was voiced when we were told he would be coming in with the Ilvermorny delegates. No! No bigotry talk! You heard me about your Veela and Harpy rant, do you think I want to hear a rant about werewolves. Lupin, a werewolf, is immune from mind magic. He is Lord Black’s best friend. He would know if Lord Black confounded Lady Potter and her son. So... what is this about Lord Black?”

“He's the reason Rita Skeeter is in Azkaban,” Dolores said.

“Rita is the reason Rita is in Azkaban,” Cornelius said, “Or Barnabus Cuffe. He knew her secret, and did nothing about it. I was fine with that, because I did too, and so did you.”

“Barnabus turned Rita in, because Sirius threatened her!” Dolores said.

“He turned her in because she broke a law of exclusivity!” Cornelius said, “Rita outing the soon-to-be adopted daughter of Lord Black to Britain! Cuffe told me this!”

“We needed Rita,” Dolores said, “She was ruining the reputations of those we didn't want to overthrow our – your position, Cornelius. She is useful.”

“She outran her usefulness,” Cornelius said, “Let me guess. You wanted to ruin the reputation of Lord Potter, by arresting him for being an Animagus, whom you thought was unregistered – because his Godfather did the same to Skeeter's reputation?”

“Yes,” Dolores said.
“Did it work?” Cornelius asked.

“No,” Dolores said, going red again.

“Did you make a fool of yourself?” Cornelius asked.

“Yes,” Dolores went redder.

“Over the next two weeks while you work, and don't get paid,” Cornelius said, “Think about how you made a fool of yourself. So it doesn't happen again. Because if it does, you will never work anything higher than Maintenance in this building ever again. You are excused, Dolores. Good day.”

Dolores stood and left without another word. Cornelius sipped from his glass, as he wondered how he could save his job in the coming months. He needed to speak to his Chief Advisor again. But he had already seen enough of the man today, and that was way too much. Another time. He wanted to simply wind down and think about the wonderful First Task he had witnessed.

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**Hogwarts – Headmaster's Office**

Hundreds of miles away from the Minister of Magic's Office, the Minister's Chief Advisor – the man's least important title – Albus Dumbledore was also sipping on some Ogden's Old Firewhiskey. He was relaxed in his chair and thinking about the entertaining First Task.

The fact that Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom were tied for second surprised Albus. He didn't think Neville would do very well, but after a questionable start, the young man did quite well. He had met with Alastor Moody earlier, and talked to him about the Vine Traps. Albus had been correct to assume that Neville had gotten that strategy from Moody. At least the boy was getting help from the man, as had been Albus' advice.

Harry Potter, on the other hand, was an absolute shock. First there was the Patronus Swarm. Albus was quite sure out of every single person – student and staff – in Hogwarts, he was the only one who could do that. And maybe a couple of other staff. Most of the students and half the staff couldn't do Patronuses, and they were much older than Harry.

Then there was the Boulder-to-Panther Transfiguration. Not just one, but six of them! And they were used for distraction perfectly! Minerva McGonagall commented to him that she was astounded and amazed a fourteen year old could do that – even if he was taught by three people who were good at the subject.

Between the Patronus Swarm and the Panthers, that provided excellent distraction for the Dragon.

Then there was the leader of the pack. Albus was beyond shocked that Harry Potter was an Animagus – a Magical Animagus at that! A Shadow Panther! Sure, his illness from the cold proved that he had much to learn, but the boy was talented! Foolish, having revealed such a secret just to do a Task. But talented!

This worried Albus. The boy was quite powerful. Obviously he was the Child of Prophecy. The boy had an excellent chance at defeating Voldemort. Albus was hoping that the final confrontation between the two would end in tragedy for the Potters, simply because he wanted to be the one to kill Voldemort, and the Prophecy wouldn't let him until the prophecy was complete. With Potter dead, Voldemort could be killed by somebody else. Then he would take the fame for it, and bring the British Wizarding world back into Pureblood Paradise.
Sure, he was a Half-blood, but he believed his end-game. He had seen much too tragedy simply because the Dark Purebloods didn't like that there are Muggleborn – such as Hermione Granger, and – so one thought for several years – Lily Potter – who were academically better, and also who were romancing and marrying purebloods and tainting long pureblood bloodlines. As long as this happened, the Dark Purebloods would go to war with the Light Purebloods, and more Houses would go extinct because of Civil Wars amongst what was supposed to be a united blood type. Tragedy, death, destruction. Albus had had enough of it.

Potter's future sacrifice was unfortunate, but necessary. Hopefully he could extend his bloodlines and Houses before that happened, however. But Albus wasn't too sure it would happen. If the new bill for the Last Generation Loophole passed, perhaps he could work on another one to where Harry would be required to have at least one child per house by a required age. Even if the law didn't pass, perhaps he could still do it.

Albus nodded. It would upset Harry and his mother, but it would extend the boy's Houses he Lorded over. It would all work out in the end.

Suddenly, the door to his office opened and Minerva McGonagall stepped in, followed by French Minister of Magic Pierre Delacour, and Madame Olympe Maxime. Albus frowned. He did not like the looks of this. Remus Lupin's mention of Merpeople sprang to mind. No... this wasn't going to be fun at all.

“Greetings Minerva,” Albus said, standing up, “Minister Delacour, Madame Maxime. Please do come in. You may leave, Minerva.”

Minerva nodded and left. Albus conjured two chairs, one which was large enough for Madame Maxime. The French guests sat down.

“What can I do for you?” Albus asked, “If this is about mine and the other judges decisions regarding the dragon and Champion Delacour --”

“That was already explained to me by Madame Maxime and Lady Potter,” Pierre said.

Pierre had spoken to Lady Potter. Albus sighed. Yep. He knew what this was about.

“I listened to the Golden Egg right before coming up here, Albus,” Pierre said, “Perhaps you know what it says?”

Albus nodded. Of course he knew.

“My daughters nearly fainted again when they heard the clue and understood its meaning,” Pierre said, “Yes, again! My daughters fainted when the Egg shrieked at them.”

“Oh, dear,” Albus said, “I didn't know. I do apologize.”

“Fleur is going to have to swim in that lake of yours and rescue her sister from a group of Merpeople!” Pierre said, “Gabrielle is innocent, and she will be a hostage amongst Merpeople in February.”

“She will be protected,” Albus said.
“No, she won’t!” Pierre exclaimed, “The Merpeople have already threatened my daughters since they’ve been here!"

“I did not hear of this,” Albus said.

That was the honest truth. How had he not known the Merpeople threatened the Beauxbatons Champion and her sister? He knew everything around Hogwarts... didn't he? Well... there was Harry's Animagus. Obviously the boy had transformed into his form and ran around since he had come to Hogwarts. He'd have had to do so to practice for the Task. This was not good.

“They told my daughters on the very first night they were here, to stay away from the water!” Pierre said. “The girls hadn't visited the lake. They were in bed, asleep, and the Merpeople sensed them and threatened them unprovoked! Do you understand now the severity of this danger?!

Albus sighed. “I am afraid we cannot change the task. It is set.”

“Then unset it!” Pierre said. “Or I will! You won't like what happens. I am not having either of my daughters in that lake! I have several ideas to stop them. This is only one of them. I will send the entire French Auror League here to protect them. And guard the lake so they can prevent the task from happening! I will have them here tomorrow, until the Second Task is done so you cannot change the date and prevent it! And that is just one idea! I have one better idea I will not spoil. And you will not like it! It will be harmless, but it will be embarrassing!”

Albus sighed. “Let me meet with the judges and officials behind the Tournament and figure out what to do.”

“Including Lady Potter?” Pierre asked.

“Yes,” Albus said.

“Good, because she has an alternative Second Task to take place,” Pierre said, “I'll let her explain that. If the second task has anything to do with Lakes, water, Merpeople, and innocent hostages, especially my daughter, I will bring fury down on this castle and your Tournament! The only reason I am not taking my daughter away tomorrow is because she has a few friends she doesn't want to part from right now. Or else I would! Good day, sir!”

Madame Maxime hadn't said a word. She just sat there smirking. Now she stood and followed Pierre as they walked out of the office.

Portraits of Headmasters and Headmistresses covered their ears. Fawkes looked nervous.

“Even I'm not going to rage at that one,” Albus said. “I learned long ago not to mess with the French.”

Headmasters, Headmistresses and – to Albus' astonishment – Fawkes sighed in relief.

Maybe there was hope for the Headmaster. Probably not. But maybe.

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Chapter End Notes
Ha! I loved that ending. I know I didn't get Barney's interview in this chapter. It didn't fit right with the topics in this one. Besides it works better for the theme of next chapter.

I think you've noticed by now one of my favorite things to do is write characters ranting to bad people about things they made mistakes about. I did it twice here. And had so much fun!

Pierre's idea is awesome, and I am not going to say a word about it. Except it will happen whether or not the judges agree to an alternative task. Because it is awesome.

Should I have Harry listen to the clue even though the task is changing?

Next Chapter: Barney's interview with Harry. Also, in two separate points of view, Neville and Angelina get reaction from their friends and others about their performances. And maybe... Harry takes a bath in the Hospital Wing bathroom and listens to the egg.
Chapter Notes

Thanks to reviewer, HauntingHarmoni, for suggesting something that is announced by Albus in this chapter, and takes place in one of the next couple of chapters.

This first scene of this chapter takes place while Lily and Rose speak to Gabrielle. The first half of the second scene takes place while Rose and Lily are returning to the Hospital Wing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tuesday, November 24th, 1994

Hogwarts Champion Angelina Johnson sighed as she stared at her broken leg which was currently in a splint. She would be taking Skele-Gro before she slept so that her leg could mend. Right now, she was just relaxing on her bed, and really doing nothing but relaxing. Madam Pomfrey had told her she was “in for a rough night” after taking Skele-Gro, but right now she was in for a rough rest of the day, due to boredom.

Sure, she had some visitors. Friends had been coming by, and she had even been visited by Headmaster Dumbledore. The Headmaster told her Professor McGonagall would be coming by soon to apparently check on “her Lion”. Also, apparently Barnabus Cuffe would be coming by to speak Harry about a promised interview. Perhaps the man would visit her for an interview about the First Task.

Angelina winced as memories of the First Task washed through her mind. It wasn't the crash, or following pain and injury which upset her. It was the ten minutes it took to complete, and how she was in fourth place because of that! Bartemius Crouch had said it best... she had made everyone bored! Maybe this was revenge... she was the one bored now.

Sure, some of her friends had told her the task was exciting. And she did awesome. But she knew they were being nice because she had gotten fourth, and had gotten hurt. Her best friends, Katie Bell and Alicia Spinnet, had not actually talked to her about the Task yet. They wanted to know if she was okay. They hadn't visited since she had been taken to the Hospital Wing.

Speak of the devil. Katie Bell and Alicia Spinnet stepped in between the dividers on either side of her bed.
“Hello, strangers,” Angelina said, sarcastically, as the girls sat down in chairs on either side of her bed.

“Sorry!” Katie said, “We know we should have come here earlier! But we were telling everyone you were safe! Which is a good thing, because apparently, there is a rumor Lord Harry Potter is on his deathbed!

“Deathbed?” Angelina asked, “He's just sick! He has a cold from something he did in the strategy.”
“He's a Shadow Panther Animagus!” Alicia said, “We didn't see it, because we were with you. But Fred and George said Lord Potter, in his Animagus form, actually disappeared into shadows – like – a shadow dimension, or something – and reappeared under his dragon!”

“Shadows must be really cold,” Angelina said, “That is why he's ill! He's not dying! Where did that come from?”

“People saw Lord Potter's sister running away from here,” Katie said, “and their mother running after her. Rose Potter was upset.”

Angelina sighed. “I am sure he is quite fine. She was probably upset for another reason. Did anyone ask Rose or Lady Potter?”

“Lady Potter said he's fine – told anyone that who saw her and Rose,” Alicia said.

“Then he's fine!” Angelina said. “Merlin, the rumors that go on around here. If all rumors we heard were true, all three of us would be pregnant and mothers two times over by Fred and George!”

“Angie!” Katie squealed, going red, “Shut up. You know... I think George is going to ask you to the Yule Ball.”

Angelina sighed. “If he asks before anyone else, I'll accept.”

“You do like him, you know,” Alicia said, “So don't deny it. Should we go and find him and bring him here? Has he and Fred visited you?”

“Not yet,” Angelina said. “Fine, after we talk, then you can go tell them to come here.”

“Don't accept a date to the Ball from anyone else until you talk to him,” Alicia said. “If he doesn't ask, then it is hopeless.”

Angelina nodded, and smiled. She did like George, after all. “What about Fred? He going to ask one of you?”

Katie and Alicia nodded. Then giggled when they noticed the other nod.

“If he wants to ask us both, we'll both dance with him,” Alicia said. “If he asks me, I'll ask him if he wants to dance with you.”

“I'll tell him to ask both of you,” Angelina said, sticking out her tongue. “That's for setting me up with a date.”

“You are a Champion!” Katie said, “You need a date.”

“Yes – and anyone would ask me,” Angelina said, “I told you – Lord Potter said he might dance with me. If he has time.”

“Anyone could ask you,” Alicia said, “but how many boys do you like that aren't named George Weasley?”

“How many boys will ask only because you're Champion?” Katie said. “George Weasley isn't one of them.”
“Okay, I get it,” Angelina said. “Talk to me about the Task. My Task. Be honest. Everyone else doesn't want to make me mad. You two don't care about that.”

“It was very long,” Alicia said, “and if it took you another minute, I'd have summoned my broom and joined you just so you would get it done!”

“Me too!” Katie said. “I'm sorry, Angie, both those judges were right. It took way too long, and people around us were getting bored. Then they got excited again when you made the dragon fall over onto its back.”

“I didn't do that,” Angelina said, “That was her fault. Crouch was right. She was stupid. So I deserve fourth?”

“From what we've heard about the other three?” Alicia asked.

“Yes,” Katie and Alicia said in unison.

“I figured that,” Angelina said.

“It was still pretty exciting though!” Katie exclaimed, “Now you can say your survived one-on-one against an actual Dragon!”

“And Ludo Bagman said you have what it takes to be in the Professional Quidditch League!” Alicia said.

Angelina smiled, and nodded. She wasn't sure if she wanted to play Quidditch professionally, but at least it was an option if she couldn't figure out what else she wanted to do.

But first she needed to survive the Triwizard Tournament.

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Elsewhere in the Hospital Wing

Harry and Remus were quietly telling stories of their Full Moon Runs, when Sirius, Amelia, and Barnabus Cuffe arrived. Remus moved over to sit next to Hermione, and Sirius and Amelia sat together. Sirius conjured a chair and Barnabus sat down.

“I take it Tracey allowed this interview to happen?” Harry asked Sirius.

“Yes,” Sirius said, “We decided that we'll give Barnabus and the Daily Prophet one more chance to continue to hold to our exclusivity deal.”

“Very well,” Harry said, then looked at Barnabus, “Hello again, Barnabus. I suppose I am ready for the interview. Bozo didn't come with you?”

“We'll use a picture from the Weighing of the Wands for the article, if we have to use one,” Barnabus said; he removed writing material, including a Dicta Quill, from a carrying case, “Now, is there anything about the First Task you do not want to talk about?”

“Yes,” Harry said, “I'd rather not give too many important details about my Animagus form. I'd rather you write about it from your own opinion. I would like to leave it a mystery for the future if I
must use it in life-and-death situations. While I don't think that would happen, I don't want to chance it.”

“Very well,” Barnabus said. “First question. Those multiple Patronuses you used – I think it is called a Swarm – I find it very impressive that you were able to cast one Patronus, even more so that it was a Swarm! How long have you been able to do that?”

“Remus Lupin taught the Patronus Charm in a club he lead at Ilvermorny,” Harry said, “I was a member of the club. I was the only thirteen year old in the group to cast a Corporeal Patronus. Earlier this month, when we were theorizing what creature I would be facing, Remus picked Dementors – a Dementor Swarm. So he taught me the Patronus Swarm – and I was able to get three by the end of the two lessons we spent doing that strategy. I've been practicing all month since then to do the Swarm. Glad to say it worked.”

“In addition to your Panther Patronuses, you Transfigured six boulders into Panthers,” Barnabus said. “Is that something you could normally do?”

“I'm rather skilled at Transfiguration thanks to being taught by my Mom and Honorary Uncles,” Harry said, “But the Panther idea was only something I learned this weekend, and dedicated myself to it until I learned it.”

“And the Patronus Swarm and Panthers,” Barnabus said, “were used as distractions so that you could transform into your own Animagus form and hide amongst them to get your prize. Is this correct?”

“Yes,” Harry said, “As long as the distractions were working, the Dragon wouldn't go after me. And it worked, until they started to lessen in number. Luckily I had my prize in hand – or rather, mouth – and was escaping. I was able to escape before the Dragon could attack me, and I didn't get injured because the distractions helped.”

“But you were injured during the Task?” Barnabus asked.

“Simply the after-effects of being in my Animagus under stressful conditions,” Harry said, “Nothing the dragon did to me. I will be out of the Hospital Wing and healthy by tomorrow morning.”

“How do you feel about how the points were handed your way?” Barnabus asked. “Your mother was rather strict.”

“She always is when she expects me to do something well,” Harry said. “She's strict, but kind, and always has been in situations like this. Situations where I've been presented with a task – be it homework, exams, duels, so and so. Constructive criticism. She was like that during the contention tournament that brought me here. So I expected it. And she was correct. I am fine with being second place, because I know it could have been worse. The other judges gave me plenty of things to think about too.”

“Such as Albus Dumbledore?” Barnabus asked, “He basically scolded you for giving up a secret so important as being an Animagus.”

“My strategy allowed me to survive my task and I am tied for second place, one point behind first place,” Harry said, “I think I chose the correct strategy. If I hadn't survived the task, his reasoning wouldn't have mattered.”
“I asked you this during our first interview,” Barnabus said, “Perhaps you can answer now. How do you feel about the other Champions?”

“From what I know of each of them, they play to their strengths, just like I do,” Harry said. “If that continues, they will all be a challenge – even Angelina Johnson who didn't score as well as the rest of us.”

“Thank you, Harry,” Barnabus said, “With their permission, I would like to ask one question to each of your friends and family. But your mother and sister are not here.”

“Maybe they’ll be here soon,” Harry said, “If not, I could suggest they write you a letter with their answers.”

“Very well,” Barnabus said, “My question is for all four of you. How do you feel Harry did? If you were a judge, what would you have given him points-wise? Miss Hermione Granger? May I call you Lord Potter's girlfriend in the article?”

“You may,” Hermione said. “Watching Harry in the task was nerve-wracking and incredible. I couldn't take my eyes off the task, but I wanted to cover my eyes so badly. But he did very well. The judges, while strict, made good points. I would have given it a nine out of ten, just because he wound up in the Hospital Wing.”

Harry grinned when Hermione smiled at him.

Remus went next. “All month, Harry and I have trained for strategies against several creatures. He combined several of those strategies, but also adapted very well to the situation. He is ill due to after-effects, but the dragon did nothing to him. Ten out of ten. As a teacher, he would have gotten a very good grade on the exam. Perhaps extra credit.”

It was Sirius' turn. “It was entertaining! All around me, people were gasping in surprise, shock, and many other reactions and emotions. It was like watching a Quidditch match. Harry used a combination of his talents and skills, and brought them against a dragon using strategy very few would have considered. Entertaining and smart. Perfect ten.”

“I don't know Harry very well,” Amelia said. “But he impressed me. His talents of adaptation, and strategy. Any Auror in the Department would be amazed. His skills of magic at his age are impressive. If he lives in Britain for any long period of time, I'd love to have him on the force when he is older. If the American Aurors get him, I'd try to steal him away for my force.”

“You'd have to fight me first to take him away from home,” Lily said, as she and Rose returned. “

“I know I would,” Amelia said. “I give it a nine out of ten, Barnabus. The fact that he is in the Hospital Wing, means he does take risks to his health, and that is something that we like to prevent amongst the Auror Force. Live to fight another day.”

“Quite true,” Lily said, “I suppose you want our opinions on Harry, Barnabus.”

“Yes, Lady Potter,” Barnabus said.

“I said my piece during the points ceremony,” Lily said, “But I believe my feelings about it can be summed up in a few words. Terrifying, incredible, horrifying, awesome, hard to watch, and hard to look away from. I believe I already gave my points earlier today.”
“And finally, Rose – how did you think your brother did?” Barnabus asked.

“In my opinion, he should be in first place,” Rose said. “But I may be biased. It was the best thing I’ve ever seen him do. It was scary, and I was worried for him. But it was exciting. However, saying that... don’t ever do it again, Harry!”

Hermione and the adults chuckled. Harry merely grinned.

“Thank you, all of you,” Barnabus said, “I am finished here. I must interview the other Champions. I believe I can find Champion Johnson here in the Wing too. I must get permission from Madam Pomfrey. Even I know not to cross her in her Wing. Thank you everyone, especially you Lord Potter, and farewell.”

“Before you go,” Lily said, “Were you witness to Dolores Umbridge's tirade about Champion Delacour's performance?”

“I was,” Barnabus said.

“You realize Champion Delacour could have had a better score had we judges not been influenced by Umbridge?” Lily asked.

“Yes,” Barnabus said.

“How do you and the Daily Prophet feel about Dolores Umbridge?” Lily asked.

“We’ve done our best to make the Ministry happy, Lady Potter,” Barnabus said, “Mentioning her in such a negative way would not be wise.”

“Well, think about it,” Lily said, “If you include her part in the Tournament, that would go a long way toward us trusting you again in the future.”

Barnabus merely nodded. He stood and walked off. Another chair was conjured, and Rose and Lily sat down.

“That,” Sirius said, “was very Slytherin of you, Lily.”

“It will paint a bigger target on Umbridge,” Lily said. “I believe she wanted to ruin Harry's reputation when she tried to have him arrested. So I want to ruin hers.”

“What did she do to the judges?” Harry asked.

“Complained about Fleur being a Harpy and that she almost killed the dragon in front of innocent students,” Lily said. “She said Fleur didn't deserve to get such a high score. We only half-agreed so she'd shut up, and Fleur still got first place. Don’t worry, Harry. She will never speak to you again. If she does, I'd challenge her to a Duel of Satisfaction myself!”

Harry grinned. So... what happened? We know you went to go see Gabrielle and Fleur. Was it about Merpeople?”

Harry listened as Lily and Rose retold the tale. He groaned when Lily told him that there was a rumor about him on his deathbed, because everyone mistook Rose being upset as for him and not
Gabrielle and Fleur. Then they spoke of finding Fleur and Gabrielle unconscious, after opening the Golden Egg, and immediately reviving them. Then they told the story of meeting the Veela sisters' father, Pierre Delacour, as well as all the discussions.

“So,” Harry said, as he eyed the Golden Egg, “I have to place it under water and open it. I could take a bath tonight in the bathroom here and do so.”

“If I am correct, the Second Task is no longer going to be the task it was when this Egg was made,” Lily said. “Pierre Delacour was really angry, and he basically promised he was going to see it get changed. I expect to be summoned by Albus and the Tournament Committee in the coming weeks. I don't think you should focus on that Egg until we're sure you need it. It could just make you worry for nothing. However, I am going to be suggesting a Dueling Competition between the champions. So I think you should focus on that between now and the end of February, unless you hear differently.”

“Yes!” Sirius cheered, raising his hands, “My specialty!”

Lily grinned. “Why do you think I am going to be suggesting it? Harry's lessons with you would be lessons and training.”

Sirius grinned and nodded.

“Alright,” Harry said. “Well, put the Egg in the my bedroom until we know we need it.”

“One other thing Rose and I did not say about meeting Pierre,” Lily said. “We have been invited to a New Year's Eve Party at Delacour Manor in Paris. We can bring a total of twelve people. So... everyone here, including you, Hermione. And perhaps your tent-mates if they accept. And get permission from their parents.”

“That sounds really fun!” Hermione said, “I'll definitely ask my parents if I can go.”

“I would like to go,” Harry said, nodding.

Remus and Sirius agreed, and when asked, Amelia accepted to be Sirius' date.

“I will give the message to Pierre,” Lily said. “By the way, Hermione – Rose and I met with Minerva on our way here. She wants all the Hogwarts students in the Great Hall for dinner. Albus will be announcing something special this evening. I have no idea what it could be, but I think I'll attend too.”

“Me too, and I'll see if I can convince Gabby,” Rose said. “But I'm sure she and Fleur will be having dinner with their father, so probably not.”

“No, Rose,” Lily said, “Let Gabby be with her Papa and sister to celebrate Fleur's performance.”

Rose nodded.

“An announcement, huh?” Harry muttered, “Wonder what the old man is up to.”

Harry wasn’t sure if he was happy or not to be stuck in the Hospital Wing for Albus' announcement. He was distracted by that, that he didn't notice the four adults exchanging looks after his statement.
Lily was seated between Albus and Filius Flitwick at dinner. She was rather happy she didn't have to sit beside Severus. Even though their friendship was very slowly returning, spending so much time next to him wasn't something she wanted to do. His mind, so obsessed with lusting after her, might think she was actually having dinner with him. Like a date. She shuddered slightly at the thought – she didn't want to give him any of those signals.

Once the entire Great Hall filled with students, Albus Dumbledore stood up, as Minerva tapped her glass three times with her spoon, getting everyone's attention.

“Before you all fill your bellies this evening,” Albus said, “I have a couple of announcements, and something else to say. First, although only one of our four Champions are present, I would like to congratulate all four Champions on an entertaining First Task this afternoon.”

The Hall roared in applause and cheers.

“There have been rumors around Hogwarts that one of the Champions, Lord Harry Potter is apparently on his deathbed,” Albus continued, “I doubt Lady Lily Potter nor her daughter would be present this evening if that was true. I can confirm that Lord Potter is simply feeling the after-effects of the strategy he used against the Dragon today. He will be released from the Hospital Wing tomorrow, completely healthy.”

Lily smiled at the cheers and applause from many of the students, especially those seated with Rose, who had spent much of the past month in the Ilvermorny Tents.

“Now,” Albus continued, “I would like to announce a special event taking place on Thursday evening right here in the Great Hall. Centuries ago in America, a tradition was started with some of the first settlers in the country. Even to this year, they continue the tradition. Wizards, Witches, Squibs, and No-Majes – as they call Muggles across the pond – celebrate this tradition everywhere. They are united in the tradition as they are in the country. For those Americans visiting us, I would not want them to lose such a tradition. Therefore, on Thursday evening, we will be hosting a Thanksgiving Feast here in the Great Hall for all present – Ilvermorny, Beauxbatons and Hogwarts alike. Turkey and the trimmings will all be available to fill your bellies with. One and all are invited! I will see you there!”

Lily applauded along with much of those in the Great Hall.

“I know you are all hungry!” Albus said. “So am I. Let us eat!”

Albus sat down as the five tables filled with food.

“Thanksgiving, huh?” Lily asked Albus. “This isn't another one of those 'gifts' of yours, is it?”

“I am simply taking the opportunity to acknowledge our American guests, Lady Potter,” Albus said, “I would not want you, your family and students to break tradition.”

Lily shrugged. Before Albus' announcement, she had been thinking of plans to celebrate the holiday within the Ilvermorny Tents.

“I would appreciate any and all help to decorate the Great Hall for the Feast,” Albus said, “As I have never lived in America, and only been there for about a month of days – far separate from each other
“in the century-plus years of my life, I know very little about Thanksgiving.”

“I'm sure I could help,” Lily said.

“Thank you,” Albus said.

“I heard you spoke to French Minister of Magic Pierre Delacour,” Lily said.

“Yes,” Albus said, sighing, “He wants the Second Task to be changed.”

“Will it be?” Lily asked.

“That depends on what is decided,” Albus said, “I am going to request a meeting for all judges, Cornelius Fudge, and Amos Diggory.”

“Amos Diggory?” Lily asked.

“Yes,” Albus said. “As he is the leading expert in the Ministry, he would be able to tell us about Veela and Merpeople, and the enmity between them. Also, it would bring a seventh person into the voting committee to prevent a tie in votes.”

“It might be better to invite Champion Delacour or her father to explain it better,” Lily said.

“I will take that into advisement,” Albus said, “I will also ask that we suggest alternative tasks. Minister Delacour said you had an idea to suggest?”

“Yes,” Lily said, “A Duelling Tournament between the Champions. I will give more details during the meeting. Any idea when the meeting will take place.”

“Within a week or two,” Albus said, “I will let you know when the exact date will be.”

“Very well,” Lily said.

Lily began talking to her favorite Professor as a student, Filius Flitwick, as she began to eat dinner.

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Elsewhere in the Great Hall

Neville Longbottom was sitting beside Ginny at the Gryffindor Table. Ever since the First Task, students from all four Houses – including Slytherin! – had been congratulating him for such a brilliant performance during the Task. He had spent an hour in the Gryffindor Common Room during an afternoon party, where he was wizard of the hour. Mostly he just wanted to spend time with Ginny.

However, after discussing the Task for the dozenth time in less than an hour, Neville left Gryffindor Tower with Ginny. He headed to the Owlery and wrote a letters to his Gran and Uncle Algie to tell them about the Task since they couldn't attend. He had expected the letters to show up tomorrow morning, so he was surprised when they had come about an hour ago, after putting away his knapsack – he had been catching up on his homework in the library with Ginny for much of the afternoon.

His Grandmother was very happy for him, and proud of him for doing such a good job and getting
second place, tied with Harry. Uncle Algie was happy and proud as well, though he also lectured Neville by letter, listing several things he could have done instead of taunting the Dragon, in order for it to move away from its eggs.

While Neville and Ginny were in the library, Barnabus Cuffe gave him an interview for the Daily Prophet, regarding the First Task. Ginny was also included, for which she was very happy.

“Neville?” Ginny asked, “Are you listening to me?”

“Hmm?” Neville replied. “Sorry, Ginny. Thinking about Gran and Uncle Algie's letters.”

“You did very well with the task,” Ginny said, “I told you and Cuffe that.”

Neville blushed. Ginny had literally used “My Knight in Shining Armor” for her part in the interview.

“Anyway, I was saying,” Ginny said, “That George finally asked Angelina out on a date. They're going to the Yule Ball together. Fred, believe it or not, says he is going with both Katie Bell and Alicia Spinnet. Not sure I believe him. But I suppose we'll find out.”

Neville nodded. He knew what she was trying to do. But he wasn't going to give her what she wanted in the middle of the Great Hall.

“A Ball!!” Lavender Brown asked, across the table, “Is that why we had to bring formal outfits?”

“Yeah,” Ginny said. ‘Yule Ball on Christmas.”

“Ugh! My formal outfit is not brilliant enough for a Ball!” Lavender said, to her best friend, “What say you, Parvati? Next Hogsmeade opportunity, we buy new outfits.”

“I brought one that is just fine,” Parvati said.

“But we should match!” Lavender exclaimed.

“So match with mine,” Parvati said, rolling her eyes, “I am more worried about getting a date.”

“And now I have to worry about that too!” Lavender groaned, “Thanks.”

“Bring each other,” Ginny said, with a snort.

Lavender and Parvati glanced at each other.

“Uh... I was taking the mickey, girls,” Ginny said.

“We know,” Lavender and Parvati said.

“But, it is a possibility,” Parvati asked.

“And it would prevent sending wrong signals,” Lavender said, “to certain boys around here if we accepted dates from them, just so we could have one.”

“I think going together would also send wrong signals,” Ginny said, “Like.. the kind of signals that
would make what happened to Tracey happen to you.”

“Last minute option?” Parvati asked, obviously ignoring Ginny now.

“Sure,” Lavender said.

“Save a dance with me either way,” Parvati said.

“Definitely,” Lavender said.

Ginny groaned. “I'm going to get blamed for this.”

“I think you're being too cynical about this,” Neville said.

“I suppose the idea of them going together is hot, huh?” Ginny asked, glaring at him.

“What?” Neville asked, “No – but them going as friends, just so they'd have a date --”

“Right,” Ginny said, sarcastically.

“He is right,” Lavender said, “You are cynical. Now, who do I want to convince to take me? Lord Potter?”

“You know he's taken, Brown,” Ginny said.

“Yeah, by a Muggleborn,” Lavender said, “My father said it may be illegal for him to date her after the Winter Solstice Session.”

“Not going to happen!” Parvati exclaimed, “The Great Alliance is making sure it won't!”

“Ha!” a voice said, loudly. “What Great Alliance?”

Neville glanced toward the voice. A second-year girl he didn't recognize was looking at them.

“What do you want, Vane?” Parvati asked, “You probably won't even be able to go to the Ball.”

“My Father, Lord Vane,” Vane said, “is going to do his best to make sure Purebloods like Lord Potter don't waste their bloodline on Muggleborn like that girl who's obviously using Love Potions on him.”

“You take that back!” Parvati snarled.

“Can you prove I am wrong?” Vane asked.

“You have a lot to learn, Vane,” Parvati said, “Your jealousy just made you reveal something you should have kept silent until the Winter Solstice.”

“Maybe two somethings with that Love Potion gag,” Neville said, “Thinking about using them on Lord Potter, are you?”

Vane blushed and glared at him. Ginny glared back at her.
“The Great Alliance is going to walk all over your father,” Parvati said.

“We'll see,” Vane said. “You don't know what strategy my father has.”

Neville sighed. He was going to have to speak to Lord Potter, or his mother. Even if Vane didn't use Love Potions, someone else might. His Gran had taught him how to detect those Potions back when he began dating Ginny. It was when she was being paranoid that Ginny or her mother was going to do something foolish just so Ginny could be Lady Longbottom. He was happy to say he had never detected anything like that since dating Ginny. And that was why he knew he loved her. Because it was real.

“Like I said,” Parvati said, ignoring Vane, “Harry will be going with Hermione Granger to the Ball. He asked her the second day he was here.”

“Damn, he works fast,” Lavender said, “I never had a chance.”

“Maybe you should pass that same opinion around as gossip,” Ginny said, “I'm sick of listening to girls like my dorm-mates who think they have a chance with Lord Potter. Hermione Granger could just be a girlfriend while he's here. He'll be back in America after the Tournament. How many girls here really would follow him to America, sacrificing everything else they have here, just to be Lady Potter?”

“Very few,” Parvati said, “Maybe those girls who are living in the Ilvermorny tents now.”

“So... Potter's not an option,” Lavender said, “Neville?”

Ginny glared at her.

“I'm simply joking, Ginny,” Lavender said, grinning. “Though it is interesting that you're worried he'd say yes if I asked him. Betrothal Contract not a sure thing?”

“Eff you, Brown,” Ginny said.

Several minutes later, Neville and Ginny were finished with their dinner. When they entered the Entrance Hall, he brought her out to the front steps of the castle. Neville sat down on the steps and stared in the direction of the Ilvermorny Tents. Ginny sat down too.

“What are we doing out here?” Ginny asked.

“You didn't need to give me anvil-sized hints in there, Ginny,” Neville said. “Talking about your brothers' dates to the Yule Ball, reacting so harshly to Lavender joking about asking me. Talking about the Ball in general. Don't you think I wanted to wait for a right time and place. And not just ask you in the middle of all those people? We're Betrothed, Ginny. You're my girlfriend. Do you truly believe I was going to ask somebody else?”

“I expected to be the first in my family to have a date to the Ball,” Ginny said.

“You are,” Neville said. “Just because you haven't been asked. You and I are Betrothed, we have been since we were little, and known about the Contract for a few months. We've been a couple for about that long too. We don't have the luxury of wondering who we're going with, and searching for someone. Or whether or not the person we ask will say yes...”
“or whether the person who we want to ask us, will do so,” Ginny said.

“For us, it is a sure thing pretty much,” Neville said. “The only luxury we have is the right place and right time. But now we’ve lost the whole surprise part. Will you go to the Yule Ball with me, Ginny?”

“Yes, Neville,” Ginny said, “Of course I will. And next time we go on a date, I’ll just let you ask me without hinting about it.”

“Tonight just shows us we have a lot to learn about our relationship and the future of it,” Neville said. “We’re pretty much guaranteed to get married. I would very much like the wonder of the rest of our courting to be as if we’re just a boyfriend and girlfriend, dating like any normal couple our age.”

“Neville?” Ginny asked. “Would you really have asked me to the Ball if, before now, we were just friends who weren’t Betrothed?”

“Definitely,” Neville said. “I fancied you since the night I saw you in the Chamber of Secrets. I told you that before. I would have asked you if we were just friends.”

“First a Basilisk, now a Dragon,” Ginny said.

“I didn’t slay the Basilisk,” Neville said.

“You didn’t slay the Dragon either,” Ginny said. “Yet you faced both knowing exactly what you were facing, and you still did it.”

“I didn’t have a choice either way,” Neville said. “Today was because I’ve been put in this Merlin-be-damned tournament, against my knowledge. And the Basilisk...”

“You were doing it to save me,” Ginny said, “Exactly. My Knight in Shining Armor.”

She leaned over to him and kissed him. Their kiss lasted about a minute.

“I love you, Ginny,” Neville said, as he backed away.

Ginny grinned. “I love you too. Now, get up.”

She hopped up and pulled him to his feet.

“We’re finding a broom closet before curfew,” Ginny said. “After the day you’ve had, you need to wind down. You’re getting another sneak-peek.”

Neville grinned and allowed her to drag him back into the castle. It was at that moment that he saw Lady Lily Potter walking out of the Entrance Hall, with the girls that were residents in the Ilvermorny tent.

“One moment, Ginny,” Neville said. “I need to do something.”

Ginny frowned and nodded.

“Lady Potter?” Neville said, raising his voice.
“You can call me Lily you know, Neville,” Lily said, “Did you need something?”

“I need to talk to you about something important,” Neville said. “About possible threats against your son...”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished. And so the First Task Arc is finished.

I'd like to make one thing crystal clear, because someone brought it up a couple days ago. There will be NO Lily/Severus in this story. Her verbal rejection a few chapters ago should have told all my readers that. I do not like that ship at all.

I thought about Dumbledore announcing the Yule Ball. But that can take place during the Thanksgiving Feast. A few characters know about it anyway, and it would have messed up Lavender's shock when Ginny talked about it.

Someone wanted to see Romilda Vane in this story. So there you go!

BTW! I got my own copy of the Cursed Child script-book! Yay!

Next Chapter: Harry has an important discussion with Lily, Remus and Sirius once returning from the Hospital Wing. Some focus on the Hogwarts Five plus Tonks, since I have had a lack of them. Also, the Thanksgiving Feast.
The Bad Kind of Paranoid

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: I don't know how long Amortentia takes to brew. Just don't think about that while reading this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Wednesday, November 25th, 1994

Around eight-thirty Wednesday morning, Lily Potter was brewing a Potion in a cauldron on the kitchen counter in the House Potter Tent. Remus was sitting at the dining room table going through a pile of mail. Sirius and Rose were still asleep. It was Thanksgiving break for the Ilvermorny students, and there were no classes for the rest of the week for the American students, so teacher and students were sleeping in. Unfortunately for the Hogwarts students, this wasn't a break, and they had already left their about half-an-hour ago to go to the castle.

“The Daily Prophet arrived thirty minutes ago, and mail has been arriving since then too,” Remus said. “I don't think the majority of these are from reactions to the article about the Task.”

“I imagine students in Hogwarts sent out a bunch of letters to their parents after the First Task,” Lily said.

“So should we be expecting more Betrothal offers just because the news is out Harry's an Animagus?” Remus asked.

“Ugh,” Lily said, turning up her nose, and not because of the Potion in front of her, “Parents might think we'd teach their daughter how to be an Animagus. So probably. Especially from those who have been sending offers once a week.”

“Well if you'd stop burning them and just reply that we don't want any offers,” Remus said.

“I like burning them,” Lily said. “Makes me feel better.”

The curtain to Remus and Sirius' bedroom opened. Sirius emerged, and trudged over to the coffee pot.

“Something smells like dog in here and it isn't me,” Sirius said, then looked around, wildly, now wide awake. “Is Amelia here? Where are you, Bones? I'm willing to go back to bed!”

Remus snickered. “Sirius, I thought we had a rule of no hanky-panky in the bedroom we share.”

“No, you made that rule before I started dating Amelia,” Sirius said. “And haven't brought it up since. So it is void.”

Lily sighed and shook her head. “Amelia isn't here. You're smelling her scent in the Amortentia.”
“Oh,” Sirius said, then glanced at Lily, and then the Cauldron. “Why are you brewing Amortentia? It isn't a lesson for today. We gave the students the rest of the week off for Thanksgiving Break.”

“Last night Neville Longbottom told me that he suspects girls in Hogwarts will try to use Love Potions on Harry,” Lily said, “I didn't tell you last night, because I didn't want to chance Rose listening in. I had to tell Hermione and the girls to take Rose back here once Neville said the word 'threat', because I didn't want them to worry. Anyway... apparently a girl Rose's age decided to accuse Hermione of using Love Potions – and maybe bringing up her own strategy in the process.”

“A twelve year old?” Sirius asked, then whistled, “Ladies of all ages are after Harry.”

“And most of them because they want to be a Lady of rich Houses,” Lily said, glaring at him, “Not because they fancy him. So... I'm going to teach Harry to identify Amortentia, as that is the commonly used Love Potion. Then I am going to teach him how to detect illegal Potions in drinks and food. Merlin, we should have done this when we gave him the Talk!”

“I think we need to talk to Hermione and the girls in the tent,” Remus said, suddenly.

“Why?” Lily asked.

“To ask them about Love Potions,” Remus said.

“Remus!” Lily said, “If you accuse them, you'd only create enmity and distrust!”

“We both know Harry and Hermione are getting a little too talkative about permanent futures for two teens so young,” Remus said.

“Because of that damn Loophole and Betrothal Contract!” Lily argued. “He's Betrothed to Daphne, and Tracey is going to basically be his wife. He likes Hermione... a lot.”

“Could be Love?” Remus suggested.

“Remus John Lupin,” Lily said, through clenched teeth, “If you don't stop accusing Hermione of using Love Potions --”

“Can't we just be cautious?” Remus asked.

“Sirius?” Lily asked.

“If Remus wants to get a few hormonal teenage witches mad at him by accusing them,” Sirius said, “Let him do it. Ninety-five percent chance he's wrong. He makes a good point about the whole 'permanent future' thing, but that just needs to be solved by a sit-down discussion with Harry and Hermione.”

Lily stared at him, her jaw dropping slightly. “Wow... you sound like a father.”

“Well, between Tracey, and Amelia talking to me about her raising Susan,” Sirius said, “And being something like a father to two children for thirteen years – it had to rub off on me sometime.”

Lily smiled at Sirius, then turned and glared at her other friend. “Do you see, Remus? Sirius is actually being the smart Marauder here!”
“I am pretty sure I've just been insulted!” Sirius whined. “You know I don’t like back-handed compliments.”

“If you want to keep this up,” Lily continued, ignoring Sirius, “I wish you luck. I also hope you're ready for hexes and curses on specific parts of your body. What Harry and Hermione have... that is not assisted from Potions. If they're talking about the future, it is because they are worried about it. Before too long, it is going to be a long-distance relationship. They're not discussing marriage already, they're worried they're having a romantic relationship that is destined to be doomed.

“Besides, it isn't that bad. Merlin, remember me and James back in seventh year? Started dating at Halloween, and by Christmas, I was wondering when he was going to give me a ring and ask me to be his forever.”

More like for four years, a voice in Lily's head said before she could stop it.

Remus sighed. “That was because of fear of short lives, and wartime and --”

“Voldemort is coming back soon,” Lily said, trying not to wince at the words 'short lives'.

“And you were seventeen, going on eighteen!” Remus exclaimed.

“I am not arguing with you on this anymore,” Lily said. “We have to already make Harry paranoid of a bunch of girls he doesn’t know possibly using Potions. What about girls he does know? And that he trusts? Do you want him to lose the trust of his new friends? Stop it, Remus Lupin. Stop it now. I trust all of them. Sirius is right. A sit-down discussion will solve the problem. And don't you dare bring up accusations against his girlfriend when he returns. Or you will be sleeping in the Shrieking Shack until after the Full Moon.”

“Stop!” Sirius exclaimed, raising both hands, one toward each of his friends, “Merlin bless it! Thirteen years of two Alphas in the same pack have finally taken its toll on this family! Do I need to send both of you back to your bedrooms? Harry could be back at any moment – we don't know if Madam Pomfrey would excuse him without our permission or not. Do you want him to come in here during this discussion? You're lucky Rose is asleep. Stop it. Calm down. We have good plans. Merlin help us, we've all become the bad kind of paranoid!”

Lily frowned at the mention of her daughter. She had forgotten one of her children was still in the same tent. She walked over to the bedroom she and Rose shared and peeked into it. Then she sighed in relief. Rose was still asleep. She knew how to make sure Rose wasn't fooling her, and she couldn't find any indication Rose was awake. She shut the curtained door, and walked back over to the kitchen.

“She's still asleep, thank Merlin” Lily said, lowering her voice to a whisper, and glaring at Remus. “Do you know how much she cares – in a platonic way – about those girls in that tent, Remus? Do you? Do you want a twelve year old -- who is already worried about her brother's survival in this Tournament – to be worried that her friends – her brother's girlfriend – are trying to betray him? What about the idea of Gabrielle betraying her?

“If Harry wants to ask them after our discussion, that is his choice. We will not influence him on that decision. I will not have him losing the friendship and relationships he has with those girls because of paranoia and a bunch of teenage girls struck with lust and greed in that damned castle! He's already got enough issues surrounding him. Do not create more!”
Remus sighed and nodded, returning to his work at detecting any dangerous mail.

“Sirius?” Lily asked. “Would you please go see if Harry can be released, or is already on his way down here?”

“Can you two Alphas survive that long?” Sirius asked.

“Maybe,” Lily said. “But I’m not risking Remus having a one-on-one discussion with him, in his current mind-set. And I am the only one who can brew this correctly.”

Sirius nodded and brought his coffee back into his bedroom, so he could change into something that wasn't his pajamas. He usually wore pajamas in the morning when he didn't have class. Meanwhile, Lily went into Harry's bedroom and put together an outfit for her son. When Sirius returned, she handed the outfit to him. Neither Lily or Remus spoke until Sirius left.

“Can I apologize to you, Lily?” Remus asked.

“Will it be a serious apology, or a Sirius apology?” Lily asked, “Because those are two very different things.”

“I am sorry for bringing that up,” Remus said. “He's right. We've all become the bad kind of paranoid. We really need to talk to Harry about everything. Not only this threat, but our suspicions about Albus. We need to take care of it today. Now that he doesn't have the First Task to worry about – and a few months until the next.”

“He's got the Winter Solstice Session to worry about,” Lily said.

“He won't be alone facing that Task, Lily,” Remus said. “He'll have us, and the Great Alliance. We need to tell him about everything.”

“Fine,” Lily said. “I'm not accepting your apology until I know you won't speak of anything you just told me about your fears concerning his friends. So after our discussion with him.”

Remus nodded and returned to his work. Lily turned back to the Amortentia. She gave it a whiff, and smiled as she smelled scents she hadn't smelled in years.

She let the scent of James Potter calm her down. James could always calm her down, even thirteen-plus years after his death.

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**Hogwarts**

Harry was eating breakfast brought to him by Madam Pomfrey. He had had to convince her not to give him a “full English breakfast”, and just a normal American breakfast. She snorted when he joked that he'd throw it up, but decided not to risk it. So he was now eating bacon, eggs and toast with some orange juice.

Earlier, Hermione had visited for about fifteen minutes, but left so she could go to classes. He had apologized to her for missing out on their breakfast tradition, but she waved it away. She also told him about Dumbledore's announcement the previous evening, which was a Thanksgiving Feast. Harry was surprised, but understood when she said Dumbledore was just trying to acknowledge the
traditions of the American guests. Harry looked forward to the Feast. Hermione left after giving him a peck on the lips. He wished her luck during classes, and promised he’d spend time with her later that afternoon after her classes.

She countered and told him she wanted him to spend time with all of the Hogwarts Five. It wasn’t until he started eating breakfast that he had realized why she had made that request. He hadn’t spent much time with his Betrothed, his Betrothed’s likely future Wife’s Consort, or Luna, since he had heard about the Dragons. When was the last time he had a sit-down conversation with them? Yes, a conversation with the girls was something he needed to do. If only just to have some nice, fluffy conversation about their lesson-filled day.

As he was finishing up with breakfast, Sirius arrived alone.

“I’ve come to break you out of the Pomfrey Prison, Shadow!” Sirius said.

Harry laughed. “She was going to let me go after breakfast,” Harry said.

“Not before? So no breakfast tradition with Hermione?” Sirius asked, grinning.

“She was here earlier,” Harry said. “It was before I started eating, but it counted, according to her.”

“You’re becoming pretty serious – no pun intended – about her, kid,” Sirius said. “It is beginning to worry us adults about just how serious. We’d like to talk to you and Hermione about that later.”

“Concerning what?” Harry asked, frowning.

“How did your mother put it?” Sirius asked rhetorically, “Whether or not you two believe your relationship is destined to be doomed.”

Harry frowned, thinking of the possibility of Hermione not attending Ilvermorny.

“I suppose we do need to talk about that, don’t we?” Harry asked.

“Yep,” Sirius said. “You finished eating? Can I go tell Madam Pomfrey to clear you up? Oh! Here is the outfit your Mom set up for you. We’ll take the rest in a bag down to the tent.”

Harry popped the last piece of bacon into his mouth, took the last gulp of juice, and handed the plate, utensils and glass to Sirius. He left to find Madam Pomfrey.

Harry thought about what Sirius said about ‘doomed relationships’ as he began to get dressed. Sirius and Madam Pomfrey returned as he tied his tennis shoes.

“You are quite assuming, Lord Potter,” Madam Pomfrey said, “What if I decided you were to remain here for another day.”

“He’s fine, Poppy!” Sirius exclaimed.

“I’ll be the judge of that,” Madam Pomfrey said; she checked up on Harry for about three minutes, then, “He’s clear to go.”

“See!” Sirius said.
“Thank you, Madam Pomfrey,” Harry said.

“Thank me by not being my patient for the remainder of the Tournament,” Madam Pomfrey said, “That means no more injuries!”

“You sound like his mother!” Sirius said.

“Then she's an excellent mother,” Madam Pomfrey said.

“I promise, ma'am,” Harry said. “See you later.”

“I hope not,” Madam Pomfrey said, with a snort.

Harry grinned. He bagged the previous day's outfit, and followed Sirius out of the Hospital Wing.

“Your mother, Remus and I want to speak to you about important things when we return,” Sirius said.

“About Hermione?” Harry asked.

“No,” Sirius said, “Whatever we're going to talk to you about, it has nothing to do with Hermione unless said otherwise. The discussion I mentioned earlier is for later when we can speak to you and Hermione.”

“That just worries me,” Harry said.

“Blame Moony,” Sirius said, mysteriously.

Sirius went silent, so Harry did too, as they headed on their way out of the castle. The trip back to the tent took twenty minutes. When Harry stepped into the tent, Lily walked over to him and hugged him. Harry smelled something that oddly reminded of Hermione, and wondered if he was accidentally smelling his mother's hair and whether or not his mother was using the same shampoo as Hermione.

“Are you alright?” Lily asked.

“Lily, Poppy let him out of her prison,” Sirius said, “Would she have done that if he wasn't?”

“I suppose so,” Lily said, “I take it Poppy fed you breakfast too?”

“Yes, Mom,” Harry said.

“Alright,” Lily said, “Come sit with us at the table. We have something to talk to you about. Rose woke up and I sent her off to see if she can meet Gabrielle's father before he leaves.”

“So a distraction,” Harry said, “Which means you don't want her to listen to what we have to discuss.”

“It would only worry her,” Lily said.

“Which means it will worry me,” Harry said, sighing.
As he walked over to the table, he noticed something covered with a towel that was roughly the size of his mother's Cauldron.

“What are you brewing?” Harry asked, as he sat down with Lily, Sirius and Remus.

“I'll explain it soon,” Lily said. “That will be our second part of our discussion. First is more important.”

“Maybe,” Remus said, “But not the thing that will be affecting him most immediately.”

Harry caught Lily glaring at Remus and wondered what that was about.

“I need you to think about a few things right now, Harry,” Lily said. “Imagine Albus Dumbledore knew Sirius and Amelia were in the Forbidden Forest when he and Ludo Bagman were talking about Dragons. He just so happened to walk by the Thunderbird when they mentioned Dragons. And Sirius happened to be there. The one person out of all three of us who would tell you immediately about Dragons without worrying about 'facing the unknown'.

“Now... Remus told me Dumbledore was there when you saw the Dragons. You overheard him asking about the dragon species. Dumbledore is wise, and an expert on Dragon blood. Why does he need to ask that? Imagine if he knew you were in the forest.

“Did you hear about the Thanksgiving Feast Albus announced?”

“Hermione told me,” Harry said, “He announced it last night during the Feast.”

“He also asked me if I had suggestions for an alternative Second Task,” Lily said. “Allowing five of his students to room with complete strangers in an additional tent. Allowing Nymphadora Tonks – an Auror-in-Training, not an actual Auror yet – to guard Tracey, instead of suggesting his own way to help her – maybe because she's Sirius' cousin? Giving us back the Invisibility Cloak when we know he had given it Neville. We know he couldn't give it to us right away because Neville had it. Neville is an ally of his. He could have asked Neville to give it to us. But he, himself, gave it to us instead.”

Lily clasped her hands together. “Do you know why? Think of everything I just said.”

Harry frowned and pondered. “This isn't a coincidence?”

“Twice is a coincidence,” Remus said. “Three times is a pattern.”

“He's buttering us up,” Harry said. “Trying to earn our trust. He's...”

“Giving us all gifts so we owe him something,” Sirius said. “Damn Gryffindor is more Slytherin than Salazar.”

“Owe him what?” Harry asked.

“A meeting,” Lily said, “A meeting with you, me, and him. Maybe Sirius and Remus. But according to what Severus said, Albus wants to meet with you and I.”

“Obviously you have theories, or this discussion would be next-to-pointless,” Harry said. “Unless it is just to convince me we need to walk up to his office today.”
“Not today,” Lily said, “We're hoping we can discover everything he's going to tell us before he tells us.”

“What do you believe he is going to tell us?” Harry asked.

“Why Voldemort targeted us that night,” Lily said, “Why Neville Longbottom was targeted by his followers a few days later. Why Voldemort survived the night your father... blew both of them up. We're not sure he knows why, but he might. Why Voldemort told Neville that he was destined to kill him. Why Albus told Neville that Voldemort lied.”

Harry's eyes widened as implications began forming in his mind.

“He told a white-lie,” Harry said, “Neville isn't destined to kill Voldemort. I am.”

“We don't know that,” Remus said.

“We have theories about it,” Sirius said, “Granted those theories are pretty damning in themselves.”

“Voldemort could have sent his followers after Neville,” Harry said, “You know – 'if I don't come back, kill Neville Longbottom'. Voldemort assumed what everyone else did. That I was dead. Neville's alive. I don't know much about Prophecy, but 'destiny' – goes hand-in-hand with Prophecies. If I'm dead, and Voldemort believes one of us has the best chance of killing him – then he's picking someone else who is alive, and that is Neville – who survived his Death Eaters' attack.”

He grinned when Lily, Sirius and Remus looked at him in awe. Then he shrugged.

“Come on – you just said Dumbledore lied when Voldemort said Neville was destined to kill him,” Harry said, “Dumbledore wants to speak to me. Not three former Order members about Voldemort. Me. Obviously he thinks I'm important when it comes to defeating Voldemort for good.”

“We're in awe because you aren't breaking down or ranting, Harry,” Remus said.

Harry shrugged again. “Voldemort's alive. We know this. He's the reason Dad is dead. If I had a chance to kill him, I'd take it – before he can kill anyone else I love.”

“I think that is what Albus wants, Harry,” Lily said. “Severus said Albus wants you to remain in Britain --”

“-- and it likely has nothing to do with Lord Potter attending Hogwarts,” Sirius said.

“Severus also basically said Voldemort could return within a year,” Lily said, “And also that Severus has been a spy for Albus since... since the day he thought we were dead.”

“Which explains why a man with a foul attitude is still teaching after all this time,” Sirius said. “How long would a man like Snape be a teacher at Ilvermorny? Dumbledore needs him.”

“So... if Dumbledore gets his way,” Harry said, “Either I won't be returning to America until Voldemort is dead. Or I will... and then coming back before Voldemort is dead. Because it is up to me to kill him.”

“According to Albus,” Remus said, nodding. “You were correct earlier to assume that there could be a Prophecy. If there is, it is in the Hall of Prophecies – and it is definitely there still – because we
believe that only you or Voldemort – and maybe Neville – could touch it. Also, Neville's Great-Uncle Algernon Croaker is an Unspeakable.”

“Possibly the Head of the Unspeakables,” Sirius said.

“Lily?” Remus asked, “Do you want him to know about the diary?”

Lily nodded. “I'll tell the story. Remember when Neville said Algie kept the diary, and made a point not to take it to Albus?”

Harry nodded.

“Remember the story of the ghostly Tom Riddle?” Lily asked.

Another nod.

“That ghost said he was a memory – a special memory,” Lily said. “Now, I can understand how a diary could be a Pensieve. How a memory from a diary could come into being. I could probably invent one. But a memory like Tom Riddle actually speaking to Neville, Algie, Fred and George? Knowing Ginny's name? Memories don't speak of the present, Harry.”

“So... what was he?” Harry asked.

Lily inhaled and exhaled, and Harry could feel the carefulness she spoke with. “We believe he was a piece of a soul, placed into the diary, to protect the soul-piece. Tom Riddle's ghost was an echo of a soul-piece placed into the diary at the same age Riddle was. So sixteen, apparently. If he did this at sixteen, Voldemort was remorseless even then. What he did... was create a Horcrux – which can only be created by committing an act so dark, it tears your soul.”

“Murder,” Harry said, quietly.


“But if Voldemort is alive to this day,” Sirius said, “Even after Algie destroyed his Horcrux – it means he made more.”

“So we need to speak to Algie about the Horcruxes,” Remus said.

“But Horcruxes are the Darkest Art in the book,” Sirius said, “You just don't speak the word in every day conversation, you don't teach it at any school. We just can't bring up the subject to Algernon Croaker. We have to convince him we're doing so for a reason. So that we can help you kill Voldemort, if that is what is going on.”

“The Prophecy,” Harry said, “If there is one, we need to speak to Croaker about it.”

“Yes,” Sirius said.

“So... Albus knows about this Prophecy, if there is one,” Harry said. “He believes I am destined to kill Voldemort. He may or may not know about Horcruxes. He wants to use me to kill Voldemort. But for what gain?”

“That – we do not know,” Lily said. “That – we may never know, Harry.”
“It could be just to rid a monster from the world, once and for all,” Remus said. “Or it could be much worse.”

“Which is why we don't want to talk to him yet,” Sirius said. “We want to, at least, wait until after the Winter Solstice. If Albus wants you to remain in Britain – he could use the Wizengamot to do so.”

“How?” Harry asked.

“By passing a law that makes it illegal for you to marry someone like Hermione,” Lily said. “Like passing a law that says all three of your future Ladies must be British purebloods, since you’re the Lords of Houses which were British-born.”

“Oh, he could do worse than that,” Sirius said.

“Merlin – he's the Leader of the Light!” Harry said, “Didn't you raise me with stories of him being the Leader of the Light, of the Leader of an organization who was working to kill Voldemort? We're painting him as a Leader of the Dark now.”

“A Leader of the Dark doesn't tell you he is Dark, Harry,” Sirius said, “He believes himself to be fighting for what he believes in. And to him, even though it may be a bad thing, it isn't in his eyes.”

“We're not saying he is, Harry,” Remus said, “Merlin – this was the man who accepted a young werewolf into Hogwarts. I don't want to believe this. But why is he waiting for us to come to him?”

“Because he wants us to trust every word he says,” Harry said, “And fight for his beliefs.”

“An army is an army, Harry,” Sirius said, “Picture Albus in Voldemort's shoes. A Light Lord's Order of the Phoenix, is a Dark Lord's Death Eaters. If that is what your leader wants you to fight for.”

“Take this into thought, Harry,” Lily said, “Something that has been on my mind as of late. Albus is a Master Legilimens. Peter Pettigrew was not a Master Occlumens – maybe not an Occlumens at all. In a time where Albus was trying to figure out who was the spy in the Order of the Phoenix – why did he never find Peter?”

Harry frowned. “I want to know what that Prophecy says – if there is one. And I want to know how Voldemort found out about it. And how much he knows. I don't want to think about the thoughts going through my head right now.”

“What thoughts?” Lily asked.

“That I have to fight two Dark Lords before all is said and done,” Harry said.

Lily, Sirius and Remus exchanged looks. Lily then stood up and walked over to the kitchen.”


“Uh... are we ignoring Thanksgiving Break because we're in Britain?” Harry asked.

“No,” Lily said, “This is an unofficial, but very important, lesson. Come over here, Harry.”
Harry stood and walked over to his mother, and found he was nearly face-to-face with whatever the towel was covering. Lily removed the towel. Harry was right – it was a Cauldron.

“When I remove the lid,” Lily said. “Take a whiff. Take a few. But do not take deep ones.”

Harry nodded. Lily lifted the lid, and Harry sniffed.

“What do you smell?” Lily asked.

“Uh... that smells like Boston – like the salty sea air?” Harry said.

Merlin, he felt like he was back in Boston! He could smell flowers... just outside the front door of the house.

“Uh... the flower garden outside of our house?

He was sitting next to the flower garden, and there was a breeze. And suddenly... Hermione? What was she doing there? He could smell her!

“Uh...” Harry said.

“Yes?” Lily asked.

“Hermione's been using this really nice shampoo,” Harry said, quietly. “Her hair smells... what is she doing in...?”

He stopped talking when Lily put the lid back on. He blinked and looked around. He was in the tent.

“Odd... I was back home in Boston,” Harry said. “The flower garden. And I could... it was as if Hermione was coming up behind me or something. Was that a Hallucination Draught?”

“No, Harry,” Lily said. “That is Amortentia.”

Harry's eyes widened. “Love Potion?”

“I know those two words can be dangerous,” Lily said. “The scent of the Potion has much different effects than when drinking it. When smelling it – you really are smelling what you --”

She paused. Harry blushed. He knew what she was saying.

“Remus?” Lily said.

“Sorry, Lily,” Remus said. “You were right.”

Harry had absolutely no idea what that was about.

Lily cleared her throat. “However... one additional ingredient added into this Potion changes everything. Know what it is?”

“Peppermint?” Harry asked.

“That would remove a symptom,” Lily said. “Very good. You remember when I mentioned that
once. But that isn't what I mean. Mandy Brocklehurst, for example. She obviously wanted to steal you from Hermione. Say she pulls a piece of her hair out, and drops it in here. Then you drink it. You're not thinking of Hermione anymore. Soon, you're all over Mandy, and if she wants you to lay down with her, you're going to do it if this is in your system.”

Harry gulped. “That's... ugh.”

“Ugh,” Lily agreed. “Yesterday evening, someone let it slip to Neville Longbottom that – well, he suspects foul play of Love Potions are going to be a threat for you.”

“Especially since the Yule Ball is coming up,” Remus said.

“Great... no more meals in the Great Hall,” Harry said.

“Now, hold your hippogriffs, Harry,” Lily said, “That isn't necessary. You can detect when there are unfriendly Potions in food and drink.”

Lily plucked a hair from her head. She dropped it into the Potion.

“This just became an illegal Love Potion – because it has human hair in it,” Lily said, “Sirius? Be a dear and fill four mugs with coffee. Remus, name a color not seen in most liquids or foods.”

“Uh... Rainbows?” Remus said.

Sirius snickered as he walked over to the coffee pot. Lily took one of the mugs and poured some of the Potion into the mug.

“Notice any change in color in the coffee?” Lily asked Harry.

“Uh... no,” Harry said.

“And you won't for any food or drink,” Lily said, “What is the point of poisoning someone with Love Potion if they can detect it?”

Lily cast a spell above the mug, which included the Latin word for rainbow. “Amore Deprehensio Arcus!”

Harry watched as a rainbow swirl formed in the coffee, as if someone had just decorated the coffee with cream. Then the rainbow arced out of the cup and shot into Lily's chest. Harry's eyes widened.

“Don't worry,” Lily said, “The arc of light is harmless. It just tells you who did the Potion. Good luck on following it if the person isn't in the same room though. Now, go to your bedroom for a few moments.”

Harry shrugged and did as was asked. Then Lily told him to come back out. He sat down at the table when instructed, and found three mugs of coffee in front of him. Lily and Sirius were sitting down again.

“If you don't want to fall in love with your mother than just in a familial fashion,” Sirius said, “pick the right one, and drink it. Can you do it without the spell?”

“Uh... no,” Harry said.
“Good... remember that from now on,” Sirius said, “Pick the mug you would have drank from without knowing. Don't think, just pick.”

Harry picked the one on the right.

“Remember the spell?” Sirius asked.

Harry nodded, and pointed his wand at each mug and said, “Amore Deprehensio Arcus!”

A rainbow formed in the right mug, and shot out of it into Lily’s chest.

“Congratulations, Harry, you picked the wrong mug” Sirius said, pointing at Lily. “You may kiss your new girlfriend.”

Remus snickered. Harry coughed.

“Well... shit,” Harry said.

“It is a wonder he hasn't drunken Love Potion before,” Remus said.

“Uh.... have I?” Harry asked.

“Harry,” Sirius said. “Remember what I said about Hermione. Do not think about her during this discussion. It will only lead to the bad kind of paranoia.”

“The whiff of Amortentia told you your real feelings for Hermione,” Lily said. “It didn't have her hair in it.”

Harry sighed in relief.

“Now... for the next hour,” Lily said, “We're going to test several drinks and food. Remus? Please find different things in the Ilvermorny cafeteria. First, however. I want you to tell Harry why you apologized to me.”

Remus sighed. “I believed that Hermione or one of the girls in their tent could do this to you,” Remus said.

He frowned, stood up and left the tent. Harry stared at the seat he had been in.

“Remember the 'destined to doom' thing I mentioned?” Sirius asked. “The reason we want to talk to you and Hermione? Remus seems to believe you and Hermione are already discussing things way too permanently when it comes to your relationship.

Harry gulped. Sirius had hit it spot on.

“That's what you want to talk to us about?” he asked.

“We just want to figure out where your relationship is with her,” Lily said, “And help both of you figure that out too. When the girls return from classes, I want you to meet with them, hang out a bit, and bring up the subject of the threat of Love Potions. Tell them you suspect something from... I dunno...”
“Those Ravenclaw bullies,” Sirius said.

“Good,” Lily said, “Do not accuse them your friends. Just mention it. Figure out what their opinions are of it. Then ask them in your best way possible. Then come in here with Hermione so we can talk.”

Harry nodded. He stared at the right mug of coffee, and frowned.

How easily he could have drank that Love Potion... how easily he could have fallen for someone who didn't love him, and only wanted him for all the wrong reasons.

And just like that, he felt it. The bad kind of paranoia.

Chapter End Notes

Whew... I loved this chapter. Didn't get nearly everything I wanted in it. Not at all. Not even close!

“Amore Deprehensio Arcus!” Amortentia Detection: Rainbow

A little advice, dear readers. Don't let two Alphas start arguments. It rarely ever works out well.

Next Chapter: Harry talks to the Hogwarts Five and Tonks. Harry and Hermione talk to Lily, Remus and Sirius. And maybe the Thanksgiving Feast.
The Good Kind of Paranoid

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Wednesday, November 25th, 1994

Harry was sitting on one of the couches in the House Potter Tent, reading through some pages in a notebook, when he heard the giggle and discussion of girls passing by the tent. The notebook he was reading had a list of various Detection Charms when it came to different Potions and other dangers. This included, but was not limited to Love Potions, Lust Potions, Loyalty Draughts, and even Portkeys. Each topic had ways of detecting the dangers with and without the use of magic. In addition, it also had ways to detect when someone was under the influence the certain Potions, and other mind control magic, including Imperio and Confundus Charms.

The notebook had been created by Lily, back during the Great War, when dangers and threats of mind control ran rampant every single day.

“Paranoia can be a good or bad thing, Harry,” Lily had said, giving him the notebook after more than an hour of detecting Love Potions in all kinds of food and drink. “Alastor Moody will tell you he is the good kind of paranoid, because he checks all food and drink – even things he made – with Detection Charms. It is okay to be paranoid if you can respect how to handle it.”

Sirius had even run down to Hogsmeade as Padfoot during lunch, and had come back with a bag full of stuff from the candy shop. Harry was then instructed how to detect Potions in various candy.

“Chocolate Frogs, Cauldron Cakes, anything with hollow centers – all could be injected with Potions,” Lily had said, “Sometimes it is easy as breaking open a Chocolate Frog, and liquid pours out. Unless it is soaked into the candy. When soaked in, the Detection Charms will work.”

So Harry spent from the end of the lesson, to right up until he heard the girls come back, reading the notebook. When he had finished it, he had started reading it again. He was halfway through the reread, when he heard the girls.

“Going in to speak to the girls,” Harry said, to Lily, Sirius and Remus, after he slapped the notebook onto the coffee table for later reading.

“Good luck,” Lily said, “And behave.”

“Mom!” Harry whined, “Tonks will be in there.”

“That just makes it worse,” Sirius said, grinning.

Lily glared at Sirius, as she spoke to Harry. “Remember to bring Hermione back with you.”

“I will,” Harry said.

He walked out of the tent, then walked over to the tent of Tonks and the Hogwarts Five. He inhaled and exhaled.
“It is Harry,” Harry said, “May I come in?”

“Yes!” six voices said.

Harry stepped into the tent. Astoria, Hermione and Luna were sitting at the dining room table doing homework. Daphne and Tracey were cuddled up on a couch. Tonks was lounging in a chair.

“Tonks,” Harry said, “You should have met me outside the tent before I walked inside. I might not have been Harry. Or maybe I was under an Imperius Curse. Or... any other thing that could be done with mind-magic.”

Tonks snorted. “You sound like Mad-Eye Moody.”

“Mad-Eye Moody is paranoid, and that is not a bad thing,” Harry said.

All six girls stared at him, with different expressions.

Harry shrugged. “Spent the morning and afternoon learning how to detect various types of mind-control magic and Potions.”

“Uh... why?” Hermione asked.

“I'll explain that in a while,” Harry said, “I just want to hang out with all of you. Or are you too occupied by homework?”

He sat down in a chair. Hermione glanced at her homework, then Harry. She put her homework in her knapsack, stood up and walked over to Harry. Then she sat down on his lap, and pressed her lips into his for a kiss. Before he could kiss her back, she backed away.

“What were you learning?” Hermione asked him. “I want to learn it too.”

“You've been learning all day,” Harry said, “Right now is 'Harry' time. And 'Harry spending quality time with friends' time. Or was it not you who said I needed to do that?”

Hermione sighed. “Fine.”

Harry kissed her. By the time Hermione backed away, Luna and Astoria were sitting on the other sofa.

“What do you want to talk about?” Daphne said.

“Whatever,” Harry said, shrugging. “When was the last time we hung out just talking? It was before that moment last Friday when Sirius came into my tent screaming about Dragons. Even close to what we're doing now, is after I revealed my Animagus Secret.”

“And that was talking about Dragons,” Tracey said, “And not us focusing on something that wasn't the First Task or the Tournament.”

Hermione pouted, and relaxed her body onto his lap. Harry had to focus on his Occlumency so Hermione wasn't feeling anything she should feel so early in their relationship.

“Hermione told us she told you about the Thanksgiving Feast announcement,” Tonks said, “You excited for that?”

Harry snorted. He wasn’t too eager to discuss Albus Dumbledore.

“I don’t know,” Harry said, “What do you know about American Thanksgiving?”

This was a Hermione question. “History tell us that it started because of a Feast between Pilgrims who came in on the ships, looking to find life in the new world, and Puritans – religious folk from Europe – who were already there. Others believe it wasn’t Puritans, but actually Native Americans. Anyway, whether it be the Puritans or Natives, they found the Pilgrims about a week after the Pilgrims arrived. The Pilgrims were finding it hard to keep their bellies full. So their visitors put together a big feast. The Pilgrim gave their thanks. Thanksgiving.”

“What were the Pilgrims, Hermione?” Harry asked.

“Immigrants from Europe mostly,” Hermione said.

“What was I thirteen years ago?” Harry asked, “What was my family?”

“Immigrants from Europe,” Tonks muttered. “Merlin – celebrating it in Britain must feel insulting. It is literally saying 'enjoy our Feast – remember where you came from, much like American ancestors did!'”

“Even more insulting when I have a reason to believe Albus Dumbledore wants to keep me in Great Britain,” Harry said.

“Because you're Lord of multiple Houses?” Daphne asked.

Harry shrugged. “Why would it? One meeting with my Account Manager, and all of my House Vaults could be transferred to the Gringotts branch in Boston. The Houses may be British-born, but does that mean I am required to raise the family of my Houses in Britain?”

“I am Betrothed to you, Harry,” Daphne said, “Tracey's as good as family to you. We're British.”

“I'm probably going to be in America when Sirius goes, Daphne,” Tracey said.

Daphne bristled. Obviously not an easy topic for her.

“And so could you, Daphne, if we go with the agreement we discussed the day before we penned the Betrothal Contract,” Harry said.

“Required, as your Betrothed, to attend the same school as you,” Daphne said.

Harry nodded. “Your family may be here, but you could move with me to America, and see your family during vacations.”

“So why are you so concerned with the Loophole and all that?” Daphne asked.
“Because of what laws could be passed in the future,” Harry said. “Family of British-born Houses could become illegal to be raised outside Britain. That is just a possibility.”

“Bugger,” Tracey said.

“I don't think so, Harry,” Luna said, “If the British Ministry tried that, the American MACUSA could set them straight. You are an American citizen, Harry. They would help you if you needed it.”

“Yeah,” Tonks said, “My father help you with that.”

“Why is the MACUSA a problem for the Ministry?” Tracey asked.

“America and Britain are ICW Allies,” Tonks said. “However, if what Harry is saying, and he ends up becoming something of a prisoner to Great Britain, because of laws that prevent his Houses from being raised elsewhere – which could happen because of his Betrothal Contract to Daphne – America won't like it. They could start a war with magical Britain. And let me tell you something. American Auror forces? At least five times greater than Britain.”

“Bugger,” Tracey said.

“For the Ministry perhaps,” Tonks said, snorting.

“Would they really go to war for a few American citizens?” Astoria asked.

“Yes,” Harry said. “The No-Maj half of their army has done it before just to rescue prisoners of war. Americans do not negotiate with terrorists. If the Ministry is threatening an American citizen, that is an attack on an American citizen, and an attack on America. As one of my fellow school-mates said earlier this month... 'The Americans are coming'!”

“Ooh boy,” Hermione said, “That would be... interesting.”

“Dolores Umbridge tried to have me arrested for being an Animagus – she thought I was unregistered,” Harry said. “She ignored the warnings of MACUSA granted Diplomatic Immunity. According to my mother, she will work with Tonks' father to stop Umbridge from bothering me ever again. Even if it means informing the MACUSA that an advisor to the British Minister of Magic attempted to cripple American-British Magical Cooperation by trying to arrest the Ilvermorny Champion.”

Daphne whistled. “That would be fun to watch. So... if not because of all that, then why does the Headmaster want you to remain in Great Britain?”

“All I know are theories my mother and Uncles came up with,” Harry said, “Did Hermione and Luna tell all of you about the Philosopher's Stone incident? Neville Longbottom's part?”

“We talked about it the day after Neville and the three Weasleys visited your tent,” Hermione said, nodding.

“Vol – sorry, I'll use the other – You-Know-Who told Neville that night that Neville was destined to kill him,” Harry said, “Dumbledore said You-Know-Who was lying. When I first heard the story, I thought Dumbledore was lying. I was half-right, it was a white lie. That is where the theory begins. Before Halloween 1981, You-Know-Who appeared to be under the impression that one of two children were destined to kill him. Then came Halloween. You-Know-Who survived – how I cannot
“Cannot or will not?” Hermione asked.

“Remember how I was worried if Neville told Ginny about the Dragons?” Harry asked, “One-hundred times worse.”

“Translation?” Tonks asked.

“If that information gets out,” Hermione said, “It could cause trouble.”

“What I am willing to tell you could cause trouble too,” Harry said, “But not as much as that – even though these are simple theories until confirmed. You-Know-Who survived, and rumors spread of my death that Halloween night. Everyone in Wizarding Britain, but a few people, and the Goblins, thought I was dead. You-Know-Who would find out this later somehow. Nearly a week after that Halloween, Neville Longbottom and his parents were attacked by Death Eaters. Neville survived unscathed, aside from what happened to his parents. So... Neville's alive, I'm dead as far as You-Know-Who knows.”

“And You-Know-Who tells Neville he is destined to kill him,” Tracey said.

“It isn't Neville,” Daphne said, “It is you, Harry. That is why You-Know-Who attacked your family that night.”

‘Is there a Prophecy, Harry?’” Luna asked. Hermione snorted. “Don’t mind her, she doesn't believe in Prophecy nor other Divination practices. She had a rough time in Divination, so it has turned her against the subject.”

“There may be a Prophecy that says either I, or Neville, have to defeat You-Know-Who,” Harry said, “It is a real possibility, because if it exists, You-Know-Who, and Dumbledore, both seemed to know parts or all of what the Prophecy says.”

“Dumbledore wants you to stay in Britain to defeat You-Know-Who,” Tonks said.

“That's the theory anyway,” Harry said.

“Do you believe all these attempts,” Hermione said, “at trying to keep your Houses and Lordships and future when it comes to marriage – including changing the law to ‘Pureblood Only’ – may have something to do with the Headmaster?”

“No idea,” Harry said, “But if it is him, he won't reveal that. Someone else will bring up the bill for vote – it may or may not come from Dumbledore's mouth. Whether he is the Leader of the Light, or it is a mask is the question – if it is a mask, he needs to keep it on.”

The girls exchanged looks at each other. Harry wasn't sure which revelation had shocked them more.

“Like I said,” Harry said, “These are all just theories until proven.”

Hermione inhaled and exhaled. “So... you will have to remain in Britain, if your theory is right?”

Harry shrugged. “I said it earlier today – either I will have to stay in Britain if the theory is right – or I will go to America – and be forced to come back here somehow. If I am destined to defeat
“Why do you have to come back?” Daphne asked. “Merlin, Harry. Even if there is a Prophecy, those things are so open-ended, and so... well, here it is. Are you saying You-Know-Who can't die unless he is only killed by you or Neville Longbottom? How is that possible? So if I do a killing blow at him, he won't die? That doesn't seem plausible. So why does it have to be you?”

Harry snorted. “Hello, my name is Harry Potter. You killed my father. Prepare to die.”

Hermione, and even Tonks, snickered. The other girls looked confused.

“Muggle reference,” Hermione said.

“You-Know-Who is alive, and my father is dead,” Harry said. “My Betrothed, her sister, her future Wife's Consort, my girlfriend, and some friends are living in Britain. He comes back, he'll be threatening Britain all over again. If You-Know-Who knows I am alive, he'll come after me and my family. To finish the job he started thirteen years ago.”

“So you want to kill him if it means he is threatening those you love,” Tracey said.

“Yes,” Harry said. “Either I'll stay in Britain, or I'll go back to America only to be pulled back in.”

“If your theory is correct,” Tonks said.

“Oh, come on,” Hermione said, “Would Harry be telling us all of this if he believed his theory wasn't correct?”

“No’s and “Probably not’s were heard from the girls.

“So there you go,” Harry said, “You-Know-Who will come back – maybe sooner rather than later. I likely have a huge target on my back. If you want to run from me to protect your --”

Hermione silenced him with a kiss. Then she backed away. “Shut up, Harry. We're not going anywhere.”

The other girls nodded. Hermione laid her head back on Harry's chest. Harry inhaled and exhaled. He could smell Hermione's shampoo, and it reminded him of what he smelled in the Amortentia. It was time to begin the reason he was here.

“Good,” Harry said, “Because I need to tell you something else.”

“Something worse than You-Know-Who returning, and targeting you?” Tonks asked.

“My mother says you were all there in the Entrance Hall last night,” he said, “When Neville informed her of a threat to me.”

“Yes!” Hermione said, lifting her head from his chest, and looking at him, “She told us all to take Rose and come back here. What was that all about?”

“A second-year Gryffindor with a father in the Neutral or Dark Alliance said something off-color,” Harry said. “Vane – I think Mom said that is what Neville told her.”
“Victor Vane's daughter,” Daphne said, with a snort. “Neutral Lord who votes with the Dark Alliance most of the time.”

“Vane tried to accuse you, Hermione, of dosing me with Love Potions,” Harry said; he placed a finger on Hermione's mouth when she opened it. “Let me finish. So Mom told me that I need to start being careful about Love Potions from girls who want me to be their date for the Yule Ball.”

“I'm starting to understand your mention of paranoia and mind-control magic,” Tonks said.

Harry grimaced. “So Mom spent all morning and afternoon teaching me about Detecting illegal Potions -- including Love Potions -- and mind-controlling magic. Spent a couple hours detecting Amortentia in drinks and food. The first thing I did was with a mug of coffee. Mom put a hair in the Potion, so it would key to her. Before I did my first Detection Charm on three mugs of coffee to find one dosed mug, I picked one of them to see which one I'd pick if I didn't know the drink had a dose in it. Guess which one I picked?”

“The dosed one,” Daphne said.

“Like Sirius said, after pointing to my mother,” Harry said, “Congratulations, now kiss your new girlfriend!”

That the six girls groaned instead of laugh meant a lot to Harry. It meant they were disgusted by Love Potions.

“Do you know what would happen with that Charm I did?” Harry asked, “It shot a beam of color from the dosed drink – and if the person was in the room, who added their hair into the Potion making it illegal – the beam would shoot into the person's chest --”

Loud gasps erupted from each girl. They were horrified.

“-- harmlessly,” Harry finished, “Thank you girls. You just told me you have never and would never do that. You were scared of what it could do, but none of you were scared because I'd discover your secret.”

Hermione frowned and stared at him. “You... thought we'd dose you?”

“So would Alastor Moody,” Harry said, shrugging, “Right, Tonks?”

“Yes,” Tonks said, “Because if he doesn't suspect you, he'd be underestimating you.”

“Good kind of paranoia,” Harry said. “Former American No-Maj President Ronald Reagan once said to the former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, translating a Russian proverb, 'Trust but verify'. I trust all of you.”

“You just needed to know,” Hermione said. “To verify it.”

“Do you know what Amortentia is used for aside from being a Love Potion?” Harry asked, “What anyone can use it as without even taking a sip? What anyone who makes it will automatically use it as – unless they were preventing it in a specific way.”

“Smelling it,” Daphne said, “They would smell it unless they... plugged up their nose.”
“And what happens when you smell Amortentia?” Harry asked.

“You smell things... or people... you love,” Luna said. “I am sure it is a very pleasant and lovely scent.”

“What did you smell, Harry?” Hermione asked, looking into his eyes.

“The smell of salty ocean air in Boston,” Harry said, “The flower bed outside my home in Boston. And...”

“And...?” Hermione asked.

Harry took a curl of her hair in his fingers.

Hermione blushed, and took the curl of hair back. “M-my hair?”

“Your shampoo,” Harry whispered.

“M-Muggle shampoo,” Hermione said, “Mum orders it from... magazines. And sends it to me in care packages.”

“So I wouldn't have smelled it otherwise?” Harry asked.

Hermione shook her head. “I don't think so, unless your family orders from British magazines, or they stole my shampoo.”

“Improbable,” Harry said.

Hermione nodded. “S-so... y-you --”

“Yes,” Harry said, already knowing what she was going to say, “I think so anyway. Mom, Sirius and Remus want to talk to you and I. About us. They’re worried we're discussing our relationship in a too permanent sense, even though we've only been together for less than a month. 'Destined to be doomed', is what Mom said. I think... because of a long-distance relationship in the future.”

Hermione was still holding the lock of her hair in her hand, as she stared at him. Then she kissed him.

“We'll be back, girls,” Hermione said, when she backed away some moments later, “Come on, Harry.”

Hermione stood, and pulled Harry up. Then they left the tent.

“Before we go in there,” Hermione said, stopping long before they got to the House Potter Tent “I think we need to talk about exactly what we want to say.”

“A fine idea,” Harry said, “And what do we want to say?”

Harry listened to her ideas. He was surprised – beyond surprised – at some ideas, but he also gave his own. The discussion took ten minutes before they had come to an agreement. Then they stepped into the House Potter tent.
Lily, Sirius and Remus were sitting in the living room – Lily on a sofa, Remus and Sirius in chairs. Harry and Hermione sat down together on the empty sofa.

“I assume you already know why you're here, Hermione?” Lily asked.

“Yes,” Hermione said.

“You are aware Voldemort is still alive, I know this,” Lily said. “What you may not know is that there are signs he will likely return to the threat he once was, in less than a year. Wizarding Great Britain will be in the middle of another war, much like the last.”

“And either Harry or Neville is destined to kill him,” Hermione said, “That's the theory anyway – plausible or not.”

Lily, Sirius and Remus stared in shock at Hermione, before looking at Harry.

“You told her?” Sirius asked.

“I told all of them,” Harry said. “I didn't tell them everything. Now let me tell you why. We already know I am likely either going to be staying here in Great Britain until Voldemort's gone, or I will be going back to America, and getting pulled back here somehow. I told this to Hermione and the girls.”

“He tried to tell us to run away from him,” Hermione said, “And we basically told him to shut up. We're here to talk about relationships, and how temporary or permanent they will be, right?”

Lily, Sirius and Remus nodded.

“I want to know something first,” Hermione said. “Do you believe Harry and I are too young to discuss the possibility of a permanent future?”

Lily glanced at Sirius and Remus, then back to Harry and Hermione. “We simply think you're taking this a bit fast.”

“What do you mean?” Harry asked. “We haven't gone beyond snogging. Can you say that, Sirius? We've been together three weeks, and three days. Have I come anywhere close to how far you went with a girl at my age?”

Remus sighed. “Maybe Sirius isn't the best --”

“He's got a point, Moony,” Sirius said, “And no, Harry. What you two have is quite normal for any normal relationship.”

“Where are you going with this, Harry?” Lily asked.

“We don't think you believe Harry's too young for this,” Hermione said.

“Why not?” Lily asked.

“What happened in Hogsmeade early this month?” Hermione asked. “If Harry is too young, why is he in a Betrothal Contract?”

“That was not our choice,” Lily said.
“Oh, sorry,” Hermione said, “I meant – why is he in an active Betrothal Contract? Why didn't you postpone the meeting until Harry was sixteen or seventeen? Why did you accept Harry's Lordship? Augusta Longbottom didn't. Neville's waiting at least until next summer. Why is Tracey contracted as Daphne's Wife's Consort, and basically Harry's Wife in the future? Do you now want to tell us Harry is too young?”

Lily, Sirius, and Remus stared at each other in silence. Their jaws were slightly dropped.

“Is Hermione too young?” Harry asked. “She's fifteen, you know. Older than me. Older than Daphne and Tracey. Snogging at three weeks, three days isn't as fast as getting Betrothed and having a future Wife's Consort.”

“You agreed to all of that!” Sirius argued.

Remus groaned. “Good job, Padfoot. Prove his point.”

“Yes, and so did you, Sirius,” Harry said, “So did Mom. So did Remus. Why?”

“What's your point, Harry?” Remus asked, then he groaned again, “You're not – please don't tell us you two want to get engaged, or – or Betrothed or whatever.”

“No,” Harry and Hermione said, in unison.

“Not yet at least,” Harry said.

“Young man,” Lily began.

“Seven months from now the Triwizard Tournament will be over,” Harry interrupted his mother. Seven months seems like a pretty good span of time for me and Hermione to see where our relationship has gone between now and then. A relationship where we're just boyfriend and girlfriend. No expectations aside from what is going to happen in the present day. Not where we're going to be seven months from now, or three years from now.”

“A month from now if the Wizengamot makes it so,” Hermione said, “None of it will matter anyway. It could be illegal for me to even date Harry.”

“I'm fourteen,” Harry said, “I'm not looking for wife material right now. I want a girlfriend. Who I can date, snog, and spend as much free time with as I can get. Hermione has said she is going nowhere, even after I told her our theory about Voldemort. I want to see if that is true in seven months.”

“So what happens one day after the Tournament is over?” Remus asked. “That is seven months from now, right? Pretty specific day.”

“Hermione and I sit down and talk,” Harry said, “If we're still together, that is. We discuss our relationship – where we are in it, and where we want to be in the future. We discuss whether or not we can handle long-distance, or we cannot.”

“And what if you cannot?” Lily asked.

“Then we won’t,” Harry said. “Whether that is because we're both in Great Britain, or we're both in
America, and Hermione is transferred to Ilvermorny.”

“And what if your parents don’t approve of those plans, Hermione?” Lily asked.

“I will go down a route that you seem to already approve of,” Hermione said. “Arguing about the route would be hypocritical. First, I’d disown myself from my parents, if necessary. Then I’d get myself Emancipated – explain to whoever it is I need to, that I am Protected under the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter. I am a Muggleborn, whose parents know next to nothing about my world – who basically did nothing when I was hurt, threatened, or nearly killed while at Hogwarts in my first two years here. They didn’t pull me out –”

“Did you tell them what happened?” Lily asked.

“No,” Hermione said, “But that's not the point, is it? They're supposed to take care of me. They're supposed to find out from responsible adults what happened to me. They're supposed to see the signs that I was hurt. Do you know what happened in the three weeks I was Petrified? Five letters. The last four asked me why I hadn't replied yet. What would you have done in your position?”

“If I couldn't get to the school,” Lily said, “I would have... contacted a Professor.”

“Professor McGonagall,” Hermione said. “She met my parents. She didn't tell them about me being Petrified, and they never contacted her. The Wizengamot would approve, because – well, I'm speaking for a good percentage of the British Wizarding population – they'd approve because filthy Muggles didn't care for a witch, even if she is Muggleborn.”

“Young lady,” Lily said, “You shouldn't --”

“She isn't,” Sirius said, “She's speaking about Pureblood supremacists who hate Muggles more than Muggleborn witches. At least she's a witch.”

“I would get Emancipated,” Hermione said, “And then I could make my own decision without parental approval. Harry's a Lord. So could he.”

Harry kept calm while Lily, Sirius and Remus looked at him.

“And what decision is that?” Lily asked.

“Seven months from today,” Harry said, “If we are satisfied where we are in our relationship, we would discuss a Betrothal Contract, and the ramifications of it. As I am her Lord, and she my Protected – we can legally pen a Betrothal Contract without parental permission.”

“Well, I can't see an argument with that point,” Sirius said. “Aside from the... parental disapproval. But – both of you seem to have figured it out for yourself. Go over the heads of parental approval.”

“Perhaps,” Harry said, shrugging; he was aware his mother was rather angry at him, “But at least we’d have taken seven months to think about it. That is – if I remember the story correctly – about how long it took Mom and Dad to get engaged.”

Lily frowned. “We were eighteen --”

Lily stopped talking because her jaw had dropped.

“Age has nothing to do with it – according to you,” Hermione said. “Anything else and you'd be rightfully called a hypocrite.”

Remus chuckled. “I cannot argue with that.”

“We're not saying right here, right now 'Yes! We're going to get Betrothed!’” Harry said. “We're saying we're going to be a couple – boyfriend and girlfriend – for seven months – if our relationship survives that long. And then we'll discuss it.”

Lily stared at both Harry and Hermione. Silence reigned from all for a good minute.

“Damn it,” Lily muttered. “This is what I get for being the smartest witch of my age, and marrying a smart, headstrong husband who knows how to argue. We create a combination of us, and then he goes and falls in love with somebody who is absolutely perfect for him.”

“Merlin, they're another Prongs and Tiger-Lily!” Sirius said, “I couldn't argue with Prongs and Tiger-Lily when they worked together! I don't have the ability!”

Harry and Hermione blushed and chuckled.

“I suppose what they're saying – is you two make very good points,” Remus said. “No, we can't argue with them without sounding like hypocrites. I suppose the only thing we can say is – good luck in the next seven months.”

“If your relationship is where mine was with James,” Lily said, “disregarding age, and how long James and I knew each other before we started dating --”

“You barely knew each other at all!” Sirius argued.

“I will support any plan you decide,” Lily said, “If I like where your relationship is in seven months.”

“Thank you, Lily,” Hermione said, “I'm sorry we were so forceful.”

“You discussed this before coming in here, didn't you?” Remus asked; Harry and Hermione nodded. “Then it seems we never stood a chance. You two do work very well together. I will be interested to see what you are like in seven months.”

“Is this discussion over?” Hermione asked.

“I suppose so,” Lily said. “I think I speak for Sirius and Remus when I say we have nothing else to say really.”

Remus and Sirius nodded.

“Alright,” Hermione said, “Because I want you to give me a crash course in everything you taught Harry about detecting Love Potions and mind-control magic. I want to help him if there is a threat to him involving that. And I want to do it before the Feast tomorrow.”

“Why the Feast?” Remus asked.
“Because I don't want either of us to have meals in the Great Hall until then,” Hermione said, “Just in case.”

**Thursday, November 26th, 1994 – Thanksgiving**

Most who walked into the Great Hall in the minutes before the Thanksgiving Feast didn't know what to think they were seeing. Not even most of the the Muggleborn students didn't know what all the decorations were about. There were paper creations that resembled turkeys; black hats – why did the hats have belts and buckles on them? Most were perplexed at that! – that definitely weren't witches' hats (a few students still wore them, though, including most of the Ilvermorny students); and something known as horns o’ plenty, which had bunches of fruit coming out of the end of it. Where were the floating candles, and the entertainment from the ghosts, and the live bats – or maybe turkeys, perhaps? This wasn't like any normal holiday feast they were used in the autumn months!

Poor Harry and the rest of the Americans were forced to explain *everything*, as they sat at the Ravenclaw table. Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs from the nearest neighboring tables were trying to listen in and figure out what was going on.

“Mostly the holiday is about food,” Sebastian – one of the Ilvermorny seventh years commented – “Loads and loads of food. If you aren't filled to burst, or vomiting, by the end, it is seen as rude. If your elves did as good as Ilvermorny elves do during the Feast – for those who stay during the holiday – the feast should be pretty good. I just wish the food would get here already!”

“You get this time of year off?” a Ravenclaw student asked; then to the reply of 'about a week', “No fair!”

“First-Gens and No-Majes – er – Muggleborn and Muggles, sorry -- like watching football all day,” a First-Gen Ilvermorny sixth year said, “Oh, right, English! Ah – American football. Pigskins! Powerful men in jerseys and helmets running around knocking the hell out of each other, just so they can carry the ball down to the other end of the field.”

“Carry the ball?” another Ravenclaw asked, “Why is it called football then?”

“I'm not sure even Americans could tell you that,” Harry said, grinning.

Hermione and her tent-mates around Harry chuckled.

“Those football fanatics – most don't even eat their dinner with their family around the table,” the same First-Gen said, “They sit in front of the – er – how should I put this in British wizarding language? – moving picture screens, and gorge themselves while watching football, and forgetting about original traditions.”

After the final students, and staff from all three schools – made their way into the Great Hall and had taken seats, Minerva McGonagall tapped her spoon three times against her glass. Albus Dumbledore stood up.

“Before I began this feast with my planned speech,” Dumbledore said, “I have an announcement to make. On Christmas Day, here in the Great Hall – fourth years and above – and perhaps those younger if you are invited by an older student as a date – are invited to attend a traditional social event held during Triwizard Tournaments – the Yule Ball!”
Most of the Hall cheered, and applauded, but only a quarter of the students seemed surprised at the news. Word had obviously gotten around about the Ball.

“For those who do not want to attend, are too young to attend without an older date, or wish to spend Christmas Break and the holidays with family,” Dumbledore said, “The Hogwarts Express will be available to take those home a few days prior. For those in the categories above who remain at Hogwarts and do not attend the Ball, a Christmas Feast will be available two hours earlier than usual, so the Great Hall can be ready in time for the Ball. The Ball will begin with a Feast, and there will be a live music band – it will be a famous wizard-rock band, but I cannot say who at this moment, as discussions and decisions are being finalized. I'm sure all who attend will show off their best dancing skills, and will enjoy themselves.”

Minerva cleared her throat.

“And I do hope everyone who attends will also behave themselves that evening,” Dumbledore said, his eyes twinkling.

Harry and several students around him grinned and snickered. It was obvious that part wasn't in his original speech.

“Now!” Dumbledore continued, “To current events. As I explained two evenings ago, tonight we celebrate a tradition held by Americans on this day every year for several centuries now. Without fail – even though there has been a history of war and tragedy involving Americans going on during this time of the year – the tradition still is held every year. As we are hosting American guests, we celebrate with them on this fine American holiday.

“Thanksgiving. A time of eating, a time of spending with friends and family, and a time in which all who take part in the tradition say what they are thankful for. I am thankful for this show of International Magical Cooperation we have in front of us tonight. A united force of wizards and witches from all around the world, here to celebrate together. I do hope these relations can continue after the Tournament is over. Enough talk from me! Let the Feast begin!”

All along each table in the Hall, large carved turkeys appeared at portions of the table. The usual sides and trimmings, and desserts appeared too. Jugs of beverages appeared as well.

As most around Harry started to dine, Harry, Hermione and her tent-mates didn't start right away. Harry was staring at a jug in front of him. Something was off. Harry could already tell. All along the table, jugs were placed at various sections of the table. In fact they were lined up perfectly with each table. Except the one in front of him. No other jugs appeared in that exact spot at the other tables that he could see.

The phrase “The Good Kind of Paranoid” played in Harry's mind.

“Pass that jug, why don't you, Harry?” Padma asked.

“I can't,” Harry said.

“Why?” Padma asked, raising her eyebrows.

“Because it wasn't delivered by House-Elves,” Harry said.
Several around him stopped eating.

“What?” Padma asked.

“Look at the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff tables,” Harry said, “Look at this spot, at the other tables. Then look at the other jugs along each table.”

Padma and other students did so.

“Uh...” Padma said, “That's... odd.”

Harry looked around the Hall, then looked down Ravenclaw table at the “usual suspects”. One particular Ravenclaw was staring at him with wide eyes. He grinned, then removed his wand from his robes, and tapped the jug.

“Amore Deprehensio Arcus!”

He had not stopped looking at the Ravenclaw in question. A rainbow arc shot from the jug, and sped down the table. Then it hit the Ravenclaw.

Cho Chang fell backwards off her seat with a shriek, as the rainbow beam hit her. Laughter roared for those who saw her. Confusion and a few screams for those who did not.

“What is going on here?!“ Dumbledore roared, standing up.

Lily was looking at Harry, with a grin on her face. Then she narrowed her eyes at Cho, who was sprawled out on the floor, looking shocked.

“Sonorous,” Lily said, “The Charm my son just did on the jug in front of him, was known as an Illegal Potion Detection Charm. This specific Charm detected Amortentia. Illegal Amortentia. The Charm would detect the hair placed in the Potion – and would then shoot a colored beam – Harry chose Rainbow, because the color isn’t in many drinks or foods – at the suspect whose hair was in the Amortentia, making it an Illegal Love Potion. The beam of color would then hit the guilty party in the chest, for easy detection. I believe we know who did it.”

“Rubbish!” Cho Chang screamed, still sitting on the floor, “Potter attacked me!”

“Are you injured, Miss Chang?” Professor Flitwick asked. “Did the spell hurt you?”

“I fell out of my chair!” Cho exclaimed.

“From shock, Miss Chang,” Flitwick said, “The Charm did not harm you, did it?”

“Potter attacked me!” Cho exclaimed.

“Aye, and he was right to have done, lassie!” The scarred, disfigured, former Auror, and current Defense Professor Alastor “Mad-Eye” Moody said. “I will be teaching all of you in the coming days and weeks about what you just saw here! Lord Potter did the right thing! Constant Vigilance! Good job, laddie!”

Moody started clapping. There were cheers and applause from several in the Hall.
“Are you all mad?!” Cho exclaimed. “You're applauding the boy who attacked me!”

“Even if Harry did attack you,” Lily said, “It is self-defense. You attempted to ensnare my son with a Love Potion. Do the words 'Line Theft' mean anything to you, Miss Chang? How about 'thrice'? As in 'three times the Line Theft'?”

Cho stood up. But before she could run out of the hall, a red beam from Lily's wand hit her, and she fell to the ground, Stunned.

“Sirius, please go and contact Madam Bones,” Lily said. “She needs to be notified of this. Remus? Please take Miss Chang somewhere where she won't get away.”

Dumbledore cleared his throat. “Perhaps we should --”

“No, Albus,” Lily said. “We should not. We should let the DMLE take care of this. We should let everyone else enjoy their feast.”

Harry glared at Dumbledore, and the man wilted.

“Professor Flitwick, would you please go with Mr. Lupin and your student?” Dumbledore asked.

“I would be most happy to!” Flitwick exclaimed.

Soon the Stunned Chang was revived, and taken out of the Great Hall, kicking and screaming by Remus, and Flitwick as Sirius followed, after collecting a sample of the dosed beverage for evidence.

Harry vanished the jug with his wand.

And the Great Hall erupted in applause.

“And that,” Harry said to Hermione, below the din of applause, “is the good kind of paranoid.”

Chapter End Notes

Yep. The Thanksgiving Feast was only done so I could get somebody with the Love Potion Detection Charm. It was either going to be Cho Chang or Marietta Edgecombe. Cho Chang seemed better, given her recent rant about Harry and Hermione.

This chapter gave me a whole lot of hell. I had to write and modify the latter half of the “Hogwarts Five” discussion three times to get it right. And the talk with Harry and Hermione and the adults... it took me three times to figure out what I wanted to write. The other two attempts will probably be in deleted scenes. Which I might put up one of these days.

I hope you liked my final decision for Harry and Hermione's talk with the adults. Because it gave me hell to figure out how to get it right in a way that didn't make it sound unbelievable.
What should the Patronuses be for Hermione, Daphne and Tracey? Luna’s is going to be a Crumple-Horned Snorlax.

Next Chapter: A short time-skip detailing noted scenes, including the aftermath of Thanksgiving. Patronus lesson with Remus, Hermione, Daphne, Tracey, Luna, and Harry as a guest Professor. Mandy Brocklehurst returns. And the discussion which decides the Second Task.
For those who did not notice before I changed it, I added this before Sirius walked out of the Great Hall at the end of the chapter. “Sirius followed, after collecting a sample of the dosed beverage for evidence.” I realized my mistake could have changed Cho Chang’s punishment, without evidence being proved.

Also, the chapter starts with a time-skip. We start a bit over two weeks after Thanksgiving on a Friday afternoon, with a summary of the time-skip to begin. When it begins, it is Friday, December 11th, 1994 – One Week before the Winter Solstice.

Thanks to everyone who suggested Patronuses, especially LoveEvangeline, who suggested Tracey’s.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Two weeks had passed since the Thanksgiving Feast when Cho Chang’s plot to dose Lord Harry Potter with Love Potion was discovered by Harry, himself, using Charms he had learned only the day before.

For the countless time since she and Sirius had become a couple in early November, Amelia Bones had come back to Hogwarts. This time she had come, accompanied by Aurors Shacklebolt and Savage, and her visit was to deal with Cho Chang. By the end of the night, Harry, Lily, and Albus Dumbledore had been interviewed in addition to Cho, Remus, Sirius, and Professor Flitwick, who Amelia had met with upon her arrival.

Harry recounted his tale – how he had noticed an oddity in the pattern of jugs placed by House-Elves at the feast. How this specific jug was out of place. How he had used a Charm, taught by his mother, to detect Illegal Amortentia. And how the rainbow beam had hit Cho Chang. Lily parroted the event from her point-of-view, as well as verifying the lesson she had taught Harry the day before. Albus Dumbledore tried to persuade Amelia to let him, as Cho Chang’s Headmaster take care of the matter, as it happened in the castle he lorded over. Amelia wouldn’t have it. After being presented with the witness statements, and given the sample of the dosed beverage from Sirius, Amelia arrested Cho Chang on possession of illegal Love Potion, and three counts of Attempted Line Theft.

Severus Snape was investigated for a possible connection to the Love Potions, as he was the Hogwarts Potions Master. But his brew of Amortentia – used for educational purposes – had not been tampered with. It was soon discovered Chang had bought the Potion from an outside source, and had it smuggled inside Hogwarts in a case of Butterbeer.

Cho Chang spent two nights in the Ministry Holding Cells. But she wasn’t alone. Her father, Lord Xi Chang had tried to argue with Amelia about his daughter’s arrest, and how she should be placed on house arrest so he could watch her. He got part of his wish to watch her – he spent two nights in the same cell as his daughter.

Then Cho was put on trial in front of twenty-one Wizengamot Council members – a combination of School Governors who were also Council, and those Council who specialized in trials. In the end, it
was decided Cho Chang was expelled from Hogwarts, but her father and their House Solicitor had saved her from time in Azkaban, saying she was a minor. He also saved her from getting her wand snapped. She would be allowed to attend a school in a different country. She also had a restraining order placed on her against Harry Potter, and any allies, family, or close friends of House Potter. If she broke it, she'd be going to Azkaban.

Two enormous changes happened in light of the Thanksgiving Feast “fiasco” – as some had put it.

The first, was that nobody was looking jealously toward Harry and Hermione anymore. Nobody wanted to end up like Cho Chang. If that meant stop being jealous of Hermione, so that Harry Potter didn't suspect someone of attempted Line Theft, then by Merlin, they were going to stop being jealous! They'd take their chances once Hermione broke up with Harry, or vice-versa. It was bound to happen sooner or later, right?

Whether or not it was due to a possible law passed by the Wizengamot, or their relationship just went bad, it was bound to happen! This was Hermione's first boyfriend, after all. She needed to play the market! Date several boys to find the right one! Yep... it was definitely going to happen! That is what was on the minds of several girls anyway. A few girls even denied really good wizards who asked them to go to the Ball, just so they'd be available when Harry became single.

The second big change was Professor Moody's defense class. The paranoid Ex-Auror had dedicated two whole weeks of classes, teaching every single student in every single year how to detect Illegal Potions and mind-control magic. Severus Snape had even volunteered to brew the necessary Potions. But no! The paranoid ex-Auror brewed his own.

Oh, and he also subjected those who got it wrong to drink it. He even put the hairs of their closest neighbor – of the opposite sex -- in the class, into their the mugs of potion at their desk, and forced them to drink if they got it wrong. Dumbledore had apparently given Moody permission. So Severus was forced to brew antidotes for the Potions, and give them to Madam Pomfrey to cure the lust-filled students – of all ages – who drank the dosed Potions.

One memorable incident was when Ron Weasley had drank a Love Potion dosed with Lavender Brown's hair, and Lavender Brown had shrieked and fled class when Ron proclaimed his undying love for her. He spent the next couple of days in the Hospital Wing. At least he didn't hear the laughing and jeering at his expense, or the stories about it. Harry had heard the tale when it was delightfully retold by Hermione, Daphne, Tracey – and Tonks, who was doing her guard duty – who were in the class at the time – even though the class was Gryffindors and Ravenclaws, Hermione \textit{and} the two Slytherins were in the lesson, due to their “Hogwarts” Sorting.

Suffice it to say by the end of two weeks, most students in Hogwarts now knew how to detect several illegal Potions and mind-control magic, whether it be on themselves, in food and drink, or someone else was under the influence of the mind-magic and Potions. It was a common sight for wands to be waving over food and drink in the Great Hall at every meal. Moody's “good paranoia” had spread widely around Hogwarts, and he got a kick out of it.

Hermione, Daphne, Tracey, Luna and Astoria were the quickest to learn, because they were taught in extracurricular lessons by Lily. Harry, Rose and Gabrielle had joined in on the lessons too – Harry, simply wanting more practice. They had finished the lessons after one week of lessons – the lessons were held between the time of their final school lesson, and dinner. At the end of Lily's lessons, all eight students in Lily's 'class' had gone through an exam, which took place during dinner in the Ilvermorny Cafeteria Tent. They had all passed with flying colors, and the Hogwarts students earned Outstanding grades from Professor Moody by the end of the lessons.
After Lily's lessons were done, Hermione, Daphne, Tracey, and Luna were then taught the Patronus Charm by Remus. Tonks was being taught how to do a Patronus Charm, and Harry was Remus' assistant. By the end of Thursday's lesson, two weeks after Thanksgiving, Luna was the first to complete her Patronus, and had moved on to the Swarm lesson. Hermione, Tracey and Daphne had only been able to create 'shields'. Hermione, Tracey and Daphne were shocked when Luna succeeded first. And all of them – including Harry, Remus and Tonks, were shocked to see Luna's Patronus.

It was a Crumple-Horned Snorack.

Hermione went to bed that night, confused about how an imaginary creature could be a Patronus. And she started wondering how many of Luna's imaginary creatures... were imaginary.

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**Friday, December 11th, 1994**

Friday afternoon, Harry, Hermione, Daphne, Tracey, Luna, Remus and Tonks were on the Grounds of Hogwarts. The last class of the day had ended about an hour ago, and they were once again participating in another Patronus Charm lesson – their fourth lesson. Harry was helping Tonks – who had a jack-rabbit Patronus, and Luna – her Crumple-Horned Snorack still confused Harry – with their Patronus Swarms. Hermione, Daphne and Tracey were still trying to cast Corporeal Patronuses, with Remus' help. They could only get shields.

“I have to be misunderstanding something here!” Hermione fussed, after producing yet another shield, “I should have gotten this by now!”

Harry gave words of encouragement to Luna and Tonks, then walked over to Hermione.

“What have you been picturing in your mind as you cast?” Harry asked.

“Several things,” Hermione said. “Receiving confirmation that I'm a witch. Seeing Diagon Alley for the first time. Seeing Hogwarts for the first time. Meeting and becoming friends with Luna. Meeting you... you asking me out on a date... when you kissed me. How are these not happy enough?”

“Because you're a perfectionist, Hermione,” Remus said. “It makes it more complicated. You're doubting yourself. This is our fourth lesson. You expected to have a Corporeal by the first. Maybe the second. Luna beat you yesterday. And that has you doubting you can do it. Am I correct?”

Hermione frowned and nodded.

“Doubting yourself is blocking memories,” Remus said.

“What if she had a more recent memory to use?” Harry asked.

“It could possibly work,” Remus said, “What do you think she –?”

Harry cupped one of Hermione's cheeks and kissed her. Their kiss turned into a French kiss. Then Harry backed away.

“Expecto Patronum!” Hermione said, breathlessly, as she stared at Harry.
Harry grinned as a silver lioness emerged from her wand and flew into air. He was slightly disappointed her Patronus wasn't Shadow... as he thought it might be. But it was a type of large cat, and that *had* to mean something. Hermione stared at it in awe – whether it be in awe of her feat or in awe of what it represented, she did not know.

“I did it!” Hermione squealed.

Then she jumped on Harry and kissed him again. The lioness rubbed at their legs as it moved around them. They could almost feel it.

Tracey sighed. “Maybe we should kiss, Daphne.”

Daphne snorted. If it was that easy, we'd have our Patronus on the first night of lessons.”

Harry backed away from Hermione's lips.

“So, you're saying,” he said, “That each night you --”

“Snog before bedtime?” Tracey suggested.

“While doing so in bed?” Daphne suggested. in a teasing manner.

Harry gulped, and nodded slightly. Hermione rolled her eyes, and her lioness vanished. Harry winced at the implications of what that might have meant.

“Yes,” Daphne and Tracey said, in unison.

Remus cleared his throat. “I am not sure – er – snogging would solve your issue, ladies. Since it seems to be a – er – daily occasion.”

Harry, Daphne, Tracey and Tonks snickered at Remus' awkwardness of the situation. Hermione rolled her eyes, but grinned at the witch couple, happy that they were so happy.

“It needs to be more powerful,” Remus said. “Maybe not a memory, but an emotion during happy memories. How you felt about something. The happiest, most positive emotion you felt during a favorite memory.”

Daphne and Tracey exchanged glances, staring searchingly at each other for long moments.

“Expecto Patronum!” Daphne exclaimed.

An arctic fox cantered out of her wand, and started running circles around her and Tracey. Obviously it represented her fierceness, slyness – and appeared to also compliment her apparent nickname.

“The day you agreed to be my Consort,” Daphne whispered to Tracey.

Tracey smiled then cleared her throat. “Expecto Patronum!”

A tortoise – no, a *fire-crab* crawled out of her wand, and started running in the same circles as the arctic fox.
“The day you helped me convince our parents to have sleepovers,” Tracey said to Daphne; in a whisper that Harry could barely hear.

Tracey then stared at the fire-crab, and she smiled sadly at it. She seemed to know why she had that Patronus. Harry studied it and tried to see the metaphor in it. It resembled a tortoise more than a crab. Tortoises were known for hiding in their shell. Harry nodded. She was hiding her past trauma, and perhaps her sexuality. Her Patronus would likely change once she freed herself of her secrets.

“Very good, all of you!” Remus said, smiling. “If you're up to it, you three can move onto practicing Swarms until dinnertime. And we can practice Swarms next lesson too.”

“Remus?” Hermione asked. “After we do these lessons, I'd like our next to be Occlumency – I don't know if you, Lily or Sirius are better at it. But...”

“I would be happy to help,” Tonks said. “I learned it during my first year of Auror training.”

“I'm pretty good at Occlumency,” Harry said, “I think I told you that once, Hermione. I could help.”

“Yes, you told me,” Hermione said.

“Anyone else up for those lessons?” Remus asked.

Daphne, Tracey and Luna nodded.

“Then we'll figure that out,” Remus said, “and it will be our next extracurricular lesson after we test whether or not all of you can do the simplest of Patronus Swarms. Now, as I told Luna and Tonks, the Patronus Swarm is very difficult...”

Saturday, December 12th, 1994

Around eleven-o-clock, Saturday morning, Harry and Hermione were sitting in Harry's bedroom – curtains opened, but a Privacy Bubble was around the room. Hermione had wanted to talk to him in private. And she wanted to do it in a far more private place then secluded corners around the Grounds.

“I need to tell you something I've been keeping from you for a couple of weeks now,” Hermione said. “The only reason I didn't tell you two weeks ago, is because I've been giving it a lot of thought. First of all... I'm not breaking up with you. So don't even think about that.”

Harry exhaled in relief. “Well, when you come in and want to speak to me in private...”

“Far more important things need privacy too, Harry,” Hermione said; then blushed, “And it isn't what you think. Damn it, I am messing this up!”

“Just say whatever you need to tell me,” Harry said, “I am silent until you say I can speak.”

“The day after Thanksgiving, your mother let me take a whiff of the Amortentia,” Hermione said, “To see what I would smell. She said it was only fair since you smelled it.”

“She Charmed away our smelling senses otherwise during those practices,” Harry nodded, then winced when he realized he interrupted her. “Sorry.”
“Yes, she did,” Hermione said. “Anyway, First I smelled spearmint toothpaste – you know, my parents are dentists. I smelled flowers that are usually sitting in a vase in my sitting room at home. And I smelled...”

She cleared her throat. “Do you remember the day you showed me Shadow? How I hugged you and wouldn’t let you go when you told me you would be facing a Dragon?”

Harry nodded, silently.

“I remember a musky scent,” Hermione said. “or maybe it was dirt. Whatever it was, I smelled it again in the Potion. It was the aroma of your body when I hugged you, after you played as Shadow.”

Harry grinned. Did that mean...?

“I had a vision under the influence of the Amortentia,” Hermione said. “I was sitting in my sitting room, talking to my parents. And you transformed from Harry, then to Shadow, then back to Harry, to prove you were a wizard. We were telling them how we felt about each other... and...”

She sighed. “We agreed not to talk about the future. But it was something I wanted – still want -- to happen. Harry... did you... have a vision?”

“I had a vision of you walking out of my house in Boston, then toward me as I was looking at the flower bed,” Harry said. “The wind blew, and I smelled your shampoo.”

Hermione smiled. “I know we agreed to slow down our relationship. I still want to do the seven month thing. But after two weeks of thoughts, pondering and a bit of meditation, I decided I wasn’t mad. That what I smelled in the Amortentia was real. I am falling in love with you, Harry.”

Harry beamed, grinning like a fool. “And I with you, Hermione.”

Hermione smiled and blushed. “We still need these seven months, Harry. Just in case.”

“I know,” Harry said. “We made a promise. I really... really... want to kiss you, but Mom would scream at me.”

“Yes,” Harry’s mother said, poking her head into the invisible bubble, “I probably would. I only heard the 'wanting to kiss' part, Harry. Stop panicking.”

“Privacy!” Harry exclaimed.

Lily rolled her eyes. “Sorry, private time is postponed. Padma and Professor Flitwick are here. And someone else apparently. Padma says Professor Flitwick wants to speak to both of you, and me as well.”

“Oh,” Harry said, “Alright then.”

He stood up, and offered Hermione his hand. She took it, and pulled herself up. She pecked him on the lips as soon as she reached him.

“There's that kiss you wanted,” Hermione said; then whispered. “And promises of more to come.”
Lily cleared her throat.

“Yes – we heard you – we're coming,” Harry said.

He grinned at Hermione, and they followed Lily hand-in-hand out of the bedroom, and outside the tent. They found Padma and tiny Professor Flitwick standing a few feet away.

And Mandy Brocklehurst was standing in between them, looking a lot more timid than she had the last time Harry had seen her. So, Brocklehurst was back. Fantastic. Then he noticed... she was wearing a green tie in her school-robes. Fantastic!

“Greetings!” Flitwick said, “Lady Potter, I will address you first. Headmaster Dumbledore has requested you be in his office at three-o-clock this afternoon.”

Lily tensed up. “Me... or me and my son?”

“Just you!” Flitwick said, “There will be a Tournament Council meeting. I believe the Headmaster said you were expecting it?”

Lily's expression softened. “Finally! I will be there!”

“Headmaster Dumbledore will be happy to hear it!” Flitwick said; then turned to Harry and Hermione, “As I am sure you've noticed, Mandy Brocklehurst has returned from her out-of-school suspension. Well... hopefully. She arrived an hour ago and was immediately Re-Sorted into Slytherin.”

“Rightfully so!” Padma exclaimed; then merely grinned when Flitwick looked at her.

“Perhaps so,” Flitwick said. “However! Miss Brocklehurst's father, the Lord Brocklehurst, has requested that I give a message to you. So here we are. Miss Patil is here just as an escort, but I believe she wanted to say something important after we were finished.”

Padma nodded.

“Um... the message?” Harry asked.

“Oh!” Flitwick said. “Yes, of course! Lord Brocklehurst sends you, and Miss Granger as well, his deepest apologies for his daughter's behavior last month, and in the many months in Miss Granger's time here at school which she had to deal with Lord Brocklehurst's daughter. He has requested his daughter to speak to you – be it an apology or whatever. He asks that you listen to what she has to say. Because then it will be up to you to deem whether or not she returns to Hogwarts.”

“He wants us to decide whether or not she's a changed person,” Hermione said, glancing at Mandy.

“I believe so,” Flitwick said.

“Hermione?” Harry asked, “It will be your decision whether to listen, and your decision of her fate.”

“Putting a load on my shoulders, are you?” Hermione said, smiling. “Please begin, Mandy.”

Mandy inhaled and exhaled. “I was seven years old the day my parents took me to Gringotts, and told me what it would mean to be a future Lady. I'd have a powerful pureblood husband. I'd give
birth to the next generation of pureblood wizards of my husband's House. I was eight when my parents took me to my first social party. They brought me into the so-called children's parlor, where all the Heirs of the guests hung out. They pointed at various boys my age. 'Any one of these boys could be your future husband. Just tell us whom, and we'll try to work out a Betrothal Contract'.

“Five years later, I'm still looking for the boy my parents told me to find. I don't know if I haven't been looking right, or if there isn't a boy that is right for me in Hogwarts. Then you arrived, Harry. Just like that. The House of Potter was no longer extinct. You were an eligible bachelor, Heir of one of the longest bloodlines, and most popular Houses in Wizarding Britain. I followed you that day you went to the library. Watched you. I wanted to talk to you, and flirt, and whatever it took to get us on the road to me being your Lady. And then you asked Gran – Hermione.

“A Muggleborn. Once again, another generation tainted by Muggleborn. My parents may have disapproved of what I had done to Hermione, but they did agree with my beliefs. However, they also said I had gone at it all wrong.

“Then I got word of what Cho Chang did. Attempted Line Theft. Love Potions. Obviously she was mad at what happened to me. We were friends. I know she wanted our group of friends to be your wives – the three you said in your interview. But she did it in a way that was... she's smarter than that. I can't believe... I'm not as dumb as her. I won't ruin my life over a boy who I'm not going to be able to marry.

“I want to continue my education at Hogwarts. Maybe now that I'm in... Slytherin... I'll find a boy who is right for me, and believes the same beliefs I follow. I never really interacted with Slytherins. Maybe I was looking in the wrong places. But I also want to complete my education, pass my OWLs and NEWTs, so I am not just going to be a stay-at-home mother like my own mother is. I can't be her. I won't. But I will... if I can't go back to Hogwarts. I can't go elsewhere. I'd be disowned like... like Tracey. I have a sister who will be starting Hogwarts next year. She would be Lady in my place.

“I suppose that is it. My fate is up to you.”

“Good Merlin, you are a Slytherin,” Padma snorted.

“Miss Patil,” Flitwick said, in a light scolding tone.

“Hermione?” Harry asked.

“Stay away from me, my friends, and anyone affiliated with House Potter, Mandy,” Hermione said, “Unless we approach you. Basically a restraining order while still being a Hogwarts student. Enjoy being a Slytherin. You do deserve it.”

“Thank you, Hermione,” Mandy said.

“You never really did apologize,” Harry said to Mandy.

“She isn't going to,” Hermione said, “Because she wanted to be honest with us. There's my decision, Professor Flitwick – she can stay with limited restrictions. If she messes up... expulsion.”

“An excellent decision, Miss Granger,” Flitwick said, “I agree with you, and I am sure the Headmaster will too. Let's go tell the Headmaster, Miss Brocklehurst.”

Mandy glanced at Harry and Hermione for a moment, before she turned and followed Professor
Flitwick.

“Padma?” Harry asked.

“Winter Solstice Session is in less than a week, Harry,” Padma said, “Next Friday. Since it falls on a Friday, those future Lords and Ladies have permission to sit and watch the Council. Only future Lords and Ladies are welcome in the visitor seats – no media, nobody else.”

Harry whistled. “That clears out a good portion of Hogwarts for a day. Is that common amongst Solstice Sessions?”

“No,” Padma said, shaking her head, “We’ve been invited to this one. Which means it is an important one.”

“Who has invited the Heirs?” Lily asked.

“I have no idea,” Padma said, “I only heard rumors. Anyway, Parvati, Luna and I can't go --”

“Oh, yes, you can,” Lily said. “We're going to be asking for the Patil and Lovegood Houses to be welcomed into the Wizengamot as Noble Houses. I was planning on writing to yours and Luna’s fathers today.”

Padma grinned. “Thank you, Lady Potter. Alright. Um... we need to have at least one, maybe two meetings of the CGA between today and Thursday evening.”

“Tomorrow at noon,” Harry said, “Thursday after classes, but before dinner.”

“Wait,” Lily said. “Tomorrow is fine. However, either you and I are going to write to every Great Alliance House between tonight and tomorrow. We're going to host a large dinner meeting Wednesday or Thursday evening at the Three Broomsticks in a private room.”

“You've been keeping that one in,” Harry accused playfully.

Lily merely shrugged.

“I will speak to the others about tomorrow's meeting,” Padma said, “And encourage everyone to write to their families about the latter meeting too. I know you'll be writing them too, but we'll do our best to encourage it. Obviously you have better access to well... all five tent-mates of yours, Hermione. So you can speak to them about it. Leave the rest – Parvati, Susan and Hannah – to me. And we can collaborate again tonight during dinner.”

“Deal,” Harry said.

“See you this evening,” Padma said.

She smiled, then turned and started off to the castle.

“Six days,” Hermione said. “Six days to know whether or not you and I can still be together. Six days... of knowing we can still be together.”

“No, Hermione,” Harry said, “It won't be the Wizengamot who decides for us. We will make sure of that.”
Hogwarts -- Headmaster's Office

As three-o-clock approached, Lily was now sitting in a chair at a large round table that had been temporarily placed in the Headmaster's Office. The Tournament Council, including Albus Dumbledore, Madame Maxime, Bartemius Crouch, Ludo Bagman, British Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge, and Amos Diggory was sitting at the table. French Minister of Magic Pierre Delacour was also present, sitting between Fudge and Diggory.

Lily was surprised, at first, that Pierre was there. She thought Albus had agreed with her about Pierre's expertise, in the subject of the Second Task. But she had caught Albus frowning when Pierre Delacour had arrived with Cornelius Fudge and Amos Diggory. Obviously Pierre had been invited by Fudge, and not Albus. Which could only mean – in Lily's opinion – that Albus might have been counting on Amos Diggory perhaps having a lack of knowledge of Merpeople and Veela, and hoped that lack of knowledge would help to keep the Task the same as it had been.

Standing almost unnoticeable against various positions around the office, were eight wizards. Four were Fudge's personal security, and four were Delacour's personal security.

“I believe we can begin this Tournament Council meeting,” Fudge said.

Lily noted a slight displeasure on Albus' face – perhaps he hoped to lead the meeting.

“I would like to introduce Amos Diggory and French Minister of Magic Pierre Delacour,” Fudge said, “They are here to present some information that could help us make a decision. Recently, an issue, regarding the future of the Second Task, has come to me as very concerning. Amos has volunteered to be the seventh vote in our decision-making, to prevent a draw in votes. I am sure we are all busy, so let us do away with small talk and get right to it.

“When we decided on what the Second Task would be, we did not take into account one serious problem. Madame Maxime had told us that one of her contenders was a Veela, and it wasn't until recently I understood her concerns. Now, as we know, Fleur Delacour is the aforementioned Veela, and as we know, she is the Beauxbatons Champion. Recent discoveries have made me concerned about Miss Delacour's safety.”

“Pardon me, Minister Fudge,” Pierre said, “Not just my daughter's safety, but also two entire magical races could be threatened if the right decision isn't made today.

“Please, Minister Delacour,” Fudge said, “Enlighten us so we know how to make the best decision available. Amos, you may bring in additional information if you find it necessary.”

“Veela, such as my daughters and wife,” Pierre said, “Have one mortal enemy above all others. Merpeople. Now, it may seem silly at first. Merpeople live in lakes and oceans. Veela live on the land and take to the air. But Veela can also swim. There is a legend amongst Veela and Merpeople lore, about the beginnings of what started this turmoil. It has to do with the Lost City of Atlantis. Most know about the legendary city – it is famous amongst Magicals and the mundane alike. Mundanes believe it is simply that, a legend. Magicals know it was once a very real city which resided below and on the surface of the ocean. What nobody realizes, is that there was a secret,
hidden Veela colony a few kilometers away.

“Merpeople called Atlantis home. In fact it was their capitol. Their kingdom. In Veela history, there were two famous island Veela colonies. One was the isle of Lesbos in Greece. The island near Atlantis is was named from an olde, dead Veela language. Veela now speak the language of their homelands to blend in with humans. In the olde language, the island's name translated to 'Paradise'.

“As legend goes, a group of teen Veelas, all friends, were celebrating another friend's second Ascension. So as you can imagine, they were twelve, thirteen, fourteen year old friends. They celebrated on the beach of their island, and swam in the ocean. Before this day, Veela didn't know about Merpeople, Merpeople didn't know about Veela. The group of teen Veela were swimming in the ocean when they encountered a teenaged school of Merpeople who were exploring the shore of the mysterious island, which their people knew of, but never approached. They had done so on a dare.

“The Merpeople surfaced when they heard splashing. They started shrieking, panicking. The Veela teens panicked, and the Veela who had just Ascended earlier that day panicked. At that Ascension, one learns how to bring forth their fireball ability. The newly Ascended Veela accidentally threw a fireball at a mermaid. The mermaid was a daughter of the King of Atlantis. The friends of the Mermaid princess attacked the Veela who had attacked their princess, and they dragged the attacking Veela -- the Veela the group was celebrating -- deep into the depths of the ocean, drowning and killing the Veela. The dead Veela was a niece of the Veela Queen of the island's colony.”

Lily's eyes widened. Yep. That would start a war.

“The Merpeople and Veela started a war because of the death of the Queen's niece, and the attack of the Merpeople's princess. The war lasted nearly a year, and ended with Atlantis sinking.”

“Why is this not a more famous tale?” Lily asked.

“I agree!” Ludo said, “That is an amazing story!”

“It is interesting,” Albus commented, speaking for the first time since the meeting started.

“Most Veela don't like telling just anyone aside from mates about their histories,” Pierre said. “I learned it from my mother-in-law on my wedding day to my wife.”

“And the war still rages on even to this day?” Lily asked.

“It is more like a... peacetime that could end in a snap of a finger,” Pierre said. “If a Merperson kills a Veela, or vice-versa – war will begin again.”

“When we met last,” Albus said, “You mentioned about the threat from the Merpeople to your daughters. What was that all about.”

“Simply a warning to let my daughters know that they were near Merpeople territory,” Pierre said; he looked around at the Council. “And now you know why the Second Task must be changed. If you don't change it, you will be responsible for possibly sparking another war between two races – simply for a Tournament, and so you can entertain yourselves.”

“I believe we should listen to other opinions,” Cornelius said, “I really don't want to be responsible for having a part in starting a war with a history that resulted in the end of a legendary city! Amos?”
“You were right to invite Minister Delacour,” Amos said, “I wouldn't have known of any of that. I don't get much audience with Veela, I am afraid. That is just terrible.”

“I will not be responsible for hurting one, perhaps two my students,” Madame Maxime said.

“Change the Second Task,” Lily said, “We can figure out something else.”

“While we would do all we can to prevent such a war from beginning,” Albus said, “We have discovered we are not infallible in this Tournament – Champion Longbottom's entry proves this. We could make a mistake and that would be our fault.”

Crouch snorted. “We put together this Task before Champion Delacour entered the Tournament. She knows the dangers. It should be up to her to prevent doing anything that might start a war between her race and the Merpeople!”

“While the Second Task would have been very entertaining,” Ludo said, “I had my doubts. I mean – the Champions will barely spend anytime in the spectator's views. I would only be able to commentate at the start and finish! If there is a chance our decision could start a war, we obviously change it”

“Let's take a vote,” Cornelius said, “Those in favor of changing the Task.”

Six out of seven – all aside from Crouch – voted in favor. Lily noticed Albus' slight hesitation.

“Majority,” Cornelius said, as he frowned in Crouch's direction; then cleared his throat. Let's discuss suggestions! Lady Potter? You raised your hand first.”

“A Duelling Tournament,” Lily said, lowering her hand. “Instead of a one-day tournament, we stretch it to two days. For example, Harry versus Neville, Fleur versus Angelina for the first round. Second round different duels. The following day. Third round, the Champions duel who they hadn't duelled already. Then the final round. The judges vote – deciding on the performances in the duels. Whoever places first and second duels for first place. Third and fourth duels for third place. The losers get second and fourth respectively.

“Points as such: First: Fifty Points. Second: Forty-Five. Third: Forty. Fourth: Thirty-Five. The duels could take place on dueling platforms in the Great Hall, or out on the Grounds. The Dragon arena is still built. If you don't want duel platform style duels, the Dragon arena could be used. Or we could change arenas up. Great Hall first day. Arena second.”

“Hmm,” Madame Maxime said. “In order to make up for Golden Egg clue, we could give the Champions an exam of questions. Whoever gets the most questions right, gets to decide the schedule in the duels. Who they want to fight first, second third. And the rest is decided there. If there is a tie, it would be whoever finished. We could have the exam be in an impartial room with impartial Council – Amos Diggory, Bartemius Crouch and Ludo Bagman – perhaps, to watch over the exams. The exam would take place one month from the Task. We could all pick out two or three questions and add them into the exam.”

Lily smiled and nodded. “A good addition to my idea. Thank you, Madame.”

Madame Maxime smiled.
“Any other ideas for Tasks?” Cornelius asked.

“Since we can't use the lake,” Crouch said, “Let's use the Forbidden Forest. Play a game of – what do the children call it -- hide and seek. We figure out an area, block it off so no dangerous animals – those we don't want to interfere anyway – go into the area. And set the four into the Forest. We judges and other volunteers, follow them around silently, so we make sure they aren't using illegal spells. To add interest, the 'seek' part could be elevated. The winner of the task is the one who is the last Champion standing. The other three must be rendered incapable of competing. But... they also have to make it back out of the forest to prove that they survived the Task. If all Champions are rendered incapable – that obviously drops points down greatly.”

“Would Bartemius' idea be possible, Albus?” Cornelius asked.

Albus stared at Bartemius. “I don't know. It would certainly upset the Centaurs, and we need their permission to take creatures from the Forest for the Third Task. That was agreed upon originally when we discussed the Dragons with them. I'm afraid changing our deal might be impossible. I am in favor of Lady Potter and Madame Maxime's decision.”

“I trust we don't need your votes, Lady Potter, Madame Maxime?” Cornelius asked. “You support the duel and exam Task?”

Lily and Madame Maxime nodded.

“Amos?” Cornelius asked.

“Duel,” Amos said, “I agree with Albus about the Centaurs not allowing us any more use of the Forest.”

“Ludo?” Cornelius asked.

“Bartemius' idea seems exciting! Duels are exciting too!” Ludo said, “Either are entertaining, and it seems since the forest Task is already outnumbered, I pick the duel!”

Cornelius nodded. “Duel idea. Well done, Lily, Madame Maxime. The Second Task will be the Duel. Between now, and January 24th – one month before the Task – we'll figure out three questions apiece for the exam. We'll also figure out dueling arenas. The Great Hall and Dragon Arena seem a good idea to me. I'll figure out a date between now and the end of January for another meeting. Amos, Pierre, thank you for your assistance – you are, of course, welcome to join us at the Yule Ball. Bring your lovely wives – we'd love to have them.”

“Shall I announce the new change in Task during the Yule Ball, Minister?” Albus asked.

“Shouldn't we leave it a mystery for everybody?” Fudge asked.

“No,” Crouch said, “This task isn't to face the unknown like the Dragons. What better night than to announce the Task than the Yule Ball?”

“Show of hands to agree with Bartemius?” Fudge asked.

Everyone raised their hands. Their first unanimous decision.

“I believe we are finished then,” Fudge said. “Thank you all for attending, Minister Delacour, thank
you for an enlightening tale and making us see the error of our ways. Lady Potter, Madame Maxime, Bartemius, thank you for all your ideas. I look forward to the future of the Tournament. Meeting adjourned."

Lily smiled and stood. As she walked out of the office, she patted herself on the back for a job well done. And Madame Maxime have added a great addition to her idea. She had faith Harry would do well. This was something Sirius could teach him. And something he was very good at.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished! Thanks to those who suggested the Patronuses. Daphne and Tracey's are subject to change in the future.

Harry and Hermione's discussion about the Amortentia wasn't planned until I started writing, it and neither was the discussion with Padma – including the Great Alliance meeting at the Three Broomsticks, Patils and Lovegoods hopefully becoming Noble Houses, and the Heirs getting permission to sit in amongst the Council. So yeah, a lot was added as I wrote! But I liked all the ideas!

I hope you liked my version of the sinking of Atlantis. I thought it worked well.

Crouch's Forest Task idea came from a reviewer who suggested something similar. I like my duel idea, but I added the forest Task as a suggestion.

Next Chapter: We meet the Great Alliance, for their meeting in the Three Broomsticks. And possibly more. Two Chapters (I think) until the Winter Solstice.
Saturday, December 12th, 1994

Arriving back at the House Potter Tent, Lily searched for her children, but found that they weren't there. Sirius and Remus were sitting at the dining room table.

“Harry and Rose?” Lily asked, as she sat down at the table.

“Taking advantage of what could be the last pleasant afternoon of the winter season,” Sirius said, “by walking the Grounds with their... respective girlfriends.”

“Walking the Grounds' or finding secluded corners?” Lily asked.

“Lily, I am surprised by you!” Sirius said, scandalized, “Rosie and Gabby are not the type of couple of to find secluded corners!”

“I'm aware,” Lily said, “They're both very mature about how young they are when it comes to their relationship.”

“And Harry and Hermione aren't?” Remus asked, deciding to get into the debate.

Lily sighed. “My baby boy is growing up way too fast. I told you about when Hermione took a whiff of the Amortentia, didn't I? Those two are already in love with each other. After barely a month of their relationship.”

“And how long into your relationship with James did you fall in love with him?” Remus asked. “You've admitted several times before to wanting him to ask you marry him the Christmas after your relationship, not two months after your relationship began.”

“You already know that answer,” Lily said, “I was already falling in love with him after --”

“After one month,” Remus said, nodding, “You have agreed to disregard age, and how much you and James knew each other before – which can be debated, since knowing someone and knowing them is widely different – when comparing your relationship with James, with that of Harry and Hermione. Have you forgotten the debate where they floored us, leaving us almost speechless, a couple weeks ago? I'm not ready for another one of those.

“Harry was taught about romance and witches by Sirius, here. This is his third girlfriend – fourth if you count whatever he had with Rebecca. Be happy Harry hasn't gone anywhere as far as Sirius did
with his first girlfriend – which wasn't nearly as long of a relationship Harry had with either of his first two girlfriends.”

“I don't even know what Harry has done with his girlfriends,” Lily said; then stared at Sirius, “Do you?”

“Heavy petting and his second girlfriend let him see her topless in a broom closet – if he told me the truth,” Sirius said, then snorted, “Knowing what kind of girl the first one was, I'm surprised she didn't let him see her naked at the very least. But according to him, she did not. Anyway, he's less of a braggart these days, so he hasn't told me anything about his romance with Hermione. But I doubt Hermione has let him even 'pet' her yet. She's definitely not that kind of girl. Snogging, yes. But all teens their age snog. Right?”

Lily nodded, thinking about her teenage relationships.

“You're still worried they're moving too fast,” Remus said, “I think they really want to keep to their seven month plan.”

“If they get that long,” Sirius muttered, “I do not want to even think about what will happen if that rumored bill passes next Friday. You think his outburst last month in the Great Hall was bad? Imagine what will happen if dating Hermione becomes illegal for him?”

“I imagine he'd run away with her back to America,” Remus said, “Where British laws don't matter. They would ignore the seven-month plan, she'd Emancipate herself, and they'd get Betrothed. He might even consider dropping out of the Tournament and losing his magic. And yes, I realize that means he'd likely forget about his supposed 'destiny' against Voldemort.”

“Forget Betrothal,” Sirius said, with a snort, “They'd take a couple Aging Potions, use a bit of magic to fake their identities and get hitched in Vegas just so they could be married, at least in the No-Maj way, which both have experience with. Mind you, that is the extreme, especially if they're afraid Great Britain would somehow try to force them to remain in the country as British-born citizens.”

“Dear Merlin, we need to make sure this stupid bill does not pass,” Lily muttered. “Everything you two just said is quite plausible.”

“And when it does not pass – they'll go back to their seven-month plan,” Remus said. “Boyfriend and girlfriend, exploring a relationship and finding out just how compatible they are.”

“For someone who has declared himself a lifelong bachelor, you know a lot about romance, Remus Lupin,” Lily said, with a grin.

Remus grimaced and looked away.

Lily frowned and gave him an apologetic glance. “Sorry, Moony. I was just poking fun.”

“It isn't that,” Sirius said, grinning, “Before you came back, he told me he's actually found someone he is interested in.”

Lily's eyes widened. “Tell me who it is, Remus Lupin? Is it Tonks? I've seen the way she's looked at you when you were teaching her the Patronus Swarm.”

“She is much too young for me,” Remus said.
“And the Astronomy Professor isn't?” Sirius asked.

“She's four years younger, Sirius,” Remus said. “Tonks on the other hand – we babysat her – as did Lily and James -- the summer before their wedding.”

“Astronomy Professor,” Lily echoed Sirius, “Aurora Sinistra?”

Remus' cheeks went slightly pink.

“You know – the name Aurora sounds very slightly familiar,” Lily said. “Where have I –? Our Hogwarts days? She would have been a student in the same time we were.”

Sirius laughed. “Remus remembers her. He told me. Apparently she was this adorable little second year student who had ripped her knapsack in the middle of the corridor, and Sixth Year Prefect Remus was doing his rounds, and helped her fix it and put her belongings back in place. She introduced herself, and he distinctly remembers her blushing every time she saw him for the next year-and-a-half.”

“Thank you for revealing a story which was mine to tell,” Remus said.

“Were you going to tell it?” Sirius asked.

Remus blushed and shrugged.

“Aurora,” Lily said, nodding, “James talked of her – I remember now. He said she was your little stalker. I do remember a young student who I saw more often than not around seventh year, after I started hanging out with you Marauders. She kept herself at a distance, but it was kind of fun after a while figuring out where she was. That was her?”

Sirius and Remus nodded.

“And she's single?” Lily asked.

“Aren't most Hogwarts Professors?” Sirius asked, with a snort.

“Ask her to the Ball, Remus!” Lily said. “I'm sure she'll say yes.”

“You could see if she still carries around a knapsack and slice the bottom open!” Sirius said, laughing, “Deja-Vu! Then romance!”

Remus sighed. “I can't ask her.”

“Remus Lupin, you're not asking her to marry you and have your babies,” Lily said, “Ask her to the Ball, so you can have a date.”

“And what about you?” Remus asked. “Will you have a date?”

Lily shrugged. “I'm definitely not asking Severus.”
“If you don't go with anybody, he is going to want a dance with you,” Remus said.

“Probably more than one,” Sirius said, snorting, “And something after the dance. I'm surprised he hasn't asked you – even on the major chance you'd deny him.”

Lily glared at him.

Sirius ignored her glares. “I wonder if Luna's father is seeing anyone We could see on Thursday.”

“Xenophilius?” Lily asked, then frowned. “Uh... well, he's...”

“Too eccentric?” Sirius suggested, “Probably – Luna's behavior didn't come from Pandora. So it had to come from him.”

“No... he's... too closely related to somebody who could possibly be a candidate for Harry's third wife,” Lily said.

“Luna?” Remus asked.

Lily shrugged. “I've caught her flirting with him.”

“You're not asking Xenophilius to marry you so you can have his babies,” Remus said, basically echoing her earlier words.

“If he is single, I'll consider it,” Lily said.

“Ask Luna,” Sirius said.

“No!” Lily said, “Just what I need is Luna thinking I am interested in her father, just because I want a date so I can avoid Severus.”

“Is Amos Diggory single?” Sirius asked, grinning, “Didn't you say he'd be here for the Tournament Council meeting? How is your old boyfriend?”

“He's happily married and didn't look twice at me,” Lily said, “And I didn't look twice at him either.”

“Seeing his son – Connor or something – must be Deja-Vu,” Sirius said, “Looks just like his father did as a teen.”

“I have not thought anything about that man in several years,” Lily said. “Over half a lifetime. So don't bring him up. As I said, he's happily married.”

You could ask Ludo Bagman,” Sirius said.

“Ludo?!” Lily yelped. “Why would I –?!?”

“I didn't tell you, did I?” Sirius replied, “Remember the First Task? I told Remus I wanted you to talk to Ludo. And Remus believed I was trying to hook you two up.”

Lily turned to Remus, who merely sighed and shook his head.

“He also believed that since I was apparently unhappy Amelia hadn't told me she was going to be at
the First Task,” Sirius said, “That I was going to leave her for you.”

Lily narrowed her eyes in Remus' direction.

Remus cleared his throat and stood up. “I'm going to go look for the kids.”

“Leave the kids alone!” Sirius said, “Worry about your own love-life! Go find Aurora! Hey! She’s the Astronomy Professor! You won't get caught on the Astronomy Tower by the Professor if she’s the one you're with!”

“Screw you, Padfoot,” Remus said, as he walked out of the tent.

Sirius snickered and shook his head. “Ten Galleons he has a date when he comes back.”

“Deal,” Lily said. “Yes, I hope he asks her. But he's always been so... hidden... when it comes to romance because of his affliction. At least two Professors at Ilvermorny had a fancy for him. If he noticed, he did nothing about it.”

“I can't believe you thought he was interested in Tonks,” Sirius said, “Really, Lily? Tonks?!!”

“She has a fancy for him – women can tell these things,” Lily said.

“As much as being that closely related to Remus through marriage would be brilliant,” Sirius said, “He's right. She's much too young for him. If she was any younger, Remus would have been changing her nappies while we were babysitting her!”

Lily snorted, which then turned into loud laughter. Sirius grinned and soon joined in.

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The week leading up to the Great Alliance meeting, and the Winter Solstice Session, was very busy for the 'extended Potter family', and the Hogwarts Five Plus Tonks – the new name for the tent where the six girls roomed together. “

Sunday afternoon, the Children of the Great Alliance held their second lunch meeting in as many months, so they could discuss the larger Great Alliance meeting, and the Winter Solstice Session.

Tonks had been invited, because the House of Tonks would officially be welcomed into the Alliance during the bigger meeting planned for Thursday. Even though House Tonks was a minor House – one that wasn't eligible for Nobility, like the Patils and Lovegoods were, simply because House Tonks was too young in generations – they would be a valuable House in the Alliance.

Aside from House Tonks and House Black, they hadn’t had any luck discovering any other possible Alliances. They had hopes that House Longbottom might return to the Alliance, but Harry wanted Augusta to approach him and not vice-versa. The woman needed to be able to volunteer to break away from Dumbledore's Alliance – he wasn't about to influence her to do so. It might backfire on him. Other CGA members agreed, saying that if Augusta was pushed, she might accept to return, only so she could spy on the Great Alliance for Dumbledore.

They discussed the upcoming meeting on Thursday, which would include all members of the Great Alliance, including the CGA. They had brought up topics they would like to bring up during the meeting. Most of the time, the CGA had never had a voice amongst the normal Alliance meetings. They needed to change that, and the best way to do it was to bring up some convincing topics to
Daphne had voiced one topic in particular.

“I've been thinking about something we're expecting to happen during the Winter Solstice Session,” Daphne said. “A Bill will be brought up that makes it illegal for Last Generation Lords of multiple Houses to marry anyone but purebloods. It sounds fairly specific if our predictions are correct. How do we know Harry isn't the only Lord who falls under the category? Can anyone think of any future Lord in Hogwarts who is Lord of more than one Noble, Ancient, or Ancient and Most Noble House?”

“Used to think it was Draco Malfoy until Sirius showed up and proved he wasn't missing,” Tonks said. “Draco would have been Lord Malfoy and Lord Black. But now he's just going to be Lord Malfoy.”

“Surely there has to be somebody else,” Hannah said.

“And if there isn't?” Hermione asked, “What do we do?”

“Delay,” Tracey said, “Delay the bill until we can get proof that this bill isn't simply targeting Harry.”

“If someone gets offensive about that,” Daphne said, “Then obviously it is just targeting Harry.”

“Which would be illegal,” Susan said. “Laws can not be specifically targeted at one person. And if it is...”

“Poof,” Luna said, smiling, “Bill destroyed. Harry can still marry Hermione.”

Harry and Hermione coughed. Rose, once again seated to Harry's left, giggled, while the other girls grinned.

“I think you mean date, Luna,” Hermione said.

“Oh, come on,” Daphne said, “You can't fool us. You want to get Betrothed to him, so you can attend Ilvermorny next year.”

“It is a possibility,” Hermione admitted, “But we're simply taking our relationship day-to-day for a while. No expectations.”

Harry could still see the expressions of skepticism and knowing smiles on the faces of the girls after Hermione's statement.

By the middle of the week, all the Children of the Great Alliance had been given permission from their parents to go to the large Alliance meeting Thursday afternoon in The Three Broomsticks, as well as the Winter Solstice Session on Friday.

All around Hogwarts, several students were talking about attending the Winter Solstice Session as well. A good quarter of the student body would be attending, having gotten permission from their parents and guardians. The Hogwarts Staff were quite busy – on top of already busy schedules – trying to figure out how they were going to transport a large group of students to the Ministry of Magic on Friday, and into the Council Room, without too much fuss. They would have to leave at
least two hours before the Session began to get everyone through security and to the ninth floor of
the Ministry of Magic. Transporting all those students down the lifts would take at least half-an-hour
alone.

In addition to the plans for the Winter Solstice Session, the Hogwarts staff was quite busy when it
came to lessons. Ilvermorny, Beauxbatons and Hogwarts alike had end-of-term exams before
Christmas Break that took place between Monday and Thursday.

Harry was excluded from end-of-term exams as Champion, so he spent his free time preparing for
the Winter Solstice. When his mother and Uncles were busy, he was reading some books about the
Wizengamot Council and Wizarding British law to prepare himself for the Council Session. During
their free-time, Lily, Remus and Sirius also helped him prepare. Sirius instructed him how he would
reclaim the seats of his three Houses, and how to give his mother Proxy for the Houses. Lily took
Sirius’ advice about this as well, as well as how to accept Proxies.

By Thursday morning, Harry felt as if he was ready for the following day. But he knew he wouldn't
have much control over anything aside from reclaiming his House seats. It would be up to the Great
Alliance whether or not those worrisome rumored bills would pass. However, he could do his part
during the Great Alliance meeting. He definitely planned to use his voice there.

Thursday, December 17th, 1994

Albus Dumbledore stood near the four Thestral-drawn carriages, which would be leading a group of
adults and students down to Hogsmeade for a meeting. All week, Albus had pursed his lips every
time he was informed of yet another so-called “Child of the Great Alliance” had permission to spend
the evening hours before curfew in Hogsmeade for an outing with their parents. An “outing”? Ha!
Obviously it was a Great Alliance meeting, which would be complete for the first time in thirteen
years. Well, aside from Houses Longbottom, Boot and MacMillan. Even then, with three less
Houses, and less votes, the Great Alliance was still a powerful political force.

If they were meeting together the eve before the Winter Solstice, then obviously they were making
some grand plans for the Wizengamot Council Session. What Albus wouldn't give to have an ear, or
even a spy, in that meeting, so he could be forewarned of all their preparations. But he knew that all
eavesdropping and spying enchantments were automatically done away with when one entered the
private rooms of the Three Broomsticks where the Great Alliance would surely be meeting. And he
had no spies within the Great Alliance, no matter how much he had tried. He should have considered
convincing Augusta to act as if she had jumped ship back into the Great Alliance, so she could be his
spy. Alas, it was much too late.

He heard teenage giggling, and turned to find Susan Bones, Hannah Abbot and the Patil sisters – all
Children of the Great Alliance walking toward him and the carriages.

“I believe you have our permission slips, sir?” Padma Patil asked when she saw him. “If not, we
have copies for you here.”

“I was informed earlier of the permission given by your parents and guardian, ladies,” Albus said.
“The Carriages are ready for you.”

“We're waiting for everyone else, sir,” Susan Bones said.

“Here they come!” Hannah Abbot said, pointing across the Grounds, then she giggled. “I see Auntie
Amelia couldn't wait to see Sirius, Susan.”

Susan snorted. “Oh, sure, she told me nothing about her coming up here instead of greeting me in Hogsmeade with the rest of the parents. So she's definitely here for her boyfriend.”

Albus glanced at the group coming from the Ilvermorny Tents. He was rather surprised to see Hermione Granger coming their way, holding the hand of Harry Potter, and accompanying Harry's family, and the rest of the Children of the Great Alliance. He knew Hermione wasn't allowed to go into Hogsmeade that evening. He hadn't received a permission slip for her.

Perhaps... perhaps he could take advantage of this. He could inform her of the rumored bill that, if passed, would make it illegal for her to date Harry. Perhaps he could promise a way to make her immune from that bill if she did something for him – such as give him information about things happening at the Ilvermorny Tents? Was her feelings for Harry deep enough that she'd be willing to betray her boyfriend's trust a little bit? Albus looked forward to finding out. Of course, he had no plans of keeping his promise. Once he had the information he needed, he'd simply Obliviate her of their meetings. Yes... a good plan, and some headway.

Soon, the group from the Ilvermorny Tents arrived.

“Albus,” Lily said, “How surprising to see you here.”

“Just wishing to see several of my students off safely,” Albus said, “This is nice practice for the large group of students that will be heading out tomorrow. Greetings, Miss Granger.”

“Greetings,” Hermione said; she had been talking in whispers to Harry and the girls, and turned when she heard him.

“I am afraid I didn't get permission from your parents,” Albus said, “Perhaps you could spend your time away from your friends in the library. I am sure you want to check over whether or not you've done well on your exams.”

“Hermione is coming with us, Albus,” Lily said.

Albus sighed. “I am afraid she doesn't have --”

“She does have permission,” Lily said. “From the Protector and Head of her House. As she is under House Protection, she is a member of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter. Harry has been her Magical Guardian since the day they agreed that she'd be under his Protection. Perhaps you forgot about that? I hope you haven't been under the assumption that you're still her Magical Guardian for the last month-and-a-half?”

Albus tried not to purse his lips for the countless time in the past week. He had assumed that. He had forgotten that a Protector would be a Minor's Magical Guardian. Damn it! His plans had just gone down the drain.

“Go on into the carriage with your sister, Harry,” Lily said. “I'll be in there soon.”

Albus watched as Harry helped Hermione into the carriage, then stepped inside as well.

“She will be joining us today and tomorrow for the Winter Solstice Session,” Lily said. “Harry and Hermione have plans to get Betrothed. So she will likely be the future Lady Potter, and as such has
permission to sit with the future Lords and Ladies tomorrow.”

Albus tried to keep his grandfather-like manner. Betrothal? Ha! Tomorrow, that plan would go down the drain!

“I do hope you’re going to vote against the rumored bill that would make their relationship illegal,” Lily said. “Because if that bill is passed, it is only passed in Great Britain. Not in America. Harry and Hermione will go to America, where Hermione will be Emancipated, and they'll get Betrothed – and maybe even elope early, if they’re afraid that they can’t get married. And they'll never come back to Great Britain. Ever, Albus. So do please vote against the bill. If you do, Harry and I might even come and speak to you about the topics you're interested in talking to us about. That would be the 'gift' that would allow us to meet with you, if you know what I mean.”

Albus stared at Lily. Was she being honest with him? If he did away with the Bill before it even started, would she and Harry meet with him? Perhaps even before the year was out? He knew she was being honest about Harry and Hermione running off to America to elope. He hadn't considered that the British laws wouldn't work in America. If the bill didn't pass, would that help him keep Harry in Britain? He had a lot to think about.

“Enjoy your dinner reunion with your friends, Lady Potter,” Albus said, “Try to bring my students back before curfew.”

He turned and walked away, as Lily, and the others stepped into the carriages. Well, he had wanted to know what was happening in the Ilvermorny Tents with Harry. He had gotten a glimpse, from Lily voluntarily giving him information. Harry was ready to go back to America, dragging his girlfriend with him. And he had no intentions on returning.

Albus needed to think about his plans. He needed to modify them. Harry leaving Britain was something he couldn't have.

If Harry decided to leave Britain forever, the British Wizarding World would never recover from that decision. A decision which – while seemingly miniscule to Harry Potter – was apocalyptic to Albus Dumbledore.

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**Thesstral-Drawn Carriage En Route To Hogsmeade**

Lily fumed as she stepped into the Carriage with Harry, Hermione and Rose. That manipulative, interfering old man! How dare he try to stop Hermione from joining her boyfriend!

It had been decided that Lily, Sirius, Remus and Amelia would be in the four separate carriages escorting the Children of the Great Alliance to Hogsmeade. Sirius had joined Tracey, Daphne, Tonks and Astoria. Remus had joined the Patil sisters, and Luna. And Amelia had joined her niece, Susan, and Hannah. The carriages started moving as soon as Lily sat down.

“Did Professor Dumbledore really just try to stop me from joining you tonight and tomorrow?” Hermione asked, “Going to the library to check up on my exam answers. I already did that! Every afternoon this week including today!”

“I believe he either didn't know, or had forgotten, that you are a member of House Potter,” Lily said. “You don't need your parents' permission, because they are No-Maj. Magical Guardians will always have first and final decisions for those who have Muggle parents, when they're in the wizarding...
world – until they turn of age.”

“So he's been my Magical Guardian from the day I accepted to go to Hogwarts,” Hermione said, “Until the day Harry made me his Protected. That explains so damn much. I used to look up to that man!”

Lily smiled softly, as she watched a slightly weepy Hermione lay her head on Harry's shoulder, and Harry proceed to kiss her bushy hair.

“I tell you what,” Harry said, to Hermione, “Before we leave Hogsmeade this evening, two things will happen for you personally. I'm buying you a big bag of chocolate. And you’re getting some formal robes for tomorrow, so you can wear the House Potter Crest over your heart. We're not coming back until that happens.”

Hermione smiled, then raised her head from his shoulder and pecked him on the lips. “Thanks, Harry.”

“Aww, I want a big bag of chocolate!” Rose whined, playfully.

Lily held back a snicker. Rose was going through her 'time of the month', and chocolate tended to cheer her up during these times.

“I'll give you ten Galleons for a visit to the candy shop,” Lily said.

Rose grinned. “Thanks, Mom.”

“So what did you say to Dumbledore, Mom?” Harry asked.

“I told him that if this rumored bill is passed tomorrow,” Lily said, “That you two will run away back to America, get Emancipated, Betrothed, and probably elope within a year.”

Harry and Hermione dropped their jaws as they looked at her. Rose giggled, either at Lily's words, their reaction, or both. Likely both.

“Oh, and you won't return to Britain... ever,” Lily said, shrugging. “I am not sure which one shocked him more.”

“Why did you tell us to come in here?!” Harry asked. “I wanted to see his face!”

“You did see his face,” Hermione said, “We both did. He looked as if he had swallowed his whole bowl of lemon drops.”

“But I wanted to hear why!” Harry complained.

“And now you did,” Lily said.

“In real-time!” Harry exclaimed.

Lily shook her head. “So you're more worried about not overhearing the conversation, and not the fact that I told him you'd run away, Emancipate yourselves, and elope within a year?”

“Yes,” Harry and Hermione said.
“Please don't tell me that was already something you discussed,” Lily said.


“Young man,” Lily muttered.

“So you're still going to be against that series of events if the bill passes tomorrow?” Harry asked innocently.

“Or were you being honest with Professor Dumbledore?” Hermione asked.

Lily sighed and stared out the window. She had done it again. She had lost a verbal battle against two teens that knew how to hold one.

Harry and Hermione merely grinned at each other, and Rose giggled at them all.

Chapter End Notes

Yes. I know. The Great Alliance meeting wasn't in this chapter. It will be next chapter. If I also include the moments leading up to the start of the Winter Solstice Session, even if it is cliffhanger, will you forgive me?

Remus/Aurora and Lily/Xenophilius are only POSSIBLE relationships. They'll probably be Yule Ball dates. I had other plans for Xenophilius. Maybe. What do my reviewers think? Do you approve of these two relationships? Should I explore them further than Yule Ball dates?

I loved the discussion of Tonks in this chapter. Especially Sirius' line about nappies.

Albus has realized things he totally had ignored. His plans are unraveling. Will he modify them? Is Lily being completely honest with him? Is she manipulating the manipulator? I loved Albus' PoV in this chapter. His plot for Hermione, while very implausible, was fun to write.

Next Chapter: I already told you, didn't I?
Thursday, December 17th, 1994

As the carriage stopped at its destination, Harry stepped out and helped his sister, girlfriend and mother out of the carriage. They walked over to Remus, who was holding the carriage door for Luna and the Patil twins.

"Are you sure you don't want to stay here and chat with old friends, Remus?" Lily asked.

“Someone needs to make sure the rest of the Ilvermorny students behave, Lily,” Remus said, smiling. “Enjoy yourselves. I'll see you later, eager to hear about everything.”

“Thank you, Remus,” Lily said.

Remus smiled and waved farewell, as his family and the Children of the Great Alliance made their way toward the Three Broomsticks. Harry, Hermione, Lily and Rose were the first to enter the restaurant, and they walked over to the bar where Madam Rosmerta was standing behind.

“Lady Potter, young Lord Potter,” Rosmerta said, “Party Room Three is ready for you. Several of your guests have already arrived. It is a good thing you warned me you would need the largest room. Quite the party you have in there.”

Her eyes widened as she saw several students pass by.

“And still more coming, I see,” she said, grinning. “It is a good thing you decided on the party buffet tables. Everything is already set up. You can pay for it all afterward.”

“Thank you, Rosie,” Lily said, “I know I did right naming my daughter after you.”

Rosmerta's eyes widened. “I didn't know.”

Lily patted a hand on Rose's shoulder. “This is Madam Rosmerta, Rose. Your namesake, basically. Without her help, I might have never decided to say 'yes' when your father asked me out to the Halloween Hogsmeade weekend in my seventh year. Without her, I might have never had you or Harry.”

“Oh, you are too kind!” Madam Rosmerta said, then smiled at Rose, “Hello, dear. I told your brother a few weeks ago that he looks just like your father. And you – look just like your mother.”
“Thank you,” Rose said. “Nice to meet you, ma'am.”

“So polite!” Madam Rosmerta said. “Such a dear. Well, don't let me keep you all waiting. Enjoy yourselves.”

“Thank you Rosie,” Lily said.

Hand-in-hand with Hermione, Harry followed his mother and sister through the restaurant and down a corridor. They passed the room where, over a month ago, Tracey Davis had become Tracey Black, and a future member of House Potter. Then they headed toward another room. Sirius was at the door, waiting for them.

“I do believe some of our Allies invited their own Allies,” Sirius said.

“Possible new additions to the Alliance?” Lily asked. “Excellent.”

Harry and Hermione exchanged grins. This could be a very good thing!

“Well, let's go reunite with old friends, and meet some new ones,” Lily said, “Go on in, kids.”

Harry led Hermione, Rose, Lily and Sirius into a very large room that was a quarter-size of the main restaurant area of the Three Broomsticks. In the center of the room, there were four long, rectangular dining tables strategically positioned into a square, so that all who sat at the tables could see everyone else. Several chairs were placed around the tables. The tables were decorated with much the same decorations as seen in the main restaurant, and there were utensils, and glasses already available. Two Buffet tables were lined up along one side of the room, with plates on either end, and Harry assumed the buffet had ever-replenishing enchantments so all food choices would be available for everyone.

Harry looked around at the various people. The Hogwarts students were talking to adults who were likely each student's parents. He could see Daphne, Tracey and Astoria talking to Lord Castor and Lady Illiana of House Greengrass. Daphne was introducing Tonks, whose parents, Ted and Andromeda, were standing nearby. Luna Lovegood was hugging a man who was obviously her father. He had long blonde hair, which was graying in parts, and he wore clothing just as eccentric as Luna's casual wear was. There were a couple pairs of adults who weren't reuniting with parents – perhaps these were Allies of some of the House Potter Allies?

Harry slightly jumped as, behind him, Lily let off light fireworks from her wand to get everyone's attention. It worked. Everyone was now looking at her. Some were grinning, and looked emotional – obviously these were her old friends who had only seen her pictures in the Daily Prophet in the past month-and-a-half, and were now getting a glimpse of her being alive now, after all this time.

“Thank you,” Lily said, “I am happy to see all of you too after so many years. Is everyone here, or are we expecting anybody else?”

There were no signs that anyone else was expected.

“As is a tradition of the Great Alliance,” Lily said, “Started by Charlus Potter, and passed onto his son – my late husband, James, I must ask this to begin our meeting. Has everyone checked themselves of eavesdropping or spying enchantments on their person and their children? We do not want anyone listening in on what will prove to be an important meeting. These rooms usually are enchanted to remove all of those types of enchantments, but I want to make sure.”
There were nods and murmurs of assent from all adults in the room.

“Thank you,” Lily said. “I think we will start this meeting by filling our plates and glasses with the buffet Madam Rosmerta has offered us. I will be paying for all of it – as I am hosting this meeting. So please, fill your plates and bellies.”

There was a scramble as several went over to the buffet. Others, those once closer friends to Lily, greeted her privately and hugged her. Harry tried to hide his blush, as a few people told him they hadn't seen him since he was a baby. Twenty minutes later, everyone was seated with plates and glasses full.

“I am sure all of you have heard, but I will say so anyway,” Lily said, “My son, Harry, has taken on the title of Lord Potter of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter. But as he has made me his Proxy for the Wizengamot Council until he turns of age, he has also granted that I will be leading the Great Alliance until he can take the House Potter seat. To begin, I think we will do introductions for those who do not know who each of us are. Also, I can see that some of you brought who I assume are your own Allies. I assume they are here in hopes of joining the Great Alliance?”

There were assenting murmurs and nods.

“I, too, have a couple of Houses up for possible Alliance members,” Lily said, “As does my son. Two of those Houses will surprise you. We will take votes whether or not those not in the Alliance can join. I ask that those who are not voted in, leave the meeting so we do not risk spying or eavesdropping. My son, Lord Potter, will then ask those voted in to take oaths, allying themselves to the House of Potter and the Great Alliance Charlus Potter founded. Is this understood?”

More murmurs of assent, and nods.

“I will begin,” Lily said. “I am Lady Lily Potter of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter. As you probably saw in my interview with the Daily Prophet last month, I recently discovered I am a Pureblood, adopted by Muggles. My birth surname was Byrd. While the House of Byrd is a Minor House, they – and myself – and my children – are descended from the Ancient and Most Noble House of Ravenclaw.”

Harry had revealed this news to the CGA last Sunday. But everyone else – aside from the Tonks, and those in the 'extended Potter family' and Amelia – were absolutely shocked. I will be reclaiming the seat of House Ravenclaw, as Lady Ravenclaw, tomorrow.”

Rose introduced herself, then Harry did. None were surprised about Peverell House, since he had announced that before. Most were shocked about his Lord Gryffindor Title. He explained that his grandfather and father had decided to keep it a secret. He told everyone that Houses Peverell, Gryffindor and Ravenclaw were accepted into the Great Alliance. Then he introduced his girlfriend, Hermione, as his Protected and a member of the House of Potter.

“Now for the first of two candidates,” Harry said, “Both should have been in the Great Alliance if my father wasn't forced into hiding with my mother and I back in 1981. The first candidate is the Minor House of Tonks.”

The Tonks introduced themselves – Andromeda introduced herself as a member of the Black family as well.
“House Black is the other candidate,” Harry said, “My Godfather, Lord Sirius Black, hopes to bring House Black into the Light Alliance for further votes for the Light, and further crippling the Dark Alliance.”

Sirius introduced his hopeful soon-to-be daughter Tracey, formerly of House Davis, and his plans to request a Blood Adoption on Friday.

The Noble House of Greengrass introduced themselves next, followed by Minor House of Lovegood. Then the Ancient and Noble Houses of Bones and Abbots took their turn. House Abbot introduced the next possible candidate, their ally, the Noble House of Branstone. Lord Edgar and his wife Lady Elena looked like very kind and friendly people. It turned out that Lady Abbot and Lady Branstone were sisters. Hermione whispered to Harry that she recognized the last name – likely their daughter had been sorted into Hufflepuff that year, with Susan and Hannah.

House Patil introduced themselves, and also their own candidates, the Ancient and Noble House of Brown – Lord Braddock and Lady Holly. Harry realized they were the parents of Parvati's friend, Lavender Brown.

“Let us take a vote for the four new candidate Houses,” Lily said, “Majority vote rule.”

All four Houses – Tonks, Black, Branstone and Brown – each of whom were Light Alliance members, were voted in, and Harry made it official with vows.

“More announcements,” Lily said. “I’ve recently been in contact with House Patil and House Lovegood. I will request that both Minor Houses are allowed ascension into Nobility and take new seats tomorrow. Lord Castor, I need a Neutral or Dark House to be my second for each invitation.”

“I will be your second,” Lord Castor said.

“Thank you,” Lily said, “Any more announcements from the Great Alliance, before we move onto important business? Amelia?”

“My news is not exactly about the Great Alliance, but I have a feeling it will greatly help toward our goals,” Amelia said. “Lord Xi Chang has resigned his House from the Dark Alliance and the Wizengamot, and has moved his entire family, House, and Accounts to China. You all may remember the news in the Daily Prophet of Lord Potter's problems at the end of November with Lord Chang's daughter. Lord Chang's daughter was expelled, but allowed to finish her education at other schools. Lord Chang has decided his daughter will do so in China.”

“Was Lord Chang a voice of the Dark Alliance?” Sirius asked.

A “voice” meant someone who usually spoke up about bills, issues, et cetera, and other things including convincing their Alliance to vote against other Alliance's bills and issues, et cetera.

“He was one of them,” Amelia said, “Lucius Malfoy was one of the voices until his arrest. His wife, Narcissa, took over the Malfoy seat.”

Harry noticed Andromeda Tonks roll her eyes. He knew Andromeda and Lady Malfoy were sisters.

“Narcissa is definitely not a voice,” Andromeda said. “She's only there as a holding place until her son turns of age, so the family seat doesn't be given away.”
“Have you been in contact with her recently?” Sirius asked, looking thoughtful.

“We exchanged a couple letters after her husband was arrested, then became a fugitive,” Andromeda said, “Why, cousin?”

“Because I wonder if she's still dedicated to Lucius,” Sirius said, “Or if she'd like her Lord Black to annul her marriage. They were Betrothed, weren't they? I'd like to know the details of that Contract.”

“I wish you luck – just don't expect too much from her,” Andromeda said.

“If it works, it could remove another vote from the Dark Alliance,” Sirius said, shrugging. “I'll take a chance.”

“Are there any voices in the Dark Alliance?” Harry asked.

“Bartemius Crouch,” Lord Castor said, nodding, “I've heard rumors he's going to be the voice now. Also a couple known Houses of Death Eaters who got lucky with the Imperius Defense way back when will probably be voices too. But Lord Brocklehurst and Lord Vane of the Neutral Alliance have Dark tendencies, and do enough speaking for the Dark Alliance without assistance by Crouch. I wouldn't be surprised if Vane announces he's now Dark.”

Harry nodded. “Vane is a name I am concerned about. We'll discuss that soon. I fear he could be the voice behind one of the biggest bills tomorrow.”

Harry then glanced at Tracey, and looked around. “What about Lord Davis?”

Lord Castor sighed and looked at Tracey. “I've exchanged a couple letters with Lord Davis, trying to get him to apologize to Tracey for his actions last month. I am afraid he's going to go from Neutral with Light tendencies, to Neutral with Dark. Same as Lord Vane and Brocklehurst.”

“Which means he'll oppose when Sirius wants to do a Blood Adoption with me,” Tracey said.

“Naturally,” Sirius muttered.

“Any other announcements?” Lily asked.

“Ever since you and your son were discovered alive, Lady Lily,” Lord Abbot said, “I've been in contact with Lord Boot and Lord MacMillan, hoping they might bring themselves – and their Alliance – back into the Great Alliance. I think I've been chipping away at their resolve, but some great victories tomorrow for the Great Alliance and the Light Alliance would certainly help.”

“Will they still vote with the Light Alliance?” Lily asked.

“Most of the time,” Lord Abbot said. “Unless the Dark Alliance has something really juicy.”

“Any other announcements?” Lily asked again; no one else spoke up. “How united is the Light Alliance outside our Alliances? For example, Dumbledore's Alliance.”

“Albus Dumbledore and his Alliance,” Amelia said, “has had a very odd history in recent years. Arthur Weasley's ascension to Nobility, for example, was a surprise. The man never seemed like someone who would want to sit on the Wizengamot. And he rarely ever speaks up, even though I know he favors Muggles and Muggleborn. He could offer bills supporting Muggles and
Muggleborn, and he just does not do it. Then a few years ago, Augusta Longbottom made a really odd bill attempt that did not sound like something she'd usually do. It sounded almost like a Neutral or Dark idea.”

“What was it?” Lily asked.

“She wanted to pass a bill that could have given the British Ministry more control over sections of Gringotts,” Amelia said. “If it had passed, we could have had more Goblin Rebellions. Her bill specifically wanted to give the British Ministry control over extinct – or rumored-to-be-extinct Houses – instead of letting Gringotts take control over them.”

“Rumored-to-be-extinct?” Harry echoed, “She said that?”

“Yes,” Amelia said.

Several others nodded in agreement.

“Dumbledore,” Lily sighed. “It was his bill – Augusta was just the voice. Our Account Manager revealed to us that Dumbledore tried to take control of the House Potter Accounts, believing our House was extinct. I am sure Keeper Ragnok told him that there were rumors the House was not extinct, and he was waiting for those rumors to be confirmed. Every year on my son's birthday, he tried to take control of the Accounts.”

“Augusta's bill would have given him control,” Ted Tonks said. “Merlin... I wonder if there is a history of him influencing others to offer bills that he doesn't want to be seen responsible for.”

“I think we'll see evidence of it tomorrow,” Harry said; he looked at Lily, who smiled and motioned for him to continue, “Everyone in here saw my interview last month with Barnabus Cuffe, I assume. I told Cuffe that I only had to marry one Pureblood wife. I am Lord of three Houses – so, three wives. The other two could be Pureblood, Half-blood, Muggleborn, or Muggle. Hermione, here, is my girlfriend. She's a Muggleborn. It is possible we could be Betrothed in the future. What do you want to bet, a bill will be offered that prevents Lords of multiple Houses – who are affected by the Last Generation Loophole – from marrying anyone but Purebloods?”

There were several glances exchanged around the room.

“Now, there are two issues with this already,” Harry said, “Heiress Greengrass, you spoke of this recently, would you like to take over?”

“Thank you, Harry,” Daphne said. “Let me ask everyone a question. Think hard about it. How many young Lords affected by the Last Generation Loophole, are Lords of multiple Houses?”

“Narcissa bragged that her son would be,” Andromeda said, “But cousin Sirius appears to have stopped that. Now Narcissa’s brat will only be Lord Malfoy, and not Lord Black.”

“Anyone?” Daphne asked. “Anyone... besides Harry?”

“Are you saying, daughter,” Lord Castor said, “that Harry could be the target of the bill?”

“Which would make it illegal, wouldn't it, Auntie?” Susan asked.

“Oh, definitely,” Amelia said.
“So here is what we do,” Daphne said. “We ask for a delay. We challenge and say we believe it is targeting one person in particular, and not a general group. We don't name names. We request the Daily Prophet make an article, asking for concrete evidence and proof that there is a group targeted in this bill. If the challenge is denied – we know it is for just Harry. And we give our proof.”

“I second this!” Sirius said.

“Votes?” Lily asked, “If Bill is addressed, do we challenge it?”

Every Lord in the Great Alliance raised their hand in approval.

“What is the second issue you spoke of regarding the Bill, Lord Potter?” Lord Brown asked.

“I am an American citizen,” Harry said, grinning. “This bill wouldn't affect me. If I choose to marry British-born witches of any blood type, or Muggles, I could simply do so in America.”

“Unless a Bill prevents British-born witches from marrying into a British House unless they remain in Great Britain,” Lord Castor said. “That would prevent a Betrothal Contract in question if you moved to America.”

“Or a bill prevents British-born Lords – that is you, Lord Potter – from moving your Houses out of Great Britain,” Xenophilius Lovegood said.

“That would just about make Harry a prisoner of Britain,” Lily said. “The American MACUSA would not like that. They would make sure Harry, an American citizen, can live in America, and that no British laws affect anyone he chooses to marry. Or they would threaten Wizarding Great Britain with war.”

“Could America win a war with Wizarding Great Britain?” Lord Brown asked.

“Uh... yeah,” Amelia said, nodding, “Auror and Hit Wizard force in America is somewhere between five and seven times Great Britain's force on a good day. On a bad day, as much as twelve times larger.”

“Good Merlin!” Lady Brown exclaimed.

Several others agreed with Lady Brown's exclamations.

“So, as you can see,” Lily said, “If this bill my son described, or any of these bills discussed, come into action. We need to make sure they are shot down quickly.”

“I think these arguments we've made here can be made there, and will shock a lot of people,” Lord Branstone said.

“Especially if Lord Potter is singled out in any of those bills,” Lord Abbot said, agreeing with his Ally.

“Agreed,” Lily said, nodding. “I would like to listen to any bills you have up for discussion. Adults and Children alike.”

“I might get some flack about this,” Sirius said, “But what about a vote of No Confidence for
Harry glanced at Sirius. That was definitely unexpected.

“Continue, Sirius,” Lily said.

“I don't know whether most of you have heard,” Sirius said, “But Amelia and Lily can back me up. We have proof Voldemort –” Several gasps, “– is not dead.”

More gasps, and expressions of shock.

“Perhaps your children discussed the Philosopher Stone and Chamber of Secrets incidents with you,” Sirius said, “both happening at Hogwarts sometime in the past three years. We have confirmation from a few students and Dumbledore himself, that Voldemort leached himself into Defense Professor Quirrel three years ago. Quirrel died in June of 1992, and Voldemort escaped.”

“He survived the night my husband died,” Lily said, “The only evidence I can give you is that an old friend – who unfortunately became a Death Eater, before leaving – has recently told me that he feels his Dark Mark burning every day.”

“I also have confirmation of this,” Amelia said. “I've received reports of Death Eaters in Azkaban, clutching their Dark Marks, and looking very pleased whenever they do. Their Master is returning sometime soon.”

“Cornelius is a peacetime Minister,” Sirius said. “He will not be ready for this.”

“The Auror Department and DMLE need more funds and forces,” Amelia said, “Cornelius won't approve because he believes it would send a bad message.”

“When Voldemort returns – and he will return,” Sirius said, “We will not be prepared if we do something now.”

“If we ask for a Vote of No Confidence,” Lord Patil said, “We're going to need more proof to give out. Whoever asks for a Vote of No Confidence, it is a risk – if they lose, they have to step down from their seat.”

“I'll do it,” Sirius said, “As long as I have permission for Blood Adoption. That is all I want. We can make the Vote of No Confidence the last announcement, before the Session comes to a close.”

“If the vote works,” Lord Castor said, “The Wizengamot will take charge of all duties of Minister for a month, until a new Minister takes office.”

“This... evidence of V-Voldemort,” Xenophilius said, “Will he return in one month?”

“No,” Amelia said, “We don't believe so. We'll keep an eye on the imprisoned Death Eaters. So we'll know when the Dark Mark becomes hot to the point of painful. I think the DMLE and Aurors will have enough time to gain some forces. Even if it means recruiting the highest two classes of Aurors-In-Training early, and putting them through advanced training.”

“Who would we offer up as candidate for new Minister?” Lord Abbot asked.

“Lady Bones,” Harry said.
Amelia's eyes widened as she looked at him. “Harry...”

“Who better to rebuild the DMLE and Auror forces, and be a wartime Minister than you, Madam Bones?” Harry asked.

Amelia blushed as the Children of the Great Alliance agreed with Harry.

“Fine,” Amelia said, “If it happens, I'll throw my hat in.”

“A vote for Sirius' offer?” Lily asked.

Hesitating hands, but all Lords raised their hands unanimously.

“Motion passed,” Lily said, “Who will stand up as second for Sirius' announcement?”

“I will,” Lord Castor said.

“You will have to step down if we lose,” Lily said, “We need a voice amongst the Neutral Alliance.”

“I will stand up if nobody else does,” Lord Castor said.

“Alright,” Lily said, “Next offer?”

“I know I do not have a seat,” Ted said, “But I'd like to possibly try to pass a law that makes libel and slander illegal.”

Ted's proposal was accepted. Lily would be the one to voice it. Other bills were discussed and either voted for and against. Most just had to do with changes in different Ministry offices, or businesses. Harry realized that – while it didn't affect the majority of Wizarding Britain – much of these proposed bills and laws were quite common during Wizengamot Council Sessions. After the proposals were finished, the meeting moved onto what other bills and proposals could be expected, or what were rumored, from the Dark and Neutral Dark Alliances, as well as other members of the Light Alliance. Then came several minutes of small talk while the Alliance finished their meals and caught up. Harry, his mother, sister, and Sirius were asked some questions about their life in America, and they gave much information willingly.

The meeting/party lasted nearly three hours. Then came one last important discussion.

“Lord Potter, Lord Black,” Lord Patil said, “I have grown curious about something. I wonder whether both or either of you have plans to go back to America, or remain in Britain, once the Triwizard Tournament is over. With your Houses and votes added into the Great Alliance, we become a force again. Lord Black, Lady Potter, you have already proven you can be two new voices amongst the Great Alliance, and Light Alliance. We have welcomed new Allies into the Alliance today. But losing the House of its Founder would truly affect the Great Alliance.”

Harry remained silent for half a minute as his family, Hermione and several others looked at him.

“I cannot answer that tonight, Lord Patil,” Harry said, “I could tell you one thing, and then things could happen tomorrow that changes my mind. I could change my mind from whatever I tell you in the next several months. I can’t answer that until the Triwizard Tournament is over.”
“I agree with Harry,” Sirius said, “A lot can happen between now and then.”

“Thank you for your honesty,” Lord Patil said.

There were murmurs of agreement.

“And I believe it is now time to conclude our meeting for the evening,” Lily said, “Tomorrow, we will be showing the Wizengamot what kind of force the Great Alliance used to be, and what it still is. There will be shocks and surprises, and there will be a lot of life-changing decisions. Tomorrow could begin a new era – whether that be good or bad for the Great Alliance and our lives personally, is unknown. Tomorrow, our children will be present, as will the other future Lords and Ladies. Let us show them all just why Charlus Potter's Great Alliance was once a fearsome power during every Council meeting.”

Harry started applauding, and it was contagious, as applause rang throughout the meeting room.

“Thank you,” Lily said. “I will be seeing all of you tomorrow. So let us get some rest, and ready our minds and voices for the events of tomorrow. Meeting adjourned.”

More applause. Soon, Alliance members stood and started to leave, while others stayed behind to talk to friends. The Children stayed behind as their parents began to leave, since they'd be joining the 'extended Potter family' to return to Hogwarts.

Lily inhaled and exhaled and walked over to Xenophilius and Luna, who were talking to Hermione and Harry.

“Xenophilius,” Lily said, “May I speak to you for a moment. In private?”

“Of course, Lily,” Xenophilius said.

Lily led Xenophilius across the room away from eavesdroppers.

“Did Luna tell you about the Yule Ball taking place on Christmas?” Lily asked.

“Of course,” Xenophilius said, “I believe Luna plans on attending, even if she doesn't have a date. She says Harry might dance with her.”

“Perhaps he will,” Lily said, smiling at Harry, Hermione, Rose and Luna who were talking in low whispers. “I have come across an issue. I have no date for the Ball. And I really don't want to let a certain man named Severus Snape believe he has a chance to dance with me.”

Xenophilius chuckled. “Pandora spoke of tales of your rise and fall with Severus Snape. She could tell some fine stories.”

“Yes, she could,” Lily said, “I wondered if you had plans for Christmas. Perhaps you could accompany me to the Yule Ball. Even if it was just as friends.”

“I have been looking for an excuse to be able to join Luna on Christmas Day at Hogwarts!” Xenophilius said, grinning. “I would love to accompany you, even as friends. Perhaps we could entertain one another... with stories of course!”
“Stories?” Lily asked.

“Your son is Lord Peverell,” Xenophilius said, his eyes wide; he grasped the end of his necklace and showed her the end of it; it had Peverell's Crest.

“Did your husband ever entertain you with stories?” Xenophilius asked, “Perhaps of the Deathly Hallows?”

“Beedle the Bard's story, perhaps,” Lily said. “But nothing more.”

“Then you will be entertained!” Xenophilius said. “I look forward to our friendly date. And perhaps I can dissuade Severus Snape from trying to claim you.”

“Perhaps;” Lily said. “Thank you, Xenophilius. This means a lot. It is so good to see you again.”

“Pandora is smiling upon our reunion,” Xenophilius said, looking upwards with a smile, “I do, very much, still miss her. But I think she'd tell me to move on. Perhaps I will find someone. Adieu, Lady Lily.”

He turned and walked back over to his daughter.

Lily sighed as she looked at Xenophilius. She wished she could move on as easy as he could – so easy; his wife had passed away only four years ago or so. But it wasn't easy for her. She walked over to her children. Sirius and Amelia were there too.

“Are we going up to Hogwarts now or what?” Sirius asked.

“Mom!” Rose said, “You promised me chocolate. And Harry promised Hermione shopping.”

“I'm sure the kids will like to spend an hour or so in a few shops,” Amelia said.

“Fine, but only an hour,” Lily said, “It is dark, and there is two hours til curfew. And we escort them around.”

“Tonks will volunteer, I'm sure,” Sirius said, “Amelia and I will take a couple of groups. You escort this crew.”

“Let's go tell everyone then,” Lily said.

The cheers from the students when they told them their idea told them it was another unanimous decision.

Chapter End Notes

I didn't get the lead-up to the Winter Solstice Session in this chapter. It will start next chapter. The only reason I didn't add it, was because I wanted to get this chapter up quicker.
So the Great Alliance Chapter was a lot easier than the CGA meeting. Strange.

Two things were unplanned on before this chapter. Rose's namesake, and Sirius' proposal of a Vote of No Confidence. I think they went off well.

Next Chapter: Winter Solstice Session... possibly Part 1 of 2 Chapter Arc? We'll see. I have a lot of plans for the Winter Solstice. Definitely next chapter we will see the arrival at the Ministry and courtroom, Lily taking several seats including Harry's Proxies. Sirius taking his seat. And House Patil and House Lovegood's possible Ascension! Also more surprises!

Reviewer Decision time! How should vote numbers be tallied up? One vote per House? Or more than one vote per whether House is considered Noble, Ancient or Ancient and Most Noble?
Chapter Notes

For those who may have noticed, the previous chapter originally had the date of Saturday December 12th, 1994. I changed it to the correct date, Thursday, December 17th, 1994.

As per majority of reviewer decision, this is how the Wizengamot votes will go. I will try to make it easy to understand however.

Department Heads: 1 Vote
Noble: 1 Vote
Ancient: 2 Votes
Ancient and Most Noble: 3 Votes

In my version of the Wizengamot, Ancient Houses automatically get into the Wizengamot Council without need for votes from the Council. Only Noble Houses need that. Ancient and Most Noble are also voted upon by the Wizengamot after their Ancient House has survived so many generations – this merely allows them an additional vote. The Ravenclaw, Gryffindor, and Peverell Houses are in the last category, and were voted in many generations ago.

The first scene is inspired by a review which told me fear of Voldemort might stop people from believing those points. So I used it and ran with it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Thursday, December 17th, 1994

Lily, Sirius and Remus were sitting at the dining room table, with mugs of hot cocoa. It was nearly eleven-o-clock in the evening, and Harry and Rose were already fast asleep in their beds, having gone to bed about an hour ago, after having their own mug of hot cocoa. Lily and Sirius had just finished discussing what had happened with the Great Alliance.

“I only have one question,” Remus said, “Everything else is understandable, but this one I do not get. Why did you bring up a vote of No Confidence, Sirius? Hang on, don't answer yet. Fear runs rampant even today about Voldemort and the Great War. Nobody is going to want to believe you if you tell them Voldemort is back. You'd have to give them evidence.”

“The Dark Marks,” Sirius said, “Damn it, I wish Amelia had stayed over tonight. Or invited me over to Bones Manor. She'd have explained this better.”

“She knows you both need your sleep to prepare for tomorrow,” Remus said, “Which is why she did not invite you over.”

“I know,” Sirius said, “No matter. Just gives us more of a reason to be together tomorrow night if we have a successful day tomorrow. You know what they say about celebration shags. They last all --”
“-- of about five minutes,” Lily interrupted, “Because you're usually too drunk.”

“Hey!” Sirius exclaimed. “Maybe James' celebration shags did, but mine --”

Remus cleared his throat, interrupting Sirius. “You told me what Amelia said. But nobody is going to believe that amongst those who are afraid. Those Death Eaters and sympathizers in the Wizengamot would vote against you, because they know you're right. So there has to be more evidence.”

Sirius grinned. He bent over to a bag of purchases, and took out a folder which obviously wasn't a purchase. "Now, don't get upset, Lily, like I know you might. But I've been writing to Ted and Andromeda ever since that whole deal with Umbridge. I told them my ideas of the Vote of No Confidence.”

“You kept this silent all this time?!” Lily asked. “Why?”

“I am the only one who could do it,” Sirius said. “I told you. The only thing I care about, while being in the Wizengamot, is Tracey's Adoption. Everything else in the Wizengamot is just bonus. A Vote of No Confidence would make for a great prank, and if it doesn't work – I am in and out. So what? It doesn't give Malfoy's spawn my seat – I'm still Lord Black either way, just not on the Wizengamot.”

“So you're doing a big risk because you can sacrifice it?” Lily asked.

“Basically,” Sirius said, nodding, “Anyway, Ted said he would try to help me. A couple days ago, he came through. While investigating Umbridge, he was also investigating Fudge. He spoke with Keeper Ragnok, with my permission, since he was doing so for me. Keeper Ragnok got permission from his father, the Chief Goblin of Gringotts, London Branch, to investigate Fudge.”

He drank from his mug of hot cocoa, and tapped the folder with a finger. “This folder shows information about Cornelius' illegal dealings with Dolores Umbridge, Lucius Malfoy, and more. What do you think would happen if all I said in front of the Wizengamot was 'Cornelius Fudge has history of bribing with Dolores Umbridge, Lucius Malfoy...' and I leave it hanging. If Fudge doesn't say anything, I keep going. Dolores is in deep water with the threat against international relations, Malfoy is a fugitive and criminal. But would Fudge want to be seen doing bribes with others? What might happen?”

“Those who he did bribes with might fear you are going to name them!” Lily said, a grin slowly crossing her face, “They'd start agreeing with you just so they don't get named!”

“One possibility,” Remus said, “Or... he might resign on the spot.”

“Possibly,” Sirius said. “I have enough information in here to keep talking until either he begins to sweat, or people being jeering him and believing me. I can start naming some members in the Dark Alliance if I need to. Some of Lucius Malfoy's allies and fellow Death Eaters are in here. That should get people going. If I run out, then we talk about the DMLE and Auror Division, and how Fudge has disallowed them from gaining a force. Sooner or later, either he's going to sweat a bucketful, or people are going to start wanting to vote my way. Adios, Minister!”

“Very Slytherin of you,” Lily said.

“Hey,” Sirius said, “I am Lord Black. It is time I act like it.”

“It could work,” Remus said, “You'd have to inform the Great Alliance of it before the Council
Session. So they're not surprised, and they can start jeering Fudge as others start doing it. Then you'll get people voting.”

“Now you sound like a Slytherin,” Lily said, grinning, “But it is a fine idea. We can do that.”

“You're welcome,” Remus said. “Better than announcing to Death Eaters that we know their Master's coming back.”

Lily and Sirius nodded. Both were thinking the same thing: why didn't we think of that?

Friday, December 18th, 1994 – T-Minus 2 Hours 15 Minutes Till Winter Solstice Session

At a quarter-till ten-o-clock, Hermione was in the bedroom she shared with Luna in the tent which belonged to the Hogwarts Five Plus Tonks. In fifteen minutes, she was expected to join her tent-mates and meet with her boyfriend, Harry, and the rest of his 'extended Potter family' so they could take carriages to Hogsmeade, just like they had done last night.

Tonks had informed her earlier that students in Hogwarts – the future Lords and Ladies of Great Britain -- were already making their way in carriages to Hogsmeade, but that there would be enough carriages left for those in the Ilvermorny Tents. The Winter Solstice Session would be starting at noon, and it could go on for several hours according to Sirius Black. There had been a history of council sessions lasting until midnight. Hermione had rather hoped the same didn't happen today. She didn't want to be sitting in one of the audience seats for twelve hours, even if she would be next to Harry. She knew there would be restroom and food breaks, but still, that was ridiculous!

Hermione was staring into a body-length mirror, looking at her outfit. She was wearing formal robes she had purchased last night on her – as Harry called it – 'mini-date' with Harry after the Great Alliance meeting. They had spent fifteen minutes in Honeydukes and had come out with bags of candy, then they had gone to Gladrags, and found formal robes for her. She knew she had made a good choice as she looked at them. They were not as modest as Hogwarts school-robes, but enough to be ridiculous. So she had worn one of the new bras she had bought during her first Hogsmeade date with Harry. Her average-sized bust was more noticeable thanks to her bra, and the view of her curves was only for Harry.

Hermione blushed as she looked at the area of her robes at her left breast. The House Potter Crest would be going there, and Daphne had told her exactly how it would happen. Harry would place his ring finger onto the area where his Crest would go. So basically he would be touching her clothing-covered breast with his ring. Her body tingled just thinking of it. What would actually happen when it took place?

She cleared her throat and realized she had been staring at herself for three minutes. She checked herself over again, decided she looked nice, and pocketed her wand in an inner pocket of her robes. She grabbed a small bag of an assortment of candies and chocolates Harry had purchased for her at Honeydukes the previous evening, and pocketed it in her robes – the bag had been purchased for this exact reason alone – so she’d have some snacks during the Wizengamot Council Session. Chuckling to herself at the scolding her dentist parents would give her for eating so much candy in so little time, she then walked out of her bedroom.

Luna and Astoria were sitting at the dining table, and Tracey and Daphne were cuddled up on a sofa. Tonks was apparently still getting dressed. As she walked over to the sitting room, Hermione noticed Tracey looked emotional.
“What's wrong, Tracey?” Hermione asked softly.

“What if it all goes wrong today?” Tracey asked, barely above a whisper. “What if Sirius can't get a Blood Adoption? What if Lord Davis convinces enough voters not to allow it? What will happen to me?”

“I told you last night,” Daphne said, “We'll get you Emancipated.”

“I like Sirius,” Tracey said, “He's a much better father than Lord Davis. I want to be able to officially call him my Daddy. I want to be a Black.”

“We'll speak to Sirius – he'll likely be riding with us to Hogsmeade,” Daphne said. “We'll ask him to request that you give your opinion. You're going to be an audience member. I'm sure they'll allow it. Then you speak from the heart.”

“I can't tell them why I wanted to be disowned, Daffy,” Tracey said, “I can't.”

“You don't have to,” Daphne said, “Tell them what it means to be what you are. How you feel about it. How Lord Davis opposed you, and how Lord Black accepts you.”

“And how I feel about you?” Tracey asked.

Daphne nodded. Tracey leaned over to her and kissed her softly. As the couple kissed, Hermione smiled and looked away. Thankfully, Tonks walked out of her bedroom, giving her a distraction. Hermione raised her eyebrows at Tonks' choice of hair-color.

“Is your hair-color a combination of Daphne's and Tracey's?” Hermione asked.

Daphne and Tracey backed away from each other's lips and looked at Tonks.

Tonks blushed. “I'm showing my support.”

Tracey snorted and giggled. “Thanks, Tonks. I needed that.”

“We like it, Tonks,” Daphne said, “Thank you.”

Sirius stepped into the tent at that moment. “Time to go, ladies! Hermione, Harry's waiting for you.”

“Hold up, Daddy!” Tracey said, as she stood up, and dragged Daphne to her feet, “Daphne and I need to speak to you!”

Sirius grinned like a fool at being called 'Daddy' by Tracey. Hermione smiled at Sirius as she passed him and walked out of the tent. Harry, Lily, Rose and Remus were outside their own tent. From the look of Remus' outfit, he obviously wasn't going anywhere. But Hermione was looking at Harry. He was wearing a formal robe outfit he had purchased last night, and he looked very handsome. All three of his crests were on the left breast of his robes. Lily – wearing an adult-version of what Hermione wore – had the crests of the Ravenclaw and Potter Houses on her robes.

“You look gorgeous, Hermione,” Harry said. “Um... I need to do something, and we need privacy.”

“You can go back into the tent,” Lily said, “Don't take too long. The Portkeys at Hogsmeade Station...”
will be leaving in about forty minutes, and the trip there takes fifteen minutes. There might be a line waiting. So we need to get going.”

“We'll be quick,” Harry said.

He took Hermione's hand and led her back into the House Potter Tent.

“Um – ah – Hermione, I'm not sure you're going to like this,” Harry said.

“You need to put your Crest on my robes,” Hermione said. “Tonks already explained the details.”

Harry coughed. “So you understand that I need to – ah --”

“You're touching my robes, Harry,” Hermione said, “It isn't like you're actually touching my breast!”

Harry's cheeks went bright red when she said 'breast'.

“Stop fussing, or I'll get offended and think you don't want to touch them!” Hermione said, trying to ease the tension.

It worked. He spluttered, she grinned, and then he chuckled.

“Tease,” Harry quipped. “Why are you wearing one of those... elevated bras?”

“To look beautiful for you,” Hermione said, she pressed a finger on his lips, “I know – you always find me beautiful. But I wanted to look like the future Lady I am going to be. Your future Lady.”

“One day at a time,” Harry reminded her, in a sing-song voice.

*Not if that law passes.* Hermione thought, *If it passes, I would favor being an Emancipated American and officially Harry's wife by New Year's Day if it meant I could get away from this bullshit! Ooh, a New Years' Eve wedding and honeymoon would be lovely...*

Happy he couldn't hear her thoughts, Hermione cleared her throat. “Quit wasting time.”

Harry cleared his throat. He held his hand up, showing his House Potter ring. Then he slowly moved it toward the correct position right above her breast. He coughed, and pressed the face of his ring into her robes. She tried to keep herself from blushing. He wasn't exactly touching her breast through her robes, but it was close! She had not let him 'pet' her yet, so this was the first time she had ever been touched like that by another boy. Harry backed his hand away, and the Potter Crest materialized on her robes, looking as big as the one on his robes did. She wasn't sure if it was the Crest, or where his finger had been, but she was feeling more tingles. Perhaps it was both.

“That's it?” Hermione asked. “No words? No vows?”

“If my ring deems you as a proper member of the House of Potter,” Harry said, “It gives you the Crest.”

Hermione nodded. “And what if it doesn't...?”

“No idea,” Harry said. “I don't know if I want to know. Now everyone will know you're a member of my House.”
He learned toward her and kissed her softly. Hermione grinned against his lips and kissed him back. It lasted thirty seconds, before they heard Lily clearing her throat. Luckily she was standing outside the tent, so she hadn’t actually watched anything they had done.

“Coming, Mom!” “Coming Lily!” Both had called out as they backed away.

Harry took her hand, and they walked out of the tent. They said their goodbyes to Remus, who was once again, staying behind to chaperone the Ilvermorny students, and he wished them the best of luck. Ten minutes later, Hermione and Harry were once again in a carriage with Lily and Rose as it made its way down to Hogsmeade.

“Apparently, we will be taking Portkeys into the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic, at a specified area,” Lily said, “Have you ever used a Portkey before, Hermione?”

“Yes, I used one with Luna and her father, when they took me to the Quidditch World Cup this past summer,” Hermione said.

“Good,” Lily said. “I imagine a big crowd like the Quidditch World Cup had coordinated Portkeys, leaving and arriving every three-to-five minutes. I believe those at Hogsmeade Station will do the same. I am sure several Hogwarts students, and their Hogwarts Chaperones have already arrived, and are doing so as we speak. So hopefully it won’t take too long to get into the Ministry, through the Atrium, and into a lift to get down to Level Nine where the courtrooms are. The lifts can only hold so much at a time, so I will go with you three and a couple more in a group, and Sirius will go with the rest. According to Sirius, Amelia should be meeting us in the Ministry Atrium, with the rest of the Children of the Great Alliance, so perhaps we can split a group into three for the lifts.”

“When we get to the Courtroom, Hermione and Rose, you two will be joining Tonks and the other girls at the audience seating with the rest of the future Lords and Ladies. Save a seat for Harry. He will join you after he claims his House Seats, with Sirius and I, and gives me Proxy.”

Hermione nodded.

“Any questions?” Lily asked.

“I have one, but not about our arrival,” Hermione said. “Let’s assume that this rumored bill actually passes. Would I be able to ask for Emancipation during the Winter Solstice Session?”

Lily raised her eyebrows. “What about your parents? How would they feel?”

“I’ve been writing my parents weekly about Harry,” Hermione said. “I haven’t told them everything – such as my true feelings for him, or what we’ve been discussing. But they know Harry’s my boyfriend, and they want to meet him sometime. Yes, they would probably be mad at me, but they’d also be happy for me for standing up for myself, and fighting against a bigoted Council that doesn’t allow me to be Harry’s love-interest.”

“Good for you, Hermione,” Harry said. “Even though I’ve never met them, I am sure your parents would be happy too, especially for standing up for yourself.”

Lily smiled. “If it happens, I will bring that up. I’ll ask for you to take the floor and state your reasons.”
Hermione nodded. “I hope it won't be necessary. We seem to have a good strategy. It is just in case...”

“Just in case,” Lily agreed, “Always good to be prepared.”

Hermione smiled and looked at Harry, who smiled back at her. She stared at their entwined hands, which they had not let go since leaving the tent. No matter what happened today, their relationship would not end. Either their relationship would continue to be legal in Britain – or she would be going to America with Harry as soon as possible, maybe even before the end of the year. Bigoted Pureblood Supremacists would not be preventing her from being with Harry. Not today, and not ever.

Still holding Hermione's hand, Harry followed his mother and Rose across the platform at Hogsmeade Station, as Sirius and Hermione's tent-mates followed them. Up ahead, only a few Hogwarts students were still in queue, waiting for their Portkey ride to the Ministry of Magic. Harry knew that the rest of those Hogwarts students attending the Winter Solstice Session had already reached their destination.

When they reached the queue, Lily and Sirius addressed everyone, told Hermione's tent-mates basically everything his mother had told him, Hermione and Rose in the carriage. Tonks agreed to lead the youngsters to a group of seats once they reached the Courtroom where the Council Session would be taking place.

They had to wait fifteen more minutes, before it was their turn. Hagrid and a Hogwarts Professor were standing there, with objects which were obviously used as Portkeys. As Harry studied the Hogwarts Professor, he realized from Remus' description that this might have been Aurora Sinistra, the Professor whom Remus was accompanying to the Yule Ball. Aurora was a dark-skinned witch with chocolate brown eyes, and long flowing dark hair. She was wearing the usual Hogwarts staff garb.

“Remus didn't come with you?” the Professor asked.

Lily grinned. “He's watching the rest of the Ilvermorny students, Aurora. I'm sure he will be rather lonely, today. He only ever spends meals and lessons with the students/”

Aurora smiled. “Perhaps I will visit him today. Anyway, Headmaster Dumbledore, Professor McGonagall, Professor Flitwick and Professor Snape are accompanying the Hogwarts students today. The Headmaster is part of the Wizengamot, and the other three Professors will be there as chaperones for the student body.”

“My cousin, Nymphadora Tonks, will be chaperone for this group,” Sirius said.

Tonks nodded, bristling slightly at Sirius' use of her full name.

“I think we can get this group into the Ministry in two trips,” Aurora said. “We have a couple Muggle... uh... hooey-hoops – I think they're called here.”

“Hula-hoops,” Hermione corrected her Astronomy Professor.”

“Ah, yes, thank you, Miss Granger,” Aurora said. “They're good for large groups. So Lady Potter, pick half the group here and take hold.”
Lily picked Harry, Rose, Hermione and Luna. Sirius and Tonks would be going with Daphne, Tracey and Astoria.

“Portkey will be activated in thirty seconds!” Aurora said, as Lily, Harry and the girls took hold; when she reached five, she counted down. “Five... four... three... two... one!”

Harry barely heard 'one', as he felt the familiar tug at his navel, and he was lifted off his feet. As they usually were, the Portkey ride was quite dizzy. Harry concentrated on the speeds of the Portkey, and when it started to slow down, he started moving his feet. When the Portkey stopped, he was able to land on his feet. Everyone but Hermione and Luna had been able to stand.

“Move off the Platform!” somebody said, “Move away!”

Harry helped Hermione up as Lily helped Luna. Then they stepped away from the arrival platform with Rose. Harry's eyes widened as he saw the Atrium of the British Ministry of Magic for the first time. It looked like a gigantic tunnel had been burrowed out by an earthworm several stories tall and several more thick. Hundreds and hundreds of witches and wizards were bustling around hurriedly around the enormous Atrium. Memos, notices, and Owls were flying around through the air.

“Lily!” A voice was heard.

Harry saw Amelia Bones with her niece and ward, Susan as well as Hannah Abbot, and the Patil twins. Parvati Patil's friend Lavender stood near her, and near Hannah was a little first year girl – Harry realized the girl was the Branstone Heiress. Lavender and Miss Branstone were the newest Children of the Great Alliance.

“Sirius, Tonks and the other girls will be here shortly,” Lily said, “I assume the rest of the Alliance is already downstairs?”

“Yes, we are to meet them there,” Amelia said. “I volunteered to accompany this group along with my niece.”

“How many Hogwarts students do you think are here?” Lily asked.

“Oh, Merlin – at least one-hundred, ranging from first to seventh year,” Amelia said. “I was surprised to see all four Weasleys with Neville Longbottom. The eldest Weasley, Bill, is the next Lord of their family. I understand Neville's Betrothed being here, but the others.”

“Probably their mother's doing,” Lily said, “I bet she's here with her husband.”

“Of course,” Amelia said, “All wives are welcomed to this meeting, in addition to the Heirs.”

At that moment, Sirius' Portkey arrived with his group. Tonks and Astoria had fallen, and been helped up by Daphne and Tracey. They joined the group, and Harry smiled when Sirius gave a long kiss Amelia.

“Any chance since you're their boss, we can get past security?” Sirius asked her.

“Good news – yes, we can,” Amelia said. “I've cleared you all up.”

“Good!” Sirius said. “If we can get downstairs, we can do a bit of private discussion with the Great
Alliance before the Council starts – last-minute discussions and what-not. Decisions we slept on.”

“A good idea,” Lily said. “Let's get going.

Even with them not having to wait at the queue for security, there was still a queue of wizards and witches – young and old alike – waiting for the lifts. So it took another half-an-hour, before they had reached Level Nine. Amelia led Lily, Sirius and the Children of the Great Alliance down the corridor. Harry saw a large group of Hogwarts students, with more walking toward them as they passed by his group. They stopped outside a doorway several feet away from the Hogwarts Students.

“This is where Harry, Lily, Amy and I need to go,” Sirius said, “It is the preparation room for the Wizengamot Council. As we said earlier, Harry will join you once he claims his seats. Tonks, you're in charge of this group.”

“I can watch 'em, cousin,” Tonks said.

“I know you can,” Sirius said. “Your parents might be here. Perhaps you can join them with this group.”

Tonks nodded.

“Save me a seat,” Harry said to Hermione.

“I will,” Hermione said, “Good luck. Good luck to all of you.”

Harry smiled and kissed Hermione. When he backed away, she squeezed his hand, and let go, and followed Tonks with the rest of the CGA.

“Er…” Harry said, looking at the door. “Am I welcome in there?”

“Yes, you are,” Sirius said, “Lily, Harry, place Notice-Me-Not Charms on those Crests you don't want everyone to see until the Council Session.”

Harry pointed at his Gryffindor Crest. “Nonanimaadverto.”

Lily did the same with the Ravenclaw Crest. Sirius and Amelia's eyes moved away from the Crests, and Harry knew it had worked. Sirius opened the door, and Harry followed Amelia and Lily inside, as Sirius tailed them. The room they had entered looked like a small cafeteria. There were several tables with various wizards and witches, all dressed in different colors of robes – to separate the Noble Houses, Ancient Houses, and Ancient and Most Noble Houses, each of which had different vote counts – one vote per bill for Noble, two for Ancient, and three for Ancient and Most Noble Houses.

Harry noticed the Great Alliance – at least the Lords of the Alliance -- sitting at one large table in the far corner of the room. He walked with Lily, Amelia and Sirius over to the group. Pacha Patil, and Xenophilius Lovegood were also there, as they were hopefuls to be entered into the Wizengamot. Harry, Lily, Sirius and Amelia were greeted as they sat down together.

“Any interesting things to note so far?” Lily asked.

“How about the stares you and Harry you've been getting as you entered the room?” Lord Brown said.
Harry looked over his shoulder and noticed several people looking in their direction. Some of them looked friendly, while others did not. He caught sight of Lord Davis glaring at him, and he turned back around.

“Aw, they're just wondering why an underage kid is here,” Sirius said, grinning in Harry's direction. “Obviously they have forgotten you're taking seats today, Harry. Lily's your Proxy, but you're responsible for claiming them.”

“Common sense is lacking even amongst the Council, I see,” Harry said; then realized he was talking to a bunch of the Council, at his table; he pointed a thumb at everyone behind them. “Among all of them, I mean.”

“Nice save, Lord Potter,” Lord Castor said, grinning. “Does that work with your girlfriend or my daughter?”

Harry merely shrugged as everyone chuckled.

“I see Albus Dumbledore's Alliance,” Amelia said, “I don't see Albus Dumbledore.”

“He's probably hanging around with Cornelius Fudge and his ilk,” Lord Abbot said. “They usually come in together, don't they?”

“Is Dolores Umbridge going to be here today?” Lily asked.

“Yes – she has a seat as a Departmental Head – Ministerial Security Head, according to Fudge,” Amelia said with a snort. “She's the least bit qualified for that position, but since all Department Heads get the same votes as Noble Houses, it doesn't matter too much. I think he only gave her that position so she could spew her venom against the Council.”

“When did Departmental Heads become Council Members?” Sirius asked.

“The year Arthur Weasley became a Noble Lord,” Amelia said, “One of the Dark Alliance members proposed a Bill, and it passed.”

“These tables have privacy enchantments on them right?” Sirius asked.

“Of course,” Lord Abbot said, “Did you think the silence when you entered was only because everyone was looking at Lord Potter and Lady Lily? Nobody not seated at our table can hear us.”

“Not every Alliance in the Council meets like we did last night,” Lord Castor said, “Most meetings are held in here before Council Sessions.”

Sirius said. “Good. I need to tell everyone a couple things. Developments I didn't reveal yesterday or happened today. My hopeful daughter, Tracey, wants to speak up during the Blood Adoption Bill. So she can convince those who may oppose to change their minds.”

“Non-Council members don't usually get to speak,” Amelia said, “But never before has the Future Lords and Ladies been welcomed to watch the Sessions – especially those whom are Minors in Hogwarts. So I think it should be possible for her to say her part.”

“Harry's girlfriend, Hermione wants to become Emancipated if that rumored modification bill to the
“Last Generation Loophole passes,” Lily said. “She wants to ask the Council today, if it happens. I will call her forward.”

“Shouldn’t be necessary,” Lord Castor said, “We have a good strategy if that Bill comes along.”

“Also, I have a new strategy to oust Minister Fudge,” Sirius said, “One that does not inform Death Eaters we know their Master's coming back.”

Harry listened to Sirius' ideas. He grinned, quite pleased with the new modifications and plans. Sirius was right. Much better than the Voldemort plan – those afraid of Voldemort or another war coming – might oppose the Vote of No Confidence. This was much better. And it appeared the rest of the Alliance thought so too.

The Great Alliance continued talking, and planning, for another half-hour. The door at the other end of the room opened and Cornelius Fudge walked in with Albus Dumbledore, Dolores Umbridge, and Bartemius Crouch. An odd bunch, Harry decided. He noticed Dumbledore looking in his direction, as he followed the three Ministry officials across the room. Dumbledore had a mild look of surprise, possibly at seeing him sitting in this room? Or perhaps he had noticed how large the Great Alliance was now?

Cornelius Fudge cleared his throat, getting everyone's attention.

“Soon, we will step into the Council Room, and begin the Winter Solstice Session,” Cornelius said. “I will be leading the Session, due to the Chief Warlock, Albus Dumbledore, wishing to take part in the voting and other fun in the Session. I know there are some of you in here who are wanting to claim their rightful House Seats, and others who are wanting to be voted into the Council as Noble Houses. All of you will get your chance at the beginning of the Session before any bills are discussed.

“Now, as I am sure most of you know already, today is a special day – more so than being an important Winter Solstice Session. For the first time ever, the future Lords and Ladies who will be taking our Chairs several years from now, are getting a chance to watch a Council Session! They will be seated in the audience, along with your significant others. While I know Council Sessions can get very heated at times, I want everyone to keep in mind that we have Minors here today as young as eleven who are watching us as their Mentors, and families! So let us try to keep civil tongues, eh?”

He chuckled and cleared his throat. “We're in for a long day. We could be here until midnight. I hope not, but it is possible. We could simply be here for two hours and be home for dinner! Every two hours, there will be a recess for bathroom breaks and refreshments. During bathroom breaks and refreshments, nobody can speak with opposing major alliances – Light, Neutral, and Dark – until we're back in session. Once we get inside, all doors will be barred, and most spells, curses, charms and what-not – aside from those necessary for the Session – will not be permitted. There will be Wards to prevent these very things. Only the Aurors and Security in the room standing guard are able to use their magic completely. I am only telling you this as a precaution – it should be well-known by now.

“I believe that is all I need to say. The doors into the courtroom are open! Those of you who have seats already, please head on in first. Those of you wishing to claim your House seats, or wishing to be voted in as Noble, please wait until the rest of the room is cleared.”

Harry, Lily, Sirius, Xenophilius Lovegood, and Pacha Patil remained behind, as Amelia and the rest of the Great Alliance stood, and headed on through the doors behind where Fudge and Dumbledore
had been standing.

“Remember how to claim your seats, Harry?” Lily asked.

“Rings for Potter and Peverell, and Blood Blade for Gryffindor,” Harry said.

“Very good,” Lily said, smiling. “Sirius will claim his seat first, then I will, than you, and you will name me as Proxy as each House is accepted.”

Harry nodded. As everyone else walked into the Courtroom, Harry noted with surprised interest that nobody but those seated at his table were left behind.

“Interesting,” Sirius said, “Only the Light Alliance will be gaining votes today.”

“Excellent,” Harry said, grinning.

“Indeed it is,” Pacha Patil said.

“Let’s go in,” Sirius said.

Harry stood with the four adults, and they walked through the door on the other side of the room. The Council Room was a very large room. The door they arrived at led them in the center of the room. At one side of the room, there was raised seating in a horseshoe shape for the Wizengamot. The Light, Neutral and Dark Alliances were obviously seated together, and there were several rows, which were separated by Noble, Ancient and Ancient and Most Noble Houses. Aside from Lord Castor Greengrass in the Neutral Alliance, the Great Alliance were seated together, even with the separation of House levels.

On the other side of the room, there were several rows of chairs, with several students, children, and loved ones of the Wizengamot Council seated together. Several Hogwarts students were seated with their families – loved ones of the Council Lords or Ladies – while others were grouped together. Professors McGonagall, Snape, and Flitwick were seated amongst this group. Harry instantly spotted Hermione, Rose and the Children of the Great Alliance seated together. Hermione and Rose had saved a seat in between each other.

“We stand here until we’re called,” Lily instructed Harry.

Harry nodded. He noticed that Cornelius Fudge and Dolores Umbridge were seated in the front central row together, with a few others who appeared to be Department Heads. They were obviously separated from the rest of the Council, as they were not Lords and Ladies.

Separated from the Council – Lords, Ladies and Department Heads included – were two column-like features. They stood in plain view of everybody. Harry noticed two objects on top of the columns, which resembled small cauldrons. Harry remembered his lessons about the Council, and realized these cauldrons were for counting votes. Whichever Cauldron had the most votes – be it yes or no, yay or nay, approval or disapproval, it would light up to show the winner. These cauldrons could not be manipulated by anybody. They would only count when wands lit up a certain color.

In the center of the floor, there was a table. Harry realized this was where he would soon be claiming his seats at.

Cornelius Fudge stood up, and the entire room of chattering Lords, Ladies, loved ones and students
“Welcome, Lords, Ladies, Department Heads and Guests,” Cornelius said, “to the nineteen ninety-four Winter Solstice Session of the Wizengamot Council! Aurors! Bar the doors!”

Behind Harry, two Aurors standing on either side of the door he had just entered, waved their wands, and bars and chains appeared on the doors. The same was said for a door behind the audience seating.

“The doors will open every two hours,” Cornelius continued, “for recess, in which bathroom breaks will be allowed, and refreshments provided for all present, I would likely to personally welcome all of our special guests here today – the future Lords and Ladies whom have come here from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, after a tough week of end-of-term exams. Welcome future members of the Wizengamot!”

There was light applause from the Hogwarts students.

“Hogwarts students, this is a special privilege to be here,” Cornelius said. “I hope all of you will be on your best behavior. I would not want to ask Aurors to remove any of you. This is a learning experience for all of you, as much as it is entertainment. Do please enjoy yourselves today.

“Now! Before we begin with the bills and important stuff, we have to welcome the newest Council members. First hopeful Council member, please present yourself!”

Harry watched as Sirius walked over to the table and stood behind it. There were a few murmurs, but nothing too loud. Out of the corner of his eye, Harry did notice that a blonde student about his age was looking rather venomous. Harry wondered if this was Draco Malfoy, who would have been Lord Black had Sirius not been given the title.

“How many seats do you claim today?” Cornelius asked.

“One, Minister,” Sirius said.

“Please continue,” Cornelius said.

Sirius removed his House Ring, and placed it on material that resembled black felt.

“I, Lord Sirius Orion Black, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black,” Sirius said, in a loud, carrying voice, “claim my rightful chair!”

A smoky wisp resembling the Crest of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black rose through the air. Sirius returned his ring to his finger.

“You have been weighed and accepted, Lord Black,” Cornelius said, “Your Alliance?”

“The Light Alliance,” Sirius said. “And the Great Alliance.”

There were several murmurs, especially from those in the Dark Alliance, and those who supported them. Obviously they thought the House of Black would return to the Dark Alliance.

“Council Scribe,” Fudge said, “Please note that Lord Black has been accepted into the Light Alliance. As he is Lord of an Ancient and Noble House, he will have three votes per bill. You may
Sirius headed to join the top row of the seats near the Great Alliance. Several murmurs were heard as Lily walked over to the table.

“How many seats do you claim today?” Cornelius asked.

“One, Minister,” Lily said. “I will be using the Blood Blade option.”

Cornelius appeared skeptical. “Please continue.”

Harry watched as Lily took the Blood Blade to her palm. He winced as she sliced her hand, and she lowered her palm over the black felt. Droplets of blood dripped onto the felt.


There were several shocked gasps as the Ravenclaw Crest rose through smoke.


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The House Potter Crest appeared in a wisp of smoke. He placed his ring back on his finger, then placed the Peverell ring onto the felt.

“I, Lord Harry James Potter, Lord Peverell of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Peverell,”
Harry continued, “claim my rightful seat.”

The Peverell Crest – also known as the Sign of the Deathly Hallows – appeared in a wisp of smoke. Harry returned the ring to his finger. He picked up the Blood Blade and – hoping it was sanitary – sliced his palm. He lowered his palm over the felt as droplets of blood fell.

“I, Lord Harry James Potter,” Harry continued, as the as his hand healed, Lord Gryffindor of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Gryffindor, claim my rightful seat!”

Several gasps of shock as the Gryffindor Lion Crest appeared. Cornelius’ eyes were wide as he stared at Harry.

“L-Lord Potter-Peverell-Gryffindor... you have been weighed and – and accepted,” Cornelius said, “Your Alliance?”

“The Light Alliance,” Harry said. “And the Great Alliance. I name Lady Lily Potter as Proxy for House Potter, House Peverell, and House Gryffindor, until I reach the age of seventeen and may claim my seats.”

“Accepted,” Lily said.

“Council Scribe,” Fudge said, “Please note that Lord Potter-Peverell-Gryffindor has been accepted into the Light Alliance. As she is proxy, Lady Ravenclaw now has... twelve votes --” Several loud gasps and a few angry faces from this announcement, “-- twelve votes per bill. Lady Ravenclaw, please take your seat. Lord Potter, please seat with the audience. Next!”

Harry and Lily exchanged smiles. Harry walked over the where the Great Alliance were seated, and sat between Hermione and Rose. Hermione kissed him on the cheek and took his hand. He smiled at her and the rest of his friends and CGA members. Around him, he noticed several students were either looking at him shock, awe, wonder – and some glares. He merely smiled and turned to face the Council.

It was already proving to be an interesting day. Harry only hoped the rest of the day went well.

Chapter End Notes

And... there's Part 1 of the Winter Solstice Arc! So much has happened and we've only started the Session! I didn't get Lovegood and Patil in on this one, but that will happen at the beginning of next chapter.

Next Chapter: Several points-of-view are switched back and forth as the Council Session continues. Will I fit it all in one chapter? Or will there be a part 3? We'll see!

I am afraid you'll likely only get one chapter today. Council Sessions are very complicated to write! I must get it perfect!
Chapter Notes

If you don't want to be spoiled about the future of the Harry/Daphne relationship, or Harry's relationships in general, skip the Author's Note.

Do you still want to read it?

Good.

A reviewer complained about the lack of focus on Harry/Daphne right now. They even asked me to focus on Harry/Hermione, and remove all focus on the Harry/Daphne relationship from the story. One, I am planning on Harry being with four women (MAYBE five if I can't decide between Rebecca and Luna by the end of the Tournament storyline, when the story would go in one of two directions that would decide which girl Harry is with. Not cemented on choosing either OR both yet. If I do, it might ruin plans I have.)

Two... I just can't get rid of Harry/Daphne this late in the story! They're Betrothed. That can't be canceled by the MACUSA or Wizengamot. It is a House Agreement beyond MACUSA and Wizengamot capabilities. It was already agreed, and it is cemented. Their Great-Grandfathers made sure of it – though they didn't know it wouldn't become active until then. But still. I am not changing anything about Harry/Daphne in this story. Nor any of the other relationships I have planned!

Now, saying that, Daphne will get more focus with Harry once I feel she and Tracey are ready for it. Probably after the Tournament storyline, and Hermione and Harry have become closer – and Hermione and Tracey trust them enough to allow it – then Harry and Daphne's relationship will evolve. At the moment in the story, they are fourteen, and are either three years, or three and a half years away from wedding. They don't even HAVE to date until they're finished with their education unless things change. They will change their minds, and more focus will be on their relationship in time, but both are fine with their friendships at the moment.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Previously on “The Ilvermorny Champion”....

“Lady Ravenclaw,” Cornelius said, “please take your seat. Lord Potter, please seat with the audience. Next!”

Harry and Lily exchanged smiles. Harry walked over the where the Great Alliance were seated, and sat between Hermione and Rose. Hermione kissed him on the cheek and took his hand.

Friday, December 18th, 1994

Albus Dumbledore stared at Harry Potter as the Lord of three Ancient and Most Noble Houses
walked over to join the Children of the Great Alliance. Albus could not believe the events that had just transpired. He should have foreseen much of this, but even he admitted he had not been able to foresee it all. Yes, he knew that the Potters were descended from both House Peverell and House Gryffindor.

House Gryffindor was one of the reasons he wanted to take control of the House Potter Accounts when it was rumored House Potter had gone extinct. He would have finally been able to take claim to the Gryffindor Vaults, and return the Account to Hogwarts' Control – along with what must have been a fortune! Such a fortune would have been useful for the future he had been planning for so long.

Now Harry knew about it, and he had taken full advantage of it. House Potter, House Peverell, and House Gryffindor now had seats back in the Wizengamot Council, and he had nine votes!

Then there was Lady Ravenclaw! Albus turned and watched Lily sit next to Sirius Black. He had not seen this coming. One of Lily's birth parents had descended from Ravenclaw. Albus recalled Lily's tale in the Daily Prophet of how Voldemort had killed her parents. Now it made sense! Voldemort was wanting to know if Lily's parents knew anything about Ravenclaw's Artifacts – he knew Voldemort was interested in all Founder Artifacts. Lily Potter – Lady Ravenclaw – now had twelve votes with her son's three Proxies. That was unheard of! In addition to Sirius Black's three votes, that was fifteen added onto the already powerful Great Alliance.

Albus then glanced at Xenophilius Lovegood who was now making his way to the Acceptance Ritual Table in the center of the room. Pacha Patil was waiting as well. These two men were part of the Great Alliance. If they were accepted into Nobility, that would bring two more votes into the Light Alliance, making the Great Alliance even more powerful!

Albus sighed. It appeared that there would be many great victories for the Light Alliance today. They could get almost anything they wanted. But what did the Great Alliance want? And would it do harm against Albus' future of a Pureblood Paradise? He wasn't sure. And the problem was – he couldn't vote against them. Else his secrets would come out much too early, and all would be lost.

“Welcome,” Cornelius said, “I assume you are here so that the Council may vote your House into Nobility? What is your name?”

“Xenophilius Lovegood,” Xenophilius said, “of the Minor House of Lovegood.”

“Wizengamot Council,” Cornelius said, “Make your decision and raise your wands. Do you accept to bring the House of Lovegood into Nobility!”

Albus waited until the members of his personal Alliance – Arthur Weasley, Augusta Longbottom, Tiberius Ogden, Griselda Marchbanks – raised their wands in acceptance, then he did too. For those who accepted, they summoned forth red lights from their wands, all of which were sucked into one of the Cauldrons. For those who declined, they summoned forth blue lights from their wands, which were sucked into the other Cauldron.

As soon as every member of the Council cast their votes, red and blue flames began to roll in their respective Cauldrons. Everyone watched the Cauldrons in silence. Then a red flame shot up out of the Cauldron, and the blue flame disappeared.

“Congratulations, Lord Lovegood,” Cornelius said, “Your request has been approved. But you must
Albus watched as Lord Lovegood went through the ritual at the table, using his ring. His House Crest appeared in smoke. He told Cornelius he would be in the Light Alliance and the Great Alliance. One more vote added into the Great Alliance.

Pacha Patil was next. Five minutes later, he was also accepted into the Council, as a member of the Light Alliance and Great Alliance, adding yet another vote. A total of seventeen votes had been earned for the Great Alliance in less than fifteen minutes. On top of their already tall numbers.

Albus couldn’t deny it, and neither could anybody else. The Great Alliance, the most powerful political threat in a century, had returned.

Cornelius returned to his seat between Dolores Umbridge and Head of the Auror Department, Rufus Scrimgeour.

“We will now open the floor to proposals of bills, laws, challenges, and other issues that you wish to be voted upon,” Cornelius said, "raise your wands and I will choose who gets to speak up. Unless I open the floor to debates during bills and challenges, you may not speak up unless I call on you. I will be able to get to all of you before the Session is over. The Winter Solstice Session will not finish until all proposals are heard. So there is no rush. Show of wands, who would like to be the first to speak.”

Several wands were raised.

“Lord Patroclus Nott of the Ancient House of Nott,” Cornelius said, “Please stand and be recognized.”

Albus frowned as Patroclus Nott, a known Death Eater who was free only due to Imperius Defense – which had caused several Death Eaters to go free -- stood up.

“A few minutes ago, we were witness to a serious breach in Wizengamot Council etiquette,” Nott said. “Centuries ago, when the Council was formed by the Original Twenty-Eight Families, they made an agreement that has gone on in tradition all these years. Back then, it was agreed that no Lord should get no more than three votes. One vote for Noble Houses, Two votes for Ancient Houses, and Three votes for Ancient and Most Noble Houses. It was deemed a fair, and respectful reward toward Lords and Houses who had dedicated so much to Wizarding Great Britain. Today we witnessed a serious error that, in my opinion should have been remedied several years ago.”

Albus raised an eyebrow. He knew where Lord Nott was going. This was going to get interesting.

“I propose a change to the Wizengamot Council etiquette,” Nott continued. “No Lords or Ladies of Multiple Houses should be allowed to have more than a total of three votes per person, not House!”

There were several jeers from the Light and Neutral Alliances.

Cornelius stood up. “Silence! Be silent now! I have not given permission to open the floor. Show of wands for those who wish to counter!” He looked around as wands raised. “Lady Ravenclaw. I believe this new proposed challenge to an old law affects you today. Stand and be recognized.”

“Thank you, Minister,” Lily said, standing up, “You are quite correct that this affects me, and my son. Minister Fudge, could you possibly answer a curiosity? Can proposals, bills and challenges be
created from actions happening during the current Session? Or do they have to be raised during the following session?"

“They have to be raised during the following session,” Cornelius said, “That piece of etiquette has been around for many years. We will not change it today.”

“Lord Nott, can you prove this challenge of yours was made before my son brought forth nine votes for himself?” Lily asked. “Or was this a deliberate challenge made after the doors were barred and chained, made to affect not only the actions happening today, but to target my son specifically?”

“I postpone my challenge, Minister Fudge,” Lord Nott said, “Forgive me. I forget my place.”

“You seem to know a lot about Council etiquette, Lord Nott,” Lily said, “And you forgot this piece of etiquette?”

Even from where he was sitting, Albus could see Patroclus Nott's face go pale as he sat down. Lily sat down too.

“Be that as a reminder, everyone,” Cornelius said, “And also a good learning experience for our guests. No proposal made today may affect the events that have already taken place during today’s Council Session. If you cannot prove your proposal was thought of before the doors were barred and chained for the first time today, since they could be barred and chained again if there are recesses, please do not try to repeat Lord Nott's mistake. One more error like that, Lord Nott, and I will call a vote about whether or not you and your House will be expelled from this Council.”

Lord Nott nodded once, and looked down at his lap. Albus shook his head at the man's obvious attempt at something similar to crocodile tears. Albus would have never made that kind of mistake. The man let his anger come forth and he paid for it. And the man had been a Slytherin!

“Next proposal?” Cornelius asked. “Lady Malfoy?”

Albus watched as Narcissa Malfoy stood up. She had taken her husband's seat after the man had been arrested. The non-Solstice Council Session had taken place the day after Lucius Malfoy had been arrested, but before his trial and following escape from custody. There had been a heavy debate from the Light Alliance about removing Malfoy's seat entirely, for being a criminal. But Lady Malfoy had been voted in by a narrow margin, to take her husband's seat. If it had happened today, there would have been enough votes to remove the Malfoy seat from the Wizengamot Council.

“Everybody knows that my husband, Lord Lucius Malfoy, is currently a fugitive on the run from the Ministry,” Narcissa said. “He has been on the run since late June, and still has been able to escape capture. If I had a chance to give this proposal months ago, I believe my husband would now be in custody and in Azkaban.”

Albus frowned. Was Narcissa trying to put her husband in Azkaban because she was afraid of him, and wanted him to be in Azkaban to pay for his crimes? Or because she cared for him, and was worried he would be killed if he wasn't in Azkaban?

“I request that the Kiss-On-Sight Order that has been on my husband since he became a fugitive be lifted,” Narcissa continued. “I believe if it is lifted, he will turn himself into custody. I believe he hasn't turned himself in simply because he is afraid he would be killed, instead of imprisoned. His sentence was not death by Dementor's Kiss. It was fifty years in Azkaban. I ask the Council to vote and lift the Kiss-On-Sight Order, so that he may turn himself in.”
There were several comments and low jeering from the Light and Neutral Alliances.

“Arguments?” Cornelius said, “Lady Bones and Rufus Scrimgeour. I believe your voices are the most important in this case, given your positions in the Ministry. You may speak first Lady Bones.”

Amelia stood up from her seat next to Sirius Black. “Before I begin my reasoning, I must ask you Lady Malfoy? Have you been in contact with your husband recently?”

“I do not appreciate this interrogation or your insinuations, Lady Bones,” Narcissa said, “But no, I have not. If he had met with me, I'd have Stunned him and contacted the DMLE.”

“So this is not a request from a criminal husband's mouth through his dedicated wife's lips?” Lady Bones asked. “You have never spoken up before in past councils. Why now? Why didn't you bring this up until now?”

“This is my request,” Narcissa said. “’I had hoped he would turn himself in. But now I know it is because of the Kiss-On-Sight Order.”

“Are you aware he is considered an armed and dangerous fugitive?” Lady Bones asked, “He is believed to be in possession of Auror John Dawlish's wand. The very man your husband killed, and may the man rest in peace. Your husband will get the Dementor's Kiss on Sight. Not because he is a fugitive, but because he killed an Auror, Lady Malfoy! The penalty for killing an Auror is death!”

Lady Bones sat down. Cornelius looked at Rufus Scrimgeour.

“I believe Lady Bones said everything I had planned on saying,” Rufus said, “If Lucius Malfoy is captured, he will get the Dementor's Kiss anyway. It doesn't matter if he comes willingly or not. My Aurors have been told to Kill if they cannot Capture.”

As Rufus sat down, Albus frowned. Such a pitiful fate for a man who had done so much for the British Wizarding World.

“Do you wish the Council to vote, Lady Malfoy?” Cornelius asked.

“I rescind my proposal, Minister,” Lady Malfoy said; she had been sitting since Lady Bones sat down.

“Very well,” Cornelius said, “Next proposal? Show of wands?”

Wizengamot Council Room – The Great Alliance Seats

Sitting between Lily and Amelia, Sirius raised his wand, as several others did too. As he did, he stared at his cousin, Narcissa. Her proposal had been surprising, but he couldn't figure out her intentions. His thoughts – though he didn't know it – were similar to Albus Dumbledore's line of reasoning. Was Narcissa wanting to save her husband from a Dementor's Kiss, so he wouldn't be killed? Or did she want to see him in Azkaban? Even now her expression was hard to read. That didn't help. He wanted to know whether or not a meeting with her would go in his favor or not.

“... Ah! Lord Black!” Cornelius said.
Amelia nudged Sirius, and he stood up, realizing his name was called. It was time to get what he wanted.

Sirius cleared his throat. “I come to the Council today with one important mission in mind – more important to me than anything else. I come to gain a daughter through Blood Adoption. Only the Wizengamot Council can approve of allowing a Blood Adoption Ritual to take place. Last month, I was witness to a travesty. Lord Derrick Davis disowned his daughter, Tracey. Immediately, I offered to adopt her, though I knew I wouldn't get to do so unless I was given permission from the Wizengamot Council.”

Lord Castor Greengrass raised his wand. Cornelius glanced from Sirius to Castor.

“You may speak, Lord Greengrass,” Cornelius said.

“I have a feeling Lord Davis will like to speak, perhaps to voice his disapproval,” Lord Castor said, as he eyed Lord Davis, who was looking at Sirius, venomously, “Before we hear him, I believe we should listen to the young witch in question. I believe she is here in the audience. I, too, was there when young Tracey was disowned. I think she should speak her peace to us before we let Lord Davis say anything.”


“If young Tracey is present,” Cornelius said, “Please stand and make yourself recognized.”

Sirius smiled as Tracey stood up.

“Do you wish to talk to the Council about Lord Black's offer, young lady?” Cornelius asked; Tracey nodded, shyly. “Please do come forward. I personally know how difficult it is to speak in front of such a crowd. Take your time. Nobody will interrupt you until your finished.”

“Thank you, Minister,” Tracey said, “Honored Minister, Lords and Ladies, and members of the Wizengamot Council. I am Tracey – former Heiress of the House of Davis. When Lord Davis disowned me, I was not upset. I was crying, yes, but they were tears of happiness, of relief. Lord Davis was going to sentence me to a life I did not want.

“He would Betroth me to a boy, and in his own words to me, I would become a broodmare. If Lord Davis” had his way, I would have been forced to be a stay-at-home mother to however many children that may or may not have been my choice. I suspect for the first several years of the marriage, I would be pregnant every one or two years. I would not get a job I want. My seven years of education at Hogwarts – whatever results I get on my OWLs and NEWTs would be worthless. Every fifth year gets Career Advice. If I was Betrothed like Lord Davis wanted, do you know what I would have said during the meeting, when asked what I wanted as a job? I would say it doesn't matter. The only job I have will be wife, mother, and – basically a whore to my future husband, who would use me at his every whim without my permission.”

Sirius looked around at the reaction of the Council and those seated in the audience. He was pleased to see that several looked horrified. Lord Davis still looked venomous, but now he was doing so at Tracey. Several Dark Alliance members, however, looked emotionless like stones. He knew they believed Tracey's feared life was something many Ladies would be lucky to have.
“In Lord Davis’ own words,” Tracey said, “he said it did not matter if I was attracted to my husband. I didn't need to be attracted to him to lay down and have my husband do what would be something akin to legal rape. I was to accept it as a dutiful wife, and let him impregnate me, and do so every night for however long he wanted, and however many children he wanted me to give him. That was my future if I had not been disowned by Lord Davis. But he did disown me, and I thank him for that. He disowned me because he was disgusted by me.

“I am sure everyone here saw the article Rita Skeeter wrote about me last month. She was soon arrested after the article was published, and Daily Prophet Editor-in-Chief Barnabus Cuffe apologized to me and gave a retraction. But everyone had seen the news. I proudly confirm it in front of everybody. I, Tracey, hopeful Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, am a Witches’ Witch!”

Sirius looked around at the reactions again. There was clear disgust from much of the Dark Alliance. Dolores Umbridge held the most disgust on her face, probably enough to match all of those doing so in the Dark Alliance.

Tracey turned and pointed – it was easy to see she was pointing at Daphne.

“My girlfriend has given me permission to reveal her identity to everyone,” Tracey said, “Daphne Greengrass, Heiress to the House of Greengrass.”

Lord Castor merely smiled in his daughter's direction as several people looked at him.

“Lord Castor – her father – has not decided to disown her because she's romantically involved with a witch,” Tracey said. “Not like Lord Davis did. Perhaps it is because she is also Betrothed to a wizard. No, I won't reveal his identity. This wizard has also given Daphne permission to take on a Wife's Consort – me. We have put together a Contract. And if I want a child or two from my own womb, Daphne's future husband will father them for me. You might ask, then, why did I not decide to get Betrothed to Daphne's future husband? As sister-wife I could have the same thing as Wife's Consort – a relationship with Daphne. I may never fall in love with Daphne's Betrothed. But I am in love with my girlfriend and future Wife. So yes, I am a Witches' Witch. But I will do the honor of an Heiress if it is asked of me. Lord Davis did not understand that.”

She turned to Sirius and smiled at him. “Lord Black does. And because of that, I want to be adopted by him. I want to be Tracey Black, Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black. Through Blood Adoption, I could continue the line of the House of Black with my future Wife's future Husband.

“Witches' Witches get a very bad reputation in the British Wizarding World. I believe Lord Davis told me they were a fantasy. Stories told by Teen Witch Weekly, to teenage girls who want to get their jollies off with Witches, just so they'd be happy to have Sister-Wives. As I said, that is not what I want. I want to live my life with the love of my life. Lord Davis never understood that. Lord Black does. Thank you.”

Sirius clapped softly, holding his hands at his lap.

“Thank you, young Tracey,” Cornelius said, “Please keep standing there until the vote for Lord Black's proposal is done. Lord Davis? Do you wish to do a counter-argument to either Lord Black, Tracey, or both?”

Every eye turned to Lord Davis. Sirius stared at him as the man looked from him to Tracey, and
looked searchingly around the room. He cleared his throat and stood up.

“What my former daughter did not tell you,” Lord Davis said, “is that I was forced to disown her. I didn't have much of a chance. Lord Harry Potter threatened me. Either I would disown my daughter, or he would challenge me to a Duel of Satisfaction in the middle of Hogsmeade.”

“So you admit yourself a coward?” Sirius countered. “You blame a fourteen year old boy for your decision? You picked to disown your daughter, over participating in a duel with Lord Potter. Am I to understand you believe you would have defeated Lord Potter? You weren’t forced, Lord Davis. You chose to disown your daughter. Do not blame Lord Potter.”

“If I lost Lord Potter's duel, I would have to disown Tracey anyway,” Lord Davis continued. “So I decided to be the bigger man, and not wipe the floor with Lord Potter in front of his friends and family.”

Sirius snorted. He looked at Harry, who was merely staring at the man. Harry could have challenged the man here and now so Lord Davis could prove himself. But he was being mature and letting Lord Davis make a fool of himself. Lord Davis wouldn't challenge Harry here. He'd look like a coward, wanting to fight a fourteen year old boy. Nor did he want to get embarrassed in front of everyone if he lost.

“I told Tracey I had a Betrothal Contract waiting for her at home,” Lord Davis said. “If she had told me everything she said just now, I would have Betrothed her to the wizard Heiress Greengrass is Betrothed to.”

Sirius sighed. Even though Tracey had not said Harry's name, Lord Davis had pretty much revealed Daphne was betrothed to Harry.

“No, she wouldn't have been a Wife's Consort,” Lord Davis continued, “Yes, I would expect a couple children from her, by her future husband. Then if she wanted to ,she could spend the rest of her life with her Sister-Wife whom she is apparently in love with. Once she did her duty and gave me a couple of grandchildren, then my expectations for her would be done. After her children were proper age that she didn't have to be at their every beck and call, then I would support any job she wanted. I am not a soulless father, my fellow Councilmen. Yes, I have a counter-argument. Reject Lord Black's Blood Adoption, and accept my proposal to welcome my daughter back into the House of Davis she was born into!”

“You can't do that,” Tracey said, “Don't you remember, Lord Davis? No proposals can be made in reaction to other proposals.”

Lord Davis sat down hard in his seat, glaring at Tracey.

“Now you see, Lords and Ladies?” Tracey asked. “He wants me back in the House of Davis just so the House of Black does not embarrass him. He won't keep his end of the bargain. He said he had a Betrothial Contract waiting at home. I'd be sentenced to the life he wanted before he disowned me. He's even trying to break a law just so he can get what he wants. How many other laws will he break?”

“Thank you, Tracey,” Cornelius said, “I believe we can vote now. Those who approve of Lord Black's Blood Adoption Ritual with Tracey, bring forth red lights into the Cauldron. Those who reject the proposal, blue lights please.”
Sirius raised his wand, thankful that he could vote for his own proposal. Three more votes were quite welcomed into the red Cauldron. He held his breath and tried, but failed, to see if he could tell how many lights were going into each Cauldron. But as usual, it was hard to keep track. He waited with bated breath as he watched the Cauldrons, praying for the red flamed Cauldron to ignite.

Five seconds later, the red flamed Cauldron did just that. It ignited, and the blue flames disappeared.

“Lord Black,” Cornelius said, “Your request for the Blood Adoption of Tracey into the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black has been accepted by the Wizengamot Council of the British Ministry of Magic!”

“Yes!” Sirius exclaimed, but his voice was barely heard.

The applause around him and at the area where the Children of the Great Alliance was seated was too loud. A very emotional and happy Tracey Black grinned at him, as her eyes teared up. She turned and ran back to the seats. Daphne was standing, waiting for her. Sirius did not see the couple kiss, though much of the room did. He turned and hugged Lily, then hugged Amelia and kissed her.

“Thank Merlin,” Sirius whispered, as he backed away.

“There was never any doubt,” Amelia said.

Sirius grinned and nodded. He relaxed in his seat. In time, before the Council Session would end, he would bring up another proposal. But he would wait for the opportune moment. He just hoped he was as victorious for that too.

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**Wizengamot Council Room – Children of the Great Alliance Seats**

Harry smiled as he watched Tracey and Daphne sit down in their seats to his left beside Hermione and Luna. Tracey had done an excellent job standing up for herself, and had even been brave enough to confront Lord Davis, even after he spoke up. Harry was quite proud of her. He was so happy for both Tracey and Sirius.

“Congratulations, Heiress Black,” he whispered to Tracey.

Tracey went pink and smiled sweetly at him. “Thank you, Harry. It feels so good to hear that name, and know that it will soon be official.”

“Harry,” Hermione whispered, “Pay attention! Minister Fudge called on Lord Vane to speak. I think this is it!”

Harry turned to Hermione, who nodded toward the Council Seats. Harry looked at the Council and noticed a man standing amongst the Neutral Alliance. Hermione gripped his hand hard; he replied by rubbing his thumb softly over the top of her hand, as he stared at the man.

“My fellow Council,” the man – Lord Vane – said, “A couple weeks ago, I had a revelation. A revelation about the most important Act that has been approved of by this very council in the past decade and a half. I speak, of course, of the Pureblood Heritage Act. Although the Council, nor the Committee behind the Act, did not call it such, a certain section of the Pureblood Heritage Act is
known by many as the Last Generation Loophole.”

Harry and Hermione exchanged a glance, and gripped each other's hand harder. Here was confirmation that the rumored modified bill proposal would be discussed today.

“My own daughter is amongst the audience today,” Lord Vane said, “And while I know she is well-educated about the Pureblood Heritage Act, and the Last Generation Loophole, there may be some here today who do not know certain topics of the Act and Loophole. So I will educate you.

“The Last Generation Loophole is fairly easy to understand. Any Pureblood Lord, younger than eighteen years old, who is the last son of a Noble, Ancient, or Ancient and Most Noble House, is required to marry a Pureblood witch by the time they turn eighteen years old. They are required to have at least one Pureblood Heir or Heiress by their twenty-first birthday.

“A couple years after the Pureblood Heritage Act was passed, magical advances and research had been discovered, and children were able to be identified as magical or Squibs before they were six months old. So then a bill was passed to modify the Act. The Heir or Heiress of the Lord in the Last Generation Loophole couldn't be a Squib. If they were a Squib, then another child would be required by the Lord's age of twenty-three.”

Harry knew about all of this, only because he had learned it this past week, having finally researched the Pureblood Heritage Act, and the so-called Last Generation Loophole.

“Here's the mistake that was made back when the Act and laws were created,” Vane continued. “The Council was too kind, and too forgiving. Think about this question I am about to ask, while I continue my speech. What is the point of a Pureblood Heritage Act if Pureblood bloodlines are not going to be preserved due to bad decisions made by the Council?

“In addition to Purebloods... Half-Bloods, Muggleborn and even Muggles can be chosen if a Lord under the Last Generation Loophole has more than one wife. Their second and third and fourth – and I can go on and on – does not have to be a Pureblood. What is the point of the Pureblood Heritage Act if Pureblood Houses are going to be threatened by sullied bloodlines, or Muggles who have no magic at all? That is how you create Squibs, my fellow Council Members! Preserve the bloodlines! I propose a bill in which all wives of Lords, who fall under the Last Generation Loophole, be of Purest Blood! After all, my fellow Lords and Ladies, that is the reason this Council voted to approve the Pureblood Heritage Act in the first place, is it not?!”

Harry didn't like the approving murmurs from several members in the Wizengamot – including Light Alliance members.

“Arguments against Lord Vane's Bill?” Cornelius asked.

Harry's eyes widened as he saw somebody raise their wand. Not only did Lily, Sirius, Lord Castor, and others in the Great Alliance raise their wand. So too, did Albus Dumbledore.

Wizengamot Council Room – Dumbledore's Alliance Seats

Albus Dumbledore hid a smug smirk as he raised his wand with several members of the Great Alliance, at Minister Fudge's question. He could see Lily, Sirius and others looking at him in surprise. It was time to get exactly what he wanted. It was time to give a gift to Lily and Harry Potter.
“Ah, Chief Warlock Dumbledore,” Cornelius said, smiling, “I was beginning to think you had gone mute, and your wand arm limp! Stand and be recognized!”

Albus smiled as he stood up.

“Before I address Lord Vane, and the Council,” Albus said, “I would like to address our future Lords and Ladies for just one particular moment.”

He turned and looked at his students. “Please raise your hand if you are affected by the Last Generation Loophole – that is, if you are, or will be a future Lord of more than one House.”

Albus smiled as Harry hesitated for a moment before raising his hand. His smile grew to rival the Cheshire Cat’s when nobody else did.

“Perhaps the future Lords and Ladies do not know,” Albus said, turning to the Council. “Lords and Ladies, please raise your hand if your child falls under the category in spoke of.”

Lord Vane’s eyes widened, and Albus knew why. Albus had personally asked Lord Vane to bring up this Bill. Vane was looking for an Alliance. Albus promised to invite Vane into the Alliance if he had done this request. Now Albus was about to shoot down his very own Bill.

Lady Potter raised her hand. So did Narcissa Malfoy. Then she lowered it.

“Lady Malfoy?” Albus asked.

“Never mind,” Narcissa said. “My son used to qualify, until Lord Black emerged.”

“So only Lord Potter qualifies?” Albus asked, looking around. “That is very discouraging, Lord Vane. That would make this Bill target only one person. Which is illegal, Lord Vane. Something you should know.”

Albus noticed Lily raise her hand again. “Lady Ravenclaw?”

Lily stood. “Perhaps Lord Vane would allow a delay in his Bill proposal. We ask the Daily Prophet to make a front page ad. If anyone can present clear evidence that a future Lord aside from my son qualifies, then there is proof that Lord Vane isn’t targeting my son today.”

She looked at Vane. “Of course, if Lord Vane knows this accusation is true, then I would accept as an apology, that Lord Vane rescinds his Proposal.”

Vane looked at Albus, who merely stared at the man.

“I rescind my proposal,” Vane said, as he sat down, “And apologize for my mistake.”

Albus sat down. Vane might be a voice, but he was also a coward. Albus mentally gave himself a pat on the back. Hopefully this would be the gift that made Lily and Harry Potter come to his office soon.

He sighed as he looked at Harry and Hermione hugging at this. He had given up on personally working to end their relationship last night. Lily had made a good argument. He couldn't force them to break up. They would go to America, get Betrothed or get married. And he wouldn't able to stop
Then he recalled that Vane wasn't the only person he had asked to bring up bills for the Last Generation Loophole and Pureblood Heritage Act. He groaned under his breath as Lord Davis raised his hand, and was accepted to go next by Cornelius. Albus knew exactly what the man was going to bring up. This would make Lily and Harry very, very mad.

Ah well. Hopefully they didn't realize he was responsible for this.

“Now, even though my bill may sound as if it was influenced by Lord Vane's proposal,” Lord Davis said, “I thought this one up several weeks ago. Lord Vane made a point about Lords, under the Last Generation Loophole, having children by a certain age. I believe this one can be modified. Lords and Ladies, unlike Lord Vane, it appears, I am not here to single out Lord Potter. No, to do so would be rude and very foolish! And very illegal! This proposal goes for all Lords who fall under the Last Generation Loophole.

“As we all know, ever since the Pureblood Heritage Act has been created, there has been an influx of Betrothal Contracts. I know of several young Lords attending today who are in Betrothal Contracts due to this very influx. Some are just waiting to finish their education before they get married and begin their families and the next generation.

“Here's my question. Why wait? Hmm? Why wait? Those who fall under Betrothal Contracts are going to be married. It is confirmed once the Contracts are agreed upon, and cemented. So why wait until their education is finished? My proposal is to lower the age requirement for the Lords to have their first Heir or Heiress. But only those who fall under Betrothal Contracts. If you are a young Lord, Betrothed and promised to be married, sixteen years old or younger as of the time this law becomes active, you would be required for you and your Betrothed to either have a child, or be expecting a child... by seventeen years old.”

Albus pinched his nose as several students, and Council members gave horrified and shocked gasps. This would be interesting. If this law passed, it would certainly change things at Hogwarts for Betrothed students.

“Arguments?” Cornelius asked, “Lady Ravenclaw?”

“Yes, I am arguing!” Lily said, standing up, “How dare you propose this, Lord Davis? Witches pregnant or mothers at seventeen?! Are you mad?!”

“Only Witches who are Betrothed, Lady Ravenclaw,” Lord Davis said, smiling, “Witches who are already planning on being married at seventeen, or finishing their education – whichever. Why wait? Why wait until twenty-one?”

“Perhaps they want to get a job!” Lily said, “Or get to know their husband before they have children.”

“There is no requirement saying these Witches must be jobless when pregnant or new mothers, Lady Ravenclaw,” Lord Davis said. “And if they are Betrothed, they should be able to get to know their husband before marriage. Lady Longbottom, if I may address you?”

“Of course,” Augusta Longbottom, seated next to Albus, said.

“I know your grandson is Betrothed at fourteen to a witch of thirteen,” Lord Davis said, “How well
does your Grandson and his Betrothed know each other? Are they complete strangers? Do they need
time to get to know each other after their wedding?"

“No,” Augusta said, “They have been dating since about two weeks after discovering their Contract.”

“Ah, now there is a smart idea,” Lord Davis said, then pointed at Lily, “That would counter the argument that they should get to know each other before becoming parents. Those young enough can get to know each other from the time of their prime dating age. No need to interrupt their normal teenage years. Normal teens date. Nothing wrong there. So these teens are dating they're dating the boy they're promised to. It would help them get to know one another before they are required to have children.”

“Lady Ravenclaw, I am surprised you're speaking up at this. I am surprised you are so defensive. Don't you plan on bringing your son back to America when he is finished with his Tournament? What about his Betrothed? Taking her along? British laws don't affect American citizens. Why are you so defensive?

“Ah I see. Let me ask you a question. What age were you married? What age were you when you were pregnant with your son? Before twenty-one? How long did your husband get to spend with his son before he died? What about his daughter?!”

Lord Davis gasped dramatically. “That is right! He didn't! Are you going to prevent these children from making the mistake you and your husband did? Your daughter didn't get to know her father.”

“You act as if my son will die before his children can know him,” Lily said, through her teeth.

Albus was very surprised Lily hadn't reacted more than that counter statement.

Lord Davis shrugged his shoulders dramatically. “Do you know that isn't going to happen? Can you promise everyone in here that their children are going to live long enough to get to know their own children? That they're going to live long enough to even have children? You weren't here so maybe you don't know this. But rioters attacked the Quidditch World Cup. What if children had died? Teens? Future Lords? What if they had died before they were able to have children? What if it happened again?

“Your husband lived long enough to see his son, but not his daughter. Don't let that happen to this generation, Lady Ravenclaw. Learn from your tragedies.”

Lily stared at Lord Davis. Then she did something that shocked Albus. She sat down and offered no more counter arguments. Lord Davis had played an excellent game. He knew where to hurt Lily. Her dead husband, the son he barely knew, and the daughter he didn't. The man was playing fear-monger amongst the voters making them think very morbid thoughts about their children's future. Thinking 'what if' questions 'What if I didn't approve of this law, and paid for it? What if I lost the chance at grandchildren?'

Albus was very impressed with Lord Davis. He would definitely have to discuss an Alliance with Lord Davis if this worked out in his favor.

“This is a difficult bill proposal, ladies and gentlemen,” Cornelius said, quietly, “Any more arguments?”
Albus raised his wand. Cornelius nodded at him. He stood up.

“How would this modification affect Hogwarts, Lord Davis?” Albus asked. “Many students experiencing their education would be affected by this.”

“That would be your decision as Headmaster,” Lord Davis said. “There is no reason witches who are pregnant, or mothers, before they finish their education can’t still be students at the same time. I am sure you and your staff could discuss such topics with the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee if the law passes.”

Albus nodded and sat down.

“Any more arguments?” Cornelius asked.

Silence. Even the Great Alliance was contemplating and looking at Lord Davis.

“Time to vote on Lord Davis' proposed bill,” Cornelius said.

Albus waited to raise his wand. Arthur Weasley raised his... and a red light shot out of his wand. Augusta shot a blue light. Tiberius and Griselda each shot red. Majority vote amongst the Alliance – their leader had to agree. Albus voted in approval.

He watched Lily as she looked around at the Council. Obviously she was wondering how the vote would go. Albus had a feeling – either way it would be very close.

As the last vote was cast, the entire room was hushed and looking at the Cauldrons.

The winning Cauldron's flame ignited. Albus compared the color of the fire to Lily Potter's hair. And probably the color of the fury rising in her too.

Red.

As the room around him seemed to gasp out loud, Cornelius cleared his throat.

“Lord Davis' proposal,” he said, “has been Approved by the Wizengamot Council of the British Wizarding World. The Pureblood Heritage Act Committee will discuss everything that needs to be discussed about this new bill in the next few days, and those teens and parents affected now, or in the future, will be sent letters informing them of the Act.”

Yet again, the British Wizarding World's future was changed because of the Pureblood Heritage Act.

Chapter End Notes

Mwahahahaha! Lord Davis gets his revenge, and Albus gets a victory! Who saw that coming?! Remember readers, Albus thought of that modification weeks ago in-story. Also! The Great Alliance is not all-powerful. It can be defeated if Light Alliance members vote with Dark Alliance and Neutral-Dark.
Cue the rage and controversy from reviewers! I can see it coming. Look, I needed at least one victory for villains in the Winter Solstice. This seemed like a good one. Of course... Harry and Daphne aren't affected. Probably, maybe. But others definitely are!

Next Chapter: Winter Solstice Session, Part 3! The aftermath of Lord Davis' Approved Bill! Also more bills are discussed, including the Libel and Slander law. I have several law ideas (read: 8 more) to be discussed, so this could definitely be four parts!

Mwahahahaha! I hope you liked this chapter. (Please don't hurt me.)
Followers lost because of one specific story plot that they didn't like. They didn't even give it a chance to see how the good guys will respond to it. Thank you to all of you still reading this story. And especially to those of you who LIKED the twist. YES... readers actually liked it! It isn't taboo to like a twist like that! It is just a story! Ah well, lost some followers, but gained a bunch more.

For those reviewers who don't like Lord Davis' law, please, in your next review, give me a law to pass that would be as devastating as Lord Davis' law, but wouldn't feel like a cop-out if I went and did away with the law in the next Council Session. I need something as equally devastating to the good guys (which as you will soon find, isn't that devastating at all) as this law.

The Pureblood Heritage Act Committee WILL discuss this law, and modify it if they have to. There will NOT be kids as young as 12, 13, 14 having unwanted sex. Only sixteen year olds and up will be affected by the law.

Hopefully this chapter calms a few readers' nerves that fired up at the end of the previous chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Previously on “The Ilvermorny Champion”....

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Friday, December 18th, 1994

“No... tell me I am hallucinating here, Harry,” Hermione said. “They didn't just do that, did they? They didn't just approve that ridiculous law, did they?”

“They did, Hermione,” Daphne said, a couple seats away from Hermione, “They just did approve it.”

“Lord Davis has always been a snake,” Tracey said. “The way he attacked Lady Lily like that. Played at her tragic past, and made others fear they too could have a tragic future... he knew exactly what he was doing.”
Harry Potter was simply staring at his mother. Why hadn't she argued anymore? Why didn't the rest of the Great Alliance? With enough influence, the Light Alliance – much of whom had voted to approve Lord Davis' law – would have denied the law. But the Great Alliance didn't speak up. Why?

“It doesn't matter,” Harry said. “American citizens – Hermione, Daphne, Tracey, we're going to make sure this doesn't affect you by making you American citizens.”

“So we can still get Betrothed?” Hermione asked, “If it comes to that?”

“Probably,” Harry said, “We'll discuss it with Mom and Sirius.”

“Good,” Hermione said, “I don't want to be pregnant before I finish my education, Harry. I don't want to be a mother by then either.”

“Neither do I,” Daphne muttered.

“You'll all be immune from this,” Harry said, “I promise.”

“There's one problem, Harry,” Luna said, sitting next to Hermione. “What if you want to come back to Britain?”

“Why would that matter?” Harry asked; Luna had a point... his 'destiny' with Voldemort could bring him back.

“The Wizengamot could pull off some dual-citizen crap for anyone who spends so much time in Britain and another country,” Daphne said. “We could all qualify for that.”

“Then we'd be forced to abide by British law,” Hermione said.

Harry sighed. “I really need to talk to Sirius and Mom. Hopefully nothing like that happens until we can talk to them.”

The Great Alliance

Lady Lily Potter was slouched in her chair beside Sirius as she tried to drown out the voices inside the Council Room. She had told Sirius to tell her if there were anything the Great Alliance wanted to vote for her against, but otherwise, she didn't care.

She was too busy fuming about Lord Davis' law, and the fact that it had been approved. He had used the memory of her dead husband and her children to get his law approved. Such a Slytherin move, for sure. The only reason she was slouched in the chair, was so she didn't stand up and start yelling – which could get her, and her twelve votes, kicked out of the Council Room. She couldn't afford that. The Great Alliance needed her votes. If the Light Alliance voted with the Neutral and Dark in any laws, the Great Alliance would lose. Lord Davis' law had proved that. Several Light Alliance members had voted for Lord Davis' law – including Albus Dumbledore and much of his Alliance. She would be speaking to him about that one.

Minister Fudge had said that the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee would be discussing Lord Davis' law. It would have to be approved, but he didn't say anything about it not being modified. The only really good news was that this didn't affect her son, or his Betrothed, Daphne, or possible
Betrothed, Hermione. Daphne and Hermione could become an American citizens, and the law wouldn't affect them. Lily snorted at the thought – unless another law passed that made it so it affected them. Goddamned Purebloods!

Lily kept an ear open whenever a new law was proposed. Most just had to do with Ministerial Department decisions, and business proposals. Nothing too big yet. Perhaps everyone was doing as she was doing. Trying to calm down after such a controversial law had been passed. More important laws could be proposed after their first recess break.

Sirius nudged her.


“Already?” Lily asked.

“Two hours have passed – you've been acting like a robot ever since Lord Davis' law passed,” Sirius said, “Good news is, you approve or deny everything I do. Nothing too important. Nothing that will affect us. Nothing since Lord Davis' law anyway. Come on. The kids will want to discuss that law. And I want to see Tracey.”

Lily nodded and stood up. While most of the Council headed into the side-room, Lily, Sirius and Amelia headed out with the kids into the corridor. Lily noticed that Lord Castor and Lord Weasley did too.

A great section of the corridor outside the Council Room had been modified into a cafeteria of sorts. Several tables were set up, as well as buffet tables with various finger foods and snacks. Lily wasn't hungry, so she sat down. Sirius and Amelia went off to find Tracey and Susan and get food. Lord Castor was talking to Daphne and Astoria. Daphne looked quite concerned.

A couple minutes later, Sirius and Amelia were at her table with Susan and Tracey. As was Castor, Daphne, and Astoria. Their bodyguard Tonks was sitting at a neighboring table with her parents, and some other members of the Children of the Great Alliance. Then Harry and Hermione joined Lily's table, both with a couple plates of food.

“What the hell, Mom?!” Harry asked, “Why didn't you argue more against Lord Davis! Why didn't the Great Alliance?”

“We couldn't argue anymore,” Lily said, “What was I supposed to say? Lord Davis made a very good argument.”

“He also played on Council Member's fears,” Sirius said. “Fear-mongering, it works very, very well in there. It is why we can't bring up Voldemort. No one would believe us because they're afraid.”

“None of the Great Alliance were going to speak up after Lily was verbally beat down by Lord Davis,” Amelia said. “Lily's our leader in there. She's the main voice for the Alliance. What were we going to say? If Voldemort comes back soon, and the next war begins, Lord Davis could be right about children dying before they become parents. The Act wouldn't matter then. They would remember Lord Davis' discussion --”

“And Betrothed couples would have children or become pregnant by seventeen anyway,” Harry said.
“Because their parents would order them to,” Sirius said, nodding.

“So there was nothing you could have said?” Harry asked.

“Nothing that would have worked,” Lily said. “Lord Davis convinced Alliances on all sides to vote. The Great Alliance can't win when the Light Alliance votes against us. We're not invincible, Harry. This proves it.”

“So when does the law take affect?” Hermione asked.

“The Pureblood Heritage Act Committee will discuss that in their next meeting,” Amelia said, “Don't worry. Lord Davis' law will have to come into affect, but the Committee has a right to modify it.”

“Modify it how?” Hermione asked.

“Well, maybe no Betrothed couples aged below sixteen can participate in sexual acts that would get their Betrothed pregnant,” Amelia said. “They'll make sure there aren't any pregnant witches younger than a required age.”

“That won't work,” Susan said, “Think of Betrothed who are younger than the Lords? Ginny is over a year younger than Neville.”

“Then they'll change it to Witches' Age,” Amelia said. “If the Witch is younger than the Lord, they have to be sixteen for the law to take affect.”

“That would work,” Lord Castor said, nodding, then he frowned, “Did you see Albus had voted in approval? He's approving of teen pregnancies and teen mothers in his school! As Students!”

“If this is his bill,” Lily said, “He's gone way too far this time.”

“Hey,” Sirius said, “At least he spoke up for Harry and Hermione.”

“Yeah,” Lily said, “Because he wanted to give us another 'gift'. I told him if he helped do away with that law, Harry and I would speak to him soon about you-know-what.”

Sirius sighed. “Well, shit.”

“Relax,” Lily said, “I never gave him a specific date.”

“But that's my point here!” Harry said, “You think me and anyone that could qualify for my future wives here in Britain, are going back to America. True... but didn't we also say we'd be coming back because of what we suspect Dumbledore will tell us? Hermione and I had discussed the possibility of a Betrothal! Great, that one law didn't pass – we can still get married if we want...”

“But if we're Betrothed, that stupid law qualifies for us!” Hermione exclaimed.

“So don't get officially Betrothed,” Sirius said, shrugging. “You don't have to be Betrothed to get married. Nobody does. Lord Davis' bill was specific. Those future Lords who fall under Betrothal Contracts. He said Betrothals are targeted, not those who may get married. Sure, you and Daphne qualify, Harry – if you are both still in Britain at sixteen years old.”

“If Daphne's an American citizen before sixteen,” Amelia said, “Simply ask the MACUSA to give
her Diplomatic Immunity where she doesn't have to follow British law.”

“The same could be done for me,” Hermione said, “I could be an American citizen. And be immune from British law. Then we could still get Betrothed, Harry.”

“Loopholes,” Sirius said, “That is the secret of Pureblood Politics. Look for the loopholes.”

“Maybe,” Daphne said, “What about dual-citizen laws? If the Wizengamot passes something like that, we'd be forced to abide by British law, because we've lived in Britain for so long.”

Lily frowned. Daphne had a good point. Even if they were made American citizens, they could still be affected by British law, if dual-citizen laws were passed.

“Well,” she said, “let's just hope nothing like that comes up, Daphne.”

She stood up and went to find something to eat. She hadn't had lunch yet, and she was quite hungry. There was still much to do in the Council Room.

Elsewhere in the Corridor outside the Council Room

Molly Weasley – who had attended the Session with her husband, the Lord Arthur Weasley, and had been sitting with her sons, Fred, George, and Ron, her daughter, Ginny, and Ginny's Betrothed, Neville –was now sitting at a table in the Corridor with her husband, four youngest children and Neville. Ginny wasn't eating anything on her plate. She was holding Neville's hand on the table and staring at it. Since Lord Davis' law had passed, Ginny had been looking very depressed, and on the verge of either tears, rage, or both. Molly was rather upset because Ginny hadn't spoken to her, hoping for comfort.

“Daddy?” Ginny asked. “Why did you approve of Lord Davis' vote?”

Arthur sighed. “Two reasons. The first was because Professor Dumbledore discussed the possibility of this law with me beforehand. He wanted me to approve of it, but if Lady Longbottom, Lord Ogden, and Lady Marchbanks didn't approve, then neither would Professor Dumbledore.”

“Gran wouldn't approve, and she didn't,” Neville said. “I expected her to talk to me about it, but she went in to talk to Albus, I think.”

“Probably to yell at him about voting for a law she didn't vote on,” Fred said.

“Professor Dumbledore's going to learn why he shouldn't cross Lady Longbottom,” George said.

Ron mumbled then swallowed his food, “I disagree. Headmaster Dumbledore is far more intimidating than Neville's Gran. He's the Leader of their Alliance. She won't talk to him like that.”

“Yes she will,” Neville and Ginny said in unison.

“Stop that!” Ron said, “It is bad enough the twins do it!”

“Don't talk like that to Ginny and Neville, Ron,” Molly said, “I'm still upset you tried to split them up.”
Ron frowned and made an apology – or Molly thought he did. His mouth was full of food. Before she could tell him to be polite, Ginny spoke up.

“What is the other reason, Daddy?” Ginny asked.

“Your mother is part of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee,” Arthur said, “She won't let the law affect you too badly.”

“We'll modify Lord Davis' law,” Molly said. “When Neville turns sixteen, you'll be much too young to become pregnant! Witches who are younger than their Betrothed will be required to be sixteen before they can engage in such behavior. Nobody below sixteen should have to fear becoming pregnant or a mother. Much too young!”

Ginny smiled. “Thanks, Mum. That makes me feel a bit better, I suppose.”

“Lord Davis forgot one very important thing today, Ginny,” Arthur said. “The Wizengamot doesn't make the final decisions about the Pureblood Heritage Act. The committee does.”

“So you can appeal the Wizengamot's decision?” Neville asked.

“No, dear,” Molly said, “We can modify it, however.”

“I hope you do,” Neville said. “For all of our sakes.”

Council Room – The Great Alliance Seats

Hunger sated, and nerves and temper calmed down, Lily returned to the Council Room with Sirius and Amelia. As she made her way to her seat, she saw Lord Davis smirking in her direction as he moved to his seat, and she merely smiled back at him. He looked rather shocked that she was so calm.

“Poor Derrick Davis,” Lily said, “He hoped his bill proposal would affect me for the rest of the day.”

“Show him it won't,” Sirius said. “You have that Libel and Slander law to present, Lily. For Ted, remember?”

“I remember,” Lily said.

She reached her chair, and found a scroll of parchment laying in it.

“What the hell?” Lily asked, “Someone sent me a letter?”

“Where?” Sirius asked.

“Here!” Lily said, picking up the scroll and showing him.

“Uh... why are you holding your hand up?” Sirius asked.

“I am holding up this...!” Lily paused. “You can't see it? Can you Amelia?”

“I see your hand,” Amelia said, “Someone sent you a letter? A powerful notice-me-not charm
targeted at only you. Note-passing is illegal in the Council Room.”

“Read it,” Sirius said. “Just in case.”

Lily sat down in her seat and opened the scroll, then read it aloud.”

“I invite you, your children, and Lord Black to meet me outside the Department of Mysteries when the Winter Solstice Session is finished,” Lily read. “I cannot say why in a letter, even one only you can read. It is very important. Signed, Toad.”

“Toad?” Amelia asked, “Umbridge, maybe?”

Sirius snorted. “As funny as that is, I don't think so. What sound does a toad make, Lily?”

Lily stared at the letter. “Croaker. Algie?”


“The apparent Prophecy?” Lily asked.

Sirius nodded.

“We could be here until midnight!” Lily said.

“Croaker would wait,” Amelia said, “Especially if it is important.”

“I suppose you're right,” Lily said.

She pocketed the letter as Cornelius Fudge stood up at his seat again.

“I believe everyone has returned to their seats,” Fudge said, “Aurors! Chain and Bar the doors once again please, so that we may continue!”

The doors were barred and chained once again. Lily relaxed in her seat, and prepared herself for whatever would be coming next.

“Before we continue, I need to talk about something,” Cornelius said, “During recess, I was met by people complaining about Lord Davis' law. I am well aware of how controversial this topic was. But I assure you. The Pureblood Heritage Act Committee will make sure this new modification is well-liked by everybody. I have already suggested that no Witch below the age of sixteen years old be forced to become pregnant for this modified law. I have assurances that will come through! I will not allow anyone younger than sixteen to be forced into early parenthood! I do hope now that those who rejected the law will be dissuaded from giving me, Lord Davis, or members of the Committee Howlers.”

Lily smiled, as she noticed the looks on relief from her son, and several of his friends. She would have to personally thank whoever convinced Cornelius to do this. Even if he did have to resign today, due to Sirius' plans, hopefully the Committee did what he wanted.

“Let's continue!” Cornelius said, “Raise your wands if you wish to speak next!”
Lily raised her wand. Cornelius smiled and pointed at her. She stood up.

“Last month,” Lily said, “A real travesty was discovered in Wizarding Great Britain. A young girl was outed to the entire magical population as a Witches' Witch because of a certain article written by Rita Skeeter, who is now in Azkaban. The Daily Prophet soon apologized to that young girl, and they gave a retraction to Rita's article. But why was it necessary. I am proposing a bill to make slander and libel completely illegal!

“Nobody in this room should wake up to a Daily Prophet article about themselves, that has completely ruined their hard-fought reputation in one article. No journalist has a right to do that, just because they want to seek revenge on somebody, or get a good story on someone. There is a law of exclusivity for the media. Why isn't there libel and slander laws? Minister Fudge, do you want to be drinking your morning tea, and then read an article that suddenly tells everybody a deep secret of yours? What if a journalist accused someone in here of being a Death Eater?!”

She, of course, knew there were Death Eaters in the Dark Alliance. She was playing at their fears.

“Lord Davis spoke of the riots earlier,” Lily said, “What if the Daily Prophet told their readers the identity of someone in the riots, and it wasn't them? The person they accused, their reputation would be sullied, even if they were found innocent! They could lose their family before they were found innocent. Their friends? What if they were wrongly found guilty? Nobody in here wants that, do they?”

She sat down and looked around at reactions.

“Counter-arguments to Lady Ravenclaw?” Fudge asked; he smiled as Dolores Umbridge raised her hand, “Madam Umbridge?”

“Thank you, Minister,” Umbridge said, “Lady Ravenclaw, maybe in America there isn't a law of freedom of press and freedom of speech. But here, there are laws about that. Libel and Slander would prevent these laws. Laws that have been around for centuries. Do you really want to be responsible for ruining laws set by the Sacred Twenty-Eight?”

“In America, we have freedom of press,” Lily countered, “But that doesn't mean there aren't libel and slander laws. The two coincide with each other. The press has a right to be honest. Libel and Slander are wrong, and illegal. Right now, I could call you a toad in an article in the Daily Prophet, and I'd be free to do so.”

Umbridge glared at her, as several in the Hall tittered and snickered.

“That doesn't mean I am telling the truth or being honest, Madam Umbridge,” Lily said. “You're not a toad, are you? Did I just slander your good name and reputation? If I did, it is completely legal right now according to you.”

A still glaring Umbridge sat down.

“Any more arguments against Lady Ravenclaw?” Cornelius asked; there were none, “Let's take a vote then.”

Lily raised her wand, and shot twelve red balls of light from her wand. She relaxed in her chair, and waited as everyone voted. Then they watched the Cauldrons.
Lily smiled when the red Cauldron ignited.

“Lady Ravenclaw’s Bill has been Approved,” Cornelius said, “Libel and Slander in the media of Wizarding Great Britain is now illegal, as decided by the Wizengamot Council of the British Ministry of Magic.”

Lily sighed and relaxed in her chair. After such a horrible defeat earlier, this was a fine victory. But she needed more. Any more serious and devastating changes, to a person's free will, and she was not going to be a happy witch.

Wizengamot Council Room – Dumbledore Alliance Seats

“Next proposal?” Cornelius asked. “Lady Longbottom?”

As Augusta Longbottom stood up, Albus glanced at her. Whatever she was about to propose, he wasn't ready for it. She didn't mention anything to him about a proposal, and he hadn't given her one. He sighed. This was just another sign that she was distancing House Longbottom from his Alliance.

Earlier during the recess, she had ranted to him about approving of Lord Davis' damnable law. He had given her a simple excuse – it was a lie, but it worked. The excuse was that he had taken a majority vote amongst his Alliance. His alliance members voted three to one in approval, so he did too. That was what a leader did. Or rather, that was what he had told Augusta anyway.

Even then she was still raging. Albus reminded her that their Ally, Molly Weasley, was on the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee. The two women could talk about what modifications to Lord Davis' law could be done before the Committee meeting. Hopefully that would stop all ideas Augusta had about leaving his Alliance. Molly wouldn't want to agree with anything Augusta said, once she knew Augusta was leaving the Alliance, after all.

“I would like to propose a bill that has been approved, then denied, then approved several times in the past,” Augusta said. “The law was disbanded some years ago, but I think it needs to be brought forth again. In August, rioters attacked the Quidditch World Cup. I know there was evidence of the use of Unforgivable Curses. All rioters escaped. All of them. We need to bring back the law that prevents them from escaping. The law that identifies all who cast those we call the Darkest Curses known to our world. I propose a bill to, once again, place a Taboo on all Unforgivable Curses!”

Albus refrained from pinching his nose. Several members of the Dark Alliance and Neutral Alliance were jeering.

“Silence!” Cornelius said, “Counter-Arguments! One at a time! Madam Umbridge?”

“Aurors are permitted to use those Curses, Lady Longbottom,” Madam Umbridge said, “As were teachers recently. I heard rumors that Ex-Auror Alastor Moody taught the Unforgivable Curses, and sampled them, with students! Do you want Professor Moody to get captured just because he's teaching in a class?”

“Exemptions can be made for good reasons,” Augusta countered. “Aurors can be exempt, if necessary! Educators can be given temporary permission. Everyone else does not have permission to use those Curses. They are illegal! They always have been. We need to capture those who illegally use illegal Curses! Before they can hurt somebody!”
Madam Umbridge glowered, but sat down.

“Lord Parkinson?” Cornelius asked.

Pascal Parkinson stood up. “I don't think the DMLE and Aurors have enough forces to risk such a move. A Taboo could be used, but it still means Aurors and Hit-Wizards would have to confront and capture the suspects, risking their very lives doing so. This law could damage the DMLE and Auror Department.”

“Mr. MacNair?” Cornelius asked the Head of the Committee for the Disposal of Dangerous Creatures.

“I use Killing Curses on dangerous creatures,” Walden MacNair said, “If I don't, I could get killed during capturing such creatures. Am I going to be given an exemption? What about the rest of my men who do the same thing?”

“Unforgivables are unnecessary on dangerous creatures,” Augusta said, “Other spells could be used. I am sure you have several legal spells you could use. You would simply need to rework your strategies. However, if you have to use the Curses, you could always ask for an exemption, then give your reasons why, and also proof that you didn't use illegal curses illegally. Don't try to use loopholes on me, Mr. MacNair. Dangerous Creatures – you could categorize Muggles as Dangerous Creatures! But nobody else would!”

Walden sneered and sat down. Albus had to hand it to Augusta. She had discovered the man's obvious attempt at a loophole. It was no secret Walden was a Death Eater. He'd definitely consider Muggles 'Dangerous Creatures'.

“Any other arguments?” Cornelius asked, “Mr. Crouch?”

“I think we need to look at the reason this bill was dismantled last time,” Bartemius Crouch said, “It was dismantled after.... You-Know-Who's Defeat. We are in peacetime, fellow Council members. Let this bill proposal sit until we are no longer in peacetime. It would simply lead to unnecessary problems. As Madam Umbridge said, Aurors and DMLE could take a major hit we cannot afford if they have to go after Taboo Breakers.”

Crouch sat down.

Cornelius looked around. “No more arguments? Let's take a vote.”

Three minutes later, a red flame ignited from the Cauldron. Albus raised his eyebrows. He was impressed that the bill was approved. Perhaps the Great Alliance's votes had broke what could have been a close tie.

“The Unforgivable Curses will be made a Taboo,” Cornelius said, “as approved by the Wizengamot Council of the British Ministry of Magic. Next? Madam Bones?”

“Even though Lord Parkinson and Mr. Crouch voiced this issue, I thought of my proposal several weeks ago,” Amelia said. “Both Lord Parkinson and Mr. Crouch make excellent points. The DMLE and Auror Departments have taken a hit in recent years. I am proposing a bill that would give a great deal of funds to the DMLE and Auror Department so that we could improve our forces. I am not asking for funds from the Ministry treasury. I am asking for donations. Show of hands? Who would be willing to donate a bit of Galleons to help the forces?”
Albus looked around as Augusta, Lily, Sirius, and a few others in the Light and Neutral Alliances raised their hands.

“Thank you all,” Amelia said, “So you see... no money would need to be given from Ministry coffers. I just need the bill passed to be able to accept these donations, and make sure that they are given to the DMLE and Auror Department. Yes, some of you may argue that we are in peacetime. But the recent riots show a possibility of things changing. We need to be ready for those changes. Or Wizarding Great Britain could lose a war.”

“Counter-arguments?” Cornelius asked. “Lord Nott?”

“War? You believe we're on a brink of war?” Lord Nott asked as he stood, “I call it war-mongering. Fear-mongering! You are playing at everyone's fears trying to get them to approve of your bill!”

“And you are trying to make them deny it, Lord Nott,” Amelia said. “That is the nature of a debate, is it not? The nature of a Council Session? To debate laws?”

Nott sneered and sat back down.

“Because of the approval of the new Taboo Bill,” Amelia said, “We need to bring more forces into the Departments. An excellent argument that was by Lord Parkinson and Mr. Crouch. Since the Taboo was approved, I am sure they would approve that these voluntary donations should be accepted.”

Cornelius looked around. When there were no signs of more counter-arguments, he spoke up.

“We will now vote,” Cornelius said, “on whether or not Madam Bones can accept the voluntary donations for the DMLE and Auror Department.”

Three minutes later, the red Cauldron ignited again. Albus began wondering just how close these vote counts were, and how much the Great Alliance was tipping the scales.

“Madam Bones,” Cornelius said, “You have the Wizengamot's permission to accept donations for the DMLE and Auror Department. Good luck. Next! Lord Weasley.”

As Arthur stood, Albus knew what the man was going to say. He had given his approval, but he had also told Arthur not to expect much from it.

“Similar to Madam Bones' proposal, but mine too was created before this Council met today,” Arthur said. “I would like donations to create a Muggleborn Protection Act Committee. One of several parts of this Act would help protect Muggleborn and their parents in their own homes. Ward-Builders, like my eldest son, William, would be hired to create Wards around Muggle homes that are home to Muggleborns. All Wards would be created with the Statute of Secrecy in mind, and with their Muggle neighbors in mind. We need to protect every magical child, my Lords and Ladies. Lady Ravenclaw was thought to be a Muggleborn, but she is a Pureblood from one of the eldest Houses in our world. How many other Muggleborns out there are similar to Lady Ravenclaw – how many are actually Purebloods and need to be protected?”

“Mr. Scrimgeour?” Cornelius asked.

“Would it be possible for this Act Committee of yours,” Rufus said, “to only protect those
Arthur frowned. “I’d like to protect all Muggleborn, but your idea could be a start, and we could move on from there.”

Cornelius called for votes. Albus was not surprised to see a blue flame ignite. Muggleborns as a whole were not respected amongst the Wizengamot Council. Albus would speak to Arthur about modifying the bill. Perhaps Muggleborn could be encouraged more to take Inheritance Tests. If they had magical ancestry, then they could be protected. But those Muggleborn – those witches and wizards who, as Lady Ravenclaw called “first-generation”, who really were born from Muggle parents – were not respected amongst much of the Wizarding World. And Arthur needed to learn that.

Albus sighed, as he looked at Arthur. Hopefully this defeat would dissuade the man from any more ideas like that.

Chapter End Notes

Yep. There will be a Part 4! And it will probably be a long chapter so we can finish up the session!

Next Chapter: Dolores Umbridge and Walden MacNair make some proposals. Then Sirius calls for a Vote of No Confidence. And finally, Lily and Co. answer that odd request she received. Is it Croaker? You’ll have to wait and find out!
After yet another recess, Lily returned to her seat in the Council. She had spent the last half-hour talking with the kids about some of the bills that had been approved. They were all genuinely happy about the Libel and Slander victory – Ted had thanked her for doing such a fine job – as well as the DMLE and Auror Funds Victory. They also liked Lady Longbottom's law about Taboos. But Hermione was quite disappointed Arthur Weasley's bill had been denied. She thought it would have done a lot of good.

Lily was rather surprised Hermione – nor anyone else – had brought up a topic of Hermione taking an Inheritance Test. Perhaps Hermione had decided she really didn't want to know right now? Lily couldn't blame her. Her Lady Ravenclaw title had some good benefits, but she didn't like knowing she was a Pureblood, and so were her children. Her son was affected by these damned Pureblood laws. Hermione probably didn't want to find she was a Pureblood, which would cause her children to be affected as well if she married Harry.

After Arthur's law had been denied, there was another round of Department and personal business issues that didn't affect the majority of the British Wizarding World, nor did it affect their Great Alliance much. Well, aside from the fact that Lord Patil and Lord Abbot won a couple of good proposals they wanted concerning their businesses.

By the time recess came, there weren't many wands raised for new proposals, which meant there were only a few more bills to debate before the end. Lily hoped there wouldn't be another recess, and the Council Session could just be over within the next two hours.

“Any more letters we cannot see?” Sirius asked, as he, Lily and Amelia reached their chairs.

“Nope,” Lily said, as she sat down, “Why?”

Sirius shrugged. “I want to know why Toad wants Rose to be part of this meeting. She doesn't need to hear about everything we want to discuss with Algernon Croaker. It would worry her too much.

“Susan and I will go with you,” Amelia said, “If Rose doesn't need to be in the meeting, I can bring her back to the tents to Remus, when I take Susan back. I imagine Harry's girlfriend, and the others will go with Tonks.”

“Thank you, Amelia,” Lily said, “If Toad doesn't need to meet with Rose, then she can go with you. I am sure Rose misses Gabrielle anyway.”

Cornelius stood and Lily paid attention once again to the proceedings. After the doors were barred and chained, Cornelius asked for more proposals. Interestingly enough there were only three others who raised their hand. Sirius would be raising his hand last.

“Lord Branstone,” Cornelius said, “Rise and be recognized.”
Lily smiled at one of the newest members of the Great Alliance. She knew what he wanted to request, and it would prove to be interesting.

"Thank you, Minister," Lord Branstone said, "Lords and Ladies, my proposal is something very dear to my heart. My daughter, who is present today, started her Hogwarts education this year. We live in a Muggle neighborhood. Now, I am a Pureblood Lord, and I know there are several like me in my position – we live in Muggle neighborhoods. Our children cannot do magic during the summers, because of the Restrictions.

"Little Eleanor, my daughter, will be spending the next couple of weeks at home, and my wife and I would very much love to see how our little girl has progressed with her magic, and we hope to help her during the holidays, so she can improve her education and be ready for more to learn. But right now we cannot do that. So I would like to make the Reasonable Restriction for Underage Magic, a little more reasonable.

"Purebloods, half-bloods, Muggleborn alike – those between eleven and seventeen should be able to use magic away from Hogwarts – when they're around their parents – without fear of getting in trouble. We are limiting our children to using magic while only at school. But what about their practices at home. We want them to learn, whether at school or at home. These restrictions are preventing that. Thank you."

"Arguments?" Cornelius asked, "Lady Edgecombe, this is your area of expertise, let's hear it from you."

"You mentioned Muggleborn, who are at risk most for this change in law, Lord Branstone," Lady Edgecombe said, "Please clarify. I am having trouble how this would help them and not break the Statute of Secrecy. After all, that is why we have this law."

"For Muggleborn," Lord Branstone said, "only their relations who know about magic can be allowed to see them practice. We could give Muggle parents special Rune-stone necklaces that tells the Ministry if the Muggleborn are using magic around someone and whether or not that person in their vicinity knows about us. I am sure we can come up with something like that. That would prevent the break of the Statute of Secrecy. Purebloods and Half-bloods would also get the same privilege, with less restrictions. They wouldn't be able to do any magic around Muggles, those who don't know about magic at least.

"Perhaps there could be bigger punishments for those who break the new law, and use magic around Muggles who don't know about magic. It would make the children more responsible about their magic use, and even educate them about the Statute of Secrecy and our bylaws about Muggles and magic."

"Any more arguments?" Cornelius asked, as Lady Edgecombe sat down.

Lily thought Madam Umbridge would speak up. This seemed right up her alley. But she had risen her wand earlier – she might have been focusing her concentration on the proposal she wanted passed.

"Let's vote then," Cornelius said.

Lily was rather surprised when, three minutes later, red fire ignited from the Cauldron. Unlike Lord Davis' law, all the Light Alliance, and much of the Neutral Alliance had voted in approval for
something the Great Alliance approved of. The Great Alliance's many votes helped the victory—
though Lily admitted it was probably close.

“The Reasonable Restriction for Underage Wizardry,” Cornelius said, “will be modified and
delicately handled to deal with Lord Branstone's law. Lord Branstone, your rune-stone necklace idea
has merit. If you or someone you know could help the Ministry with that, we’d appreciate it.”

Lord Branstone nodded. As he sat down, he caught Lily's eye. She smiled and gave him a thumbs-up.
This was right up her alley. He grinned and nodded at her mouthing 'thanks'.

Only three people had raised their hands upon Cornelius' request. Walden MacNair, Dolores
Umbridge, Sirius. Lily knew Sirius didn't want to be ignored if he didn't raise his hand.

“Only three left?” Cornelius asked. “Brilliant! Mr. MacNair, you'll go first, then Madam Umbridge.
Lord Black, you'll go last, as this will be your second proposal.”

Sirius smiled and nodded. Lily grinned. This worked right with their plans.

“You first, Mr. MacNair,” Cornelius said, “Maybe we can get this done before the next recess, and
we can all leave!”

Walden MacNair stood up.

“Earlier this month, I visited Azkaban Prison,” MacNair said, “To speak to an old friend, who had
made some very bad decisions in life. While there, I noticed something very amiss. Lords and
Ladies, my fellow Department Heads, I have distressing news. The Dementors of Azkaban could
rebel from their handlers very soon.”

'Bullshit,” Sirius whispered, in a voice only Lily and Amelia could hear, “He's a Death Eater. He
wants them to go away so his fellow Death Eaters can get stronger. A break-out could happen.”

“I want to propose a bill,” MacNair said, “That would remove the Dementors from Azkaban
completely between now and next year's Winter Solstice!”

Several people in the room gasped.

Cornelius stared at the man, and Lily thought the man seemed to be scared of something. Either of
MacNair, or perhaps that MacNair was correct.

The Minister cleared his throat. “Counter-arguments? Chief Warlock Dumbledore!”

Lily turned and looked at Albus as he stood up.

“Do you have proof the Dementors are rebelling, Walden?” Albus asked.

“At least three of them wouldn't move away at first from my friend's cell,” MacNair said. “They
usually move away. They're getting rebellious!”

“And how would you suggest we move them out, if they are rebellious?” Albus asked. “If they
rebel, it would be better to move the prisoners elsewhere. Nurmengard Prison perhaps.”

“We remove them soon while most are still culpable!” MacNair said.
“First you say ‘within a year’,” Albus said, “Now you say ‘soon’. If you thought they were rebellious, you wouldn't have asked us to remove them within a year. You would have said a month or two. But I suppose we could arrange for a team of experts to go there and see whether or not your worries are something we should be concerned about.”

Albus sat down. Amelia raised her wand, and Cornelius called on her.

“We don’t have enough forces at this moment in time to replace the Dementors with human guards,” Amelia said. “Within a year, perhaps. But if they truly are rebelling, then we have no choice but to send the prisoners to various other prisons aside from Azkaban. I am sure the ICW would help us with that.”

Cornelius cleared his throat. “If this law passes, it will be passed along to the ICW for further approval. All decisions regarding Azkaban must be brought to the ICW. Chief Warlock Dumbledore, if approved, would you please bring the law to them?”

“I would,” Albus said.

“Excellent,” Cornelius said, “Let's take a vote. If you approve, it is to bring the bill to the ICW. No decision will be made today. The bill could still be denied.”

Three minutes later, the bill was approved.

“Not surprising,” Sirius muttered, “ICW will likely deny it though.”

Lily nodded in agreement. Cornelius called on Madam Umbridge, and Lily grimaced. Whatever proposals this woman had would have were sure not to be good.

“Thank you, Minister,” Madam Umbridge said, standing up, "Last month, an event took place that I feel disrespected the Ministry of Magic greatly. Minister Fudge, myself, and other officials were forced – forced! – to address Centaurs regarding Ministry business. Chief Warlock Dumbledore and Ludo Bagman were forced to make a decision to head on into the dangerous Forbidden Forest near Hogwarts, and speak to the Centaurs. In the Centaurs' own home! No Neutral ground! It could have been a trap!

“Those Centaurs are dangerous and ruthless! We had to ask the Centaurs to give us permission to bring Dragons – used for the First Task of the Triwizard Tournament – into the Forbidden Forest where the Centaurs are guests. We had to ask them! How disrespectful! The Centaurs are not owners of the Forbidden Forest. The Forest is on Hogwarts property, and Hogwarts has been Ministry property for two centuries. It is a privilege for them to be there, and they went beyond the limits of privilege! I propose a bill that removes those disrespectful creatures from the Forest! Your children are there! If the Centaurs rebel, they could attack Hogwarts! Remove them before it happens!”

“Raving mad lunatic,” Sirius muttered.

“Counter-Arguments?” Cornelius asked, “Chief Warlock Dumbledore.”

“The Centaurs were not at all disrespectful when Ludo and I spoke to them,” Albus said. "I couldn't find indication of them being rebellious at all.”

“They weren't going to tell you they're rebelling, Chief Warlock!” Umbridge argued.
Albus ignored her. “Nor were we forced to meet them, as Madam Umbridge said. A decision was made by Minister Fudge and other representatives to speak to the Centaurs.”

“We shouldn't have to speak to them!” Umbridge exclaimed. “They are guests in the Forest!”

“Centaurs are a very diplomatic people,” Albus said. “Tell me, Madam Umbridge, if we kick them out of the forest, wouldn't there be greater risk of angering them, which would lead them to the castle and the children there?”

“So prevent that by killing all who won't leave peacefully!” Umbridge said. “You don't ask a Doxy to leave! You spray it or kill it! Force it to leave! Force them to leave!”

Cornelius cleared his throat. “Thank you, Madam Umbridge, Chief Warlock Dumbledore. Any more arguments? Madam Bones?”

“Who would be responsible for ridding the Forest of the Centaurs?” Amelia asked. “I won't risk Aurors or Hit-Wizards. I won't be responsible for starting a war that could lead to Hogwarts. Wouldn't you agree, Auror Scrimgeour?”

“A battle against a herd of Centaurs would do us no good,” Scrimgeour said. “There is little gain for us. It would be a lose-lose situation. If the Centaurs are peaceful and diplomatic, then we leave them alone. We don't need their entire species invading Hogwarts avenging them if we kill the ones in the Forest.”

“I think we can vote,” Cornelius said.

Unsurprisingly, Umbridge's bill was denied.

Finally it was time for Sirius. Lily tensed up slightly, and wondered how this would play out. It could go really well, or really horrible.

“Last but not least!” Cornelius said, “Lord Black? Let's hear the final proposal, so we can finish this very successful and very interesting Winter Solstice Session long before we predicted!”

“Thank you, Cornelius,” Sirius said, standing up. “You might have noticed, I did not refer to you as Minister Fudge. Why? Because I call for a Vote of No Confidence against Cornelius Fudge!”

Lily held back a smile as several gasps were heard around the Council Room. Fudge's face was purple and red, his mouth opening and closing like a fish.

“I have a folder of information here,” Sirius said, pulling out the folder that had been hidden in his robes all day. “Regarding an investigation I made against Cornelius Fudge. Now, even though I will reference something happening earlier in today's session, let me make it crystal clear, that this is not about anything said today. I started this investigation several days ago. Earlier, Madam Bones asked for funds for the DMLE and Auror Department. A law that was passed today! Cornelius even wished her the best of luck with it. Strange behavior, Minister. My investigation shows that you, as recently as a year ago, denied funds for the DMLE and Auror Department! Flat out refused! Why, Minister? Why refuse to fund the Departments that are defending Britain from crime and violence and death!

“My investigation provided an answer. I have evidence here – evidence I am willing to copy and
hand out to all doubters of bribes that Cornelius accepted. Cash bribes so that he could ignore certain laws made, or deny bill proposals, or influence votes. It was the criminal Lucius Malfoy, who used to be one of Cornelius' Chief Allies and Advisor who gave Cornelius money if he wouldn't give funds to the DMLE and Auror Department! Is money more important than the defense of your people you lead, Cornelius?"

Lily grinned as Cornelius spluttered. Dolores Umbridge was seething.

“How dare you do this, Black!” Umbridge growled.

“Ah, Madam Umbridge,” Sirius said, “Thank you for reminding me that you are here. I had forgotten. Yes, you are in this folder too. Giving bribes to Cornelius, if he would give those voting Cauldrons to the Unspeakables, so they could figure out how to manipulate the Cauldrons. Why? So you could get any law you wanted approved, no matter how the rest of us voted!”

Lily grinned as jeers and booing was heard from several in the Light and Neutral Alliances. Umbridge went read and sat down.

“I have other names, Cornelius,” Sirius said, “Allies of yours and Lucius Malfoy's... at least four names – Death Eaters who never went to Azkaban -- were freed due to the Imperius Defense, because you took a bribe from Lucius Malfoy, agreeing to speak to Bartemius Crouch, the Head of the DMLE at the time. You influenced him to give these people the Imperius Defense. You were just a paper-pusher back then! But you wanted to be in the Ministry. These names are...”

Suddenly, several Dark Alliance members started to stand and jeer Cornelius. Lily raised her eyebrows. That was a lot of people afraid they were going to be named.

Albus Dumbledore stood. “I believe we can take a vote, if you are finished, Lord Black.”

“Not necessary!” Cornelius bellowed, standing up, “I, Cornelius Oswald Fudge, resign from the office of the British Minister of Magic!”

A few shocked gasps were heard. But most were cheering and clapping. Sirius' plans had worked well. Nobody liked hearing about the bribes, and the Dark Alliance didn't want to be named in the investigation. Lily patted the back of a very relieved Sirius Black, who was hugging and kissing Amelia. He had risked his position on the Wizengamot, and had succeeded.

Once the cheering died down, Albus Dumbledore cleared his throat.

“As is tradition of Ministry bylaws,” he said, “The Wizengamot Council will take all duties of the Minister of Magic for one month. We will meet here two days after Christmas – nine days from now – to discuss candidates for the next Minister of Magic, and we will hold votes two weeks later in another Council Session. This will give time for candidates to make their case for them to be named Minister of Magic.

“For now, I believe we can now end this, the nineteen ninety-four Winter Solstice Session of the Wizengamot Council. Thank you all for your proposals, arguments, decisions and votes. It was yet another entertaining Session. Pureblood Heritage Act Committee will be expected to have a meeting before the Council Session next week, where they will present their decisions for the new law passed today. All other decisions will be handled within respective Departments.

'To our guests, including those from Hogwarts, thank you all once again for attending. I hope you
enjoyed yourselves! I, Chief Warlock Albus Dumbledore, officially call an end to this Council Session. So mote it be!

Several in the audience stood and applauded, obviously applauding for the Session as a whole.

“I need to speak to Albus about something,” Lily said.

“You're going to set up a meeting with him?” Sirius asked.

‘He's expecting it,” Lily said. “We'll give it to him. Besides, I believe it is Algernon Croaker we're meeting. This is what we were waiting for. I'll request a meeting sometime within the first week of January, with the excuse we'll all be busy for Christmas Break.”

“Very well,” Sirius said, “We'll meet with the children and wait for you.”

Lily nodded. She headed along the rows of seats over to Albus, who was speaking to other Council members. He caught her eye and smiled.

'I need to be getting my students back to Hogwarts,” Albus addressed those around him. “If you need something important, send me owls, and I'll reply as soon as possible.”

Those around Albus said their farewells and walked away.

'Sorry, Albus,” Lily said, “I didn't mean to break up your discussions.”

‘Ah, Lady Ravenclaw!” Albus said, “No matter. I was hoping to speak with you anyway. I wanted to congratulate you on some of those victories. I know you were worried about the one law involving Lord's multiple wives required to be Purebloods.”

“Yes, my son and his girlfriend are quite happy about that,” Lily said. “They're rather unhappy about Lord Davis' law, however.”

“Ah, well I am sure the Committee will do their best to please everyone,” Albus said, “I will be meeting with them, of course, to discuss how it will affect Hogwarts.”

“Why did you vote to approve it?” Lily asked. “I was so surprised at that.”

“We are both leaders of our personal Alliances, Lily,” Albus said, “Please tell me. If your Alliance voted two different ways, would you vote for the majority, or the minority?”

“I'd vote however I felt was best,” Lily said.

“Ah, well, I didn't have that choice,” Albus said, “I needed to show unity and support in my Alliance. So I voted with the majority.”

“So they didn't all agree to approve it?” Lily asked.

“I would rather not divulge that information,” Albus said, “As leader of your Alliance, I am sure you understand.”

“Fine,” Lily said. “Look, Albus, you spoke up for that bill which would have affected by son and his Muggleborn girlfriend. You helped shoot it down. So I am going to give you what you want. Sometime within the first week of January, after New Year's, you may invite me and Harry, and
whoever else it may concern, to your office to speak to us about what is so important. Severus told me about that weeks ago.”

“The first week of January will be fine with me,” Albus said. “I will be busy between now and then I suspect.”

“As will I and my group,” Lily said. “I will see you soon.”

“You're not headed back to Hogwarts immediately?” Albus asked.

“Ah, no,” Lily said, deciding on a white lie. “I am taking my family to the Leaky Cauldron to celebrate the Session.”

“A wonderful idea,” Albus said, “I will see you later then.”

Albus bowed and walked off. Lily sighed as she stared after him. She really hoped they were meeting with Algernon Croaker today. If not, she was going to need to contact him, through Augusta or Neville Longbottom. She couldn't afford going into a meeting with Albus without being prepared.

She stepped down to the floor, and headed off to the corridor to reunite with her family and friends.

Corridor Outside Council Room

Albus Dumbledore sighed as he stepped out of the Council Room, and into the corridor. What an eventful Winter Solstice Session it had been! And it ended spectacularly, and in a way he couldn't have ever predicted! He didn't foresee Sirius Black doing something like requesting a Vote of No Confidence, and succeeding by convincing Fudge to resign on his own without aid of votes!

Sirius had done very well, trapping Fudge with the DMLE and Auror Department crises, then speaking of Lucius Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge – two people who were either out of the Ministry, or likely on their way out. Then he had baited the Dark Alliance, and they had taken the bait! They jeered Fudge, which led to him resigning.

Albus smiled as he thought about Lily's discussion. He was finally getting the meeting with Lily and Harry he wanted. Sure he would have to wait a bit longer, but that was fine. He needed to prepare everything. Besides, he would be busy elsewhere too.

He found his staff at Hogwarts, who had accompanied the students as chaperones. Minerva McGonagall, was speaking to a group of Gryffindors, instructing them on how they would be leaving back to Hogwarts. Severus was doing the same with Slytherins, and Flitwick with Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs.

“Are we missing anyone in the Gryffindors, Minerva?” Albus asked.

“Parvati Patil and Lavender Brown, fourth years,” Minerva said, “And the four Weasleys and Neville Longbottom, but they're over there with Arthur Molly, and Augusta.”

Albus saw the Weasleys and Longbottoms nearby. He needed to speak to Molly about something before she left.

“Miss Patil and Miss Brown may be accompanying the rest of the so-called Children of the Great
Alliance back to Hogwarts with their parents,” Filius Flitwick, who was nearby, said. “Susan Bones, Hannah Abbot, and Padma Patil are also missing, and I suspect so are those students living in the Ilvermorny Tents.”

“All Children of the Great Alliance,” Minerva said.

“Then they’re being escorted back together,” Albus said, “Wait for the Weasleys and Mr. Longbottom, then head off.”

“Yes, Headmaster,” Minerva said. “By the way, we need to talk about Lord Davis’ law. You know the one, Albus – that modification that is allowing teen pregnancy!”

“I am going to speak to Molly Weasley about it,” Albus said, “I’ll arrange a meeting with the Committee, and we will hold a staff meeting to discuss it.”

“Fine,” Minerva said. “Poppy Pomfrey is going to give you hell about this, Albus.”

“I know it,” Albus said, sighing.

He walked over to the Weasleys and Longbottoms. Molly smiled when she saw him.

“Headmaster!” Molly said, “What can we do for you?”

“I need to speak to you, Molly,” Albus said, “And the kids need to head on with Minerva so they can leave.”

Molly nodded, and gave hugs to all of the kids, including Neville. She then shooed them all back over to join their house-mates.

“Molly, could you get a hold of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee?” Albus said, “I need to arrange a meeting with the Committee sometime this week, so the Committee can meet with the Hogwarts Staff to discuss how the – as Minerva called it – ‘teen pregnancy’ modification – will affect Hogwarts.”

“When would be a good time for a meeting?” Molly asked.

“Anytime between tomorrow and Thursday,” Albus said, “Floo me when you have a date ready, and I am sure we can come up with a meeting time.”

“Of course,” Molly said, “Keep your Floo available.”

“I will do so,” Albus said, “Thank you, Molly. Arthur, I am sorry your Muggle Protection Act wasn’t approved.”

“Ah well,” Arthur said, “Molly told me it wasn’t a sure thing, like you did. We’ll try again another time. Just needs a bit of tinkering!”

Albus smiled. “I am sure you can tinker it to perfection. Augusta, a fine Council Session. Congratulations on your Taboo victory.”

“Thank you, Albus,” Augusta said. “Hopefully it will help in the future.”
“I am sure it will,” Albus said, “Adieu to all three of you. We'll speak soon.”

He turned and walked away. It was time to head back to Hogwarts, and have a glass of firewhiskey or three. There was much to be done!

Level Nine of the Ministry of Magic

Lily Potter was walking through the corridors of Level Nine, with Harry, Rose, Sirius, Amelia and Susan. Their destination: the Department of Mysteries. Earlier they had said temporary farewells to Hermione, Tracey, Daphne, and the rest of the Children of the Great Alliance, all of whom were heading back to Hogwarts, led by Tonks and her parents.

Soon, they found themselves outside the Department of Mysteries. But nobody was there.

“Uh... Mom?” Harry asked. “Are you sure this is the place we're supposed to be meeting this guy?”

“The note said we were supposed to meet at the Department of Mysteries,” Lily said, nodding.

“I don't like this,” Amelia said, “Could be a trap.”

“Not a trap,” a distorted, eerie voice said.

Lily turned and saw a figure materialize in a hooded cloak. Lily could not see the figure's face.

“Merely wondering why more are here than I requested,” the man said, in the same distorted voice.

“Toad, I presume?” Lily asked.

“Yes,” Toad said.

“Your note said both my children needed to be here,” Lily said. “I think I know of what you want to talk to us about. Rose has nothing to do with it, if I am correct. Amelia and her niece are here to escort Rose back to Hogwarts, if necessary.”

“I requested your daughter's presence,” Toad said, “Just because I didn't think you'd want to send her off alone. She can go with Madam Bones and her niece.”

“First – I want you to tell us who you are,” Amelia said. “I won't leave my friends and Allies with a stranger.”

“You know who I am, Madam Bones,” Toad said. “And you know what I want. Your friends have already told you. But I can only allow them inside to meet with me. They can tell you, if that is their decision, at another time.”

“We'll leave then,” Amelia said. “But I do know who you are. You're right. If anything happens to them, I will find you.”

Toad nodded his hood once, and motioned down the corridor. Lily hugged Rose against her.

“We'll be alright, Rosie,” Lily said, “Go have fun with Remus and Gabby.”
“Hurry back,” Rose said.

She hugged Harry, then Sirius, then headed off down the corridor with Amelia and Susan. Nobody spoke until Rose, Amelia and Susan were several yards away. Then Toad removed their hood.


“My Unspeakable Code Name,” Algernon Croaker said, “I didn't choose it.”

He turned to Harry. “Welcome, Lord Harry James Potter, to the Department of Mysteries. I have been looking forward to the day I would meet the true Child of Prophecy.”

Chapter End Notes

Cliffhanger! Finally, the Winter Solstice Session is finished!

Next Chapter: Harry and Co. visit the Department of Mysteries, where important discussions are held and revelations discovered!
The Department of Mysteries

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: Get ready to forget everything you know about The Department of Mysteries, Unspeakables, and Algernon Croaker. This chapter will blow your mind.

P.S. Accidentally posted this on Harry Potter: Neko's Mate earlier. That is what I get for having an easy bookmark to that, and not this story, and posting a new chapter, half an hour after I wake up. It is deleted over there. MASSIVE Apologies for those who believed I was updating Neko's Mate. I am focused on this story, right now, because I can see an end to it! YAY!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Friday, December 18th, 1994

Harry Potter was staring at the floor below his feet as he followed Unspeakable Algernon Croaker and his mother down the corridor toward the Department of Mysteries. Sirius was tailing him. The floor was reflective, and mirror-like, he could see his own face clearly.

“Enchanted floor, Lord Potter,” the Unspeakable said, “The reflection reveals all disguises. For example, you would not be able to walk down this corridor under your Invisibility Cloak, because we’d see you through the reflective floor. And Polyjuice Potion does not work either. It isn’t fooled by the floor.”

“Interesting,” Harry said, “Call me Harry, please.”

“You may call me Algie,” Algie said, “My Great-Nephew, Neville, does. I believe you're familiar with him.”

“Yes,” Harry said, “Algie? What did you mean when you called me –?”

“Not here, Harry,” Algie interrupted, “Such things should not be discussed outside the Department of Mysteries.”

“You discussed it,” Harry said, “You called me it.”

“My robes are filled with various enchantments including Notice-Me-Not Charms,” Algie said, “You do not have that luxury. Nobody who I do not address can hear me outside the Department of Mysteries. Nobody but you, your mother, and Godfather could have heard me. It is why we me and my co-workers are called Unspeakables. While we wear our outfits, we only talk to those we want to, and nobody hears us unless we address them.

“I will answer all the questions the three of you have and also the ones you don't know you want to ask. First I will answer the question that is on all three of your minds. But for you to do that, you have to trust me, and you have to follow me.”
“Frank Longbottom spoke highly of you,” Lily said, “If you're still the man he described, I will trust you.”

“Ah, Frank,” Algie said, with a deep sigh, “I wish I could help him and dear Alice. But I can't right now.”

“Right now?” Sirius asked. “Means you can help him.”

“I will tell you why I can’t help him or Alice soon,” Algie said, “Know that I am trying to save their lives by not helping them.”

“That makes no sense,” Sirius said.

“It will in time,” Algie said, “We're here.”

Harry looked up. He frowned and noticed that the door was still fifteen feet away. Algie turned to his left, and placed his hand against a decorative brick wall. He murmured a few words under his breath, and a door materialized in front of him.

“Uh... I thought we were going through that door at the end of the hall,” Harry said.

“That door?” Algie asked. “That leads into a trap that will get you lost without someone that can get you out of it.”

“An Unspeakable?” Harry asked.

“Yes and no,” Algie said, “I suspect Miss Granger and Miss Lovegood could also get you out of the trap. I would love to test them on that sometime.”

Before Harry could reply that he'd rather not place his friends in such unknown dangers, Algie opened the door in front of him. He motioned them forward, and this time, it was Sirius who led them inside. Harry followed Sirius, as Lily and Algie tailed behind. Harry thought they'd enter some kind of grand, or mysterious waiting room. What they entered was another corridor. Algie walked past them and led them down the corridor.

Soon, they found themselves in front of what appeared to be an elevator. The door opened and Algie led them inside. Harry's eyes widened as he looked around. It looked like a normal elevator, but there were several more buttons then there usual would be for even a Boston skyscraper. As he looked around at the buttons, he suddenly wondered why all of this seemed vaguely familiar.

“Thinking this looks familiar, aren't you, Harry?” Algie asked.

“Um... yes,” Harry said, “Why...?”

“Welcome to the inspiration behind Roald Dahl's Wonka-vator in 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,’” Algie said, grinning.

Harry looked back at Algie, thinking the man was joking.

“Roald Dahl was a Muggleborn wizard, Harry,” Algie said. “He visited the Department of Mysteries once. He loved this elevator. Though he didn't quite understand it. Do you remember what the elevator did in his story?”
“It went in all kinds of directions – and flew,” Harry said.

“This one doesn't do that,“ Algie said; he pointed to a particular button. “Press that button.”

Harry pressed it. The Elevator didn't move at all. Nor did it make noise or vibrate. And yet the door that had closed, now opened again.”

“Stay here, Harry,” Algie said, “What do you see?”

Harry looked into the room they had entered. He snorted at what he saw.

“Uh... a bathroom?” he asked.

“That would be my guess too,” Sirius said, with a snicker.

Algie pressed a button and the door closed. Then he ran his fingers over a button, and pressed one. The door opened again. Harry looked out. The Elevator hadn't moved, however they were now looking at a different room.

“Welcome to the Hall of Prophecies,” Algie said, as he stepped out of the elevator, “Follow me everyone.”

“We didn't go anywhere!” Harry said, as he walked out of the elevator.

“Yes, we did,” Algie said, “The Elevator didn't, but we did.”

“Best not ask what he means, Harry,” Lily said, “It is why this place is called the Department of Mysteries.”

“A proper name,” Harry muttered.

He glanced around the room they had entered. On either side of where he stood, there were dozens and dozens of aisles of very tall shelves. He could hardly see past five rows of shelves on either side, because the room was so dark. The only lighting came from the numerous bluish orbs in every aisle.

“Follow me,” Algie said, again, “No need to light up your wands. I will provide enough light for you.”

And the Unspeakable did just that. Bright orbs of light flew from his wand, and three orbs circled around Harry's waist, providing enough light around him to see, but not being blinding. Lily and Sirius also had orbs circling their waists. Their faces looked oddly shadowed, and it reminded Harry of when Sirius and Remus would hold flashlights up to their faces to tell scary stories at night during camping trips.

Harry followed Algie, while Lily and Sirius tailed him. As they passed each row, Harry saw brass plates on the ends of the aisles, with numbers.

Fifty-four, fifty-five... Harry kept counting as he followed Algie, and looked at all the bluish orbs as they passed. Their were also some black orbs with no lights. Sixty-three... seventy-five...

“Why are some orbs not lit up?” Harry asked.
“Prophecies that have been completed,” Algie said, “and never collected by those who can pick them up. Why do you think there are so many shelves? Because we kept running out of room on other shelves. Not even Unspeakables can hold the orbs, unless the Prophecy is about them. Long ago, when the Hall of Prophecies was created, there were three aisles. Now it over nine thousand!”

“Nine-thousand?” Harry asked, bewildered.

Algie chuckled. “Just my little joke. Something only certain Unspeakables would understand. Actually there are about two-hundred.”

Over two-hundred rows of prophecies. And apparently there was one about him – and Voldemort? – somewhere in this gigantic room.

Eighty-six... ninety one...

They stopped at aisle ninety-seven. Then Algie turned and walked down the aisle, beckoning them to follow.

“Go on, Harry,” Lily whispered.

Harry followed, passing by blue and black orbs. Each orb had nameplates etched into the edge of the wooden shelf in front of them. The words looked fuzzy.

“Don't bother trying to read the words on those nameplates, Harry,” Algie said, “You can't – well, you won't be able to read most of them, anyway.”

They seemed to have been walking forever down the aisle. Then Algie stopped. He pointed at the Orb in front of where Harry was now standing. Harry looked at the brass nameplate and found he could read it. The nameplate read:

S. P. T. to A. P. W. B. D.

Dark Lord

and (?) Harry Potter

Harry swallowed as he looked at it. Here was confirmation. However two questions immediately sprang to mind.

“What does the question mark mean next to my name?” Harry asked.

“The question mark is where Neville Longbottom's name should be,” Algie said, “But I replaced it with a question mark. So that my Great-Nephew would not be in danger. I knew you were alive, Harry Potter. But I didn't have faith you would return to Great Britain. I wanted to come and find you back when you turned eleven. But even I, the Head of the Unspeakables, have a boss.”

“The Minister of Magic?” Harry asked.

“Nay,” Algie said, “We call them the Elders. Unspeakables who are all but retired, and only are amongst us to order me around. The Elders would not let me find you. You had to come here.”
“You contacted us, Algernon,” Lily said.

“Yes,” Algie said, “The Elders gave me permission to, and I will reveal why soon. Until you came to me, I could not let anyone know that Neville wasn’t the True Child of Prophecy. However, because he may be involved in this Prophecy, the Elders allowed it to continue.

“Harry, you have a choice here. Either we can listen to the Prophecy here, or you can take it with you, and we will listen to it in my office, where the rest of our discussion will take place. However, if you remove it, it can never return.”

“And if I leave it here?” Harry asked.

“You risk Voldemort hearing the entire Prophecy,” Algie said. “He doesn’t know the entire Prophecy. But if you leave it here – not even us Unspeakables could stop him on our own, if he wanted to steal it.”

“So Harry can take it,” Sirius said, “And then he can destroy it after we’re done with it.”

“Aah, that might not be the wisest decision,” Algie said, “And I will explain why –”

“Soon,” Harry, Lily, Sirius and Algie said.

“You say that a lot, Croaker,” Sirius said.

“I could explain everything to you, while standing here, Lord Black,” Algie said. “But I am afraid we would be standing here for a while. Plus I didn’t bring everything with me that I need for the discussion. My office is much more comfortable then this floor, I assure you.”

Algie reached into his robes, and removed a beaded bag with a pull-string. He handed the bag to Harry.

“Pick up the Prophecy, but do not tap it with your fingers,” Algie said, “You can do so in my office. Then place the Prophecy in the bag. Only you can hold the bag while the Prophecy is inside. Oh, and take the nameplate too.”

Harry nodded. He inhaled and exhaled, then moved the palm of his hand over the orb. He grabbed it in his hand, and placed it in the bag. He grabbed the nameplate, and dropped it into the bag, then tightened the pull-strings.

“Back to the elevator,” Algie said.

The trip to the elevator took ten minutes. Had it really taken that long to get there? The entire trip was spent in silence. Nobody was talking. It was rather eerie with the silence, and the blue orbs and balls of light being the only lights in the shadowy darkness. Harry’s thoughts were going wild, but he couldn’t translate them – he could barely focus on one thought, or one question, before another question or thought came forth to the front of his mind. Not even his Occlumency practices helped much.

He couldn’t look at the bag he was holding, because it would break his resistance and cause him to take the Prophecy and tap it, to listen to whatever it had to reveal. Soon, he kept repeating, like a mantra, soon. He just needed to wait. Soon all of his, his mother’s, and his Honorary Uncles’ questions would be answered. And their suspicions answered as well. That is... if Algie was going to
tell them everything. Harry still wasn't sure if he wanted to trust Algie. The man was so mysterious about everything. Was this how all Unspeakables who worked in the Department of Mysteries acted? The man seemed to love the word “soon”, and it irked Harry that he kept repeating the same word too.

Soon they reached the elevator. When they were inside, the door opened. Algie removed his wand from his robes once again, vanished the orbs of light around everyone, then tapped his wand above a column of buttons. A golden button – the rest were metallic -- materialized out of thin air. Algie pressed it, and the door opened. The button vanished. He motioned for them to exit, and Sirius stepped into the room first.

Harry could only guess that they were in Algie's office. But it didn't look like most offices he had been in before. One portion of the room looked oddly familiar.

“Deja-Vu,” Sirius muttered, “Reminds me a bit of Headmaster Winston's Office.”

“Reminds me a lot of Headmaster Winston's Office,” Harry said. “Algie... have you ever met Headmaster Winston?”


“You sound like you know him – and yet you said you've never talked to him,” Lily said.

“Please do sit down in the sitting area,” Algie said, “No need to sit at such a stuffy desk.”

Harry walked over to the sitting area, and he sat down on a sofa. Across a coffee table was another sofa, and behind that was a hearth with crackling fire. Lily sat down next to him, while Sirius sat down in one of the chairs. Algie walked over to his desk, collected something from an apparent drawer, and walked over to the coffee table. He placed a large box on the table, then walked over to a bookshelf. He tapped his wand on the central book in the third row, and the row of books split apart. He reached for something between the books, and pulled out a golden bowl. He carried the bowl over to the table, and placed it in the center. Then he sat down on the sofa opposite the table.

“Do you know what this bowl is, Harry?” Algie asked, motioning to the golden bowl.

“A Pensieve, sir?” Harry asked.

Algie chuckled. “Everyone thinks so, at first. But no, it isn't.”

He waved his wand over the bowl, and an image appeared in it. Harry's eyes widened when he saw Cornelius Fudge standing in front of a desk, with a longing look as he looked around a room.

“I see former Minister Fudge is saying his goodbyes to his old office,” Algie said.

“This is the present time?” Lily asked, “What the hell is this bowl?”

“A Scrying Bowl, Lady Potter,” Algie said, “I simply need to put a rune in the room, and I can look into it using this bowl. I can even record events in the bowl – as long as I am here to view it. I spend a lot of my free time looking at the bowl, and when I'm not looking, one of my very trustworthy assistants watch it if I need them to look at something important.”

“You're spying on people!” Lily accused.
“Scrying, spying, call it what you want,” Algie said, “I am getting important information. Much of which is quite useful. And very important. Don't worry, if I ever watch unnecessary information, I remove the memory of it from my mind, and dispose of it. I don't keep information in my head that isn't important.”

He tapped his wand on the bowl again. Harry stared into it, as he recognized Headmaster Winston's Office, the sitting room there.

“And now you see how I got my inspiration for area we are sitting in,” Algie said.

“You said you never spoke to Headmaster Winston!” Sirius said.

“I never have,” Algie said, “Three of my colleagues visited Ilvermorny in August of '91. They placed a rune in Winston's Office, and runes all around the school.”

“August of '91?” Lily asked. “Don't tell me you were spying on my son?! He got accepted that summer!"

“Your son, you, Sirius, Remus,” Algie said, “I needed to be prepared for when you finally decided to come back to Great Britain. I knew you and your son was alive. But I never invaded your privacy until Harry was invited to Ilvermorny. It wasn't until I discovered Harry was invited, that I sent Unspeakables there. I was pleased to find you, Sirius and Remus were also hired as staff members. That helped a lot. I know you're angry, Lily.”

“Oh, I'm furious,” Lily said, through her teeth.

“Like I alluded to,” Algie said, “of all the memories I collected of you and your family, I only kept those which were important to what I needed. The rest I did away with.”

“And what did you need?” Sirius asked, a fierce expression on his face.

“I needed to know if Harry would be prepared for his destiny,” Algie said, “I admit, I did it for a selfish reason. Like I told you, until you came to Britain, I couldn't do anything about Harry. I had to focus on my Great-Nephew when it came to – as I like to call it – the Voldemort problem. But I could watch Harry. I could watch and make sure he would be trained by you two and Remus. That he would be ready for his destiny. If not, I'd have never done what I did.”

“And what was that?” Lily asked.

“First I framed Durmstrang Headmaster Igor Karkaroff for murder,” Algie said. “Durmstrang was ejected from the Triwizard Tournament. I worked it out so Ilvermorny would be accepted. Then my colleagues went back to America, talked to some important people in the MACUSA, and the contention tournament for the Triwizard Tournament allowed fourteen year olds and older. And I watched. I couldn't do anything to interfere in this. So I watched and prayed Harry would place in the top ten in contention. And he did.

“On Halloween of this year, I visited Hogwarts. While Sirius and Remus were setting up the other tents, I went into your tent...”

He tapped his wand on the Scrying bowl again. “… and placed a rune. Only in the main area. Not in your bedrooms or shower, so don't worry. I respect your privacy... as much as I can, at least.”
Harry's eyes widened as he saw the dining room table in the House Potter tent. Remus, Rose, and Gabrielle were sitting at the table, talking. Algie tapped his wand again. Harry could hear voices now.

"... Daphne might have to, and Hermione might have to if she gets Betrothed too," Rose was saying, "But Mom and Sirius and Amelia already told us it wouldn't happen. We'd all be back in America before it happened."

Remus looked as if he was about to reply, and looked very shocked. But Algie tapped his wand on the bowl and the conversation muted, before anyone could hear what Remus said.

"How many conversations have you watched involving us?" Lily asked.

Algie tapped his wand on the bowl yet again. Then the scene disappeared and reappeared. Harry's eyes widened as he saw himself, his mother, Sirius and Remus talking.

"Quite useful," Algie said, "Just think of the memory I want to use, and poof, there it is... let's listen in, shall we?"

Algie tapped his wand again.

"Neville isn't destined to kill Voldemort," Harry said, "I am."

"We don't know that," Remus said.

"We have theories about it," Sirius said. "Granted those theories are pretty damning in themselves."

"Voldemort could have sent his followers after Neville," Harry said, "You know – 'if I don't come back, kill Neville Longbottom'. Voldemort assumed what everyone else did. That I was dead. Neville's alive. I don't know much about Prophecy, but 'destiny' – goes hand-in-hand with Prophecies. If I'm dead, and Voldemort believes one of us has the best chance of killing him – then he's picking someone else who is alive, and that is Neville – who survived his Death Eaters' attack."

Harry grinned. "Come on – you just said Dumbledore lied when Voldemort said Neville was destined to kill him," Harry said, "Dumbledore wants to speak to me. Not three former Order members about Voldemort. Me. Obviously he thinks I'm important when it comes to defeating Voldemort for good."

"We're in awe because you aren't breaking down or ranting, Harry," Remus said.

Harry shrugged. "Voldemort's alive. We know this. He's the reason Dad is dead. If I had a chance to kill him, I'd take it – before he can kill anyone else I love."

Algie stopped the scene. "Do you still believe that, Harry? You'll kill Voldemort if you have a chance, before he kills anyone else?"

"Yes," Harry said nodding. "Of course I will."

"Thank you, Harry," Algie said, "Now, let me show you the most important thing you discussed – at least the most important to me."
He tapped his wand. The scene sped up, and then went real-time again.

“... Memories don't speak of the present, Harry.” Lily was saying.

“So... what was he?” Harry asked.

Lily inhaled and exhaled, and Harry could feel the carefulness she spoke with. “We believe he was a piece of a soul, placed into the diary, to protect the soul-piece. Tom Riddle's ghost was an echo of a soul-piece placed into the diary at the same age Riddle was. So sixteen, apparently. If he did this at sixteen, Voldemort was remorseless even then. What he did... was create a Horcrux – which can only be created by committing an act so dark, it tears your soul.”

“Murder,” Harry said, quietly.


“But if Voldemort is alive to this day,” Sirius said, “Even after Algie destroyed his Horcrux – it means he made more.”

“So we need to speak to Algie about the Horcruxes,” Remus said.

“But Horcruxes are the Darkest Art in the book,” Sirius said, “You just don't speak the word in every day conversation, you don't teach it at any school. We just can't bring up the subject to Algernon Croaker. We have to convince him we're doing so for a reason. So that we can help you kill Voldemort, if that is what is going on.”

“The Prophecy,” Harry said, “If there is one, we need to speak to Croaker about it.”

“Yes,” Sirius said.

Algie paused the scene again and relaxed back on the sofa. He looked back and forth at each of them.

“Here I am,” Algie said, “Your Prophecy exists, Harry. Let's speak of it. And then we can talk about that other subject you discussed.”

Harry stared at Algie, then looked at Lily.

“This is why we're here, Harry,” Lily said, “We need this information before --”

“Before you talk to Albus,” Algie said; Lily glared at him, and he smiled, “Yes, listen to everything I have to say. Then I will help you with Albus Dumbledore. Scratch my back, I scratch yours. We can have good old back-scratching relationship until Voldemort is dead. And Dumbledore is... well, I'll help you with your Dumbledore problem too.”

“So he's a problem?” Sirius asked.

“Judging from another conversation I witnessed around the same time as that one,” Algie said, pointing to the bowl, “I think you know he is a problem.”

Algie looked at Harry. Harry realized what Algie wanted him to do. He opened the beaded bag and
removed the Prophecy orb. He set it between himself and Lily, inhaled and exhaled, then tapped his finger on it.

A figure rose out of it, draped in shawls, her eyes magnified to enormous size behind her glasses, and she revolved slowly, her feet in the basin. The woman spoke in harsh, hoarse tones

“THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES.... BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRCIE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES... AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT... AND EITHER MUST DIE AT THE HAND OF THE OTHER FOR NEITHER CAN LIVE WHILE THE OTHER SURVIVES... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...”

The slowly revolving Professor Trelawney sank back into the orb.

Harry stared at the orb, his jaw dropped. He blinked and looked at Lily, then Sirius who were staring at the orb. Lily had tears in her eyes. Sirius had a fierce glint in his. Algie was merely relaxing on the sofa. Harry raised his eyebrows as he looked at the expression on the man's face. He did not look shocked.

“You have heard this before,” Harry said.

“Mmm?” Algie said, “Oh, yes, mmhm, I have. The summer after the Chamber of Secrets incident – yes I know you know about that, and my involvement in it – what a fun-filled day that was! Anyway, I brought Neville to the Hall of Prophecies with my sister, Augusta. Neville was able to lift the orb without repercussion, and he was able to listen to it.”

“So Neville and Augusta know?” Lily asked.

“Hmm?” Algie asked, “Nope. No, they don't.”

“But,” Harry said, “You just said --”

“Aggie – Augusta, my nickname for her, she hates it,” Algie said, “She gave me permission to Obliviate the memory from her mind and Neville's mind. She didn't want either of them to know about it, until Neville was far more mature to take it. A good thing, because he had fainted right after he heard the Prophecy. Luckily the orb was on its stand, so he didn't have to put it back. I Obliviated while he was unconscious and brought him here. He simply believed he was visiting my place of work and had dozed off.

“So yes, I knew about the Prophecy. It gave me a lot of time to think about it. I knew about the first two lines of it – baby born at the end of July, born to parents who thrice defied him, destined to defeat Voldemort. Voldemort targeted you, his Death Eater bastards attacked my Nephew, his wife, and Neville. Neville told me what Voldemort had said about believing my Great-Nephew was destined to kill him. Neville isn't destined to defeat Voldemort.”

“So he doesn't qualify for the Prophecy?” Harry asked, “But you said he did.”

“Oh, he doesn't qualify for Voldemort's defeat, no,” Algie said, “But that doesn't mean he couldn't qualify for the Prophecy... he could in the future. Take out that nameplate, Harry, and read it.”

Harry did so and read the nameplate again.
“Does it say Voldemort on there?” Algie asked.

“No,” Harry said. “It says Dark Lord.”

“It does – how peculiar,” Algie said. “We’ll get back to that. Let’s discuss this Prophecy as if we were discussing that it had to do with Voldemort, alright? The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches. ‘Power’ is a pretty questionable thing. What power do you have? We’ll discuss that soon. Born to parents who have thrice defied him. Lily? How many times did you and James confront Voldemort before the last time? How many times did you escape with your life?”

Lily frowned. “Three times. The last time I did, I wound up in the Hospital. That was the day I discovered I was pregnant with Harry. I never fought in the war again, and James never confronted him again until... until that day.”

“Aggie remembers Frank and Alice telling stories of when they confronted Voldemort,” Algie said. “Three times. Just like you. So ‘born to parents who thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...’”

“The Dark Lord will mark him as his equal,” Sirius asked. “What mark?”

“It doesn't have to be physical, Sirius,” Algie said. “Emotional, mental, physical, spiritual. Emotional... we just witnessed Harry in the scrying bowl, saying that Voldemort is the reason James is dead. Harry wants to kill Voldemort. That’s a pretty big emotional mark Voldemort left on Harry. Avenging his father's death.

“However, saying that... the mark could physically happen in the future. Voldemort could mark him in some way. But he will have Power the Dark Lord knows not... Power? That is a tough one. Voldemort fears death. That is known. Harry, would you sacrifice yourself if it meant your loved ones would live.”

“Yes,” Harry said, without hesitation.

“There is a power Voldemort doesn't know – dying for something good,” Algie said.

“Do not talk about my son dying!” Lily snarled, her eyes misty.

“He doesn't have to die, Lily,” Algie said. “He has to accept that death is something good. That if it happens, he is not afraid. Doing so would be a power Voldemort does not know. And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives... pretty confusing. What is living? What is surviving? You've had a wonderful life so far, have you not?”

Harry nodded. “Sure, I have. A pretty good life.”

“Okay, but here's the thing,” Algie said. “You're planning to go back to America, right? After the Tournament?”

“Yes,” Harry said. “And probably bringing some friends with us.”

“Alright,” Algie said. “Will you go back if Voldemort returns before you have a chance? Or will you stay here? Or if you do go back, will you stay? Knowing what you know, can you stay in America while Voldemort is a threat here?”
“Not if I am destined to kill him,” Harry said.

“There you have it,” Algie said, “You may return to America even if Voldemort returns – you may go just to get away for a bit, and reunite with American friends, let your new British friends discover your Boston roots. But you can't stay there permanently, unless Voldemort is dead. You can't live – you can't live a peaceful life while Voldemort survives. And Voldemort is afraid of dying as long as you live. There you have it. There's the Prophecy.”

Algie then raised a hand. “If... if you believe the Dark Lord in the Prophecy is Voldemort.”

“Who else could it be?” Sirius asked.

Algie leaned forward and tapped the Scrying Bowl again.

Harry frowned. “I don't want to think about the thoughts going through my head right now.”

“What thoughts?” Lily asked.

“That I have to fight two Dark Lords before all is said and done,” Harry said.

Algie paused the scene again, relaxed back on the sofa and crossed his arms looking at all three of them.

“Dumbledore is the Dark Lord in the Prophecy?” Lily asked.

“He could be,” Algie said, “The most glaring problem is this. James is Harry's birth parent, but I don't know if James defied him. You certainly have recently, Lily. Several times. Maybe it only needs to mean one parent – the parent who gave birth to the one born at the end of July.”

He sighed and cleared his throat. “And now you might know why I do not want to cure my Nephew and his wife.”

“You don't know if they have defied Dumbledore,” Sirius said, “And you don't want to take a chance that they might do it in the present.”

“Born to the one who thrice defied the Dark Lord,” Algie said, “Prophecy is a touchy thing. Does it mean born after they defied the Dark Lord? Or could it mean before? It could be both. Back to you, Harry. Dumbledore hasn't marked you, but he could in the future. A power he knows not... eh, that's questionable right now. Living and surviving is the same thing as Voldemort. You have to come back to defeat him if you go to America. He won't leave you alone. Especially if you kill Voldemort and Dumbledore's still alive. He'll want to manipulate you in doing things for him.”

“To do what?” Harry asked.

“To help him with his dream,” Algie said, “From what I've heard when he rants in his Office, and doesn't know anyone is listening who doesn't have to keep his secrets – Sorting Hat, Fawkes, the portraits, they keep his secrets – I am spying on him, and I don't have to. Anyway, from what I've learned, Dumbledore wants to create a Pureblood Paradise. Even though he isn't a Pureblood. He believes if the Light and Dark Alliances do not unite and agree into one Alliance, they'll hold a civil war that will bring Armageddon on the wizarding world. If he can't create a Pureblood Paradise, the purebloods will wipe themselves out – in his opinion at least.”
“Merlin, the man is a lunatic!” Sirius exclaimed.

“Most Dark Lords are,” Algie quipped, shrugging, “The ones that aren’t easy to kill anyway. Sane Dark Lords don't live too long. People don't fear ’em.”

“People fear Dumbledore?” Harry asked.

“Voldemort does,” Algie said. “Because Dumbledore wants him dead. Two Dark Lords ruling over one country don't work out too well. Only... because of the prophecy – Dumbledore's never believed that the Prophecy pertains to him. He believes it is Voldemort. And because he does, he believes that you, Harry, or Neville – just because who else but Voldemort can the Prophecy pertain to, for Neville? – can defeat Voldemort. You are more powerful than Neville. But Dumbledore hopes you'll die when fighting Voldemort, and then he can swoop in and kill Voldemort, since – sorry to say – with your death, the prophecy is complete. Dumbledore kills Voldemort, sheds crocodile tears over you, and – hey, look! – no one will believe Dumbledore's a Dark Lord when he killed Voldemort! He can do anything he wants!”

“Good Merlin,” Lily muttered, cupping a hand with her cheek. “That's...”

“Insane?” Sirius asked.

“I can see Albus believing it,” Lily said. “Which is why he wants Harry to stay here, why he wants Harry to fight Voldemort. So he can die – maybe be a sacrifice for his friends – and Dumbledore gets the glory.”

Harry sighed. “So in the end I will have to fight both Voldemort and Dumbledore?”

“Maybe,” Algie said, shrugging, “Maybe I am wrong. Maybe you kill Voldemort, and this Orb goes dark – Prophecy over., Maybe we're wrong about Dumbledore. But what if it stays blue? And that is why you don't want to destroy it. So you know when the Prophecy is done. I suggest you place it somewhere only you or someone you trust can get it. Take it out of the Department of Mysteries, and anyone can touch it.”

“The House Potter Family Vault in Gringotts,” Lily said.

Harry and Sirius nodded in agreement.

“A good plan,” Algie said, “Now, before we discuss the other topic, there is something else you need to know. You won't like it. I'm sorry.”

“What is it?” Harry asked.

“Have you wondered how Voldemort knows the first couple lines of the Prophecy?” Algie asked.

“Someone told him,” Lily said, “One of his Death Eaters.”

“Yes,” Algie said, “The night Albus Dumbledore witnessed Sybill Trelawney tell the Prophecy, there was someone eavesdropping. He only heard the first two lines. However... it registered in the Hall of Prophecies. Harry, that nameplate there – isn’t the original.”

He leaned toward the box that he hadn't touched since setting it on the table, and rummaged through
it. He picked up something and placed it on the coffee table, then slid it across toward Harry.

“Remember,” Algie said, “Once you know, it changes everything.”

Harry inhaled and picked it up. He cleared his throat and read the nameplate.

*S. P. T. to A. P. W. B. D. and S.T.S*

*Dark Lord*

*and (?) Harry Potter*

Harry frowned, and showed it to his mother. She took it and read it. Then her eyes went wide, and tear-filled. She covered her mouth with her hand and shook her head.

“What is it, Mom?” Harry asked, “You know who it is, don't you?”

“S... T... S,” Lily said, then inhaled and exhaled. “Is Severus Tobias Snape.”

Chapter End Notes

Cliffhanger! Aah, I love this chapter so much. So many revelations! I love the Scrying, Algie's motives and theories... everything!

I am well aware “Over Nine-Thousand!” wouldn't take place for about twelve more years. So what?! (Or if you want, just believe those “certain Unspeakables” Algie mentioned are time-travelers into the future.)

Next Chapter: The Horcruxes are discussed, and we discover who Bartemius Crouch, Junior is impersonating. (Only because there is no way to do an important scene without revealing it!)
Had a Private message (on FFN) which was basically asking for when the next update will come, without posing it as a question. “Hoping all is well and that updates continue for Ilvermorny.” I think this came from me NOT posting two chapters in one day yesterday. I think I’ve gone and unintentionally made some of my readers selfish – expecting a chapter or two (probably two!) every single day! Oops! My bad!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Previously on “The Ilvermorny Champion...”

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Friday, December 18th, 1994

Harry stared at his mother, as she threw the nameplate onto the coffee table.

“Please tell me I am wrong, Algernon,” Lily said, “Please tell me it is not Severus Snape. Please tell me he isn’t responsible for --”

“Who else could it be?” Sirius asked; his face had a murderous expression on it; the phrase 'if looks could kill' seemed to be a good phrase here; “Who else do we know who has those initials? Does anyone have those initials? Any other Death Eater? You just said one of Voldemort's Death Eaters told Voldemort the first two lines of the Prophecy. Only the first two lines, Algernon?”

Algie nodded. “Voldemort knew of two children born at the end of July, born to parents who defied him three times, who was prophecized to defeat him. When the Prophecy appeared in the Hall of Prophecies, only the Elders knew about it. They brought it to my attention, only when my Great-Nephew was born a few months after the Prophecy was given back in January of 1980.”
“The Elders knew what the Prophecy said?” Lily asked.

‘The Elders make the Prophecy Orbs,” Algie said, “They have a – let’s call it – a technology that lets them know when a Prophecy is being made, then they put the Prophecy into an orb, label it, and place it in the Hall of Prophecies. They know I'm related to Neville, so they showed me the orb, and the label. Neville and Harry's names were on it. I didn't initially remove the label, the one which had Snape's initials. Not until several months later, after I had done an investigation.

“Back then the Elders had suspicions that Albus Dumbledore might have been the Dark Lord in the Prophecy – or perhaps they believed both Voldemort and Dumbledore were. So they asked me to investigate him. I've had scrying runes in his office, and his usual haunts around Hogwarts since about a week after they told me about the Prophecy. I never knew what the Prophecy said until Neville heard it. But I knew Dumbledore or Voldemort – or both – could be the “Dark Lord” on the label.

“Back then the initials 'S.T.S' were a mystery to me. Until... the morning of November 1st, 1981, when I saw Severus Snape in Dumbledore's office.”

“When Severus became Albus' spy?” Lily asked. “He became his spy that day?”

“Yes,” Algie said, “I need to show you an important scene in the Scrying Bowl. Before I tell you anything else about Severus Snape. You need to know this, and keep it in mind.”

Algie tapped his wand on the Scrying Bowl. Harry looked into it. Severus Snape – looking much younger than he currently was, and much more emotional than Harry had seen him in the past month-and-a-half – was standing in Albus Dumbledore’s Office. Dumbledore was sitting at his desk.

“She and James put their faith in the wrong person,” said Dumbledore.

“The wrong person?” Severus asked.

“Sirius Black,” Albus said.

“I do not think so,” Severus said.

“I am surprised at you,” Albus said, “Defending Black?”

“No,” Severus said, “Presenting more damning evidence. Peter Pettigrew is dead.”

“He could have been in the house during the explosion,” Albus said.

“No,” Severus said. “He was blown across the street from the explosion, the front of his body charred. No markings of the Killing Curse. Pettigrew was not there before Voldemort arrived, and killed by Voldemort when he arrived. Pettigrew had come with Voldemort. He had stood in the Potter's front yard, and waited for his one-time best friends to be killed. Pettigrew was the Secret Keeper.”

“You call him Voldemort now?” Albus asked.

“I will only call him the Dark Lord in front of those who believe I should be doing so,” Severus said. “Voldemort has betrayed me. I begged him to spare her life. And he didn't. She's gone. Dead. Her son too. The House of Potter is extinct. Because of him. I will end him, Albus.”
“No... Neville Longbottom will end him,” Albus said. “I was obviously wrong about the Prophecy. And so was Riddle. But you can play your part.”

“And I will,” Severus said, “This I swear.”

“So mote it be,” Albus said.

Algie tapped the Scrying Bowl again. He relaxed back on the couch. Harry stared the vision of Dumbledore and Severus in the bowl for another moment, then he turned to his mother, who was also staring at the bowl. She looked up at Algie.

“Severus turned on Voldemort,” Lily said, “Because he thought Voldemort killed me.”

“Yes,” Algie said. “After I watched this scene, I waited for a couple of days. Unlike Sybill Trelawney, who Dumbledore has kept in his castle so she cannot be kidnapped so the Prophecy can be revealed from her mind – Seers don't remember giving Prophecies, but Legilimens can take it, even from minds which have been Obliviated of Prophecy – Severus had free reign to do whatever he wanted. Even after Dumbledore hired him as his Potions Master and spy. Two days after I witnessed this scene you just saw, I visited Severus Snape at his home. He still lives in his childhood home at –”

“Spinner's End,” Lily interrupted.

“Yes,” Algie said. “Severus was asleep. I broke into his home, broke into his bedroom – then broke into his mind, while he was asleep. I wanted to know everything he knew about the Prophecy. I saw him hearing the first two lines, before being yanked away from the door in the Hog's Head where Dumbledore and Trelawney had been.”

“Wait!” Sirius said, “The Hog's Head? Why not Hogwarts? Why in such a place where he could be eavesdropped upon?”

“Or the Three Broomsticks,” Lily said; “Those rooms have anti-eavesdropping enchantments.”

Algie shrugged. “Dumbledore's brother, Aberforth, owns the Hog's Head. Perhaps he thought it would be safe. I know what you're thinking. Dumbledore had no idea that Trelawney would be making a Prophecy. It is impossible to predict when a Prophecy will be given. Anyway, Severus was yanked away from the door by Aberforth Dumbledore, and thrown out of the restaurant. Aberforth didn't know what the man was eavesdropping on. I once heard Albus ranting to himself, about how his brother made a big mistake, and let Snape get away without being interrogated about what he had heard. Then he calmed down, and told himself, verbally, he could use this.

“And he did, from what I could divulge of Snape's mind. Anyway... back then, Snape was looking for any chance he could get, to get into Voldemort's Senior Circle of Death Eaters – his most trusted.”

“So he told Voldemort the two lines of the Prophecy,” Lily said, sounding quite emotional.

“He didn't know back then that the Child of the Prophecy would be your son, Lily,” Algie said. “I remember seeing a scene. Snape reading the Daily Prophet, while sitting at his home. An article about James and Lily Potter having a son born on July 31st. That day he was summoned by Voldemort. Voldemort said the Child of Prophecy was either Neville Longbottom or Harry Potter.
He believed it was Harry.

“Severus immediately went to Dumbledore. Begged him to help. I saw Severus pleading. I saw Dumbledore looking everything as dangerous as the Dark Lord he is. He looked so angry. Severus told Albus to protect you. Not your son, not James. You. Then Dumbledore said that Severus disgusted him. So Severus told him to protect all the Potters.

“So he was trying to redeem himself for me,” Lily said.

“Yes,” Algie said.

“Redemption?!” Sirius growled, standing up, “You expect him to be redeemed?! Snape is the reason Voldemort knows the Prophecy! Snape had a hand in James’ death, Lily! You and Harry could have died that night! Rose could have never existed. And you speak of redemption?! I want to walk out of here, walk into Hogwarts, walk into that git's classroom, and beat him to his last breath of life before I take it! And you say he is trying to redeem himself?!”

“He is, Sirius,” Lily said, quietly, even though Sirius was raging. “We have proof. His conversation of the night he thought –”

“The night he thought you were dead, and Harry – the night James died,” Sirius said. “Of course he wants to be redeemed. Because he's responsible for it! It might as well as been him who was your Secret Keeper. Or the one invading your house that night! He is as guilty as Voldemort and Wormtail, Lily! Do not talk to me about redemption! Snape got his revenge on James! James bullied him, and Snape got his final revenge! Fuck redemption!”

“SIRIUS!”

Sirius stopped ranting. He stood there, frozen. And looking at Harry. Why was Sirius looking at Harry? Why were Algie and Lily looking at him. Oh. It was him who had yelled at Sirius. How did that happen?!

“I am as pissed at Snape as you are, Sirius,” Harry said. “But we can't kill him. One, you'll end up in Azkaban.”

“So what?” Sirius asked. “At least he'll be ~”

“Tracey,” Harry said. “Tracey Black. Tracey No-Name right now until the Blood Adoption you cemented today.”

Sirius froze again, and stared at Harry. Then he fell back into the chair and stared forward.

“Tracey can't be a Black until you go through with the Blood Adoption,” Harry said.

“Christmas,” Sirius said. “Christmas morning, I'm going to do the ritual. Then she'll be a Black, and I ~”

“Will be her father,” Lily said. “What about Amelia? Remus told me. He hears you talking quietly to yourself at night before bedtime, when you debate whether or not you want to ask her to marry you. Whether or not you'll take her and Susan to live in America, whether or not you'll stay in Great Britain.”
Sirius winced. “You weren't supposed to know that yet.”

“None of that can happen if you kill Severus,” Lily said.

“Stop calling him by his first name!” Sirius exclaimed. “He doesn't deserve it! He doesn't deserve that you still want to be his friend! He is the reason James is dead and we --”

“-- need him,” Harry said. “We need him. He's a spy in Voldemort's camp. He's closest to Dumbledore. We need him. If you still believe he has to pay after Voldemort is dead and Dumbledore is... whatever will happen to him. Then you can make the choice. Kill him yourself, tell Amelia to arrest him, whatever. But we need him if I – if we – are going to survive a battle against two Dark Lords.”

“Stop it, Harry,” Sirius said,

“Stop what?” Harry asked.

“Stop making so much goddamn sense!” Sirius exclaimed, “It is annoying! I just want to be mad.”

“Be mad,” Lily said. “But make sure your anger is to a manageable level by the time we leave this office.”

“Remus isn't going to be happy either,” Sirius said.

“Remus can usually handle things in a far more mature manner than you,” Lily said.

“I have other distractions to take your mind off of Severus Snape, Sirius,” Algie said.

“Firewhiskey?” Sirius asked, “Mead? Scotch?”


“How is that better?” Sirius asked.

“It is better because it brings us closer to defeating Voldemort,” Algie said.

“Defeat Voldemort, deal with Dumbledore,” Sirius said, “Then kill Snape.”

“Sirius,” Lily groaned.

“Excellent!” Sirius said, looking more cheerful than he had since he heard Snape's name from Lily's mouth. “Let's discuss Horcruxes.”

“Alright,” Algie said, “From what I've gathered from your conversations --”

“Gathered is not the word I'd use here,” Sirius said, testily.

Algie ignored Sirius. “-- you know all about what happened down in the Chamber of Secrets. Partially from what my great-nephew told you, partially from figuring it out on your own. You were pretty much correct about the entire thing. The manifestation that emerged from the diary was no normal manifestation. It could have actual conversations with us, as well as Miss Weasley when she wrote in the diary. Also, the manifestation was threatening to take over her body – possession. And I
I didn't know exactly what the diary was, until I was able to destroy the manifestation with the venom from a Basilisk fang. Basilisk venom is one of the few things that can destroy a Horcrux, along with Fiendfyre, the Dementor's Kiss, a Goblin Ritual, and throwing the object through the Veil of Death.

“The Veil of Death?” Harry asked.

“If anything goes through the Veil, it is destroyed,” Algie said, “Be it an object, or a living thing. Not even Unspeakables are sure what is actually on the other side of the Veil, because none of us has ever dared to enter it.”

“So how do you know it is destroyed?” Sirius asked. “It could just be a Veil to a deep cavern in Timbuktu.”

“The Veil of Death is used for executions that are more humane than a Dementor's Kiss,” Algie said, “The first criminal we sent through the Veil, we checked the Gringotts Records – if anyone can tell you someone is dead, it is Gringotts, if they have an account there. The Goblins confirmed the person was dead, so I doubt they were in a cavern in Timbuktu.”

“Unless they died from a great fall into the cavern,” Sirius said.

“Believe me, Black,” Algie said, “Anything you can argue with me about the Veil, we've argued about it. Tossing Horcruxes into the Veil is a last-ditch situation. We're well aware that they could -- as you put it -- end up in a cavern in Timbuktu, and not destroyed that way. So we try to destroy it other ways. There is also the fact that some of these Horcruxes Voldemort used are ancient and priceless artifacts, so we don't want to destroy them.”

“Two things,” Sirius said, “How many Horcruxes do you think Voldemort has, and how do you know some of them are priceless artifacts?”

“Right now we're unsure on the number situation,” Algie said, “We believe there are five soul containers, six if you count the piece in Voldemort himself. But since the one of the most magic numbers is seven, then we believe there might be one more out there we don't know about. And we know he used some as priceless artifacts, because we already found two priceless artifacts he used. Rowena Ravenclaw's Diadem, and Helga Hufflepuff's Goblet.”

“Is this why Voldemort hired mercenaries to kidnap my birth parents around the time I was born?” Lily asked; “Because one of them was descended from Ravenclaw, and he wanted to interrogate them so he could find another Founder's artifact for a Horcrux?”

“Very likely,” Algie said.

“So how many have you found and destroyed?” Harry asked.

“Well, there is a difference between knowing where they are and obtaining them,” Algie said. “We have obtained four, know where the fifth one is, and destroyed three of them. If there is a sixth, then it is likely in a living animal, because we haven't been able to detect it.”

“Detect it?” Sirius asked.
Algie leaned toward the table and grabbed the box. “I collected all of this stuff today from the secret room we're using to investigate the Horcrux Hunt, as we like to call it.”

He lifted up what looked like a glass ball. Closer inspection found a floating ring inside it.

“Harry, am I correct to say you are in Possession of one of the Peverell Rings?” he asked.

Harry summoned forth his ring, and showed it to Algie.

“This is another Peverell ring,” Algie said, pointing at the ring inside. “It may distress you to know that Tom Riddle – Voldemort – is a long-distant cousin of yours.”

“What?!” Harry and Lily yelped.

“Tom Riddle is the son of Merope Gaunt,” Algie said, “The Gaunts are descended both from Slytherin, and one of the Peverell brothers. You are descended from another Peverell brother.”

Sirius snorted. “Don't be too discouraged. Most Purebloods and half-bloods are related to everyone else in Britain.”

“Yeah, I know,” Harry said, “But to learn that Voldemort is a long-distant cousin.”

“Anyway,” Algie said, “Voldemort – Tom Riddle – stole this ring from his uncle or grandfather. However, he made a pretty stupid move, because he kept the ring hidden in the house where his mother, Uncle, and Grandfather lived. I'm sure he simply thought nobody would connect him to the Gaunt family. Given that his middle name, Marvolo – named after his Grandfather -- then that is a pretty bad assumption. Hell, several of these items were easy to find. Thank Merlin, he didn't do the sensical thing and put them in a waterproof box at the bottom of the Marianas Trench or something! Then we'd never find any of these, and he'd be immortal for eternity!!”

“You have a grim sense of humor, Croaker,” Sirius said.

“One of my finest qualities,” Algie said. “So after doing some research, which is what Unspeakables like me are good at, we found the Gaunt Shack, went to battle with some wards and defenses – and let me tell you, that was much harder than facing a Basilisk! A Rooster crow didn't work against that defense Anyway, after all the fun was said and done, we found this ring. It had its own enchantments on it.

“Thank Merlin we Unspeakables have ironclad minds, so its Compulsions didn't affect us. Which is a good thing, because let me tell you. If you were Compelled by this ring to put the baby on your finger, you would have been struck by a Wilting Curse on that hand and arm. And if that hand and arm wasn't amputated in a few hours, it would spread – and you'd die in a week, unless you got treated to slow it down. Then you'd be dead in a year!”

Sirius whistled. “Good thing you weren't Compelled then.”

“I already said that much, didn't I?!” Algie asked.

“Now, this ring has a bigger secret to it than just being a Horcrux,” Algie said. “The stone on this ring. Is the legendary Resurrection Stone from the Deathly Hallows.”

“Like the Invisibility Cloak Harry has, and the Elder Wand?” Lily asked.
“Yep!” Algie said, “Quick check – know where the Elder Wand is?”

“James had some theories – Dumbledore has it, according to what James said,” Lily said.

“James was right,” Algie said, “That Peverell ring on your finger, Harry? It can summon the Deathly Hallows. Now don't go summoning the Resurrection Stone until I can destroy this! Because we need it! Well, no, actually we really don't need it after our meeting is finished, I suspect. But don't summon it until I destroy this ring and can part the stone from the ring. Otherwise, you'll summon the Horcrux!”

“And the Elder Wand?” Harry asked.

“Depends on when you want Albus Dumbledore to know that you know he’s your enemy,” Algie said. “Because if you summon the wand, he's going to probably see you as an enemy.”

“So let him keep it until either we need it, or we want him to know what we see him as?” Harry asked.

“Pretty much,” Algie said.

“Now, the orb this ring is inside,” Algie said, as he eyed the orb in question, “is a fascinating little bugger. See all these runes etched into it? These make this baby a certified Horcrux Detector – well, as long as they are objects, not living things, and have Voldemort's soul in them. The downside is we can't find Voldemort using this, or any Horcruxes he made out of living objects! Damned bastard. Anyway, so with this little baby, we were able to detect the objects that are Horcruxes. The diary was already destroyed --”

He took a book – the diary -- out of the box, and set it on the table. It had a huge hole in the middle.

“Is that where the fang...?” Harry asked.

“That's where I stabbed it,” Algie said, “Yep. Then I opened the book and stabbed it again for good measure. A Godly scream was unleashed, followed by black ooze. Horrifying! Well, after I destroyed the diary, and started doing research on Horcruxes and Tom Riddle, I went and found the ring in the Gaunt Shack, Already told that story. Then – well this little baby is like a compass – it just points where I need to go. And I did a lot of going. The first one took me to Gringotts. Yes, Gringotts. Turns out Bellatrix Lestrange put a Horcrux in the Lestrange Vault. And let me tell you! Those Goblins were mad about that!”

“Bellatrix had one in her possession?” Sirius asked.

“Yep, just like Lucius Malfoy,” Algie said, “Riddle trusted them both with hiding one and keeping it safe. Neither did too well of a job. With the Goblins' help, we found the Goblet. Remember that Transfer Ritual I told you about? Neat little thing, where the Horcrux gets transferred from the object, into a live swine. Was quite entertaining watching two Goblin warriors battle a possessed swine! So entertaining, I let them do it twice. First with Helga Hufflepuff's Goblet --”

He took a golden goblet out of the box, and set it on the table. It looked undamaged at all – owing to the Ritual probably.

“And then Ravenclaw’s Lost Diadem,” Algie said, taking what appeared to be a crown – also
undamaged -- from the box, and putting it on the table, “Not so lost anymore.”

“Will those be returned to Hogwarts?” Sirius asked. “As Founder's Artifacts?”

“Hmm?” Algie asked, “Oh, yes, sure. After Voldemort is dead. Wouldn't want him reading a Daily Prophet article about two Founder's Artifacts returning to Hogwarts, and him discovering they're his Horcruxes, now do we?”

“Point,” Sirius said.

“Now, finding the Diadem, that was interesting,” Algie said, “Believe it or not it was at Hogwarts!”

“What?!“ Harry, Lily, and Sirius yelped.

“Yep, Hogwarts,” Algie said. “Luckily, I went back to Hogwarts the summer after I killed the Basilisk, and destroyed the Diary. Went there to claim the Basilisk’s body and all. My kill, my claim. I also went there for another reason, one Dumbledore couldn't know about. The Detector led me to a corridor on the seventh floor. At first, it led me to a blank wall. After some investigation through interrogation of a House-Elf, I discovered behind this wall was what was known as the Come And Go Room – or the Room of Requirement. Interesting room.”

“I know about almost every room in that castle!” Sirius said, “I don't remember a Come and Go Room.”

“Ever felt in need of using a restroom and walking through a corridor of the seventh floor,” Algie said, “And – hey! – there's a restroom I never saw before!”

“Um... no,” Sirius said, “Though there was that one time with a Ravenclaw fifth year during my sixth year when I wanted a broom closet and found one I'd never seen before. So we went in there, and –”

“Please, spare us, Sirius,” Lily said, rolling her eyes.

“Come and Go Room.” Algie said. “A most interesting room that gives the person making the request just about anything it wants. Well, I found what was called the Room of Hidden Things – or the Lost And Found Room. And let me tell you there were mountains of objects in there. I'd like to go back and search through it all, but Albus would get suspicious.

“So after a bit of searching, the Detector led me to the Diadem. Apparently Voldemort placed it in the room thinking no one would ever come back and find it. Don't ask me when, and why he was there in the first place. I don't want to know. And it is probably not important, aside from to put the Horcrux there. Good news is, I found it, and there it is. And now for the fifth one... ah, yes the fifth one. Now this has a story to it. One that hasn't actually ended yet.”

Algie picked up what appeared to be a locket.

“Believe it, or not, this isn't a Horcrux, and I didn't find it with the Detector,” Algie said. “I found it after doing some research into Riddle's childhood days. He was an orphan, and lived in an orphanage. Well, each year the orphans would go on different outings. One of these outings was a cave. I visited the cave, found a lake in the cave filled with an army of Inferi.”

“Oh, Merlin,” Lily gasped.
“Don't worry, they're all gone now – a team of Unspeakables wiped 'em all out,” Algie said.

“But they used to be people!” Lily said.

“'Yes – victims of the Great War – Muggles and magical both,’” Algie said, sighing, “But not any more, and now they have found peace. Anyway! After getting past the Inferi, I got onto this small island in the middle of the cave. There was a large bowl on a pedestal. In the bowl was Draught of Living Death. I think Voldemort wanted whoever came across the cave to drink the Potion. But I was able to vanish it using advanced Vanishing Charms. And I found this locket. It wasn't a Horcrux. It was a fake. Someone had gotten there long before me, and replaced the locket with a fake.”

He opened the locket, and took out what appeared to be a small square of folded parchment.

“Why don't you read it for us, Sirius,” Algie said. “Out loud, please.”

He handed the parchment to Sirius, who had a questioning expression, as to why he had to read it instead of Harry. He took it, unfolded it, and began to read.

“'To the Dark Lord,’” Sirius said, “‘I know I will be dead long before you read this but I want you to know that it was I who discovered your secret. I have stolen the real Horcrux and intend to destroy it as soon as I can. I face death in the hope that when you meet your match you will be mortal once more. R --’”

Sirius paused and his eyes widened. His mouth gaped like a fish opening and closing.

“Yes, Sirius?” Algie asked.

“R.A.B,” Sirius gasped out, “Algernon – please don't tell me --”

“Yes, it is, Sirius,” Algie said.

“What, Sirius?” Lily asked.


Harry's eyes widened. Sirius rarely ever talked about his brother. The only thing Sirius had ever said about him was that he was a good kid, who went bad, then became a Death Eater, and it was rumored Voldemort might have killed him.

“Well, I found the cave before I made this Horcrux Detector,” Algie said, “‘I wasn't completely sure about who R.A.B was until the Horcrux Detector lead me to Number 12 Grimmauld Place.’”


“Yes,” Algie said. “Problem was. I couldn't get into the house. It was locked by Black Family enchantments, probably after your mother died. I believe it can only be opened by Lord Black. You. I need in that House because I believe the fifth Horcrux – the real Locket – is in there.”

Sirius gulped, still looking at the parchment. “Um... y-yeah, sure. We can... we can go tomorrow. If that is alright with you.”
Algie threw the locket at Sirius, who caught it.

“Keep it,” Algie said, “It was your brother's. According to the note, your brother was trying to redeem himself.”

“Like Severus,” Lily said.

“Don't compare Snape to my brother, Lily!” Sirius snarled; then he wilted, “Sorry. It's just... if he redeemed himself, I – all these years I've hated him and – damn it! Why couldn't he just be an evil son of a bitch?!”

He sighed and pinched his nose. “Sorry again. Yeah, tomorrow. Meet me at the Leaky Cauldron. And we'll head off to my family home.”

“Noon sound good?” Algie asked.

“Noon sounds very good,” Sirius said, nodding.

He stared at the note, then the locket. He placed the note in the locket, closed it, and placed it around his neck.

“Once the Locket Horcrux is destroyed,” Algie said, “All that will be left is Voldemort, and this last Horcrux – if he made one. It will be a living object – something this Detector can't detect. So, it could be a pet – a familiar. Something he won't let go of too easily. Or let it out of his sight. He'll be protecting it. It is risky enough making a living Horcrux, knowing it could die.”

“How do you know there is another one?” Harry asked.

“Horace Slughorn – told you about him, didn't I?” Algie asked.

“Professor Slughorn?” Lily asked, “Our old Potions Master? What's he got to do with this?”

“Guess I left him out,” Algie said. “Anyway, he was Voldemort's Potions Master too. And his mentor back then. So I talked to him, asked him about Tom Riddle, and he got very tight-lipped about it. So I broke into his mind – and found a vision of Slughorn talking to Riddle about Horcruxes – Slughorn just thought Riddle was asking hypothetically. Like a lesson or something. Riddle mentioned the number seven. If you include the locket, and Voldemort, that is six. So I am sure there is a seventh, and it is a living thing.”

“So we won't be able to kill Voldemort unless we kill this living thing,” Harry said.

“Yes,” Algie said.

“How do we know it isn't a person instead of an animal?” Sirius asked.

Algie grimaced. “We don’t.”

“Brilliant,” Sirius said, sarcastically.

“I believe that ends our meeting – everything I wanted to talk to you about,” Algie said. “Any questions?”
“Who all are you spying on using that bowl?” Sirius asked.

“I can't tell you that – I've already told you what I could about that,” Algie said, “Dumbledore's Office, Hogwarts, your tent, and even added the Minister's office for good measure.”

“I ask you to remove the runes from our tent,” Lily said.

“No can do,” Algie said, “And don’t bother looking for it either. Strong Notice-Me-Not Charms on it, and other stuff.”

“We can always collapse the tent, and use another one,” Lily said.

“Then I'll put another rune-stone!” Algie said.

“Why?!” Lily growled.

“Because!” Algie said, “You might talk about important things that – while not important to you – may be important to us!”

“Us?” Harry asked, “You don't mean the Unspeakables. You mean the Elders!”

“The Elders want me to keep an eye on you so I can know about any plans you make,” Algie said. “I'm not forbidding you from returning to America. Return there – take a bit of time to rest. Either way, you will come back, because the Prophecy says you will. Living and surviving. We have two Dark Lords that need to be taken care of, and until they are taken care of, I'm not leaving you alone to your own devices.”

Harry studied Algie for a moment. “Is this the Elders ordering you around? Or you? Who wants Voldemort and Dumbledore dead more? Who wants this Prophecy orb to go dark more? The Elders or you? You're putting a lot on my shoulders here. Apparently Neville and I are both Children of this Prophecy. So don't tell me this is the Elders ordering you around. This is you. You don't want Neville to be a part of this.”

“Would you want your mother or sister part of it, Harry?” Algie asked.

“Probably not,” Harry said. “But I have enough on my plate with Dumbledore manipulating me. I don't need you manipulating me too.”

“Dumbledore wants you dead, Potter,” Algie said. “I want Voldemort dead, and Dumbledore either permanently incapacitated, or dead. My manipulations gets two dangerous Dark Lords off your back, and gets you out of this alive. Yes, you'd be doing this instead of Neville. But can you seriously tell me you'd leave this up to Neville Longbottom? Could you hide away in America, and let my Great-Nephew die? Knowing that you could have prevented it?”

Harry sighed. “Fine. But cross me or my family and friends, and I don't care if you are a powerful Unspeakable. I already have to go up against two powerful wizards. Why not three?”

“I won't cross you, Potter,” Algie said. “After that prophecy goes dark, our paths will never cross again if that is what you want. Until then, I'll do all I can to help you.”

“As long as it is help, and not a hindrance,” Harry said.
“Agreed,” Algie said, “I believe our meeting is over then. Remember, Harry. Get that Orb in your Family Vault soon.”

“We can keep it safe until tomorrow,” Sirius said. “Then we’ll visit your Family Vault. You can come with me and Croaker to kill a Horcrux, how about that?”

Harry looked at Lily, who sighed and nodded. “As long as you’ll be safe.”

“It will be me and Croaker with him!” Sirius said. “You heard Croaker. He wants Harry alive as much as we do!”

“Alright,” Harry said, “I’ll go with you.”

“Excellent!” Sirius said.

“Great,” Algie said, “Then I’ll see you tomorrow at noon. And with that, this meeting is adjourned. How about I show you out?”

Chapter End Notes

Well, I wanted a Voldemort scene in this one, but that can take place next Chapter.

Also Next Chapter: Things happened while Harry, Lily and Sirius visited the Department of Mysteries. We discover those things as we travel back a few hours in time.
Friday, December 18th, 1994

Fleur Delacour wouldn't admit it out loud, but she was currently hiding in her tent. She was laying on one of the sofas in the sitting area, and reading an English romance novel to help her improve her English. She was also practicing her English, trying to perfect it, so she could talk to one of the Hogwarts students she had her eye on.

“Fleur!” Gabrielle said, as she hurried into the tent, “The Carriages are back. Which means Rose is back. Can I meet with her and go to the Ilvermorny tents?”

“Mmm,” Fleur said, staring at her book and thinking, “If the students are back, zat means dinner in ze Great 'All will be starting soon.”

“I wasn't planning on having dinner in the Great Hall,” Gabrielle said. “I was thinking something more private with Rose. I haven't seen her all day.”

“You might not be attending dinner in ze Great 'All,” Fleur said, “But I will be.”

“Why?” Gabrielle asked; then after a moment, she laughed out loud, “Are you going to ask a boy to the Ball, so everyone will stop asking you?”

“Oui,” Fleur said.

“Is that why you are reading an English romance novel?” Gabrielle asked. “Looking for an English way to ask someone out?”

“I am working on my English, zank you very much!” Fleur exclaimed.

“Zank?” Gabrielle echoed, then snorted. “Yeah, good luck there.”

Fleur huffed. “Have you asked Rose to the Ball?”

“Well, no,” Gabrielle said, “But I just thought --”

“-- zat you two will go togezzer because you are a couple?” Fleur asked. “Are you a girl or not? You're a girl dating a girl, and you don't even know what zey want! Girls want to be asked.”
“So why are you asking then?” Gabrielle said, “I'm asking because I'm a girl asking a girl. Are you asking a girl?”

“Non!” Fleur exclaimed. “I am asking because otherwise zey might not ask me!”

“And if they say 'no’?” Gabrielle asked, “Will you Allure them into saying yes?”

“I would never!” Fleur huffed. “Besides, I already know zis boy is attracted to me. My ability tells me so!”

“Is his color pink or red?” Gabrielle asked.

“Red,” Fleur said, “For now. But it is only a date. If pink by end of date zen we talk boyfriend-girlfriend talk.”

“Well, Bon chance then,” Gabrielle said. “Bon chance with asking him, and Bon Chance with getting him to understand you!”

Fleur huffed again. “Go on and see your girlfriend, you little 'Arpy. And ask 'er to ze Ball! She probably zinks you won't ask 'er!”

Gabrielle's eyes widened. Then she turned and ran out of the tent. Fleur rolled her eyes, set the book on the coffee table and stood up from the couch. She made her way out of the tent, and headed off to the castle, with a quest in mind. She was going to have a date to the Ball by the end of the night! Even if she had to go with one of those boys who were asking her just because she was pretty!

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**Carriages**

Roughly an hour after the Winter Solstice Session ended, the Thestral-drawn carriages headed back to Hogwarts with the Hogwarts students, and four members of the staff in tow. Those staff members were in one of the last Carriages at the end of the queue. Albus Dumbledore was sitting in the carriage with Minerva McGonagall, Severus Snape, and Filius Flitwick.

“Have you decided when you will hold a staff meeting to discuss Lord Davis' ridiculous bill, Albus?” Minerva asked. “We need to decide what we're going to discuss with the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee by next Sunday, before they can make their final decisions!”

Albus sighed. Minerva had asked him that same question about three times now in the past hour. He swore she was finally going senile!

“Tomorrow afternoon before dinner – five-o-clock,” Albus said. “I can’t imagine Molly Weasley contacting me about a meeting before then, so we can discuss a good time and place during the meeting tomorrow. Then once I have confirmation from Molly, I'll send word to the appropriate staff members who will be attending the meeting. Can the three of you please make sure all staff members know by five-o-clock tomorrow?”

Three nods from his staff members. Albus pulled took his pocket-watch from his robes, and glanced it.

“Almost seven-o-clock,” Albus said, “Excellent, we'll all be right in time for dinner. Do make sure
the students head on into the Great Hall for dinner after leaving the carriages.”

“Will you make any announcements about the Winter Solstice Session during dinner?” Filius said.

“Ah – I am sure the Great Hogwarts Rumor Mill will take care of all the news before I can even say a word,” Albus said.

“Ah, but some of it could be wrong!” Minerva said.

“I am sure the Daily Prophet will clear everything up in the coming days,” Severus drawled. “Let the little heathens make rumors and gossip. Maybe this will be a fine piece of education for them – what rumors to believe and what they shouldn't.”

“An excellent idea,” Albus said, nodding. “By the time the articles come out in the Daily Prophet, I'll be able to figure out which decisions made today should be something a Headmaster says to his students.”

“Like Lord Davis' bill?” Minerva asked.

“Now, now, Minerva,” Albus said, “Not every student in Hogwarts will fall under that bill. Only those who are Betrothed. I think it would be better to collect all the Betrothed students and announce it to them. And only them. And if more students get Betrothed – well, I am sure their parents or guardians would let them know about that. And we can't discuss the bill with the students until after the next Council Session next Sunday where those details will be finalized.”

“I suppose so,” Minerva said.

“What about the modified Underage Restriction law?” Filius asked.

“Now that will be something I can announce and explains when it comes out in the articles,” Albus said, “Hopefully it will come out tomorrow at breakfast, before those students leaving for Christmas Break head onto the Hogwarts Express.”

“Yes,” Severus drawled, “Wouldn't want so many underage brats to not know they can now use magic at home, around their families. Especially the Muggleborn. Oh joy .”

“Do I sense sarcasm in your tone, Severus?” Minerva asked.

“I am never sarcastic, Minerva,” Severus said. “I detest sarcasm.”

Minerva and Flitwick scoffed. Albus merely chuckled.

Soon the carriage stopped. Minerva and Severus stepped out first. Then Filius conjured a footstool outside the Carriage, and used it as stairs to step out. Then Albus stepped out last. Minerva and Severus were already guiding the students.

“Strange,” Minerva said, as glanced amongst the carriages, “I don't see Harry and Lily Potter or Sirius Black.”

“Lily informed me that she and her family would be going to the Leaky Cauldron for dinner to celebrate,” Albus said.
“Then I suppose Rose Potter must not be feeling well,” Minerva said, “Because there she is with Miss Granger. Oh, and there is Madam Bones with young Susan.”

Albus turned and saw Rose with Hermione Granger and Madam Bones.

“Perhaps Lily and Sirius asked Amelia to escort Rose back,” Minerva said, “but if she wasn't feeling well, then why didn't they just simply delay a celebration at the Leaky Cauldron until Rose felt better? And there's Tracey Davis too. If they were celebrating Sirius' Blood Adoption Bill passing Tracey and her girlfriend would be with them. Odd.”

Albus raised an eyebrow. Minerva raised a good point. Had Lily lied to Albus? Was Lily taking Sirius and Harry elsewhere? To do something that didn't involve Rose? He considered the possibilities. Perhaps they were meeting with their Account Manager at Gringotts. He knew the Potters and Blacks had the same Account Manager.

Albus decided he would contemplate this later. Dinner would beginning soon, and he hadn't gotten much to eat from the available refreshments during the session. He had an appetite!

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**Hogwarts Grounds – a couple minutes prior**

Rose Potter was sitting in one of the Thestral-drawn Carriages, as it made its way toward Hogwarts Castle. Hermione and Amelia and Susan Bones were with her. After leaving her mother, Harry and Sirius with that odd Unspeakable character at the Department of Mysteries, Rose, Amelia and Susan had made their way to the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic, where they had caught up with Hermione and the rest of her tent-mates. Hermione had chosen to accompany them back in a carriage. Now Hermione was staring out the window in the direction of the tents.

“Something wrong, Hermione?” Rose asked.

“Just wondering if Harry will be back soon or not,” Hermione said, “Whether or not I should delay dinner until he gets back."

“I'm sure their meeting with Unspeakable Croaker won't last too long,” Amelia said.

“Right, an Unspeakable,” Hermione said, wistfully, “Wish I could have gone with them. The Department of Mysteries must be an extremely interesting place to visit!”

“Never been there myself,” Amelia said. “When the Unspeakables wish to speak to me, they come to me. Whatever Unspeakable Croaker wanted to talk to them about must be quite important.”

“I'm sure Harry will tell us what happened,” Hermione said.

“Ooh, perhaps not,” Amelia said, “Meetings with Unspeakables – you can’t just bandy about information like that to anyone. They might be required not to tell anyone what was discussed.”

Hermione frowned and nodded, still staring out the window. Soon the carriage stopped, and Rose stepped out first.

“You joining me and Remus in the House Potter tent?” Rose asked Amelia, as the older witch stepped out of the Carriage.
“I'll be down there in a few minutes,” Amelia said, “I'm going to hang out with Susan for a bit. If Sirius arrives before I get down there, tell him I'll be there soon.”

“Alright,” Rose said.

Meanwhile, Hermione had joined up with her tent-mates, including Tonks. So Rose ran to join them as they headed toward the Ilvermorny Tents. Midway through the journey, however, she noticed Gabrielle running in her direction from the Beauxbatons Camp. She grinned, split away from the group of girls and hurried toward Gabrielle. She met Gabrielle in the middle, and pulled her into a hug.

“Finally!” Gabrielle said, “Been waiting all day. Our Christmas Break started today, so I had no classes, and it got so boring without you around!”

Rose grinned, backed away from the hug, and pecked Gabrielle on the lips.

“Missed you too, *mon Ange*,” Rose said; her girlfriend glowed at hearing her nickname in French, “You're lucky we're back this soon. Could have been there until midnight!”

“Midnight?!?” Gabrielle asked, “Then I wouldn't have seen you all day. We haven't been apart that long since we became a couple.”

“Might have been good practice though,” Rose said, as she took Gabrielle’s hand and headed toward the House Potter Tent. “Aren't you going back to France for a week, the day after the Yule Ball?”

“Yeah,” Gabrielle said, frowning. “Won't see you until the New Year's Eve Party.”

Rose smiled. What Gabrielle didn't know — because Rose wanted to keep it a surprise — was that one of Gabrielle’s birthday gifts would be a “Marauder Mirror” — a communication mirror Sirius and Remus invented just like the one she and her friends back home had. Once a week, every week she’d talk to her friends over the communication mirrors. None of them knew she had a girlfriend though. They knew of her sexuality — she had told them in September, and all of her friends supported her. She hadn't mentioned one word about her girlfriend to them. Perhaps she could introduce Gabrielle to them after Gabrielle found out about the mirrors?

“Though I suppose one week away is going to be good practice too,” Gabrielle said. “Will let us know if we can survive a long-distance relationship.”

“Do you think we can?” Rose asked, frowning; they hadn't discussed that since their very first date.

“I believe so,” Gabrielle said, “But I guess we'll find out.”

“Mnhmm,” Rose said, “So why aren't you asking me about what happened at the Winter Solstice Session?”

“Bleh!” Gabrielle exclaimed, in a mock-disgusted tone, “English politics. Are you going to summarize it to Remus, or let your mother and Sirius do it?”

“I'll give him a few interesting details,” Rose said.

“Then I suppose I'll listen in when you tell him,” Gabrielle said, “But don't blame me if I am not interested. English politicians are so... stuffy.”
“Yeah, I got that impression myself,” Rose said, grinning.

Soon they were feet away from the tent.

“Before we go in,” Gabrielle said, “I need to ask you something.”

“Alright,” Rose said.

“Rose Potter, will you do me the honor of accompanying me to the Yule Ball?” Gabrielle asked.

“Finally!” Rose said, grinning, “I was thinking of asking you myself! Of course I'll go with you, mon Ange!”

“I'm sorry I didn't ask until now,” Gabrielle said, “I would have but – and Fleur told me – and I well, I had just assumed --”

“That we'd be going together, because we're a couple?” Rose asked.

“Yeah,” Gabrielle said, “Fleur basically said I shouldn't be so assuming.”

“Well, next time you'll know,” Rose said, grinning. “And if you don't, then I'll be the one asking you on a date, silly!”

Gabrielle blushed and grinned. This time it was her, who leaned in for a peck on the lips.

“Mmm, I want to kiss you longer,” Gabrielle said, “but I think we can wait until the Yule Ball to make it special.”

“I'd like that,” Rose said, smiling.

She pulled Gabrielle toward the tent and stepped inside. Remus was lounging on a sofa, reading a book. He laid the book face-down on his chest when he saw Rose and Gabrielle enter.

“You're back!” Remus said, sitting up, “Didn't last until midnight as feared then? Where's your mother, Harry and Sirius?”

“Mom got a note from an Unspeakable – I think Amelia called him Croaker?” Rose said, “Anyway, the Unspeakable wanted to meet with Mom, Harry and Sirius. Last time I saw them, they were heading to the Department of Mysteries, and I left with Amelia and Susan.”

“Hmm, I see,” Remus said, nodding. “I think I know what they're talking about. Did you have fun?”

“It was... interesting,” Rose said, “A lot of good stuff happened. “But also some very bad stuff.”

“Uh-oh,” Remus said, frowning, “Let's sit at the table. Where are my manners? Good evening, Gabrielle.”

“Good evening, Remus,” Gabrielle said.

Rose sat down with Gabrielle and Remus at the dining room table.
“So do you want to hear bad news or good news first?” Rose asked.

“How much good stuff and how much bad?” Remus asked.

“Only one very big bad thing,” Rose said, “And a few good things.”

“I think we better start with the bad then,” Remus said, sighing, “Tell me the Blood adoption passed and the 'Pureblood Wives Only' bill didn't.”

“Those went our way,” Rose said, grinning.

Remus sighed in relief and relaxed against his chair, “Thank Merlin. So what is the bad thing that is very big bad?”

“Tracey's ex-Daddy,” Rose said, “He brought forth a bill that would also modify the Pureblood Heritage Act, like the 'Pureblood Wives Only' bill would. Only this one passed.”

“Mmhmm,” Remus said, “And what was the bill about?”

Rose inhaled and exhaled. She looked at Gabrielle, then looked back at Remus.

“Witches in Betrothal Contracts sixteen years and older,” Rose said, “have to either be pregnant with their Betrothed's child, or be a mother of their Betrothed's child by seventeen years old,”

Gabrielle's jaw dropped and her eyes widened.

Remus coughed loudly. “Please tell me you're joking. Sirius didn't tell you to pull this one on me, did he?”

“No, he didn't,” Rose said. “It really happened. It affects all witches and wizards in Betrothal Contracts sixteen and older. These girls will have to become pregnant. And Harry is now worried that Daphne might have to, and Hermione might have to if she gets Betrothed too. But Mom and Sirius and Amelia already told us it wouldn't happen. We'd all be back in America before it happened.”

Remus stared at Rose, with a shocked expression. “How did that bill pass? There were so many parents there! It had to be argued greatly! I imagine there must have been a pretty good debate with that one, huh?”

“No, not at all,” Rose said, shaking her head. “Harry said Lord Davis used – what was it called – 'scare tactics’?”

“Fear-mongering,” Remus said, “He made everyone afraid of something?”

“Yeah,” Rose said, “Um... Mom was the only one to argue about it. And everything she argued against, Lord Davis had things to argue right back. And then he basically attacked her – verbally that is. Mom asked Lord Davis if he was mad to propose witches being mothers or pregnant at seventeen. She argued about witches getting jobs, and knowing their Betrothed before they planned to have kids. But Lord Davis was ready for it all...”

Rose described everything. She could remember it all. How Lord Davis countered the job and 'getting to know each other' arguments, how he had asked Augusta Longbottom about Ginny and
Neville. And then how Lord Davis mentioned her father.

“He... he told her that she shouldn't let others make her mistake,” Rose said, frowning, “How Harry barely got to know Dad. And how I never did get to know him before he...”

She felt tears coming down her cheeks – and she hadn't even realized they had been pooling in her eyes. Gabrielle scooted her chair over next to Rose's and hugged her. Rose sniffled into Gabrielle's shoulder.

“Lord Davis knew where to hurt your mother,” Remus said, his face twisted in anger, “Not with curses or hexes. With the memory of your father. I can see how bringing that up would make others afraid. He told everyone in the Council that they shouldn't make the same – as he put it – 'mistake' your father did, right? How sixteen year olds and up should have children because they might not get to if something happened to their Betrothed or themselves.”

“Yeah,” Rose said, backing out of her girlfriend's hug, and wiping her tears. “He mentioned the riot at the Quidditch World Cup. How future Lords could have died. Later, Mom, Sirius and Amelia said the law wouldn't matter. Before long Voldemort might come back, and start another war. And then everyone would realize what Lord Davis said.”

“They're probably right,” Remus said, “So how did the votes for the bill go? I imagine the Great Alliance voted against?”

“Yeah, but most approved,” Rose said, “Even a great part of the Light Alliance. Lord Castor said Dumbledore even approved of the bill!”

Remus frowned. “Did he? But won't Hogwarts be affected by this? I thought he'd argue due to that.”

“Hogwarts will definitely be affected,” Rose said. “Hogwarts Staff and the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee will meet together. Apparently there will be modifications to Lord Davis' bill, but the idea of the bill will stick.”

“Sixteen year olds and up will still be required to be pregnant by seventeen,” Remus said, then he snorted. “Not everyone is that lucky. Sometimes it takes a while to get pregnant, even with constant attempts -- especially at that young of age. Hogwarts staff, you said? Well, I am sure Madam Pomfrey will discuss it with the staff, and the committee. I think we can definitely expect modifications. I'd love to get a look at your mother's memory of that event. Something tells me Lord Davis didn't plan out his bill much. Especially if the Committee has to modify it.”

“He didn't give that many details out at all,” Rose said. “He just said 'Why wait until the Betrothed Witches and Wizards are twenty-one to have kids? They'll be married at seventeen.'”

“I can't believe so many people agreed to it,” Remus said. “Fear-mongering only does so much. There are so many parents on the Council. Parents of teens affected by this. Sounds like somebody was trying to benefit from this, and Lord Davis doesn't sound like the type.”

“So,” Gabrielle said, “You mean it wasn't his bill? He was just --”

“Parroting?” Remus suggested.

“Yeah,” Gabrielle said.
“Very likely,” Remus said. “His strategy was give very few details, then scare everyone into agreeing with him. It sounds as if he didn't remember the entire bill he was supposed to give. Just important details.”

“He was pretty angry,” Rose said. “Just a little while prior, he had argued against Sirius' Blood Adoption for Tracey, and Tracey was given permission to speak her mind about it. She said a lot of things Lord Davis didn't like – and then Lord Davis tried to save face, and basically said he'd Betroth Tracey to Harry if Tracey was his daughter again. Then he tried to make a challenge that the Council should vote for him to have custody of Tracey again. But making a challenge in reaction to a challenge in the same session is illegal. And Tracey reminded him of that.”

“So he got pretty mad,” Remus guessed.

“Yes,” Rose said, “Then Tracey said Lord Davis was probably lying, and if he got custody of her, he'd probably Betroth her to the boy he wanted to before he disowned her.”

“Probably,” Remus said, nodding. “Tracey isn't in a Betrothal Contract. She isn't affected by his bill. But if she got Betrothed to someone who stayed in Britain – so not Harry –”

“She'd end up pregnant before seventeen!” Rose said.

“Yes,” Remus said, “I imagine he was angry, and forgetting whatever he was supposed to 'parrot' was due to him wanting revenge Tracey and Sirius. He even forgot his bill doesn't affect her. It might affect Tracey's girlfriend, but Daphne is likely going to be in America with Harry by the time she is sixteen or seventeen. She'll be an American citizen. So it won't affect her.”

“Actually it might,” Rose said, “Daphne discussed something, and thankfully it wasn't discussed today.”

“What wasn't discussed?” Remus asked.

“Dual-citizen law,” Rose said.

“Daphne would have to heed British laws if she became a dual-citizen in America,” Remus said, “Yeah, that would be pretty bad.”

“Let's hope it never happens,” Gabrielle said.

Rose nodded, agreeing with her girlfriend. She then began giving the good news.

_Hogwarts – Great Hall – Head Table – Half-an-hour later_

Severus sneezed.

“Are you catching a cold, Severus?” Minerva asked.

“Someone somewhere is talking about me without my knowledge!” Severus snarled.

“Probably Harry Potter,” Minerva said, “isn't that who you've blamed these ridiculous things about recently. Severus?”
“Now who is being sarcastic,” Severus drawled.

He sneezed again. This time violently.

“Someone is discussing very bad things about me behind my back!” Severus snarled. “Whoever is doing it will rue this day!”

“Tissue, Severus?” Albus asked, nonchalantly. “Or perhaps a napkin?”

Minerva offered Severus a napkin. Severus glared at her, while several of his fellow staff chuckled at him.

Elsewhere In the Great Hall

Fleur was currently eating dinner in the Great Hall of Hogwarts, and talking to a few older Ravenclaws she had gotten to know while sitting at the table whenever she chose to eat in the Great Hall. A few boys were looking in her direction, obviously wanting to ask her on a date to the Ball. But the Ravenclaw girls kept giving them all glares that told them to leave her alone.

“Don't you have a date yet, Fleur?” one of the Ravenclaw girls asked. “I thought one of those handsome Beauxbatons boys would have asked you.”

“I turned zem all down,” Fleur said. “I am interested in one boy 'ere at 'Ogwarts.”

“Is he single?” another Ravenclaw girl asked.

Fleur frowned. “I zink so. I am not sure. Oh, Merde! What if I 'ave lost my chance?”

“Who is it?” the first Ravenclaw asked. “Maybe we know if they're single.”

Fleur was about to answer when she saw the boy stand and make his way out of the hall, followed by a group of girls. Fleur frowned. One of them had to be his girlfriend. No... she needed to take her chance. What if she was wrong? What if he said yes?

“I am finished,” Fleur said, “I am going to ask 'im.”

“Ooh, I see who it is!” one of the Ravenclaw girls said, giggling, “Good luck, Fleur!”

Fleur grinned and hurried off out of the Great Hall, as quick as her feet could take her. The boy, Cedric Diggory, was surrounded by those girls again. When he caught her looking, he smiled, and said something to the girls. They frowned, complained for a moment, and Cedric pushed past them. The girls walked off separate ways – dungeons or to Grand Staircase – as Cedric walked over to her.

“May I help you, Miss Delacour?” Cedric asked.

“Oui, Cedric Diggory,” Fleur said.

Cedric blinked. “You know who I am?”

“I 'ave 'eard some girls speak of you,” Fleur said, “I 'ave – um – admired you from afar. I am sorry my English isn't so good.”
“I think it is pretty good,” Cedric said.

“I am sorry I interrupted your talk,” Fleur said, “I am sure you were just looking to go off and spend your evening with your girlfriend.”

“Those girls,” Cedric asked, “They were hoping I'd dance with them all at the Ball. I don't have a date yet. Haven't found the right one. Well, I thought I had – but she got expelled at the end of November.”


“Cho Chang,” Cedric said, “I was going to ask her, but after what happened between her and Lord Potter – the Love Potion thing.” He shuddered. “Glad she wasn't going for me.”

“Oui, good zing,” Fleur said.

She inhaled and exhaled. She wanted to ask him. He was single! No date!”

“Hey! You!” a boy screamed behind her.

Fleur turned and saw a ginger-haired boy running toward her and Cedric.

“Don't let him ask you to the ball!” the boy said, “Get away from her, Diggory! I'm asking her. Go to Ball with me!”

Fleur sniffed. “Go away, little boy.”

“Go to the ball with me!” the boy said.

“Turn away, Cedric, please – close your eyes and ears,” Fleur said.

Cedric raised his eyebrows. Then he nodded and closed his eyes. He turned around, and plugged his ears.

Fleur turned and glared at the ginger-hair boy, bringing forth the bad part of her Allure. The kind that scared stupid little boys and rude men away.

“You will go to your dormitory, boy,” Fleur said. “You will ask nobody to ze Ball. And you will not attend ze Ball. It would be better if you went 'ome tomorrow with ze rest of ze little children too immature to attend a Ball, and tell your Mummy you couldn't go because every girl 'ates you because you have bad hygiene, bad table manners and don't know how to act around the better sex! Do you understand me?”

“Yes,” the boy said, in a dazed tone.

“Good,” Fleur said, “Now go.”

The boy ran toward the Grand Staircase. Fleur inhaled and exhaled, calming herself. Then she poked Cedric on the back. He turned around.

“Sorry about zat,” Fleur said, “Some boys just don't know how to say 'no'. You weren't affected by
my Allure, were you?”

“Allure?” Cedric asked.

“I had to use Allure to tell him to leave,” Fleur said.

“Well, I am still here,” Cedric said. “So I guess not. Say... do you have a date to the Ball?”

“Non – I am not attracted to anyone who has asked me,” Fleur said, then smiled. “But that might change very soon.”

“Would you accompany me to the Yule Ball, Champion Delacour?” Cedric asked.

“Are you prepared to dance in front of everyone – champions get the first dance of the night,” Fleur said.

“I am,” Cedric said.

“Then I would be honored to go to ze ball with you, Cedric Diggory,” Fleur said.

“Brilliant,” Cedric said, “I will... meet you at your camp... well, I'll be there in enough time to accompany you back here. We will not be late.”

“I look forward to it,” Fleur said, “Zank you.”

“You are most welcome,” Cedric said, “Have a good evening, Champion Delacour.”

He took one of her hands and kissed her knuckles. She blushed and giggled.

“Good evening,” Fleur said.

She smiled, turned and headed off out onto the Grounds. She got the boy she wanted. And what a handsome, polite, perfect boy he was!

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**Riddle Manor – Little Hangleton**

Lord Voldemort was cranky. And not because he looked like a baby. He was cranky because certain parts of his plans were not going well at all. Bartemius Crouch, Junior had been his most trusted, most important minion – er – follower. He had a very important job to do. Well, more than one important job to do. Tonight the man had given him some bad news.

“Do you understand why I changed my well-thought-out plans at the last minute, Barty?” Voldemort asked his minion, “Do you? I had planned that you would take over the Defense Against the Dark Arts position at Hogwarts. Disguising yourself as the Professor using Polyjuice. But you made a suggestion, and I listened to it. You wanted revenge your on your father, Barty. You wanted to ruin his reputation, then ruin him. So I allowed you to pose as him instead. Now, you were able to get the Longbottom boy into the tournament. And you have been a good spy at Hogwarts. But today, you disappointed me.”

“Yes, My Lord,” said the bowing Barty Crouch, Junior.
“I told you to make sure no bills were passed during the Winter Solstice Session that made our plans more difficult!” Voldemort hissed, “I told you to make sure that bills that helped us did pass!”

“My Lord – the Dementor bill,” Barty said.

Voldemort sighed. He desperately wanted to Crucio the man.

“The Dementor bill,” Voldemort said, “Ah yes, you said it did pass. But there was a complication.”

“Dumbledore,” Barty said.

“Dumbledore has to take it to the ICW,” Where it might not pass!”

“My father is not part of the ICW, My Lord,” Barty said, “There is no way I could influence that.”

“Lucius?” Voldemort asked, glaring at the man who had prostrated himself behind Barty.

“He is right, my Lord,” Lucius Malfoy said. “The ICW has to approve all laws regarding Azkaban. Wizengamot is merely one step.”

Voldemort sighed. “Fine. I admit that was not your fault, Barty. But... the other Bill that is your fault.”

“I argued against it, My Lord,” Barty said.

“You don’t argue enough!” Voldemort snarled. “The bill passed, and now the Unforgivable Curses are Taboo! I want to Cruciate you until blood drips from your eyes and ears, and I cannot do it! Aurors and Hit-Wizards would be here! Do you think we can stop a team of Aurors and Hit-Wizards!”

“No, my Lord,” Barty said, “We would stand a chance. But – I do not believe we would succeed.”

“I would live, because I will live forever,” Voldemort said, “and even if I could kill them all, I’d be stuck here because you two would be dead! And nobody else knows I am here! I would be too weak to do anything! I My homonculus would die, and I would have to retreat again, and my plans would be ruined! All because of you!”

“I could bring more of your followers, my Lord,” Barty said.

“No,” Voldemort snarled. “I cannot risk a mutiny while I am in this body. You two are my most trusted – but if anyone else sees me this weak, they would betray me, because they are greedy.”

“I would kill anyone who dares!” Barty snarled.

“Who made that blasted bill anyway??” Voldemort growled.

“Augusta Longbottom, My Lord,” Barty said, “The Grandmother of the boy who is one of your targets.”

“Augusta Longbottom,” Voldemort hissed, “Mmm... yes. I believe a new change of plans is in order for her grandson. I will capture her grandson, torture him, but keep him alive, until we capture Augusta Longbottom. Then we will torture both of them, and see who is the last to survive. And
then I kill them too!"

“A good plan, My Lord,” Barty said. “Do we still need Potter?”

“Of course we need Potter!” Voldemort hissed. “I will be using Potter's blood for the ritual! Then I will kill him, just like I killed his father thirteen years ago!”

“It will be a thrill to watch, My Lord,” Barty said.

“Do you know what will be a thrill to watch?” Voldemort asked.

“What, My Lord?” Barty asked.

“Beg me to tell you,” Voldemort said.

“I beg you to tell me, My Lord,” Barty said. said, “I wish to know.”

“I will be very thrilled to watch you torture yourself,” Voldemort said, “Pound your head repeatedly into that wall until you knock yourself out!”

“As you wish, my Lord,” Barty said.

He stood, walked over to one of the walls in the room.


“Watch him, Lucius,” Voldemort said.

Thud.

“Yes, My Lord,” Lucius said, as he sat back on his haunches and looked at Barty.

Thud.

“Do you see, Lucius?” Voldemort asked. “That is why he is my most valuable servant.”

“Thud.”

“He will torture himself,” Voldemort said, “When I cannot.”

“Thud.

“Make sure he is conscious, and ready to do his job tomorrow, before he leaves,” Voldemort said. “And nurse Nagini for me! All this yelling made me hungry!”

Thud.

“Yes, My Lord,” Lucius Malfoy said.

Thud. Barty Crouch, Junior fell to the ground, face bloodied, and unconscious. Voldemort grinned.
Hmm... should I have put a warning of some type for that last scene? Can't use Cruciatius? Adapt and find better ways!

So now we know that Barty Crouch Junior is posing as his father.

I loved writing Fleur's Allure to Ron. Is Fleur and Cedric a good pairing?

Three guesses why Severus was sneezing. Do you only need one?

Next Chapter: Harry, Lily and Co. return to the Ilvermorny Tents. Harry speaks to Hermione and the girls, while Lily, and Sirius talk to Remus and Amelia.
One reviewer is a little confused about dual-citizenship (and the workings of Magical Government versus Muggle Government). So I decided to do a little info-dump in this chapter, since it could become important in the future of the story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Friday, December 18th, 1994

Harry Potter was currently sitting in a Thestral-Drawn Carriage with Lily and Sirius as it made its way up to Hogwarts.

“I don't get why we couldn't run to the tents in our Animagus forms,” Sirius said.

“Three reasons,” Lily said. “One, I'm not entirely sure Albus knows about Tiger-Lily. Given that I am the only Animagus of us three who Albus does not know about, I would very much like to keep it that way, so there is a chance we can surprise him with it. Two. Harry is carrying the Prophecy Orb in his robes, and I'd rather not him to drop it while we were running.”

Harry clutched at the mass in his robes -- which was the bag that held the Prophecy Orb -- in his robes protectively.

“Three,” Lily said, “We're going to talk about Severus before we arrive.”

“Why do you keep saying his first name?” Sirius asked, “Why aren't you more angry? You should be furious!”

“She is,” Harry said, “She just doesn't want to show it in front of me.”

“You are entirely too smart for your own good,” Lily said, with a smile.

Harry grinned.

“Oh, thank Merlin!” Sirius said, “For a while there, you had me. I thought you were going mad talking about redemption!”

“It was practice, Sirius,” Lily said, “Practice in front of Algernon, to see if I could do a convincing manner in front of others, such as Severus and Albus. Algernon didn't seem to notice, so I think it worked.”

“So it was an act?” Sirius asked.

“Yes,” Lily said, “However...”

“Uh-oh,” Sirius said.
“I still think he'd be useful in the triple-agent role,” Lily said, “Like Harry alluded to.”

“Uh-oh is right,” Sirius said, “Merlin bless it, Lily! Listen to me. We cannot trust him. Backstabbing! He has a history of it. Backstabbing Voldemort so he can spy for Dumbledore! If he accepts to be our triple-agent, he'll be backstabbing Dumbledore. How do you know he won't do the same to us?! Oh, right. Because he's in love with you.”


“Harry James Potter!” Lily scolded.

“Am I wrong?” Harry asked.

“No, but you didn't need to say such things,” Lily said.

“He hates me, he hates Remus,” Sirius said, “I am quite sure he hates Harry for being a clone of James, and the fact that he is the son of his arch-rival, and the woman he lusts over. And I don't even want to think what he thinks of Rose, since she's a mini-you!”

Harry shuddered. “That's it. I'm ordering Rose to stay away from him.”

“No, I will,” Lily said.

“Aha!” Sirius said, “So you don't trust him! And you talk of triple-agents! We don't need him to spy on Dumbledore! We have Algernon Croaker, and his Spying Bowl for that! When Voldemort comes back, Snape will tell Dumbledore what Voldemort tells him, and Algie will tell us! We do not need him!”

“No, we don't need him,” Lily said, “But you just said we can't kill him either.”

Sirius raised his eyebrows as he looked at her. Then he pouted, thoughtfully. Then he growled.

“Damn it!” Sirius said, “Now you're making me see sense! Do you understand what I want to do to that man? Severus is the reason --”

“Yes, he's one of the reasons James is dead,” Lily said. “I heard you back there. 'Got his ultimate revenge'. Were you even listening to yourself? James bullied Severus? Yes, he did. But so did you!”

“Yes! I did!” Sirius said, “And I don't like that I did it! James and I hated him from day one, because he was so proud to be a Slytherin, he boasted about it on the Hogwarts Express hours before he was Sorted! If I am right, and he got his revenge on James, then he would want to get his revenge on me and Remus. Do you want that?! Do you?!”

“No, of course not,” Lily said.

“Then quit saying we need him,” Sirius said. “Unless we can get good information from him, through Algernon, he's gone. Either from my wand, yours, or through that damnable Veil! And if it leads into a cavern in Timbuktu, I hope the fall is only far enough to shatter his legs, arms and enough bones that he dies a slow, painful death! Because I wouldn't be able to give him one otherwise! He lives until he outlives his usefulness. Whether it mean information, or making one Merlin-be-damned wrong move to any of us!”
“If he crosses any of us, of course he's gone,” Lily said. “But if he doesn't, then we do need him.”

“I know we do!” Sirius said. “I just wish we didn't.”

“So you will behave?” Lily asked.

“As long as he does,” Sirius asked, through gritted teeth.

“Good,” Lily said, “Now, calm down, Sirius. I imagine Amelia is still here. Do you want to be angry in front of her?”

“She'll probably be angry when we tell her,” Sirius said.

“Are you going to her Manor tonight?” Lily asked.

“Well, I can't have a celebration shag or five in my bedroom in the tent!” Sirius said, grinning.

“You be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed tomorrow morning,” Lily said, “Algernon wants to meet you at noon, so I want you here at ten, and leaving with Harry by ten-thirty to go to Gringotts.”

“Yes, Mom,” Sirius said.

Lily rolled her eyes. “Harry? I assume you want to talk to Hermione and the girls when we arrive?”

“Yes, Mom,” Harry said.

“You will put the Orb at the bottom of one of your trunks before you go into the girls' tent,” Lily said. “Only you, or I, are allowed in your bedroom until you leave tomorrow to take the Orb to Gringotts.”

“Alright,” Harry said. “Er... what can I tell the girls about the Department visit?”

Lily groaned. “I wish you hadn't asked that. Astoria will be in there. And she's much too young to hear some of that. But we cannot tell any of them – not even Hermione – about the Horcruxes. Not any of it!”

“I know, Mom,” Harry said, “I don't know if any of them know Occlumency. I think Hermione's been practicing meditation, but she's nowhere close to Occlumency.”

Lily sighed. “We do need to teach that soon. Alright, starting in January, while you are duel-training with Sirius during the afternoons after class, they're learning Occlumency from me and Remus. Anyway! It will be your decision alone whether to tell them about the Prophecy.”

“I already hinted to all of them that I have something to do with defeating Voldemort,” Harry said, “Even Astoria. It was a guessing game then, but we were sure we were right.”

“Well, then I suppose they'll take it fairly well then,” Lily said, sighing, “Fine. But don't tell them anything about Dumbledore being an apparent Dark Lord. I know he's looking for any information he can get from us or the girls.”

“I'll tell them to be careful around him, or Snape, and to never look them in the eyes,” Harry
promised.

“Good,” Lily said, “And do not tell any of them about Snape. Tell them about the Prophecy if you must. Tell them about the Department itself! But nothing else! Just what we need, for them to learn that some old pervert is using a Scrying Bowl, and them all scared to take showers!”

Sirius snorted. Lily glared at him.

“Don't tell me you wouldn't abuse a Scrying Bowl like that!” she huffed.

“Not with underage kids!” Sirius argued, “Nor with my cousin! Merlin!”

“Pervert,” Lily muttered.

Sirius sighed. “I should have transformed and ran as Padfoot as you were getting into the carriage. Lily? There's something I've been meaning to ask. Why didn't you lay claim to Rowena Ravenclaw’s Diadem? You are Lady Ravenclaw, after all.”

“It belongs to Hogwarts,” Lily said. “It would collect dust in the Potter Family Vault until after Voldemort is dead, and I can give it to Hogwarts. The title of Lady Ravenclaw, to me, is nothing more than three votes in a government body, in a country I no longer belong to, and family I only just knew I belonged to. I still don't see myself as a Pureblood. It is better for the Diadem to stay in Algie's care until it can be presented to Hogwarts.”

Harry looked out the window of the carriage, as he protectively held the orb within his robes. He wondered exactly what he was going to say to Hermione and their friends. He knew they would be mad at him for keeping secrets from them – Hermione definitely would. But he would say these were Unspeakable secrets, and an Unspeakable trusted him to keep them. Hopefully she would understand that. He searched the darkness of the Grounds, and could barely see the tents in the distance. He wondered if Hermione had waited to have dinner with him, or had eaten already. Those refreshments in the corridor outside the Council Room seemed so long ago.

Hogwarts Five Plus Tonks' Tent

Hermione stepped into the tent, carrying two plates of food. Daphne and Tracey were cuddled up together on one of the sofas. Luna was relaxing in a chair, reading the latest issue of the Quibbler which had come out that morning, Tonks was in another chair, reading some type of fashion magazine, and Astoria was laying on the other sofa, looking as if she was ready to fall asleep.

“... never saw you as a fashion-magazine type of woman, Tonks,” Daphne said.

“I look through it for the models mostly,” Tonks said.

“Female models,” Daphne said, “Tonks... is there something you need to tell us?”

Tonks snorted. “I am looking for new styles for inspiration! You don't think my various appearances come naturally, do you?!?”

“Ooh,” Daphne said, nodding, “Makes sense. What do you have there, Hermione?”

“I do believe I spotted a Carriage coming up the driveway,” Hermione said, “I think Harry's back
with Lily and Sirius, and unless they stopped off to get a bite to eat, I bet he's terribly hungry. And so am I. So I put together a couple plates.”

“Aw, look at you,” Daphne cooed, “Acting like the little wife making dinner for her husband when he comes home.”

“I think you're in the more proper position for that role, don't you, Daphne?” Hermione countered, as she applied warming charms to both plates, “You are Betrothed to him, remember?”

Daphne sighed. “Don't remind me. That Merlin-be-damned law. I swear, Tracey. Next time I see that ex-father of yours, I'm going to stick my wand up where the sun don't shine!”

“You'll have to get in line, love,” Tracey said.

“Oh, please,” Hermione said to Tracey, “I think you already got in a few shots in on Lord Davis already. I'm still catching myself grin when I remember that speech of yours.”

Hermione expected a smile from Tracey. She didn't get one.

“I think he said those things to Lily today,” Tracey said. “Because he was getting revenge for what Lily, Harry and Sirius did to him – both the Blood Adoption, and all that disowning business last month. Lord Davis knows the rules of the Wizengamot, he knows he couldn't have countered Sirius' bill with one of his own to claim me back into his custody. And yet he tried to do it. I think he did that Teen Pregnancy Modification to target me ... at least originally. And maybe Daphne.”

“Really?” Hermione asked.

“Yes,” Tracey said. “He likely thought he'd somehow get me back into his custody, and he'd put me into a Betrothal Contract, then I'd have to get pregnant at sixteen because of his bill. He'd break me and Daphne up that way. And then with Daphne – well, I don't think he understands my relationship with her at all. I think he figured if I saw her belly swelling with Harry's baby, that I'd somehow think it was confirmation she was cheating on me. At least in his sad little mind.”

“Yeah, well,” Daphne said, “Even if it is Harry's plans to make us all American citizens by this summer, I don't think it will work.”

“That whole dual-citizen thing?” Hermione asked, “I don't get that. Citizenship is a person's choice, not a government's.”

“Maybe not a Muggle government,” Daphne said. “Bills and laws in the Magical government can be about just about anything.”

“Yeah,” Tonks said, agreeing, “A Muggle government can't sentence sixteen year old girls to becoming pregnant, just to save the next generation of children. Muggles are well-populated around the world – no matter what some Pureblood Supremacists want to believe. Muggles don't have a Heritage Act preserving the next generation. Like it or not the wizarding world is full of Purebloods who want nothing more than to preserve the Pureblood bloodline, even through incest and inbreeding with some of the more crazier Houses and families.

“Daphne, Astoria, Tracey, Luna, they're all purebloods. British Purebloods of important British Houses. Luna's now a part of a Noble House – a member of the government. Harry's a Pureblood. Hell, today we could have seen a law passed today where Harry would have had to marry three
“Ever since the Pureblood Heritage Act was created,” Daphne said, “The British Wizarding World – at least the Pureblood citizens have been hell-bent on preserving the bloodlines. Yes, even the Light Alliance. I mean... look at Neville and Ginny. They've been Betrothed since they were either in nappies or barely out of them. Two Light families there, and they're Purebloods. A Betrothal Contract stemmed from the Heritage Act. I am thoroughly surprised that every pureblood in this castle isn't Betrothed. Astoria's had offers, but Daddy's never agreed to any. Luna?”

“Daddy's received offers, but he burns them all,” Luna said. “But yes, we do get them.”

“You see?” Daphne asked. “If a Pureblood isn't Betrothed, it is simply because either their parents haven't gotten the right Contract, or they're one of the rare ones who want their children to find their own love. And if they can't, then they'll accept a Betrothal Contract when they finish their education.

“We're getting off-topic. Anyway, Four pureblood girls in here, and Harry's been recently discovered as a Pureblood. You heard Lord Davis before he got angry and revealed his true plan. He might have agreed to Betroth Tracey to Harry – though he didn't name Harry. Not a Wife's Consort to me, but Betrothal to Harry. Just so there's be a new generation of Pureblood Potters, Peverells, Gryffindors, whatever. Wizarding Great Britain doesn't want to lose any more extinct Houses. Especially Pureblood dominant Houses. That would mean – to the Pureblood Supremacists anyway – that our way of life is slowly disappearing. None of the Supremacists wants to marry a Muggleborn or have babies with them. Someone like Draco Malfoy – if he had a sister, he'd be more prepared to have a child with her, more than he would with you, Hermione.”

“Thank Merlin,” Hermione muttered, “But I can understand that. After all, that is what Brocklehurst, Chang and their crew said to me 'Marry Finch-Fletchley, because at least he is your equal.”

“Muggleborns marrying Muggleborns,” Tracey said, nodding. “No harm to Pureblood bloodlines there. Another Pureblood to marry another Pureblood.”

“So what you're saying is,” Hermione said, “if the British Wizengamot wants to force us to remain British citizens, just so we'd follow the British laws, get Betrothed and have babies by seventeen?”

“Well, not you, because you're Muggleborn,” Daphne said. “They don't care if you leave Britain. Hell, they would pay you to leave, so you don't taint a bloodline. But us? Yes, if they feel we're not coming back to Britain, then they'll pass a law for Dual-citzenry, just because they can. Lived in America six months, or thirteen years? Doesn't matter. Born in Britain, you're a British citizen, at least with a dual-citizenship law. And the Wizengamot will do it just because they can. They're not limited by 'Muggle Government' laws, because they don't care about them.”

“Oh, yeah, and there's one other thing you might have forgotten,” Tonks said, “Do you honestly believe the Magical Government or Ministry of Magic even cares about Her Majesty, the Queen? Hermione, she's a Muggle. You know how much of the magical world looks upon Muggles, no matter how powerful they are. Hell, one of my Trainers sometimes works as undercover security for the Muggle Prime Minister. You know the Muggle Prime Minister knows about us, right? He meets with the Minister of Magic sometimes during crises? The new Minister, whoever it will be, will be meeting with them once they take office.”

Hermione nodded. She had read about that.

“He has an actual magical moving portrait inside his Muggle office,” Tonks said, “And that Trainer I
mentioned – you should hear how he talks about how condescending the Minister speaks to the Muggle Prime Minister? Why are they condescending?”

“Because Muggles are below them,” Hermione said.

“Exactly,” Tonks said. “So the Queen, the Muggle Prime Minister, the Muggle Government – the Wizengamot doesn't give a damn about any of them, or the way they do their laws. Because they are Muggles. The Ministry and the Wizengamot care about the future of Wizarding Great Britain, and if passing mad laws like Lord Davis' law today, or a dual-citizenship, just to preserve the future they want. They're going to do it.”

“But Harry said something about the MACUSA stopping them,” Hermione said. “If the British Ministry attempts to keep American citizens here.”

Tonks snorted. “It would take a harsh reality check that the American Wizarding World is greater than the British one, before they leave American citizens alone.”

“The scary thing is,” Luna said, “It might very well come to that.”

Hermione stared at Luna. “Is this one of your 'Seer predictions' or your own opinion?”

Hermione knew all about Luna's so-called 'Seer predictions'. She didn't want to believe them. But some things Luna had predicted in the past that she had passed off as small talk or opinions... some of them came true.

Luna cocked her head and looked at Hermione. “You know me, Hermione... sometimes I can never tell.”

Every girl besides Luna had shivered at that. Even Astoria, who had fallen asleep, during the conversation, had done so unconsciously.

**Meanwhile....**

Harry shut the lid of his clothing trunk closed and stood up. The Prophecy Orb was now sitting at the bottom of it, hidden beneath a pile of clothes. It would stay there until the following morning. Harry walked back out. Lily, Sirius, Amelia and Remus were sitting at the table. According to Remus, Rose and Gabrielle were having a private, late dinner date in the cafeteria since they missed out on being around each other all day.

“It is a bit past eight-o-clock, Harry,” Lily said, “Be back in here here by ten-o-clock for bed. You have to get up and prepare for your morning visit to London.”

“I know, Mum,” Harry said, “And yes, I'll behave.”

Lily smiled. “I know you will.”

“Don't do anything I would do,” Sirius said, grinning.

“Like what?” Lily asked.

“Tell everything about what happened down in the Department of Mysteries,” Sirius said, “Like I'm going to do with Amelia and Remus. Why? What did you think I was going to say?”
Harry snickered, and ducked out of the tent. He headed off over to the witches' tent, and stepped inside. Hermione was standing over at the dining room table. The other girls were in the sitting room. Astoria appeared to be asleep.

“Hi, ladies,” Harry said.

A collective ‘Hi, Harry' was heard from the girls, and a murmur from a sleeping Astoria.

“Hermione's prepared you dinner,” Daphne said, grinning, “Like the dutiful wife she is.”

“Isn't that your job, O Betrothed o' mine?” Harry asked, grinning.

“Ha!” Hermione said, “See, he agreed with me.”

“Oh, I see,” Daphne said, “So is it I who gets the kiss tonight?”

“Do you want one?” Harry asked, countering her tease.

Daphne blushed, and cuddled closer to Tracey, who merely grinned at the byplay between her girlfriend and friend. Harry smiled and walked over to Hermione. He pecked her on the lips and sat down at the table.

“Thank you, love,” Harry said, “What is on the menu this evening?”

“The usual found in the Cafeteria Tent,” Hermione said.

Harry lifted the plate covering one of the plates to keep it warm. “Aah, American-British mix. My favorite.”

Hermione snorted in an unladylike manner, and sat down in a chair closest to him.

“So,” Hermione said, “Tell us! What happened down there?”

“I can't tell you everything, you know,” Harry said. “Unspeakable secret stuff.”

Hermione sighed and nodded. “Amelia mentioned you might not be able to tell us much.”

“Oh, I can tell you enough,” Harry said, “Mind you, some of it will be hard to hear. The other bits are pretty cool. But there are things I simply cannot tell you.”

“Locked under Secrecy Enchantments?” Daphne asked.

“Probably best to consider them such,” Harry said, nodding. “So... have any of you met Neville's Great-Uncle Algie?”

All of the girls shook their heads.

“Neville's told us about him,” Hermione said. “Said he's pretty cool in a strange old Uncle kind of way.”

“If he's an Unspeakable, then that is understandable,” Tonks said, snorting. “They're a strange and
mysterious bunch.”

“Strange and mysterious – well, he wasn't exactly that to me,” Harry said. “Actually he was pretty revealing about a lot of stuff. He gave me, Mom and Sirius a lot of information. But he's not sunshine and butterflies. That man is manipulative, but he knows how to do so in a convincing way. He knows how to use his manipulations to better himself and you – unlike certain other people, Algie’s manipulations aren't selfish. Well... not entirely selfish, though he did have his moments. And he definitely loves and protects his family. That's definitely for certain.”

“So anyway, Algie led us down this corridor, with this really cool reflective mirror floor that is enchanted to not let any kind of disguise – Invisibility Cloak, Glamours, Polyjuice Potion – be hidden. It can all be revealed. There was the door everyone could see, and then there was a hidden door, that might only be able to be opened by Unspeakables. The door everyone could see apparently led into a trap that would get you lost, unless you were with someone who could get you out.”

“Unspeakables?” Hermione asked.

“Actually,” Harry said, grinning, “Algie said he wanted to test you and Luna on the traps and see if you could get past them.”

Hermione's eyes widened. “He said that?”

“He did,” Harry said, grinning.


“I could probably get through it,” Luna said, shrugging, as if she was simply discussing walking through a door.

Harry continued telling them about what he had seen in the Department of Mysteries. Hermione, Tonks, and surprisingly Luna, got the Wonka-vator reference. And all the girls – aside from the sleeping Astoria – were all amazed at how the elevator worked.

“I bet it has something to do with some type of portal magic,” Hermione said. “There isn't one Elevator, there are numerous Elevators, all identical. Each button pressed transfers the people in the elevator to the destination. Some kind of travel magic like Apparation or Portkey. And it is connected to the floor, so you're all going at once.”

Harry blinked. Then he chuckled. “I'd love for you to test that theory to Algie, and see if you're correct.”

Tonks snorted. “I don't think he'd tell you if you were right, Hermione.”

“Or he might,” Luna said, “And then force her to become an Unspeakable, so she doesn't tell anyone else that information.”

Hermione blushed at what her best friend had said.

Harry then described the Hall of Prophecies, and the girls were wide-eyed as they listened to the description of the room. And then he talked of retrieving the Prophecy Orb.
“So there is a Prophecy about you?” Hermione asked.

Harry merely nodded, and then described Algernon Croaker's office, though he didn't mention anything about the Scrying Bowl.

“And then Algie asked me to touch the Prophecy so it could play,” Harry said, “And your Divination Professor, Sybill Trelawney, a smoky figure of her rose from the orb. And she echoed the same Prophecy she made in January of 1980...”

He sighed. “Ladies, if I tell you the Prophecy, you have to do your best to keep a secret it from everyone. Voldemort cannot find out about it. Dumbledore and Snape are Legilimens, do not look them in the eyes. For those who need Occlumency, Mom and Remus will start training you in January.”

“I'm okay at Occlumency,” Tonks said, “But could use improvement.”

“I'm a Natural Occlumens from birth, Harry,” Luna said, “No Legilimens can break into my mind.”

“We'll do our best to keep the information secret, Harry,” Daphne said. “We'll learn Occlumency.”

Tracey and Hermione nodded in agreement.

So then Harry told them the Prophecy. Luna was staring at him wide-eyed. Daphne, Tracey and Tonks had gone pale – Tonks' actual complexion turned ghostly white, due to shock. Hermione had tears in her eyes. She was biting her lip, and her eyes kept darting back and forth. She appeared to be reciting the words in her head. Then she whimpered, scooted her chair over to him and hugged him tightly. She then kissed him passionately. Harry returned the kiss, and Hermione soon backed away.

“Sorry,” Hermione said, “I needed that badly.”

“Never apologize for kissing me, Hermione,” Harry said, grinning.

Hermione smiled, then cleared her throat. “You know me, Harry. You know I find Divination and Prophecies rubbish. But damn it all, this one sounds legitimate.”

“That is because it is,” Harry said.

“So... the Dark Lord mentioned in the Prophecy is... V-Voldemort?” Tonks asked.

Harry sighed. He couldn't tell them it was Voldemort and Dumbledore. Not yet. He hated keeping secrets, especially to Hermione. But he couldn't do it.

“Yes,” he said, simply.

“So you were born at the end of July,” Hermione said, “And... your parents defied Voldemort three times.”

“Three times before that Halloween night,” Harry said, “The last time while Mom was apparently a month pregnant with me. She got injured during battle, while escaping Voldemort, and in the Hospital, she found out she was pregnant with me!”

Hermione nodded. “He will mark you as his equal. A mark?”
“Algie said it could be emotionally, mentally, physical,” Harry said. “He killed my father. I blame him for my father's death and want to kill him. That's an emotional mark. But a physical mark could come in the future, according to Algie, and it would count.”

“Power he knows not,” Daphne said.

Harry sighed. “And that is a difficult one. Algie said Voldemort is afraid of death. He doesn't understand the concept of sacrificing oneself for those you love.”

Hermione stared at him, fresh tears in her eyes. “And you do?”

“I won't let him kill anyone I love, Hermione,” Harry said. “If that meant I'd have to sacrifice myself to save everyone.”

“You will not!” Hermione said.

“Hell no!” Daphne said. “You think I want to be a damned war widow?!”

“I can't be Daphne's Wife's Consort, if she ain't a wife!” Tracey said.

Harry snorted. “So basically I should marry Daphne before I sacrifice myself?”

“You bet your ass!” Tracey said, then growled. “Wait, I didn't mean that! You will not be a sacrifice, Harry Potter! What about those babies we discussed! You know, sperm donor or whatever. I want to be a mother of children from my own womb, but I will sure as hell not be one while Voldemort is still kicking! And nobody but you will have the right to be sperm donor!”

Harry stared at Tracey. And he wasn't the only one. Hermione, Daphne, Tonks and Luna were looking at her.

“Well, now you have to survive, Potter,” Daphne said, “If only to give Tracey some babies.”

Harry snorted. This got all of the girls chuckling.

“You stop talking about sacrifice,” Hermione said. “There's got to be another power --”

“Not as big as sacrifice,” Harry said, “Love and dying for someone you love – Voldemort doesn't understand those, and that is power.”

“Harry,” Hermione said, in a warning tone, “Shut up.”

“Algie said, I didn't have to sacrifice myself, Hermione,” Harry said, “He just said I have to believe that I can. I have to admit it to myself. To be ready for it.”

“Admit it all you want!” Daphne said, “You aren't sacrificing yourself! If you have to defeat that Merlin-be-damned monster, you'll do it. And you'll live! Long enough to give us all babies and watch them have babies! And maybe even the next generation of babies!”

“Hey!” Tonks exclaimed, “I can find my own baby-daddy. I didn't volunteer to have Potter's babies. “
“I would,” Luna said.

Harry coughed, while the others chuckled.

“Either must die at the hand of the other,” Hermione said, “Well, that's pretty concrete that you have
to kill him. Neither can live while the other survives. Er... what?”

“Means I can't live a nice and long life in America with my wives, or future wives or whatever,
while Voldemort is alive,” Harry said, “Algie said it himself. I could go to America to visit. I could
take all of you there, to visit Boston, and perhaps Ilvermorny.”

“But somehow, you are going to be forced to come back here,” Tracey said.

“Yes,” Harry said. “Because I can't let him kill people I love. And I can't have a fruitful life, while he
lives.”

He exhaled a breath and looked at all the girls, but stared at Hermione longest.

“So there you have it,” Harry said, “The Prophecy. The reason Voldemort came after me that night.
Not my parents. Me.”

“Wait,” Tonks said, “Hold on a minute. You made it sound like Voldemort doesn't know the
Prophecy. Which is why you doubted telling any of us.”

“He knows the first two lines – all the way up to the end of July part,” Harry said. “Because a Death
Eater eavesdropped on the meeting when Trelawney unexpectedly told the Prophecy to Dumbledore
--”


“Yes,” Harry said. “But until I came back from 'death', Dumbledore believed what Voldemort did –
that after I 'died', Neville was the Child of Prophecy.”

“Born at the end of July,” Hermione said, “Neville is one day older than you. So the Prophecy could
mean him?”

“Algie doesn't think so,” Harry said, “At least I don't think he does. Apparently because Voldemort
targeted me and my parents on Halloween, that means I am the Child of Prophecy.”

“He told you that?” Tracey asked.

“No,” Harry said, “I came up with that much myself.”

“So... did he tell you who the Death Eater is?” Tonks asked, “And is the bastard dead or alive?
Because it sounds as if the asshole is the reason your father – who was a friend of mine by the way –
is dead. I'd like a piece of them myself.”

“Yes, I know who it is,” Harry said, “No, I can't tell you.”

“Why the hell not?!” Daphne asked.

“You're protecting the bastard?!” Tracey asked.
“I can’t give my reasons why,” Harry said, “It is an Unspeakable Secret.”

“You better watch it with these secrets you keep, Potter,” Daphne said. “They can amount up, and then you begin lying to everyone, and losing their trust.”

“I will tell you all of the information before you marry me,” Harry said, “And that is all I can say about that. We won't marry with secrets – at least none on my end.”

Daphne sighed. “Fine. I understand this is Child of the Prophecy stuff – stuff Voldemort can't know. But damn it, it hurts not knowing.”

“It hurts not being able to tell any of you,” Harry said. “But truth is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with caution.”

“That sounds like something Dumbledore would say,” Tracey said.

“He probably has said it before,” Luna said.

Harry grimaced. Great. Now he was unintentionally quoting an insane Dark Lord.

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**The House Potter Tent – fifteen minutes later**

While Harry was trying to discuss anything but what he could not reveal to the girls, Lily and Sirius had just finished revealing everything told to them in the meeting with Algernon Croaker. Remus and Amelia were shocked, angry, and several other emotions.

Remus was staring thoughtfully between Lily and Sirius. Amelia, however had stood up and was looking around the tent.

“Lily?” Amelia asked, “Whereabouts was it that you were looking in on the table here?”

Lily pointed at where she thought Algernon was looking in from, and Amelia looked right at the spot.

“Algernon Croaker, when I find you next, I am going to kill you!” Amelia yelled. “I do not care about anything else you've said to Sirius, Lily and Harry. But scrying and spying on people! That goes beyond the rights of even Unspeakables!”

“Does it?” Lily asked.

“No,” Amelia said, “But I am happy thinking I scared him as much as he scared all of us with this information. Really, the scrying thing is useful. But if I am made Minister of Magic, I will tear apart that whole office until I find those runes, and then round-the-clock Aurors will be stationed in and outside the room preventing him from coming in and planting another. I'll even reinstate Mad-Eye just to put him in the room. He'll catch Croaker. You hear that YOU MAD COOT?! Moody will catch you and steal that Bowl from you, and it will be you we watch and laugh at!”

“Amelia,” Sirius said, “Please remember it is I who am meeting him tomorrow. I have to face him.”

“I'm coming with you!” Amelia said. “I am going to give Croaker a piece of my mind! And I want to
see this Horcrux for myself!” She turned to look toward the same area as before. “DO YOU HEAR THAT TOO? PIECE OF MY MIND! TOMORROW!”

“You don’t need to yell,” Sirius said, “We could hear things just fine in normal talk.”

“I know,” Amelia said, “But it makes me feel better thinking that I could be making the old coot’s ear-drums blow out.”

Lily and Sirius snickered. Remus was still looking thoughtful.

“Knut for your thoughts, Remus?” Lily asked.

“I don’t know what is the worst part of all of this,” Remus said, “The fact that there are two Dark Lords gunning for Harry and – in essence – all of us. Or that the British Wizengamot seems to be gunning for us too. Rose told me about that dual-citizenship stuff.”

“It is a legitimate worry, Remus,” Lily said. “Muggle Government would never do it. But the Wizengamot would. And MACUSA would go to war for it, if Harry – or hell, anyone of his friends who become American citizens – are forced to abide by British laws.”

“And the problem is,” Amelia said, “Even as Minister of Magic, there isn’t much I could do about it. I’d pretty much have to – how do Muggles put it – throw in the white towel, and give up the Ministry to the MACUSA, just so these idiotic laws can be done away with. Otherwise the Wizengamot wouldn’t do it. You saw how easy it was for the Wizengamot to approve of Lord Davis’ bullshit law when the Light Alliance voted for it too.”

“Huh,” Remus said, “That is interesting. And really, really, terrifying.”

“What?” Lily asked.

“You told us Dumbledore’s end-game is Pureblood Paradise, right?” Remus asked.

“Light and Dark Purebloods uniting and becoming equals,” Sirius said.

“Mmmmm,” Remus said, “And how did Lord Davis' law pass? Light Alliance and the Dark Alliance voted together. Add in the Neutral Alliance – and they beat the Great Alliance.”

“A palpable preview of Pureblood Paradise,” Lily said.

“Nice alliteration,” Remus quipped, “And also very, very true. Now, here is something else that is interesting. Gabrielle – when she was in here, listening to Rose discuss Lord Davis' law with me – she said something interesting. She believes Lord Davis was parroting the law, because he seemed to give only a few bits of information, and not very detailed. So little detail, that the Committee has no choice but to modify it.”

“So if he was parroting,” Lily said, “Who was speaking to the parrot?”

Remus smiled, grimly. “The man who would have been very happy to see Light and Dark Alliance working together to approve a vote. Because that is what he wants for all laws in the future. His Pureblood Paradise.”

“Albus Dumbledore,” Amelia said. “Dumbledore created Lord Davis' bill?”
“Yes,” Remus said, “The one person who could understand it best how to handle such a bill at Hogwarts.”

“He was not asking Lord Davis how Hogwarts would handle the situation of the new bill,” Lily said, her eyes going wide. “He was wanting Lord Davis to tell everyone else how it would happen. Because Lord Davis was his parrot.”

“Now why would Albus Dumbledore want to create a bill like this?” Remus asked, “I'll give you a hint. Why is he manipulating Harry? What is his end-game for Harry?”

Lily frowned. “To see Harry die, so the Prophecy would be complete, and he could finish Voldemort.”

“Now, imagine that the confrontation he planned didn't happen until Harry turned seventeen,” Remus said, “In his vision, Harry had to abide by all the British laws.”

“He’d have to get his Betrothed pregnant by seventeen,” Amelia said.

“Son of a bitch,” Sirius said. “He may want Harry dead, but a child would bring forth the next generation of one of Harry's Houses. House Potter, perhaps?”

“Now, with three Houses – three Pureblood Houses,” Remus said, “How would Dumbledore benefit most from Harry before he died?”

“Harry would have three pureblood wives or Betrothed carrying his children for the next generation of three Houses,” Amelia said. “Son of a bitch! Dumbledore is behind both the Teen Pregnancy Law, and the failed Pureblood marries Purebloods law!”

“This was all for Harry,” Lily said, going hoarse. “Dumbledore doesn't care who else it affects. He's trying to manipulate Harry into bringing forth a new Pureblood generation of children – before he dies at the hand of Voldemort.”

“Well,” Sirius said, “Who votes to kill Dumbledore before Voldemort dies?”

“Voldemort fears Dumbledore, Sirius,” Amelia said. “If Dumbledore dies before Voldemort – Voldemort will invade Hogwarts.”

Sirius growled. “Shit. That bastard worked this all out perfectly.”

“Except for one thing,” Lily said, a Cheshire grin forming across her face. “He doesn't have all the pieces. And we do. We know things he doesn't. And now we need to figure exactly what pieces we are going to play.”

“Let the chess match begin,” Remus quipped.

He was basically saying what everyone was thinking.

Chapter End Notes
And there's the end of the chapter. Finally the very longer Winter Solstice is over!

I think I answered a lot of reviewer questions in this chapter. I hope I did anyway.

Next Chapter: Harry, Sirius and Amelia go to Gringotts. Then they meet with Croaker and go to Grimmauld Place. Also other things happen.
Chapter Notes

See that chapter title? Now you know why this chapter isn't taking us to Grimmauld Place. Harry's Great Grandfather decided to make an appearance. Sorta! You'll see. Enjoy! Remember. Fleamont Potter is Harry's Great Grandfather in this story.

At a quarter-till ten-o'clock on Saturday Morning, Albus Dumbledore was sitting at his desk, sucking on a lemon drop, and writing a list of notes for possible discussion for the meeting with the staff that afternoon, regarding what was now being coined as the "Teen Pregnancy Law". Albus didn't like how people kept referring to it as 'Lord Davis' law' because the bill hadn't belonged to Lord Davis. Derrick Davis had only been a parrot. Albus had created that law.

Except Lord Davis had done a really bad job of it. Albus had told Davis to lay out a specific plan of details that would have to be followed in the bill. But the man's anger and need for revenge, against Sirius Black, Lily Potter, and his former daughter, Tracey, who had stood up to him in front of everyone, had made him forget nearly everything Albus had told him. Even with a little nudge in the right direction, the man had made things worse. Not only did the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee now have the right to modify the law, but now Hogwarts staff could give their opinions! No... Albus had a specific set of details that needed to be followed. It was his law. Not Davis', not the Committee, not Hogwarts, but his.

His law would be remembered as the one which brought forth a new generation of pureblood children, even though their parents' lives were at risk every day. Voldemort would be back after all. And soon. Severus had told him that much. The Dark Mark was burning. And when Voldemort returned, the new war would begin. The war which would rid the British Wizarding world of those who didn't deserve to be a part of Albus' Pureblood Paradise, and those who survived, would bring forth the next generation of Purebloods. And Albus would be remembered as the creator of the new Paradise.

Albus had had a very long morning already. By Minerva and Filius' request the previous evening, the Daily Prophet edition that morning was complimentary. The Professors had chipped in to buy enough copies, so everyone could read the results of the Council Session. Albus had only one announcement, the new Restriction for Underage Wizardry Bill. Much of the Hall was quite thrilled with that bill. Those who looked less thrilled were those the bill did not affect – the ones who had been getting the same permission for years that everyone would get now.

Those who had been doing magic during the summers did so behind wards so thick the Ministry couldn't detect them. This gave them the upper hand in magic and education that others who were less-qualified didn't. After all, it was the richest of the students who used wards thick enough to be able to do magic freely without repercussion. Now everyone had the same privilege, and those select few didn't feel so special anymore.

Most of the students in the Great Hall had heard about the "Teen Pregnancy Bill" the previous day, either from the Council Session, or the rumors around Hogwarts about it. Albus said nothing about
that one. He needed all the concrete details agreed by the Committee before he made the announcement.

Albus looked up as the office door opened. Minerva McGonagall walked into the office.

“Minerva,” Albus said, “I was under the impression you were making sure those students who are going home for Christmas Break are on their way.”

“I was,” Minerva said, “And that is why I am here. Ron Weasley was one of those in the carriages. But there was nothing in the sign-up sheets about him going home for Break.”

“I thought he'd have stayed for the Ball,” Albus said, frowning.

“I suppose he decided he didn't want to go if he couldn't find a date,” Minerva said. “The boy isn't exactly popular amongst the female half of the students after all. His manners and behavior --”

“-- has caused you trouble in the past for complaining about it,” Albus reminded her about Molly Weasley's Howlers.

“I need you to contact Molly Weasley,” Minerva said. “I am not sure she or Arthur knows Ron is coming home. He could be alone at the station in London when he arrives.”

Albus sighed. “I will contact Molly.”

“Thank you, Albus,” Minerva said. “I assume that meeting is still on for today.”

“Of course it is,” Albus said, “I am working on discussion points at this moment. And I do not need any help, thank you. As I said, I will contact Molly. Thank you. You may go.”

Minerva huffed, turned and walked out of the office.

“Oh, Fawkes, what do you think happened to dear Ronald?” Albus asked. “Molly really wanted all of her youngest children to attend the Ball so they could learn how to act while attending social parties. And now Ronald is going home. Why? Because a girl doesn't want to accompany him? I could have arranged for someone to go with him.”

Fawkes squawked.

“I am well aware most of the students know how to detect Love Potions, thanks to Alastor's classes,” Albus said. “But a Confundus would have done away with such things. Hermione Granger would have been a nice date for Ron Weasley. But alas, she is with Lord Potter. Her friend, Miss Lovegood – ah, now that might have been a lovely date for Ron. They've known each other since they were young, after all. Think what a Betrothal between Ronald and Miss Lovegood could have done for both families? Pandora Lovegood would have approved.”

Fawkes squawked again.

“I am happy you agree!” Albus said; he stood and headed over to the fireplace, “And now I must contact dear Molly. Perhaps she could coax Ron into returning for the dance, so that he could accompany Miss Lovegood. She can't go otherwise, as she is a third year. Beneficial for both parties, now and in the future.”
He grabbed a handful of Floo Powder, threw it into the fireplace, turning the fire green, and knelt down. He stuck his head into the fire and said “The Burrow!” After a few dizzying moments his head appeared in the fireplace of the Burrow's sitting room. He found Molly Weasley sitting in a rocking chair, working on knitting one of her famous Weasley sweaters. He cleared his throat, and she jumped. When she saw him, she covered a hand over her heart and large bosom.

“Oh, Albus, you startled me!” Molly said, “What a coincidence, I actually was thinking of contacting you.

“Oh?” Albus asked; he figured it was better to get her concerns out of the way first, then he could say what was on his mind.

“I've had a busy morning today already,” Molly said, “I've been in contact with several Committee members, and they've agreed to meet with you and a few staff members – at Hogwarts, if necessary – on Tuesday at three-o'clock – in the afternoon, of course!"

“Excellent!” Albus said, “I will inform the staff during the meeting today. Perfect timing. And I assume you will be there?”

“I wouldn't pass up another opportunity to see my children, Albus!” Molly said, “I can send them their Christmas presents early!”

“I am afraid the reason my head is in your lovely fireplace,” Albus said, “is because I have rather concerning news about one of your children.”

Molly immediately looked concerned. “What could have happened since I saw them last yesterday?!”

“Minerva reported to me that she saw Ron in one of the Carriages heading for Hogsmeade Station,” Albus said, “I do believe he is going home for Christmas Break.”

“Why ever would he do that?!” Molly asked, “He didn't tell me or Arthur yesterday! In fact he was looking forward to the Yule Ball!”

“Has he found a date yet?” Albus asked.

“No, but he said he had an eye on one particular girl,” Molly said.

“Perhaps said girl turned him down,” Albus said, “And he decided just to go home for Christmas Break. He didn't even let Minerva know he was doing so. He just marched out into one of the carriages. I assume he had his things with him.”

Molly sighed. “Well, this puts a wrench in some plans. Between having to go to the Committee meeting, and the Wizengamot Council meeting on Sunday? I can't exactly bring him to either one of those. Arthur's working until Christmas Eve. And he'll be at the Council meeting too.”

“Perhaps between now and Tuesday you could convince him to return to the Ball,” Albus said. “Perhaps we can arrange to have date for him.”

“Arrange... how?” Molly asked.

Albus smiled. “I think you know how, Molly...”
"I was afraid you would say that," Molly said. "As much as I'd like to have one of the children home for Christmas, I am going to be busy. I had plans since we'd be alone this year! I wasn't expecting one of the boys home. Percy's so busy, and Bill and Charlie aren't coming either. I suppose it would be best to find a way to get him back to Hogwarts before the Ball. He just needs a talk with his mother about these things. The boy simply doesn't understand girls right now. I thought this Ball would help him there. But I guess he needs his mother's help."

"And of course," Albus said, "I would be too happy to assist. So here's what I was considering..."

_A few minutes later...

Harry plopped down onto the sofa inside House Potter Tent, with his arms crossed and a pout on his lips. Lily and Remus were sitting at the table, and Sirius and Amelia hadn't arrived yet; they had both gone back to Black Manor the previous evening. Rose and Gabrielle were off somewhere on the Grounds enjoying a morning that was only slightly cool out instead of a usual winter chill.

"What's wrong, Harry?" Lily asked. "I thought Hermione would have been in here to spend time with you before she had to see you off with Sirius and Amelia."

"That's the entire problem, Mom," Harry said, "I couldn't tell her where or why I am going with Sirius and Amelia. I tried to tell her it was House Potter duties, and that I am visiting the family Vault, but she didn't exactly believe me. She asked me why Sirius and Amelia were coming with me instead of you. She knows it has to do with Algie, and she's not happy about it. When I told her I was also doing Unspeakable Secret stuff, and Child of the Prophecy stuff, she got all mad."

"She's just worried about you, Harry," Lily said. "She knows what 'Child of the Prophecy' stuff means, because you told her – you have to defeat Voldemort. She doesn't like that you're getting involved in that already. She just doesn't understand."

"Well, what am I supposed to say?" Harry asked, "I can't exactly tell her what we're doing today."

"I think she doesn't want you to push her away from you," Remus said, "Didn't you tell us that you told them about what Algernon thinks the 'power he knows not' is?"

Harry winced. "Yeah, and they weren't happy about it. At all. I told you that."

He had even told them about their whole 'you can't die, because we want your babies' thing. His cheeks still felt like they were burning from admitting that to his mother.

"Well," Remus said, "Hermione believes you're going to do the whole sacrificing thing, even though you told her you wouldn't be doing it."

"Er... I didn't exactly have a chance to say anything like that," Harry said. "They took over that conversation and I didn't get in a word, aside from the whole 'I don't need to sacrifice myself, only understand that I could' explanation."

"So you never told Hermione or any of the girls you aren't going to sacrifice yourself?" Lily asked.

Harry grimaced. He hadn't even made that promise to himself yet.
“Well, there you go!” Lily said. “Hermione believes what you're doing today is another stepping stone down the path to sacrificing yourself for everyone you love! That is why she is upset! You don't need to tell her now... you can think about what you're going to say. But unless you want her to stay upset at you, you need to tell her – and the rest of the girls – that you aren't going to sacrifice yourself, Harry. And mean it! Don't tell me it isn't a possibility, damn it. You know I don't like lying. What you told us about the girls' response to you explaining that was really sweet – even if it was awkward for you. Do you not understand how all of us – not only the girls, but me, Rose, your family would love to see that too?”

Harry sighed. “I do understand that. I just don't want to face the fact that somebody I love could die.”

“That is the risks of war,” Remus said, “I don't want to think about it either. But it is a possibility. We know that more than many do.”

“The last war ended with the love of my life sacrificing himself to save those he loved,” Lily said, “I will be damned if History is going to repeat itself, Harry James Potter. Do you hear me?”

“Yes,” Harry said; he rubbed at his eyes and groaned. “Where are they? What time is it?”

“They'll be here,” Lily said. “I should have never let Sirius go off with Amelia though. He has important duties to do today.”

“Distract me until they arrive,” Harry said.

“How?” Remus asked.

“Oh, I don't know,” Harry said. “You both have been awfully quiet about how you and Amelia reacted to the Snape news last night, Remus. How about that?”

“It was predictable in an amusing way,” Lily said. “Amelia's going her Head of DMLE route. She ranted about how she wanted to march into Hogwarts and arrest him. But she also understands how useful he could be for the future of the war against Voldemort and Dumbledore. But she also said she does not agree to the triple-agent plan at all.”

She chuckled. “Actually, I think she's planning on interrogating Algie today. She wants him to tell her about Scrying Bowls and Runes, so she can have one for herself. She wants to plant her own Runes in Dumbledore's office, Hogwarts, and several places around the Ministry.”

“I don't know if Algie will go for that,” Harry said.

“She said something about making a deal with him,” Lily said, “But didn't mention anything beyond that.”

“That will be entertaining to watch,” Harry said, grinning, “And you, Remus? How did you react?”

Before Remus could say anything, he was interrupted by Padfoot rushing into the tent, and transforming back into his human form.

“Help me!” Sirius said, “Amelia's been on a rampage all morning! Sometime during the night, she apparently decided something that has made her even madder at Algernon, and now she won't stop ranting. She was even barking on her way up here. The only way I could shut her up, was when we were – oomph! Hey!”
Amelia's German Shepherd had knocked into Sirius as she entered the tent. She transformed back into her human form.

“A little angry, are we this morning, Amelia?” Lily asked.

“You'd be angry too if you had the same revelations I've had since last night,” Amelia said.

Sirius sighed. “I think I bonked the idea into her last night sometime during the second or third --”

“Sirius!” Lily scolded. “Language!”

“What... bonk?” Sirius asked, grinning, “What should I use?”

“You should be quiet,” Lily said, “What revelations, Amelia?”

“I can't tell you here,” Amelia said, “Do we know if he's Scrying us outside?”

“I don't think so,” Lily said. “And no one else would hear, because I could put up a Privacy Dome. I'm not exactly sure they work against Algie's Scrying Runes.

“Let's take a chance then,” Amelia said. “If he can hear us, then that means he'll just have an argument ready. He won't win either way.”

Soon, Harry and the four adults were standing under a Privacy Dome

“Algernon's Unspeakable Secrets – mixed with what happened at the Winter Solstice Session yesterday,” Amelia said, “could have already cost us the goddamn war before it has even begun!”

And then Amelia ranted again for the countless time that morning. By the time Amelia was finished, Harry decided two things. One, he was going to enjoy watching her rant to Algie. And two... Amelia was probably right – and that was a really horrible thought.

Gringotts – Half-an-hour later

Harry eyed the goblin security guards standing outside the Gringotts Bank in Diagon Alley warily, as he kept his arms crossed protectively to hide the Prophecy Orb under his robes. One of the Goblins narrowed his eyes at him, and stepped in front of the door.

“Halt!” the Goblin said, “This young wizard is hiding something under his robes. Reveal it, human."

“Excuse me,” Amelia said, “Do you know who I am?”

“I do not care who you are, witch,” the Goblin snarled. “I care about what this wizard is hiding under his robes.”

“I do not care who you are, witch,” the Goblin snarled. “I care about what this wizard is hiding under his robes.”

“He is hiding it for safety and security,” Amelia said. “I am Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Lord Potter, here, has Department of Mysteries clearance through Unspeakable Toad. I will speak no more about it out here in public. But I assure you that if you attempt to confiscate the package, we will report it to Keeper Ragnok the Sixth – who is Lord Potter's Account Manager.
Lord Potter's House is one of Keeper Ragnok the Sixth's most valuable Houses, and if he learns you are treating his client with disrespect...

“I will escort you all inside to Keeper Ragnok,” the Goblin said. “If he clears you, then I will too. One wrong move, young wizard, and you'll regret it.”

Harry merely nodded. The Goblin grunted, and led Harry, Sirius and Amelia inside the bank. They made their way over to Keeper Ragnok's counter, and the security Goblin spoke in Gobbledygook to him. Ragnok snarled at the security Goblin in Gobbledygook, and it was obvious he wasn't happy. The security Goblin wilted, and backed away, then hurried back out to his post.

“Follow me, Lord Potter, Lord Black, Madam Bones,” Keeper Ragnok said, “Do not speak until we have are in the privacy of the tunnels.”

Harry exchanged a glance with Sirius and Amelia, who both nodded. Harry turned, and they followed Ragnok toward a door that was about as large as the entrance doors. Soon, they were standing at some mine-carts, and the only thing Harry noticed ahead of him was a rocky, cavernous tunnel. Torches provided the only light around the shadowy cavern. Harry could almost hear his Animagus form salivating at the sight of the shadows.

“My apologies Lord Potter, Lord Black, Madam Bones,” Keeper Ragnok said, “Unspeakable Toad informed me of your visit today, and I had forgotten to inform the security guards at the door. They only took up their post half-an-hour ago. I had told the prior posted guards before, and forgot about the change in guards. The guards who interrupted you will be reprimanded. Anyone untrustworthy could have seen you, and your package would have been in danger.”

“Apology accepted, Keeper Ragnok,” Harry said; he wasn't surprised Ragnok knew he had a package with him.

“So Toad was expecting me to visit too?” Amelia asked.

“Mentioned you by name, Madam Bones,” Keeper Ragnok said.

“I guess I shouldn't be surprised,” Amelia said. “I did basically give him an early warning I'd be meeting him today. He is expecting us to meet him at noon at the Leaky Cauldron. So let's make haste.”

“Yes,” Sirius said, “We shouldn't dawdle or stand around, what with the contents of the package Harry is carrying.”

“Indeed we should not,” Keeper Ragnok said. “Ever been in a Gringotts mine-cart before, Lord Potter?”

“In Boston, yeah,” Harry said, nodding.

“Ah – I'm afraid our friends in Boston cannot rival our mine-cart track we have here,” Keeper Ragnok said, grinning, “And I don't think Boston has the type of security we do for high-value Vaults such as yours, Lord Potter. Let's go. Time is money, after all!”

Ten fast-paced and exciting minutes later, Harry was standing in front of the Potter Family Vault. And what a trip it had been. Keeper Ragnok was right. The ride on the mine-cart track was a lot faster, longer, and much more fun than what he had experienced in Boston. And then there was the
A Dragon. A blind Dragon was guarding the corridor of Vaults where the Potter Family Vault was located.

“Unspeakable Toad informed me you know about his very important visit to Gringotts a couple summers back,” Keeper Ragnok said. “It may interest you to know that the artifact he was looking for... was in the Vault at the end of this corridor.”

“The Lestrange Vault is here?” Sirius asked.

Ragnok sneered. “Not anymore. The Lestrange Vault is nothing more than a minor Vault now,. What with the reparations and damages we took from their Account due to keeping such a dangerous piece of Dark Magic in our bank Vaults for so long. What is left of their fortune fits into one of the smaller Vaults.”


“Aye,” Keeper Ragnok said, “A pity they are in Azkaban, and out of Goblin reach. Well, if they ever get out, they’ll leave one prison, and go into another.”

“I'm just going to forget you said that,” Amelia said.

“Good,” Keeper Ragnok grunted, then smiled at Amelia. “May I suggest an Obliviation? A Goblin-based Obliviation, perhaps?”

“Funny,” Amelia quipped, dryly.

Ragnok smirked, then looked at Harry. “Lord Potter, this is your first time here, so I will instruct you on how to get into your Vault if you do not mind.”

“Not at all,” Harry said.

He studied the Vault door and noticed, etched into the bronze metal of the door, a design, like a shield. He recognized it, of course. It was the House Potter Crest. A Griffin standing tall, its wings outstretched, stood above two swords pointed diagonally. On the Griffin's chest, there was a letter P.

“Lord Potter,” Keeper Ragnok said, “walk up to the door, and press the Potter Family ring directly in the hole that forms around the upper portion of the large letter P.”

Harry did as was instructed, then backed away as he heard a great mechanical sound. The Potter Shield split in two, dividing the two swords, as the doors melted into the walls revealing the Vault and its treasures within.

Harry's eyes widened at the sight. The Vault was cavernous – he could compare it to the Great Hall at Hogwarts, just by the sheer size. Piles of Galleons, Sickles and Knuts appeared like large hills, all lined up throughout the center of the Vault. On either side of the coins were all the valuables. Just standing in the entrance, Harry could see large casks overflowing with various jewels, as well as furniture, chests, and what appeared to be mannequins wearing clothing and armor. Weapons – swords, shields, bows, staffs – hung on the walls.

“This all belongs to me?” Harry asked, turning to Ragnok.

“It belongs to the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter, which you are now the Head of,”
Keeper Ragnok said, “So yes, it belongs to you... and your family. This Vault has been on loan to the House of Potter for a very long time. In fact, my ancestor, Ragnok the First, was the first Goblin to place this Vault on loan to an ancestor of yours. It has 'belonged' to the House of Potter since then.”

All of this had been stagnant for thirteen years. Well, perhaps not stagnant. There were businesses and stocks House Potter owned that were making money. He figured some of the money amongst the mountains of coins had to come from that over the past thirteen years.

“Am I the only one allowed inside?” Harry asked.

“You may allow anyone in your party to go inside with you,” Keeper Ragnok said. “Anyone who remains out here is safe with me. The dragon won't harm us.”

“Sirius and Amelia are both welcome inside,” Harry said.

“Very well,” Keeper Ragnok said.

“I've been in here with your Dad a time or two,” Sirius said, as he followed Harry into the Vault with Amelia. “I know where we can place the Orb so it will be safest.”

“Can't we put it anywhere?” Harry asked. “I mean, only me or anyone I welcome are allowed inside. And only I can open the Vault it appears – my ring is the key, after all.”

“If we put it just anywhere,” Sirius said, “You'll forget where it is. Besides, it might get covered by an avalanche of Galleons, and we'd never find it.”

“Point,” Harry said, nodding.

“Follow me,” Sirius said.

Harry followed his Godfather through a path between treasures and Galleons, Sickles and Knuts.

“One could get lost in here, you know,” Harry muttered, as he looked around.

Sirius laughed. “According your grandfather, James did get lost in here the first time he was here as a kid accompanying your Granddad. Charlus recounted that amusing tale to me once, much to your father's chagrin and blushing face. Now where is it?”

“Are you the one who is now lost, Sirius?” Amelia asked.

“No – no, I don't think – I am quite sure --” Sirius said, then he pointed, “There it is!”

He led them over to a wall of the Vault, where there was a portrait of a little old man there.

“Grandson?” the portrait echo asked. “How many years has it been since I saw you last in here, James?”

“Actually, Lord Fleamont, this is your Great Grandson,” Sirius said, “James' son, Harry.”

“Harry... short for something?” Fleamont asked. “Harold? Hadrian, perhaps?”
“Nope – just Harry,” Harry said.

“Nothing as lavish and extravagant as Fleamont then,” Fleamont said. Nice to meet a new generation of Potter. Where is your father ‘just Harry’?”

Harry frowned. “He died thirteen years ago on Halloween. He sacrificed himself for me and my mother, and unborn sister.”

“Dead?” Fleamont asked, looking emotional, “No – no that cannot be. I'd have known! Why isn't his portrait at Potter Manor then?!”

“He was never able to complete one, Lord Fleamont,” Sirius said.

“Merlin,” Fleamont said, “His parents' portraits will be heartbroken. Nobody in such a fine House should die without a portrait for their future descendants to remember them by. You make sure you don't make his mistake, Harry. And make sure your mother does get a portrait!”

“I promise,” Harry said.

“Good, good,” Fleamont said, “Now why aren't you living in Potter Manor? It is safe and clean thanks to the enchantments. Hidden behind wards activated through your ring. It will bring you there.”

“We live in America, sir,” Harry said, “We're here for an event of sorts. The Triwizard Tournament.”

“They brought that infernal thing back?!” Fleamont asked. “Pah! Well, if you stay in Britain for any long period of time, come by Potter Manor.”

“We will, sir,” Harry said, “You know, sir, I don't know whether I should thank you, or yell at you.”

“For what?” Fleamont asked.

“Remember that Betrothal Contract you made with Cygnus Greengrass?” Harry asked.

“I do,” Fleamont said, “Ooh. I see. So the Greengrass House finally had a daughter, and the Contract passed on to you.”

“Yeah,” Harry said.

“So why do you want to yell at me?” Fleamont asked. “If she's anything like her Great-Grandmother, she's a fine-looking girl. I wish to meet her sometime.”

“She's great,” Harry said, “I just don't like being forced into a marriage like a Betrothal Contract.”

“You are a Lord, Harry!” Fleamont said, “You have a ring! Betrothal Contracts are in your blood! Get used to it, and I want to hear you passing on my tradition to your children. Charlus didn't do it – and James ended up marrying a Muggleborn—”

“A Pureblood actually,” Sirius said, “Recently discovered to have been adopted after her parents were killed on Voldemort's request, or perhaps Voldemort himself. And... Lily, and your great-grandchildren, are descended from Rowena Ravenclaw.”
Fleamont's eyes widened. “Really? Well, that's brilliant! Always knew my Grandson could pick 'em right.”

“So you're against Muggleborn?” Harry asked. “Because my girlfriend – possible soon-to-be Betrothed is a Muggleborn.”

“If your mother's Pureblood, your girl may be too,” Fleamont said. “Do you know how long this House has worked to keep the blood Pure?”

“Given that I am being manipulated by a man who wants to create a Pureblood Paradise,” Harry said, frowning. “I'm not sure I care about Pure blood,”

“Manipulated?!” Fleamont asked, “We Potters do not fall for manipulations!”

“And that tradition still goes on,” Harry said, “While others will be broken. Such as Betrothals and Pureblood marriages.”

“But Miss Greengrass!” Fleamont said; then his eyes narrowed, “Did the grandson of Cygnus taint his bloodline? That was never part of the Contract's deal!”

“Daphne is Pureblood – and I hardly care about that,” Harry said. “Now, we're fairly busy. So good day, Great-Granddad. Thanks for the Betrothal.”

“I probably miss your father as much as you do, you know,” Fleamont said, frowning. “Died too young, and never hard a portrait. Is the man responsible for his death dead?”

“No... but he will be,” Harry said.

“Good – tell me when it happens when the bastard is dead!” Fleamont said, “I can't change my ways, Great-Grandson. Portraits aren't capable of it. But I will try to respect the traditions held by the new Lord Potter.”

Before Harry could reply, the portrait swung open, revealing a golden safe. A small etching of the Potter Crest was in the center of the safe. Harry didn't need Sirius’ guidance. He pressed the ring against the Crest, and the safe opened. The inside had a large metallic scroll inside and nothing else.

“Your parents' Final Will and Testament,” Sirius said, “Leave it alone for now.”

Harry nodded. He took the glowing Prophecy Orb from the beaded bag, and set it inside the safe.

“Hopefully the next time we see it,” Harry said, “It will be dark.”

“A good wish, Harry,” Sirius said.

Harry closed the safe, and backed up. The portrait closed again.

“Lord Fleamont,” Harry said, “Nobody but me can get past you. Understand?”

“If your guests will move away out of eavesdropping range,” Fleamont said, “And we'll make sure nobody can but you.”

Sirius and Amelia turned and walked several yards away.
“Password Choice?” Fleamont asked.

“Voldemort Is Dead,” Harry said.

“And may he rest in pieces,” Fleamont replied. “Password and Acceptance message... accepted!”

“Nice acceptance message,” Harry said.

“Glad you approve,” Fleamont said. “I want to see you with my other portrait, Harry. You have ancestors to meet. Like my dear, sweet Euphemia.”

“I promise I'll be there eventually,” Harry said.


Harry didn't know how to reply, so he placed his hand -- the one with his Potter Signet Ring -- over his heart. He then turned and left, and soon found Sirius and Amelia.

“Huh,” Harry said, “Half-expected the pair of you to be half-naked.

Amelia gave shocked gasp. Sirius laughed out loud.

“Wait until I tell your mother, young man!” Amelia said.

“Will what you say to Algie be more or less rude than what I just said?” Harry asked.

Amelia huffed. “You are definitely the son and Godson of Marauders.”

“Let's get out of here and go find Croaker,” Sirius said, “So what did you think of your Great-Granddad, Harry?”

Harry shrugged as he followed Sirius and Amelia. “Don't know if I like him or want to throw paint thinner on his portrait.”

Sirius laughed. “Your father basically said the same thing once. But the two found a mutual respect for each other. I am sure you will too.”

Harry merely shrugged again. It was nice to meet an ancestor, but the man was the reason he was in a Betrothal Contract.

But a thought crossed his mind after that one did. Without Fleamont would he have ever met Daphne or Tracey? Would they had been his friends? Future members of his family? Would Tracey be Sirius’ daughter? Something told him 'no'.

“Maybe you're right, Sirius,” Harry said. “Maybe you are right.”

Chapter End Notes
Blame Fleamont Potter for this chapter not going to Grimmauld Place. I do! Originally the portrait was going to be three dogs playing Quidditch (in reference to Dogs Playing Poker painting). But Fleamont decided to show up. How do you like him?

Albus' plan for Luna will NOT succeed. So no worries. Molly underestimates the power of Veela Allure. Don't blame her. She doesn't know her son is under an Allure.

Next Chapter: Grimmauld Place! Amelia rants at Croaker! Locket Horcrux! Kreacher! Don't know if Ron will meet his mother at King's Cross next chapter. Probably not. I had plans on putting that in the same chapter as the Hogwarts Staff meeting.
Harry, Sirius, and Amelia stepped out of the Gringotts Bank, fifteen minutes after exiting the Potter Family Vault. And were immediately met by the one man they had intended to wait for in the Leaky Cauldron.

“You're early,” Sirius said.

“And you appear to be talking to yourself,” Algernon Croaker said. “Given that you're talking to someone only the three of you can see.”

Algie was wearing the same garb Harry had seen him in the previous day. He recalled that they were his robes he wore so that only those he wanted to talk to could see him. Harry noticed that, indeed nobody was looking at the cloaked man standing a few feet in front of them. Not even the two bank security guards – both different Goblins than the ones who Harry had met with earlier – could see Algie.

“Follow me and do not speak,” Algie said. “Let me do the talking for now. Yes, even you Madam Bones.”

Harry heard Amelia grumble under her breath. The three of them followed Algie, trying to keep up with him, as they strode up the cobbled walkway of Diagon Alley. Other shoppers noticed them, but did not notice Algie, even though he was walking swiftly around them.

“Madam Bones, I am aware you wish to rant at me, but this is neither the time nor place,” Algie said. “I am eager to hear your rant. You found a flaw in my runes by taking your conversation outside this morning. Aside from conversations you speak about me personally – those that might insult me, I understand the need for those to be in private – please try to not fight the Scrying Runes. I told you the same thing yesterday, Harry, Sirius, and I know that message was passed on to you, Madam Bones. Remember, you might say things that might help me. And will, ultimately, be beneficial for all of you too.”

He swerved again, to step around someone who had attempted to tread upon his path. And he waited to speak again, as Harry, Sirius and Amelia caught up.

“My Scrying methods are a hindrance for you, I know,” Algie said, “but they are also a help. They might have helped you as recently as this morning, and you will thank me for the Scrying Runes and Bowl when I tell you what happened. I will tell you soon, but we must be getting to Black Manor post haste. There, I will listen to all you have to say, Madam Bones.

“You will understand why I am early soon enough. And if we hurry, you may benefit from my being early. Oh, by the way. You're all very welcome for my warning to Keeper Ragnok. I am sure his assistance was most helpful. Look at me, chattering away. I'll be silent. It will make getting to our destination quicker. Do keep up please.”
Oh yes. Harry was really going to enjoy watching Amelia rant away to Algernon. The old coot deserved it for this stunt alone!

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_Hogwarts Grounds – Ilvermorny Tents_

Lily Potter stepped into the Classroom/Cafeteria tent, intent on working on a brew of her own remedy that prevented colds and flu from the chilly winter months that would soon be plaguing Hogwarts. Her own brew was far better than anything Madam Pomfrey would have on hand – and tasted better too – so she wanted her children and students to have the remedy in case they got sick.

She unexpectedly found Hermione near the tent's small library, sitting in a rocking chair and reading a book. Hermione looked up over the book, and smiled when she saw Lily.

“Hi, Lily,” Hermione said,

“Hello, Hermione,” Lily said, walking over toward her son's girlfriend, “What do you have there?”

“One of the available copies of the Occlumency textbook,” Hermione said, “Harry said you and Remus were going to teach us in January, and I wanted to do some early reading up on it.”

“And you're doing so in the solitude of this tent?” Lily asked.

Hermione shrugged. ‘I figured if I was going to put some practical use into it, I wanted to be away from the chatter of my tent-mates.”

“You want to learn faster than anyone else, don't you?” Lily asked. “Not because you love to learn. You believe that once you learn Occlumency, Harry will tell you more.”

“Will he?” Hermione asked.

“I think he will, once you prove to have strong Occlumency shields,” Lily said.

Hermione nodded. “Alright. Then yes, I do want to learn faster. I want him to be able to tell me. I mean he could tell Luna, because she's a natural Occlumens but – she's not --”

“She's not his girlfriend, not like you,” Lily said. “I see the way she looks at him you know. I've heard her flirt with him in her own little way. Harry told me about when she flirted with him yesterday.”

“He did?” Hermione asked, her eyes wide.

“Well, I don't think he knows she was flirting,” Lily said. “He told me about her basically saying she wanted his babies – when you were talking about him being a – a sacrifice, and why he shouldn't be.”

“She definitely was flirting with him,” Hermione said, “She does like him, you know.”

“Are you jealous?” Lily asked.

“I don't know,” Hermione said, sighing, “I mean – she's my best friend. If I married Harry, and so
did she, that would be fine, I suppose. But I also don't want him to break her heart. He – did he tell you about his list of possible wives?”

Lily raised her eyebrows. “He's kept that one from me.”

“Maybe I shouldn't say anything then,” Hermione said.

“I think I know which girls are on a list if he has them,” Lily said. “I'm sure Daphne and Tracey are at the top since they're a sure thing. And you... are just below them?”

Hermione blushed and nodded.

“Hmm,” Lily said. “Rebecca might be one. I know he's told you about her.”

“He told me – and yes she is,” Hermione said.

“And I bet Luna's on the list,” Lily said. “My son isn't a heart-breaker, Hermione. His first two girlfriends broke his heart – the first one cheated on him, the second hated long-distance relationships. He doesn't want to feel the same way.”

“But if he has something with Rebecca,” Hermione said.

“She's a No-Maj, Hermione,” Lily said, “Do you know how much of a gigantic leap he'd have to take with her to further his relationship with her? He might do it. But it would first take him to tell her about our world – then he'd have to mention his Lordships, his girlfriend, his Betrothed... and the whole Polygamy thing.”

“And he could only do any one of those things if he's serious about her,” Hermione said.

“Pretty much,” Lily said, “Statute of Secrecy is basically the same in the States, as it is here. At one point several decades ago – early 1900s-- magicals having relationships with No-Majes wasn’t only frowned upon, it was illegal. That's changed in the modern age, but still it is a big risk. I know how he feels about Rebecca, or at least I am sure he does. But she is a No-Maj, and if someone bad gets word that they have a kind of relationship that may lead to marriage and kids, it would also paint a big target on her. Especially in Britain. Something tells me Luna's higher on the list than Rebecca.”

“Really?” Hermione asked.

“Really,” Lily said, “He's rather confused about her, I think. For all I know, he probably does have feelings for her, but he doesn't want to show them because of you. Has he shown anything toward Daphne?”

“Maybe a touch of flirting or two – but the most recent, he was just teasing her,” Hermione said.

“And yet she's his Betrothed,” Lily said. “Granted she's in a pretty serious relationship, but I think he knows he's going to end up a part of their dynamic. So he's fine with letting things be for now. I think he wants to know where he's headed with you before he does anything else.”

Hermione nodded. “I suppose that makes me feel better. But if likes Luna, and she definitely likes him. I don't want them to lose that because of me.”

“Do you think Luna will stop doing what she's doing if he takes too long?” Lily asked.
“Luna’s... not like regular girls,” Hermione said. “If she knows Harry feels the same way about her that she does with him, she’ll wait for him. And she respects our relationship – enough that she knows how and when to flirt, and only to do so with me around.”

“Then I think they’ll be fine,” Lily said. “Let’s worry about you and Harry right now. Harry told me about the fight you two had. I am here to listen if you want to talk about it.”

“It wasn’t a fight!” Hermione argued, then she frowned, “Was it?”

“Harry looked and sounded quite upset,” Lily said, “You know, I don’t think I’ve ever seen either of you two fight until today.”

Hermione bit her lip. “We’ve had minor disagreements, but – oh, bother. I suppose this *was* a fight. Our first fight. I suppose it had to happen sometime...”

“Harry really wanted to tell you, Hermione,” Lily said. “Even though you don’t know Occlumency, he still wanted to tell you. He doesn’t like keeping secrets – from you, or the other girls, but you especially. But I do know what he is doing today, and believe me, it is very important. I would have gone with them if I didn’t trust Sirius to keep Harry safe. And then Amelia decided to tag along, so I am quite sure they’re okay.”

“But why did Harry have to tag along?” Hermione asked, “He didn’t tell me that. V-Voldemort isn’t back. I know you wouldn’t keep that from me. So it isn’t about him, per say. So why did he have to tag along?”

“Did Harry tell you what he received yesterday?” Lily asked, “What particular object?”

“A Prophecy Orb,” Hermione said, “I know they hold Prophecy recordings.”

“And aside from holding Prophecy recordings,” Lily said, “What else do they do?”

Hermione bit her lip. Then she frowned and shook her head.

“A hint? They light up – or they turn off,” Lily said.

“Oh!” Hermione said, “They stay bright until the Prophecy is complete.”

“He told you he’s headed to our Family Vault – he told me that much,” Lily said, “That is one of his plans. He’s placing the Prophecy Orb in the Vault – so it can be safe, and he can come back and see if the Prophecy goes dark or not.”

“After V-Voldemort is dead, you mean,” Hermione said, “Why wouldn’t it go dark. Prophecy would be over... wouldn't it?”

“The Prophecy never said 'Voldemort' in it, did it? It just said Dark Lord,” Lily said. “That’s all I can tell you.”

“There could be another – another Dark Lord – and he's keeping it safe, just in case,” Hermione said.

“He couldn't destroy it,” Lily said, “and Croaker basically told him if he kept it in the Hall of Prophecy, Voldemort could steal it.”
“Oh,” Hermione said, “And... as to why Sirius went along instead of you.”

“That is the part he couldn't tell you,” Lily said. “Sirius is taking care of something, and since he was escorting Harry, Harry tagged along too.”

“Oh,” Hermione said, then she sniffled. “I just don't like him doing anything pertaining to the Prophecy, Lily. It means he's --”

“One step closer to his destiny,” Lily said, “I know. He knows you don't like it. And I told him to talk to you about it when he returns. Will you let him?”

Hermione nodded. “I don't like fighting with him.”

“I don't think anyone would like arguing with the one they love, Hermione,” Lily said; she smiled when Hermione blushed. “You're definitely not the first to fight with your romantic interest. And you won't be the last. Hermione? This won't be the last argument either.”

“We just need to get through each one,” Hermione said.

“And that is the key to a healthy, lasting relationship,” Lily said. “One of them at least. Now, I am going to let you continue. I need to make some Cold and Flu Remedies for the winter season. If you have any questions about Occlumency, I am here to help. I'm free until they return – then I do believe we'll both be occupied.”


“Please do not tell Harry this,” Lily said, “I don't want to be responsible for breaking your 'seven-month plan' and going fast-forward into the next step. But I wouldn't be unhappy with you as a daughter-in-law.”

Hermione blushed red. “Thanks, Lily. That means a lot. I'll try to keep that a secret.”

“You do that,” Lily said. “Now you have a secret, and so does he. They're both fairly big, aren't they?”

Hermione giggled and nodded. Lily smiled, and stood up, then headed over to the Potions lab.

She did her part for her son and his girlfriend. Now they needed to do theirs. She remembered her first of many fights with James – well, the fights after they became a couple. True, there were much less than they had before they became a couple. But as a couple they became different fights.

Lily only hoped it would be a while before Harry and Hermione made up after fights in the same way she did with James. She sighed and put those memories away for now. She'd save them for later. She had Remedies to focus on and brew.

Number 12 Grimmauld Place – Black Manor

Harry exhaled as his lungs inflated, after his latest bout of Side-Along Apparation. He and Amelia had both done Side-Along Apparation with Sirius. Only Sirius and Algie knew where Black Manor
was, and neither Harry nor Amelia wanted to Side-Along with Algie. They were standing on a sidewalk which separated the streets where cars would usually go in either direction. There were cars parked along the street, but the only ones along the street were parked. There were no people walking down the sidewalks. Nobody had seen them arrive out of thin air. Good.

Whenever Sirius mentioned his home as “Black Manor”, Harry visioned a white-washed – Black, only in name -- Victorian Manor behind a gate that wrapped around a very large piece of land. Like his mother and Uncles had described when talking about Potter Manor.

But Black Manor wasn't anything like how he imagined. Manor only in name, it was more like a tall three-story building, and it was connected on either side by identical buildings all along the street. Harry supposed he could call it a home. Harry half-expected they were about to walk into a large apartment building. But Sirius didn't seem like the type to have grown up in an apartment building.

“Huh,” Sirius said, “I distinctly remember, after I ran away, Mum placing a Fidelius Charm on the house and not giving me the Secret. Her simple message telling me never to return. I suppose it went away when she died?”

“I would wager so,” Algie said. “Do you want to lead, or shall I?”


Sirius led them toward the building labeled twelve. Definitely a single house – just a large three-story one family home, it appeared. Big house for a family of four. Harry's home housed five residents, and it was only two stories.

When they arrived at the landing near the door, Sirius cleared his throat.

“If my old house-elf Kreacher is alive – and I hope he isn't,” he said, then he probably made the inside of the house a living hell, in case I returned. His way of greeting me back into my old home. There could be any number of defenses, and even some magical creatures. I suspect Doxies, and other types of pests.”

“And the artifact inside, it might have its own type of defense,” Algie said.

“So be careful and cautious,” Amelia said, “Got it. Wands out everyone, as soon as you step inside.”

Sirius pressed the crest of his House Black Signet Ring against the door's locking mechanism. Harry heard a mechanical sound for a few moments before it stopped. Sirius inhaled and exhaled, then opened the door. Harry removed his wand from his robes, as Sirius did. Sirius stepped through the door, followed by Amelia, then Harry went in, followed by Algie.

Harry looked around as he entered. They were in a long, very dusty and rather dark corridor. The wallpaper was peeling, and was definitely not an attractive color. A ways down the corridor, there were stairs going up to a second level on the right, and a doorway on the left.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Algie's Horcrux Detector went off.

“Croaker!” Amelia growled.

“WHO DARES ENTER THE ANCIENT AND MOST NOBLE HOUSE OF BLACK!” a voice screeched from somewhere down the corridor in the direction of the voice.
“Oh, bollocks,” Sirius said, “Please don't tell me – please tell me I'm wrong --”

Sirius hurried off down the corridor, and Amelia and Harry followed behind him. Algie's Detector kept slowly beeping. Sirius arrived at the stairwell, and his eyes widened, and his lips turned down in a frown, as he gazed at something. When Harry arrived next to him, he saw what his Godfather was looking at.

It was a portrait of an old woman with yellowish skin and a fierce gaze as she stared at Sirius.

“YOOU!” she screamed, “SHAME OF MY FLESH! ABOMINATION! BLOOD-TRAITOR! HOW DARE YOU RETURN TO THE --”

As the vile woman screamed, Sirius was conjuring curtains on either side of the portrait. He violently shut them, and the screaming stopped.

“There you go, Harry,” Sirius said, “A nice introduction to my mother.”

“I see her portrait is quite accurate,” Amelia muttered. “Appearance and personality.”

“She was such a nice woman when she was younger,” Algie said, with a sigh.

Harry, Sirius and Amelia stared at the Unspeakable. Suddenly there was a creaking sound, and all four visitors pointed their wands down the corridor. A very old house-elf slowly skulked out of the shadows into the light.

“Mistress?” the house-elf said, “What is the matter? Was it the Doxies? Kreacher will --”

The house-elf's eyes widened as he finally saw the guests. He glanced at all of them and Sirius, he stared at the longest.

“The blood-traitor brat has returned to the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black,” the house-elf muttered. “Now Kreacher knows why Mistress was upset.”

“Hello, Kreacher,” Sirius said, “Long time, no see. We're just here to pick something up, and we'll be on our way.”

“Sirius – I have a theory,” Algie said. “Kreacher's been here all this time with this artifact. I think he's been guarding it. He knows where it is. Show him the fake around your neck. See if he recognizes it.”

Sirius shrugged. He removed the locket, and showed it to Kreacher. Kreacher's eyes widened for a few moments as they stared at the locket. Then his eyes narrowed.

“How did you get Master Regulus' locket?!” Kreacher growled.

“I found it,” Algie said, “In a cave. Full of Inferi. Do you know of which cave I speak of, Kreacher?”

Kreacher suddenly collapsed onto his hands and knees and sobbed.

“Kreacher failed his Master Regulus!” Kreacher sobbed, “Kreacher tried to destroy it, as Kreacher
promised. But Kreacher could not!"

“The real locket?” Sirius asked. “Where is it Kreacher? We're here to take it and destroy it. I'll – I tell you what. I'll trade you. The real locket for Regulus' locket here.”

“Is the blood-traitor telling the truth?” Kreacher asked.

“I am Lord Black, Kreacher,” Sirius said, “I respect the honor of the House of Black.”

Kreacher stared at Sirius, then eyed the fake locket, and looked back at Sirius. Then he started walking up the stairs.

“Kreacher will bring the locket to Master,” Kreacher said. “It will take five minutes while Kreacher does away with the defenses. Kreacher set many defenses.”

“We'll be waiting,” Sirius said.

Kreacher vanished with a pop.

“Do you trust that elf, Black?” Algie asked.

“No,” Sirius said, “But he'd never dishonor Lord Black. Kreacher realized when I told him I am Lord Black, that I was never truly disowned. He knows I am his Master, his Lord Black.”

“I trust him,” Harry said. “He wants to destroy the Horcrux, but obviously never could.”

“I trust him too,” Amelia said, “More than you right now, Croaker.”

“Here we go,” Algie muttered. “Let me have it Bones.”

“Let me get something straight,” Amelia asked, “You've known about these Horcruxes since June of '93 And you never told me?!”

“We Unspeakables were doing just fine on our own with the Horcrux hunt, Bones,” Algie said. “It was the one here in this house we couldn't have gotten without Sirius.”

“You could have burned the entire house down with Fiendfyre,” Sirius supplied. “It would have gotten rid of the Horcrux and I would have thanked you for doing it.”

Harry snorted. He could tell Sirius wasn't joking. And he didn't blame him.

“It crossed my mind,” Algie said.

“You know what didn't cross your mind?” Amelia asked. “Telling me that Voldemort wasn't dead a year and a half ago!! So I could be ready. So I could work harder at pushing through my DMLE and Auror Department fund bills. So I could start bringing our force back up in numbers! Did that cross your mind? No! It obviously didn't! When do you believe Voldemort could return to true power?”

“Less than a year likely,” Algie said. “Maybe by next summer.”

“A year?!” Amelia asked, “Less than a goddamned year! Possibly next summer! Oh, great! Thank
you for dooming us all, Croaker!”

“Now that is a little overboard,” Algie said.

“Overboard?” Amelia echoed in disbelief, “Remember Albus Dumbledore? Apparent Dark Lord? Has a Seat in the ICW. Has a lot of influence. Yesterday the Wizengamot gave him permission to bring MacNair's Dementor Bill – Walden MacNair, a Death Eater, by the way! – to the ICW. Dark Lord Dumbledore will get the law passed, the Dementors will be gone – not within a year, but a lot sooner – so then, Voldemort's imprisoned Death Eaters – his most dangerous, by the way, will get stronger and escape. And then we have to deal with a much greater army! And Dumbledore won't care! Why? Voldemort wants to wipe out Muggleborn! Which works perfectly for Dark Lord Dumbledore's Pureblood Paradise!”

Harry gulped. Amelia was much scarier when she was ranting at the target of her intended rants.

“What else have you done since hunting these Horcruxes down without telling me?” Amelia asked.

“Hmm? Gallivanted with Giants? Wooed a few packs of werewolves? Please tell me you didn't vex the vampires. We don't need any of those beasts invading Britain like they did last time. We're not ready. Add the Dementors which will leave Azkaban, looking for food. And the Death Eaters who escape Azkaban. Yeah, Algie, you fucked us real good by KEEPING SECRETS!”

“We did destroy a whole army of Inferi in a cave Voldemort had placed them in,” Algie said, “How's that?”

“That's grand, Algie,” Amelia's voice lit up with sarcasm, “I'm sure you used a Fiendfyre Curse, did away with 'em all and thought 'well, maybe Ol' Bones will forgive me for not telling her about any of this when the truth gets out'. Because you'd be wrong, Algernon. Very wrong.”

“Are you done?” Algie asked. “You remember why we're here? This is exactly why I didn't want you to come. We're here to retrieve a Horcrux.”

“Kreacher's bringing it,” Amelia said, “I still have time to rant! Because I am not done! I get you are trying to help us. But you've been a hindrance as much as a help! We could lose this war! You are going to be the target of a DMLE investigation after Voldemort and Dumbledore are dealt with! Unless...”

“Are you trying to blackmail me, Bones?” Algie asked.

“Yes,” Amelia said, bluntly, “Give me the blueprints and research for your Scrying Bowl and Runes. I want my own copy for various operations. And I need it soon. It will go a long way into remedying your hindrance!”

“And if I don't?” Croaker asked.

“I'll tell Augusta and Neville Longbottom why Frank and Alice are still insane,” Amelia said. “but capable of being cured, and you knew and could help them. I'll tell them everything. You told Sirius, Harry and Lily that you care about your family. Prove it! Backscratching relationship, wasn't that what you called it? I can help you! We all can! If you don't want Neville involved, let others help!”

Croaker glared at her. Then he wilted and frowned. “I'll give you the research tomorrow morning in your office at ten-o'clock.”
“Excellent,” Amelia said, “If it doesn't work, I will tell Augusta and Neville. And I'll have all the proof I need.”

“Hold up,” Sirius said, “What about that 'help' you mentioned earlier pertaining to the Scrying Bowl?”

“Backscratching relationship, Black,” Algie said, “Once the Horcrux is in our possession, I'll give you the information.”

“It better be good,” Sirius said.

“You'll be thanking me,” Algie said, “And I'll be thanking you.”

“No funny business, Croaker,” Amelia said, “Or I go straight to Neville when we leave here.”

“I don't back out of deals, Bones,” Algie said. “Especially involving family.”

“What will you do with the Horcrux?” Harry asked.

“If I am right, it is Salazar Slytherin's locket,” Algie said. “It will get the same treatment as the other Founder's objects. Goblin Removal Ritual. I'll take it to Keeper Ragnok, and the Goblins will remove the Horcrux. Then there will be Voldemort, and possibly one more. I am quite sure there is one more, and like I said, it is a living being. The Locket will stay in my possession with the other Founder's Artifacts until you or your mother request they be given to Hogwarts – only after Voldemort is dead, of course.”

“Okay,” Harry said. “So... Voldemort and this other Horcrux?”

“If I am right, he'll be keeping it close at hand,” Algie said, “When Voldemort returns – for he will return – all we need to do is find a peculiar living being – likely an animal – that he keeps close, and acts different than others of its species.”

“So it is impossible to find Voldemort and this possible Horcrux until he returns?” Amelia asked.

“I am afraid so,” Algie said. “Believe me, I've been doing my research, and there is nothing that can help us find him.”

“What about possible hide-outs?” Amelia asked, “If he's back in Britain?”

“I have Unspeakables posted on every possible hidey-hole that we've figured out,” Algie said. “Trained to watch targets of ours. He isn't in any known Death Eater home or hideout. And there is no activity in other hide-outs. Of course... he could be behind a Fidelius Charm.”

“Why do you need Unspeakables doing it if you have Scrying Runes?” Amelia asked.

“That's the problem with a Scrying Bowl, Amelia,” Algie said, “You can't watch every location at once. You have to be choosey and pick well. It would be a waste of time to just use a Scrying Bowl. There isn't a team of Unspeakables sitting around looking at Scrying Bowls all the time, you know. The posted, trained Unspeakables are far more useful.”

“Would you be willing to tell me about any suspicious activity at known Death Eater home or hideout?” Amelia asked.
Algie sighed. “We'll discuss it tomorrow.”

Before Amelia could reply, Kreacher returned with a pop. Algie's Detector went haywire. Kreacher winced and stepped back.

“It is alright, Kreacher,” Sirius said, “It is only reacting to the locket in your hand.”

Algie removed a beaded bag from his cloak, similar to the one that he had given Harry for the Prophecy Orb.

“This is spelled to lessen the artifact's enchantments,” Algie explained. “Kreacher? Would you please place that locket in here? I promise it will be destroyed within the next two hours.”

“Do it,” Sirius said, “And I'll give you Regulus' locket.”

Kreacher slowly walked over to Algie. Algie offered the bag, and opened it up. Kreacher dropped the locket inside. When Sirius handed him Regulus' locket, Kreacher sat on the floor and clutched it against him, sobbing.

“Kreacher,” Sirius said, “On Christmas, I will be participating in a Blood Adoption Ritual with my new daughter, a young teen Pureblood witch, and she will join the House of Black. I want this house looking proper and fitting for a Lord and Heiress of the House of Black, in case I'd ever like to stay here for any period of time. There are no time constraints. We may be back during the summer, or the spring. I do not know.”

“It will be done by the end of winter, Master,” Kreacher said. “Kreacher will have the House of Black fitting for Master and young Mistress.”

“Good,” Sirius said, “Thank you for what you've done today. You are excused.”

Kreacher bowed then vanished.

“You know,” Algie said, “He could have told you how your brother died, and how he ended up with the locket.”

“I don't need to know how,” Sirius said. “I know Regulus redeemed himself, and that is good enough. Now... backscratching. Give us this information.”

“One of the houses I am watching in the Scrying Bowl is a family of the Dumbledore Alliance,” Algie said, “The Weasleys, at their House known as the Burrow. Luckily, I had been watching Dumbledore's office, and noticed him using the Floo, to speak to the Burrow. So I switched to the Burrow location Scrying Rune. Albus and Molly Weasley were talking. Molly's youngest son, Ron, is apparently going home for Christmas Break. Apparently he was having issues trying to find a date, and when he got shot down, he wanted to go home. But Albus and Molly discussed him going to the Ball anyway. And finding him a date.

“Here’s the part where you're all concerned. The target for Ron's date... is Luna Lovegood.”

Harry hissed. “I don't like where this is going, Algie.”

“It isn't good,” Algie said, “But it can be fixed quite easily. Albus' plan with Molly was to dose Luna
with a Love Potion, keyed to Ron Weasley.”

“She knows how to detect them!” Harry said.

“Mnhmm,” Algie said, “But what if Albus' other plan was to use a Confundus Charm on Luna, so she wouldn't detect it?”

“We'd still notice,” Sirius said. “We'd notice something suspicious if she suddenly started dating Ron Weasley.”

“Albus seems to have forgotten that little detail,” Algie said. “His endgame is making a Betrothal Contract between the Weasleys and Xenophilius Lovegood. But as I said, this is quite easy to stop. Just let Albus know his plan has already been discovered. If you don't want to do it, ask a Professor to. Tell them you received anonymous tip that Luna Lovegood was being targeted with a Love Potion and a Confundus Charm.”

“Why both?” Harry asked.

“Because if we only tell Albus about the Potion, he might think someone else was trying to dose Luna,” Amelia said, “And he'd continue his plan. Love Potion and Confundus... he'd know he'd been outed. I will be the one to tell him.”

“Amelia,” Sirius said.

“He won't do nothing to me,” Amelia said, “I'll mention a list of targets. I'll mention Susan first. I'll tell him that is why I am involved. I also suspect other members of the Great Alliance being targeted. Hermione, Daphne, Tracey... use Luna's name in the middle... and name the other girls.”

“Will he stop?” Harry asked.

“That is the juicy part,” Amelia said, “If he doesn't, I'll continue the investigation. Molly Weasley will be a suspect. And so on and so forth.”

“And I'll keep an eye on both Albus and Molly,” Algie said. “See if they continue the plan.”

“I have my Marauder Mirror,” Sirius said, “Should I contact Lily, so she can watch Luna.”

“Yes,” Harry said. “Don't let Mom let Luna out of her sight.”

Sirius nodded, and walked away a few feet pulling out his mirror from his robes.

“Thank you Algie,” Harry said, “Oh, and do ask Keeper Ragnok to send me a letter with confirmation of the Horcrux destruction.”

“I'll do so,” Algie said. “Thank you all for your help. Amelia, I will see you tomorrow with all the promised information. Tell me then if you're doing an on-going investigation into the Lovegood incident. Good luck with it.”

“I should be able to handle myself,” Amelia said. “Even around Dark Lord Dumbledore.”

Sirius returned. “Lily knows and is going to tell Luna. Now let's get the hell out of here. A Horcrux needs to be destroyed, and Dumbledore needs to remember that Luna is under House Potter
Protection!

Chapter End Notes

Good news for those who wanted Luna in the Harem. You got it! It will be slow, and there won't be any romantic development until post-Tournament. But after the Tournament, we will go further into the 'Harem' aspect of the story. Will Rebecca be in the Harem? I do not know. It depends on what happens later in the story.

Magical/No-Maj Romantic relationships being forbidden in America in the early 1900s is canon, according to information recently given by JK Rowling, concerning “Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them” movie plots.

Next Chapter: Lily starts off another chapter with the end of her conversation with Sirius. Then She talks to Luna. Then Amelia talks to Dumbledore. Then a Dumbledore PoV, then the staff meeting. And a Ron and Molly PoV. It looks to be a fairly long chapter. I'll try not to split it in two!
Chapter 48: No Title

Chapter Notes

This Chapter has no title because I didn't want to give any spoilers.

Well, we didn't get to everything I promised in this chapter. The Staff Meeting among other things will happen next chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, December 19th, 1994

“We should be back in half-an-hour or less,” Sirius said, “We're going to Apparate outside the Hogwarts wards and then run back in our Animagus forms.”

“I will try to keep her occupied until you return,” Lily said. “Thank you, Sirius. Congratulations on a successful mission.”


Lily's reflection replaced Sirius' face. She pocketed the mirror and growled under her breath. That interfering, manipulative old Dark Lord! How dare he try to trap Luna into a relationship with a boy, and into a Betrothal Contract, all because a stupid boy couldn't get a date to the Yule Ball! Surely the old bastard knew the plan wouldn't work! Even if Luna was Confounded, she had several friends – teenagers and adults – who would have recognized her strange behavior!

For the first time since she had discovered the Scrying Bowl, and how Algernon Croaker had been spying on her and her family, she thanked the Unspeakable. If it wasn't for his Scrying, they wouldn't have discovered Albus' plot involving Luna. And with Amelia now successfully getting the research for the Scrying Bowl, they could use it to their own advantage.

Lily set a Stasis Charm on the Cauldron which was brewing the Cold and Flu Remedy Potion. Then she dropped the Privacy Charm. Hermione was looking at her, with a worried expression.

“Something's wrong, isn't it?” Hermione asked.

“Good news and bad news,” Lily said. “Good news is that Harry, Sirius and Amelia's missions today went very successful and they're returning in half-an-hour or less.”

“And the bad news?” Hermione asked.

“Our Unspeakable friend discovered a plot against Luna involving Love Potions,” Lily said.

Hermione's eyes widened; she dropped the Occlumency text book and stood up. “What?!”
"Relax," Lily said, "We're going to find Luna and explain things to her. Then we're going to stay with her. Madam Bones has things well at hand it appears. We'll stop this before it starts. Now, I have a Stasis Charm on this Cauldron. It should last an hour. That should give me enough time to stay with Luna until things are taken care of."

"I think she's still in the Tent," Hermione said, "Oh, Merlin. I hope so! What time is it? She could have gone to lunch in the Great Hall! I should have stayed with her!"

"We'll find her," Lily said, as she led Hermione out of the tent. "Come on."

Soon they arrived at Hermione's tent, and Lily was quite relieved to see the other five girls in the tent. Luna and Astoria were sitting at the dining room table, while Daphne, Tracey and Tonks were in the sitting area.

"There you are, Hermione!" Daphne said, "We were just about to get some lunch in the Great Hall."

"I'm afraid that might not be the best idea," Lily said. "I have just received notice of a possible threat against one of you involving Love Potions."

"Which one of us?" Daphne asked.

"Luna," Lily said.

Lily expected Luna's usual dreamy expression to change to shock or panic. Therefore she was surprised when Luna cocked her head to the side and looked at Lily.

"Someone is attracted to me enough to want to use a Love Potion?" Luna asked. "I suppose I should be flattered."

"The boy in question is not the mastermind behind the plot, Luna," Lily said, as she walked over to the table and sat down. "My son told all of you about his meeting with Unspeakable Algernon Croaker, am I correct? You might know him better as Neville Longbottom's Great-Uncle Algie."

"Astoria was asleep during most of the conversation," Daphne said, "But we summarized some of it."

"Unspeakable Croaker has a... a method of detection that he uses against targets of his investigations," Lily said, trying to be cautious about revealing information. "Headmaster Dumbledore is apparently one of these targets of investigation."

"Why Dumbledore?" Tonks asked.

Lily decided on a white-lie. "Augusta Longbottom is Croaker's sister. She's one of Dumbledore's Alliance members. Croaker just wants to make sure his sister can trust Dumbledore as an Ally. Same goes for the Weasleys. Using these detection methods, Croaker eavesdropped on a discussion between Dumbledore and Molly Weasley. Apparently Ron Weasley is going home for Christmas Break, because he doesn't have date to the Ball, and can't get one. Dumbledore discussed baiting you, Luna, into taking a Love Potion keyed to Ron Weasley, so you would go with him to the Ball. Dumbledore knows you know how to detect Love Potions, so he would try to Confound you into
deciding not to check the drink or food.”

“Why Luna?” Tracey asked. “Why did he decide to target her?”

“I've known the Weasleys since I was four years old,” Luna said. “Ginny and I have been friends since we were little.”

“Oh, I see,” Hermione muttered. “You being in a relationship with Ron Weasley wouldn't be so strange, because under a Love Potion, all you would have to do to make us convinced that you do love Ron is tell us you've known him since you were little.”

“Dumbledore would probably use Luna's friendship with the Weasleys, yes,” Lily said.

“He can't Confound us all!” Daphne said. “Luna's never hinted about being attracted to Weasley! We'd notice something was off!”

“I don't think Dumbledore thought this one entirely through,” Lily said. “But he'll be reminded soon not to mess with us. Madam Bones is going to tell him about that an anonymous tip was given to her that all members of the Children of the Great Alliance are apparently targets of Love Potions. Luna will only be one of those named, but she won't be the first she names.”

“That would scare Dumbledore for sure,” Tonks said. “She isn't going to arrest him?”

“The only proof we have is Unspeakable Croaker's detection Charm,” Lily said. “Sure, we could let Dumbledore's plan work out for a while. We could try to stop him from Confounding Luna, so she could detect the Love Potion. But what if it didn't work? We don't want to risk hurting Luna. If Dumbledore continues to pursue this, Madam Bones will then pursue an investigation. Right now, we're protecting Luna.”

“I guess that would be the best response to this for now,” Tonks said. “Cut it off at the head before it even begins.”

“Yes,” Lily said, “Luna, unfortunately, I must keep you a prisoner in your tent temporarily until Harry, Sirius and Madam Bones return. Sirius said they'd be here in half-an-hour or less.”

“We'll stay until then,” Daphne said, “Besides, I think we've all been put off meals in the Great Hall for today. We'll just have lunch in the Cafeteria Tent.”

Hermione and the other girls agreed with Daphne. Lily smiled and relaxed in her chair at the dining room table.

“So, how about you girls tell me what you think about what Harry told you yesterday?” Lily asked, “I would very much like to hear your own opinions for myself...”

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Twenty minutes later...

Shadow, Padfoot and Amelia the German Shepherd (whose Animagus form didn't have a nickname yet) hurried across the Grounds toward the Ilvermorny Camp. They were running on the edge of the Forbidden Forest, to keep out of sight of students and Hogwarts staff. When they neared the Camp, they reverted to their human forms.
Hermione was waiting for them outside the tent as they arrived. When she saw Harry, she ran over to him and hugged him, then kissed him soundly. Harry was slightly surprised she was kissing him, given how angry she was at him earlier. But he happily kissed her back. She backed away before it could linger though.

“Your mother's in my tent with Luna and the rest of my tent-mates,” Hermione said. “Luna knows she's a target of Love Potions. Hello, Sirius, Madam Bones. Lily told us about your plans for Dumbledore.”

“Yes, and I need to get right on that, before Dumbledore decides to do anything foolish,” Amelia said. “Well... anything else foolish! I'll be back soon, Sirius.”

“Be careful,” Sirius said, “If you're not back within the hour, I'm coming in there and throwing curses.”

“I'll be fine,” Amelia said.

She kissed Sirius, then headed off toward the castle.

“I'm going to go and talk to Moony about what happened,” Sirius said, as he watched Amelia walk off toward the castle. “Please tell your mother.”

“I will,” Harry said.

Sirius nodded, and headed off toward the House Potter Tent.

“Before we go into my tent, Harry,” Hermione said, “I need to say something. I apologize for being so angry with you this morning. I crossed a line. I know what you're doing is important in the long run, and I will not interfere with it anymore. Just promise me you'll be safe. And alive after Voldemort is dead. No sacrificing yourself. Okay?”

Harry whistled. “And here I thought I was going to have to convince you to forgive me.”

“Your mother talked some sense into me,” Hermione said, smiling. “I think she said everything you would have said.”

“Oh, well, that was nice of her,” Harry said. “I promise I will do my best to survive all of this. No sacrificing myself.”

“Good,” Hermione said. “Because you made a promise to a few girls last night, and you will not break it, Harry Potter.”

“You mean the baby thing?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” Hermione said, “And before you ask, I am not saying whether or not that topic involves me! Seven month plan, remember?”

“Thank goodness we will have the option for a seven-month plan,” Harry said. “No need to run off to America and elope.”

“Not yet anyway,” Hermione said, with a small snort, “So... our first big fight.”
“It was, wasn't it?” Harry asked. “Is it over now?”

“Yes,” Hermione said.

“You know what they say about making up, huh?” Harry asked, grinning.

Hermione rolled her eyes and kissed him again. “That's all your getting for a make-up after this fight, Harry Potter.”

“Huh,” Harry said. “We might have to fight more. Ow!”

She had slapped him playfully on the chest. Then she took his hand and pulled him inside her tent. When Lily saw Harry, she immediately stood up and walked over to him.

“I'm fine, Mom,” Harry said.

“I'll be the judge of that,” Lily said; then after a minute of diagnosis charms, she gave him a hug and backed away, “You're fine. You will tell me everything young man.”

“Right here – in front of the others?” Hermione asked.

“No.” Lily said, “It can wait. The girls know not to ask questions about too much of what happened today.”

“We understand it is Child of the Prophecy stuff,” Daphne said. “Stuff that can't be given out to just anyone, because it might be risky.”

“Definitely,” Harry said. “You alright, Luna?”

“I'm good,” Luna said.

“She's a champ,” Lily said, “She's not even too affected by it.”

“I know it will be thwarted before something serious happens,” Luna said. “It is an odd way to find a date for the Yule Ball though.”

“I just realized you can't go unless you have a date, Luna,” Harry said. “Well, if you don't find one, just tell whoever asks, that you're going because I promised you a dance.”

Luna smiled. “Thank you, Harry Potter. I look forward to our dance.”

“You know...” Daphne said, “Astoria doesn't have permission either. Luna and Astoria could go as a friendly date. They could say Harry has promised them a dance, and then go together so they're not alone all night.”

Luna and Astoria glanced at each other.

“If someone doesn't ask you, I'll be happy to go with you,” Astoria said. “I thought I'd be cooped up in here all night.”

“Deal,” Luna said.
Harry smiled and sat down on one of the sofas with Hermione, who cuddled up to him.

“So... what can you tell us about what happened?” Tonks asked.

Harry smiled, as he began a ready-made explanation. He knew they would probably be interested to find he met the man responsible for his Betrothal Contract with Daphne.

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**Hogwarts**

Madam Amelia Bones followed Minerva McGonagall up the circular stairs that led to Albus Dumbledore's office. She had met with Minerva in the Great Hall, and Amelia told her she had to meet urgently with Albus – that it was an emergency involving a threat against students. Minerva told her that Albus was in his office, and immediately led her in that direction.

Amelia followed Minerva into Albus' office, and steeled herself for the confrontation. She had prepared her ready-made conversation, and also prepared herself for the possibility of Albus reacting harshly. Hopefully it wouldn't happen. But all information told her that she was about to be face-to-face with an apparent Dark Lord. And that was a frightening thought.

Albus was sitting at his office, working on apparent paperwork. He looked up as Minerva entered the office.

“Minerva, how may I help --” Albus said, then frowned as he saw Amelia, “Madam Bones. A surprise to see you. How may I help you?”

Amelia held back a snort. A surprise? She was quite sure he knew she was coming.

“First of all, I would like Minerva to remain here during this conversation, as she may of some assistance,” Amelia said.

She hadn't planned *that* until Minerva had decided to lead her into the office, instead of letting her go alone after giving the stone guardian the password.

“Is that necessary?” Albus asked.

“Am I correct when I say that she has more face-time with students than you do at any given time of the day?” Amelia asked.

Albus frowned. “I suppose so, though I try to make time for all my students if they feel the need to speak to me. What is this about?”

“I am here on official Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement duties,” Amelia said. “Earlier today, I was given an anonymous letter claiming a threat against several students inside Hogwarts. I take all threats seriously, so I came here immediately.”

“What threat?” Albus asked, “Who is being threatened?”

“It would appear that all the female members of the Children of the Great Alliance are being threatened,” Amelia said. “Including the five newest members. So my own Susan, which is why I assume the note came to me, Hannah Abbott, Daphne and Astoria Greengrass, the soon-to-be Tracey Black, Parvati and Padma Patil, Luna Lovegood, Hermione Granger, Lavender Brown,
Eleanor Branstone and Nymphadora Tonks, though the latter is not a student, of course."

“Eleanor Branstone has gone home for Christmas Break,” Minerva said. “The rest are here at Hogwarts, including Astoria Greengrass – who I assume is staying with her sister instead of going home, even though she doesn't have permission to go to the Ball.”

“Unless someone asks her,” Amelia said. “I know Luna Lovegood doesn't have a date. But Harry Potter has promised her a dance. Would she have invitation then?”

Minerva frowned. “That is a loophole we had not considered. But I think we can let that loophole happen. I would not want to stop Miss Lovegood from going if Lord Potter promised her a dance. Astoria Greengrass would fall under that category too.”

“I'll be happy to pass along the message,” Amelia said. "Anyway, they are being threatened with the possibility of being dosed by Love Potion."

Albus, meanwhile, was looking pale. Amelia had noticed his eyes twitch lightly when she had mentioned Luna Lovegood.

Albus cleared his throat. “This is a serious threat. We should not waste such a conversation with gossip. Was there anything else with this threat? Aside from the targets and Love Potion?”

“Yes, now that you mention it,” Amelia said. “I believe that the culprit will try to use Confounding Charms on the targets so they can’t detect the Potions in their food or drink. I know Alastor Moody has been teaching the students how to detect such things.”

“Yes,” Albus said, “He has. Ever since the incident involving Lord Potter and Cho Chang.”

“I have to wonder why the culprit would take such a risk,” Amelia said.

“What do you mean?” Albus asked.

“Every single one of these ladies are either Allied to Lord Potter,” Amelia said, “Or something more – such as Hermione Granger and Luna Lovegood. Those two ladies fall under House Potter Protection.”

Amelia noted Albus’ eyes twitch. It appeared he had forgotten that little tidbit concerning Luna.

“Such actions would not only have DMLE involvement, but also House Potter involvement,” Amelia said. “Whoever targets any of these girls would not only face heavy repercussions. But they would become a very big enemy of Lord Potter's and the Great Alliance. They would be high on the shit-list of the entire Great Alliance, and could create a blood feud with every single House in the Alliance. That would destroy the person, their House, and all Alliances they are in, not to mention their own reputation. So why risk it?”

Amelia had to hand it to Albus, for keeping calm during that onslaught of her informing him exactly what kind of repercussions could come his way.

Albus frowned. “It does seem to be a very foolish maneuver, does it not?”

Amelia nearly laughed out loud. Had Albus Dumbledore just admitted to his own folly? Had he actually seen the error of his ways – at least in this case?
“I think we can all agree on that one, Albus,” Amelia said.

“Definitely so!” Minerva said, “What do you believe should be done, Amelia?”

“I am going to personally speak to every person named in this threat,” Amelia said, “So they can be more cautious in the future.”

“Is that necessary?” Albus asked. “It would only frighten the children. Wouldn’t it be best to leave such precautions to myself... and my fellow staff?”

“Absolutely not,” Amelia said. “Each victim, and their families, needs to be personally told by me. That is my duty as Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. I think you have enough on your hands, what with Derrick Davis' damnable law, and also that Dementor Bill that needs to be taken to the ICW. Plus there is the Tournament, the Yule Ball, and the fact that you're the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, which is currently taking care of all Minister of Magic duties. You're a very busy man, Albus. So leave it to me.”

“As Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, I am – by definition – interim Minister of Magic, Madam Bones,” Albus said.

Amelia couldn't believe the man. Was he actually going on the defensive now. Was he actually trying to prevent justice.

“If you want the Minister of Magic title, Albus, then put your name in the hat next Sunday for candidate,” Amelia said.

“I do not want to be the Minister of Magic, Madam Bones,” Albus said.

“And yet you just basically named yourself interim Minister, Albus,” Amelia said. “This is my investigation, Albus. You will leave it to me. Otherwise, I will find your actions suspect.”

“Suspect?” Albus said, “What ever do you mean?”

“Denying me a DMLE investigation would make make me believe you're trying to cover up something, Albus,” Amelia said. “I don't want to make you a suspect in the threat toward these students, Albus. But I will if I have to. Simply because it would make sure you are kept out of any involvement with the investigation.”

“You have made your point, Amelia,” Albus said. “I leave it up to you to inform the impacted students and their families. Please keep me informed of the investigations – and whether or not you do, in fact, make me a suspect.”

“As long as I feel you will not interfere in the future of the investigation,” Amelia said, “I will include you in it as much as possible. As Headmaster, the students are your responsibility after all. Two attempts at illegal Love Potions in two months would not be a good thing for you. If this threat is more than just a threat, Albus, I am sure the School Governors would want to investigate this as well.”

“I do hope it does not come to that,” Albus said. “Good luck on catching the culprit. Do you have, by chance, any suspects?”
“Oh, I think I have one or two in mind,” Amelia said. “Good day, Albus. Thank you for allowing me to take a moment out of your busy day to meet with you.”

“Of course,” Albus said, “I will let you go and speak to your students. Do you need Minerva’s assistance?”

“No,” Amelia said, “I should be fine on my own.

She turned and left the office, without another word, before Albus could order Minerva to escort her around 'for her own protection, and protection of others'. As she started off down the corridor toward the Grand Staircase – intent on returning to the Ilvermorny Tents to tell her friends everything about her meeting with Albus, Amelia smiled to herself.

While she had told Albus he could be a suspect, she knew that she hadn't made him believe he was her prime suspect – which he definitely was, and aside from Molly Weasley, there were no other suspects. Algernon Croaker had told her that much.

She hadn't lied to Albus. She did intend to speak to all of the Children of the Great Alliance. While she did lie about the Alliance-wide threat, she wanted them to know anyway just in case Albus decided to target someone else aside from Luna. She knew there had to be a reason Luna was the target, and not simply because was basically a neighbor to the Weasleys. She had connections to Harry Potter – a friendship, Protection. Lily, Sirius and Remus had voiced their suspicions to her about Albus possibly being the mastermind behind the Teen Pregnancy Law. It was obvious. Albus was trying to target Harry Potter's friends. Because it was his friends that Harry Potter was fighting for. And Albus Dumbledore knew that.

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**Albus Dumbledore's Office**

Albus Dumbledore did his best to keep his grandfatherly 'Leader of the Light' expression on his face, as Amelia Bones left his office. Minerva McGonagall was still there, and Albus could not afford Minerva finding anything peculiar about his actions. Amelia hadn't exactly named him a suspect to the Love Potion threat, but Minerva would likely paint him as one if he made the wrong move.

“Albus, when is this going to stop?!” Minerva asked. “I thought we were done with this Love Potion fiasco after Alastor Moody taught all the students how to detect the Potions in their food and drink. And now we have word of another threat. Against all the Children of the Great Alliance. Obviously it is revenge against the Great Alliance for their show of power yesterday. What else could it be?!”

“Yes – that crossed my mind too, Minerva,” Albus said, “After all, Amelia named all of the Alliance members, even the new ones.”


“Perhaps,” Albus said.

“Whoever could have done this?” Minerva asked. “A member of the Dark Alliance perhaps? Or the Neutral Alliance, at least those who side with the Dark Alliance?”

“Wouldn't that be too obvious?” Albus countered. “It could, after all, be an inside job.”
“Someone in the Great Alliance threatening their own daughters?” Minerva asked.

“It would take the heat off of them if their child was threatened,” Albus said.

“Merlin, it could be anyone!” Minerva said, throwing up her hands. “What a fiasco. I do hope Madam Bones can find the culprit before anything bad happens. At least the targets will be well and truly warned, and they can be cautious. ‘Constant Vigilance’, as Mad-Eye would say.”

“Thank you for bringing Madam Bones here, Minerva,” Albus said, “You're excused. I will see you this evening for the staff meeting. I assume everyone knows to be there?”

“Yes, everyone has confirmed attendance,” Minerva said. “I will see you then.”

Albus nodded once. He watched Minerva leave the office. Then he huffed and slammed a fist against his desk. How had his plans for Luna Lovegood been thwarted already?! Had Molly Weasley betrayed him?! Arthur didn't work on Saturdays... perhaps he had eavesdropped on the conversation with Molly without their knowledge? No, no he wouldn't betray his wife, or the Leader of his Alliance, the Leader of the Light. And Molly was his most trusted Alliance member. So who had found out? There were no eavesdropping or spying enchantments in his office. Nothing in his office would betray him.

Had someone put spying enchantments on the Burrow sitting room? Is that how it was discovered?

Love Potions and Confundus Charms. That was very specific. That was his plan. He couldn't deny it. He had to drop his plans immediately. If Lily and Harry Potter discovered he was behind this... especially now that they had planned on giving him the meeting he wanted... no he couldn't risk that. How had he forgotten Lovegood was under House Potter Protection. Bah... Amelia was right on one point. He was quite busy with everything. He had so much on his mind he had forgotten about one important factor that could have ruined everything! He had to be careful! At least until he could speak to Lily and Harry Potter. That was the most important thing he would be doing in the near future. The most important for the Greater Good.

He stood and headed over to the Floo Network. He hoped Molly was still home. He needed to visit the Burrow, instead of just talk to Molly through the Floo. He needed to check the Burrow for spying enchantments. Also, he needed to tell her to forget their plan. It was not important enough in the long run to risk so much.

What a fool he had been! No longer would he do something so foolish to risk the Greater Good. He had to be careful, and crafty from now on. Every move he made needed to be thought out from that moment further..

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Algeron Croaker's Office – minutes later

Unspeakable Algeron Croaker was twirling Salazar Slytherin's Locket – now cleansed of the Horcrux – around his finger, as he watched the Scrying Bowl with an amused grin on his face. He was currently sitting on the sofa in his office, the Scrying Bowl on the coffee table in front of him. Albus Dumbledore was waving his wand around the sitting room of the Burrow in complex patterns. Obviously he was looking for eavesdropping and spying enchantments. He wouldn't find the Scrying Runes. Algie had made sure of that. But it was fun to watch the man try.

Even more fun was watching Madam Bones talk to Albus Dumbledore. The woman was scary, that
was for sure. She was scary when she yelled, and scary when she didn't. Algie still couldn't believe he had given in so easy to her threats. But she knew where to hurt him, knew how to win against him.

Molly Weasley was sitting in her rocking chair, looking very confused as she watched Albus.

“Are you sure we're being spied on, Albus?” Molly asked.

“I am no longer certain,” Albus said. “I cannot find any hints of eavesdropping or spying enchantments. I was so sure...”

“Sure about what?” Molly asked.

Albus sat down in a chair. Algie listened to Albus as he gave Molly a summary of his meeting with Amelia. Molly looked very shocked and concerned.

“It couldn't be a coincidence, could it?” Molly asked, when Albus was finished.

“I do not think so,” Albus said. “It was very specific. The fact that every single child of the Great Alliance – well, aside from the Potters, that is – may just be the anonymous person trying to hide the fact that Miss Lovegood was the actual target. Whether they're trying to fool Amelia, or me – us – is the question.”

“So what do we do?” Molly asked.

“We drop the plan,” Albus said. “I think it is best Ron simply remains here for Christmas Break. Yes, that presents problems for your plans during the Break. But I am sure you can figure that out.”

“Yes, I am sure I can,” Molly said. “It is a good thing you came. I was just about to go to Diagon Alley and visit the Apothecary. I'd be several ingredients, of course, to hide the fact that my purchase is Amortentia ingredients.”

“I would suggest not buying all the ingredients for Amortentia,” Albus said. “If Amelia does her investigation thoroughly – as she usually does – she'll look for anyone buying those specific ingredients –”

“And she wouldn't be fooled by my strategy,” Molly said. “Yes.”

“I better be off back at the castle before anyone notices I am gone,” Albus said. “I would have only spoke to you by Floo, but I needed to make certain nobody is spying on you or your family.”

“Thank you for making sure,” Molly said. “I am quite relieved nobody is watching us.”

“I am sure you're relieved not even the great Albus Dumbledore can detect those Scrying Runes, Toad,” a voice said behind Algie.

Algie jumped out of his chair and turned around. A figure stood near the fireplace, their outfit sparkling from the roaring fire.

“Elder Dhampir,” Algie said, “How many times do I have to ask you not to sneak up on me?”

“Once more, as always,” Elder Dhampir said, “I wanted to congratulate you on destroying another of
“One step closer to saving your Great-Nephew's life, you mean,” Elder Dhampir said, “I've told you time and again, you put too much stock in your family. This is why we Unspeakables do not have family, Toad. They can be used against us.”

Algie winced. He should have known the Elders would know what Amelia had told him.

“Yes, Toad,” Elder Dhampir said, “We know about Amelia Bones' threat. Her blackmail.”

“Do you want me to deny her request?” Algie asked.

“No,” Elder Dhampir said, “Scrying Bowls were never going to remain an Unspeakable Secret. Amelia Bones made some good points. Parleying with the Giants, Werewolves and Vampires would be a good idea. The Dementors leaving Azkaban would cause problems. Perhaps you can convince Amelia Bones to take care of that side of the war. If so, that would give myself and my fellow Elders good reason to allow her to have the Scrying Bowl information. In fact... give her your Scrying Bowl, as well as the research.”

“Mine?!” Algie asked, “But --”

“You will have another by the time you return, Toad,” Elder Dhampir said, “Amelia Bones can have yours, so she can use it immediately. And so she has an example of one so she can make others.”

“As you wish, Elder Dhampir,” Algie said.

“I noticed you lied to Lord Potter today, Toad,” Elder Dhampir said. “You do know where Tom Riddle is at this moment. You do know he has another Horcrux. His snake, Nagini.”

“You were the one who forbid me from giving that information away, Elder Dhampir!” Algie said. “Of course I lied! You want Riddle's plans to succeed – at least up until his resurrection.”

“Riddle's part in the Prophecy will not be complete unless he as an actual body, Toad,” Elder Dhampir said. “He must have a fighting chance to survive, else the Prophecy is one-sided in Lord Potter's direction. It cannot be one-sided, or else it would say outright that the Child of Prophecy would destroy Riddle.”

“I know this,” Algie said.

“Do keep that information to yourself until Riddle returns to full body,” Elder Dhampir said. “I would not wish to participate in an Unbreakable Vow with you.”

“Of course, Elder Dhampir,” Algie said.

“I will leave now,” Elder Dhampir said, “You are doing fine work. Adieu, Toad.”

The man vanished in thin air. Algie sank back down on the sofa. What we wouldn't give now for a drink. If anyone could break his sober streak, it would be the Elders and their control over him.

But he had to comply with the Elders. He had no choice. If he didn't, his ambition of being “Elder
Toad” would never come to pass.

Chapter End Notes

So now we have met an Elder. Algie isn't only manipulating some people, he, himself is being manipulated. Hopefully you see Algie's reasons now for what he is doing.

Next Chapter: During lunch with Hermione, and the girls, Harry runs an idea by Hermione for a Christmas plan. A short meeting with Lily and the adults. Then the staff meeting, and finally Ron arrives at King's Cross.
Okay... let me make one thing perfectly clear. Just because there may be times when I do not update this story every day, does not mean I am abandoning it. I have all the faith in the world that I will complete this story... as well as the sequel to it.

Yes, I am going to be splitting the story in two, once the Tournament ends. And yes, I will finish it. I can see the ending, and much of the between. We just have to get there. I have had at least four or five reviewers, over the past couple of days, think I have suddenly abandoned the story, just because I haven't continued my strong of updates.

The only reason I didn't update this sooner is because the final scene – the most important scene – of this chapter took forever for me to come up with a good scene to write for you! It happens!

Harry, Hermione, and Hermione's tent-mates were currently eating a late lunch in the Cafeteria Tent. A few minutes ago, Harry had talked to a few of his Ilvermorny school-mates, where he learned that several of his school-mates had dates to the Yule Ball – either with their fellow school-mates, or they had been lucky enough to find either a Beauxbatons or Hogwarts student to accompany.

The only one who hadn't found a date was Sebastian, one of the two twin seventh year Ilvermorny students who had beat Harry in the contention tournament. Harry suggested to Sebastian that he ask Tonks. Sebastian was a bit surprised at the suggestion at first, since Tonks was three years older than him, and he figured he was out of her league. Harry then told him it was just a date to the Ball. Sebastian then proceeded to ask Tonks, who shrugged and accepted the date. Harry had given the older boy a thumbs-up gesture as he left the tent afterward.

“It was you who convinced that Sebastian bloke to ask me to the Ball, wasn't it, Harry?” Tonks asked.

“He needed a date,” Harry said, “I figured you did too. Standing around watching Daphne and Tracey all night, while everyone else dances wouldn't be fun. This way you get to join in, and watch them still.”

“As long as it doesn't interfere in my job,” Tonks said. “Besides, he's rather cute. Not someone I'd date for the long run, but he'll be a nice date for the Ball. Thank you, Harry. But let this be the only time you play Cupid.”

“Yes, ma'am,” Harry said, with a mock-salute.

He looked at Hermione, who was looking thoughtful as she ate her lunch.

“You alright, Hermione?” Harry asked.
“I received a letter from my parents while you were gone,” Hermione said, “It skipped my mind until now, because I was focused on everything else. The letter was rather focused on you, actually.”

“Me?” Harry asked, raising his eyebrows.

“Yes,” Hermione said, then blushed, “I guess I hadn’t realized until now, but ever since we became a couple, my letters to my parents have had a lot to do with you. Well, my parents finally got smart when it comes to our relationship. They fear I am – um – a bit too serious about you, for only dating a month and a half. Especially since you’re my first boyfriend.”

“Uh-oh,” Harry said. “I suppose you haven’t told them about our so-called ’seven-month plan’, and all that.”

“Of course not!” Hermione exclaimed. “I can’t just explain all of that in a letter. That has to be face to face.”

“So let’s discuss it face to face,” Harry said.

Hermione blinked. “What?”

“I’m sure they’re dying to meet me,” Harry said.

“They did mention something like that,” Hermione said.

“And I am sure they were upset that you aren’t able to spend Christmas with them,” Harry said.

“Yeah,” Hermione said. “Harry? Where are you going with this?”

“What if you went home for Christmas Eve?” Harry asked. “What if you visited them for Christmas Eve? And what if you brought me? And maybe my Mom and perhaps Rose? We could Apparate or Floo to the Leaky Cauldron, and either catch a taxi or – er – what was that bus thing?”

“The Knight Bus?” Luna suggested.

“Thank you Luna,” Harry said. “Yes, the Knight Bus. We could take the Knight Bus to your home.”

Hermione blinked and looked at him. “I’ll write to my parents after lunch. Are you sure you want to do this?”

“I want to meet them,” Harry said. “I’ll ask Mom, but I am sure she would agree.”

“When your Mom agrees, I’ll write to mine,” Hermione said.

“We don’t have to talk about the seven-month plan – or any future plans -- unless you want to, Hermione,” Harry said, “But if we have an opportunity to meet them before next summer, then this is the best time. And you can spend a few hours on Christmas Eve with your parents.”

Hermione smiled, and kissed his cheek. “Sweetest boyfriend ever.”

“Definitely,” Tonks said, with a snort, “What kind of boy actually wants to meet the father of his girlfriend?”
“Especially one with plans such as serious as those you two have,” Daphne said.

“We have no plans right now,” Hermione said. “Except for the seven-month plan.”

Tracey snorted. “That is just because you don't want Harry's family to yell at the two of you for wanting to get Betrothed after only a month of dating.”

Harry noticed Hermione went pink, and hoped his own cheeks weren't doing the same. He didn't want to admit that Tracey was probably right. Suddenly, a black-colored owl flew into the tent and dropped an envelope in front of Harry then flew out. He picked up the envelope, smiled when he saw the Gringotts Seal on the back, then placed the envelope in a pocket inside his robes. The other girls were looking at him curiously.

“Just confirmation that the last part of my mission today was also successful,” Harry said, mysteriously.

“I take it that is a good thing?” Daphne asked.

“A very good thing,” Harry said.

“You know, Harry,” Hermione said, “Your mother said part of your visit was in Diagon Alley. I'm starting to wonder if your 'mission' was just to buy us all Christmas presents without us knowing.”

Harry coughed. “Nope. I'll be doing that sometime next week. Nice try though, Hermione.”

Hermione shook her head while the other girls chuckled.

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**House Potter Tent**

Lily had moved the Cauldron which had the Cold and Flu Remedy, into the House Potter Tent, so she wouldn't interfere the students eating lunch in the Cafeteria tent. Amelia was just finishing up her tale of her confrontation with Dumbledore in his office. Lily had heard a bit of it, since Amelia had told what she could to the 'Hogwarts Five Plus Tonks'. The girls had been rather shocked that they were included in Amelia's 'lie' about the threat against Luna. But they had understood pretty quickly why she had done it, since Dumbledore was a prime suspect in the investigation.

“So Dumbledore just sat there and took it?” Sirius asked. “You basically told him about every single repercussion he could have had to deal with it, and he just sat there?”

“Well, there was that point when he tried to call himself the interim Minister of Magic, since he was the Chief Warlock,” Amelia said. “I think he was just hoping I would give in, and stop the investigation because the 'interim Minister' told me to do so. I knew he doesn't want to be Minister of Magic, so I used that against him. He backed down pretty quickly. That was his only defensive moment in the whole conversation. Of course there were the mild eye twitches, when he reacted to Luna's name being one of the 'targets', and the Confounding Charm being part of the strategy with the Love Potion plan. If I had wanted to arrest him, I could have, simply because of those facial expressions. They basically said 'Hey, arrest me! I am guilty!'”

“So why don't you arrest him?” Sirius asked.
“Because we don't want him to think he is our enemy right now?” Lily suggested. “We need him to think we either see him as an acquaintance, if not a friend. We need him to believe we still see him as ‘The Leader of the Light’.”

“Right,” Sirius said, nodding.

“And because he could escape Azkaban fairly easily,” Amelia said. “If anyone could, he can. We can't afford two dangerous Dark Lords out in the open, where we don't know where they are.”

“Keep our friends close, and our enemies closer,” Remus said.

“Exactly,” Amelia said, “Keep Albus in his little Headmaster's office for now. Thanks to that little deal I made with Croaker, I will soon have eyes and ears in Dumbledore's office and Hogwarts at all times. Eyes and ears Dumbledore doesn't know about.”

“That was a brilliant bit of planning, Amelia,” Lily said, “That deal with Algie.”

“Definitely,” Sirius said, “Will you let us have at least one Scrying Bowl when you make them?”

“As long as you can keep it a secret,” Amelia said.

“Of course we will!” Sirius said.

“Then yes,” Amelia said, “We'll need all the eyes we can get on those Bowls. I am going to open up a top-secret Department in the DMLE that focuses on the Scrying Bowls – making them and using them to keep an eye on various locations at all times. This will hopefully make up a bit for the mistakes Croaker has already made for us in this coming war.”

Before anyone could reply, Harry and Hermione stepped into the tent.

“Mom, I had an idea, and Hermione likes the idea, but we need to run it by you,” Harry said.

“Let's here it then,” Lily said.

“Are we doing anything on Christmas Eve?” Harry asked, “Hermione isn't going to spend Christmas with her parents this year, but I thought we could go to her parents' house on Christmas Eve. Yes, ‘we’. If Hermione gets their permission, I would like to meet her parents, and I would like you, and perhaps, Rose to come with us.”

Lily stared at Harry for a moment, then she cleared her throat. “I do have plans, but they won't interfere with yours. Sure, we can do that, if Hermione's parents agree to it. Do you need to write to them, Hermione?”

“Yes, I was just about to do so,” Hermione said, “What time should I suggest on Christmas Eve?”

“Late afternoon and evening?” Lily asked.

“I could see if they'd like to invite us all for dinner,” Hermione said, “I'm sure they'll say yes.”

“Why don't you do that now?” Lily asked. “I need to speak to Harry about something.”

Hermione nodded. She kissed Harry on the cheek, then headed out of the tent.
“What’s going on, Mom?” Harry asked, as he walked over to the kitchen.

“I wrote to your Aunt Petunia yesterday,” Lily said. “When we got back from the Ministry visit. And she wrote back.”

Harry’s eyes widened. “Oh.”

Lily’s sister, Petunia, was one of the few people in England who knew Lily and Harry had survived that Halloween night. The day after her husband had died, Lily had written a letter to Petunia, and had sent it through Muggle means in the mail. She had received a letter the day before she, Harry, Sirius and Remus would leave for America. Petunia was happy Lily was alive, and safe, and she did say she was sorry for James’ death. Petunia wasn’t exactly the biggest fan of the wizarding world, or Lily’s lifestyle. She was always jealous that Lily was a witch.

Lily and Petunia started a tradition once a year after Lily headed to America with Harry. Lily wrote her one letter per year around Christmas, giving her pictures of the children, and information about how they were. Petunia did the same, sending pictures and news about her husband and son, Dudley.

“I decided to send her letter this time by owl,” Lily said. “And she actually surprised me by sending a reply back with the owl. I received the letter while you were away with Sirius and Amelia. She apparently divorced Vernon last summer, and she’s living in a flat with Dudley. Petunia invited me to her flat for Christmas Eve. Dudley will be spending that day with Vernon, so we won’t see him. She wants you and Rose to come with me. So... I’ll agree to a brunch meeting with Petunia. And we should have time to get to Hermione’s house afterward. If Hermione doesn’t want to visit your Aunt, we can always take her to spend the day with her parents.”

“I think she'll be okay with meeting Petunia,” Harry said, “If Petunia will be okay with meeting her.”

“I think she will be,” Lily said.

“Alright,” Harry said, “Sounds like a packed day then. Hmm... I wonder if I could try to contact Rebecca that day.”

“She might be home for Christmas Eve, unless she's with one of her relations elsewhere in the country,” Lily said. “You should try, though, since you can't see her this holiday.”

“Yeah,” Harry said, nodding, “Alright. When are we doing our Christmas shopping?”

“I was thinking tomorrow,” Lily said. “What say you, Sirius? Remus?”

“Tomorrow sounds fine,” Sirius said, “Amelia, here, is going to be busy with that Scrying Bowl stuff so I'm free for much of the day.”

“I'll be out by the afternoon,” Amelia said.

“We should be done by then,” Lily said, “Remus?”

“If I can get out of chaperone duties, sure,” Remus said.

“Just tell the Ilvermorny students that if they behave, we'll take 'em to Diagon Alley sometime this
week as a field trip,” Lily said. “For Christmas shopping. And some of the ladies might want to buy an outfit for the Ball. We can take them on Monday, and do our shopping in Diagon Alley then. Tomorrow we can do Muggle shopping and stuff.”

Remus nodded. “That should do it.”

“Tomorrow and Monday, it is, then,” Harry said. “By the way, I got my letter from Keeper Ragnok. The Locket is cleansed.”

“One possible container to go then,” Sirius said, “And then Voldemort will be mortal.”

“Are we sure there is another container out there?” Remus asked.

“Algie wouldn’t have told us about his theory if he didn't think it was true, Remus,” Amelia said. “There’s another one, and it is a living thing.”

“Let’s not worry about that right now,” Lily said, “We're one step closer to finishing it up, and right now we all just need to have fun and enjoy Christmas Break. That means you, especially, Harry.”

Harry agreed, hugged his mother, and said goodbye to the others, before going off to find Hermione again. Lily sighed and returned to her Cauldron. She smiled as she thought of her sister who she hadn't seen in so long. What if her sister knew she was adopted? That might explain some of the distance in their relationship as kids and teens. Petunia might have been forbidden to tell Lily. If so, then she just wanted to distance herself, so she wouldn't risk telling such a big secret. Lily could understand that, of course.

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Hogwarts Staff Room

Albus Dumbledore stepped into the Staff Room at five minutes to five-o-clock that evening, and smiled when he found that all staff members were in attendance, including Madam Pomfrey, Hagrid and Mr. Filch – the latter was holding his cat, Mrs. Norris, in his arms, and glowering at people.

“Greetings,” Albus said as sat down at the head of the table. “The elves will have dinner ready soon and I am sure you are all ready to sate your appetites. Let us get this meeting over with with haste. I have two announcements before we begin, both have some importance to this meeting. The first... Cuthbert, I have a request of you. I would like you to postpone your current lesson plans and curriculum for the start of next term. For the entire month of January, I wish for you to focus on the Pureblood Heritage Act, and teach all years about everything concerning the Act. The books and notes will be provided to you by the first day of term.”

“I believe it can be done, Headmaster,” the ghostly Professor Binns said, “Though I am afraid I am not well-addressed in the Act myself.”

Albus sighed. He had kept Cuthbert Binns on as History Professor all these years, because any new History of Magic Professors would teach more than just about the old Goblin Rebellions. There was a far richer history of Wizarding Great Britain, than just Goblin Rebellions, but he feared that if the students learned the history of the Grindelwald and Great Wars, then that would only terrify them. No... as long as the current generation did not learn much about the mistakes of the past, those mistakes would not be used as tools to create even more mistakes. Goblin Rebellions of the past were a far better lesson to learn.
Cuthbert Binns only taught things he used to each several decades ago when he was alive. Long before the Grindelwald and Great Wars. He didn't know much about these wars, because they didn't affect him, as a ghost. So Cuthbert Binns only taught of Goblin Rebellions. And that was just fine for Albus.

"Then I am sure you will use your time wisely between now and the end of term," Albus said. "I will have the necessary information ready for you by Monday."

"Of course," Binns said.

"As for the other announcement," Albus said, addressing all now. "I spoke to Molly Weasley earlier today. She is a member of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee. A meeting has been arranged for this coming Tuesday at three-o-clock in the afternoon. We will have the meeting here. Minerva, Filius, Severus, Pomona, and Poppy. I would like all of you here with me to speak to the Committee."

"I will be here as long as I have no patients," Poppy Pomfrey said.

"House-Elves can tend to your patients if necessary, Poppy," Minerva said, "If anyone is needed in attendance for this meeting, it is you. As our nurse, this ridiculous act should concern you greatly."

"That it does!" Poppy said, "Very well, I will have House-Elves on hand during my absence."

"We'll be here in the castle, and the meeting won't take very long at all," Albus said, "Thank you. Now, as for what we should discuss with the Committee --"

"I believe many of us have suggestions here for that, Albus," Minerva said.

"I have a list here of necessary suggestions," Albus said, reaching into his robes and taking out a piece of parchment, "I believe they just need to be agreed upon here today."

"Agreed upon?" Filius asked, "Who else did you consult with these suggestions before today?"

"I thought of these suggestions myself," Albus said.

"With no help? No one to give any objections?" Minerva asked.

"Now, Minerva," Pomona said, "I am sure that is why we are all here. Albus wants us to voice our objections, and lend our own suggestions."

"I doubt there will be any objections," Albus said.

He hoped there would be no objections! This was his law, after all! They were only here to agree with his suggestions, and to help him voice them in front of the Committee!

"I vote we do away with your suggestions, and start fresh," Minerva said.


"Now, Alastor, why do you agree with this?" Albus asked.
“Because, Albus,” Moody said, “If I didn't know better, I'd say this is your law, and not Derrick Davis' law.”

Albus frowned. “Now why would you say that?”

“From what I hear,” Moody said, “Derrick Davis didn't exactly say much for the proposed law. Merely said a couple of facts, and then scared the Council into voting for it using fear-mongering! It is why the Committee is meeting in the first place! The only reason the Hogwarts Staff is to meet with the Committee is to be a soundboard on the Hogwarts front of the situation. They don't have to accept any of our situations!

“I've seen my fair share of parrots in the Council, Albus. I know how to pick one out when I see one. So tell me, old friend. Was it you who instructed the parrot what to say about the law? And he didn't say everything you instructed him to? So now you're asking us to parrot for you?! Is that why you haven't invited me to the meeting on Tuesday? Because you don't want me to suggest something that isn't on your ready-made list of plans?!”

“Congratulations, Mad-Eye,” Severus said, “You've shown everyone here you're as mad and paranoid as they say you are.”

“There are two kinds of paranoia, Snape,” Alastor said. “The good and the bad. The bad kind of paranoia is letting a Death Eater walk free around here! The good kind is to keep an eye on him!”

Alastor's eye spun around and stared at Snape.

“Tell me, Snape,” Alastor said, “How hot is that Mark burning these days?!”

“That's enough Alastor!” Albus growled, slamming his first on the table.

Albus' bad fortune was that he had slammed the parchment with his list onto the table too. His eyes widened when the parchment in front of him was summoned into Alastor's hand. Albus narrowed his eyes as Alastor looked through the list with his good eye, and at Albus with his magical one. Albus' eyes widened, when Alastor burned the parchment in front of him and everyone.

“Oops,” Alastor grunted. “Sorry, Albus. An old man's mistake... isn't that what you usually say when you do things others don't like?”

“Seize him!” Albus growled, standing up, “I've been looking for a traitor since Halloween, and it is him! He is the one who put Neville Longbottom's name in the Goblet of Fire. He's disguised as Alastor Moody using Polyjuice Potion! He has betrayed me! He's betrayed all of us!”

“Betrayed you, Albus?” Alastor asked. “For burning up a piece of parchment. How many of you here wanted to hear Albus' list and agree to it all without objections? Albus said he doubted there would be any. How can he be so sure?”

“You are raving, Albus,” Minerva said. “Polyjuice Potion has to be taken every hour, upon the hour. We simply have to stay here with Alastor for an hour.”

“Yes,” Filius said. “If you were right, Alastor would have tried to attack us all. Just because he's done something you don't like, you accuse him of something like this! If you thought he was a traitor using Polyjuice Potion, why haven't we heard anything like this until now?”
“You believed any one of us could be have been the traitor under the Potion,” Pomona said.

Albus cleared his throat. “My apologies everyone. Obviously I was wrong. However, Alastor would never betray me, so his actions here today are in question.”

“I will never betray you, however that doesn't mean I wouldn't question you, Albus,” Alastor said. “Can you prove here and now without a shadow of a doubt, or a hint of a lie, that you weren't the one who asked Lord Davis to parrot his law?”

“I would do no such thing,” Albus said, “Do you honestly believe I want my students affected by some ridiculous law that requires a portion of them to be parents by seventeen? Witches to be pregnant while studying and taking their important NEWTs?”

“You voted in approval,” Minerva said. “I saw you do so.”

“I voted in approval, because the majority of my personal Alliance did, Minerva,” Albus said. “Majority vote. My suggestions do not matter now. I would be happy to listen to everyone's suggestions today. As Alastor said, these suggestions are just a soundboard for the committee. I am sure they already have ideas and plans in set. We just need to try to give them a few ideas. Who would like to go first? Severus?”

Severus lowered a hand. “My Slytherins affected by this – ranging from fourth years to seventh years, those in Betrothal Contracts – have requested use of Private Quarters on the fourth floor. One set of rooms per Betrothed couple.”

“Are you serious?” Minerva asked. “Even if we could spare enough rooms for every single Betrothed Couple to have one set of rooms, some of those students do not need them right now. Students below the age of sixteen do not need them. I am sure it was Draco Malfoy who wanted to have his own Quarters to lord over, so he can have something else that many do not have. And so he can be with Miss Parkinson whenever he wants. We are forced to encourage such behavior with students sixteen and older, who are in Betrothal Contracts. We will not do so for any student younger!”

“Indeed!” Filius said. “I do agree that Betrothed students sixteen years and older should have their own Private Quarters. However! As Minerva said, we don't have enough Private Quarters. If there comes a point where Betrothed Couples must share with others, then they will do so with other Couples in the same Houses.”

“What do you think Albus?” Minerva asked.

“I agree with you and Filius,” Albus said, “We will not encourage such intimate behaviors from students below the age of sixteen, and only from those who are Betrothed, because that is the new law in front of us. No one below the age of sixteen will be able to live in Private Quarters. When the law is passed, we'll have these Betrothed Couples ask for permission from their parents or guardians, and with given permission, they'll be allowed to be in Private Quarters. We'll have House-Elves prepare the Private Quarters between now and next Monday. Show of hands?”

Most of the staff raised their hands.

“Speaking of House-Elves,” Minerva said, “My suggestion is this – if Betrothed Couples have House-Elves they can bring to Hogwarts to help them. If not, then we should assign one or two house-elves per Betrothed Couple. This will assist them once the witch becomes pregnant, and if
they have children whilst students here at Hogwarts. They can help as nannies and such.”

“I do not know if we can spare the House-Elves from their jobs,” Filch said.

“Most couples in Betrothal Contracts usually have personal nannies or House-Elves they grew up with at home,” Severus said. “I think we can rest assured we won’t have to spare very many at all. I agree with Minerva, it is a good idea. And it will give parents assurances that their children and future Grandchildren will be safe – both their health and the future of their education, with such things like NEWT exams, and classes.”

“All those in agreement?” Albus asked; most raised their hands again. “Next. Poppy?”

“I have several suggestions,” Poppy said, “The first is I would like to wring the neck of every single person who agreed on this ridiculous law in that Council!”

“Would you like to start with me?” Albus asked, hoping to lighten the mood.

“It would be my pleasure,” Poppy said, with a snort. “Anyway, my suggestions regarding future pregnant students and their education,” Poppy said. “I am sure Severus could tell you that there are several Potions which can harm a pregnant woman and their child.”

“Indeed there are,” Severus said.

“I believe one of two things could be done,” Poppy said. “We change the class schedule for Potions slightly. All witches who are either pregnant, planning to be pregnant, or have children will be taking a different Potions lesson, where all Potions learned are those which are safe for pregnant witches or nursing mothers. If Severus cannot do it, I suggest we hire a tutor or two to come two or three days a week, solely to teach these witches.”

“If we cannot find tutors,” Severus said, “Then I will agree to the alternative.”

“Also, the same goes for all classes where spells will be tossed around during lessons,” Poppy said, “Defense, Charms, Transfiguration. All those witches I spoke of, either need to be taught in classes that have less practical work – and if they must learn using practical work, then there needs to be safety precautions set aside. Again, tutors could be used for this too if the Professors cannot do it.”

“It would be a sacrifice on their education,” Albus said, frowning.

“Some sacrifices must be made to protect the mothers and future children, Albus,” Poppy said.

Albus sighed and nodded. “Show of hands?”

It was a unanimous decision.

“Are you finished, Poppy?” Albus asked.

“Definitely not,” Poppy said, with a snort. “I have several other suggestions, some more necessary than others.”

Albus sighed and motioned for her to proceed. He sat back and listened as Madam Pomfrey outlined her suggestions and such. As he did so, he wondered if he had made some sort of mistake accusing Alastor of the whole Polyjuice Potion thing. Minerva was right after all. He simply needed to watch
Alastor, and make sure the man didn't drink anything while they were there. And if he didn't, and stayed the same, then Albus was wrong.

And so the meeting lasted for over an hour. Aside from suggestions being made for the Committee and either approved on, or denied, nothing else happened. Alastor stayed the same. He didn't drink anything, and all stealthy checks for glamors and other disguises that Albus used on the man showed nothing.

When the meeting was said and done, most of the staff left, aside for Alastor and Albus.

“My apologies, old friend, for my actions earlier,” Albus said. “I did not expect such opposition from you.”

“I read everyone of your suggestions you put on that piece of parchment, Albus,” Alastor said. “Less than half were spoken of by the other staff members. Less than half! Be honest with me, old friend, now that we're alone. This is your law, not Derrick Davis'. Isn't it?”

“Yes, Alastor,” Albus said. “It is. But it was necessary. I have much to tell you. I want to include you in my plans for the future. And now that I know I can trust you, I wish to tell of my plans.”

“How do you know you can trust me?” Alastor asked.

“Because nobody else burned that parchment,” Albus said. “You did.”

“So it was a test?” Alastor asked.

“Yes,” Albus said. “Not even Severus, who I thought I could trust more than anyone who was in this room, did much to stand up for me. You were able to shoot him down, and he had nothing to say. He knows you are a threat to him, and I need that. I need your help, because it is who you can help me know if I can trust Severus in the future. I wanted this law passed, because without it, I am afraid the British wizarding world will not survive the coming storm. Without this law, we will see more Houses going extinct than ever before. If that happens, we should just let Voldemort win. Because even if he dies, and the Houses still go extinct... we lose anyway.”

Alastor stared at Albus with both eyes. “Aye, I can see how that would be a bad thing. So tell me about these plans of yours. How can I help?”

Chapter End Notes

Well, I was going to have Molly meeting with Ron in this chapter, but I decided it wasn't important. I might add it as a deleted scene sometime. Just know that Molly met Ron at King’s Cross, and Ron is still under the affects of the Allure. Basically he told Molly what Fleur wanted him to say. And Molly decided to keep Ron home all Christmas Break, without going to the Ball. I'll have Molly summarize it to Albus during the the Committee-Hogwarts Staff meeting.

Next Chapter: Amelia meets with Algie. Some Christmas shopping takes place. And
more! Hopefully the Chapter with Petunia and the Grangers will come in two or three chapters, and the Yule Ball the following chapter. Believe me, I want to get this story moving as much as everyone else does. But there are cogs and wheels that move this story along. And all must be put into place to move the story along properly.
As nine-o-clock on Sunday morning approached, Madam Amelia Bones was currently sitting in her office, listening to her secretary, Samantha, as the young witch rattled off a few announcements and the schedule for the coming week.

“You are still planning on putting your name into the candidacy for Minister of Magic, is this correct?” Samantha asked.

“If nothing changes between now and next Sunday, yes,” Amelia said, “I do hope that remains a secret between you and I until I put my name in the metaphorical hat, Samantha. Aside from you, only my fellow members of the Great Alliance know I am doing this.”

“Oh, yes, ma'am, of course,” Samantha said, “It will remain a secret. I am only asking because – well – you will need to decide on a successor for this office.”

“I was considering promoting Rufus Scrimgeour as Head of the DMLE Office,” Amelia said. “However, I was also considering asking Alastor Moody if he wanted to come out of retirement.”

“Two good options, ma'am,” Samantha said.

“I thought so too,” Amelia said, “Any rumors going around as who else might be throwing their name in?”

“Yes, ma'am,” Samantha said. “Bartemius Crouch's name came up, as did Rufus Scrimgeour. There are rumors that Albus Dumbledore is putting one of his Alliance Members in to the metaphorical hat. Don't know which one it is, sorry. And – er – Dolores Umbridge's name also came up.”

“Umbridge?” Amelia said, “She didn't turn tail and run when Cornelius resigned? Umbridge already has one foot out of the Ministry anyway, what with the stunts she pulled regarding the Triwizard Tournament Champions.”

“It is only a rumor right now, ma'am,” Samantha said, “Nothing concrete.”

“Of course,” Amelia said, nodding.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door.

“That should be the meeting I am expecting,” Amelia said. “Thank you, Samantha. If there is anything else needed to be done, we can do them after this meeting. Hold my memos and turn away any other visitors but they can leave messages.”
“Yes, ma'am,” Samantha said.

She walked over to the door and opened it. Algernon Croaker walked into the room wearing civilian garb, but that wasn't the most surprising. Nor was the large bag he was carrying. Croaker's sister, Augusta Longbottom, was with him. Amelia tried to hide her momentary surprise, and curiosity as to why Augusta was there.

“Shut the door behind you, Samantha,” Amelia said, “Thank you.”

Samantha stepped out of the room and shut the door. Croaker removed his wand from his robes, and waved his wand at the door.

“Privacy enchantments,” he explained, “Just in case.”

“I have my own privacy enchantments up around this office,” Amelia said.

“Well, mine may be a bit better,” Croaker said, “But let us not argue about the size of our wands, shall we?”

Amelia refrained from rolling her eyes. She motioned to the two chairs on the other side of her desk.

“Do please be seated,” she said.

“My apologies for not informing you of my sister's part in this meeting,” Croaker said, as he and Augusta sat down. “Last minute change of plans, you understand. I'm going to let her say her piece first, and then she'll leave us to chat.”

“Very well,” Amelia said, “How may I help you, Madam Longbottom.”

“First, please call me Augusta,” Augusta said, “Second, please inform Lady Potter and her friends to stop considering trying to invite me back into the Great Alliance.”

Amelia raised an eyebrow. “And if they were considering such things, why should they stop? Are you going to outright deny them?”

“No, I would only postpone answering their invitations,” Augusta said, “I must stay in Albus Dumbledore's Alliance at this moment.”

“She's my spy, you see,” Croaker said.

“Your spy?” Amelia asked.

“Yes,” Croaker said, “When my usual methods of spying and eavesdropping do not work.”

Amelia somehow suspected, due to the way Croaker had constructed that phrase, that Augusta knew nothing about the Scrying Bowls.”

“I see,” Amelia said, “So I take it you do not trust Albus Dumbledore, Augusta?”

“No,” Augusta said, “I know he's been using my grandson for something. I do not know what, but I don't like it.”
“And... your brother hasn't given you any ideas as to what it is?” Amelia asked, looking at Croaker.

“If he does, I advised him against telling me,” Augusta said. “I was never that skilled at Occlumency, and Albus can take it from my mind. Algie has given me other methods to protect my mind from Albus discovering the spying part of the whole thing. So I suppose it is one part lack of Occlumency, and another part my short temper around Albus, which has already threatened to blow a few fuses. The less I know about Albus' plans for my grandson, the better. I won't fly off the broom handle at him if I don't know what is going on.”

“So what is your goal in all of this?” Amelia asked. “Spying on Albus?”

“Making him believe Neville and I are still his Allies,” Augusta said. “As long as he believes we are, then he won't do anything. Believe me, it is a very rough road.”

“Yeah,” Amelia said, “From what I hear, you being the only one in Albus' Alliance to deny Lord Davis' law must have not been a good message for Albus.”

“I thought both Albus and Arthur Weasley would vote against,” Augusta said. “Imagine my surprise when Arthur voted for it. Voted for a law that would see his daughter pregnant with my grandchild's baby at seventeen years old! Or younger! I can only imagine that Arthur did it because Albus asked him to. I don't know why, but it is my theory.”

“A pretty strong theory,” Croaker said.

Amelia nodded. “Rumor has it, someone in Albus' Alliance is going to become a candidate for Minister of Magic. Who is it going to be?”

“Apparently, Albus has chosen Arthur,” Augusta said.

“Arthur?!?” Amelia asked, shocked. “He doesn't stand a chance. His law was shot down easily, he stands up for Muggleborn and Muggles, and very few people on the Wizengamot like him for it. Not to mention, he hasn't been a Lord for very long, and he's only Lord of a Noble House. He's --”

“Malleable,” Croaker said, “And that is exactly what Albus wants in a Minister of Magic. As Chief Advisor for another Minister, this time far more malleable than Fudge – and that is saying something – Albus could get Arthur to do anything. It would be like he's the Minister of Magic, without having to take office.”

“But like I said,” Amelia said, “Arthur doesn't stand a chance!”

Augusta shrugged. “Maybe not. But I am sure he knows you're putting your hat in too. If the Light Alliance, and Neutral-Lights are splitting votes between you and Arthur --”

“That leaves more votes for one person on the Neutral-Dark, or Dark Alliance,” Amelia said, “Son of a bitch!”

“We may dislike him,” Croaker said, “But you can't deny – Dumbledore's got style.”

“And he is very, very smart,” Augusta said.

“Except when he's not,” Amelia said, with a snort; then she sighed,”But this is a pretty smart play. So is that all you needed, Augusta? For me to tell the Great Alliance, that you're not a candidate for
switching Alliances right now?”

“Yeah,” Augusta said, “As much as I'd like to do it, I can't.”

“I understand,” Amelia said, nodding.

“Well, I know you have much to talk about,” Augusta said., “I will let you get to it.”

“I'll see you for our usual Sunday dinner, Aggie,” Croaker said.

“How many times do I have to ask you stop calling me that?” Augusta asked.

“Once more, as always,” Croaker said.

Augusta snorted. “Thank you for meeting me, Amelia. Have a nice day. I'll see you a week from today for the Council meeting.”

“Yep, see you then,” Amelia said.

Augusta nodded, then stood and proceeded to leave the office, shutting the door behind her.

“I take it she doesn't know about the Scrying Bowls?” Amelia asked.

“Nope,” Croaker said. “In fact, she knows very little about all of this at all. Next to nothing – just that I – and now you – don't like Albus Dumbledore all that much.”

Amelia nodded. “Are you not telling her... to keep her safe... or simply because you don't want to tell her?”

“Both,” Croaker said, without hesitation. “Now, before I go through with my part of our deal –”

“You're not thinking of backing out, are you?” Amelia asked. “Because I can ask Samantha to go get Augusta, before your sister has a chance to leave the Ministry. And since you're right here – hey – front row seats to a nice confrontation full of revelations.”

“I am not backing out, Bones,” Croaker said, “Relax. I just wish to speak about other things first. Most importantly – everything you said to me yesterday. About the giants, werewolves, vampires --”

“Dementors?” Amelia suggested.

“Yes,” Croaker said. “Truth be told, I am not entirely sure the Unspeakables could have done anything about it. But I would welcome you – you, the DMLE, the Auror Department, whoever -- to attempt to make peace with those creatures.”

“Why can't you and your co-workers do anything?” Amelia asked.

“The Elders won't allow it,” Croaker said, sighing, “We have too much on our hands right now.”

“And the Elders think it is too much of a risk to risk losing Unspeakables,” Amelia said.

“We're a rare bunch, Bones,” Croaker said. “Can you blame the Elders? Not everyone can be Unspeakable material. We have our part to do in the coming war, and you have yours. You had a
good idea contacting those creatures, but it can't be the Unspeakables.”

Amelia sighed. “Perfect. Any more nuggets of good news?”

“Yes,” Croaker said, “I come bearing gifts. More than originally promised.”

“I better be getting the research, Croaker,” Amelia said.

“Stop worrying your pretty little head off,” Croaker said, as he placed his suitcase on top of Amelia’s desk, “I am giving you the research! And I am also giving you...”

He opened the suitcase. Amelia’s eyes widened as he set out what appeared to be a Scrying Bowl onto the desk. It looked far bigger than what the suitcase could hold, but Amelia figured it was an ever-expanding suitcase or something – bigger on the inside. Trust Croaker to have one of those.

“Your very own ready-made Scrying Bowl,” Croaker said, “Actually it is my own Scrying Bowl.”

“Yours?” Amelia asked.

“Don't worry, I'm getting a new one when I get back to my office,” Croaker said.

“It wasn't your choice to give this one up,” Amelia said, in realization.

“No... it was not,” Croaker said. “You can thank my bosses for this gift. It even has all the locations in it that was in there to begin with it.”

Croaker took out a thick sheaf of parchment.

“Here is the research on how to build these babies, as well as the runes needed. Also, you'll find the list showing what locations I have locked into this bowl. See those runes etched into the side? Connects to each rune associating with the locations.”

“I see... roman numerals?” Amelia asked.

“Yes,” Croaker said, “It allows us to differentiate which location is which, and it still counts when it comes to rune-crafting. The roman numerals are listed alongside the list of locations.”

“So every location you had,” Amelia said.

“Well, no – not every location,” Croaker said, “Some of them I couldn't give up. Elder's orders. But you have plenty. Including known Death Eater hideouts.”

“I thought you said you didn't Scry Death Eaters,” Amelia said.

“I said it was useless to track so many locations looking for one specific thing – simply because there were so many,” Croaker said, “I never said I didn't place runes at known locations.”

“So what isn't included?” Amelia asked. “What? You took off the rune that led to – I don't know – the Holyhead Harpies locker-rooms?”

Croaker snapped his fingers. “Drat! I knew I missed one! If I could tell you what wasn't included, do you really think I wouldn't have included it in there?”
“Point,” Amelia said, “Though I am not happy.”

“Relax – they weren't important to you anyway, nor with the coming war,” Croaker said, “This is why you wanted it after all, right? The coming war?”

“Yes,” Amelia said.

“Well, you got all the locations necessary,” Croaker said, “Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore's office, his favorite places to hang out at Hogwarts...”


“Yes, it is still in there,” Croaker said, “Why? Plan on spying on your boyfriend?”

“No,” Amelia said, “It will help us figure out where we can actually talk without you listening in.”

“I told you yesterday!” Croaker said, “Please don't encourage that!”

“Nothing we say isn't going to be important for us – everything we say in there has some kind of importance!” Amelia said, “Cut the bullshit!”

Croaker sighed. “My bosses simply want to know whether Lord Potter is staying in Britain or leaving come June.”

“Even if he does leave, Harry understands he has to come back to finish his whole destiny thing,” Amelia said. “Besides – don't you think it would be better if you just asked Harry, Lily or Sirius about their plans?”

“It isn't my decision to make,” Croaker said, “The Elders want Scrying Runes on the Potter tent. Don't ask me why. I'm just the ear that listens to the conversations.”

“And how do you know everything the Potters say in the tent is the truth?” Amelia asked. “How do you know they aren't putting an act on for you and the Elders. Huh? What if they say one thing, just because they know you're watching. Then they say another elsewhere, where you can't possibly be watching them?”

“We know how to see past lies, Bones,” Croaker said.

“So do I,” Amelia said, “And I can most certainly teach them how to hide their lies in their expressions.”

“Everything we're doing is trying to help Lord Potter,” Croaker said, “And the rest of Great Britain!”

“Prove it,” Amelia said, “Not only to me, but to Lord Potter and his family.”

“Haven't I proven it enough!” Croaker said, “I am giving you this important research and a ready-made Scrying Bowl --”

“Only because you don't want to tell your family the secrets you're keeping from them,” Amelia said, “You could have spared this drama, by just admitting everything to your family.”
“I gave Lord Potter and his mother and Godfather everything about the Prophecy and the artifacts!” Croaker said.

“Only after you discovered they already knew enough to work it out on their own,” Amelia said. “You only wanted to help them, so you could give them something they didn’t have – and therefore, they’d feel better about you spying on them!”

“I can see we’re at an impasse,” Croaker said.

“I don’t see it as such,” Amelia said.

“You’ll be thanking me and my co-workers when all this is over, Bones,” Croaker said, “Where would you be without the information I’ve given Lord Potter, which was then given to you? Where would we be in this war, if I hadn’t known about the artifacts. There would be a lot more out there than just one, plus Voldemort.”

“You know Voldemort has one more out there,” Amelia said, “That wasn’t guesswork. You know there is another one.”

“Simple Arithmancy,” Croaker said, “There is more than three, and nobody can survive splitting up their soul thirteen times. It is seven. Five already destroyed, then this one and the piece of soul inside Voldemort himself. Seven.”

“If I find out you already know exactly what it is and where it is,” Amelia said, “I will gut you, then throw you through the Veil of Death. After I tell your family your secret about them, and after you save your nephew and his wife. Yes... after. I won't forgive you just because you do all that.”

“Are you done threatening me?” Croaker asked. “I've given you what you wanted and so much more. I think I've earned a bit of your trust. Now I am going to leave before you decide I lost the bit of trust I have gained. Adieu, Madam Bones. Good luck putting together the Scrying Bowls. And do be careful where you place more runes. We don't need this secret uncovered.”

“I will be quite careful, I assure you,” Amelia said.

Croaker secured his suitcase, then stood and proceeded to leave the office. Amelia sent a quick memo to Samantha, telling her not to bother her for a while, unless it was extremely important. Then she relaxed back in her chair and stared at the Scrying Bowl and information.

She needed help putting the Bowls together. She already knew that before Croaker had arrived. She also needed a team. She knew that too. It had to be a team that would be dedicated and smart enough, not only to make the bowls, but to watch them as much as possible, and report any important information only to Amelia. Which meant they had to be trustworthy too. Amelia sighed. It couldn't be Aurors or Hit-Wizards. She needed them all doing their jobs.

“I wonder if any of the Great Alliance are looking for important, high-paying jobs,” Amelia muttered, “I’ll get right on that, as soon as I am finished getting to know this Scrying Bowl.”

She picked up the sheaf of parchment, and quickly found the list of locations, numbered by roman numerals, just like Croaker had said.

“Now,” Amelia said, “Let’s see what this baby can do...”
London – Oxford Street

As Amelia Bones sat in her office, discovering the secrets of the Scrying Bowl, Harry Potter was currently having a problem. He walking down Oxford Street, with Sirius and Remus. Lily, Rose and Hermione – the latter had been invited by Harry, so she could do some shopping in the No-Maj/Muggle world – were doing their own shopping coming from the opposite end of Oxford Street. They had split up to do shopping for each other. And that was where the problem began.

“I am not exactly sure what I want to give to Hermione for Christmas,” Harry said.

“You've had several days to think about this, Harry,” Remus said, looking amused.


“And that would create a whole new problem if I went with that approach,” Harry said, “I don't know which books she has – of I am sure she has many. I know one book I could get her, if it is available here, but that would have to wait until tomorrow when we go to Diagon Alley. But I want to get her something else. It's just... I don't know if it is too early.”

“This might sound weird coming from somebody who has similar plans,” Sirius said, “But I truly hope you're not looking for an engagement ring, already!”

“No!” Harry exclaimed, quickly, “No... but, well... close. I suppose.”

“Ah... a promise ring?” Remus asked.

“Promise rings are so cheesy!” Sirius exclaimed. “Only two rings a woman needs that is bought from a man --”

“Might be better than a Betrothal Contract, Sirius,” Remus said. “It... basically means the same thing.”

Sirius made a thoughtful 'hmm' sound. “You're right, Moony. In this current time and place, where the British Wizengamot Council are nuts and unpredictable. A Promise Ring might be better than a Betrothal.”

“Very true,” Remus said.

“And in this current time and place where war is threatening,” Sirius said, “A magical Promise Ring might be better than a No-Maj one.”

“Really?” Harry asked.

“Sure,” Sirius said, “You can ask the shopkeeper for Protective Enchantments and what-not on magical rings.”

“And magical rings are forged with magic,” Remus said, “Much easier to enchant magical rings, than No-Maj crafted rings.”

“Oh... right,” Harry said, “Good point. Do you think it is too early for a promise ring?”

“Depends on what the promise is,” Remus said.
“Yeah,” Sirius said, “And far easier to do away with than a Betrothal Contract if your relationship with Hermione goes south – not that I think it will, of course.”

“Alright then,” Harry said, “I suppose my shopping for Hermione then will be in Diagon Alley.”

“Brilliant!” Sirius said, “So now you just have to do the shopping for everyone else then.”

Remus grinned. “Exactly how many girls are on your list this year – in the currently non-family category?”

Harry groaned. Now he remembered why he hated Christmas shopping.

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**Tuesday, December 22nd, 1994**

Albus Dumbledore was currently standing in the Entrance Hall outside the Staff Room, greeting members of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee as they stepped into the Staff Room. Albus recognized several of them. There was Patricia Parkinson, Nora Zabini, Melissa Edgecombe. Albus smiled lightly as an amused thought crossed his mind. If it weren't for the three wizards in the group, the Committee could have been simply called the Mothers of Hogwarts Students Committee.

Molly Weasley was standing beside Albus and currently babbling about something in whispers.

“Albus, are you listening to me?” Molly asked.

“Mmm?” Albus asked, “Sorry, was thinking about the meeting taking place in a few minutes. I was wondering if Lord Davis was going to be here.”

“Nora contacted him, but she said he didn't want to come to the meeting,” Molly said, “Which is quite ridiculous, since this is his Act. I suppose he just wants to be surprised about what we will be deciding come Sunday. Anyway, I really should have contacted you about this sooner, but I think we should scrap all plans about Ron coming to the Yule Ball. With or without a date. He just doesn't want to come. I think he's really brokenhearted over whichever girl denied him a date.”

“Has he said which girl it was?” Albus asked.

“No,” Molly said, “In fact whenever I ask him about girls, all he says is he is too immature to be dating right now, and he needs to learn better manners. Also, his behavior when at the dinner table over the past couple of days is... bizarre. My baby boy's never had good table manners, but it is like... he's trying to change that. He just looks confused and upset when he doesn't think he's eating with the best table manners. It is almost like he's been placed under some type of... enchantment or something. But it isn't anything I can figure out.”

“Maybe he's just finally realizing he needs to mature a little,” Albus said. “Realizing he can't get a date for the Ball must be pretty tough to endure. And if he's pinpointed the problem down to his manners, then...”

“He's trying to improve himself,” Molly said, “You're probably right. It is just hard to watch him so upset. I couldn't even bring him with me today. He was insistent that he doesn't step foot back into Hogwarts until the Start of Term begins.”
“It does sound like he is embarrassed about the whole thing,” Albus said.

“True,” Molly said, “Anyway, he's with Arthur at work today until I can come and pick him up. You know, Arthur's been acting kind of weird when it comes to his job. He keeps talking about the future of his Office. He says his assistant, Old Perkins, can't take over his place. Are you sure he should be your pick for the Minister of Magic candidate? Surely Augusta or Tiberius…”

Albus had already answered these questions in his own head over and over. Tiberius Ogden was far too old for the job, and was sadly going to be six feet in the ground before the man could get through a good term if he took the Minister of Magic office. And Augusta… she was far too headstrong. She was not the type of person Albus could afford to put in the Minister of Magic seat. No... Arthur Weasley was far more malleable.

“Arthur can do a lot of good things for the future of Wizarding Britain, Molly,” Albus said. “And him being in Office would also do a lot of good for your family too. He will finally get the respect he very much deserves.”

“I suppose you are right about that,” Molly said. “I just don't think he has a chance to win anyway. You hear the rumors that Madam Bones is putting her name in?”

“A predictable outcome,” Albus said, “She's the strongest voice for the Great Alliance, and one of the strongest for the Light Alliance.”

“Arthur doesn't stand a chance against Amelia,” Molly said, “But Madam Bones would be far better than Madam Umbridge. I'm sure you heard the rumors of her putting her name in…”

Albus had... and he wished he didn't believe him. Dolores Umbridge would only cause too many problems for him if she was put in the Minister's seat.

“Actually I think the rumors are pretty true,” Molly said. “She resigned from her part in the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee, after Fudge was forced to resign from office. I think she wants to commit herself to running for Minister of Magic.”

“Merlin help us all if she wins,” Albus said.

“No arguments there, Albus,” Molly said.

“Well,” Albus said, “We better go on inside and get this over with. I am sure you want to get back to your son.”

Molly agreed, and Albus followed the Weasley Matriarch into the Staff Room.

Chapter End Notes

No, we won't see what happens during this Staff Meeting. It would only take away from what will take place when the Act becomes concrete during the next Council session.
Sorry for the lack of Christmas shopping details. I decided it would spoil too much for the revealing of some of the presents on Christmas.

Next Chapter: The Potters visit Petunia, and then the Grangers.
Chapter Notes

The conversation regarding the first time Lily and James met Vernon is very slightly off the canon information from Pottermore. In canon, Petunia and Vernon were only engaged when Lily and James (dating, not engaged) met them. In my story, Petunia and Vernon were married, and Lily and James engaged at the time of their first meeting. Also, it wasn't the last time, Vernon met James and Lily.

Hermione's house is different than what we saw in the movie, and comes from my imagination of what her house might look like. It is sort of similar to the Privet Drive house actually, with a few differences.

Thursday, December 24th, 1994

“The Knight Bus has arrived at Beaufort Street in Kensington,” the conductor of the Knight Bus announced, “The Bus will be in service until eight-o-clock this evening, and it will be out of service tomorrow for the Christmas day holiday. A Happy and Merry Christmas to those getting off now, and enjoy your day.”

Lily Potter followed her children, Harry and Rose, and their friend, Hermione, off of the Knight Bus, and onto a sidewalk. The Knight Bus immediately zoomed off, and appeared to vanish into thin air.

"That bus is bonkers!” Harry exclaimed.

“I thought it was fun,” Rose said. “Besides, big brother, I didn't think you minded when your girlfriend wound up in your lap every time the bus took a sharp corner.”

Harry grinned at his girlfriend. “I suppose it does have its perks.”

“You're incorrigible,” Hermione said, rolling her eyes.

“Well, it is a lot faster and cheaper than a taxi,” Lily said, “So I am afraid we're going to have to take it again when we head to Hermione's house.”

Harry groaned, while Rose cheered. Lily merely smiled and shook her head.

“Still have your things?” Lily asked, “Good. Now, I believe Petunia's flat is down this way...”

It took about five minutes to find the right building. Lily led them into the large, four-storied building, and directly up the first staircase they arrived at.

“Petunia's letter said she lived on the second floor,” Lily said, “Hopefully we can find it easily.”

It turned out to be easier than she thought. She soon found the correct brass-plated number,
rapped her knuckles on the door. Fifteen seconds later, the door opened slightly ajar. Lily smiled when she saw her sister, peering at her.

“Lily?” Petunia whispered, as she opened the door.

“Hi, Tunie,” Lily said.

Lily was rather surprised when Petunia pulled her in for a hug. But she smiled warmly and hugged her sister. Soon, Petunia backed away.

“You might recognize them from the pictures I've seen recently,” Lily said, “This is my son, Harry, and my daughter, Rose. And this is their friend, Hermione Granger. I told you in my last letter we might be bringing her along. We're headed over to her parents' house after our visit here.”

Petunia smiled as she looked at Harry, then Rose.

“You, my dear,” she said, to Rose, “Look exactly like your mother did at your age. It is like I'm visiting the past or something. Please come inside. You're right on time. I hope you're hungry, I have a full English breakfast ready for us all.”

Lily led her children and Hermione into the flat, and entered a living room, nicely decorated for Christmas. A Christmas Tree stood in the corner of the room – it was obviously store-bought, but it was lavishly decorated with ornaments, lights and the like. There were several presents underneath the tree. Two stockings were hanging on a wall near the tree, with the names 'Petunia' and 'Dudley' on them.

Petunia led them through an archway on the far side of the living room, and they entered a combination kitchen/dining room. The circular dining table had six chairs, five of which had plates, silverware and glasses set in front of them. All the fixings of an English breakfast were laid out in various dishes.

“Please, be seated,” Petunia said. “And start filling your plates, and we can catch up.”

Lily sat beside Petunia, and Rose sat on Lily's other side. Harry sat down between Rose and Hermione.

“I believe I told you in my last letter that my son, Dudley, is visiting his father today,” Petunia said, as everyone began filling their plates, “Vernon wanted Dudley over tomorrow for Christmas, but I put my foot down and said 'no'. I'm sorry he couldn't here today to meet you, though.”

“That is alright,” Lily said, “I am sure we can meet him before we return to America. I am not sure whether to offer my condolences or what, when it comes to your divorce.”

Petunia waved a hand dismissively. “It was a long time coming, let me tell you. Now, whatever I am about to say, please don't think I blame you for any of it, Lily.”

Lily frowned. That didn't sound good at all.

“Have you told your children anything about my husband?” Petunia asked; she was looking rather cautiously at Harry and Rose, “I wouldn't want to offend them when speaking about some of my husband's views.”
Lily now had a really good idea where this was going. “I have not, but whatever you say should be fine for all ears at this table.”

“My ex-husband, Vernon, doesn't like anything abnormal, let's just put that out there right now,” Petunia said; again, this was more to Harry and Rose, than anyone else, “I met your father twice, and both times, Vernon was with me. The first time was a couple months after Vernon and I got married. Your mother was meeting Vernon for the first time.”

“Right, at the restaurant,” Lily said, nodding, “It was when James and I told you and Vernon about our engagement. I remember I had told James not to give away much about the wizarding world, because I knew Vernon didn't know much about it at that point.”

“He knew witches and wizards existed, he just didn't have much of an imagination when it came to them,” Petunia said. “Vernon – he was always about money, and extravagance. He wanted to make friends in high places, so to speak. So, naturally, he wanted to know if your father was one of those types.”

“As you know, your father was basically 'one of those types',” Lily said, “Well – in Vernon's mind, James' family was what he imagined. James was rather amused by that. I think Vernon thought I was with someone who was far below him in terms of high-life and such.”

“At one point, Vernon asked your father what type of car he drove,” Petunia said.

“Oh, no,” Harry said, “Mom, didn't you always say Dad was less than knowledgeable about most Muggle things.”

“Like most purebloods, yes,” Lily said, “So naturally your father told Vernon he drove a racing broom.”

Harry and Rose snickered. Hermione seemed mixed between amusement and bewilderment. Lily imagined the Muggleborn was trying to think how her parents would have reacted to such things.

“Then Vernon figured that wizards weren't exactly 'in the money' so to speak,” Lily said, “I guess he couldn't wrap his mind around the fact that wizards and witches had a whole world of jobs. Because he mentioned something about wizards having to get unemployment benefits.”

“Basically he was accusing your father of being jobless, and poor,” Petunia said.

“And James informed Vernon of Gringotts,” Lily said, “And all the fortune he had in his Vault, including the load of solid gold Galleons.”

“Vernon thought your father was poking fun at him,” Petunia said, “He was quite angry. I... am sad to admit that back then I was angry too. Angry that your mother had decided to show off around me and my husband. Vernon stormed off out of that restaurant, and so did I. But only because I was afraid I would say something I'd very much regret.”

“I was in tears by the end of it,” Lily said, “James was... confused, and ashamed for his actions. He wanted to make it up to Vernon. But I wouldn't let him. I wrote several letters to Petunia between the dinner meeting and mine and James' wedding. I was so... relieved when Petunia said she'd come to the wedding, and that she'd bring along Vernon. Looking back, that might not have been the best idea.”
“No, probably not,” Petunia agreed. “Vernon – between the night of that dinner meeting, and your parents' wedding, Vernon was all about denouncing wizards, and debunking everything I told him about my experiences with Lily the witch. He simply didn't want to believe it. And then finally came the wedding.”

“It was a magical wedding, literally,” Lily said. “There was all kinds of magic being done, and most of the guests were of the magical community. Petunia and Vernon were the only non-magical guests. I suppose I was lucky that Petunia and Vernon stayed to see me and James get married. But they didn't stay for the reception. Petunia and Vernon were well-treated during the wedding.”

“Very well-treated,” Petunia said, “At least in my opinion, all these years later. They were interested in us being 'Muggles', and how we lived. I did most of the talking, and was trying to keep Vernon from saying anything rude. I forgot how many times I told him that every single guest at the wedding could hex, jinx, or curse him if he said anything rude about them. The only reason we didn't attend the reception, was because I wanted to get Vernon out of there. He had seen with his own eyes that everything he had been saying about magic, and wizards and witches not existing was wrong. And he didn't like it.

“When we got home, he basically banned me from talking about anything magical ever again. He didn't want me to be in contact with my sister. I listened and agreed... only because I was in love with him, and we were talking about starting a family. Which was what I wanted. However, I did continue contact with your mother. I bought a private post office box, which I knew had magical connections to it, because your mother told me about it. Apparently it had the option to use owl post. She sent all her letters there. And I sent all my letters from there.”

“I wrote letters about my life with James, about my pregnancy with you, Harry,” Lily said. “When you were born, I sent her pictures of you. And then the last letter I sent to her for a while was telling her that we were in trouble, James and us. We were targeted by a mad-man, and had to go to a safehouse. And then came that Halloween night. I sent a letter to Petunia the day after that Halloween night, telling her that I was alive, and you too, Harry. I didn't know I was pregnant at the time. I told Petunia that James was dead. And Petunia wrote back, and told me something that made me rather upset at the time.”

“I wrote her,” Petunia said, “And told her that I saw your father's obituary in a – er – 'Muggle' newspaper, I suppose you could say. I told Vernon that not only had your father died, but so did your mother and you. I only did so, because I didn't want him to know I was still in contact with your mother. I wanted Vernon to think we were finally done with all the magic stuff. But as you might know, your mother and I kept in contact over the years. Letters and pictures once in a while over the years. We wrote each other every Christmas with updates to tell each other we were okay, and sending pictures of our children. I watched you grow through pictures.”

She sighed, and picked up her mug of tea, and drank from it, holding it with both hands. She shivered slightly, as she put it down.

“During the spring months,” Petunia said, “Vernon and I were doing some spring cleaning of our house in Surrey. For some reason, Vernon decided to do some cleaning in the attic. Unfortunately, I had been keeping some of the letters from your mother up there, hiding them from Vernon. I never thought he'd be the one to clean the attic. I thought I would be doing that.

“Vernon... he... he found the box of letters and pictures. Pictures of all of you. He confronted me, showing me them, and accused me of lying to him. Lying about keeping in contact with you, Lily, lying about you and your son being dead. He was so... so very angry. He didn't hit me or anything,
but I was scared he would have. But he yelled. He told me to stop writing to you, and he told me to tell him where you were, so he could write to you, and tell you to leave him and I alone. It was a huge fight. I refused to stop contacting you, and by the end of the argument, I told him I wanted a divorce. He calmed down instantly, and did believe I was serious, which I was. The argument ended. We spoke about none of it for a whole week. Not any talk of divorce, not the letters, none of it. I thought he was going with the whole 'forgive and forget' thing.

“And then he brought it up again. And I threatened with divorce. I had been keeping funds in a private bank account – I still had some of the money our parents gave me in their Will. I had set it aside for a rainy day, for emergency purposes. Thank goodness for that. I was able to rent out this flat. I moved Dudley here, though Vernon was quite against that, you can imagine. The divorce was very messy. Finally got it finished this past summer. I got custody of Dudley, and Vernon only got occasional visits, like today. The courts, or whatever, allowed Dudley to visit Vernon at his house in Surrey.”

“I don't know whether to apologize or not,” Lily said. “After all, my letters --”

“Lily, stop,” Petunia interrupted her, “There is no need to apologize. This divorce – like I said, it was a long time coming. I knew it would happen, when I decided to keep your letters and pictures. Heck, maybe unconsciously, I wanted it to happen. After all, I left those letters and pictures in the attic, where Vernon was able to find them. I could have put them somewhere better if I wanted to. You are not to blame for this. Vernon and his hateful ways are. I loved your letters and pictures. Even though you were in America, all of those letters and pictures – it made me feel like we were close still. I've wanted to meet Harry and Rose for so long now, and now I finally have. But through the pictures, as I said, I was able to watch them grow up.”

Lily's eyes misted over and she smiled at her sister. “Thank you. That means a lot to me.”

Petunia smiled and patted her hand on Lily's closest. She smiled and looked at Rose.

“As I alluded to earlier,” she said, “you look so like your mother. And each picture I saw of you – I could compare to your mother's pictures, and it is almost identical. As for you, Harry. Well, obviously I didn't know your father well, but I see him in you. You are a very handsome young man. I am going to take a guess, and say – Hermione, was it? – Hermione's your girlfriend?”

“Yes, ma'am,” Harry said. “She's a Muggleborn.”

“Like your mother,” Petunia said, nodding.

Lily cleared her throat. “Actually, Petunia, I'm not. I found that out recently. Tunie... did you know I was adopted?”

Petunia frowned and looked at her plate of food.

“Of course I know that,” she said, “I've known for quite some time. I... I figured it out when I figured out how babies were made and born. I couldn't recall Mum being pregnant with you, so I asked Mum about that. In fact it was a few weeks before you found out you were a witch.”

“Oh,” Lily said.

“She told me about your adoption,” Petunia said, “Both she and Daddy did. But they made me promise never to tell you. Ever. I think they planned to do it the summer after your eighteenth
birthday. But as you know –“

“They died before that happened,” Lily said.

Petunia nodded. “Yes. But I kept their promise. I never told you. I suppose that was one of the reasons I was so jealous of you being a witch. I asked Mum and Daddy if you came from wizard parents, and they said they didn't know. Then you told me about how that Snape boy told you about Muggleborn witches and wizards, born from Muggles. So I thought I could be a witch too, because I grew up with one.”

“I know you wrote to Hogwarts about wanting to attend with me,” Lily said. “Neither you, nor our parents, told anyone at Hogwarts I was adopted? Minerva McGonagall visited our house and our parents never told her?”

“I guess they didn't want to tell you about the adoption, and didn't want you finding out any other way,” Petunia said. “I never asked them after they forbid me to tell you about it. The promise I made them – it was one of the few things I had left of them. How... how did you find out?”

“I took an Inheritance Test at Gringotts,” Lily said, “It has to do with blood – tells you whether or not you're related to someone magical, whether you're in important bloodlines or Houses. Turns out I am what is known as Pureblood – as are my children. James was a Pureblood too.”

Petunia listened in awe and shock as Lily told her of what she knew of her parents and their deaths, and her birth.

“I remember you telling me about you and that Snape boy no longer being friends,” Petunia said. “You said it was because he called you a name that offended Muggleborns.”

“Turns out I am of purer blood than Severus is,” Lily said.

Petunia nodded. “So you're... related to one of the Founders of your school?”

“And James was related to another,” Lily said. “So my children are descendants of two Founders.”

“Is that a good thing?” Petunia asked.

“Maybe a couple centuries ago it was,” Lily said. “Back then, we could have owned Hogwarts. But then a law was passed that made the British Ministry of Magic own Hogwarts. So being descended from Ravenclaw, or Gryffindor – it gives us some important votes in Governmental council decisions, and makes us pretty popular in its own right. So I suppose it is a rather good thing.”

The next couple of hours were spent with dining, and discussing various things. Lily, Harry and Rose talked of life in America, Ilvermorny, and their visit to Hogwarts. When asked by Petunia, Hermione discussed her own experiences at Hogwarts, and her parents. Petunia was rather surprised that Hermione's parents were dentists and were so normal.

“I am looking for a new dentist,” Petunia commented. “Perhaps I could visit your parents' office.”

Hermione happily gave Petunia her parents' information. Petunia talked of a few things about her life with Dudley and Vernon. Apparently Dudley had gained quite a bit of weight over the years, but now he was going on a diet and getting healthier. Petunia was happy to talk all about her son, how he was a multiple time boxing champion, and how he was going to Smeltings Private School.
Though apparently Vernon had threatened to remove Dudley from the school, if he didn't get custody. After all, it was Vernon was an alumni, and Dudley was only there because of him. But Vernon soon backed out of that threat, when it was clear that Petunia would get custody. It was quite apparent that Vernon had only used it as a weapon against Petunia, wanting her to think about their son's future. But she said she would have been fine with him going to a public school. Vernon didn't want that, so he had backed out of the threat.

Presents were exchanged between Petunia and Lily, Harry and Rose. The Potters gave Petunia a small photo album of pictures of them over the years. All of the pictures had been spelled to be stationary, and were copies of various outings or gatherings. Petunia hadn't seen most of the pictures, so she was happy to have them. Petunia gave Harry and Rose gift cards to one of the fine clothes shops in London. Lily received a box that had once belonged to her and Petunia's parents.

“I couldn't think of what to get you,” Petunia said, “So I gave you this. I haven't looked at a lot of it. I think some of it is stuff Mum and Daddy wanted to give you. It was in the attic in the Surrey house. I guess I found it after cleaning out our old house, and I never gave it to you. Most of it is pictures and stuff. But there might be letters from Mum and Daddy. I'm not sure. There... there might be your adoption papers in there. It seems like something they would have wanted you to have.”

“Thank you, Tunie,” Lily said, “This is better than anything else you could have given me.”

“You're welcome,” Petunia said. “Just promise me – whether you stay in Britain or return to America, promise me we'll stay in touch.”

Lily smiled warmly. “I promise, Petunia. Blood or not, we're still family, after all. You're still my sister. And I will always love you.”

Lily thought Petunia's smile was the warmest she ever received from her sister.

Crawley, England

Once again, Harry, Hermione, Lily and Rose were sitting on the Knight Bus, as it traveled across England. This time, they were headed to Hermione's house. Harry currently had a hand wrapped around Hermione, as she cuddled close to him, trying to keep from bouncing around the bus as it drove insanely through the streets. Hermione hated the Knight Bus as much as Harry did.

Before they had left Petunia's flat, Hermione had gotten permission from Petunia, to use her phone. She called her parents and told them she and her friends would be at their house soon. Hermione informed her parents that they had eaten a meal at Petunia's house. According to Hermione, her parents were simply planning to offer appetizers, until they had dinner later that evening.

Harry had told Hermione he was going to be silent throughout the ride, because he didn't want to open his mouth and puke up his Aunt Petunia’s cooking, due to the bus causing his stomach to move around. It was only the half-truth. He was also very nervous about meeting Hermione's parents.

He was wondering exactly what he and Hermione should tell her parents. Should they tell them about the seven-month plan? How they had plans of possibly getting Betrothed, if the seven-month plan went well? How Hermione had plans of transferring to Ilvermorny after she was finished with her fourth year at Hogwarts? Then there was the fact that Harry would have to marry three wives,
and had at least one other 'sort-of wife' in his plans as well. And if Harry married Hermione, then she would be one of a number of girls with him.

Thinking about how Hermione's parents would react to all of that only made Harry want to puke more. He'd be lucky to survive the day, not to mention how lucky he'd be if Hermione's parents allowed him to continue dating their daughter after today. How odd that he considered his relationship with Hermione safe after the bill that would have made dating Hermione illegal had been done away with before it could even be voted upon. Here was an even more serious threat – Hermione's parents forbidding him to be with their daughter.

He wondered how Hermione would react if that happened. Would she do what her parents would tell her to do, and break up with him? Would she refuse to break up with him, and possibly disown herself from her parents because of her refusal to do what they wanted her to do? Would he be okay with her disowning herself? Harry didn't know the answer to any of these questions.

Finally the Knight Bus stopped, and, hand-in-hand with Hermione, Harry led his mother and sister off the Knight Bus, and onto the sidewalk. He found himself at the end of a street which was filled with several houses. It was sort of refreshing to find that none of the houses were identical to each other.

“My house is in the center of the street,” Hermione said, “So we'll have to do a bit of walking.”

“That is alright with me,” Lily said, “Better that the Knight Bus let us out at the end of the street. Less chance of No-Majes – Muggles seeing us – whether it be us appearing out of nowhere from an invisible bus, or whether the bus is visible, I don't know. But given that a triple-decker purple bus isn't a common thing in London, it would have been a strange sight either way. So a bit of a walk is no big deal.”

“Good,” Hermione said, “And it does allow us a little bit of time to talk before you meet my parents, Harry.”

“Er... okay,” Harry said.

“I don't think we should mention anything about our so-called 'seven-month plan' today, Harry,” Hermione said. “Right now, you're just my boyfriend, and I'm your girlfriend. We shouldn't talk of any of your possible wives or whatever.”

“Oh, good,” Harry said, “Because I was considering that very thing – not telling them about any of it right now.”

“No, not right now,” Hermione said, “I think it can wait until... like.. late June or whatever.”

“Fine with me,” Harry said, “What of Ilvermorny?”

“Tell them all you want of Ilvermorny,” Hermione said. “We can compare it to Hogwarts. It might be easier for them to swallow, if I eventually tell them – like in June – that I want to transfer to Ilvermorny. But that can wait until June, when we see how everything is between us.”

“So no mentioning about any future plans,” Harry said.

“Right,” Hermione said, “Today it is about my parents meeting my boyfriend and his family, and us spending Christmas Eve together with my parents.”
“I'm fine with that,” Harry said.

“Me too,” Lily said, “Takes a load off my shoulders. I've been trying to figure out what we would explain to your parents, Hermione. So no recruitment plans today?”

“Compare Ilvermorny and Hogwarts all you want,” Hermione said. “If they hint at, or ask me, about how I feel about all this about Ilvermorny, then I'll say it is a possible option to transfer.”

“Alright,” Lily said. “Whatever you feel is necessary. Wouldn't want to make you uncomfortable with your parents. I know you said they know very little about some of the major issues you've dealt with at Hogwarts. The whole Chamber of Secrets incident...”

“The Philosopher's Stone incident,” Hermione said, “Most of the bullying. I just don't want them to remove me from Hogwarts and the wizarding world in general. It is where I belong. I'll bring up the stuff only when the possibility of me going to Ilvermorny is discussed. Be it today or in the future.”

“Whatever you want,” Harry said.

Hermione smiled and squeezed Harry's hand. Soon they reached a white-washed fence and gate that was nearly as tall as Hermione. The house beyond the fence was a beautiful two-story-plus-attic wood and brick home with a front porch. The outside of the house was decorated with Christmas lights. To the left of the fenced area, was a garage, and four-door SUV parked in the driveway. Hermione let go of Harry's hand, opened the gate, and walked into the yard, then closed it once Harry, Lily and Rose walked inside.

The front door of the house opened before Hermione could lead them onto the porch. A woman who looked a lot like Hermione, minus Hermione's bush of hair, stood there wearing a sweater, jeans, and a warm smile. Hermione greeted her mother with a hug.

“It is chilly out here,” Hermione's mother said, “Come inside before you catch a cold, and we can make introductions in the sitting room.”

Harry followed Hermione inside, while Rose and Lily trailed behind them. They entered a small hallway, that led to a door at the other end. Directly to their left was an archway into an adjoining room. To their right were stairs heading to the second level of the house. Under the stairs was a door, but Harry wasn't sure whether the door led to a cupboard, or what.

Hermione's mother led them through the archway into a very cozy looking sitting room. There were two chairs, a loveseat and a sofa, around a coffee table, with a fireplace facing the sofa. A large Christmas tree took up a corner on the opposite side of the room, and there were stockings and other decorations around the room as well. There were also bookshelves and several pictures around the room. A man that was obviously Hermione's father was standing near a chair, and greeted them with a warm smile.

“I suppose I'll do introductions,” Hermione said, “These are my parents, Drs. Daniel and Emma Granger, DDS. Mum, Dad, this is Lily, Harry and Rose Potter. They recently discovered they're actually Purebloods, but until last month, Lily thought she was Muggleborn like me. They're quite accustomed to living in Muggle style.”

“Pleasure to meet you, sir, ma'am,” Harry said, extending a hand to Daniel.
Daniel shook his offered hand. “Son, if you're dating our daughter, please do call us Dan and Emma. You are my daughter's boyfriend, are you not?”

“Daddy,” Hermione groaned.

“Yes, I am, sir,” Harry said. “And do please call me, Harry.”

“Daddy, it is Christmas Eve,” Hermione said, “This is no time for a talk between father and daughter's boyfriend.”

Dan laughed. “Whatever you say, sweetheart. Nice to meet you, Harry.”

Greetings were offered, as were seats, and appetizers. There were finger sandwiches, cookies and veggies on two platter, and Emma informed them that hot chocolate was only minutes away if anyone wanted some. Harry sat down in the middle of the sofa, while Hermione and Rose sat on either side of him. Lily sat down in one of the chairs, and Hermione's parents sat down in the loveseat.

“So how long have you been dating my daughter, Harry?” Dan asked.

“Daddy,” Hermione groaned again, “I've told you all of this myself.”

“We've been dating about a month and a half, sir,” Harry said, “I actually asked Hermione out the day after we met.”

“You certainly didn't take your time,” Emma said, smiling.

Harry shrugged. “I knew a Ball was coming up – tomorrow, actually. I wasn't sure whether or not Hermione was single or was with somebody. And if she wasn't, I figured someone might come along and realize how beautiful and nice she is, and would snatch her up. So I wanted a chance first. I was quite surprised and relieved when she said she was single – shocked, when she told me she never had a boyfriend, never went out on a date. I asked her if she'd accompany me to the Ball.

“But... your daughter is quite smart, as I am sure you know. She knew that she didn't know me so well. So I asked her on a date first to get to know her better. Turned out some of my fellow schoolmates who came along with us to England were having a party, so I asked her to come along with me. Between the time of me asking her out, and our first date, we got to know each other better with the usual discussions, and when I asked her to be my girlfriend after our date, she said yes. Lucky me.”

Hermione blushed and grinned.

“So basically you asked her before someone else could,” Emma said. “Which is why you didn't take your time to get to know her first.”

“Basically,” Harry said, “Isn't that what many people do these days when they don't have the advantage of going to school or work with that person they're interested in?”

“I suppose so,” Emma said. “Dan and I met in the university. Once he realized we were in much of the same classes together, he figured out we both had the same future in mind – dentistry. When he asked me out, and we talked about our dreams, it was confirmed. And we hit it off. Like mother, like daughter, I suppose. It only took one date for me to know I wanted to be with him.”
“I'm afraid James and I didn't have quite the same luck,” Lily said. “He asked me out several times a year for six years before I said yes.”

“Six years?” Dan asked.

Lily laughed. “He was a bit of a joker, and sort of a bully when he was younger. I thought I was just going to be a notch on a belt, if you get my meaning. Took me six-plus years to realize he was being serious when he wanted to ask me out. And from our first date, I was hooked. Madly in love.”

“Hermione told us a bit in letters about her boyfriend and his family,” Emma said. “She said much of Great Britain thought you were dead until recently?”

“Yeah,” Lily said. “It is a very long story.”

“Well, according to Hermione, you're going to be here until after we have dinner, is that correct?” Emma asked; Lily nodded. “Then if you want to tell the story, we have time to hear it.”

Lily nodded again. She cleared her throat and began to tell the tale.

Chapter End Notes

No, this isn't a cliffhanger. Well, I suppose it could be. But the next chapter won't begin with Lily telling the story. We already know the story. I just wanted to split up the chapter there. If I didn't split the chapter into two parts, this chapter would be quite long. So next chapter will have everything else I planned.

Next Chapter: More with the Potters and Grangers. Harry talks to Rebecca over the telephone. And more!
Guess what?! Christmas Eve will be in three parts! And this one does end on a rather cruel cliffhanger!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Thursday, December 24th, 1994

It was the middle of the afternoon on Christmas Eve, and Sirius stepped into the House Potter Tent and found Remus decorating a Christmas Tree the two of them had bought from the groundskeeper Rubeus Hagrid earlier that day. The tree was the smallest Hagrid had available, and still Sirius and Remus had to shrink it a bit to make it fit inside the tent. They had purchased the tree after Lily, Rose and Harry left with Hermione to head off into England, so it could be a surprise.

“I thought you were headed off to Amelia's Manor,” Remus said.

“Received owl post from Amelia while I was visiting with Tracey and her girlfriend,” Sirius said, “Amelia said she has a Healer's Appointment today. I have a feeling it was unplanned, but Amelia assured me she was fine and would explain everything tomorrow evening. She doesn't want me coming over today, and forbid me from going with her to St. Mungo's. I hope everything's alright.”

“You just said she told you she was fine,” Remus said, “Or do you mean your relationship?”

Sirius grimaced. “I hope our relationship is fine, considering what I am going to be asking her tomorrow night. Why? Do you think it isn't fine?”

“I never said that, and never will,” Remus said, “You make a great couple – I said that back when you were first together, and I still believe you're a great couple. Are you having doubts?”

Sirius sighed and walked over to Remus and the Christmas Tree. He took his wand from his robes, and started placing various ornaments – which they had purchased earlier that day in Hogsmeade – on the tree using his wand.

“I don't know whether I am or not,” Sirius said, “I suppose so. I mean – okay, look. Amelia's agreed to put her name in the metaphorical hat for the Minister of Magic gig. What if she wins? Hell, it doesn't matter if she wins or not. She's raising her niece, Susan.”

“This is about what you've been talking to yourself at night before you go to sleep,” Remus said, “You're finally talking to someone else about it... getting someone else's advice. You want to know whether or not you should ask her to marry you, because if you do, it could mean you living here in Great Britain instead of America.”

“Yes,” Sirius said, “If she's Minister of Magic, she can't move to America. And even if she isn't... what if she doesn't want Susan to move to America. Susan has friends here – a life. Tracey hasn't said anything about it, but I know she still up in the air about moving to America. Only because
Daphne's unsure about whether or not to transfer to Ilvermorny or stay at Hogwarts. You know I told Kreacher to make Black Manor a liveable house again. If I marry Amelia, then we could live at Black Manor. Amelia, myself, Tracey and Susan, I mean. If we stay in Great Britain that is.

“It would mean moving away from the rest of my family – losing my job at Ilvermorny. But I could be an Auror or something. Maybe a Professor here at Hogwarts. Hogwarts is always looking for a Defense Professor. And I could do my part for the Great Alliance. Proxy Lily and Harry's House seats on the Wizengamot.”

“If you want my honest opinion,” Remus said, “It sounds as if you've made up your mind about staying in Great Britain.”

“Maybe,” Sirius muttered, “If Amelia agrees to marry me.”

“Let me guess,” Remus said, “You haven't discussed any of this with Amelia yet.”

“No,” Sirius said, “I am planning on doing so tomorrow. Before I pop the question.”

“So your decision hinges on what Amelia says,” Remus said.

“Yes,” Sirius said, “If it all goes to hell, I hope Tracey's okay with living in America with me.”

“I think she would be,” Remus said, “Remember, Daphne's having thoughts of going to Ilvermorny, if Tracey has to do the same. Have you talked to Tracey any regarding the Blood Adoption Ritual?”

“Yes,” Sirius said, “We talked about it today. Tracey knows the adoption could change her appearance in some ways, so it looks like she's a Black. I told her there's a chance she could be a bit out of it for a couple hours after the adoption gets done.”

“Out of it?” Remus echoed.

“She could faint and go unconscious,” Sirius said, “So her body can adjust to the adoption. She said that as long as she is okay to make it to the Ball tomorrow evening, she'll be fine with it.”

“Hmm,” Remus said, “And she doesn't want to do it the day after Christmas instead, so she doesn't miss the Ball?”

“No,” Sirius said, shaking his head, “She said she wants it to be tomorrow, to be special. She just requests that it be early tomorrow morning after gifts are exchanged. She's planning on talking to the other Children of the Great Alliance, so they can be here to witness it too. If we do it around nine or ten tomorrow, it should give her enough time to get the process done, and still have time to prepare for the Ball. Both she and Daphne were discussing it all – mostly how it could change her appearance --when I left. It sounds as if they expected it, and are okay with it.”

“I imagine it must be difficult,” Remus said, “Adjusting to one's own appearance changing, in Tracey's case. One's love interest's appearance changing, in Daphne's case.”

“It shouldn't change too much,” Sirius said, “But they're ready for it. I think they're willing to make the sacrifice if it means Tracey's going to be happier when it is all said and done. No longer disowned. Officially part of a family which accepts her for who she is. I think that rises above the fears and stuff.”
“I seek audience inside this tent,” the unfortunate, unmistakable, drawling tone of Severus Snape echoed from outside the tent's entrance.

Sirius and Remus exchanged looks. Sirius shook his head. Remus sighed and looked toward the tent's entrance.

“Come in, Severus,” Remus said.

Sirius groaned under his breath. Severus Snape walked into the tent, wearing the same dark cloak, and robes outfit he was usually seen in. He wasn't wearing a coat or anything, even though it was chilly, and snowing on the Hogwarts Grounds. Sirius figured the snake was used to the cold of the dungeons, however, so perhaps he didn't mind the winter weather.

“If you're here to visit Lily, she isn't here, Severus,” Remus said, “She is in London with her kids.”

“I see,” Snape said, a slight frown upon his lips.

“And if you have come to ask her to the Ball, then you're wasting your time and breath,” Sirius said, “She has a date to the Ball already, and no it is neither one of us. And no, we won't tell you who it is.”

Snape's bushy black eyebrows frowned, as did his lips. “I see. And I already know the two of you have other dates to the Ball. You're obviously going with Madam Bones, Black. And Aurora Sinistra has been gossiping on about how you have asked her to the Ball. Does she know about your little secret, Lupin?”

Sirius' grip around his wand tightened when Snape mentioned Remus' “secret”.

“She does not,” Remus said, sounding so much more calm than Sirius felt, “But if our relationship becomes more serious than a simple date to a Ball, I will inform her of it.”

“Did Dumbledore ask you to ask Lily to the Ball?” Sirius asked.

“Dumbledore knows not to interfere with what goes on between Lily and I, Black,” Snape said. “Because I forbade him from doing so ever again.”

“Fine,” Sirius said, “Was that your only reason for being here?”

“No,” Snape said, “You're planning on doing a Blood Adoption with a student of mine, Tracey. When? Tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow morning, yes,” Sirius said; he knew where this was going and wished it wasn't, “Are you asking my permission to witness the ritual take place?”

“Yes,” Snape said, “Someone needs to be here to make sure it goes off without a hitch.”

“There will be plenty here who can make sure of that,” Sirius said. “If I wasn't so sure, I'd ask Poppy Pomfrey to assist us. I might do so anyway.”

“Be that as it may,” Snape said, “I'd like to be here, just in case.”

“Just say you want to witness Tracey's Adoption, Snape!” Sirius growled, “You don't need an
excuse to do it. She's a student of yours, and you care for her well-being. As long as you don't go reporting what happens to Dumbledore or anyone else, you can attend.”

Remus looked quite surprised, as did Snape.

Snape nodded, curtly. “Thank you, Black. I will make sure Dumbledore knows nothing about it – before or after it happens. Though... depending on Tracey's change in appearance, it might be news by tomorrow evening if she is healthy enough to attend the Ball.”

“I am aware of that,” Sirius said, “The ritual will take place around ten-o-clock, with or without you.”

Snape nodded again. “I'll be here. By your leave.”

He turned and left the tent before Sirius or Remus could say anything else. They didn't speak for thirty seconds, only resumed decorating the tree. When Sirius was sure Snape was out of hearing range, he spoke up.

“Come on, Remus,” Sirius said, “Let me go and hex Snape in the back. Or curse him! I know, I can stun him! I'm sure he has Veritaserum. We can rob it from his stocks, and interrogate him of everything he knows regarding us, Harry, Lily and Voldemort! Then Obliviate him!”

Remus smiled in amusement. “No, Sirius. Lily would never forgive you. Or me.”

“Or she will congratulate us!” Sirius said, “I am sure she wants to do the same thing.”

“No, Sirius,” Remus repeated. “We aren't doing any of that.”


“Because you know he wants to be here for Tracey,” Remus said.

“No, he wants another shot at asking Lily to the Ball,” Sirius said, “And finding out who she's going with.”

“You know as well as I do that she will shoot him down if he does,” Remus said, “And probably literally hex him too.”

Sirius smirked. “Maybe it would be better if he does try to ask her again.”

Remus snorted, but said nothing as he continued decorating the tree. Sirius went silent as well, and continued his work. He couldn't wait to see the looks on Lily, Harry and Rose's faces when they got home and saw the decorations.

Crawley, England – Granger Home

_Time flies by when you're having fun_, Harry thought to himself, as the grandfather clock chimed, announcing that it was five-o-clock.

Hermione and the Potters had been at the Granger home for about three hours now, and they had spent that time deep in discussion with Dan and Emma Granger about various things. Lily's story
about her husband's death, and her 'escape' from Europe to America with Harry, Remus and Sirius, moved onto her story of raising Harry and Rose in Boston, Massachusetts with Remus and Sirius as honorary Uncles. Dan, Emma and Hermione – the latter having only heard bits and pieces of everything from Harry and the 'extended Potter family', and never in a story so well-told – listened with dedicated ears.

Harry, Lily and Rose all talked of their time in Boston, living amongst No-Majes – Muggles – in a Boston neighborhood, as well as some of their favorite camping memories. This soon led into discussion of Ilvermorny, which Dan and Emma were eager to hear of the differences between Ilvermorny and Hogwarts. Having Hermione's permission, the Potters basically gave the Grangers all the luscious details about the school, classes, curriculum and some of the differences they had already noticed. When asked to compare Ilvermorny and Hogwarts, both Hermione and Lily – the latter using her memory of her time as a student – discussed certain bits and pieces of Hogwarts, including curriculum and rules, but never revealing the dangers, as Hermione had requested.

Harry had noticed Dan and Emma studying Hermione's reaction throughout all the discussion of Ilvermorny, and if they noticed anything suspicious about her reactions to Ilvermorny, or whether or not they realized their daughter had thoughts of attending Ilvermorny, neither of Hermione's parents said anything about it.

Dan and Emma discussed their dentistry practice, life before Hermione came into their lives, and also after Hermione was born. The Potters all had a good laugh as Dan and Emma discussed Hermione's early signs of magic. Hermione was red throughout it all, especially when Dan and Emma said they didn't think too much about how strange was after their initial reactions. They thought it was just something Hermione only did.

In fact most of the time they had ignored it, and it wasn't until Minerva McGonagall mt with them and told them Hermione was a witch, did they really take it all seriously. According to Dan, first he wasn't sure about the whole 'magic' thing. Originally, Dan had plans on having Hermione attend a Prep school in Oxford, after finishing primary school, in which the school's graduates went off to Oxford after graduating. It had taken Hermione a lot of begging and pleas to let her attend Hogwarts. Only after visiting Diagon Alley for their very first visit, did Dan finally allow Hermione to attend Hogwarts.

"We had hoped Hermione would have a lot of friends at Hogwarts," Emma said, "In primary school, she had very few friends, because the kids were so immature, and very few kids that age like when others are so much smarter than them. Unfortunately we learned it was the same in Hogwarts, even though Hermione was – according to her – in a House that encouraged bookworms, and smart students like her.”

“Our Hermione was just a little too smart for even the smart students,” Dan said, smiling at Hermione, who went pink.

“A couple years ago, her letters got better when it came to her talking about friends, and being more social,” Emma said, “She started writing about a girl called Luna Lovegood, and a couple of other friends.

“We've met Luna a couple times,” Dan said, “And her father. They're both a little eccentric…”

Emma playfully smacked her husband's chest. “No they're not. They're very kind and sweet.”

“It is alright, Emma,” Lily said, “Eccentric is a good term for Luna and her father. We both know
them too. Luna's mother was one of my best friends. Cried for hours when I found out she died. We're very good friends with Luna because of Hermione, and we know her father too.”

By the time the stories were finished, so was the appetizers and the mugs of hot cocoa. Emma stood up and collected the dishes.

“The roast smells like it is about done,” Emma said, “I'm going to fix a couple of side-dishes and then we can have dinner.”

“I would love to help if you want it,” Lily said.

“I think that would be alright,” Emma said, “Hermione, why don't you give Harry and Rose a tour of the house. Show them your bedroom and stuff. Dinner should be ready within an hour.”

“Okay,” Hermione said; then turned to Harry and Rose. “Wait by the stairs, please. I need to talk to Daddy about something.”

Harry and Rose headed out into the hallway, while Lily and Emma walked off down the hall and headed into the kitchen. Harry and Rose only had to wait for a minute, before Hermione stepped out of the sitting room with her father. Dan opened the door under the stairway, and walked through it. Hermione chuckled when she saw Harry and Rose staring at the door as Dan closed it.

“You thought there was a closet there, huh?” Hermione asked, “So does everyone when they visit for the first time. Actually it goes down into the basement. Daddy calls it his den. There's a drink bar down there, a pool table, a dartboard, our own private library – which was a Christmas gift to me a few years ago – and a guest room, for when we have guests over.”

“Guest room down there instead of upstairs?” Harry asked.

“Blame Mum on that one,” Hermione said, with a snort, “Daddy wanted his office down there, but Mum wouldn't allow it. She made him put it upstairs in a room that was meant to be a spare bedroom, because otherwise, he would have never left the basement while home. Come on!”

Hermione led Harry and Rose up the stairs. As they made it to the second floor, Hermione pointed to a door that was almost directly in front of the stairs.

“This door leads to the bathroom,” Hermione said, then led the Potter siblings down the hallway, to another door. “This is my bedroom, and the two doors down there go to my parents' bedroom, and my Daddy's office. As you learned earlier, my parents' bought this house before I was born. After they had me, they tried for more children for another four years or so, but it was never to be. So instead of what should have been my sibling's room, they made the bedroom into my Daddy's office. But we'll visit that soon. Come on.”

“Are you sure your parents will allow you to have your boyfriend in your bedroom?” Rose asked, with a giggle.

Hermione snorted. “We'll leave the door open.”

Harry followed Hermione and Rose into the room. The walls were painted a periwinkle blue – Harry recalled this was Hermione's favorite color. The blankets and sheets on Hermione's bed were in Ravenclaw colors, and Harry figured she must have found them in a Muggle store, and based them off her House colors. Harry was quite surprised to see a vanity desk and mirror because Hermione
didn't seem like the type. But he wasn't surprised at all to see a desk and also two bookcases. Harry sat down at the desk, while Hermione and Rose sat down on the bed. Harry eyed the books on the shelf.

“I am so glad I decided not to get you something from a Muggle bookstore for Christmas, Hermione,” Harry said, “I bet you bought out the whole store already.”

Hermione laughed. “Probably. I have more books in the reading room in the basement. So, what did you get me?”

“I am not telling you until tomorrow,” Harry said, sticking out his tongue.

Hermione grinned. “Darn. Hoped to catch you off guard.”

“I am sure there are other ways to catch him off guard if you want him to tell you,” Rose said, grinning, “Things that can be done in your bedroom.”

Hermione cleared her throat as her cheeks grew pink. “I'm not that desperate. Anyway... I am rather surprised Mum and Daddy didn't ask me if I was interested in going to Ilvermorny.”

“I don’t know,” Harry said, “They seemed as if it was on the tip of their tongues, and the night isn't over yet. Could be discussion over dinner.”

“Yeah, that is where I was going,” Hermione said, “I think they might ask during dinner.”

“And if they do?” Harry asked.

“I'll tell them it is a possible option, and something I am thinking about” Hermione said; she sighed and looked down at her hands which were grasped together on her lap as if in prayer. “If I have to, I'll inform them of everything that happened – the Philosopher's Stone, the Chamber of Secrets, me getting Petrified, me getting attacked by Mandy earlier this year. Stuff like that. Things I've been keeping from them.”

“Are you sure?” Harry asked.

“I'm not sure about any of it, Harry,” Hermione said. “I mean, if I go to Ilvermorny, I'm leaving Luna, my best friend, to deal with everything at Hogwarts.”

“The Great Alliance will be her friends, won't they?” Rose asked.

“I suppose so,” Hermione said. “But nobody understands Luna like I do. I barely understand her. On the other hand, if Mum, Daddy, and I all go to America... and Voldemort’s war comes back...”

“If Voldemort and his war comes back,” Harry said, “I'll be coming back here one way or another anyway.”

“I know that,” Hermione said, frowning. “There are so many 'what ifs' and stuff. I really can’t make any type of decision until closer to when you head back, Harry. I don't want to make a decision. It is why we have this seven-month plan, isn't it? So we refrain from planning any future until we're sure where we are.”

“Right,” Harry said, nodding.
Hermione sighed, and cleared her throat. “Harry? Are you planning on calling your friend, Rebecca?”

Harry raised an eyebrow. What an odd question to ask right now. “I was thinking about it. Why?”

“It is what I was asking Daddy,” Hermione said, “I asked him if he'd give you permission to call Rebecca. Daddy's office phone can make any call to the United States. He uses it to talk to business friends there. He said if you wanted to call Rebecca, you could. He told me how to reach Boston. It is one of my Christmas gifts to you, Harry. Giving you a way to talk to your friend.”

Harry smiled. “It's got to be about – what – noon over there, maybe? I don't know if she's even home right now. But I'll give it a shot. Thanks.”

“You're welcome,” Hermione said, as she stood up, “Come on. I'll take you to Daddy's office.”

Harry grinned and followed Hermione and Rose back out of Hermione's room, and down the hallway, then into Dan's office. There was a desk with a computer, telephone and other stuff in the center of the floor. Two bookshelves and a couple of file cabinets stood on either side of the room. Hermione rounded the desk, and pulled out her father's rolling, leather chair. She motioned to Harry, and he walked over to the chair and sat down in it. Hermione gave him the phone, and instructed him how to dial the number, so it wouldn't put him to an operator.

“Do you want to talk to her too, Rose?” Harry asked.

“No, we don't want to take up too much time,” Rose said, “Just tell her I said hello and we send our love.”

“Alright,” Harry said.

“We'll be back in my room when you finish,” Hermione said.

Harry nodded and smiled. As Hermione and Rose left the room, Harry stared at the telephone. He pushed the first few buttons Hermione had told him to, then Rebecca's number. He held the phone to his ear and relaxed in the chair when he heard the tone. Half-a-minute later, he heard a clicking sound, followed by a familiar voice.

“Hello, this is Veronica Branson,” the voice said, “May I ask who is calling?”

Harry smiled. It was Rebecca's mother. “Hello, Mrs. Branson, it is Harry. Harry Potter.”

“Harry,” Mrs. Branson said, “Hello, dear! Are you calling from somewhere in America, or are you still in Great Britain? Rebecca said you were visiting there.”

“Still in Britain,” Harry said, “One of my friends, their father has a way to call across to the States without any hassle. So I thought I'd call Rebecca.”

“Well, we were wondering when you and your family would call!” Mrs. Branson said, “I suppose most phones over there can't reach across the ocean?”

“They're rather difficult to find,” Harry said, “I can't be on very long. Is Rebecca home?”
“Of course she is!” Mrs. Branson said, “We're expecting guests in a little while. But you can still talk to her. You know, she misses you so much. Let me go get her.”

“Thank you, ma'am,” Harry said.

“Still so very polite,” Mrs. Branson said, “Such a gentleman.”

The other end went silent for nearly a minute, then a voice said “Hello?” Harry grinned when he heard the voice of the girl who had been his best friend since five years old.

“Hi, Becky,” Harry said, “Guess who?”

“Harry!” Rebecca squealed so loudly that Harry had to back the phone away from his ear. “Harry James Potter, why haven't you called me before now?! Am I your best friend or not?!”

Harry laughed. “Of course you are my best friend. There just aren't many opportunities to find a way to call across the ocean here in England.”

“You're still in England?” Rebecca asked.

“I'll be here until late June or early July,” Harry said.

“Oh,” Rebecca said; Harry could almost hear his best friend frowning. “I miss you already, and you won't be home until July? I usually see you at Christmas!”

“I know you do,” Harry said, “I miss you too, you know. I actually hadn't planned on calling you today, but I am at a... a friend's house, and her father calls business friends in the States, so she asked him if I could call you. A Christmas present of sorts.”

“A friend who is a girl,” Rebecca said, slowly, “Is she a friend... or a friend?”

Harry sighed. “She's my girlfriend, Rebecca. For a bit over a month now.”

“Oh,” Rebecca said. “I have a boyfriend, by the way. We've been dating about a month. He's actually visiting soon with his parents.”

“Are you just telling me this because you're jealous of my girlfriend, and you want me to be jealous too?” Harry asked.

“Why do you think me so petty, Harry?” Rebecca asked, “You've had a couple of girlfriends. This is only my second.”

“Your... second?” Harry asked, “I don't recall –“

“I consider you my boyfriend, Harry,” Rebecca said.

Harry swallowed. “I thought we had decided --”

“No official terms,” Rebecca said, “I know. I don't blame you for having a girlfriend over there in Merry Ol' England. I don't think you're cheating on me. But giving all the kissing and making out we did, I do consider you my boyfriend. We haven't done enough to be called friends with benefits, have we?”
Harry blushed. “I suppose not. Wait... present tense, not past tense?”

A short pause, then Rebecca giggled. “Oops. I just shrugged. Damn it. That is how much I miss you. I hate that you aren't here speaking to me face-to-face. I suppose it is present tense. My boyfriend – I just consider this a test run with him. To see if I can have romantic feelings for someone who isn't you.”

“Oh,” Harry said, “And...?”

“I... am not sure I can,” Rebecca said, “He's great. He's just not you. It has taken you being in a different country, and you not being able to visit me this Christmas to realize I do consider you a boyfriend. I was hoping for a bit of kissing and making out with you during Christmas holidays, you know.”

“Even though you have a boyfriend?” Harry asked.

“If you were here, I wouldn't need another boyfriend, dummy,” Rebecca said.

“Oh,” Harry said.

“So... are you sending me a Christmas gift by mail?” Rebecca asked.

“Crap,” Harry said, wincing, “No. But I'll make it up to you with twice the birthday presents this summer.”

“Fine,” Rebecca huffed, “But I want some of those Swiss chocolates.”

“I'm in England and Scotland, Becky,” Harry said, “Not Switzerland.”

“Your point?” Rebecca asked.

“And they'd probably melt before I got them to you,” Harry said; he then considered Honeydukes, and their chocolate that resisted melting, “But I might be able to bring home some stuff for you.”

“I want something from Merry Ol' England,” Rebecca said, trying to mimic Remus and Sirius' British accents, “Bring me back souvenirs.”

“Will do,” Harry said. “Do you want me to tell you what I've been up to?”

“No,” Rebecca said, “I imagine it is a long story. Mom said I can't talk long, because she doesn't want us taking up all this international time. So I am willing to wait until you get home. But it better be a good story, Harry. Especially since I can't see you until next summer.”

Harry wondered how much he'd be able to tell her. “It will be.”

“Will you be able to call me around Spring Break?” Rebecca asked. “I'll be home then.”

“Oh... hopefully, maybe?” Harry said.

Rebecca snorted so loudly, it was heard over the phone. “So... this girlfriend of yours? Is it serious?”
"I don't know yet," Harry said, "It could be. Serious enough that she might transfer from this private school to mine. But she's only discussing it. Her private school... apparently mine has a far better curriculum. Anyway, who knows... between now and the end of June, we might break up."

"Hmm," Rebecca said, "I don't know how I feel about this. You know what I said about you, about how I feel."

Harry blushed. Could Rebecca, a No-Maj, really have a chance to be one of his future wives? Would she support that? Would she support all the weirdness in his life. Well, it would be weird to her, definitely.

"We'll talk about it when I come back to Boston," Harry said, "By then, things could be different than they are now."

"Maybe," Rebecca said. "I'm pretty sure I'll be dropping this boyfriend by then anyway."

"He's... good to you, isn't he?" Harry asked, warily.

"Of course he is!" Rebecca said, "That's not what I mean. Do you really think I'd be with him if he was horrible? You know I can handle myself."

"Sorry," Harry said, "Just the way you said it."

"I only meant that – well, what I said earlier," Rebecca said. "I'm testing the waters, and failing the test. He isn't you. Nobody is. I should have kissed you long before you kissed me at Granny's wake. I better get going. Mom's staring at me across the kitchen. You know how she gets."

"You said all this about me in front of her?" Harry asked.

"She knows how I feel about you," Rebecca said. "Don't sound so surprised. Anyway... I miss you, Harry."

"I miss you too," Harry said. "Rose says 'hi', and sends her love. I am sure everyone does."

"Do you?" Rebecca asked, "Send your love?"

Harry blushed. "Maybe for your mother."

"Dummy," Rebecca said, snorting. "I send my love back. To all of you."

"Well received," Harry said, smiling, "I'll try to call around Spring Break."

"Okay," Rebecca said, "Thank you for calling. Best Christmas present ever. Bye, Harry."

"You're welcome," Harry said, "Goodbye, Rebecca."

The phone clicked on the other end. Harry sighed and hung up the phone. Harry relaxed in Dan's chair, staring at nothing, and thinking about everything. So Rebecca saw him as her boyfriend. He never knew that until now. He just figured they were... well, sort of friends with benefits, without all the benefits. But now... well, it seemed that Rebecca loved him, was in love with him. Even if she hadn't outright said it. Talked of him being her present boyfriend, even though she had a boyfriend, and he had a girlfriend. Why did love and women have to be so complicating?!
As he stood up, ready to leave the room, there was a knock on the open office door. Harry nearly jumped when he saw Hermione's father standing there.

“Hermione said you were in here,” Dan said, “Hope I wasn't interrupting anything.”

“No, sir,” Harry said, “Just finishing up the call to my friend. Thank you for letting me do this. If I have to pay for the call --”

“No, Harry,” Dan said, “Hermione said it was one of her Christmas presents to you. So I don't mind. Actually... if you feel you need to pay me... how about we finally have that father-to-daughter's-boyfriend discussion my daughter stole from us?”

Chapter End Notes

Cliffhanger! Uh-oh! At least one of my reviewers, and I am sure many readers want this discussion. Unfortunately it has to wait until next chapter. I have a lot more I want to do for Christmas Eve, but I decided to split it into another chapter.

So what do you think of Rebecca? I don't know if she'll be one of Harry's future wives. I'm still thinking about what I want to do with her. But I loved writing the discussion with her.

Next Chapter: Harry and Dan's conversation. Hermione and Rose have a short conversation. Then a discussion during dinner.
Previously on “The Ilvermorny Champion”...

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Thursday, December 24th, 1994

Harry gulped and nodded. “Alright, sir.”

“Excellent,” Dan said, then motioned to a chair on the other side of the desk, “Take a seat, Harry.”

Harry sat down in the offered chair, while Dan took his own leather chair behind the desk.

“I had this sort of talk with Emma's father way back when,” Dan said, “I imagine, back then, my face held the same expression your face does right about now.”

Harry blushed lightly. Dan chuckled.

“I remember the day Hermione was born,” Dan said, “I'll never forget that day. I held her in my arms, and was thinking all about the future. My future as Hermione's father. Hermione's own future. One of those many, many thoughts was something that was probably inappropriate back then. That thought was... my daughter would have a boyfriend, possibly more than one, in the future. And I wondered... would I be able to put the fear on the face of my daughter's boyfriend, like my daughter's grandfather did to me. I'm rather proud to say I have. But you know what the differences are between me and Emma's father?”

Harry shook his head. “No, sir.”

“Emma's father was a big, bulky man,” Dan said, “Muscles and all. But he deserved them. He was a member of the SAS after all. Know what that is?”

Harry nodded.

“Tough son-of-a-bitch, if you'll mind my French,” Dan said. “Not a man you want to cross. When he said he would shoot me with a gun if I ever treated Emma badly, he meant it. It wasn't just your run-
of-the-mill threat. Even now when he's getting up there in age, he's still a threatening man. He gives me that same look every time I meet him. Though in recent years it has been only for a moment or two, just to remind me, you know? And then he's the friendly father-in-law he figures I deserve. Now, obviously, I'm not exactly a big, bulky man. My hands and arms are tough enough to use dentist's tools, however... and I know how to use them.”

Harry gulped. Dan chuckled.

“I know I am talking to a young man who has a wand,” Dan said. “And if Hermione's letters are anything to go by, you know how to use that wand, and use it well. But I use my dentist's tools well too. Let's not get to a point where I have to use them on you, Harry.”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said, “I would never hurt Hermione, sir. Ever. I might upset her from time to time. But I hope that she forgives me whenever I am stupid enough to do that.”

“I'll tell you one of many secrets about women I have figured out over the years,” Dan said. “You're lucky if they forgive you for several mistakes. A damn lucky man. I consider myself a damn lucky man, if you know what I mean. Emma's a forgiving woman. Hermione's also a forgiving woman. But are you a damn lucky man, Harry?”

“I hope so, sir,” Harry said.

Dan nodded and tapped his fingers on his desk. “I had a very, very interesting revelation during our discussion this afternoon. I had that revelation during the discussion regarding your school. Ilvermorny, was it?”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said; he figured he knew where this conversation was going, and he wished he was wrong.

“I didn't want to say anything to Hermione yet,” Dan said, “I wanted to talk to you about it. This is why we're actually meeting in private. How serious is Hermione when she's thinking about wanting to transfer from Hogwarts to Ilvermorny?”

Harry gulped. “I'd rather you ask her that.”

“I believe that discussion might come up sooner rather than later, son,” Dan said, “But I want your opinion right now.”

“She's... fairly serious, sir,” Harry said.

“Are her thoughts more on education and the better curriculum, the better school?” Dan asked, “Or are her thoughts more along the lines of I could go to the same school as my boyfriend?”

“We don't know where we'll be in our relationship come time for the possibility of Hermione transferring to Ilvermorny,” Harry said, “We've talked a bit about the future, but we've decided to take it day-to-day. If we're still a couple by next September – brilliant! But if not... I don't know if she'd want to go to Ilvermorny anyway. It is up to her. I can't and won't speak for her, sir.”

“Of course,” Dan said. “I would ask if you want her to go to America, but I know you would say that she can do whatever she wants. So I'll ask this. Do you want Hermione to still be your girlfriend by the time you're back in America?”
“I would very much love if she was still my girlfriend,” Harry said, “If she'll want me.”

“Could your relationship survive a long-distance relationship?” Dan asked. “You in America, Hermione here in Britain?”

Harry sighed. “I suppose so. It would be more difficult, and I'd worry about her and miss her. But I would try to stay in contact with her as much as possible if we had to resort to long distance.”

Dan nodded. “I suppose I can't say much more until I know what Hermione has to say. But I can tell you this. Ilvermorny seems like a damn fine school. If your curriculum there is what you say it is, then I can see why Hermione fancies going to that school. I wouldn't want her to have to learn in a less-than-spectacular learning environment. If she does want to go, well... I'll put a lot of consideration into it.”

“I'm sure she'll thank you for that, sir,” Harry said, smiling.

“Yes,” Dan said, nodding. “I think that ends our conversation. Let's see... threaten daughter's boyfriend with dentist tools. I really should have brought up those tools from the basement. I knew I went down there for a reason. Ah well. Talk about the future between daughter and her boyfriend. Yep. That's all I needed. You're a good man, Harry. Very polite, very intelligent. I can see why my daughter loves you.”

Harry gulped. Hermione's father had used that dreaded L-word. “Sir?”

Dan smiled. “You think I don't know how my daughter truly feels about you, Harry? She loves you. I see the same look in her eyes and on her face when she looks at you, that my own wife has when she looks at me. My daughter looks like her mother. It was easy to tell. Don't break her heart, Harry. I know your relationship might be a bit more difficult, what with distance and such. But even if things go south in the future, make sure her heart can take it.”

“I will do my best never to break her heart, sir,” Harry said, “And I very much hope things never go south.”

Dan smiled. “I believe we're going to get along just fine, son.”

Harry sighed in relief. Dan chuckled.

“I bet I had that same look on my face at the end of my first discussion with Emma's father,” Dan said. “He accepted me as the man who was right for his daughter. And perhaps, one day, you will be too for mine. Right now, you're too young for me to know whether you're perfect for my daughter. But you're on the right track, Harry. Stay on it and you'll be just fine with me.”

Harry smiled and nodded. “Thank you, sir. I'll do my best.”

Crawley – Granger House – a few minutes earlier

As Harry was talking to Rebecca, Hermione and Rose had been discussing what Christmas presents they had bought for everyone but each other. Hermione, however, refused to tell Rose what she had gotten Harry, however, even though Rose had begged.

“I've been trying to stop myself from asking this question, Rose,” Hermione said, “But I need to
know. Every time Harry speaks to me about Rebecca, he tells me their relationship was mostly kissing, holding hands and stuff. It sounds like boyfriend and girlfriend stuff, but he denies them having those terms. Do you know any better?"

“First of all,” Rose said, “I'm not entirely comfortable with speaking about my brother and his other relationships, especially with a girl who I'd love to see become my sister-in-law in the future.”

Hermione blushed. “Oh. I'm sorry. Forget I asked.”

“No, I can tell you a bit, it is alright,” Rose said. “Harry tends to believe that what he and Rebecca have was very much a secret between him and Rebecca, especially from me, Mom, and Uncles Sirius and Remus. But I've seen them... mostly when they were just holding hands and talking. Maybe a kiss or two, but definitely not while they were making out, or snogging, or whatever you call it over here. Though I am sure they were doing such things. I know for a fact their relationship didn't go much beyond that.

“But I did watch them when they talked and held hands. More than once, I saw a look on Rebecca's face, and in her eyes. Something I don't think she realized at the time, and I know for a fact I didn't realize it back then either. But I know what it is now, because I've seen the same look on Amelia's face when she looks at Uncle Sirius, and I know they love each other.”

“So... Rebecca loves Harry,” Hermione said.

“It goes beyond love,” Rose said. “As friends, I'm sure the pair love each other very much. I'm pretty sure, however, Rebecca is in love with my brother. I don't know what Harry feels for her. I mean... perhaps to him, Rebecca's just his best friend with some benefits, but not the usual type if you know what I mean.”

Rose sighed. “Unfortunately I don't know if it would be a good thing if their relationship goes any further than it is now.”

“Why not?” Hermione asked.

“Because she's a No-Maj, a Muggle,” Rose said. “Their relationship would have to be pretty serious for Harry to reveal the wizarding world to her. And that is a whole new problem. Harry and Rebecca have been best friends since they were five. Harry learned around the age of six or seven exactly what he is. So for seven or eight years or so, he's kept this secret from Rebecca, his best friend. I am not sure if their relationship could survive him telling her such a big secret.

“On top of that, Harry having to marry three wives? Adding onto that a fourth girl, with Tracey being Daphne's future Wife's Consort? You remember how you originally felt about Polygamy. You're a first-gen, Hermione. Part of the wizarding world. It isn't too strange or taboo for Polygamy. But how do you think a No-Maj and her family would feel?”

Hermione frowned. She felt her eyes go slightly misty. “I suppose if Rebecca would really love him enough to put up with anything so strange, she might be able to accept it. But without knowing much about her, I couldn't say for sure. And then there is the fact that she'd always feel like a stranger in a strange land, a No-Maj, married to a husband, who has two magical wives, and also another who could be considered his wife? Yeah, that would turn me away, I think. Even if Harry and my sister-wives made me feel loved and a part of them.”

“Yeah,” Rose said, “I couldn't imagine. But I guess we won't know until it comes to a point in time.
where Rebecca learns about our secret. If that time ever does come.”

Hermione nodded. Before she could say anything, there was a knock on her open door. She gasped when she saw her father standing there.

“Your mother says dinner will be ready in half-an-hour or less,” Dan said, “Where's Harry?”

“In your office, talking to his friend over the phone,” Hermione said. “He shouldn't take too long. He knows the long-distance is costly.”

“Oh, goodie,” Dan said, “Means I can have a private talk with him.”

“Daddy!” Hermione groaned.

“No, no,” Dan said, wagging a finger at her, “Your mother's father gave me a talk, and I need to give your boyfriend a talk too.”

“You were – what – nineteen or twenty when you talked to Grandpa Herb?” Hermione asked.

“And?” Dan asked, “Am I not correct when I say you want to be in a long-term relationship with your boyfriend?”

Hermione blushed pink. That was not something she wanted to discuss with her father!

She groaned again. “Fine. But you better be nice to him. Or I'll never forgive you, Daddy.”

“I'll be nice, I promise,” Dan said.

Before Hermione could reply, Dan backed away from the doorway and headed off down the hallway.

“Darn it,” Hermione growled, snapping her fingers, “I should have seen this coming.”

Rose giggled. “I'm so glad I'm not a boy.”

Hermione snorted. “I'm sure Minister Delacour would still have a father-daughter's-girlfriend talk with, you know.”

Rose gulped audibly. “You're probably right. I should probably forbid Uncles Sirius and Remus from doing the same with Gabrielle.”

Hermione grinned. “Given that she'll probably be able to cast fireballs by her next birthday, and turn into a Harpy when she's seventeen, I think your Uncles will be put off talking to her about that.”

Rose giggled again. “Hmm... maybe I should tell them to talk to her about these things... after her next birthday.”

“You are an evil little witch, Rose Potter,” Hermione said, with a smirk.

“You didn't know that about me until now?” Rose asked, grinning.

“Hmm,” Hermione said. “I guess I don’t know you as well as I should. This is the longest we've ever
had a one-on-one talk with each other, isn't it?"

“It's alright,” Rose said, shrugging. “During our free time, I'm usually somewhere off with Gabrielle. And you're off with Harry or one of your other friends.”

“That is no excuse,” Hermione said, “There is a pretty good chance we could be sister-in-laws in the future. I should hang out with you more.”

“Believe me, Hermione, it is alright,” Rose said, then she smirked, “Besides, I see two problems with you hanging around me so often. One, it'd cut down on my 'Gabby time', and two... spend too much time with me, and you might end up falling for the wrong Potter.”

Hermione laughed. “No chance of that happening, sorry, Rosie.”

“So you're not open to the idea of being with a girl?” Rose asked. “I mean, if you're going to marry Harry, he's going to have sister-wives. And possibly welcoming two of his wives in bed at the same time...”

Hermione blushed so red, she felt her cheeks burning. “I think I'll wait to consider that until it comes to a point where it is a sure future. Right now, I see myself with only Harry.”

“So you have thought of those kinds of topics?” Rose asked, grinning. “Not girl-on-girl action, but 'action' in general?”

“I'm a teenage girl with raging hormones and a very sexy boyfriend,” Hermione said, “Yes, I have thought about those topics. And thinking is all I'm open for doing for the foreseeable future, thank you very much.”

“Message well received,” Rose said, with a laugh.

“Speaking of girl-on-girl topics,” Hermione said, “How are you and Gabrielle?”

“Wishing we were older and able to kiss more than a long peck without getting strange looks for it,” Rose replied.

Hermione smiled warmly. “Be patient. You'll get there soon enough.”

“But will I be with Gabrielle when that happens?” Rose asked, with a sigh.

“Has Gabrielle said whether or not you are her chosen mate?” Hermione asked.

“Basically, yes,” Rose said, “And I know what your next question is. I do want to be with her for the long run. It is just difficult to see such things right now.”

“You're still going with her to the Ball tomorrow, right?” Hermione asked.

“Definitely,” Rose said.

“Well, then,” Hermione said, “You'll be able to have fun and dance with her. It will put a bit of spark you've been wanting back in that relationship. And perhaps – if it is only a one-time thing right now – give her a longer kiss just this once.”
Rose blushed about as red as her hair. “I might be able to do that. Yeah... a special Christmas gift for the pair of us. Sounds nice. Thank you, Hermione.”

“I'm always here if you need someone to talk to,” Hermione said, “Especially about girls and romance.”

Rose chuckled. “I might take you up on that. Some days it feels as if I don't understand girls, even though I am one!”

Hermione laughed. “Come on. Let's go rescue your brother from my father.”

Hermione stood from her bed, and pulled Rose up to her feet. Hermione led the younger witch to her father's office, and found that the door was open. Hermione put a finger to her lips, silently asking Rose to be quiet. They could hear Dan and Harry's conversation.

“... accepted me as the man who was right for his daughter,” Dan was saying, “And perhaps, one day, you will be too for mine. Right now, you're too young for me to know whether you're perfect for my daughter. But you're on the right track, Harry. Stay on it and you'll be just fine with me.”

“Thank you, sir,” Harry said, “I'll do my best.”

Hermione smiled. She could read between the lines. Her father was already having thoughts about Harry being his daughter's possible future husband. That was a very nice thought. Hermione looked at Rose, and nodded into the office. She then stepped to the open doorway.

Dan smirked and stood up, when he saw Hermione. “Have you been eavesdropping on our conversation, young lady?”

“No, Daddy,” Hermione said, “Rose and just came to see if you were finished. We should be getting downstairs soon.”

“I suppose you're right,” Dan said. “I'll head off and let you talk to each other. But don't make me come back up and find you.”

“We're already on our way,” Hermione said, “We'll just be slower.”

“Slower than your old man?” Dan asked, as he walked over to Hermione, “In that case, I should tell your mother to leave your helpings in the pots. You might not get there until tomorrow.”

“Very funny, Daddy,” Hermione said.

Dan chuckled and kissed his daughter's forehead. Hermione scowled lightly; how dare he do such things in front of her boyfriend! Dan merely chuckled again and headed off down the hallway. Harry walked over to Hermione, and she smiled and took his hands in hers.

“Did Daddy threaten you with his dentist tools?” Hermione asked.

“Maybe a teensy bit,” Harry said, “But I think I got off pretty unscathed after the whole thing.”

“You do look alright,” Hermione said, “And Daddy seemed rather cheerful.”

She grinned and pecked him the lips. She let him kiss her back for a few moments, before she
backed away. She would have kissed him longer, had Rose not been there.

“For being able to stand up to my father,” Hermione said.

“Perhaps I should have these kinds of talks with him more often,” Harry said.

“You're incorrigible,” Hermione said.

“So you've said – at least once today,” Harry said.

Hermione rolled her eyes, and pulled him out of her father's office and into the hallway.

“So... how was your call with Rebecca?” Rose asked, as they slowly walked down the hallway

“Pretty good,” Harry said, “I told her that you and our family sent her our love and said 'hi'. And she did the same with us.”

“And?” Rose urged.

“She apparently has a boyfriend – of about a month or so,” Harry said.

Rose's eyes widened. “Really?”

“Yeah,” Harry said, “But I can tell she's not very much into him.”

“He's a replacement boyfriend,” Rose said, “She can't make out with you, so she's kissing him.”

“She sounded fairly upset when she realized I wasn't coming home for Christmas,” Harry said.

“Mnhmm,” Rose said, “She has more feelings for you than just simple kissing buddies, you know.”

“I'm starting to realize that, Rosie,” Harry said.

“Are you now?” Rose asked, “Maybe you're not as ignorant about girls as I thought you were.”

“Oi, you little brat,” Harry growled playfully.

Rose giggled and hurried off toward the stairs. She stuck out her tongue at him when she reached the stairs, and then started descending them.

“So... did you tell Rebecca about me?” Hermione asked.

“Yes,” Harry said, “When I told her a friend – that was a girl – helped me call her, she asked whether you were a friend, or a friend.”

“So she pretty much guessed right away,” Hermione said,

“Yeah,” Harry said, “I think she's pretty jealous of you, you know.”

“Really?” Hermione asked.

“Yeah,” Harry said, “I kind of told her there's a chance of you transferring to my... 'private school' as
I called it. She said she wasn't sure how she felt about it."

"Of course she's unsure," Hermione said, "If she really has feelings for you, look at it from her point of view. You're a boy in a serious relationship with a girl that isn't her. She probably realizes there is a chance I could be with you for the long-run. And of course she has no idea about the whole Polygamy, three-wives thing.'

'So to her, you could be my only wife," Harry said.

"And she's left on the sidelines nursing a unrequited love for you," Hermione said.

"I get that, I do," Harry said, "It is just... everything regarding her is complicated for me. She's a No-Maj and even if things went well romantically for her and I, she'd be far too confused about the whole thing. I don't think she'd ever fit in with us."

"Rose and I were actually talking about the same thing earlier," Hermione said, "We had wondered if you'd be able to have deep enough feelings to ignore such a thing."

"Maybe," Harry said, "Yeah, sure. But it would be up to her. And even then... how am I supposed to explain everything to her, when I can't explain everything unless her and I are in a serious relationship? Without a sure shot at marriage, the magical world would never let her know our secrets. The Statute of Secrecy would be at risk."

Hermione nodded. "I know. As Rose and I figured out, you just need to wait until it happens. For all you know, it might not even get close to that point. You might be worried about something that might never come to pass."

"True," Harry said, nodding.

"Come on," Hermione said, "We better head down before Daddy makes good on his threat."

Hermione let go of Harry's hand once they reached the stairs, and descended them. She grinned when Harry took her hand again, and she led him into the kitchen. The kitchen was a combination of both a kitchen, on the side nearest the doorway, and a small dining room across from the kitchen. The circular dining room table was set with plates, silverware, glasses, and a couple side-dishes and pitchers of beverages.

Hermione's mother was working on the finishing touches of her roast which smelled heavenly to Hermione. Hermione led Harry over to the table, and found that three neighboring chairs were empty, and were obviously for her, Harry and her mother. Harry sat next to his mother, and Hermione sat next to him. Emma came over at that moment with the large serving bowl. Inside the bowl was sliced up roast, with boiled potatoes, carrots and green beans. There was also salad, and Italian bread.

"Eat up everyone!" Emma said, as she sat down between Dan and Hermione, "We have a sugar-free apple cobbler for dessert waiting for us in the oven."

"Looks really good, Mum," Hermione said, "I missed your cooking."

"I still cook three times a week even when you're not here, you know," Emma said.

"She'd cook seven days a week, if she didn't always cook enough for leftovers each time," Dan said.
Emma smiled. “And you can't get enough of it.”

“Of course not, dear,” Dan said.

Hermione smiled at her parents' banter. Even after so many years, they were just as in love with each other as they were in university. Hermione hoped she was only as lucky with Harry.

“So, Hermione,” Dan said, when everyone had their plates and glasses filled and began eating, “Harry and I had a pretty good discussion in my office.”

“Oh, no,” Hermione groaned, “Are we going to get a moment-by-moment recap of it all?”

“Not all of it,” Dan said, “But there was one pretty important thing we discussed. Most of it was important, but one part was something I wanted us to discuss together during dinner. I couldn't help but notice earlier today, and I believe your mother noticed too. You had a very obvious expression on your face when Harry, Lily and Rose discussed Ilvermorny with us. You're considering transferring to Ilvermorny, are you not?”

Hermione tried to keep her groan quiet. She looked at Harry, who merely looked back at her with raised eyebrows. Her father discussed this with him? Why hadn't he warned her about this before they came downstairs. Ugh, he was going to pay for that!

“You heard all about the curriculum and everything at Ilvermorny,” Hermione said “They did a good job discussing it and laying it all out. I am telling you right now that just from how it sounds, it is a far better place of education than Hogwarts is.”

“Professor McGonagall told us Hogwarts was one of the best schools in Europe,” Emma said.

“Yeah, and being the Deputy Headmistress, she's fairly biased about Hogwarts, wouldn't you say?” Hermione argued. “Besides, Ilvermorny isn't in Europe. It is in the States.”

“I was quite shocked when I started teaching at Ilvermorny,” Lily said, “I expected to find something very similar to my time at Hogwarts. But the suggested curriculum for first year Potions. I hadn't learned some of those Potions until third year. Some of the seventh year Potions, I hadn't learned to brew until well after graduation. I think I was married by the time I even considered doing some of those Potions I teach to my seventh years.”

“So would you believe that Hermione would have a difficult time catching up with the Ilvermorny curriculum?” Dan asked.

Hermione stared at her father. Was her father actually considering letting her go to Ilvermorny? Back when she started thinking about this, she had thought of how her parents wouldn't allow her to transfer. She'd have to do something as mad as disowning herself from her parents, and getting Emancipated, before moving to America to attend Ilvermorny.

“Even though I've only gotten to know your daughter in these past few weeks,” Lily said, “I've found out quickly that she's a very smart girl, very dedicated to her education. I believe if she dedicated herself, and allowed others to help her, she could catch up during the summer months. Of course, she'd have to take an entrance exam, which would basically be the end-of-term exam the fourth years would take in June, so the Professors could know if she's able to be a fifth year.”
“Dan,” Emma said, “Are you really thinking we should consider letting her transfer to Ilvermorny next summer?”

“We could at least consider it,” Dan said, “But before we even begin, I need to know something from you, Hermione. I want you to answer a question honestly.”

“Alright,” Hermione said, warily.

“Are your thoughts more on education and the better curriculum, the better school?” Dan asked, “Or are your thoughts more along the lines of ‘I could go to the same school as my boyfriend’?”

Hermione blushed red. “Um... both, I suppose? I would really love to have the best education available. And if that means it is at Ilvermorny, then I want to attend there, instead of Hogwarts. It would be a very good bonus if I was attending the same school as my boyfriend.”

She looked at Harry, and squeezed his hand, under the table. “And while I hope we're still together then, there is a small chance we might not be. But I know we'll be friends either way. Right, Harry?”

“Definitely,” Harry said, “Though I also agree I hope we're still more than that come that time.”

“So... definitely both, Daddy,” Hermione said, looking back at her father.

Dan and Emma were both silent for nearly a minute, as they continued eating their meal, and were obviously contemplating.

“I think I speak for your father,” Emma said, “when I say this. I believe we should wait to actually make a final decision about these things. When do you believe we’d have to make the final decision?”

“Um... end of June, before Harry and his family go back to America?” Hermione replied.

“End of June then,” Emma said. “If you still feel you want to go to Ilvermorny, we'll figure out how to get you there. But there is still a few months between now and then. That is a long time. So we're going to wait to make any final decisions.”

“I agree,” Dan said.

“I'm fine with that,” Hermione said, “Thank you, Mum, Daddy... for even considering this. When I first thought about it, I had so much on my mind. I even wondered if you'd accept, because you have your life here.”

“Nothing says we'd have to move to America with you, sweetheart,” Emma said. “I'm sure Lily wouldn't say no to you staying with her during the summer before you would attend Ilvermorny.”

“She would be quite welcome to stay with us,” Lily said, smiling.

“There, you see?” Emma said, “Dan and I could always go with you for a little while and visit Boston as a holiday. I've never been to Boston, but it would be a nice place to go. We could even visit Salem. I imagine they have some good history in both the Muggle and wizarding world.”

“They definitely do,” Lily said, “Salem is quite nice – full of Muggle and magical residents and tourists, especially during the summer.”
“We can make this work out,” Emma said, “All you have to do is make sure it is the choice you want to make come the end of June.”

Hermione nodded and smiled. Conversation around the dinner table lasted for nearly an hour-and-a-half, long after dinner and dessert was eaten and enjoyed. Discussion was mostly about trading Christmas stories of years past, as well as vacation stories. Dan and Emma were rather envious to hear about all the camping at national parks the Potters had done over the years. The Grangers had only ever camped out during one summer holiday, and had been wanting to do the same ever since.

After discussion was done, and bellies were settling down from the delicious meal, the Grangers and their guests returned to the sitting room, where they had some eggnog, and cookies, and Hermione and her parents exchanged gifts.

Hermione was rather embarrassed to find her father had given her a book about boys and dating. She was even more embarrassed when Dan joked that he considered getting her a book on Kama Sutra. She was also rather surprised he had joked about it – maybe it meant he really did like her boyfriend.

From her mother, Hermione was given periwinkle jeweled silver earrings – that she already planned on wearing with her dress the following evening – as well as a locket that had a picture of her and her parents inside it.

Hermione gave her parents a portrait with a picture of her and Harry they had taken earlier that month, with Hogwarts in the background. The picture could go stationary, or move with a single tap of either her mother or father's fingers and say a voice-activated password that wasn't a magical enchantment, but something her Muggle parents could do. Harry gave Hermione one of her presents early, since he was giving her parents the same – Marauder Communication Mirrors, so that Hermione could talk to her parents whenever she wanted, without resorting to letters. After Harry quickly taught them how to use the mirrors, Hermione hugged Harry, and pecked him quickly on the lips in thanks. Emma and Dan thanked him graciously for such a thoughtful and useful gift.

Hermione's Christmas Eve visit with her parents ended with light conversation for a few minutes, followed by hugs, before it was time to leave and head back to Hogwarts. They needed to be up the following morning fairly early for gift-giving, and Sirius and Tracey's Blood Adoption Ritual. So after more hugs and 'i-love-yous' between the Grangers, and handshakes with the Potters, goodbyes were said, and Hermione left with the three Potters.

As they headed up the sidewalk, looking for a good place to Apparate, they heard some carolers pass by, singing “Silent Night”. Hermione smiled and hummed along with the carolers, as she held Harry's hand, and thought about such a fantastic time she had with her parents for Christmas Eve, and how they were openly considering her going to America and Ilvermorny with Harry and his family.

And there was so much to look forward to tomorrow, spending Christmas with so many new friends, and a boyfriend she was already in love with. How did she ever get so lucky?
And so ends Christmas Eve. I can't believe it took three chapters for the whole thing, but I guess it was necessary. A lot happened, even if it was only just discussion.

Next Chapter: Christmas, the hours before the Yule Ball. Gifts are handed out, Sirius and Tracey participate in the Ritual. Sirius and Amelia have a very important conversation. And more!
This story has surpassed 2000 reviews on FFN. I thank all reviewers for every word of each of their reviews so far. I love reading each and every one!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Friday, December 25th, 1994 – 7:35 AM

The soon-to-be Tracey Black yawned as she woke up, stretching as she sat up in her bed. She turned to face Daphne's bed, and found her girlfriend sitting up in her bed and staring at her, with a cute smile on her lips.

"Happy Christmas, Daffy," Tracey said, as she stopped a yawn from escaping.

"Happy Christmas, love," Daphne said, "Have I ever told you how cute you are when you sleep?"

"Only about every time you wake up before me," Tracey said, chuckling; she noticed that Daphne was wearing a Christmas sweater. "What are you wearing?"

"I think Harry's mother gave all of us girls a Christmas sweater," Daphne said; she nodded to Tracey's trunk, "You have one too."

Tracey indeed found a green and red Christmas sweater on top of her trunk. "That was nice of her. What time is it?"

"Just after half-past-seven," Daphne said. "I think we're supposed to be in the House Potter Tent at around nine to open presents."

"Mmm," Tracey said, nodding, "Sirius said he planned for the Ritual to take place around ten-o'clock this morning."

"Yeah," Daphne said, "You nervous?"

"I suppose I am," Tracey said. "Nervous, happy, excited... scared."

"Scared?" Daphne asked.

"Scared that this Ritual is going to change me," Tracey said.

Daphne smiled and scooted off the bed. She crawled onto Tracey's bed and sat down beside her. Tracey leaned her head on Daphne's shoulder, and inhaled the scent of Daphne's hair. It smelled of apple shampoo.

"You took a shower already," Tracey accused, "How long have you been up?"
“About half-an-hour or so,” Daphne said, “I didn't want to wake you up, so I took a shower, and came back in to wait for you to wake up.”

“Mmm, you smell really nice,” Tracey said, grinning.

She kissed her girlfriend's neck, and smiled as she heard Daphne gasp. Daphne turned her head, and Tracey pressed her lips to her girlfriend's. Daphne kissed her for a few moments, then backed away.

“You're trying to make me forget we're having a conversation,” she said.

“Mmm,” Tracey said, pecking Daphne on the lips again, “Is it working?”

“Not really,” Daphne said, smiling, “We need to talk about this. What do you mean you fear the ritual is going to change you?”

Tracey sighed and sat up straight. “Like my appearance. My personality. I'm probably going to take on some attributes of the Blacks, and you might not recognize me anymore.”

“One of the best attributes about the Blacks is their good looks,” Daphne said, “I mean have you seen the picture of Malfoy's mother and her sisters when they were teenagers? Very attractive. And Sirius is a rather attractive bloke in his own right.”

“But what if I become unrecognizable to you?” Tracey asked.

“Blood Adoptions don't change someone that drastically, Tracey,” Daphne said, “I have no doubts you are going to look very much like the same sexy witch I love. And even if your appearance does change drastically, I will still love you. You're not getting away from me that easily.”

“Mmm,” Tracey said, “And what about personality?”

“You think you're going to turn into some kind of frigid bitch?” Daphne asked, grinning. “Might I remind you, I've put up with you through every single monthly cycle you go through, and you haven't scared me away yet. I highly doubt you're going to turn into someone like Bellatrix Lestrange or Narcissa Malfoy. And they're not all frigid bitches anyway. Tonks' mother is a very sweet lady, as is Tonks. Remember, Tonks is also a Black. If you're one-part Tracey, and one-part Tonks, I'd still find that irresistibly sexy. Because it is you. And I know you. And I love you. Nothing will change that.”

Tracey felt her eyes water. “Thank you, Daphne. I love you too.”

Daphne smiled. Tracey grinned and kissed her girlfriend again. The force of her kiss, of her body against Daphne's made Daphne fall backward onto the bed. The two lovers kissed and snogged until they took each other's breath away. They laid together on Tracey's bed, trying to catch their breaths.

“I want to give you your present now,” Daphne said.

“Now?” Tracey asked.

“Mnhmm,” Daphne said, “What I am giving you – it is too private for such a public gathering.”

Tracey nodded. “I suppose mine is too. Alright, deal.”
Tracey grabbed her wand from the bedside table and summoned Daphne's gift. Daphne did the same with Tracey's gift. The two packages looked very similar in size, but had different wrapping paper. They were small boxes with a bow on top that covered nearly the whole package.

Tracey giggled. “I wonder if we got each other the same thing.”

“Maybe,” Daphne said.

The girls exchanged the boxes and opened them up at the same time. They found similar emerald-green ring boxes. The girls exchanged glances, then opened the boxes at the same time. Tracey's eyes watered again as she saw the silver ring sitting atop the plush felt material. An emerald jewel was sitting atop the ring. She glanced at Daphne, who was staring at a ring that looked nearly identical.

“Promise ring?” Tracey and Daphne said at the same time.

The two girls giggled and nodded at the same time.

“Really eerie how our minds thought of the same exact thing, huh?” Tracey asked.

“Yeah,” Daphne said, then cleared her throat, and stared into Tracey's eyes. “I know we created a Wife's Consort Contract last month, so I suppose that could be the same idea as a promise ring. A promise that we'll be together. Of course, the Contract isn't set in stone, like Betrothal Contracts are. We could cancel it if we really wanted to. But I very much doubt I will ever want to. If you'll have me, I see you as a part of my life, for the rest of my life, and whatever meets us afterward. This ring is a promise of that.”

Tracey smiled and brushed tears falling down her nose with one hand, as she let Daphne place the ring on the finger of her other hand.

“When I bought that ring,” Tracey said, “I was thinking of what it represented, of what it meant. Last month, that Hag Skeeter outed me as a Witches' Witch, and our relationship in the same bloody article. A retraction doesn't mean anything, since the information was still seen by everyone. But I have never, ever denied any of that information Skeeter wrote. One of the reasons I bought the ring, was so that when people saw it on your finger, they know just how much I care about you. They know that you are mine, and if you'll have me, will be mine for an eternity. Owing to that bloody Betrothal Contract, I have to share you with Harry. But I guess I'll get some good things out of the relationship with him too. But know that, to me, you are mine, Daphne. For the rest of our lives, and beyond. As long as you want me, I am yours. That is my promise.”

Daphne chuckled wetly as she rubbed the tears from her eyes. She nodded, and Tracey placed the silver promise ring on her finger. Tracey grasped the same hand in hers, that had her new ring. She leaned toward Daphne and kissed her once again. The couple kissed for nearly another minute, before they heard Tonks clearing her throat.

Tracey groaned as she backed away. “Yes, Tonks?!”

“The rest of us are waiting for you girls,” Tonks said, outside the curtains of the bedroom, “We thought we'd exchange gifts between us tent-mates.”

Tracey glanced at Daphne, who nodded.
“Alright,” Daphne said, “We're on our way.”

Before Daphne could move to crawl off the bed, Tracey squeezed Daphne's hand and brought her back to her for another peck on the lips.

“Happy Christmas, Daffy,” Tracey said, “I love you.”

“I love you too, Tracey,” Daphne said, “And yes, it is a very Happy Christmas.”

Tracey grinned as Daphne backed away from the bed. She looked down at the promise ring on her finger, and blinked back more happy tears. Yes... it was shaping up to be a very happy Christmas.

Ilvermorny Tents – 8:30 AM

Harry yawned as he tied his boots and stood up from his bed. When he had awoken a few minutes ago, he found an outfit ready for him, draped over his clothes trunk. It had probably been placed there by his mother. He was now wearing a red and green Christmas sweater, and jeans. He opened the drawer in his bedside table, and took out a small wrapped gift. He placed it one of the pockets of his jeans, then made his way out to the main area of the tent.

He grinned as he looked around the tent. The previous evening, he, his mother and sister had come home to quite the surprise. Sirius and Remus had gone all out with the Christmas decorations in the tent. The tent had been rather dark, except for a very bright glow coming from one corner of the living room, where a Christmas Tree with real fairy lights, garland, and several ornaments was standing. There were also several stockings strung out near the tree – not only were their stockings for each member of the 'extended Potter family', but also Hermione and her tent-mates, and Rose's girlfriend, Gabrielle.

Now with the light of day, Harry was able to get a better view of all the decorations Sirius and Remus had worked on. There was one major difference now in the tent that there hadn't been there the previous evening – under the Christmas tree was several gifts, with different types of wrapping paper, some of which was animated with snow-people, reindeer, and Santa Claus figures all dancing around the wrapping paper.

Lily and Remus were sitting at the dining room table, drinking mugs of hot cocoa, and going through a pile of mail, which seemed to largely consist of Christmas cards and letters.

“Merry Christmas, Mom, Remus,” Harry said, as he walked over to the table.

“Merry Christmas, Harry,” Remus said.

“Merry Christmas, sweetheart,” Lily said, “You know, I do believe Santa Claus visited last night.”

Harry sighed. “Mom, I haven't believed in Santa Claus since I was ten, and caught Sirius in a Santa outfit putting presents under the tree, Some of those presents were labeled from Santa, but I knew, even when Sirius tried to tell me he was just a voluntary elf that year.”

“I still think we should have Obliviated you of that knowledge,” Remus said, grinning, “Such things as believing in Santa Claus shouldn't be lost so young.”

“Where is Sirius, by the way?” Harry asked. “Off to pick up Amelia?”
“He did that about an hour ago,” Lily said, “It is about half-past-eight now. Sirius and Amelia are collecting the rest of the Children of the Great Alliance from Hogwarts so they can be here to open gifts and watch Sirius and Tracey’s Ritual. You’re the last one to wake, by the way. Rose went to the Beauxbatons camp, and has plans to bring Gabrielle and Fleur back here. Also, we’re going to have lunch with the rest of the Ilvermorny students around noon or so, so we can spend some of the Christmas holiday with them.”

Harry nodded and looked at the mail. “What’s all this, then?”

“Christmas Cards and presents from members of the Great Alliance, and others as well,” Lily said, “We’ve been awake since about seven-o-clock, and the mail and gifts have been coming in by owls since then.”

Harry nodded again. His hand rubbed against the small gift box in his pocket, which was Hermione’s gift. He decided he wanted to give her this gift in private.

“What do you know if Hermione and her tent-mates are up?” he asked.

“I am sure they are,” Lily said, “They’re probably waiting for you to get them and bring them here.”

Harry stood up immediately and hurried toward the tent's door.

“Ah! Put on your coat, young man!” Lily said, “It is chilly and snowing out at the moment.”

“Yes, Mom,” Harry said.

He removed his wand from the pocket of his jeans, and summoned his coat from his bedroom. He caught it and put it on, then stepped outside. The Hogwarts Grounds were covered in about six inches of snow, and there was still heavy snowfall falling from the sky. Harry could barely see footsteps that was probably Rose’s, as they headed in the direction of the Beauxbatons Tent. Harry shivered as a chilly wind blew past him, and trudged through the snow toward his girlfriend's tent.

When he stepped into the tent, he found Hermione and her five tent-mates sitting in the living room area. Immediately, he could tell one similarity amongst all the girls – they were wearing Christmas sweaters, that resembled his. It appeared Lily had gone all out with the sweaters and had given them to several people.

“Merry Christmas, girls,” Harry greeted in a sing-song voice.

“Merry Christmas” and “Happy Christmas” rang out from the girls. Hermione stood up immediately from the chair she had been sitting in and hurried over to him. She pounced on him with a hug and a kiss on the lips. Harry hummed against her lips and kissed her back.

“You taste of peppermint and chocolate,” Harry said, grinning, as Hermione backed away.

“Astoria's Christmas gift to me,” Hermione said, “A box of candy from Honeydukes. We've been exchanging gifts amongst us girls for the past hour or so. Just got finished a few minutes ago.”

“Then I hope you don't mind I give you one of my gifts now before we head back to my tent?” Harry said, “In private?”
“What kind of gift do you have in mind that it has to be private, Potter?” Daphne asked, grinning.

“Wouldn't you like to know?” Harry replied with a smirk. “I'm sure Hermione will tell you, but for the moment, it is only between me and her.”

“I hope it is nothing that isn't age-appropriate, Harry,” Hermione said.

“I think it is quite age-appropriate,” Harry said.

Hermione nodded. “We'll be right back, girls.”

Before any of the girls could reply, Hermione dragged Harry into her and Luna's bedroom. They sat down together on her bed. Harry dug into the pocket of his jeans, and retrieved the small gift box. He handed it to Hermione, and she took it and stared at it for a moment. Then she gently began to unwrap the wrapping paper, which had snowflakes dancing around it. Harry watched Hermione's eyes brighten with wonder and curiosity as the wrapping revealed a small periwinkle-colored ring box. She exhaled a breath and opened it up, revealing a silver ring with a periwinkle stone resting atop it.

“Harry,” Hermione whispered, sounding breathless; she looked at him with watery eyes, “You're not --”

“It is a promise ring,” Harry said.

“Oh,” Hermione said, as pink blush crept upon her cheeks. “I should have realized. Seems pretty common today, actually.”

“Hmm?” Harry asked.

“Daphne and Tracey,” Hermione said, “They gave each other identical emerald silver promise rings.”

“Ah, that's brilliant,” Harry said, grinning, “Did they say whether or not their rings had any charms on them?”

“No, they didn't,” Hermione said, “Why?”

“I bought your ring in Diagon Alley,” Harry said, “At Madame Jaslyn's Jewelry Shoppe.”

“Ooh!” Hermione said, “I've been there a couple of times. She sells enchanted jewelry. So that means this ring –?”

“Yes,” Harry said, “It is enchanted with several different enchantments. A locator enchantment. But it is inactive unless you mention the code-phrase “Fidelity, Chivalry, Honor,” which is the House Potter motto. My House Potter Ring will heat up, and I can Portkey to your location. Speaking of Portkey, your ring also has one. Permanent usage as long as you have the ring. Think of a location you've been too, and repeat it three times, and you'll instantly go there. However... it takes time to recharge, so you can't do it consecutively. There's also a light shielding charm on it. It can resist low-level spells and curses, like a Stunning Spell, for example. But if there is a barrage of spells, unfortunately, they might get past the shield. Otherwise, they'll absorb into the ring, and vanish. And that is basically it.”
“Wow,” Hermione whispered, “I imagine it must have cost quite a bit.”

“Doesn't matter,” Harry said, “According to Sirius, the House Potter Account has enough money to last several generations if we don't continuously splurge. I splurged only for Christmas gifts for everyone. I'm giving the other Children of the Great Alliance charm bracelets with the same enchantments.

“But this ring is special, because of what it signifies. I know we've agreed to the seven-month plan thing, but know that as long as you wear that ring – until there comes a time where I might have to upgrade it to something more meaningful, you will always have a place in my heart.”

Hermione's eyes sparkled with unshed tears. “It is moments like this I wonder why we ever agreed to a seven-month plan. Then I remember it is necessary so we're sure we're not making any mistakes. First you give me and my parents a way to communicate just by saying a few words. Now you're giving me a promise ring that is both meaningful and useful in the sense of defense. Why are you so good to me?”

Before Harry could answer, Hermione leaned over to him and pecked him on the lips.

“That was rhetorical,” she said, “I accept your promise ring and the promise that comes with it. Will you place it on my finger, please?”

Harry took the box and picked up the ring. Then he placed on the ring finger of Hermione's offered hand. The ring glowed with a slight blue aura as it settled on her finger.

“I'm guessing that was the Locator and Portkey adjusting to my person?” Hermione asked.

Harry nodded. Then he leaned over to her and kissed her again. Hermione kissed him back, and backed away after thirty seconds.

“You don't know how much I want to continue that and make it so much more,” Hermione said, “But that is just my hormones talking, which means we need to get up before we do anything we shouldn't be doing right now.”

Harry grinned and stood up. He took Hermione's hand which had her ring, and pulled her up. She grabbed her bag of presents and the couple walked back into the main part of the tent. The other girls were staring at them.

“So?” Daphne asked.

Hermione smiled and raised her and Harry's hands. “Harry gave me a promise ring.”

Harry winced when Luna, Astoria, Tracey and Tonks squealed. Hermione pulled away from Harry and walked over to the girls, showing off the ring.

“Ha!” Tonks said, pointing at Daphne, “You owe me five Galleons!”

“You bet on what Harry was giving me?” Hermione asked.

Daphne snorted. “Tonks was quite sure it was a promise ring. I thought you might do away with that seven-month plan, and do a Betrothal Contract already. I thought that was Harry's Christmas gift to you.”
“She seems to have forgotten what a Betrothal Contract would mean thanks to Lord Davis' law,”
Tonks said.

Daphne shrugged and shook her head. “Nope. I, for one, know we'll be away from Britain by the
time we turn sixteen. Harry would never let us have to face such a law. So have you done away with
that seven-month plan. A promise ring is a pretty big thing.”

“We're still on the plan,” Hermione said, “This is just a promise that we'll work harder to get through
it.”

“I'd wish you luck, but I don't think the two of you need it,” Daphne said.

“Thank you, Daphne,” Harry said, “What say we head into my tent now?”

The girls agreed and gathered their bags full of gifts, and their coats, and headed out into the snow.

**House Potter Tent – 9:50 AM**

After the gifts and stockings were handed out amongst the 'extended Potter family', and the Children
of the Great Alliance, it was time for Sirius and Tracey to prepare for the Blood Adoption Ritual.

Tracey, Daphne, Lily and Poppy Pomfrey were in Lily's bedroom, where Lily and Madam Pomfrey
were drawing several runes on Tracey's body, while using instructions from a book on Rituals,
which had the Blood Adoption Ritual in it. The runes were being drawn using about a pint of Sirius'
blood.

Sirius was relaxing on his bed, nursing a Blood-Replenishing Potion that Severus Snape – of all
people – had given him after the initial steps of the ritual had finished. He was also reading from a
piece of parchment, where he had written his part of the verbal portion of the ritual the night before,
and trying to memorize it before Tracey returned. His best mate, Remus, was sitting on his own bed,
watching Sirius to make sure he didn’t faint.

Sirius’ girlfriend, Amelia, and Snape had volunteered to put together the final arrangements for the
ritual, and were currently doing so in the main area of the tent. Sirius’ cousin, was keeping an eye on
the teens that were going through their presents that had been opened a few minutes before.

“You alright, Padfoot?” Remus said. “You look worried.”

“I'm confident that the Ritual will go well,” Sirius said, “I'm worried about Amelia. She's been really
quiet this morning since I went and picked her up. I don't know what is wrong. But I keep having
flashbacks of Prongs and Tiger-Lily's wedding, during the reception.”

“I don't think you need to worry about a repeat of that day, Sirius,” Remus said, “I don't think that is
what is bothering Amelia right now.”

“So something is bothering her?” Sirius asked, “Do you know what it is?”

“I have my theories,” Remus said, “But I think I'll let her talk about them with you.”

“Damn it,” Sirius muttered, “You know, I was thinking about popping the question during the Ball
tonight, but now I'm way too antsy for that. I need to know what's wrong.”

“Were you planning on doing so in a public or private situation?” Remus asked.

“Private,” Sirius said, “Last time it was public, and it didn't work out so well, you know.”

“So come back in here with her after the Ritual gets done,” Remus said. “Talk to her about things...”

Sirius nodded. “I suppose so.”

The bedroom's curtain opened a bit, and Lily poked her head in.

“Tracey's nearly ready,” she said, “And Amelia and Severus are done with their part too.”

Sirius nodded. He cleared his throat and read through the parchment again. Then he closed his eyes and went over the ritual in his mind. When he was satisfied he had locked it into his memory, he stood and straightened his robes and stepped out into the tent. Most of the guests in the tent were standing in the living room. The dining room table was moved away, and now there was a large, square wooden board sitting on the floor in its place. On the board were several runes, which were drawn in Sirius' blood.

The curtains of Lily and Rose's bedroom opened, and Daphne stepped out, followed by Tracey. She was wearing what appeared to be her sleeping gown. Sirius could see several red runic symbols on her hands, arms, ankles and feet, as well as on her forehead, cheeks and chin. Sirius walked over to one corner of the wooden board and stepped onto it, placing his feet just inside the runic circle. Tracey walked over to him and stepped onto the circle.

“You alright?” Sirius asked her.

“Feeling rather vulnerable in my gown,” Tracey said, “And it was rather disgusting having runes drawn on me with your blood. But other than that, I'm fine. You?”

Sirius chuckled. “I'm brilliant.”

Amelia walked over to them, and stood just off the board. Poppy Pomfrey and Remus were a few feet behind Tracey and Sirius respectively, in case something went wrong. All eyes were now on Sirius and Tracey.

“We are gathered here on this fine Christmas Day,” Amelia said, “to witness Sirius Black and Tracey take part in a Blood Adoption Ritual, made legal by the British Wizengamot. I, Amelia Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, take part in this ritual as the official witness for the British Ministry of Magic. Who is here as witness for Sirius Black?”

“I, Remus John Lupin, am witness,” Remus said.

“And who is here as witness for Tracey?” Amelia asked.

“I, Daphne Illiana Greengrass, am witness,” Daphne said, standing near Madam Pomfrey.

“And who is here as witness for the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black?” Amelia asked.
“I, Nymphadora Tonks, daughter of the House of Black, am witness,” Tonks said, standing near Remus.

“Accepted,” Amelia said; she held out her hands to Sirius, revealing a Blood Blade. “I give you, Sirius Black, and Tracey, permission to use this Blood Blade for the Ritual.”

Sirius took the Blade from Amelia, and held it above his hand which had his Black Signet Ring. He sliced open his palm, and held his hand still, as he gave Tracey the Blade. Without hesitating, she cut into the palm of her hand, in which a runic symbol was seen. Sirius placed his hand on hers, and allowed their blood to mix. Tracey handed the blade back to Amelia, then she and Sirius took their wands and held them in front of their face.

“I, Sirius Orion Black, Son and Lord of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black,” Sirius said, “offer you, Tracey, the blood of my House, and a place as a daughter of my very own blood, and Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black. Do you accept my offer?”

“I, Tracey,” Tracey said, “accept your offer of the blood of your house, and the role of daughter of your blood and Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black.”

The runic symbols on Tracey's skin began glowing and shimmering in a deep reddish color.

“I, Sirius Orion Black,” Sirius continued, “deem you Tracey Andromeda Black, daughter and Heiress of the Ancient and Noble House of Black from this point forward. So mote it be!”

Most of the guests in the tent covered their eyes, as glowing light now flashed around Sirius and Tracey. Tracey suddenly fell against Sirius, and for a moment he thought she was hugging him. It only took a moment for him to realize she was not hugging him, but had fainted into unconsciousness against him. He held her and dropped to his knees, laying her on the floor. Madam Pomfrey, Daphne and Snape were by their side almost instantly. Madam Pomfrey was waving her wand across Tracey's body.

“She's merely unconscious, Sirius,” the Hogwarts Healer said.

“As I predicted,” Snape drawled, “Her body has shut down so that it may adjust to her results of the Ritual.”

“As you predicted?” Sirius asked, “Couldn't have warned me, could you? Never mind, how long will it take?”

“Two, maybe three hours,” Snape said, “According to my own research. Congratulations, Black. You now have a teenage daughter, and Heiress of your House.”

Sirius sagged and sat back on his haunches, inhaling and exhaling. He smiled as light, polite applause started amongst the guests.

“I'll let her sleep on my bed for now,” Lily said. “Can I pick her up, Poppy?”

“I think that would be alright,” Madam Pomfrey said. “Let me know when she wakes up, and also if there is any significant change before she does wake up. No matter what happens, none of you are to bother her. I imagine she may go through some changes before she wakes up. Do you need anything, Black?”
“I think I'm alright,” Sirius said.

“Don't hesitate to find me if you need anything,” Madam Pomfrey said, “I would advise you to take another Blood-Replenishing Potion if you're still that pale color in an hour.”

Sirius nodded. Lily scooped Tracey up into her arms, and walked back over to her bedroom as Daphne followed her. Sirius stared, watching them, until they disappeared behind the curtains. As he stood up, Amelia pulled him into a hug.

“Are you alright?” she asked.

“I will be,” Sirius said, “I need to talk to you in private.”

“Funny, I was about to say the same,” Amelia said.

“Head into my bedroom,” Sirius said, “Let me wash my hands and I'll meet you there.”

Amelia pecked him on the lips, and backed away. Sirius headed into the bathroom and washed his hands in the sink. As he did so, he stared at his reflection in the mirror. He was still slightly pale from the Ritual, but didn't look too bad. He hoped the color would come back soon. He brushed his hand along the bump in the pocket of his robes. He inhaled and exhaled as he thought about what was currently in his pocket.

“Stop being a coward,” Sirius said, “She's given no hint that she's going to say 'no' again. It won't be like last time.”

Sirius cleared his throat, and dried his hands, then headed back into the main area of the tent. The wooden board which had the runic circle drawn on it was gone now, and the dining room table was back. Remus was sitting there with Snape. Most of the Children of the Great Alliance were still in the living room area talking quietly with one another. Harry and Hermione were cuddled up together, and when he saw Sirius, Harry gave him a thumbs-up. Sirius smiled at him, then made his way back over to his bedroom, and made his way inside. Amelia was sitting on his bed. Sirius sat down next to her.

“I have so much to say to you, but I have a strange feeling you should go first,” Sirius said.

“First, I apologize for being so quiet and distant over the past couple of days,” Amelia said. “I didn't mean to do that, but I didn't want to give you any hints until I could tell you at a time when it could be special. Like now. I'm pregnant, Sirius. You're not only a father to Tracey now, but also to the baby currently growing in my belly.”

Sirius gripped the edge of the bed with both hands so he wouldn't fall over. He stared at Amelia, as she stared back at him. Suddenly, everything started making sense. Her unplanned visit to the Healers in St. Mungo's. Of course she wouldn't have wanted him to come along, if she wanted it to be a surprise.

“I've been feeling off all week, and you wouldn't believe how hard it was to keep it from you” Amelia said. “Yesterday morning I woke up with an urge to vomit, and I did so. Me puking answered so many questions I had in my mind. I asked one of my House-Elves to buy a Pregnancy Test Potion from the Apothecary. I could have probably brewed it, but I didn't trust myself not to vomit again into the Cauldron. The test was positive, but I wanted actual confirmation. So I had an appointment with my Healer at St. Mungo's, and they confirmed it. I'm about a month pregnant.”
“Merlin!” Sirius said, chuckling, “We didn't take very long, did we?”

“I think, unconsciously, I wanted this baby,” Amelia said, “It is why I didn't take any contraception. Why I was so welcome to the idea of us being so intimate just days after we started dating again. I suppose I was just hoping to get back what we had missed over the years.”

“You don’t think this is us moving too fast?” Sirius asked.

“Merlin, Sirius, no!” Amelia said, “If anything it is rather slow. Do you know what our lives would have been like had I said ‘yes’ all those years ago?”

“Would you have been the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement?” Sirius asked.

“Maybe, maybe not,” Amelia said, shrugging. “I suppose I did pretty well with my career, and raising Susan at the same time. I made a mistake back then, Sirius. I shouldn't have said ‘no’.”

Sirius reached into the pocket of his robes, and pulled out a small ring box.

“Then maybe you can make up for it and say ‘yes’ now?” Sirius asked.

Amelia’s eyes misted over as she stared at the box, then she cleared her throat.

“Before you continue with that line of thought,” she said, “We need to talk about something first.”

“What?” Sirius asked.

“The future,” Amelia said. “My pregnancy isn't the only reason I've been rather quiet all morning. Sirius, I can't run for Minister of Magic. Not since I am pregnant. I would probably only do more harm in the office than Fudge did.”

“I have no reason to argue with that,” Sirius said.

“Sirius... where do you see us come next summer?” Amelia asked.

“Shite,” Sirius muttered, “That is a loaded question, Bones.”

“Then let's split it into two parts,” Amelia said, “Next summer, we're in America. What is happening now?”

“I suppose I could purchase a house in Boston for us, Tracey, the baby, and Susan,” Sirius said, “Tracey and Susan would transfer to Ilvermorny in September. When's your due date?”

“I wouldn't be surprised if our baby's born before the end of summer,” Amelia said.

“Then you and the baby could live with me in my Professor's Quarters at Ilvermorny during the school year.”

“I already see one issue with that,” Amelia said, “Susan might not want to leave Britain.”

“And how would you remedy that?” Sirius asked.
Amelia sighed. “I suppose she could live with Hannah and the Abbots. And perhaps visit us during the holidays.”

“Would you want to get a job?” Sirius asked.

“I could probably find one easily in Law Enforcement, but only after our baby is a few years old,” Amelia said.

“So the only issue in question is the possibility of Susan staying,” Sirius said.

“Well, there is also our part in the Great Alliance and the Wizengamot,” Amelia said.

“Proxies?” Sirius asked, “Lily and Harry would have to do the same.”

“I suppose we could hand off some Proxies to Houses like Abbot and Greengrass,” Amelia said. “Divvy up the Proxies. Now, the other option is we stay in Britain. I don't know whether I would stay on as the Head of my office. Or give the post to someone else, and take a lower job in the office that would allow me more time with our child.”

“I could probably get a job as a Professor here at Hogwarts,” Sirius said, “If I wanted one, I mean. I really wouldn't need one. I could just stay home and be with our child.”

“Home?” Amelia asked.

“We would live at Black Manor in London,” Sirius said “Kreacher's working on cleaning the house and making it liveable again. There is plenty of room for all of us – you, me, the baby, Tracey and Susan. With room left over if we have guests.”

“And what if Daphne wants to move to America with Harry, so she can avoid Davis' stupid law?” Amelia asked. “Tracey would probably want to go with her.”

Sirius shrugged. “She could do so if she wanted to. And she could visit us during the holidays.”

“And now for the issues,” Amelia said, “We know a war is coming. All signs point to Voldemort coming back. We're going to be high-value targets. No matter how much I want to do my part to fight for Britain, I can't. I'm a mother now, more than just a guardian of Susan. I'm a mother to my own child – our child.”

“And the only way to do so would go to America?” Sirius asked.

“Yes,” Amelia said, “Sod it. America, it is. If the war begins, I'm forcing Susan to leave with us. She might be upset, but I don't care. She'd be safe.”

Sirius nodded. Then he opened up the ring box, revealing the platinum ring with a ruby jewel atop it.

“Several years ago, you broke my heart, Bones, I can't lie to you,” Sirius said, “You broke my heart when you told me you wouldn't marry me. Last month, you put the pieces back together. Nobody but you could have done that. Because you still had a piece of my heart. I'm not complete without you. Amelia Bones, will you do the honor of becoming my Lady Black and the mother of my daughter, Tracey? Would you marry me?”

“There ain't no way I am saying no this time, Sirius Black,” Amelia said, “Yes. Yes I will marry you.
I will be your Lady Black.”

“Thank Merlin!” Sirius exclaimed.

He placed the ring on her offered hand, just above her Signet Ring. Then he cupped her face in his hands and kissed her soundly. As Amelia kissed him back, he could feel tears on her face.

Something told him those tears were coming from both of them. And he didn't care. He felt like the happiest man in the world right now.

Chapter End Notes

A very sappy chapter finished. So, Tracey is now Sirius’ daughter, officially through blood adoption and Sirius is going to be a Daddy twice over now! I figured I had given too much of a hint a couple chapters ago when it came to Amelia's pregnancy. Ah well!

What did you think of the Blood Ritual. I wanted to say more in the vows, but couldn't figure out how to put it.

I am so horrible at describing Christmas presents, but I'll name a few of them next chapter during some of the character PoVs.

Next Chapter: Lily, Severus and Remus talk. Sirius and Amelia's news is revealed to everyone. Tracey wakes up as an official daughter of the House of Black. And preparations for the Yule Ball. Yule Ball in two chapters!
Friday, December 25th, 1994 – 10:15 AM

Lily stepped out of her bedroom, where the newly-named Tracey Andromeda Black was somewhere between sleep and unconsciousness in Lily's own bed. Tracey’s girlfriend, Daphne, was keeping vigil, sitting on Rose's bed. Daphne had not said anything since Lily had placed Tracey on the bed; she merely sat there, staring at her girlfriend, as if making sure she wouldn't vanish. Lily had explained to Daphne that Tracey would likely go through some type of appearance changes, and that she shouldn't be too shocked. Daphne had only silently nodded. Lily also told the young teen to find her if anything too serious happened to Tracey. Daphne had only nodded again.

The rest of the Children of the Great Alliance were in the living room, talking in whispers or looking through their Christmas gifts. Hermione was sitting on Harry's lap in a chair, relaxing against his chest, as she read through the Animagi book he had given her as one of her gifts. Lily smiled as she saw the periwinkle promise ring sparkling on one of Hermione's fingers. Harry had told her about the promise ring the same day he had bought the ring, so she wasn't surprised to see it.

She was, however, mildly surprised to find that Severus Snape was still present in the tent. He was sitting in companionable silence with Remus. Lily steeled herself for what was sure to be an interesting conversation – after all, there had to be a reason he was still there; he hadn't said more than a greeting to her since he had arrived to the tent – and sat down at the table across from Severus.

“Sirius and Amelia are in the bedroom,” Remus said.

Lily merely nodded.

“How is Miss... Black?” Severus asked, looking at Lily.

“No changes yet,” Lily said.

“Yet' being the keyword,” Severus said, “I believe we'll find she'll be soon taking on some of the finer attributes commonly seen in witches in the House of Black. The runes drawn on her body are likely now changing the blood of her birth parents, to that of Sirius Black. She will be entirely a Black.”

“You seem to know a lot about this ritual, Severus,” Lily said.

Severus hesitated a moment, glancing at the teens in the sitting room. He lowered his voice before speaking. “I studied up on several rituals under the servitude of Voldemort.”

“Including the Blood Adoption Ritual?” Remus asked, raising an eyebrow, “Whatever for?”
“Aside from asking to study up on the ritual, he never asked me for its importance beyond that,” Severus said, “But he took interest in several blood rituals, many of which were illegal, or borderline illegal. For example, the Blood Adoption is borderline illegal, without permission from the Wizengamot. Most other blood rituals do not have the same lines of permission.”

“Are you still here just because you wished to talk about the Ritual, Severus?” Lily asked.

“No,” Severus said, “I wish to give you a Christmas present.”

Lily looked at him warily. “A gift from you, or a 'gift' from Dumbledore?”

“Dumbledore knows not to interfere anymore when it comes to you and I,” Severus said. “This is a gift from me. Do forgive me, because I did not wrap it.”

He reached into his cloak, and pulled out what appeared to be a book. He placed it in front of her on the table. Lily raised her eyebrows. Whatever she was expecting, it was definitely not a copy of Advanced Potion Making.

“I already have a copy,” Lily said.

“Not this one,” Severus said, “It is a special copy. Open the cover.”

Lily did so. Her eyes widened when she saw what was written on it.

This book is property of the Half-Blood Prince.

“It is your old textbook from our school days,” Lily said, looking at Severus. “Why are you giving me this?”

“Do you not remember?” Severus asked. “I was not the only one to write notes in the book. You did too.”

Lily nodded. She did recall writing certain notes and pieces of information in the book.

“When I thought you were... dead,” Severus said, “I used a spell to make all of your notes in the book invisible. I didn't want to chance anyone else seeing them. But recently, I removed the enchantment, and your notes are visible.”

“So you're giving it to me?” Lily asked, “Why?”

“I have other copies of the notes I made,” Severus said, “I no longer have use of the book, and it was yours as much as mine.”

“Er... thanks,” Lily said, “I didn't get you anything. Sorry.”

Severus waved a dismissive hand. “I do not care for Christmas gifts given to me.”

“No, you never did, did you?” Lily asked.

“Your friends informed me you have a date this evening for the Ball,” Severus said.
Lily glanced at Remus, who shrugged. “Sirius and I refused to tell him who you were going with.”

“I am going with Xenophilius Lovegood,” Lily informed Severus.

Severus raised a bushy eyebrow. “An interesting choice.”

Lily decided *not* to tell Severus that she was only going with Xenophilius as friends. Severus would likely want to dance with her, which was the reason she was going with Xenophilius.

Severus stood up. “I will see you all this evening then. Happy Christmas, Lily.”

“Happy Christmas, Severus,” Lily said.

Severus nodded curtly, then turned and left the tent. Lily exhaled a breath she didn't know she was holding.

“How am I ever going to survive talking to him without wanting to curse him?” Lily asked Remus.

Remus smirked in amusement. “I'd advise you to only talk to him while you're around Sirius, Amelia, Harry or myself. We might be able to stop you from hexing him. Well... maybe not Sirius. He might encourage it.”

Lily snorted. She glanced down at the book. “Should I just burn this?”

Remus shrugged. “Your choice. However, I would suggest making sure there are no untrustworthy charms on it, such as eavesdropping.”

“Good point,” Lily said.

She waved her wand over the book, going over the usual enchantment detections, and found nothing untrustworthy.

“Then I suppose it is an innocent gift,” Remus said.

“Innocent?” Lily asked, then snorted, “Half of what is in here isn't innocent. Perhaps you remember the curse known as Sectumsempra?”

Remus grimaced. “Point. So what are you going to do with it?”

Lily shrugged. “I'm definitely not giving it to the kids. It is much too dangerous. I'll see if there is anything useful in it, then put it away. I'd do away with it, but Severus might find out, and I don't want him discovering our... displeasure toward him right now.”

“He is useful at times, isn't he?” Remus asked.

“Yes, and I wish he wasn't,” Lily said. “He did very well with his part in the Ritual, and his knowledge of the Ritual was useful.”

“Mmm,” Remus said, “So... how do you think the Ritual will affect Tracey now that she is a Black? Do you agree with Severus?”

Before Lily could answer, the curtains to Sirius and Remus' room opened, and Sirius and Amelia...
stepped out. Sirius cleared his throat loudly.

“May we have your attention please, everyone?” he asked.

The teens all went silent and looked at Sirius.

“Thank you,” Sirius said, “Amelia and I have two announcements. The first is... Amelia has agreed to make me an honest man, and has accepted my proposal to marry me.”

There was much cheering amongst the teens. Susan stood and hurried over to Amelia and hugged her. Lily and Remus grinned and applauded for the newly engaged couple.

“The second announcement,” Amelia said, “Is that I am pregnant. Sirius and I will be having a baby sometime before the end of summer.”

As the teens cheered again, and Susan hugged her Aunt again, Lily smiled. She had a feeling Amelia might be pregnant. She had noticed Amelia had a bit of a glow about her, and having been pregnant twice, Lily knew what that meant. She and Remus stood as Sirius and Amelia approached the table with Susan. Lily hugged Amelia, then Sirius.

“Congratulations, you two,” she said, “So you're now going to be a father two times over, eh, Sirius?”

“Three times if Susan wants it,” Sirius said, glancing at Susan.

“As long as I don't have to go through a Blood Adoption,” Susan said.

“Nope,” Amelia said, “I am going to be Lady Black. Which means you will be Lady Bones.”

“Which means a Line Continuation marriage for me,” Susan said, nodding, “I expected that anyway. Then yes, Sirius, I would love to call you my Daddy.”

Sirius grinned and gave Susan a one-armed hug.

“Two teen daughters, and a baby on the way,” Remus said, “Merlin help you, Sirius Black.”

“Don't I know it?!” Sirius said, barking out a laugh. “How's Tracey? Anything?”

“She likely won't be awake for a couple hours or so, Sirius,” Lily said. “Daphne's with her, and I have a good feeling none of us will be able to move her away from Tracey's side.”

Sirius nodded. “I'll check up on her from time to time.”

Susan hugged her Aunt again, then returned to her friends. The four adults sat back down at the table.

“Sirius and I decided on a few things,” Amelia said. “First is... I am no longer running for Minister of Magic.”

“Not surprising since you've discovered your pregnant,” Lily said. “That would definitely cause problems.”
“Right,” Amelia said, “Do you think we should speak to the Great Alliance before the Session on Sunday, and see if anyone else is willing to put their name in?”

“I suppose we could write a few letters,” Sirius said. “If no one volunteers, then – well – there's the rumors that Arthur Weasley will be the candidate for the Light Alliance.”

“Yeah, but he's in with Dumbledore,” Lily said.

“I suppose we could hope that the rumors are true, and Rufus Scrimgeour is putting his name in,” Amelia said. “He's definitely better than the rumor of Dolores Umbridge.”

Lily nodded. “If we can't find a replacement candidate, then I suppose we'll vote for Scrimgeour.”

“We've also decided I'm going with you to America,” Amelia said. “I can't be here for another war. Not now that I'm going to be a mother. I'll be a high-value target. I'll do my part as long as I can, and then resign before I would be taking a maternity leave.”

“Probably the best idea,” Remus said, nodding; he glanced at Susan, who was talking in whispers with her friends, “What about Susan?”

Amelia sighed. “I'll talk to her about our plans soon. She might not like it, but she'll be coming with us to America. I can't have her here during a war.”

Lily nodded. “I'm sure she'll understand. Besides, by then she'll be a big sister to your little one. Technically a cousin, but I'm sure she'll love being in one of the big sister positions, along with Tracey.”

“Yeah,” Amelia said, smiling.

“So... Susan, Tracey, and now the little one,” Lily said, “Three kids all at once, eh, Sirius?”

Sirius smiled. “It makes up for the years we lost. We might have had as many kids if we had gotten married back then.”

“No more 'what-ifs', Sirius,” Amelia said, as she placed her hand in his on the table, “You don't need it now.”

“Quite true,” Sirius said, squeezing her hand.

Lily smiled, happy for the couple. Back when Sirius had originally proposed to Amelia during James and Lily's wedding reception, he hadn't immediately told James or Lily about it. Instead he had waited until they had come back from their honeymoon so his news wouldn't ruin their fun. Lily had been upset with Amelia for breaking up with Sirius, and denying his proposal, for such a silly reason. Lily and Amelia had been friends during their days as students in Hogwarts. But after Amelia had broken up with Sirius, Lily had done all she could to ignore Amelia.

They were a wonderful couple back then, and even more so now. So Lily was quite happy that the couple was now getting back what they had lost way back when.

Ilvermorny Tents – 12:15 PM
The first thing the newly-named Tracey Andromeda Black realized as she awoke was that her body felt as if she had been attacked by several Bludgers consecutively. She groaned rather loudly in discomfort.

“Tracey, are you awake?!” That was Daphne’s voice, and it was quite welcoming to Tracey’s ears. She groaned and hoped it sufficed as an affirmative answer.

“Don’t move,” Daphne said, “I’ll be right back.”

Tracey blinked open her eyes, expecting her view to be rather blurry. But it was quite clear. She moved a hand in front of her face, wondering why she still had her glasses on, even though she had been asleep. But as she felt her face, she couldn’t feel her glasses. She turned her head to her left, and found her glasses sitting on the bedside table.

“What the hell?” she murmured.

She heard shuffling of feet and turned to see Daphne walking back in with Lily Potter.

“Sirius is on his way to get Madam Pomfrey,” Lily said, as she knelt down next to the bed. “Is there anything you need right now? How are you feeling?”

“My body feels strange, but I can’t place what is wrong yet,” Tracey said, “And my eyesight...”

“Can you not see?” Lily asked.

“That’s just it,” Tracey said, “I can see perfectly, without my glasses on!”

“Hmm,” Lily said, “It could be temporary, or it could be a side-effect of the ritual.”

“As for your body,” Daphne said, “Well, that is understandable. I can already notice some differences. Do you have a hand mirror, Lily? You have a full-body mirror, I see.”

Lily opened a drawer in the bedside table, rummaged through it, and pulled out a large mirror. She gave it to Tracey, who took it and looked at the reflection of her face. Her eyes widened at what she saw. Her hair color was no longer brown, but jet black. And her eyes, formerly a blue color were grayish-silver, like Sirius and Draco Malfoy’s eyes. Her cheeks and lips seemed slightly fuller, but other than that she could recognize herself. She also noticed something else. The runic symbols that had been painted on her face in Sirius’ blood were now gone.

“The runes are gone all over your body, Tracey,” Daphne said, when Tracey asked, “They... er... kind of vanished gradually over the past couple of hours while you were asleep.”

“I would have to ask Madam Pomfrey or Professor Snape for a second opinion,” Lily said, “But I think the runes were part of what changed your appearance a bit, and also changed your blood, making you an actual daughter of Sirius, and the House of Black. Can you sit up.”

Tracey groaned again as she moved to a sitting position. She now could feel where the discomfort was located partially – in her chest area. She looked down and her eyes widened. She patted a hand against her gown, over her breasts.

“Something wrong?” Lily asked.
“My breasts – they're... I think they've grown!” Tracey exclaimed.

“I noticed that too,” Daphne said; then cleared her throat. “Not that I was actually staring so much. But I noticed your gown moving oddly in your chest area at some point.”

Tracey decided against saying that she didn't mind Daphne staring.

“Maybe you should – er – undress to see if they're different?” Daphne asked, “You could look in the body-length mirror. Just to make sure. I... I could stand guard outside the room.”

Tracey laughed. “Daphne, you've seen me naked plenty of times, even before we became a couple. You don't need to sound so nervous. You can stay. But I think it would be good if I checked.”

“Do you want me to stand guard?” Lily asked.

“Alright,” Tracey agreed, “We'll tell you when I'm done.”

Lily stood and left the bedroom. Tracey stood and groaned again, feeling more discomfort, this time around her hips and legs. She wondered what was now going on.

“Do I look taller?” Tracey asked.

“Er... not really,” Daphne said.

Tracey walked over to the body-length mirror, and unbuttoned her sleeping gown, then removed it. Her eyes widened as she looked at her breasts. They were definitely at least a half-a-cup bigger, and seemed more fuller and had better lift than before. Then she noticed the basis of the discomfort elsewhere. Her hips were fuller and her butt was rather shapely than it had been before. Her pubic hair, which was fine like peach fuzz was now jet black like her hair instead of brown.

“Merlin, you are gorgeous,” Daphne whispered; she blushed and looked away, “Not that you weren't always gorgeous, but --”

“Thank you, Daphne,” Tracey said, “I know what you mean. And you do not need to look away.”

Daphne smiled and looked back at her girlfriend. “I still recognize you if that means anything. I mean your hair looks like you've dyed it, and – well – I've heard of colored contacts. So your face can be explained – though I must admit your lips are definitely still kissable. But your tits and ass are different!”

Tracey chuckled. “Attributes of a Black witch, eh?”

“Definitely,” Daphne said, “Merlin – you're going to be the talk of the Ball. Forget the Champions. You'll be unrecognizable at first until they get a closer look. Can you imagine Parkinson and Malfoy – oh, Merlin, Malfoy!”

“What?” Tracey asked.

“He's technically your cousin now, Tracey!” Daphne said, “By blood!”

“Fantastic,” Tracey said, sarcastically. “Just what I wanted, to be related to that arse. Ah well, I
suppose being a Black can't be all sunshine and daisies, huh?”

“Knowing the Black family?” Daphne asked, with a snort.

“Good point,” Tracey said, “The Black sheep – or would that be white sheep – are the good ones of the family.”

“Hey, at least you have one good cousin – Tonks... and her mother!” Daphne said.

Tracey smiled. “True.”

She twisted her waist, getting a better look at her breasts and butt. She was still shocked that they were different... better, in fact.”

“You're... okay with how I look, right?” she asked.

“Of course I am, love!” Daphne said, “I had a really attractive girlfriend before, but now you're just even more sexy.”

Tracey blushed. “Thank you, Daphne. That means a lot to me. Your opinion is all that matters to me. If I look good to you, then I am happy.”

She put her gown back on and moved over to Daphne. She pulled her closer and kissed her softly on the lips. With her new, fuller lips, the kiss felt slightly different than before.

“Wow,” Daphne said, as she backed away after about half-a-minute of kissing, “That feels sort of like a first kiss.”

“Not strange?” Tracey asked.

“Definitely not,” Daphne said.

Tracey smiled and sat down on Lily's bed with Daphne, then called Lily back in.

“So?” Lily asked as she stepped inside.

“My body is definitely different,” Tracey said, “My – er – breasts, butt and hips.”

“I am not exactly surprised,” Lily said, “Professor Snape said you may have some Black attributes, and you have the body of a Black witch now. I knew Narcissa Malfoy – then Black – when she was a teen. She's about four or five years older than me. Your body type reminds me of hers a bit.”

“Great,” Tracey said, “Just what I wanted. To be compared to Draco's mother.”

“You're beautiful in your own right, if you don't mind me saying,” Lily said. “Everyone will love you. At least everyone who matters.”

Tracey nodded and smiled. “Thank you.”

“There's something I need to tell both of you while we wait for Madam Pomfrey,” Lily said. “Sirius and Amelia are now engaged.”
Tracey grinned. “I know Sirius was hinting at asking her. That's brilliant!”

“There's more,” “Lily said, smiling. “Amelia is pregnant. You're going to have a little sibling come the end of summertime.”

Tracey squeaked. “Really?”

“Really,” Lily said, “I guess you could see Susan as a sister of sorts too. Sirius has given her permission to call him Daddy too. But she'll be taking on the Lady Bones name in time.”

Tracey smiled and brushed away happy tears. “So much new family already. That's so brilliant.”

Daphne grinned and gave Tracey a side-hug. “I'm so happy for you.”

“New family, new name, new looks,” Tracey said, sighing, “It will take some time to get adjusted to, but... I am so very happy.”

“You deserve to be, love,” Daphne said.

“Yes,” Lily said, “How do you feel? Discomfort still?”

“Yeah,” Tracey said, “But now I know it is due to my body adjusting to the new changes.”

“Yes, Madam Pomfrey will probably tell you the same,” Lily said, “I imagine she'll give you some muscle relaxant Potions and stuff that should help. You're still planning on going to the Ball, right?”

“Are you kidding?” Daphne asked, “We can't miss showing off the new Tracey Black!”

Tracey smiled. “Yes, I'll be going. As long as Madam Pomfrey gives me permission.”

“She better,” Daphne said, “Because I want to dance with my sexy girlfriend this evening – all evening.”

“Aren't you going to dance with Harry at least once?” Tracey asked.

“I suppose so,” Daphne said, nodding. “You?”

“Maybe,” Tracey said, “I guess so, yeah.”

“Good,” Daphne said, “Aside from that, I'm not letting you go all evening.”

“That sounds fun,” Lily said. “By the way, everyone else not living in the Ilvermorny Tents went back to the castle about an hour ago. And Harry, Rose, Gabrielle, and your tent-mates are in the Cafeteria Tent having lunch with the other Ilvermorny students. Tonks is still here doing her duties as bodyguard of course.”

Daphne snorted. “She must be bored. I think we're quite safe in here right now.”

“Oh, no,” Tracey said, “I remember you saying you were planning on having a Christmas celebration with your students. I'm sorry you're missing out, Lily.”

“Don't be,” Lily said, “Once you're cleared by Madam Pomfrey, you can get dressed and we'll all go
into the Cafeteria Tent and have lunch and celebrate. Alright?"

“Okay,” Tracey said; then she groaned, “I just realized... what if my clothes don't fit?! My bras might not fit, and my jeans and bottoms... my hips and butt are different. And my dress for tonight! Oh, Merlin!”

“Simple Transfiguration should help, Tracey,” Lily said, “We'll figure it all out. This won’t ruin your dress, I promise.”

“And if I remember correctly, you got a few gift cards for some clothing shops,” Daphne said.

“Yeah, I did,” Tracey said, “Shops in Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley. Brilliant. I can get a few new outfits and some undergarments that will fit!”

“I'm sure if you ask, Sirius and Amelia might take you both out shopping tomorrow,” Lily said. “I'm sure they'd love to spend time with you two, to get to know you better.”

Tracey smiled. “That sounds like a brilliant idea. I'll ask Sirius when we're done here.”

Madam Pomfrey arrived at that moment, peering through the curtains. When Lily invited her in, the Hogwarts Healer bustled over to Tracey. She was carrying a basket of Potions and various items.

After about fifteen minutes – in which once again Tracey had to stand naked in front of the mirror for a few minutes at one point – Madam Pomfrey had finished up.

The Hogwarts Healer confirmed that the discomfort was a side-effect of Tracey's new body changes, and it was not unforeseen at all. Tracey was immediately given one muscle-relaxant Potion to take, and two more doses to take before and after the Yule Ball. Tracey agreed to it, because she knew it was the only way the Healer would allow her to attend. When she asked about her eyesight, Madam Pomfrey said to pay attention to it for the next few days. If there was no problems, then obviously her eyesight was now perfect thanks to the ritual. But if it faded or changed at all, she was to immediately see Madam Pomfrey.

After Madam Pomfrey left, Lily helped to transfigure Tracey's clothing so that it fit her better. She promised that the transfiguration would last for quite a while, as well as promise that she would help with Tracey's dress, if she needed it. Once dressed, she walked out of the room with Daphne and Lily and found Sirius, Amelia and Tonks waiting. Sirius' jaw dropped as soon as he saw his new daughter. Tonks gave a wolf-whistle as she admired

“These... changes... they're a result of the ritual?” he asked.

“Yes,” Tracey said.

“Wow,” Sirius said, “I still recognize you, even though your hair and eyes are different, but you now have the body of a Black witch.”

“Definitely!” Tonks said, “From her pictures, you could compare to my mother when she was your age. At least in your body figure. You look hot, if you don't mind me saying!”

Tracey blushed pink. “Thank you, Tonks.”

“Sure thing, cousin,” Tonks said, with a wink.
Tracey blushed again and Sirius chuckled. He sighed and walked over to her.

“Tracey Andromeda Black,” Sirius said, “You alright with that name? Being my daughter, a daughter and Heiress of the House of Black?”

Tracey smiled. “I am very much alright with that... Daddy.”

Sirius grinned and pulled Tracey into a hug. Tracey smiled and relaxed into her new father's arms. There was something about him that made her feel safe. She knew she could always trust Sirius. He wouldn't hurt her.


“Thanks,” Sirius said, “A lot of new changes. For both of us.”

Tracey hummed in agreement. Then she backed away and walked over to Amelia and hugged her too.

“Congratulations,” Tracey said again.

“Thank you, Tracey,” Amelia said, “And I would be proud to call you my daughter. But how about we just stick to first names for now. I'm not prepared to be called 'Mum' just yet.”

Tracey blushed and smiled. “I'd like that. Thank you.”

Tracey backed away, only to be hugged by Tonks now. She blushed and smiled at the thought that she had gained so much family in so short of time. New parents, a new baby sibling on the way.

On top of that, her appearance had changed, and her girlfriend still found her to be quite sexy.

Things were looking up for Tracey Black. And she liked that feeling.

Chapter End Notes

Didn't get the lead-up to the Yule Ball in this chapter, but that will open next chapter.

So what do you think of Tracey's changes? Do you like? I think it will make her more confident, and this will begin some good changes for her.

Next Chapter: The Yule Ball will be at least two, maybe three chapters, just because I have so much planned for the dates and couples. Harry will dance with several girls aside from just Hermione. Daphne, Tracey and Luna will all probably have dedicated dance scenes with Harry. But that probably won't take place next chapter. Hell, next chapter might just consist of arrivals to the Ball, for the various couples, of which there are many I'd like to focus on.
Arrivals To The Ball

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: The scenes in this chapter take place within the same hour of time chronologically.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Friday, December 25th, 1994

Of the six girls in the coined 'Hogwarts Five Plus Tonks' tent, Luna Lovegood was the first to finish getting dressed. She was wearing a sun-yellow dress that stopped just above her pink heels. She was wearing earrings that had little smiley-faced suns dangling from her ears, and on her wrist was a charm bracelet Harry had given her for Christmas.

She was currently standing just inside the tent's entrance, as she looked up toward the driveway. Her father, Xenophilius – who would be attending the Yule Ball with Lily Potter, as just a friendly date – would be arriving at any moment. She wanted to greet him, but first she had to wait for her date.

No boy had asked her out, and she knew it was likely because she was under House Potter Protection. No boy wanted to risk crossing Harry Potter. Luna didn't mind. She had a 'date' to the ball – she would be accompanying Astoria Greengrass. Even though they were below the required age for the Yule Ball, Luna knew they would be allowed in on a technicality. Harry had promised both her and Astoria a dance, so he was technically their 'date', if only for a short period of time.

Luna smiled at the thought of being able to dance with Harry Potter. She had a secret, though she was sure Hermione and some of her friends in the coined Children of the Great Alliance knew of her secret. Luna Lovegood fancied Harry Potter. She wasn't sure how Harry felt about her, but she didn't mind at all. When it came to romance, Harry was focused on Hermione, and nobody else at the moment.

Even though Harry was Betrothed to Daphne Greengrass, and Tracey Black would be a Consort of Daphne in the future, which meant she'd technically be Harry's wife too, the relationship between the two girls and Harry was merely friendship right now. But Luna knew the girls didn't mind that either. Like Luna, the others would wait until Harry was ready to focus on a future of having multiple wives. Harry just wanted to be normal as possible, focusing on one girlfriend for the time being. Luna knew that, and so she could wait.

She could see the looks on his face whenever she occasionally flirted with him or vaguely mentioned something along the lines that pointed to her wanting to be a part of his future family. She knew he was considering her as a love-interest. He was just confused right now, because he didn't want to offend Hermione, by being flirty with other girls. So Luna could wait until Harry was comfortable.

However, that didn't mean she wouldn't flirt. Tonight she planned on being a bit flirty when she danced with him. If only to let him know she was waiting for him, and him only. There was nobody else she was interested in.
Luna heard a curtain open and close, and she turned and smiled when she saw her 'date' for the evening. Astoria Greengrass was wearing a black and green dress with black heels. Her blonde hair looked pretty in a ponytail behind her head. Like Luna, she also had a charm bracelet around one wrist – Harry had given most of the Children of the Great Alliance bracelets which had a few protective and defensive enchantments on them.

“You look very pretty, Luna,” Astoria commented as she walked over to Luna.

“And so do you, Astoria,” Luna said, smiling, “Do you mind if we go now, before the rest of the girls? Daddy should be arriving soon, and I’d like to meet him before we head into the castle.”

“I think that would be alright,” Astoria said, “Are you sure we’re going to be allowed into the Ball?”

“I am quite sure,” Luna said, “Professors Flitwick and McGonagall will let us in once we tell them Harry has promised us a dance. Do you want to wear a coat, or would warming charms suffice?”

“My coat might be a hassle to carry around,” Astoria said.

“Warming charms it is,” Luna said.

She removed her wand from the bun of her hair, and waved it around Astoria and herself, chanting the incantation of the Warming Charms. She replaced her wand back in her bun, then offered her arm to Astoria. Astoria giggled and hooked her arm in Luna’s. They stepped out of the tent, into the snowy Grounds. Due to the Warming Charms, the chilly winter air only felt slightly cool now.

“I can’t believe nobody asked you out to the Ball, Luna,” Astoria said, as they headed toward the castle.

“I don’t mind,” Luna said, “Aside from Harry, there is no boy I want to dance with. I am very happy to accompany you tonight.”

Astoria smiled. “Thank you. It should be very fun.”

“Yes, it should,” Luna agreed.

As they neared the castle, Thestral-drawn carriages began arriving just outside the steps of Hogwarts. Luna grinned when she saw her father step out of one of the carriages. She guided Astoria over to him.

“Daddy!” Luna exclaimed, immediately hugging her father when she reached him.

“Happy Christmas, Luna, my love,” Xenophilius said; as Luna backed away, he admired her and Astoria’s appearances. “You shine like the sun you are, Luna. And you look quite lovely too, Miss Greengrass.”

“Thank you, sir,” Astoria said.

“Are you headed down to Lady Potter's tent?” Luna asked.

“Yes, I am,” Xenophilius said, “Unless... do you girls need assistance getting into the Ball this evening?”
“I don’t think so,” Luna said, “We know of a loophole – Harry has promised us both a dance, after all.”

“Ah, of course!” Xenophilius said, “One of the secrets of Purebloods. Always look for the loopholes!”

“Yes,” Luna said, smiling. “Best not keep Lady Potter waiting. We’ll see you inside.”

Luna hugged her father again, and they parted ways. She made her way into the Entrance Hall with Astoria. There were several students, most of whom were fourteen years or older, standing around the Entrance Hall and mingling, or otherwise, making their way into the Great Hall. Professors McGonagall, Flitwick and Snape were standing near the Great Hall, and when Luna and Astoria stepped forward, Professors Flitwick and McGonagall approached them.

“We expected you earlier for the lower years' Christmas Feast, Miss Lovegood, Miss Greengrass,” Flitwick said, but you seem all dressed up for the Ball.”

“Yes,” Luna said, “We are accompanying Harry Potter to the Ball.”

“I was under the impression he was taking Miss Granger,” McGonagall said.

“Oh, he is,” Luna said, “But he has also promised the two of us a dance, so technically, we're his dates too.”

Flitwick chuckled. “Well, then according to the rules, we are to allow you into the Ball. Enjoy yourselves, Miss Lovegood, Miss Greengrass.”

“Thank you, Professors,” Luna said.

“I can't believe that worked,” Astoria said, in a whispered giggle, as she walked in to the Great Hall with Luna.

Luna merely smiled her usual dreamy smile. “Like Daddy said. Always look for the loopholes.”

Fred Weasley and his only slightly-less handsome, but nonetheless identical twin brother, George, made their way down the staircase to the Gryffindor Common Room. They were wearing matching tuxedos with the House Weasley crest over their hearts. As they arrived in the Common Room, they found their best friend, Lee Jordan, waiting for them.

“I still can't believe you're taking two girls to the Ball tonight, Fred,” Lee said, “Couldn't you have let me take one of them?”

“What can I say?” Fred asked. “The ladies can't resist my good looks. I can't help if they're both attracted to me. Aren't you taking Katie's friend, Leanne, anyway?”

“Yes, but it feels like sloppy seconds,” Lee said.

George snorted. “Don't let Leanne hear you say that.”

At that moment, Fred’s two dates – Katie Bell and Alicia Spinnet – arrived, along with Katie's friend Leanne. Fred and George wolf-whistled at their outfits. Alicia was wearing a snow-white dress, and
her dark-blonde hair was braided back. Katie was wearing a beige dress and her hair was draped down the front of her shoulders, instead of in a ponytail as usual.

“I do believe we did the impossible and made Fred Weasley speechless, Alicia,” Katie said.

“Will wonders ever cease?” Alicia asked, grinning.

Fred cleared his throat. “I'm just trying to figure out which of you beautiful girls I am going to be dancing with first. May I accompany you two to the Great Hall?”

“I don't know,” Alicia said, “Were'n we talking about ditching Fred and going together, Katie?”

Katie shrugged. “He does have his uses. Yes, you may accompany us. Angelina will be down in a few minutes, George.”

Fred moved in between the two girls, and they hooked their arms in his. They followed Lee and Leanne toward the exit.

“I'm going with a Champion, I still say I am luckier, Fred!” George said.

Fred merely laughed out loud as he stepped into the corridor.

“Why does that sound like the end of a long argument between you two, Fred?” Alicia asked.

“Because it is,” Lee said, “Those two gits have been arguing for the past hour about which one is luckier tonight.”

“We're both lucky, I think,” Fred said, “We're accompanying very beautiful girls.”

“Ooh, good save,” Katie said, “I think I'll keep this one.”

“As long as I get dibs too,” Alicia said.

“There's enough of me to go around, ladies!” Fred said, grinning.

Katie and Alicia giggled, and walked arm-in-arm-in-arm with Fred down the corridor.

Tracey Black was gazing at herself in the body-length mirror in her and Daphne's bedroom. Even though she shared her bedroom with her girlfriend, the couple had decided to get dressed in different bedrooms in the tent, so their reveal in their dresses could be much more special. So Daphne had been in Astoria and Tonks' bedroom getting dressed, and Tonks had dressed in Tracey's bedroom. Instead of Lily helping her, Tonks had helped Tracey adjust her dress with transfiguration, so it would fit her new body-type better.

It had been about six hours since she had awoken to a new change in her appearance, and she still couldn't believe it. She was wearing an emerald green and silver dress, and her hair was up in a bun behind her head. She had debated for an hour how she wanted her hair-style to be. At first, she had it draped around her shoulders and chest, but Tonks told her she should put it up, so she could show off her improved bust. It took another ten minutes for her to decide whether she wanted that, and in the end agreed with Tonks. So now her hair was up, and the neckline of her dress was low enough to tease her new bust, but leave plenty to imagination. She was wearing an emerald necklace and
earrings – Sirius' Christmas gift to her -- and her emerald promise ring shone on her finger. The charm bracelet – Harry's gift – was also on her wrist.

She heard the shuffling of curtains, and saw, through the mirror's reflection, Tonks poke her head in. Her hair matched Tracey's this evening. Tracey was flattered at Tonks' choice, and it made it easy for her to see just how much of a Black both witches were now.

“My date is here, and Daphne is ready for you,” Tonks said, “Luna and Astoria left a few minutes ago. Are you ready?”

Tracey twisted her waist, admiring her hips and butt, and her bust, and decided she looked good enough. She placed her wand in the bun of her hair, and turned, then walked out of the bedroom. Tonks' date, Sebastian – one of the older Ilvermorny students – was waiting by the door of the tent, but Tracey only had eyes for one person. Her girlfriend and the love of her life, Daphne Greengrass.

Daphne was wearing a dress that nearly matched Tracey's except it was a darker forest green instead of emerald. Her hair was braided in a long ponytail that reached the middle of her back, and she had emerald earrings sparkling from her ears. The promise ring Tracey had given her shone from her finger, and the charm bracelet dangled from her wrist. Tracey smiled and blushed as Daphne stared at her with her jaw slightly dropped. She walked over to Daphne and took her hands.

“Never doubt how beautiful you are,” Daphne whispered, “You are absolutely sexy.”

Tracey giggled and blushed pink again. “You are quite gorgeous yourself, love.”

Tracey pecked her girlfriend on the lips, and placed her arm in Daphne's. Tracey smirked when she noticed the Ilvermorny boy obviously trying to avoid looking at her and Daphne. Tracey figured he was one of those boys who liked seeing girls kissing because it was 'hot', but didn't want to offend them.

*Men, she thought with a light snort.*

“Hermione?” Daphne called loudly, “We're leaving now. You're the only one left here now.”

“Harry should be here in a few minutes.” Hermione called from inside her bedroom, “I'll see you girls soon.”

“See you soon,” Daphne said.

Tracey and Daphne placed warming charms on themselves, then followed Tonks and her date out of the tent. Five minutes later, they stepped into the Entrance Hall of Hogwarts, following many of the Beauxbatons students inside. However Fleur and Gabrielle Delacour were not among them, nor was Madame Maxime.

Tracey felt herself blush as she noticed several students looking in her and Daphne's direction. She wondered how many people realized who she was, and who else was wondering who was accompanying Daphne Greengrass.

Near the doors of the Great Hall, Tracey noticed Professor Snape standing with Professors McGonagall and Flitwick, and Headmaster Dumbledore. She noticed Professor Snape's eyes widen ever so slightly as he looked at her. She merely nodded and smiled at him. He nodded curtly, his eyes following her as she stepped into the Great Hall with Daphne, Tonks and Sebastian.
“I see Astoria and Luna,” Daphne said, pointing to one of the many circular tables placed around the nearest half of the Great Hall. “Want to sit with them?”

“Yeah,” Tracey said, “I imagine some of the Children of the Great Alliance will sit with them too. And Sirius and Amelia might join us too.”

“Ooh, goodie,” Tonks said, “The Ilvermorny lot is sitting near that table. I can sit with Sebastian and his lot, and still be close to your table as bodyguard duty.”

Tracey, Daphne and Tonks started off toward Astoria and Luna’s table.

“Hey, Greengrass!” the unfortunately familiar voice of Draco Malfoy said, as they passed by the table of younger Slytherins. “I see you dropped Davis. But you're still choosing witches instead of a wizard like proper. How trite.”

Tracey snorted. “Daphne hasn't dropped anyone, but you're slightly correct. I dropped the name of Davis weeks ago. Today I am officially Tracey Andromeda Black.”

Draco’s jaw dropped, and the other Slytherins, including Draco's date and Betrothed, Pansy Parkinson had similar expressions.

“T-Tracey?” Draco asked.

“Hello, cousin,” Tracey said.

“Cousin?” Draco sneered, “What are you getting at?”

“Haven't you guessed, cousin?” Tonks said. “Tracey has officially joined the House of Black. She participated in a Blood Adoption Ritual with Lord Black earlier today. It changed her appearance as you can see.”

Draco spluttered. “Why wasn't I invited? I am a member of House Black!”

“As long as Lord Black doesn't disown you from the House,” Tonks said. “If you keep trying to insult his new daughter's girlfriend, that might happen, you know.”

“He wouldn't do that!” Draco exclaimed.

“I believe he would,” Tracey said. “Keep that in mind, cousin.”

Draco sneered at her, and Tracey merely smiled, as she turned and walked over to Astoria and Luna's table with Daphne. Tonks sat down beside Sebastian at the nearby Ilvermorny Table.

_Hogwarts Great Hall – A few minutes earlier_

Albus Dumbledore stepped out of the beautifully decorated Great Hall, and made his way over to Severus Snape, Minerva McGonagall and Filius Flitwick. He had spent the last few minutes talking with Bartemius Crouch and Ludo Bagman, as well as making introductions with the wizarding band that would be playing during the Yule Ball. Several wonderfully-attired students had already arrived and were seated in the Great Hall, including several of the Ilvermorny students.
The doors to the Great Hall opened, and several Beauxbatons students walked in, all wearing similar styles of dresses and tuxedos. Albus frowned when he saw neither Madame Maxime, nor the Beauxbatons Champion, Fleur Delacour.

“Have any of the Champions arrived yet?” he asked.

“No, Albus,” Minerva said, “But I am sure they'll be here by seven-o-clock. Besides, they're to be the last guests in the Great Hall. So there is no need for them to make an early arrival.”

Albus nodded, conceding that point. He turned to Severus, who had an odd smile on his face. Albus looked around, expecting to see Lily Potter – who else would Severus smile for? – but he did not see her. Instead, Severus seemed to be looking in the direction of Daphne Greengrass. Albus did a double-take as he saw the girl arm-in-arm with Daphne Greengrass. He didn't recognize her at all. Was she one of the Ilvermorny or Beauxbatons students? He frowned as he watched the two girls step inside.

“I was under the impression Miss Greengrass was going with the former Tracey Davis,” Albus said, “Did something happen between the two girls, I wonder?”

“That was Tracey, Albus,” Severus said, “Her appearance has merely changed into that of a Black witch, because she underwent the Blood Adoption Ritual with Sirius Black this morning. The former Miss Davis is now Tracey Andromeda Black, daughter of Sirius Black, and Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black.”

Albus stared at Severus in shock. “You're sure of this?”

“Very sure,” Severus said, “I was a witness for the Ritual.”

Albus' eyes widened slightly. “And you did not tell me?”

“Why would I need to tell you, Albus?” Severus asked. “I was personally invited by Sirius Black himself. He decided my aid might have been necessary, and it was.”

“Why was I not invited?” Albus asked. “I am Miss... Black's Headmaster.”

“Today's events had nothing to do with her education, Albus,” Severus said. “They were the actions of the House of Black.”

Albus sighed. He didn't like not knowing what was going on with some of his students. The girls in the Ilvermorny Tents were distancing themselves from Hogwarts, and there were rumors that the girls might be transferring to Ilvermorny next September. And he couldn't do anything official and legal to stop them! They had legal rights to transfer if Ilvermorny accepted them. Tracey now being the daughter of the House of Black basically cemented the fact that she might move to America with her new father. Who else would follow her? Daphne and Astoria Greengrass? Luna Lovegood? Three pureblood daughters of Houses in the Wizengamot Council. Three Pureblood Houses that could help to further the Pureblood bloodlines of magical Great Britain.

His meeting with Harry and Lily Potter would likely happen within the first week of the new year. It was in his plans to make sure that Harry remained behind in Britain when Voldemort returned. Hopefully when he stayed behind, so too would the other Purebloods. The young Lord Potter was becoming fast friends with those girls in the Ilvermorny Tents. If they stayed in Great Britain, it
would help Albus' plans to make sure that Harry traveled to his destiny.

“Please let me know when the Champions arrive,” Albus said to his staff, as he turned and headed back into the Great Hall.

Neville Longbottom adjusted his tie as he stared into the fireplace. He was standing in the Gryffindor Tower, and waiting for his date and Betrothed, Ginny Weasley. His dorm-mates, and fellow fourth year Gryffindors, Seamus Finnegan and Dean Thomas were waiting nearby too. They were waiting for their respective dates, Lavender Brown and Parvati Patil.

“How did we ever get the sexiest girls in our year?” Dean asked.

“Just lucky, I suppose,” Seamus said, “I would argue about them being the most attractive though. There are plenty of attractive girls in our year. Granger's been looking pretty fine, but I hardly noticed before she started dating Lord Potter.”

“I never thought I'd say this about a couple of Slytherin girls,” Dean said, “But Daphne and Tracey are lookers too.”

“Yeah, but they're all over each other,” Seamus said, “we blokes don't have a chance with two witches who only have eyes for each other.”

“Is that uncommon in the wizarding world?” Dean asked. “It isn't uncommon in the Muggle world.”

“It isn't rare, but it is frowned upon,” Neville said, joining the conversation. “Doesn't promote further generations.”

Seamus snorted. “Hardly matters. They could each marry one bloke, have his children, and then be with each other. They're Slytherins. They'll find a way.”

“What is this, I hear?” Lavender Brown asked, as she and Parvati Patil appeared at the stairs, “Are you two gossiping about somebody?”

“Only about you two!” Seamus said, grinning.

“Liars,” Parvati said, with a snort. “We'll let you in on a little secret. But you have to promise to keep it between yourselves.”

“We're not school gossips like you two,” Dean said. “If you can keep it a secret, so can we.”

“Daphne Greengrass is Betrothed to Lord Potter,” Parvati said, “And she has a Wife's Consort Contract with Tracey.”

“Wife's Consort?” Seamus asked. “But Potter has three Houses. So he could marry --”

“He could, but he isn't going to make Tracey his official wife,” Parvati said. “She doesn't want to be his wife. She wants to be with Daphne. Lord Potter understands that.”

“Yes, and it is very sweet,” Lavender said, “But enough about them. What do you boys think of us?”

“Hot as Fiendfyre,” Seamus said; Dean nodded in agreement.
Lavender snorted. “Men of few words, these two. Ginny should be down shortly, Neville.”

“Actually, I am here now,” Ginny said.

Neville turned as Ginny stepped into the Common Room. His jaw dropped as he saw his girlfriend. She was wearing a pink dress that went to the floor. She was also wearing the ruby earrings he had given her as a Christmas gift. Her hair was behind her in a long ponytail. Neville walked over to her and held both of her hands.

“You look absolutely beautiful,” Neville said.

“And you look handsome as a Champion should,” Ginny said. “Thank you again for the earrings.”

“You're very welcome,” Neville said.

Ginny smiled and pecked him on the lips.

Lavender cleared her throat. “Alright you two. We should be going or we're going to be late.”

Neville held out his arm, and Ginny grinned and draped her arm in his. The young couple followed the other Gryffindors out of the Common Room, and started off toward the Great Hall.

Fleur Delacour stepped out of her bedroom in the Beauxbatons Tent, and found Madame Maxime and Cedric Diggory waiting for her. She was dressed in a silver gown that drooped around her golden heels. Her hair was braided behind her, and also in sort of a crown on top of her head. Cedric was dressed in a black tuxedo and looking quite handsome. A dashing smile crossed his lips as he watched her walk over to him. He took one of her hands and lifted it to his lips, kissing it.

“Beautiful as the stars, Mademoiselle Delacour,” Cedric said.

“And you are very handsome,” Cedric said.

“Are we waiting for your sister?” Madame Maxime asked.

“She's dressing in the 'Ouse Potter tent with 'er date,” Fleur said, “I'm sure we'll see 'er shortly.”

“Then let us make our way inside,” Madame Maxime said, “I will place warming charms on you so you do not have to hide your beauty in a coat.”

Once the warming charm was on her, Fleur walked out of the tent, hand-in-hand with her date, and they started off to the castle with Madame Maxime tailing behind them.

Harry was currently standing inside Hermione's tent as he waited for her to emerge from her bedroom. He had announced his entrance a minute ago, and Hermione told him, loudly from behind her curtains, that she was nearly finished.

Harry was dressed in black formal robes that he had purchased in Diagon Alley, while his Christmas
shopping earlier that week. His three House Crests sat in their usual place at his heart.

The curtains to Hermione's bedroom opened, and Harry became breathless as his girlfriend stepped out. She was wearing a periwinkle-blue gown that reached to her heels. Her promise ring and earrings, both matching the color of her dress shone from her finger and ears. Her hair, no longer in its uncontrollable bushy state, was up above her head in a bun. This allowed her to show off her bust, and Harry was doing his best not to stare at that specific area. Hermione's cheeks blushed pink as she walked over to Harry. He took her hands in his and smiled as he looked at her.

“You know I always find you beautiful,” Harry said, “And you look as dazzling as ever.”

Hermione blushed red now, and kissed him on the cheek. “You're quite handsome yourself, Harry. I had a thought as I was dressing. My ring matches my dress, so maybe people won’t question it being anything more than a part of the outfit.”

“And if they do?” Harry asked.

“Then I will tell them exactly what it is,” Hermione said. “A sign of your promises to me.”

Harry smiled and lifted her hand with the promise ring on it to his lips and kissed it. Then he grasped her hand, and turned to the entrance. He removed his wand from his robes, and waved it around them.

“Warming charms,” Harry said, to Hermione's questioning gaze. “No coat will hide your beauty tonight.”

Hermione smiled. “Good idea.”

“My family and their dates are waiting for us in my tent,” Harry said.

“Then let's not keep them waiting,” Hermione said.

They stepped out of the tent, and made their way into the House Potter Tent. Lily, Rose, Sirius, and Remus were there with their respective dates, Xenophilius, Gabrielle, Amelia and Aurora Sinistra. Lily was wearing a black and white formal dress. Rose was wearing a pink gown, while Gabrielle had a silver gown. Amelia and Aurora were in a black formal wear, and Sirius and Remus were wearing matching black and silver formal robes. Xenophilius was wearing what appeared to be a red and green patchwork tuxedo.

“You look very beautiful, Hermione,” Lily commented.

“Thank you, Lily,” Hermione said, smiling and blushing lightly, “All the other girls and the Ilvermorny students are already inside.”

“Then let us join them,” Lily said.

Harry and Hermione led the group out of the tent, and they headed off toward the Entrance Hall. When they arrived, Harry saw the other three Champions and their dates waiting in the Entrance Hall with Albus Dumbledore, Ludo Bagman, Bartemius Crouch, Madame Maxime and Minerva McGonagall.

“Ah, here is our fourth champion!” Dumbledore beaming, “Lady Potter if you will wait out here
with your date, and your Champion and his date. Everyone else can head on inside. The Champions will be in momentarily.”

As the others headed into the Great Hall, Lily and Xenophilius remained behind with Harry and Hermione, and they made their way over to the Champions, their dates and the adults.

“Good evening, everyone,” Dumbledore said, “Champions, you and your dates will be leading everyone in dances, but first we will dine, because I am sure everyone is hungry. We will all be seated at a large table at the front of the Hall, which has replaced the usual Staff Table. Judges, if you will come inside with me now. Minerva will wait out here for a few moments with the Champions and their dates, until I call them inside, one champion at a time.”

Lily smiled at Harry, and whispered 'good luck’, then made her way into the Great Hall with her date and the other judges.

“Line up, please,” Minerva said, “Hogwarts first, then Beauxbatons and finally Ilvermorny.”

Harry and Hermione took their spots behind Fleur and her date. Fleur's date turned and smiled at Harry.

“Lord Potter,” he said, “Cedric Diggory, it is very nice to meet you.”

“Pleasure to meet you, Cedric,” Harry said, as he shook Cedric's hand.

Cedric smiled at Hermione, then turned as Neville and Ginny made their way into the Great Hall. Soon, it was time for Harry and Hermione to enter..

The Yule Ball had officially begun.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I ended it there. So this chapter was just arrival of the significant characters in this story. I hope you liked it anyway, and that it wasn't too boring.

What did you think of the reactions to Tracey – Draco and Dumbledore's mostly?

Next Chapter: The Yule Ball, Part One. Dinner, conversation – amongst both the main table, and the 'extended Potter family', their dates, and Hermione's tent-mates -- and dancing begins!
Previously on “The Ilvermorny Champion”...

Harry and Hermione took their spots behind Fleur and her date. Fleur's date turned and smiled at Harry.

“Lord Potter,” he said, “Cedric Diggory, it is very nice to meet you.”

“Pleasure to meet you, Cedric,” Harry said, as he shook Cedric's hand.

Cedric smiled at Hermione, then turned as Neville and Ginny made their way into the Great Hall. Soon, it was time for Harry and Hermione to enter.

Friday, December 25th, 1994

As Harry Potter entered the Great Hall arm-in-arm with his girlfriend, Hermione, his eyes widened at the sights before him. The Great Hall seemed to have transformed overnight. It seemed like a winter wonderland. Everything was white, and there was an illusion of snow falling from the enchanted ceiling which helped with the effect. Students in various formal attire were standing around several circular tables.

“And finally,” Albus Dumbledore said, “The Ilvermorny Champion, Lord Harry Potter, and his date, Hermione Granger!”

Harry smiled at the applause, then his smile turned into a grin when he heard cheering come from a specific section. He looked and saw the Ilvermorny students at one table, and at a neighboring table was Sirius, Remus, Rose, their dates, and Hermione's tent mates, Daphne, Tracey, Luna and Astoria. The remainder of the Children of the Great Alliance, and their dates were at another neighboring table.

At the main table at the other end of the Hall, the judges, including Harry's mother, and their dates, were standing and applauding too. When he reached the table, Harry took the chair beside his mother, while Hermione sat to his right. Behind the table, musical instruments began playing a soft tune. Harry wondered where the wizarding band was – he recalled Dumbledore saying there would be one – but figured they'd be playing for the dancing, and not during dinner.

Dumbledore was still standing near his spot at the table, and looking around at the guests in the Hall.
“Tonight’s meal has a special menu,” he said, “Unlike most feasts, where you simply pick from the arrangements on the tables, you will find menus at your tables.”

Harry did indeed find, in front of him, a menu on top of a golden plate.

“Simply request one of the options from the menu and it will instantly appear on the plate in front of you,” Dumbledore continued, “The dancing portion of this evening’s Ball will take place in half-an-hour, so you have plenty of time to enjoy your meals. Let the feast begin!”

Dumbledore sat down in his seat between Madame Maxime and Bartemius Crouch. He studied his menu, then said very clearly to his plate, “Pork chops!” His requested meal appeared in front of him. Harry and the others at the table followed in suit, picking up their menus and looking through it.

“Steak and baked potato,” Harry clearly said, “And butterbeer!”

His requested meal appeared on the golden plate in front of him, as well as a bottle of butterbeer. Hermione looked rather amused that Harry ordered such a common American meal, and she ordered Bouillabaisse.

“I am surprised to see you order a French delicacy,” Fleur said to Hermione; she and Cedric were seated on the other side of Harry's girlfriend.

“My parents and I have visited France a few times over the past few years for summer holidays,” Hermione said.

“I did not know this!” Fleur said, “Are you fluent in French?”

“Not as much as I'd like to be,” Hermione said, shrugging.

“Perhaps if you 'ave time, I can tutor you in the language before I leave in June,” Fleur said.

“I might take you up on that,” Hermione said.

“You might want to do so too, Harry,” Lily said, “After all, we have a holiday home in Nice, which I'm sure we'll be visiting some time.”

Harry shrugged and nodded. He didn't know any type of foreign language, unless one counted a few common pieces of British as 'foreign'.

“Oui, dear Rose told me House Potter had a place in France,” Fleur said, “We have a house in Nice too. Gabrielle and I grew up there before Papa became the French Minister of Magic. Have you ever been to France, Cedric?”

“No, I am afraid not,” Cedric said, “But it could be in my future plans. I hear the beaches are nice.”

Harry hid a snort. He was well aware how several of the beaches in France were clothing-optional. Something told him Cedric meant that too. From their expressions, Hermione and Fleur seemed to think the same thing.

“Lily, I would love to hear all about Ilvermorny,” Xenophilius said, “You see, my dear Luna has
expressed interest in recent letters about possibly transferring to Ilvermorny come next September."

Harry noticed Dumbledore's gaze turn to Xenophilius, and his eyes slightly widen. He wondered if Dumbledore didn't like hearing that some of his students might transfer.

“She has?” Lily asked, “Are you considering letting her?”

“It could be a possibility, yes,” Xenophilius said, nodding.

As Lily began describing Ilvermorny in a low voice to Xenophilius, Harry turned to Hermione.

“Did you know?” he asked, “That Luna's thinking of transferring?”

“She's given hints,” Hermione said, “I don't think she'll make her decision until she knows whether or not I want to transfer too.”

Harry looked out of the corner of his eyes at Dumbledore and noticed the man had a subdued reaction to this news – more than the news about Luna did. Harry wondered if it had something to do with Luna being a Pureblood and Hermione a Muggleborn.

“Ah, I suppose I shouldn't be too surprised,” Harry said. “You are her best friend, after all, and she'd miss you if you left without her.”

“Yes, I would miss her very much too,” Hermione said, then she grinned. “I think she'd miss you too, to be honest.”

“Really?” Harry asked.

“Of course,” Hermione said; she leaned to his ear, and whispered, “She does fancy you, you know. Haven't you been able to tell?”

Harry cleared his throat. “I thought it was just Luna being Luna.”

Hermione sighed and shook her head. “Pay attention to her when she dances with you tonight.”

Harry nodded and continued his meal as discussion continued around him.

Meanwhile, across the Great Hall, Tracey was sitting between Sirius and Daphne, and was dining on her meal and listening to conversation around the table. Aside from her and Daphne, there were Sirius, Amelia, Remus, Professor Sinistra, Astoria, and Luna. Nearby, at a neighboring table, Susan, Hannah, the Patils, and Lavender Brown were sitting with their dates. Tracey had been mildly surprised to find that Hannah and Padma were with Ernie MacMillan and Terry Boot, two sons of former Houses of the Great Alliance.

“I wonder if Houses Boot and MacMillan are trying to get back into the Great Alliance,” Tracey said. “Maybe that is why Terry and Ernie asked out Hannah and Padma.”

“It is possible,” Sirius said, “We could always ask Hannah and Padma later if they had mentioned anything. Good looking out there, daughter.”

Tracey blushed and grinned.
“Speaking of,” Sirius said, “How have reactions been concerning your new appearance?”

“I haven't had many people come up to me yet,” Tracey said. “The Children of the Great Alliance are all very nice about it. My former Slytherin year-mates, however...”

“Uh-oh,” Sirius said, “What did they say?”

Beside Tracey, Daphne snorted. “Draco Malfoy thought I had brought another girl besides Tracey here tonight. Said it was 'trite' that I am still dating witches instead of wizards.”

Tracey giggled. “He simply didn't recognize me until I introduced myself. The look on his face, and the face of the other Slytherins, were priceless! Draco was slightly offended you didn't invite him to the Ritual, Daddy.”

Sirius raised his eyebrows and looked in the direction of Draco Malfoy. “What did he say?”

“Just that – outrage that he wasn't invited to a House Black event,” Tracey said. “We told him you might disown him if he keeps offending my girlfriend.”

“He'd probably deserve it,” Sirius said, “Should I expect him to personally meet with me tonight?”

“Maybe,” Tracey said, “Or he might just complain to his Mummy, since he can no longer write to his father when he wants to be a crybaby.”

“If he decides to confront you again, you tell him to come to me,” Sirius said, “I'll deal with him as his Lord Black.”

“Alright,” Tracey said. “Though I can take care of myself, you know.”

“I do know that,” Sirius said, “Between you, Daphne and Tonks, I'm quite sure you're nice and protected. Which is why I'm going to let you do so with everyone else who decides not to welcome your new appearance. Draco is a son of a Black, and as such, I will deal with him in House matters.”

Tracey nodded. “Good luck. He's the definition of a pompous Pureblood.”

“I've dealt with plenty of those types before,” Sirius said, “Including his father. So I think I know how to handle him.”

Tracey grinned. She looked forward to seeing her new father handle that pompous ass. She looked around at the students seated and eating meals, and wonder how many knew by now that Tracey was now a daughter of the House of Black. She could easily predict that Draco, Pansy, or someone in their group would let that news slip around the entire school by the following morning. Perhaps it was better that it did come out. The House of Black was a powerful and respected name, after all. With her new appearance and new name, she might earn the respect back that she had lost when Skeeter had outed her as a Witches’ Witch. That would be a very good thing.

When all the food had been consumed, Dumbledore stood up and asked everyone else to do the same. Then, with a wave of his wand, all the tables zoomed back along the walls leaving the floor clear, and then he conjured a raised platform into existence along the right wall. The musical instruments which had been playing during dinner – a set of drums, several guitars, a lute, a cello,
and some bagpipes -- were now placed on the platform.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Dumbledore said, “It is my honor to welcome tonight's main entertainment! The Weird Sisters!”

The Weird Sisters now trooped up onto the stage to wildly enthusiastic applause; they were all extremely hairy and dressed in black robes that had been artfully ripped and torn. They picked up their instruments, and Harry, who had been so interested in watching them that he had almost forgotten what was coming, suddenly realized that the lanterns on all the other tables had gone out, and that the other champions and their partners were standing up.

“And now,” Dumbledore said, “If the Champions and their partners will take to the center of the floor, to begin the traditional Dance of the Champions.”

“Basically a Waltz, Harry,” Lily whispered to Harry. “Just like I used to teach you and Rose.”

Harry could only nod before Hermione took his and dragged him out onto the dance floor with the other champions and their partners. The Weird Sisters began to play a lively instrumental tune similar to the traditional music heard during a Waltz. As the other champions and their partners started dancing the Waltz, Harry and Hermione joined in. Hermione was grinning as she did her part in the Waltz, and she looked impressed at Harry's ability in the dance. Halfway through the Champions' First Dance, Dumbledore led Minerva McGonagall out onto the floor. Lily and Xenophilius followed, and soon other students, as well as Sirius, Remus and their partners, joined in.

As Harry got used to the dancing pattern with Hermione, he chanced a look around. Daphne and Tracey were dancing expertly near Sirius and Amelia. Even Rose and Gabrielle were doing well – Gabrielle seemed as talented as her own sister.

Five minutes after everyone joined in, the tune changed to something slow and mournful. Hermione placed Harry's arms on her waist, and she wrapped hers around his neck, and the pair began swaying on the spot and moving in circles.

“Just how much did your mother teach you and Rose about dancing?” Hermione asked.

“Most of the summer one year, I think,” Harry said, “I remember it was raining one day, and Rose and I were upset we couldn't play outside. So Mom decided to entertain us by teaching us how to dance. We spent at least an hour a day over the next few weeks learning to dance in several ways.”

“Did Rebecca ever join in?” Hermione asked.

“Actually, yes – for a few times,” Harry said, “Once she started wondering why I wasn't playing outside with her during my free time, she got curious and wondered what I was doing. So I told her. It wasn't as romantic as you might think. We were still in that awkward phase where we were confused and sort of disgusted about the other gender. I remember Sirius and Remus thinking it was hilarious though.”

Hermione grinned. “Maybe that was when Rebecca started to fancy you. And she's kept it a secret until recently. If I was in her shoes, I don't think I could resist not fancying you after a bit of dancing, especially this close. So... exactly how many girls have you promised to dance with tonight?”

“Ten... maybe?” Harry asked. “Five definitely.”

Hermione whistled. “Could cut back on our dance time.”

“If you want to dance with me, you're welcome to claim me at any time, you know,” Harry said, “You are my date, after all.”

“I might just have to do that,” Hermione said, “But I'm not sitting down until my feet hurt. So you're with me for a while.”

“As you wish,” Harry said.

“Oh, so you think you're Westley to my Buttercup?” Hermione asked, grinning.

“Well, you do look like a Princess, Hermione,” Harry said, echoing her grin.

“Good answer,” Hermione said, approvingly.

She pulled herself closer to Harry, so that his arms were wrapped around her, and his hands were now hooked at the small of her back. She kissed his cheek, then laid her head against his shoulder. Harry smiled and swayed with her in a circle.

The couple danced both fast and slow dances for the next half-an-hour, before Hermione decided she needed to rest. Hermione led Harry over to the table where Luna and their friends were seated.

“Need to rest, Hermione?” Daphne asked. “Does that mean Harry's free to dance with someone else?”

“Yes, he is,” Hermione said.

“But what about my poor feet?” Harry asked.

“Dance with the other girls, and I'll think about giving you a foot massage,” Hermione said.

Harry grinned. “Yes, ma'am. May I steal your girlfriend for a little while, Tracey?”

“Fine,” Tracey said, “But I call dibs on dancing with you next.”

Harry raised his eyebrows in mild surprise. She wanted to get that close to him? Did that mean she was trusting him more?

“If that is what you want, then I would be happy to dance with you,” Harry said.

“Me first, Potter,” Daphne said.

She took his hand and dragged him back onto the dance floor. Another slow dance song was struck up by the Weird Sisters at that moment. Harry placed his hands at her waist. Daphne smirked, and pulled his arms around her waist, and moved in closer to him, wrapping her arms around his neck.

“You don't need to be so proper with me, Harry,” Daphne said, in a low voice, “We are Betrothed, you know.”
“Yes, but I thought our current status was simply 'friends' right now,” Harry said.

“It is,” Daphne said, “But once Tracey and Hermione allows it, I might allow our status to change to courting.”

“Before our education finishes?” Harry asked, “That's a big change from last month.”

“Last month I barely knew you,” Daphne said. “At that time, I wasn't sure if I could trust you around me and my girlfriend. A lot has changed since I originally said you could only court me after our education is done. I'm not saying you can start courting me tomorrow or anything. But once you and Hermione are more comfortable – after that whole seven-month plan of yours, perhaps – I wouldn't say 'no' to us getting to know each other better, and going on occasional dates.”

“If Hermione allows it, I would be happy to,” Harry said, “For now I'm being very careful around girls aside from her. Yes, including my Betrothed.”

“Completely understandable,” Daphne said; she looked around and frowned. “Brilliant. Before now, very few people knew who I'm Betrothed to. This might give them a clue, since you're the only boy I'm dancing with tonight.”

Harry glanced around and noticed that a few people – including what Harry believed to be several Slytherins in Daphne's year – looking toward him and Daphne.

“Is that a problem?” Harry asked. “News of our Betrothal getting out?”

“I suppose not,” Daphne said shrugging. “It wouldn't change much, would it?”

“Not really,” Harry said; he glanced at Dumbledore, who was also watching him and Daphne, “Dumbledore probably would find it quite interesting.”

“No worries about Dumbledore tonight, Harry,” Daphne said; she laid her head on his shoulder and moved her lips to his ear, “Tonight is not for manipulative old coots. Tonight is for fun. Focus on the girls you are dancing with.”

“Yes, ma'am,” Harry said.

Daphne kept her head on his shoulder as they swayed in a circle. They remained like this for the rest of the song, before it changed to something quicker.

“Let's see what you can really do, Potter,” Daphne said, “Time to impress your Betrothed.”

And that was just what Harry proceeded to do.

Tracey grinned as she watched her girlfriend and Harry dancing a Tango. She was currently sitting alone at the table. Others around her table were currently up and dancing, like Sirius and Amelia. Hermione and Luna were also trying to attempt the Tango on the edge of the dance floor. Others like Astoria were mingling with other members of the Children of the Great Alliance who weren't dancing.

As she watched Daphne and Harry, Tracey was trying to decide what type of dance she wanted to
do with Harry. Fast like the Waltz or Tango, or a romantic slow dance like she had just witnessed her girlfriend dancing with Harry. Could she risk getting that close to Harry without having a panic attack she normally had around boys who got too close to her?

She was truly beginning to trust Harry, but trust was not exactly the issue here. Whenever a boy touched her, even accidentally, she tensed up and expected them to do things like her brother had done all those years ago. Harry knew exactly what had happened to her. Could she be able to allow herself to be close to him? And if so, how would other students react? Would they believe she was attracted to boys, and now open to the thought of dating boys?

Her reverie was broken by the sound of someone sitting down beside her. She expected it to be one of her friends, and therefore she was shocked when she saw Pansy Parkinson sit down. Tracey looked around for Draco, and found him dancing with an older Beauxbatons student.

“What do you want?” Tracey asked.

“Relax,” Pansy said, “I just want to talk. Can we do that?”

“I guess so,” Tracey said, “Why is Draco dancing with someone else?”

Pansy snorted. “You do recall that I am the only child in my family right?”

“Right,” Tracy said, nodding.

“So my Betrothal Contract to Draco is a Line Continuation Contract,” Pansy said. “Means he has to find a wife who can take his name.”

“Huh,” Tracey said, “So what was all that bragging about over the past couple of years of you calling yourself Lady Malfoy?”

“Wishful thinking,” Pansy said, muttering. “Anyway, Draco's recently decided he wants to look for another wife too.”

“So is that why he's dancing with the Beauxbatons student?” Tracey asked.

“No,” Pansy said, “He just thinks she is hot. I – er – think he has his eyes on Daphne. Or her sister.”

Tracey narrowed her eyes. “First of all, Daphne's not just with me, she's also Betrothed.”

“Yes, I remember you mentioning that,” Pansy said, “When you were speaking to your... former father a week ago during the Winter Solstice Session. I suppose it might be Daphne's sister he mentions whenever he speaks of 'Greengrass'.”

Pansy gazed at Daphne and Harry dancing. “I'm going to take a guess, and say she's Betrothed to Lord Potter?”

“I will neither confirm nor deny that,” Tracey said. “Either way, she's already promised me a Wife's Consort Contract, and even if she wasn't Betrothed, I would never let Draco get near her. Same goes for Astoria. Draco should just give up on both sisters.”

Pansy shrugged. “I'm not going to be the one to tell him that.”
“Sounds as if you don't approve of what his current plan is,” Tracey said.

“I don't,” Pansy said, “But what can I do? I'm Betrothed to him, and can't be his Lady Malfoy because my parents never decided to have another child. I don't think he'd like it if I told him to focus on me for a while before he searches for someone else. You were also on his list, you know? You still might be, even though you're now his cousin. I think that is why he was so shocked to know you had gone through a Blood Adoption Ritual.”

“There's only one boy I could ever want to be with, and that is my girlfriend's Betrothed,” Tracey said. “And only for the possibility of having children. Even then, I'm still having doubts.”

“Wow, you are a true Witches' Witch, aren't you?” Pansy asked.

“Skeeter's article didn't tell you that much?” Tracey scoffed.

“That was pretty bad, wasn't it,” Pansy said, “Have you recovered from that?”

“I'm a strong girl, Parkinson,” Tracey said, “I recovered from that pretty quickly.”

Pansy nodded. “Your girlfriend and Lord Potter are coming back over.”

Tracey turned as Daphne and Harry approached.

“What do you want, Pansy?” Daphne asked; she turned to Tracey. “Is she harassing you, love?”

“We've actually been quite civil,” Tracey said.

“I'm done here,” Pansy said; she stood and looked at Harry, “I don't believe I've had the pleasure of making your acquaintance.”


Tracey was quite shocked Daphne revealed that. She considered why Daphne would do so. Then she realized that the fact that they had been dancing in a slow dance might have gotten people talking.

“I did wonder if he was your Betrothed,” Pansy said. “An honor to meet you, My Lord.”

She offered her hand. Harry stared at it for a moment, before briefly shaking it.

“The honor is mine, Miss Parkinson,” Harry said, “Tracey, may I have this dance? That is... if you want a slow dance. We can wait till the music gets faster.”

Tracey inhaled and exhaled. “I am just fine with a slow dance, Harry.”

Pansy walked off back over to her table. Daphne sat down, and Hermione and Luna returned, as Harry led Tracey onto the dance floor. Once they reached a spot, Harry merely stood in one spot. He was letting her take over. Tracey closed her eyes and steeled herself. Then she took his hands and slowly put them on her waist. She kept her eyes closed as she whispered over and over that she could trust Harry, and all he wanted to do was dance with her. She wrapped her arms around his neck and opened her eyes.
“You alright?” Harry asked, looking concerned.

“No sign of a panic attack,” Tracey said, “I think I'm okay. But only with you. I wouldn't be able to do this with another boy.”

“Someday, I really would like to meet your brother,” Harry said.

“Shh,” Tracey said, “Let us not think of such things this evening. And he is no longer my brother. Sirius is my father, and Susan is going to be my sister. And I will have a new brother or sister. All of whom will be very nice to me.”

“Of course they will be,” Harry said, “I'll never let anyone else hurt you again, Tracey. Ever.”

“Thank you, Harry,” Tracey said.

Harry smiled. “I haven't had the chance to tell you how beautiful you look, have I? You were rather attractive if I may say so, but that ritual only enhanced your beauty.”

Tracey blushed. “Thank you, Harry. It will take a bit of time to get adjusted to. Did you have any problems recognizing me?”

“No really,” Harry said, “Of course, since you were basically attached to Daphne's waist when you came into the Cafeteria Tent, it wasn't too difficult to realize who you were. Who else but you would be so close to Daphne?”

“You?” Tracey asked, grinning. “Watching you dance with her was beautiful. You seemed deep in conversation at one point.”

“I think I'll let her tell you what we talked about,” Harry said.

“Can I guess?” Tracey asked, “She's considering letting you court her much earlier than anticipated.”

Harry shrugged and nodded. “Not in the near future. But maybe once Hermione and I are more comfortable with each other. How did you know?”

“I see her looking at you and Hermione,” Tracey said. “She's not exactly jealous. She's just... trying to picture a future with you. And I think she wants to know firsthand how that future might be.”

“Only with yours and Hermione's permission, will I start courting her,” Harry said.

“I had no doubts about that,” Tracey said.

“Do I need to worry about that Parkinson girl, or any of her friends, like that boyfriend of hers?” Harry asked.

“Maybe,” Tracey said. “Pansy is on a Line Continuation Contract. So Draco’s looking for someone to be Lady Malfoy. Pansy said something about Draco setting his sights on... um... Daphne, Astoria, and me as possibilities.

Tracey winced when Harry huffed. “I told Pansy it wasn't going to happen.”

“If he gets close to any one of you, I'm not going to play nice,” Harry said. “I already don't like him,
simply because of his mannerisms.”

“Relax, Harry,” Tracey said, “Daddy Sirius has already taken dibs on Draco if he tries anything. Draco’s a member of the Black House, so Sirius is his Lord. So I think Sirius will be able to handle it more than you.”

“My statement still stands,” Harry said. “And that goes for anyone who decides to get on your wrong side.”

“Yeah, well don't go putting me under an official House Potter Protection so soon,” Tracey said, “This little dance of ours will already have blokes thinking I'm suddenly available for them. You taking more of an interest than that could cause problems.”

“I'll only do Protection if I feel it becomes necessary,” Harry said.

“You are too over-protective sometimes, you know that?” Tracey asked.

Harry smiled. “Only for those I truly care about.”

Tracey blushed pink. She inhaled and exhaled, then pulled him closer to her. She placed her head on his chest, as he gently wrapped his arms around her waist. Tracey smiled when no signs of a panic attack showed, and blinked back tears of happiness. Being able to be so close to Harry and still feel safe. Just another brilliant change in her life that had taken place that day.

Tracey Black was definitely having a happy Christmas.

Chapter End Notes

And so the first half of the Yule Ball ends. I know readers wanted some development between Harry, Daphne and Tracey, so I hope you liked this!

Next Chapter: Sirius and Draco talk. Remus and Aurora talk. Harry dances with a few other girls, and also again with Hermione. But only Hermione and Luna will be focused on. And perhaps more to end the Yule Ball.
Friday, December 25th, 1994

“Sirius?” Amelia asked.

“Hmm?” Sirius replied.

Sirius and Amelia were currently on the dance floor, in a slow dance, as they swayed in a circle. They had spent the last half-hour or so dancing to both fast and slow dances. Sirius had forgotten how much the Purebloods of the British Wizarding World loved their group Waltzes, Tangos and other similar dances. All he wanted to do was hold his fiancee close.

“My feet are getting tired,” Amelia said, “I think we should sit down.”

“Would you like a foot massage?” Sirius asked.

“I would like so much more than a foot massage,” Amelia said, “But that can wait until the Ball is over and I can take you back to my home and to my bed.”

“And exactly what would we be doing?” Sirius asked.

“Given that I currently have your baby in my womb,” Amelia whispered in his ear, “I think you know exactly what I want to do with you. But we will also need to sleep.”

“Aw, really?” Sirius said in a mock-whine.

“Really,” Amelia said, “Or have you forgotten that we agreed to have a family day tomorrow with Susan, Tracey and Daphne tomorrow in Diagon Alley?”

Sirius grinned. He remembered when Tracey and Daphne had requested that during lunch. Due to her change in appearance, Tracey’s clothes barely fit her, and she needed a completely new wardrobe. Sirius was all too happy to go on a family outing with his new daughter and future family.

“Right,” Sirius said, “Also it would be a good time to meet with Keeper Ragnok. I’m surprised a notice from him about Tracey’s new membership into my family hasn’t come yet. Alright, let’s go sit down for a while and mingle like proper Purebloods.”

Sirius took his fiancee’s hand and walked with her over to the table. Daphne was there, but not Tracey. A quick search showed that Tracey was dancing with Harry. He smiled at the sight of them dancing a slow dance.

“Lord Black?” a voice said, as Amelia sat down.

Sirius turned and saw a young man he recognized as cousin Narcissa’s boy.
“Draco Malfoy, I presume?” Sirius asked.

“Yes, sir,” Draco said, “May we speak in private?”

Sirius nodded and led Draco over to a wall of the Great Hall. He cast one of Lily's special Privacy Bubbles around him and Draco. Draco looked at him with a questioning gaze.

“Privacy Bubble,” Sirius said, “We can be seen, but not heard. Do you honestly believe I'd let you speak to me one-on-one without back-up? You're the son of a Death Eater, boy. And don't think about denying it. I fought against your father in the Great War. He wasn't under an Imperius Curse.”

Draco frowned. “You're Lord of one of my Houses. It would be foolish of me to do anything so stupid as attack you.”

“Well, then, maybe you are smarter than your father,” Sirius said, “You don't need to tell me what you want, by the way. My new daughter told me you spoke to her earlier. You're upset that you didn't get invited to attend the Blood Adoption Ritual between me and Tracey.”

“I am,” Draco said, nodding. “I'm a son of the House of Black. It is my right.”

“I am rather surprised you still consider yourself a son of the House of Black,” Sirius said.

“Why?” Draco asked.

“I know you wanted my title, it is obvious,” Sirius said. “And now you're not going to get it. You're a Slytherin. What do you have to gain by still considering yourself a son of the House of Black.”

“It is what my mother wants,” Draco said.

“Is it now?” Sirius said, “Funny. I've been Lord Black since early November, and your mother has yet to make any interest in speaking to me about the House of Black. Not once did she try to speak to me last week during the recesses of the Winter Solstice Session.”

“Would you like me to write a letter to her?” Draco asked. “I know another Council Session is happening on Sunday. Perhaps she can speak to you then.”

Sirius considered that. “It will be her decision. If she wants to meet with me, tell her to send me a letter before the Session comes.”

Draco nodded. “I will do so, sir. Congratulations on your Lordship, and your new Heiress, Lord Black.”

“Thank you,” Sirius said, “Hold up for one moment. I'm not done. I noticed during dinner that you were admiring a few girls, including my daughter, the Greengrass sisters, and Susan Bones. All four of those girls are quite close to me. You will leave them alone unless you have my permission, or make no mistake – I will disown you, and your mother, from the House of Black. I don't think your mother would like that very much.”

Draco frowned. “Message well received, Lord Black.”

“Good,” Sirius said, “You're excused, Heir Malfoy.”
He dropped the privacy bubble and smirked as he watched Draco walk away. How fun it was to be Lord Black! He walked back over to Amelia and sat down beside her. On the dance floor, Tracey was now dancing with Daphne, and Harry was dancing with Susan.

“Everything alright?” Amelia asked.

“Just got done showing Malfoy’s spawn who Lord Black is,” Sirius said, “He's shown interest in Susan, Tracey and the Greengrass girls, by the way. I told him if he tries anything without my permission, he and his mother are disowned from the House of Black.”

Amelia nodded. “Probably the best idea. I was considering speaking to him myself. See if he's had any contact with his father.”

“If he has, he didn't make any hint of it,” Sirius said.

Hermione had been listening to the conversation. “If it helps, I don't think he has been in contact with his father.”

“Why do you say that, Hermione?” Amelia asked.

“Draco's been known to make such threats as 'when my father hears about this' in the past,” Hermione said. “I don't think he's done anything like that since his father was arrested and went on the run as a fugitive.”

“He could be trying to hide such contact,” Amelia said.

Hermione shrugged. “Malfoy might be a Slytherin, but he's not as sly as much of his House. He's been getting away with things, because of his father's influence. I don't think he could hide speaking of his father protecting him if he thought his father could protect him.”

Amelia nodded. “Thank you, Hermione. I'll take that into consideration.”

“You're welcome,” Hermione said.

Amelia smiled at Hermione, then she placed her bare foot in Sirius' lap. “I think I'll take that foot rub now, dear fiancee of mine.”

“Yes, ma'am,” Sirius said.

And he started doing a foot rub like a dutiful soon-to-be husband.

Remus Lupin was finding out a lot about himself that Christmas evening. Due to his condition, he had been avoiding romance as if it was the plague. Therefore, he found it quite shocking that he was very much enjoying his time with Aurora Sinistra. The Hogwarts Astronomy Professor currently had her head on his chest, and her arms around his neck, as they swayed back and forth to a slow tune played by the Weird Sisters.

“I have a confession to make, Remus,” Aurora whispered.
“Oh?” Remus asked.

“I have been wanting to kiss you all evening,” Aurora said, “I just haven’t gotten up the nerve.”

Remus smiled lightly and cleared his throat. “Aurora, could we talk in private?”

“I could use a bit of fresh air,” Aurora said. “I think a sitting area has been set up outside enchanted with warming charms.”

“That sounds like a wonderful place for a conversation,” Remus said.

He took Aurora's hand and led her toward the Entrance Hall. He did not miss Sirius giving him a wink and a grin as he walked past the tables. Remus merely smiled at his best friend, before stepping into the Entrance Hall. When they reached the large doors, they placed warming charms on themselves, and stepped outside. Hand-in-hand, Aurora led Remus toward a sitting area, where several stone benches were placed on ground that had no snow covering it. Hedges surrounded the arena.

As they arrived, they heard the teenagers giggling.

Aurora cleared her throat. “Alright, students. I think it is time for you to back into the Great Hall.”

Sounds of disappointment came from a hedge nearby, as young wizard and witch stood and hurried away back toward the castle.

“I do believe you just ruined a snogging session, Aurora,” Remus said, with an amused smile.

“I am technically one of the chaperones this evening,” Aurora said, “Even though I haven't been doing a very good job of it, since I've been hanging around you all evening. I do feel like a hypocrite, though. Given that I have similar plans.”

Remus cleared his throat. “Before you go through with your plans, we need to talk. Do you have any desire to further this... relationship beyond this evening?”

“Are you asking me to be your girlfriend, Remus Lupin?” Aurora asked, with a grin.

“A possibility,” Remus said, “But before I can even consider it, I need to tell you something about me.”

“Is this the part where you admit to me that you're a werewolf?” Aurora asked.

Remus' eyes widened. “H-how –?”

“I suppose to explain that, I have to start with a little story,” Aurora said. “When I was twelve years old, I was a very clumsy girl. Also I was pretty shy. One particular day, I really had to use the bathroom, and I was hurrying down one of the corridors, and I tripped and fell, and my knapsack broke my fall. The bottom of it ripped open, and I was so embarrassed and upset. And then this sixth year Prefect approached me. And he was a Gryffindor, and I was a little second year Slytherin. So I expected him to tell me off for running down corridors, and take points away from my House. But all he did was help me. He repaired my knapsack, and helped me put my things away.”

Remus smiled, as his mind went back to that day.
“I recall one particular thought more than anything about that day,” Aurora continued. “I remember how so very handsome he was. How handsome you were. I can fully admit it now that a fancy started that day. You were a sixth year, and me a second year, and still I fancied you. The handsome Gryffindor who helped a shy, clumsy Slytherin. I can also admit that I was a bit of a stalker back then. I stalked you around Hogwarts for the next year-and-a-half, and I never could get up the nerve to talk to you again.”

“We noticed, you know,” Remus said, “My friends and I. We thought your little game was cute, not annoying. Sirius and James had made a bet about when you'd get up the nerve to come and talk to me. James won the bet, because you never did.”

“I considered ripping my knapsack on purpose in front of you,” Aurora said, “Several times. But I thought it was too obvious. I noticed something quite interesting back then. My – er – monthly cycles usually take place around the full moon, and back then, I was having to go to Madam Pomfrey for her help with it all. More times than not, I noticed you in the Hospital Wing too around that time. But I never approached you.

“It wasn't until after you had finished up your education, and it was in my fourth year, when my Defense class started to learn about werewolves. By the end of those lessons, I started remembering that handsome prefect, and all those strange patterns. And I knew. I knew what you were.”

“And you still let me ask you to the Ball?” Remus asked.

“Of course I did,” Aurora said. “Because I know that most werewolves are only vicious creatures around a certain time of the month.” She snorted. “Similar to some normal witches, actually. Including me.”

Remus chuckled. Aurora smiled.

“You're not a vicious creature, Remus,” Aurora said. “You're still that same handsome, kind man who helped a little girl with her knapsack. That is partially why I said 'yes' when you asked me to the Ball. The other reason was because the boy I fancied finally asked me out after all these years. You made my twelve year old inner child a very happy young woman on that day. And you’ve made me very happy tonight. I’ve had a very wonderful time so far. Would you like to make me even more happier and be my boyfriend?”

Remus inhaled and exhaled as he looked at her. Aurora knew he was a werewolf and still wanted to be with him. Of course, there was that issue of long distance come next summer. But those questions could wait. He wasn't sure whether they'd still be together by that time.

“I would very much like to be your boyfriend, Aurora,” Remus said.

“Thank, Merlin,” Aurora said.

She leaned toward him and kissed him. He went still for but a lone moment, before he moved his lips against hers, and kissed her. Aurora backed away nearly a minute later, leaving both her and him breathless.

“Here we are, snogging like a teenage couple,” Aurora said, then she chuckled with joy, “I am definitely a hypocrite.”
“I would not call that a snog,” Remus quipped.

“Oh?” Aurora asked, in a teasing tone, “Then would you like to show me what you would refer to as a snog?”

Remus proceeded to do just that.

“Harry?” Susan Bones asked, as the latest song by the Weird Sisters ended.

“Hmm?” Harry asked.

“Thank you for such a lovely dance, but I think Luna wants her turn now,” Susan said.

Harry bit back a groan when he saw Luna, deciding it would be most rude and inappropriate. He had been dancing for the past hour or so, with few breaks in between. He really wanted to rest his feet. He had promised Luna a dance, however, and obviously she wanted one. So he decided to rest after dancing with her.

“Thank you, Susan,” Harry said, “I enjoyed myself.”

Susan blushed cutely and smiled. She walked away, as Luna made her way over to him.

“Hermione wants to dance with you soon, but she says she is resting her feet,” Luna said, “So she offered me to take her place. Would you like to dance?”

“I would enjoy that,” Harry said.

Once again, another slow tune began to play. Luna placed her arms around his neck, and leaned her head against his chest, just under his chin. Slightly surprised that she had chosen sometme so intimate so soon, she wrapped his arms around her and clasped them together.

“This is very nice, Harry,” Luna said, “You really do know how to dance.”

“This is just swaying back and forth,” Harry said, “Anyone can do that.”

“Yes, but you do it so well,” Luna said. “Why do you think I'm the fifth girl who has danced with you?”

“Oh, so this is all about my dancing skills?” Harry asked, grinning.

“No, I also wanted to dance with you because I fancy you,” Luna said.

Harry coughed. That was rather unexpected of her to say it so bluntly.

He sighed. “Luna...”

“You don't need to say anything, Harry,” Luna said; she had not moved her head from his chest at all, “I do not have any expectations for you. You're with Hermione, and I have no wish to interfere with that right now. I just wanted to inform you, so that you know my intentions are not just because I'm playing around.”
“I’ll tell you what I told Daphne earlier,” Harry said. “Let me get in a comfortable place with Hermione, and if you’re still interested in me, then we can try and move things forward.”

“I do not think I will be interested in anyone else but you, Harry,” Luna said. “I am willing to wait for however long it takes. Do you wish for me to stop flirting with you until then?”

“If you enjoy it, and it does not offend Hermione, then you can do whatever you want,” Harry said.

“So no more deliberate attempts at walking through my tent naked?” Luna asked.

Harry coughed again. “Not while I am there. That might offend Hermione.”

Luna hummed. “Duly noted. Thank you for dancing with me.”

She took his hand and led him back over to the table where Hermione was sitting alone again. She grinned as Harry and Luna sat down.

“So?” Hermione asked, “Did you tell him?”

“Yes, I told him,” Luna said, smiling.

Harry playfully glared at Hermione. “That was your idea?”

“I merely suggested it,” Hermione said, “Luna agreed to it. So what did you say?”

“Same thing I said to Daphne,” Harry said, “I'm not doing anything with any other girl until we're comfortable with our relationship. You mean too much to me to cross any lines.”

Hermione smiled sweetly. “So... with my permission, next summer, you might court Daphne and Luna?”

“If you give your permission,” Harry said. “There's just one problem. Aren't you under the option of a Line Continuation marriage, Luna? As you're the only Heiress of the House of Lovegood?”

“Unless Daddy has another Heir before I marry,” Luna said.

Harry eyed his mother seated at a table with Luna's father, having a conversation.

“Luna,” he said, “I don't think my mother is interested in your father that way. She hasn't gotten over the loss of my father, and maybe she never will.”

“Also that would be rather awkward for you two to marry – you'd be... step-siblings or something,” Hermione supplied.

“I don’t mean your mother, Harry,” Luna said, “Daddy has a date set for New Year's Eve with Zelda, the daughter of the Zonko's owner. He told me he's actively searching for a romantic partner, and he wanted my permission to let him do so. He thought I would be offended, but I don't mind. Especially if it means I might not be under a Line Continuation. Then I could qualify as one of the Ladies you are looking for. Pardon me. I believe I will see if my 'date' wishes to dance again.”

Luna stood and walked away. Harry stared after her.
“I don’t know if I will ever understand her,” Harry said.

“Join the club,” Hermione said, grinning. “How many girls are on your dancing list?”

“Astoria and Tonks,” Harry said, “And maybe my mother, my sister and her girlfriend. But if you wish to dance, just give me a few minutes to rest my feet.”

“I would very much like to dance again,” Hermione said, “But we can wait for a few minutes.”

“A foot rub would make things move quicker,” Harry said.

Hermione grinned and pulled her bare foot into his lap. “I thought you’d never ask.”

“Oi,” Harry said, with a mock-glare. “That wasn’t what I meant.”

“It wasn’t?” Hermione said, “Because I’d very much love a foot rub.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Harry said.

“Be gentle,” Hermione said, “I am rather ticklish.”

“Are you?” Harry asked, with a smirk, “Interesting.”

Hermione’s eyes widened. “Don’t you dare! Harry!”

She giggled lightly when he gently tickled her foot. Then she hummed as he began to massage it.

“I am so going to make you pay for that, Potter,” Hermione growled.

“I look forward to it,” Harry said, grinning.

Meanwhile at a nearby table, Lily Potter and Xenophilius Lovegood were finishing up a conversation with a same subject that their children had discussed earlier. Xenophilius had told her about his future date with Zelda Zonko.

“I am quite envious at the fact that you can move on so easily, Xeno,” Lily said.

“It is never easy, Lily,” Xenophilius said. “I miss Pandora every day. However, I have a duty as a Noble Lord.”

“A duty?” Lily echoed.

“Luna doesn’t want to be involved in a Line Continuation marriage, and I do not blame her,” Xenophilius said. “I would like to give her a brother, who I could eventually pass on the title of Lord Lovegood too. You are not fated to such a duty, because you have two wonderful children. Pandora and I always wanted to give Luna a sibling. We had talks about it – the most recent had been a week before her accident. She actually had plans to go off the Contraceptive Draught what would have been the day after her death.”

“I am so very sorry, Xeno,” Lily said.
“The man who lead the funeral said that the higher powers above make things happen for a reason,” Xenophilius said. “I could not see a reason for losing my wife so soon.”

“I don’t believe in such things,” Lily said. “There was no good reason why my husband was stolen from me. He could have escaped with Harry and I that night. I can’t see his sacrifice as something happening for a reason.”

“We all grieve in different ways, Lily,” Xenophilius said, “You may never find a reason why your husband was taken from you so young. You may never find someone to fill the void. But that is not a bad thing. It is just your way of grieving. My way of grieving is to make my daughter happy. And if it means giving her a new mother, and a sibling, then that is what I will do.”

“Luna’s very lucky to have you, Xenophilius,” Lily said.

“Thank you,” Xenophilius said, “I tell myself that every day. Thank you for this evening. It was quite fun. But now I believe I will spend the rest of this holiday with my Luna.”

“I do not blame you for that,” Lily said, “Thank you for accompanying me tonight.”

Xenophilius took her hand and kissed it softly. Then he stood and walked toward his daughter. Lily was just about to stand up when she saw Severus walking over to her. She groaned under her breath, and watched as he sat down.

“I do not want to dance with you, Severus,” Lily said.

“I know this,” Severus said. “I’ve just come to say something to you. Earlier today, I gave you my old Potions book. It is the only copy of all the notes you wrote in it. I did not copy them. I do not want them. Giving you that was one of the final steps I needed to take. And this is the last one. I have decided not to pursue you any longer. I had hoped that when you denied me a few weeks ago, that it was just a spur of the moment thing. But that was just denial on my part. I watched you with Lovegood this evening, and I couldn’t see any sign of any romantic feelings on your face.

“It made me realize that you might never find someone to replace your husband. And I could never hope to try. This is my goodbye to you. We may speak again in the future, but I promise to never let any feelings that have lingered come between us. I am going to do away with them.”

“You’re not going to try to Obliviate yourself of memories of me, are you?” Lily asked.

“No,” Severus said, “I will simply lock away any feelings or desire I have for you. We will simply be acquaintances. However, know this. Doing such a thing might change me. I was a very bitter man when I thought you were dead. I wasn’t a very nice person. Please don’t try to blame yourself for anything that happens to me.”

“You’re not just doing this for me,” Lily said, in realization, “You’re doing this to prepare for Voldemort’s return, aren’t you?”

“I will not let any thoughts of you betray my desire to destroy him, Lily,” Severus said, “That did nothing but harm last time, and I will refuse to make the same mistakes.”

“Then I guess this is really goodbye,” Lily said.

“Yes,” Severus said; he stood up, and looked at her for a moment. “Goodbye, Lily.”
“Goodbye, Severus,” Lily said.

Severus turned and walked off. Lily unclenched her fists and winced as she looked at her palms. She had been trying to resist doing anything that might betray what she knew about him, and in doing so, she had drawn blood, due to her nails piercing the skin of her hands. She took her wand and cast healing charms on her hands. Her palms became smooth with no more cuts.

Lily stood and walked over to the table where Sirius, Amelia, Remus and Aurora were sitting down.

“You don't look so great,” Amelia told her, “What's wrong?”

“I think Severus just broke up with me,” Lily said.

Sirius stared at her. “Er... come again?”

“He is locking away all feelings for me beyond that of mutual acquaintances,” Lily said.

“Why?” Amelia asked.

“He knows now I will never return the feelings he has for me,” Lily said.

“How do you feel about this?” Remus asked.

“Like I want to drown myself in eggnog and firewhiskey,” Lily said. “Don't get me wrong, I am glad he's finally come to his senses. But to actually have him tell me I'm nothing more than an acquaintance now? That really shocked me.”

“Try to get through the rest of the Ball,” Remus said, “And I will supply the eggnog and firewhiskey.”

“Deal,” Lily said, smiling.

“Hey, here's something that will cheer you up,” Sirius said, “Remus actually has a girlfriend!”

Lily's eyes widened and she grinned as Remus and Aurora grinned.

“Wow, you actually did the impossible, Aurora,” Lily said.

Aurora shrugged. “I happen to believe it was fated to happen. A romance – what – eighteen years in the making? He only agreed to be my boyfriend after he told me his secret.”

“Really, Remus?” Lily asked.

“Actually she knew it already,” Remus said, “She figured it out back when she was a fourth year. And she's still decided to date me.”

“I'm not letting you get away that easily after all these years, Remus Lupin,” Aurora said. “Not now that you're back in my life.”

Remus merely smiled again and clutched her hand on the table. Lily smiled as she watched them. She felt so happy for her friend. Even though her old friendship with Severus was officially coming
An hour later...

After taking a bathroom break, Rose made her way back toward the Great Hall, and found Gabrielle waiting for her in the Entrance Hall. The young couple had spent much of the evening either talking at one of the tables, or dancing. Most of the time, they danced the slow dances, and neither cared if anyone was staring at them. The only person aside from Gabrielle who she had danced with was her brother, and Gabrielle had done the same.

“There you are,” Gabrielle said. “Fleur’s about ready to head back to our tent, and she wants me to go with her.”

“So I suppose it is time to say good night then?” Rose asked.

Gabrielle nodded. Rose’s conversation with Hermione the previous day danced through her head. She recalled one specific piece of advice from Hermione. She took Gabrielle’s hand and they made their way out onto the steps. She used warming charms on each of them.

“I wanted a proper good night,” Rose said, “In private.”

She pulled Gabrielle toward her and kissed her. However, instead of backing away after a few moments, she let their kiss linger. But Gabrielle did not back away, and their kiss lasted over half-a-minute before Rose backed away.

“Wow,” Gabrielle whispered, “Rose, I thought –”

“I know we agreed on just simple kisses,” Rose said, “But I wanted to end the evening in a memorable way. I got some advice from a friend to let our kiss linger just this once.”

Gabrielle licked her lips and grinned. “Thank your friend for me. That was better than anything I could have imagined.”

Rose smiled. “Thank you for such a wonderful night, mon Ange. I very much enjoyed dancing with you.”

“Good,” Gabrielle said, “Because I plan on dancing with you again next week at Papa’s New Year’s Eve Party.” She grinned. “And maybe we can have another one of those long kisses to welcome in the new year.”

“I would love that,” Rose said.

At that moment, Fleur walked out of the castle and over to them. Rose smirked when she saw the older Veela smiling.

“End the evening with a kiss with your date?” Rose asked.

“I did,” Fleur said, smiling.

“And it wasn't their first,” Gabrielle said, grinning, “I saw them kissing at least twice.”
“Really?” Rose asked Fleur, “So do you like him?”

“I believe I might,” Fleur said.

“What is his color now?” Gabrielle asked.

“A very attractive pink,” Fleur said, “No more prying, sister. We need to be going back to our tent.” Gabrielle nodded. She hugged Rose, and pecked her on the lips.

“Good night, my Rose,” Gabrielle said.

“Good night, mon Ange ,” Rose said, smiling.

Rose stood in place as she watched her girlfriend start off toward the Beauxbatons camp. She only looked away when she heard someone familiar clear their throat. Her mother was walking down the steps toward her.

“Ready to go back to the tent?” Lily asked.

“Yeah,” Rose said, “Where’s Harry?”

“I think I saw him leaving with Hermione,” Lily said, as she and Rose began walking toward their tent, “I imagine they're saying good night in her tent.”

Rose nodded. She figured she must have just missed them leaving the castle earlier.

“So did you have fun?” Lily asked.

“I did,” Rose said, “Best date ever.”

Lily smiled. “I am happy for you. I know it has to be tough finding enough to do with your girlfriend at your age.”

“We manage,” Rose said, “But tonight definitely helped us.”

“I'm glad,” Lily said. “I admit I had some doubts about the two of you at first, but you and Gabrielle make a very nice couple. I do hope it will last.”

“She told me once she considers me her mate,” Rose said.

“Yes, but she is young, and so are you,” Lily said, “You still have a long way to go. I'm not trying to upset you. I'm just looking out for you.”

“I know,” Rose said. “Thanks, Mom.”

Rose glanced in the direction of the Beauxbatons Tent, and could barely see Gabrielle in the distance. She smiled as she reminisced about the wonderful evening they had shared. It was exactly what they had needed.

Even though the Yule Ball still had about half an hour to go, Hermione had wanted to leave. Harry
had finished dancing with several other girls – Astoria, Tonks, his mother, Rose, and Gabrielle – before dancing one last slow dance with Hermione. Then she announced she was getting tired. Many students had left already, but of her tent-mates, she was the only one to leave.

Harry had escorted her back to her tent, but she didn't want him to leave yet. She dragged him into the tent with her. Then she told him to stay put for a few minutes. Harry was sitting in the rocking chair, reminiscing about the Yule Ball when Hermione returned. She was now dressed in her sleeping gown. She pulled him from his chair, and led him slowly to her bedroom.

“Er... Hermione?” Harry asked; once he realized what she was doing.

“I desire another massage,” Hermione said.

“We could do so on the sofa,” Harry said.

“Anyone could walk in, silly,” Hermione said.

“And why would that be a problem?” Harry asked, as Hermione pulled him through the curtains.

Hermione merely smiled and crawled onto her bed. She motioned for him to join her. He cleared his throat, and sat down on her bed. He moved his hand toward her foot, but she shook her head.

“I never said anything about a foot rub,” Hermione said.

She crawled over to him and kissed him soundly on the lips. He kissed her back for a moment, before he backed away.

“Hermione,” Harry said, “I really don't think --”

“We're not going anywhere near that far,” Hermione said.

Harry stared at her. “Then how far...?”

His sentence stopped as she began unbuttoning her top. Then she moved her gown away from her chest. Harry expected to see a bra, and was therefore quite surprised to find himself staring at her bare breasts. Even with her new bras that helped her bust, Harry never had a clear imagination when it came to his girlfriend's figure. Her breasts weren't too big, nor were they small. To him, they were perfect.

“You've made this night so special for me,” Hermione said, “And I wanted to end it in a special way. For now, this is a one-time thing.”

She took his hand in hers, and placed it over her breast, but not so that he was touching it. She let his hand go and looked at him.

“Whatever you want to do, Harry,” Hermione said.

Harry considered his next action for a moment. Then he proceeded to cover her chest back up with her sleeping gown. She looked at him questioningly.

“You are gorgeous and I thank you for doing this,” Harry said, “But I don't want to do anything more right now. This being a one-time thing tells me that you're only a little bit comfortable with
showing yourself to me. I don't want to go past your comfort levels. I will wait until you're more comfortable.”

Hermione smiled and buttoned up her gown. “Are you okay with snogging me even though I am only in sleepwear without a bra?”

“Whatever you are truly comfortable with,” Harry said.

“You are so very sweet,” Hermione said, “Thank you. You're right. I'm alright with showing part of myself to you. But maybe anything else might have been a bit too much. I suppose it was just the adrenaline and the romance of the evening, it made me a bit loopy. However, I am alright with doing this...”

Hermione crawled into his lap, and straddled him. She wrapped her arms his neck and kissed him soundly on the lips. Their kiss turned heated, and Harry could feel his girlfriend's breasts and pointed nipples pressing into his robes. Harry groaned against her lips as a tent formed in his pants. Hermione gasped and backed away from his lips. She looked down and blushed pink.

“I'm guessing that is my fault?” Hermione asked.

“I'm definitely laying the blame on you,” Harry said. “I think that means it is time for me to go.”

Hermione smiled and kissed him softly again before backing away and crawling off of him.

“Thank you for such a wonderful night tonight,” Hermione said, “It is everything I wanted ever since you first asked me to the Ball – before you asked me on a first date.”

“You don't mind that half the night had other girls in my arms?” Harry asked.

“I gave you permission to dance with them, didn't I?” Hermione replied. “I was quite okay with it. It was good practice for the possible future of you being with more girls than just me.”

“Nowhere in the near future, though,” Harry said, “I am all yours for now. And I must say, this definitely tops the list of the best dates I've ever had.”

Hermione smiled. “Good night, Harry. Merry Christmas. I love you.”

“Merry Christmas,” Harry said, as he stood up from the bed. “And I love you too. Good night, Hermione.”

He made his way out of the bedroom, and found all of Hermione's other tent-mates had arrived.

“Saying good night to Hermione, are you?” Daphne asked, she had a knowing smile on her lips.

“That is exactly what I did,” Harry replied, “Good night, girls.”

The girls replied in the same, and Harry left the tent and toward his own. When he arrived, he found Lily seated at the dining room table.

“There you are,” Lily said. “I take it you were saying good night to Hermione?”

“Yes, Mom,” Harry said.
“I trust you didn’t do anything I should be aware of?” Lily asked.

“No, Mom,” Harry said.

“Anything Sirius should be aware of?” Lily asked, smiling.

Harry paused. Damn. His mother knew he talked to Sirius in the past about things he had done with former girlfriends.

“Maybe?” he replied, “All touching was with clothes on, let’s just say that. Can I go to bed now?”

Lily merely smiled. “Rose has already said her good nights to Gabrielle, and is now getting ready for bed. Sirius has gone back to Bones Manor with Amelia.”

“And Remus?” Harry asked.

“Saying good night to his new girlfriend,” Lily said, smiling.

Harry grinned. “I was wondering whether they’d become an official couple. Good for him. Wait... good night or...?”

“This is Remus, not Sirius,” Lily said.

Harry nodded. “So just good night then.”

“Yes,” Lily said, then smirked, “He probably got less action than you did with Hermione.”

“Mom!” Harry squeaked.

Lily merely smiled. “Good night, Harry. Merry Christmas.”

“Good night, Mom,” Harry said, “Merry Christmas to you too.”

Harry hurried into his bedroom before his mother could say anything anymore awkward than the conversation already was. Minutes later, he dozed off to sleep, with visions of his topless girlfriend, instead of sugar plums, dancing in his head.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished! I loved writing that last little conversation with Lily and Harry, especially how awkward it was.

When I started writing that scene in Hermione's bedroom, I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to move their relationship forward a bit, but too much seemed out of character for their relationship right now. Yes, their relationship will move forward some before the seven months are done. But right now, I decided this was
enough.

Next Chapter: Sirius spends time with his growing family. And more!
Saturday, December 26th, 1994

Sirius Black hummed and stretched as he woke up. He soon realized that something – or rather someone – was missing. He was currently in his fiancee's bed in the Master Bedroom at Bones Manor. He and Amelia had spent a good hour in the throes of passion, celebrating their engagement and Amelia's pregnancy, before curling up to sleep in each other's arms. To Sirius, an hour hadn't been enough, and he was looking forward to perhaps a bit more that morning. There was just one problem. Amelia wasn't in her bed.

Sirius suddenly heard the loud sounds of retching coming from the Master Bathroom. He quickly sat up, grabbed his robes and put them on, grabbed his wand from the bedside table, then hurried into the bathroom. Amelia was on her knees, vomiting into the toilet. Thankfully her hair was short enough that he didn't have to hold it away from her face. So he simply knelt next to her and rubbed her back. After another half-a-minute, Amelia backed up and sat on her haunches. Sirius conjured a glass and filled it with water, then gave it to her. As she gulped it down, he pulled her into a hug.

“Should we cancel our plans for today?” Sirius asked.

“It is just morning sickness,” Amelia said, “It is something that is probably going to be happening for a while. There is no need to cancel anything. I am perfectly fine. Besides, Tracey would probably hex you if you canceled on her. She needs this shopping trip to get new outfits for her changed body.”

“Right,” Sirius said, nodding; he used a *Tempus* charm and found that it was half-past-seven. “We planned on meeting the girls around nine-thirty to pick them up, right?”

“Yeah,” Amelia said, “Susan said she'd be at Tracey and Daphne's tent when we arrive so we don't have to go into the castle.”

“So we have roughly an hour-and-a-half to get ready,” Sirius said.

“Mnhmm,” Amelia said, “Mmm, as long as we're at the Hogwarts gate at nine-fifteen, we should be fine. We can run to the tent in our Animagus forms.”

“Are you sure?” Sirius asked.

“My Healer said I can transform into my Animagus form until my third trimester,” Amelia said, “So I am perfectly fine for a nice run across the Grounds.”

“You know,” Sirius said, “You're going to be married to a Marauder. I do believe it is time for your Animagus form to have a Marauder nickname.”

“Oh?” Amelia asked, “And what should I be called?”
Sirius grinned. “Justice.”

Amelia smiled. “And here I thought you’d call me something inappropriate. I like that name.”

“I thought it was perfect for your line of work,” Sirius said.

“It is, very much so,” Amelia said, “You know... I know what is going through your mind at moment.”

“Oh?” Sirius asked.

“Yes,” Amelia said, “As long as it is gentle and nothing that will upset my stomach, I would very much like an encore of last night.”

Sirius grinned. Amelia laughed when he picked her up into her arms, and carried her bridal-style back to her bed.

At nine-o-clock, the newly-engaged couple was sitting together in the dining room, and eating breakfast, as Amelia was going through her post.

“Sirius?” Amelia asked, as she looked at a letter, “You remember when we sent owl post out to the rest of the Great Alliance, announcing my pregnancy and that I wouldn't be able to run for Minister?”

“Yeah,” Sirius said.

“It would appear as if the rest of the Great Alliance threw a Christmas Party last night,” Amelia said, “For those who weren't attending the Yule Ball, I mean.”

“Yeah, I remember receiving an invitation, and having to decline,” Sirius said.

“The rest of the Great Alliance made a decision, and want our feedback,” Amelia said, “They decided to put Lord Greengrass into the running for Minister of Magic tomorrow.”

“Hmm, a good choice, I suppose,” Sirius said, nodding. “It will be more influence in the Light and Neutral Alliance with him as Minister. He might have a real chance at winning.”

“I thought so too,” Amelia said, “I'm going to write to him and tell him I support it.”

“Add my name in there as well,” Sirius said. “I am sure they sent me and Lily the same news. I probably have a letter waiting back in my tent.”

Amelia nodded and proceeded to summon writing material.

Hogwarts

Albus Dumbledore made his way down the stairs toward the Entrance Hall, reminiscing about the wildly successful, enjoyable and entertaining Yule Ball the previous evening.

He privately wondered how many of the sixteen year old and older Betrothed students had decided the joyous occasion was an ample time to practice for their part in the new, and so bluntly coined,
'Teen Pregnancy Law' of the Pureblood Heritage Act. He had 'encouraged' the chaperones the previous evening to ignore some of the frolicking of the older students, and reminded his staff that such things were going to be perfectly legal due to the new law. He had gotten strange looks for that from much of his staff, but had decided to ignore them.

His Deputy Headmistress met him on the stairs leading into the Entrance Hall, looking furious.

“My dear Minerva, what is the matter now?” Albus said.

“Albus, you need to control Severus!” Minerva growled. “He's been taking away points from students for nonsensical reasons! Just now I heard him taking twenty-five points away from one of my Lions for humming a Christmas tune, and even I could barely hear it! And that is only the latest refraction he's done this morning! He hasn't been like this since before Lady Potter was discovered to be alive.”

Albus frowned. He, too, had noticed a slight personality shift in Severus ever since Lily Potter had returned from the 'dead'.

“Where is he?” he asked.

“Standing outside the doors to the Great Hall,” Minerva said, “Probably looking for more students he can punish for more ridiculous reasons!”

Albus sighed and made his way into the Entrance Hall.

“Diggory!” Severus Snape thundered, at the sixth year prefect, Cedric Diggory, standing near the doors that led out onto the Grounds. “What are you doing?”

“I am sure she doesn't need you to wait on her,” Severus said, “Get into the Great Hall before I tell Professor Sprout to take away your Prefect status. Fifteen points from Hufflepuff!”

Albus waited until the young Prefect was in the Great Hall.

“Severus, that was completely unnecessary,” Albus said.

“I suppose Minerva came to you to fib on me like a child, did she?” Severus sneered at him.

“What is the matter with you this morning, my dear boy?” Albus asked. “Is this about Lily Potter --”

“Do not speak that name to me, Dumbledore!” Severus snarled.

“I had thought you were getting better at reacting to her married name,” Albus said.

“I meant her first name,” Severus muttered. “I want nothing to do with her. She is merely a passing acquaintance to me.”

Albus frowned. A ‘passing acquaintance’? Even when he thought she was dead, Lily Potter had never been just a 'passing acquaintance' to Severus.

“Something happened last night,” Albus said, in realization, “What did you do?”
“Nothing more than was necessary,” Severus said, “I do not need thoughts of her to distract me. It will only lead to certain death when the Dark Lord returns.”

Albus' eyes widened. Severus had not called Voldemort 'The Dark Lord' in front of him since he had thought Lily had died all those years ago. He had refused to call him such. Everything was making sense now. Severus had used his Mastered Occlumency skills to lock away any thoughts of Lily Potter beyond a passing acquaintance.

“Oh, my dear boy,” Albus said, “I fear that you may have made a terrible mistake.”

“Perhaps,” Severus said, “But it will stop me from making anymore mistakes in the future. I thought you would have been pleased. I did this to help you, after all. It is for the --”

“Severus,” Albus warned him; he didn't need such words said in public.

Severus sneered at the interruption. “Duly noted. Excuse me if I do not wish to have breakfast with those brats today.”

He turned with a swish of his cloak and walked away. Albus frowned as he watched his Potions Master disappear into the dungeons. Severus had done a lot of great work for him. But he had done so because he had a purpose: revenge on Voldemort to avenge the death of Lily Potter. Severus had been one of his greatest tools in his plans for the forthcoming war. Now Albus had his doubts Severus would be useful at all, thanks to the foolish move he had made overnight.

He considered walking down to Lily Potter's tent, and demanding her to tell him what had gone on between her and Severus. But he knew that would only anger her, and possibly stop all progress he had made with her. She had already promised a meeting between him, herself and her son. He didn't need his anger toward this new twist in his plans to ruin what would be a major move in the road to the Greater Good.

He made his way into the Great Hall, and winced at the steep change in the House Points jars in every House but Slytherin. When he made his way to the Head Table, he turned to the students, and muttered “Sonorous”, pointing the Elder Wand to his throat.

“All points lost and punishments meted out this morning are hereby canceled out,” he announced.

He smiled at the raucous cheers and applause from the Gryffindor, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff students, as the Points Jars reset to what they had been the night before. At least something had gone right that morning.

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**Hogwarts Five Tent**

Tracey Black and her girlfriend, Daphne, were cuddled on the sofa, waiting for Susan Bones. Tonks was sitting in a chair nearby. Hermione, Luna and Astoria were having breakfast in the cafeteria tent with Harry and Rose. Tracey had expected Susan to arrive at around nine-o-clock, to wait for Sirius and Amelia to arrive and take them to Diagon Alley for their planned outing. Susan arrived at nine-fifteen, wearing a casual outfit, and looking annoyed.

“Am I late?” Susan asked.
“Daddy and Amelia haven't arrived yet,” Tracey said, “But they should be here soon. We expected you here a few minutes ago though.”

“Blame that on Snape,” Susan muttered, as she plopped down in a chair, “That man is in a particularly foul mood today. I was on my way out of the castle, and he was standing in the Entrance Hall. He asked me where I was going, and I told him I had a planned outing with Auntie Amelia and Sirius. The look on his face when I mentioned Sirius' name... he hates Sirius for some reason.

“Anyway, Snape said he hadn't been informed I had permission to leave. He gave me detention for a week, and took fifty points from Hufflepuff, and told me to go into the Great Hall for breakfast. Headmaster Dumbledore came in a few minutes later, and canceled all punishments, and that is when I came down here.”

“Merlin,” Daphne said, “What found its way into Snape's cauldron and died? He hasn't been that foul for a few weeks now.”

“What was that old Muggle phrase?” Tracey asked, “A Tiger can't change its stripes'? Snape's a git. He's always been a git, and he'll always be a git.”

“Wow,” Susan said, “I never thought I'd hear that coming from you about your Head of House.”

“He isn't my Head of House,” Tracey said, “I'm sorted as merely a 'Hogwarts' student, remember? I can say whatever I want about that git.”

“Only where he can't hear it,” Daphne said, with a smirk. “I dare you to call him that where he can hear you.”

“And here I thought you loved me,” Tracey said, “Your dare would only hurt me.”

“I would protect you,” Daphne said, as she cuddled Tracey closer to her. “I will always protect you, my beautiful Tracey Black.”

Tracey grinned and pecked her girlfriend on the lips. If Daphne wanted to continue the kiss, she was interrupted by the sound of footsteps. Tracey turned and grinned when she saw a Grim and German Shepherd running into the tent. They shook off the damp from the snow, and transformed back into Sirius and Amelia respectively. Tracey stood and walked over to Sirius, and hugged him.

“Morning, Daddy!” she said.

“Good morning, sweetheart,” Sirius said, “We'll be leaving in a few minutes. Hagrid is preparing a carriage for us to take to Hogsmeade, and we'll Apparate to Diagon Alley from there. I need to go see if I have any post waiting for me.”

“Maybe you can ask Lily or Remus if they know anything about why Professor Snape is in a foul mood today,” Susan said.

“Uh-oh,” Amelia said, “What's wrong with Snape?”

Susan quickly retold her story to Sirius and Amelia. A dark expression crossed Sirius' face, as he looked at Amelia.

“You don't think this has anything to do with what happened between him and Lily last night?”
Sirius asked Amelia.

“Perhaps,” Amelia said, “You might want to talk to Lily about it.”

“Will do,” Sirius said, “I'll be back in a few minutes, and then we'll leave.”

Tracey blushed and grinned when Sirius kissed the top of her head. Then he turned and walked back out of the tent.

“What happened between Lily and Snape?” Tracey asked Amelia.

“Let's just say whatever happened, it caused Lily to want to nurse a eggnog and firewhiskey before bedtime,” Amelia said.

Tracey frowned. Harry's mother never seemed like the type to drink much alcohol. That told her that this couldn't be anything good.

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**House Potter Tent**

Lily and Remus were currently sitting at the dining room table, going through the morning mail, separating the mail into stacks for each of the 'extended Potter family', and reading their own.

“Another invite to a New Year's Eve Party,” Lily said, “I suppose we need to reply to all of them and tell them we have plans for that evening.”

Lily was very much looking forward to the New Year's Eve Party that the French Minister of Magic, Pierre Delacour, would be holding in the Minister's Manor in Paris, and she knew her children were looking forward to it too.

“Probably should have done it sooner than now, I suppose,” Remus said, with an amused smile.

Sirius stepped into the tent at that moment.

“Lily, when you told us Snape was 'locking away his feelings' for you, I didn't think you meant it literally,” Sirius said, “He is apparently in a very foul mood this morning.”

Sirius sat down at the table and explained to Lily and Remus what Susan had told him.

Lily frowned and thought back to her conversation with Severus.

“Severus told me he was very bitter, and not a very nice man when he I thought I was dead,” Lily said, “Apparently that changed a bit after finding out that I survived.”

“Yeah, well, he's apparently reset himself to the same git he was before he realized you were alive,” Sirius said.

“What am I supposed to do about it?” Lily asked.

“Talk to him!” Sirius exclaimed, throwing his hands up.

“I can't,” Lily said.
“Lily,” Remus said, “Perhaps it would be best if --”

“No, Remus,” Lily said, “My hands bled from my fingernails digging so deep into them, because I was trying to stop myself from crossing any lines with him.”

“I know you think we need him,” Remus said, “But if he's acting like this, he's no use to us.”

“I don’t care whether or not he’s any use to us!” Lily growled. “This isn't about him! Think, Remus. What would happen if I suddenly rant to him, and reveal all I know about his betrayal with the Prophecy!”

Remus frowned. “He'd probably tell Albus.”

“Exactly!” Lily said. “He would tell Albus. Albus doesn't know what we know. We have that advantage over him until the meeting takes place between, me, Harry and him. I'm not going to lose such a big advantage over him. We haven't prepared yet for the meeting. It isn't supposed to take place until the first week of January. We're not ready!”

Remus sighed. “Point.”

“So what do we do about Snape?” Sirius asked.

“We don't do anything,” Lily said, “That is Albus' job to take care of. I thought you were heading to Diagon Alley with Amy and the girls.”

“I am,” Sirius said, “I wanted to check up on my post first. I suppose this pile is mine?”

Lily nodded. Sirius thumbed through the envelopes and scrolls, and grinned as he found an envelope from Gringotts. He opened it and it transformed into a piece of parchment.

“Excellent,” he said. “Keeper Ragnok is waiting for me and Tracey, to confirm her new status as a daughter of the House of Black. Just as I predicted. By the way, did you get any letters from the Great Alliance?”

A few of them,” Lily said, “I haven't read through them yet.”

“I know what they're about,” Sirius said. “Amelia wrote to the other members of the Great Alliance yesterday, and informed them of her pregnancy, and that she couldn't run for Minister of Magic. Apparently the other members of the Great Alliance had a Christmas party last night. I guess they took up suggestions for who could be their new pick for Minister of Magic. Lord Greengrass was chosen.”

“A good choice,” Lily said, “I wonder if any of these letters has suggested I nominate him tomorrow.”

“You are the leader of the Great Alliance,” Sirius said, “I'm sure you've been given the job.”

Sirius quickly looked through his mail, and stood up. “I'll see you later. I have my Marauder Mirror on me. Tell me if anything happens I need to know about.”

“Alright,” Lily said, “Have fun.”
“Definitely,” Sirius said, grinning.

He turned and made his way out of the tent.

“We're not telling him if anything happens until he returns, right?” Remus asked, grinning.

“Nope,” Lily said, shaking her head. “He deserves a peaceful outing with his new daughter and future family. Are you planning on spending time with Aurora today?”

“I think so,” Remus said.

Lily smiled. “I’m happy for you. You deserve to have someone special like her.”

“I don’t know how long it will last,” Remus said, “What if we’re still together when we head back to America? Do you think she'd drop everything here – including her Professor job – just to be with me?”

“Why don't you take a leaf from Harry's book,” Lily said, “and wait to see what happens when the end of June comes around? Right now it is day-to-day.”

Remus nodded. “Probably the best advice you could give me. Thank you.”

Lily smiled again, and returned to her mail, trying to distract herself from thoughts of Severus Snape.

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**Gringotts**

Half-an-hour after he left the House Potter Tent, Sirius led Tracey through the Atrium of Gringotts, as they made their way to Keeper Ragnok. They had just split up from Amelia, Daphne and Susan, who were going to do a bit of shopping while they waited. Amelia mentioned buying some Potions from the Apothecary, that would assist with early pregnancy symptoms.

She also threatened Sirius that if he and Tracey join them soon, she might start on some very early shopping for their wedding and the baby. Sirius told her not to do any impulse shopping, and she merely smirked at him in response. Which told him he needed to definitely hurry up with his meeting with Keeper Ragnok.

Thankfully, there was no queue at Keeper Ragnok's counter.

“Greetings, Keeper Ragnok,” Sirius said, as he approached the Goblin.

“Ah, Lord Black,” Ragnok said, “I trust you received my letter this morning?”

“Yes, I did,” Sirius said.

“Excellent,” Ragnok said, “Follow me, and we can continue this conversation in private.”

Soon Sirius and Tracey were sitting at a table in a small meeting room which adjoined to the Atrium.

“How are Lord Potter and his family fairing as of late?” Ragnok asked.
“They're wonderful,” Sirius said, “We all had a very enjoyable Christmas holiday yesterday. Keeper Ragnok, may I introduce you to my new daughter? Tracey Andromeda Black, Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, this is Keeper Ragnok the Sixth, the Account Manager and Vault Keeper of the House of Black.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you, Heiress Black,” Ragnok said.

“An honor to meet you, Keeper Ragnok,” Tracey said. “May your coffers ever prosper.”

“And may your new name bring you good fortune in your life,” Ragnok said. “Lord Black, yesterday at fifteen-past-ten in the morning, I received a notice from the Hall of Records about a successful Blood Adoption Ritual between yourself and Heiress Black. I immediately wrote a letter to Mr. Dirk Cresswell, of the Goblin Liaison Office at the Ministry of Magic. Mr. Cresswell replaced Cuthbert Mockridge as the Head of the office this past summer. Mr. Cresswell soon confirmed my suspicions that the Wizengamot had made your Blood Adoption Ritual legal.

“What I require from you is a memory of the event for confirmation. From your daughter, I would like her to provide a few droplets of blood to confirm that she is an official member of the House of Black, and your daughter by blood.”

Sirius glanced at Tracey, who nodded. He removed a copy of the memory of the Blood Adoption Ritual from his mind, and placed it in a vial Ragnok offered. Ragnok then snapped his fingers and a shimmering piece of parchment and a Blood Blade appeared in front of Tracey. Tracey sliced the palm of her hand opened, and a few droplets of her blood dripped onto the parchment, before her hand healed back up. Ragnok took the parchment and looked over it.

“Excellent,” Ragnok said, “Tracey Black, this confirms that you are now the blood daughter of Lord Sirius Black, and of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black.”

Sirius smiled when Tracey grinned at him.

“As a direct member of the House of Black,” Ragnok said, “I am now your official Account Manager and Vault Keeper.”

“Does Tracey have any leftover funds from the House of Davis?” Sirius asked.

Ragnok snapped his fingers, and a piece of parchment appeared in front of him. He read through it and frowned.

“Lord Derrick Davis closed Tracey's Trust Vault on the same day he disowned her,” he said.

Tracey shrugged. “I expected that.”

“As did I,” Sirius said, “Keeper Ragnok, I wish to open up a new Trust Vault for Tracey Black, with a five-thousand Galleon allowance per month, to come directly from the Family Vault of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black.”

Tracey's eyes widened. “That's double the monthly allowance I got from Lord Davis.”

“You deserve it, Tracey,” Sirius said. “Besides, I can afford it.”

Tracey blushed and smiled. Ragnok snapped his fingers yet again, and two forms appeared in front
of Sirius and Tracey.

“Fill out these forms and I will open a requested Trust Vault,” he said.

Five minutes later, the forms were filled out, and Tracey had a key to her new Trust Vault, as well as a Debit Card of sorts that connected to her Trust Vault, so she wouldn't have to carry around bags of money.

“I will look over the memory of the Ritual,” Ragnok said, “And send you a notice with an official record of today's meeting. If there isn't anything else, I believe we can call this meeting done.”

“I have one announcement and a request,” Sirius said. “My announcement is that I am engaged to Lady Amelia Bones, and she is also pregnant with my child.”

“Congratulations, Lord Black,” Ragnok said, “Once the marriage is official, we can meet with the Account Manager of the House of Bones to discuss merging the accounts between the Houses. And your request?”

“I would like to update the Final Will and Testament I created back in 1980,” Sirius said.

Tracey's eyes widened. Sirius merely smiled at her.

“It is only precautionary, Tracey,” Sirius said. “Better to be prepared.”

“Promise me we won't need it for a good long time,” Tracey said, frowning.

“I will do my best to keep that promise,” Sirius said.

Over the next few minutes, Sirius proceeded to update his Will to include Tracey, Susan, and his unnamed Heir. Amelia had already been in his Will, as a named Inheritor, but he changed her inheritance to include much more than he had back in 1980. He wondered how he was going to break that news to Amelia. She would not like the morbidity of it at all. And Sirius couldn't blame her.

But there was a war coming on the horizon. As he had told Tracey, it was better to be prepared. Better to have it and not need it, then the other way around.

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The Leaky Cauldron

Three hours later, Tracey, Daphne, Sirius, Amelia and Susan were sitting down for lunch in the Leaky Cauldron. They had just finished up their shopping trip. Tracey had spent about two hours going through the various clothes stores, completing her new wardrobe, including a few new outfits for Hogwarts since she no longer fit in hers. In addition to her gift cards, she had spent about five-hundred Galleons of the money from her new Trust Vault. She had also purchased a small beaded bag, and Sirius had placed an Undetectable Extension Charm on it. It was quite useful, since it was now holding the many bags of clothing she had purchased.

She had only spent ten-percent of her monthly allowance. She still thought five-thousand Galleons was way too much. But Sirius had calmed her down, and told that if she didn't use all the money, it would sit there until she did need it. So basically, at the end of the month if there was less than five-thousand Galleons in her Vault, it would fill to the same amount, and never add any more. So it
wasn't exactly a monthly allowance, just making sure she had five-thousand Galleons available. That made her feel a bit better.

“Daphne, did you receive any post from your father this morning?” Sirius asked.

“Yes, I did,” Daphne said, “I assume you're referring to his decision to put his name into the running for the Minister of Magic instead of Amelia?”

“Mmhmm,” Sirius said, “How do you feel about that?”

“He would be an excellent Minister,” Daphne said. “If there truly is a war coming again, he would definitely be the best choice in making sure magical Great Britain will survive the war.”

“I wholeheartedly agree,” Amelia said. “This might be the better situation over all. I could still be the Head of the DMLE as long as I am still in Britain, and we could have a Minister we could count on.”

“So you really are deciding on moving us to America?” Susan asked.

“Yes, I told you that yesterday, sweetheart,” Amelia said. “With the new baby on the way, I can't be a part of this coming war. Also, you're officially going to be Lady Bones.”

“I know,” Susan said, “I don't want to be responsible for the extinction of our House.”

“Exactly,” Amelia said, “You'd be far safer in America.”

“I suppose it is a good thing Justin Finch-Fletchley didn't ask me to be his girlfriend last night then,” Susan said, referring to her date to the Ball, “It would be a doomed relationship.”

“Speaking of dates,” Tracey said, “I meant to ask you. Was there a specific reason Ernie and Terry asked Hannah and Padma to the Ball?”

“You mean are they interested in coming back into the Great Alliance?” Susan asked. “Hannah told me that Terry and Ernie are interested, but their fathers aren't. I suppose they're just hoping we could try to help influence their fathers.”

“My father as Minister would do a lot of good bringing Houses Boot and MacMillan back into the Great Alliance,” Daphne said, “I can't see them resisting being a part of such power. The Minister and the Great Alliance on our side.”

“Yes,” Sirius agreed, “Lord Greengrass as Minister would definitely do a lot of good for the future of Great Britain.”

“Enough about politics,” Tracey said, “Have the two of you figured out a date for the wedding yet?”

Sirius and Amelia exchanged looks.

“Well, I suppose it depends on two things,” Amelia said; she rubbed a hand over her still-flat belly, “I definitely want our wedding to be before this this little one is born. First is do we get married in America or Great Britain? Do I want to walk down the aisle with an obvious baby belly? No, not really.”

“So I suppose that points to a wedding before we move to America?” Sirius asked.
“The Great Alliance will want to attend,” Amelia said. “How about during Easter Break at Bones Manor? The Children of the Great Alliance will be able to attend without the hassles of missing class days. And my belly shouldn't be too big by then.”

Sirius smiled. “Easter Break it is.”

Amelia pecked him on the lips. “A wonderful time for a wedding.”

Tracey, Daphne and Susan verbally agreed. Tracey smiled as she looked around at her growing family. Daphne would officially be ‘family’ in a few years, and Sirius was already family. Amelia and Susan would be family come Easter Break, and a new baby come the end of summer.

Yes. Life was very good for Tracey Black.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter finished. So a wedding date and location is set.

Severus Snape is back to being the git he was in canon. Will his decision hurt Dumbledore or the Potters more? Or himself? What do you think of Lily's reasons for not trying to remedy the situation?

Next Chapter: Another Wizengamot Council Session. This won't be anywhere near as long as the last one. Minister of Magic Candidates are named. The Pureblood Heritage Act Committee finalizes the “Teen Pregnancy Law”, and more!
Another Council Session

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: Sorry for the delay. Real life decided to deal me a very busy few days, and I had no chance to write.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sunday, December 27th, 1994

Sirius Black sat upon the Black seat in the Light Alliance of the Wizengamot Council, between Lily and Amelia. Traditionally, there wouldn't have been another Council Session so soon after the Winter Solstice Session earlier that month, but due to Sirius ousting the previous Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, during the Winter Solstice Session, today's Council Session was quite necessary, so that new candidates for the Minister's seat could be voted upon. Cornelius Fudge now sat in the House Fudge seat in the Neutral Alliance.

Just a few minutes ago, the majority of the Council had been inside the adjoining room, making final preparations, and discussing certain items with their fellow closest Allies. The Great Alliance had sat together, of course, having a small meeting so that Sirius, Amelia, Lily, and Xenophilius – the four members of the Great Alliance who had not been present at the Alliance's Christmas Party – could catch up on certain topics.

Because Amelia had dropped her candidacy for the Minister's office, due to her unexpected pregnancy, Lord Castor Greengrass had put his name in. That decision was unanimous amongst the Great Alliance, and Lily had accepted the role of submitting Castor's name into the metaphorical hat.

Ever since the Winter Solstice Session, Lily had been on her own little mission. She and Lord Branstone had been contacting each other regarding his proposal regarding updating the Reasonable Restriction for Underage Wizardry, which had passed during the Winter Solstice Session. Lily prided herself in magical inventions, rune-work, and charm-work. Lord Branstone had provided her the rune-stones and necklaces. Just yesterday, whilst Sirius and his growing family were in Diagon Alley for several hours, Lily had finished up making half-a-dozen rune-stone necklaces. They had not been tested yet, but that was for Lord Branstone to handle. Lord Branstone would be discussing such things during the Council Session.

Unlike the Winter Solstice Session, nobody who was not a member of the Wizengamot could witness the session this time. So outside in the corridor, the members of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee were waiting to come in and announce their final decisions regarding the “Teen Pregnancy Law”.

Albus Dumbledore, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, was currently sitting in the direct center of the first row of Council seats. He would be leading the ceremonies. Albus smacked his gavel on the surface in front of him, and stood up as the entire room went silent.

“Welcome, Lords, Ladies and Department Heads,” Albus said, “to this, the Wizengamot Council
Session of the twenty-seventh of December of the year nineteen ninety four. We have two very important items up for discussion today. The first is the Naming of the Candidates for Minister of Magic. Second, the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee will announce the final, gritty details of the so-called 'Teen Pregnancy Law'. We will also be discussing, where necessary, the updates on any other bills that passed during the Council Session.

"Also, if there are any new bills that you believe should be discussed and voted upon, please feel free to do so. However, unlike the Winter Solstice Session, today's Council Session is not slated to take several hours of our day away from us. This Council Session will last two hours. There should be ample time after the other business is taken care of to discuss a few bills, but we may not get to everyone today. Also, I must remind you. Every Bill that was passed during the Council Session cannot be up on the block for its possible dismissal until next year's Winter Solstice Session."

Sirius nodded. This basically meant the Teen Pregnancy Law would be in effect for at least one year.

“We will begin today's session with an announcement from myself,” Albus continued. “If any of you also have announcements you feel are necessary for the Council to hear, you may raise your hand when called upon. I will begin. During the Winter Solstice Session, it was decided that a bill to exile the Dementors from Azkaban would pass through to the International Confederation of Warlocks. As promised, I have brought the bill forth to the ICW. However, the bill will not be voted upon by the ICW until one week from today. By the time we meet again to decide the new Minister of Magic, it will have already been decided whether or not the Dementors will be exiled from Azkaban.

“And now, I open the floor to other announcements from our Council Members.”

In the Great Alliance seats, Sirius, Amelia, and Lord Branstone raised their hands. Albus looked in their direction first.

“Lord Black,” Albus said.

Sirius stood up from his chair. “Thank you, Chief Warlock. During the Winter Solstice Session, the Council gratefully gave me the right to take part in a Blood Adoption Ritual with the former Tracey Davis. I am happy to announce that on Christmas morning, a successful Blood Adoption Ritual took place. I now have a teenage daughter, by the name of Tracey Andromeda Black. She underwent a few physical changes, and yesterday, Gringotts confirmed that she is now my daughter, by blood, and Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black.”

The Great Alliance around Sirius started applauding politely, and most of the Light Alliance joined in. Lord Greengrass applauded as well, and several members of the Neutral Alliance joined in. Lord Davis, however, looked venomous as he glared up at Sirius, who merely smirked smugly in his direction.

Over in the Dark Alliance, Sirius noted a handful of members applauding briefly, if also respectfully. Narcissa Malfoy was one of them. She didn't look surprised by his announcement at all. Sirius knew that Narcissa's son had likely informed her in the same letter he had told her of Sirius' request to meet with Narcissa. Just that very same morning, Sirius received owl post from Narcissa, asking for a meeting between the two of them after the Wizengamot Council session. Sirius invited Amelia along, just as a precaution, and because she would be his future Lady Black. Sirius, Amelia, and Narcissa would be meeting for a private lunch in the Leaky Cauldron half-an-hour after the Council Session ended.

Both Sirius and Amelia opted not to announce to the whole room about their engagement, or
Amelia's pregnancy. Instead they would be providing the news with Barnabus Cuffe and the Daily Prophet, after their lunch with Narcissa. Amelia, however, also had another announcement. She was called next and stood up.

“You may recall that during the Winter Solstice Session,” Amelia said, “A Bill was passed so that the DMLE and Auror Department may accept donations of a large sum. I am very happy to say several donations have come in, and many are feeling the generosity of the Christmas holidays. As of this morning, a total of seventy-five thousand Galleons in donations have come in, and I am expecting more in the coming days and weeks. With this money, the DMLE and Auror Department can begin to build our forces.

"By summer's end, I plan on welcoming in several new Aurors from not only Brighton Auror Academy, but also those from Allied countries who I might be able to wrangle up with the promise of good paychecks. Also, the DMLE and Auror Department will be helping Brighton Auror Academy with assistance in funds for anyone who wishes to start their training in the Academy come this summer.

“Also, If the Dementors are exiled from Azkaban, I promise to have a full selection of security guards – trained to withstand Azkaban, and all prisoners inside – ready to serve in Azkaban, by the time spring comes. I thank all of you who have already sent in donations. To those who are considering offering donations, I hope this news makes your decisions easier.”

Head Auror Rufus Scrimgeour was the first to stand to applaud. Sirius and Lily joined in, and this time the applause was loud around the Chamber. Sirius did note that a few known Death Eaters and Voldemort sympathizers clapped only briefly, if only to hide their intentions. However, some were not clapping at all.

“Thank you, Lady Bones,” Albus said, after the applause died down, “Lord Branstone.”

“With much appreciated assistance from my friend and ally, the Lady Lily Potter,” Branstone began; he turned and nodded respectfully to Lily, who smiled back at him, then he turned back to his audience; “I have made great lengths to bring forth my accepted proposal to update the Reasonable Restriction for Underage Wizardry.”

He removed a rune-stone necklace from his robes.

“Even though I cannot share exactly how it works here, due to the fact that there are no Muggles present,” he continued, “This rune-stone necklace will do exactly what I told you it would. A Muggleborn merely needs to place their magical signature on this rune, just by tapping their wand on it. Then they give it to their parent to wear. When a Muggleborn student does magic around such Muggles who wear these necklaces, the Trace nullifies. However, it doesn't nullify for all magic. I will be meeting with Madam Edgecombe, and her associates, so that we may discuss what types of spells, charms, curses, etc should be not added onto the newly updated Reasonable Restriction list. If a spell on the list is cast in the vicinity of these necklaces, the Trace will activate.

“If the young Muggleborns, or any young witch or wizard, does any magic in front of Muggles who are not wearing these necklaces, the Trace activates, and Madam Edgecombe and her associates discover that the Reasonable Restriction laws had been broken. I hope to have these rune-stone necklaces mass-produced for all Muggleborn students come Easter Break, so that students can show off their talents to their parents if they wish to go home during the holiday.”

Lily and Sirius began the applause, and the entire Great Alliance, Light Alliance, and most of the
Neutral Alliance applauded. The Dark Alliance, and their Neutral supporters, who didn't like Muggleborn having advantages, all looked displeased that such impressive advancements had been created. Madam Edgecombe looked very impressed by what Lord Branstone had brought forth.

Over the next few minutes, there were a few more announcements. One thing that Sirius found shocking was that there were six new Betrothal Contracts – counting for three new Betrothed couples -- between members of the Dark and Neutral Alliances. The students were all between fifteen and eighteen. Apparently they had decided to take advantage – if one could call it that – of the Teen Pregnancy Law. Sirius wondered whether or not the teens had any say in this.

After the announcements were all given, Albus stood up again.

“And now we move on to the candidates for the Minister of Magic,” he said, “It has been a little over a week, since a vote of No Confidence was decided upon, ousting Cornelius Fudge from the office of Minister of Magic. I am sure decisions have been made and a few of you have decided you want to run for the open seat. All candidates need at least two members of the Council to approve of the candidacy before they can enter the running. Two weeks from now, all candidates will give their best statements regarding why they want to be the British Minister of Magic. Then the Council will vote for the next Minister of Magic. Raise your hands if you wish to nominate a candidate for British Minister of Magic.

Along with Lily, Tiberius Ogden, Cornelius Fudge, Patroclus Nott, and a couple of people, whose names were unknown to Sirius, raised their hands. Tiberius Ogden was called upon first.

“I nominate Lord Arthur Weasley,” Lord Ogden said.

Sirius rolled his eyes, as he saw Albus smiling. This was obviously a decision amongst Dumbledore's Alliance, and it was rather obvious. Albus didn't want to be Minister, Lord Ogden and Lady Marchbanks were too old, and Sirius felt Albus probably thought Augusta Longbottom was too headstrong to do whatever the old coot wanted her to do. But Arthur Weasley was a malleable individual and obviously did whatever his wife, and Albus, wanted him to do.

“Who also votes for Lord Weasley?” Albus asked.

Unsurprisingly, Lady Marchbanks raised her hand. Sirius was mildly surprised that Augusta also raised her hand. Then he recalled what Amelia had said about Augusta and Algernon. Augusta was a spy within Dumbledore's Alliance, and raising her hand was probably to show Albus she was still a strong part of his Alliance.

“Lord Arthur Weasley, congratulations,” Albus said, “you are now a candidate for British Minister of Magic. Lady Potter?”

“I nominate Lord Castor Greengrass,” Lily said.

Albus didn't even need to say anything for every single Lord and Lady who had seats in the Great Alliance raise their hands. Sirius smirked when he noticed Albus look shocked. From the brief glance Albus gave Amelia, it was obvious he thought she would be their candidate. He would have been right, had it not been for her pregnancy, nor her plans to possibly move to America.

After announcing Lord Greengrass was now an official candidate, Albus called upon Cornelius Fudge, who nominated Dolores Umbridge. Sirius was only mildly shocked. Umbridge was obviously Fudge's staunchest supporter when he was Minister. However, Sirius was shocked
because Fudge could have picked someone far better than Umbridge. Umbridge was positively hated by several within the Ministry. Nobody in the Light Alliance liked her, and few in the Neutral Alliance did. Depending on who else was nominated in the Dark and Neutral-Dark Alliances, Dolores Umbridge hardly stood a chance when it came to obtaining the office Minister of Magic. When Madam Edgecombe raised her hand, however, Dolores' candidacy was locked in.

The other three candidates were Bartemius Crouch, Rufus Scrimgeour and Lord Pascal Parkinson – voted in by Patroclus Nott, and Walden MacNair. Sirius wasn't sure whether or not Parkinson was a Death Eater, but he was definitely a Voldemort sympathizer. If Parkinson became Minister of Magic, that did not bode well for the future of Great Britain.

Sirius had a good feeling about Lord Greengrass' chances, but on the chance that he didn't become Minister, Sirius hoped either Rufus Scrimgeour or Arthur Weasley took the office – Scrimgeour, more than Arthur, however. While Arthur was of the Light Alliance, he was also Dumbledore's man, so that would mean an oblivious ally of a closeted Dark Lord would be in office if Arthur won the role. Basically it meant that Albus Dumbledore would be in charge unofficially. Sirius was reminded of Algie's story of Albus wanting a "Pureblood Paradise". If Arthur became Minister, Albus' dream had a very good chance to happen.

When no one else was nominated, Albus stood up.

"Does any of the candidates oppose the decisions made today?" Albus said; none of the candidates spoke up; "Very well – two weeks from now all six candidates will be standing in front of us to give their speeches. Work hard on those speeches and your promises, candidates. They will help you with the much-needed undecided votes, and help you into the Office of British Minister of Magic. Good luck to you all. Moving on. Aurors, will you please invite the attending members of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee inside?"

The two Aurors at the door which led into the corridor opened the door. One stepped outside, and a few moments later, a few witches and wizards stepped into the Council Room, and made their way to the center of the floor. The Aurors closed the door once again.

"Members of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee, I welcome you," Albus said. "As we all know, during the Winter Solstice Session, a bill coined by many as the 'Teen Pregnancy Law' was presented, and approved by a majority of the vote from the Council present today. The Bill was presented rather poorly, in my opinion, by Lord Derrick Davis --"

Sirius resisted snorting out loud. If rumors were true, and the Bill was actually Albus' and Lord Davis had simply been his parrot, then it was quite obvious Albus was quite unhappy with Lord Davis' performance.

"-- but it was approved anyway," Albus continued. "Given its controversial matters, the Bill was passed along to the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee to modify it. The Bill, and the basics behind it, will still be approved of. The Committee has simply made it so it is less controversial --"

Beside Sirius, Lily snorted softly, but Sirius and Amelia could hear her. Sirius couldn't blame her. It was almost impossible to make this bill so it would be less controversial. Anything having to do with Hogwarts-age teenage girls, becoming pregnant and mothers, and Hogwarts-age teenage boys becoming fathers, whilst still students, would be highly controversial.

"-- and over the past week they have been hard at work to make it so," Albus continued. "Today, the members of the Committee stand before us to present the official law that will be placed in the
Pureblood Heritage Act. There is nothing for the Council to vote on. We're just here to listen to the Committee as is the duties of the Wizengamot Council, and perhaps ask a few questions the Committee members can answer. Who before us will address the details of the new law today?”

A red-headed, rather plump witch walked forward to stand out more than her fellow committee members, and raised her hand. Sirius noted the witch smile fondly in the direction of Arthur Weasley, so it was obvious this was his wife.

“Lady Molly Weasley,” Albus said, with a smile, “Thank you for volunteering to stand in front of the Council today. I know we can be an intimidating group of people. If you please, you may begin. Council members, while the Lady Weasley is speaking, she will not be interrupted by anyone present. All questions or comments can be made after she is finished.”

As Albus sat back down in his chair, Molly removed a scroll of parchment from her robes which seemed to be hand-knitted, quite possibly by herself. Sirius recalled briefly that Molly’s husband had voted in approval of the Bill. If the law remained active for a few years, Arthur and Molly’s daughter, Ginny, would be affected by this law, so Sirius knew that some of the modifications were made with girls in Ginny’s situation in mind.

“Lords, Ladies, and Department Heads of the Wizengamot Council,” Lady Weasley began, “I thank you for allowing myself and my fellow members of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee to be here in front of you, and allowing us to speak. I am here today to speak to you in detail about the so-called ‘Teen Pregnancy Law’. This week, the Committee and I met several times to discuss this new law. We also met with Chief Warlock Dumbledore, and his staff at Hogwarts to discuss with them how the Law will affect our children when it comes to being students at Hogwarts. The Hogwarts Staff gave several very good suggestions that helped us put together what we believe will be a version of this law that will be not only proper in terms of the Pureblood Heritage Act, but also welcomed by the majority of the wizards and witches of Magical Great Britain.

“Every member of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee are parents. Many of us have at least one child who is in a Betrothal Contract who will be affected by this law. So we were very careful and thoughtful about how to go forward with this, and still be true to Lord Davis’ general proposal.”

She opened the scroll, and glanced down at it, before looking back at the Council.

“The ‘Teen Pregnancy Law’, is not limited to the Last Generation Loophole,” she continued, “and will affect all Betrothed witches and wizards who have, as of this day, had their sixteenth birthday, up to those who have had their twentieth birthday. However, there are some decisions that have been made which do not affect those under the age of sixteen and eleven months.”

Sirius raised an eyebrow. That was pretty specific.

“The first decision made by the Committee,” Lady Weasley continued, “lasts until the next Winter Solstice Session, and will affect all Betrothed wizards and witches between the age of seventeen and their twentieth birthday.

“All wizards between specified within this age group will be required to see a registered, Ministry-qualified Healer, by the thirty-first of January in the year nineteen ninety-five, in order to make sure that they are healthy enough to have children. If deemed healthy, they will be required to impregnate a witch – whether or not it is their Betrothed, will be addressed shortly – within three months. If they are not deemed healthy, they will be required to present the evidence forth to the Department which handles the Pureblood Heritage Act, that they are not capable of siring children. If Healers cannot
remedy said wizards of this disability, then they will be forced to withdraw from their Betrothal Contract.”

There were several gasps around the Council Room. Sirius couldn't blame those who were shocked. Some types of Betrothal Contracts were so deeply cemented that they could not be canceled out. Harry and Daphne's was one of those. Sirius wondered if steps were being taken and researched, to discover whether Contracts could be safely canceled. When Lady Weasley said nothing about that, he realized that perhaps she, or some members of the Committee, didn't want the British Wizarding World believing there were ways of backing out of Contracts, and getting themselves, or their children out of this Law.

“All witches specified in the aforementioned age group.” Lady Weasley continued, “will also be required to see a registered, Ministry-qualified Healer, by the thirty-first of January in the year nineteen ninety-five, in order to make sure they are healthy enough to become pregnant. If deemed healthy, they will be required to become pregnant with child within three months. If it turns out their Betrothed isn't capable of siring children, their Contract will cancel out. In addition, if said witches are not healthy enough to become pregnant, and steps cannot be taken to remedy that situation, they will be required to present evidence forth to the Department which handles the Pureblood Heritage Act, that they are not capable of birthing children.

“As for those Betrothed wizards and witches who fall between the sixteen and seventeen, most of the aforementioned details are the same. However, sixteen year old Betrothed teenagers will not be required to become pregnant until they are seventeen and three-months old. But if they so wish it, it will perfectly legal for Betrothed witches sixteen years old and upwards to become pregnant if they so desire it before they turn the required age. They are even encouraged to do so, but not required at that age.”

Sirius nodded. This was already sounding somewhat better. Seventeen-and-three-months old teenagers were still Hogwarts students, but at least they were of legal age, and not minors. Encouraging sixteen year olds, however, to want to become pregnant, or impregnate a witch, was not something that Sirius liked.

“However,” Lady Weasley continued, “there are some provisos – if you will – to the aforementioned decisions. If a wizard sixteen years old or older is Betrothed to a witch under the age of sixteen, and are capable of siring children, they will not be required to impregnate a witch, until their Betrothed is seventeen years and three months old, though once again, sixteen year old witches will be encouraged to do so. The same is said for if the witch is older than the wizard.”

Sirius noted the many looks and sighs of relief from those around the Council. No witch or wizard below the age of sixteen – even if their Betrothed fell in the correct age group – would not fall under this Law until they reached the required age. It was better than Sirius expected, but still not as good as there not being a 'Teen Pregnancy Law' at all.

“As I am sure many of you can agree with me on this subject matter,” Lady Weasley continued, “Health of pregnant witches of any age is vitally important, even more so in teenagers, especially in school-age teenagers. This Committee has spoken to a few Healers over the past week, those who specialize in pregnancies. They informed us that there is a risk – not great, but it is there – of danger amongst pregnant teenagers. Be it miscarriage, or even death of the pregnant witch, both are big risks.

“Take into account those pregnant witches who are students in their seventh year of education. They will be studying for, and taking their NEWT exams. This is exhaustive tough work for normal
students. It will be worse for pregnant witches. The solution for this is simple. All witches who are pregnant, or trying to become pregnant, whilst at Hogwarts will be required to visit the Hospital Wing at least two times a week if not more. We are already working on bringing two Healers who work in the field of pregnancies and childbirth to Hogwarts to work with Poppy Pomfrey.

“But that is only one step for pregnant students. In addition, the Committee and the Hogwarts staff are working together to hire part-time tutors in Potions, and various other lessons where dangerous magic is used practically. Pregnant witches will be required to take classes with these tutors instead of their normal lessons. This will prevent any dangers from Potions or spells that may harm the pregnant mother or their child. It is ensured that these lessons will still provide NEWT Level lessons, and all pregnant witches will all be prepared to take their NEWT exams.

“Also, all pregnant witches at Hogwarts will be required to have a house-elf attending them throughout their pregnancies. These house-elves will either be loaned from Hogwarts, or can be brought from either of the Betrothed students' homes. These House-Elves will be required to be specialized as nannies or midwives, as they will be of great help for the pregnant witches. The Hogwarts staff has already promised the Committee that they will be training a selection of their House-Elves for these specialized jobs.”

Sirius nodded. At least the Committee was taking great lengths to make sure all pregnant witches would be healthy enough. That was a good thing.

“As agreed upon by the Hogwarts staff,” Lady Weasley continued, “All pregnant students and their Betrothed will be given the right to reside in the coined Private Betrothed Quarters whilst at Hogwarts. Those Betrothed students whom are sixteen and above, and are healthy enough for pregnancy, who plan to become pregnant within three months will also be given Betrothed Quarters.

“If babies are born before their mother finishes their education, it will be the mother's decision, and the decision of the Healers, whether or not the babies will either stay at Hogwarts with their mother, or they will go home to their grandparents. Most of the time, they will be required to stay at Hogwarts, however, especially in their first few months of life. If they stay at Hogwarts, the nanny House-Elves will be on hand as babysit the children. In addition, mothers will have full permission to excuse themselves from any classes if they need to be with their children.

“If lessons get to be too much for the mother, they will have permission to take private studies instead of attend lessons, in order to be with their children. They will not have any academic punishments because this will be completely legal to do so. All students who are mothers will have the ability to finish their education and take their NEWTs.”

Sirius smiled. In addition to the health of the parents-to-be, their education was also seen as important. It seemed that the Committee really had thought of ways to make this better for the Betrothed students, especially the witches who would be pregnant.

“This next decision is about the future careers and jobs of Betrothed teens affected by this law,” Lady Weasley continued, after taking a moment to catch her breath, and look through the parchment. “All teens affected by this law are to have an equal chance as anyone else their age when it comes to getting jobs. If they want a job, they cannot be turned away simply because they are teen parents, or expecting parents. As long as they have a Healer's permission to get the job they want, and promise that they can maintain their health, and the health of their child or children, they will have permission to apply for the job.”

Sirius nodded in approval again. Once again, the Committee was making waves toward the
betterment of those affected by the law. Lady Weasley continued on for a good ten more minutes, discussing various items and tidbits about the law. Most of it just had to do with simple things regarding the law.

For example, a branch of the Pureblood Heritage Act Department would be created, which its employees would have weekly check-ups with teen parents of young children to make sure both the children and parents were healthy. If the employees noticed anything wrong, the children would be taken away and either put in care of the grandparents, or others until the parents could prove that they could do their parenting jobs well.

After Lady Weasley was finally finished, Albus asked if anyone had questions or comments. Several of those whom had opposed the law raised their hands. Lord Greengrass was called upon first.

“I notice you said nothing about marriage between the Betrothed teenagers who become pregnant and parents,” Castor said, “Are those unmarried Betrothed teens who become pregnant required to be married before the planned date?”

“That is not the Committee's decision,” Lady Weasley said. “Those decisions are for the Betrothed in question, and their parents.”

Lily, who had raised her hand, was called next.

“You said nothing about teens below the age of sixteen,” Lily said. “Does the Committee or the law have any subjects regarding teens below that age regarding sexual activities?”

“Once again, that is not the Committee's decision,” Lady Weasley said, “That is up to the Hogwarts staff, or the parents to handle.”

Sirius huffed as Lily sat down, and Lily and Amelia didn't look happy either. The Committee was simply inviting younger teens to have sex and possibly get pregnant, just because older teens were doing the same. Hopefully the Hogwarts Staff – especially Madam Pomfrey – would make sure that those below sixteen were either not participating in sexual activities, or would be having safe sex.

Augusta Longbottom raised her hand and was called upon.

“Lady Weasley, you mentioned the possibility of Betrothal Contracts having to be canceled if either of the two in the Contract cannot either sire or get pregnant,” she said, “Some Contracts are so solid that they cannot be canceled without punishment. What is being done about this? And what if these teens are already married?”

“The Pureblood Heritage Act will be researching this, I assure you, Lady Longbottom,” Lady Weasley said. “We will make sure any teens who fall under this category are safe. In addition, Healers will be doing their best to make sure all who desire to become pregnant or sire will be able to do so.”

Sirius huffed again. The Committee appeared to be unprepared for that possibility. How unprofessional! After a few other questions and comments were brought up, mostly asking Lady Weasley about things she had already said, Sirius raised his hand and was called upon.

“What will happen to those teens who are able to become pregnant,” Sirius asked, “and still refuse to do so by the required time? There will always be rebels. This law happens to be very controversial. What if some refuse to follow it?”
Lady Weasley frowned and looked at her fellow Committee members. A dark-skinned witch stood up in the Neutral section of the Council

“Lady Zabini,” Albus said, “I believe you are a member of the Committee. Can you answer Lord Black’s question?”

“I can, Chief Warlock Dumbledore,” Lady Zabini said. “Lord Black, what happens when a wizard or witch breaks a law?”

“They are arrested and, if convicted, sentenced to Azkaban, or other prisons,” Sirius said.

Lady Zabini smiled. “The ‘Teen Pregnancy Law’ is, by name, a law. If a teen who falls under this law refuses to do what is required, they will be breaking the law. What Lady Weasley failed to say, probably because she is so polite and kind, is that steps will be taken so those who refuse have to abide by it. The least severe step is threats of Azkaban sentences if they do not agree to take part. Of course, Azkaban is the most severe step is time in Azkaban. But there are steps in between. The teens in question will asked to volunteer to take certain healthy and safe – albeit controversial – Potions. These Potions would be Lust and Conception Draughts, that – shall we say – encourage the teens to become pregnant. This is all voluntary, of course. But if they do not volunteer, they will be arrested for breaking the law.”

“How is that legal?!” Lily shouted.

“It can't be legal,” Amelia said, just as loudly. “You're taking away a person's freedom and right!”

“Silence!” Albus thundered as he smacked his gavel. “The Bill was approved on and passed by this Council! These decisions were made by the Committee, and as such will be legal!”

Sirius huffed and sat down. Madam Umbridge was called upon next.

“Lady Zabini, you mentioned Lust and Conception Draughts,” she said, “There is a thin line when it comes to the legality of such Potions.”

“The use of these Potions will be made legal to use on those teens who fall under this law,” Lady Zabini said.

“Not just on those who refuse to do their part?” Umbridge asked.

“All who qualify under the law will be able to take those Potions if it helps them to become pregnant,” Lady Zabini said.

Umbridge thanked Lady Zabini and sat down.

After Umbridge's questions there were no more. Either everyone was stunned by the ‘punishment’ and Potions part of the law, or they simply had nothing else to say. Albus stood up and smiled at Lady Weasley

“Thank you Committee members, especially to Ladies Weasley and Zabini,” Albus said. “And thanks to those who brought up questions and comments. Committee members, I trust plans have already been made to take these statements to the Daily Prophet, so that they may put them in their newspaper for the whole of Magical Great Britain to see?”
“Yes, Chief Warlock Dumbledore,” Molly said, “Two members of the Committee will be going to the Daily Prophet after we are finished here to speak to them. Also, pamphlets are being made and will be finished by day's end. All Betrothed students who fall under this Law, and their parents – and also Hogwarts – will be given pamphlets for their benefits.”

“Thank you,” Albus said, “Right now, I speak as Headmaster of Hogwarts. I agree with everything Ladies Weasley and Lady Zabini say about this Law, and I thank them for making this Law less controversial. We, at Hogwarts, will do our part in making sure those students who qualify for the law are taken care of. In the coming days, myself, and members of the Hogwarts staff will be addressing all Betrothed students – not just those who fall under the Law, but those who will in the future – regarding the 'Teen Pregnancy Law' so that they may be well-learned in the Law. All issues the students have, including the assigned House-Elves and Betrothed Quarters, will be explained during this meeting.”

Sirius wondered whether Daphne – and in essence, Harry – would be invited to this meeting. After all Albus probably had expectations of one or both being in Great Britain when they were sixteen or seventeen.

“I believe that is all that needs to be said regarding this Law,” Albus said, “Lady Weasley, members of the Committee, thank you for your attendance, and doing your part with this Law. You exceeded my expectations, and made this Law one I believe we can all agree on.”

Sirius huffed again, and Lily and Amelia shook their heads. Albus began to applaud, and much of the Council – those who voted in approval of the Bill originally – applauded as well. Those who voted in denial didn't applaud at all, if only so they wouldn't be mistaken for supporting the Bill. The members of the Committee were excused and proceeded to leave.

The Council Session lasted another half-an-hour. Most of what was discussed involved certain things regarding everyday Ministerial topics that the Wizengamot had to handle because the Council was the interim Minister of Magic while the office was vacant.

Shockingly, there were actually no new laws that were presented. But Sirius was just fine with that. And when Albus excused all of the Council, Sirius was happy to leave with Amelia. They had a meeting with Narcissa to attend shortly.

Chapter End Notes

And that will take place next chapter!

Whew boy, Molly's entire speech was hard to write. I was trying to decide how best to go about it, so that it would be smart, and believable. Hopefully the changes to the Law – aside from, perhaps, the punishment portion – have quelled a few worries and complaints from those who didn't like this Law being in the story. What did you all think of the details and decisions made? Anything I missed? If there was anything that my reviewers deem important that I missed, it will be brought up in future chapters –
there is a reason I didn't detail everything Molly said. Because some of it might be voiced upon later as something she discussed that I didn't say!

What do you think about the Minister of Magic candidates?

Next Chapter: Sirius and Amelia meet with Narcissa. Sirius and Amelia then meet with Barnabus Cuffe to give him an interview regarding their engagement and pregnancy. Also a Dumbledore PoV!
Sunday, December 27th, 1994

Sirius was currently sitting in one of the private rooms in the Leaky Cauldron, reading through a menu of lunch options. Amelia was currently in the bathroom, having the urge to vomit due to morning sickness – which Sirius learned quickly didn’t just happen in the morning.

Sirius felt an urge to vomit, simply due to everything that had happened in the Wizengamot Council Chambers. Sirius Black hated Pureblood Politics, plain and simple. The only reason he chose to sit in his seat on the Council whilst he was in Great Britain, was in the hopes of doing some good in Wizarding Great Britain. The 'Teen Pregnancy Law' was an obvious preview of Albus Dumbledore’s Pureblood Paradise. This Law was pretty bad – Sirius could hardly imagine how it could get any worse in the future. If it wasn't for his Godson having to compete in the Triwizard Tournament, Sirius would have just taken his family – including Amelia, Tracey and Susan – from Great Britain the very next day and would never come back.

“You're looking positively spiteful, Sirius,” Amelia said.

Sirius had been so lost in his thoughts, he hadn’t heard Amelia enter the room. He huffed and snacked his menu on the table, as Amelia sat down next to him.

“If it wasn't for the Great Alliance, and the better half of Wizarding Great Britain,” Sirius said, “I'd say to hell with all of them and let Albus Dumbledore have his Pureblood Paradise. Sooner or later, the ICW or somebody with the same kind of power will just realize how much hell the magical citizens of this country are going through, and there will be a war. It won't be the civil war Dumbledore fears between Light and Dark purebloods. It will be Great Britain versus... anyone who doesn't like what is going on here! The Wizarding Great Britain is going to implode on itself.”

“Unless we prevent it,” Amelia said.

“Who is to say we have to prevent it?” Sirius asked. “Harry only has to be here for the Second and Third Task of the Tournament. We could go to America, and then we could bring him back when he has to be here for the Tasks. Every other day, we just say to hell with them all!”

Amelia sighed. “I would agree with you. However, apparently a higher power doesn't want that to happen.”

“Higher power,” Sirius replied with a scoff. “You mean Harry’s supposed destiny to take down Voldemort and Dumbledore? That's mental, you know, Amy? So only Harry can defeat them? Nobody else can even do anything about them? They're suddenly immortal except for the fact that Harry can destroy them? How is that even possible. It isn't!”

“I never said anything like that,” Amelia said. “Voldemort believes in the Prophecy. I don't know whether he believes it is Harry, or Neville Longbottom. But either way, he believes in what he knows. He believes a Chosen One will defeat him. He will go after those who are destined to defeat him. Harry doesn't have a choice there, does he? And Dumbledore – I don't know if he realizes he
might be the 'Dark Lord' in the Prophecy, but if he does --”

“He'll go after Harry and Neville, just like Voldemort would,” Sirius said.

“Neither Voldemort nor Dumbledore will leave Harry alone,” Amelia said. “Are you going to leave Harry to that fate?”

“Hell no!” Sirius said, “I'll fight right beside him if he has to fight in a war! Damn it... you made your point. We may be able to leave Great Britain...”

“But Great Britain can't leave us – not until the two Dark Lords are done for good,” Amelia said, finishing what Sirius was basically saying. “I don't like it anymore than you do. But we cannot leave Voldemort nor Dumbledore to their own devices. Because there are people here we care about. Not all of them are going to leave Great Britain with us. This is their home.”

Sirius nodded with grudging agreement. He didn't have to like it. But he couldn't avoid it. He was in the same position as Harry. They could go back to America, but they would be pulled back in to Great Britain, because they had people there they cared about who could get hurt if something wasn't done.

The door to the room opened again, and Narcissa Malfoy entered, with Tom the Barman and owner of the Leaky Cauldron following behind them. Sirius and Amelia both remained in their seats, not willing to show proper respect to someone who was in an opposing Alliance, no matter whether or not she was technically Sirius' family.

Narcissa looked slightly surprised – seemingly trying to hide most of her shock – that Amelia was there with Sirius. She sat down across from them, and Tom approached. He took their requests from the menus – Narcissa only ordered a drink, and not food -- and also summoned drinks – butterbeer for Sirius, Iced tea for Amelia, and gillywater for Narcissa. After telling Sirius and Amelia that their meals would be there in fifteen minutes or less, he left the room.

“Greetings my Lord Black, Lady Bones,” Narcissa said.

“Narcissa,” Sirius greeted. “Shall we cut the formality, Cissy?”

Narcissa raised an eyebrow. “You haven't called me that since you were a child. May I ask what Amelia is doing here?”

“She is the future Lady Black,” Sirius said, “She is my fiancee, and is currently carrying a future Heir or Heiress of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black.”

An actual, genuine smile crossed Narcissa's lips. “Congratulations, cousin. I see you've finally gotten around with doing your part in bringing forth the next generation of the House of Black – in addition to adopting Lord Davis' 'former' daughter, of course. My dear Draco was quite thrilled to inform me about that in a letter.”

Her sarcasm was quite obvious.

“Yes, I am sure he was very disappointed in learning he was no longer first in line for the title of Lord Black,” Sirius said. “Before we move on to the main course of this discussion, I need to ask you something, Cissy.”
“Then ask away,” Narcissa said.


Narcissa raised an eyebrow again, at the question. “It was what Lucius and my father would have done.”

“What does my late Uncle Cygnus have to do with this?” Sirius asked.

“Don't you know?” Narcissa asked. “Cygnus encouraged both me and Bellatrix to do our part – teenage pregnancy, in other words.”

Sirius raised his eyebrows. “Draco wasn't born until --”

“Draco wasn't my first pregnancy, cousin,” Narcissa said. “I had a stillborn daughter when I was nineteen years old. If you hadn't distanced yourself from the family, you might have been informed of that. Lucius and I kept it out of the Daily Prophet for privacy sake.”

Sirius frowned. “I am so very sorry, Cissy. But what about Bellatrix?”

“Miscarriage at eighteen years old,” Narcissa said. “She became pregnant whilst still in Hogwarts, but miscarried a couple weeks after finishing her education. Rodolphus could be abusive...”

Sirius winced. He loathed Bellatrix, but didn't wish that on anybody.

“But she had to be with him anyway,” Narcissa said, “due to the Betrothal Contract Daddy put her in. Do you think she ever loved him? Or that he loved her? He loves his brother more than he ever did with her, if you get my meaning.”

Sirius grimaced. He did get her meaning.

“Why do you think Andromeda ran away from home?” Narcissa asked. “It wasn't only because she fell in love with a Muggleborn. Daddy wanted her to continue the bloodline when she became seventeen. She disrespected the bylaws our father set for her, and he was only following House Black tradition.

“You see, Cousin. Not only did you disrespect the House of Black by going to the Light Alliance, you also voted against the Teen Pregnancy Law, which your family would have all supported.”

“I could argue about that 'family' part, Cissy,” Sirius muttered. “But I won't. You already know my place.”

“Yes, and you've still chosen to become Lord Black anyway, instead of give it to my Draco,” Narcissa said. “For someone who wanted nothing to do with this family, you seem to have taken a crucial role in bringing the House of Black into the future. Becoming Lord Black, adopting a teenage girl to be an Heiress, another baby on the way...”

“I am looking to make the House of Black better than it ever was,” Sirius said.

“You and I will always have our differences when it comes to what we see as 'better', Cousin,” Narcissa said.
“I’d like to hear your opinion on something, Narcissa,” Amelia said. “What is your opinion on what Lady Zabini said about the whole ‘punishment’ portion of the Law.”

“Depends,” Narcissa said. “Which portion are you talking about? Lady Zabini made a very good point to your fiance, you know? This is a Law. Break it, and face a punishment, as with all Laws.”

“There is such a thing as ‘cruel and unusual punishment’, Narcissa,” Sirius said.

Narcissa tittered. “Cruel and unusual? Do you mean the Lust and Conception Potions? I noticed you two and Lady Potter were rather vocal about that part. Have you forgotten your education in Potions? I thought you were all excellent Potion students. You’re confusing Lust Potions with Love Potions. Unlike Love Potions, a person is fully aware of what is going on when ingesting Lust Potions. It simply heights their libido.”

“Yes, but they would be forced to take it,” Sirius said.

“You and I seemed to have heard two different things, Cousin,” Narcissa said. “How is volunteering forcing them to do so?”

“If they don't take volunteer, they'll be arrested!” Sirius argued

“Supporters will call that an idle threat,” Narcissa said. “How many would choose Azkaban over becoming a parent? Which would you prefer, cousin?”

“Becoming a parent, but I'm not a teenager!” Sirius said. “Teenagers should be able to enjoy themselves for a few years before they choose to become parents!”

“Becoming a parent isn't punishment, even for a teenager,” Narcissa said. “And what is this about not enjoying themselves? When Draco and Pansy have children, I'd be thrilled to babysit my grandchildren if my son wants to have an outing or go on a holiday without his child. Tell me – doesn't that sound better than Azkaban? These teenagers are still going to get everything they want – finishing their education, the same chance at finding a job that anyone else has, time to enjoy themselves. These teens will be given House-Elves – nannies and midwives – in addition to the child's loving grandparents, all of whom would watch the children if necessary.”

“Explains why Draco is the way he is,” Sirius said, “Tell me, Cissy? Who was more of a parent and role model for darling Draco? House-Elves, Lucius or you? Given the fact that you're basically supporting House-Elves being a child's minders, and also the fact that Draco reminds me of Lucius, I can't see you having much of a role in your son's life.”

“I am a fine mother, Sirius!” Narcissa growled.

“Amelia's a fine mother, and she isn't a mother yet,” Sirius said. “Susan is a fine young woman. I'd definitely prefer her over Draco.”

“I believe I already stated we see things quite differently,” Narcissa said. “You can't deny Azkaban is cruel punishment here, much worse than the alternative. The majority will choose to abide by the law. And they'll be happy about it. My Draco and his Pansy are already looking forward to it. As are many of their friends and other teenagers I know. Did you know Draco and Pansy want to have one of those Betrothed Quarters, but Albus Dumbledore won't let them until they turn the correct age?”

Sirius snorted. “They probably just want a private place to shag.”
“You talk so crudely, cousin,” Narcissa said. “You call it shagging, I call it being prepared for the future. As long as they are safe, and not risking pregnancy until the proper time, I am completely in support of it.”

“Are you out of your mind?” Amelia asked. “You call yourself a mother! How can you be alright with your child having sex so young?”

Narcissa snorted, still looking at Sirius. “Cousin? How old were you when you first laid down with a woman? Draco's age, right? Does your future Lady Black know her future husband was so sexually active so young? I'm not forcing Draco into anything, and if you believe he's only wanting to practice to 'prepare for the future', you're not ready to be a father. I wonder how far your new daughter has gone with her girlfriend? Or do you not care, since neither of them can get each other pregnant?”

“Shut your rotten mouth, Narcissa,” Sirius growled.

Narcissa merely smiled. “You just don't like not getting your own way, Cousin. Did you truly believe the Great Alliance was so great that every Bill they approved of would get approved, and vice-versa? Take the veil off of your face and grow up, Sirius! This is the life you were born into. You're a Black. Not just a Black, you are Lord Black. A Pureblood Black. Start acting like it. Your parents would be disgusted with you.”

“Much, much too late for that, Cissy,” Sirius said.

Narcissa huffed. “I grow weary of this silly, pointless debate. I came here for a reason!”

“And what reason was that?” Sirius asked. “To tell me to include your boy in on Black traditions? He was only making a fool of himself whinging about how he didn't get invited to mine and Tracey's Adoption Ritual Ceremony.”

“I want you, as Lord Black, to annul my marriage to Lucius,” Narcissa said. “I want to be Narcissa Black again.”

Sirius blinked. That was unexpected. “Why?”

“So I can find somebody else to enjoy my life with,” Narcissa said. “So I can still have a chance at having another child – maybe a daughter like the one I lost – while I still can. Lucius is a lost cause. Rumors are spreading of the Dark Lord's imminent return, and as long as I am married to Lucius, I will be deep into that lifestyle. Did all your time away from the family forget the Black mantra? 'Blacks Kneel Before Nobody'. I do not want my son to have to kneel before the Dark Lord. Draco will still keep the name of Malfoy, because Lucius will not disown his son – he has no other Heir to the name of Malfoy, and likely will die or spend life in Azkaban before he even gets a chance.”

“Annulling your marriage loses you the Malfoy seat on the Council,” Amelia said.

“Draco can take it back when he turns of age,” Narcissa said. “That doesn't matter to me.”

“How does Draco feel about all of this?” Sirius asked. “Or does he know?”

Narcissa sighed. “I'm afraid to tell him.”
“Then I refuse,” Sirius said.

Narcissa blinked. “What?”

“I refuse,” Sirius said, “Until Draco is aware of what is going on. I will not be blamed by your son for this. If that is all you want, then this meeting is over.”

Narcissa frowned. “Fine. I'll write you for another meeting in the near future once I take care of things with my son.”

“I have one proviso if you wish me to help you,” Sirius said; he conjured a quill and ink, and took a napkin from the table; then he wrote several names. “You will inform your son that if behaves unkindly to any of these people on this list, I will disown him from the House of Black.”

He passed the napkin to Narcissa. Narcissa glanced at the napkin, then nodded and pocketed it in her robes.

“It will be done,” she said.

“One more thing,” Amelia said. “Were you being completely honest when you said you know nothing of your husband's whereabouts?”

“If I knew where he was, I would tell you, Lady Bones,” Narcissa said. “Do you realize what will happen when he discovers our marriage will be annulled? I want him in Azkaban or worse. So please do refrain from accusing me of harboring a fugitive. I've even asked our House-Elves if they know where he is, and they do not.”

“Alright,” Amelia said.

“Then I suppose this meeting is over,” Sirius said.

“I suppose I will take my gillywater to go,” Narcissa said. “Farewell, Cousin. I do look forward to an invitation to your wedding.”

She stood, picked up her glass, and proceeded to leave the room.

“I forgot how well that woman could handle a debate,” Sirius said.

“I suppose we would be called hypocrites if we forbid our children from fraternizing so young,” Amelia said. “Though I didn't get up to anything at quite a young age as you did.”

“Yes, but that was me,” Sirius said, “I am lucky I didn't get another woman pregnant. Lucky that none of the Hogwarts students have come and told me I'm their Daddy. I don't want that for any of my children, or my Godchildren, or their friends. I can't believe Narcissa. Lecturing me about 'Blacks Bowing Before Nobody', and here is she is bowing before such a bloody buggering Law such as this!”

“She would probably argue that abiding by laws isn't technically bowing before somebody,” Amelia said.

Sirius huffed. Thankfully, Amelia seemed to realize Sirius didn't want to talk anymore about the subject. So during their lunch, they discussed what they would tell Barnabus Cuffe, and also
discussed the beginnings of their wedding plans.

Nearly an hour later, Sirius and Amelia walked hand-in-hand into the Daily Prophet Headquarters.

“Lord Sirius Black and Lady Amelia Bones to see Barnabus Cuffe,” Sirius said to the reception witch. “I don't think I need to tell you that I don't need an appointment.”

The reception witch frowned, stood up and walked over to Barnabus' office. She knocked on it, then opened the door and stepped inside for a few moments. She then walked back out, and motioned for them to step inside.

“Lord Black! Lady Bones!” Barnabus said, a grin on his face, as Sirius and Amelia stepped into the room, “This is quite unexpected! What can I do for you?”

“We have a couple of announcements that I believe you, yourself, would like to inform your readers,” Sirius said.

“Well, please, do sit down!” Barnabus said, “Perhaps the two of you can also help me with another article I am currently in the beginnings of writing. You see, I need a few quotes for the article, and I know for a fact the two of you would be perfect for it.”

“It depends on what it is,” Sirius said, as he and Amelia sat down in offered chairs.

“Not ten minutes ago, I finished up a meeting with Ladies Nora Zabini and Buffy Blishwick,” Barnabus said, “Perhaps you're aware that they are two members of the Pureblood Heritage Act Committee.”

Sirius frowned. “This is about the 'Teen Pregnancy Law', is it not?”

“It is!” Barnabus said, grinning, “I think you must agree with me when I say this will be some huge news to give to the readers of my newspaper. This is life-changing stuff. Now, here is why I have brought it up with the two of you. Lady Zabini mentioned the two of you by name as opposition against this Law. I need a quote or two by a few people opposing the law, just to bring both sides into the picture. Ladies Zabini and Blishwick are staunch supporters of this Law. And they are parents of teenagers! But so are you. They saw this as a good thing for their children. Now I know that your niece, Susan, isn't in a Betrothal Contract. Will you place her in one, Lady Bones?”

“Not as long as this Law affects her!” Amelia replied. “My niece doesn't need such a Law to bring forth a new generation of the House of Bones. Nobody needs this law.”

“Ladies Zabini and Blishwick talked of rumors of another impending war,” Barnabus said.

Amelia raised an eyebrow. “Are you going to put those rumors in your newspaper for whole of Great Britain to see? If so, then you'll be possibly inciting riots and mayhem everywhere. And you'll be the first I arrest for inciting such thing.”

“Relax, Lady Bones,” Barnabus said, “I do not place rumors in my newspaper. Only facts. Once there are facts that show another war coming, then I will address them. You're avoiding the main point however.”

“And you've fallen for the same thing the Dark and Neutral-Dark Alliance fell for,” Sirius said, “The same thing that made that 'Teen Pregnancy Law' pass. Lord Davis was fear-mongering. He was
playing to the Council's fears, because he knew it would work. And it did.”

“Of course it worked, Lord Black,” Barnabus said. “How many Houses went extinct during the last war?”

“I suppose you believe this is for the betterment of wizarding Great Britain?” Sirius countered.

“It doesn’t matter what I believe,” Barnabus said, “I will write a biased article from both sides. Tell me what you believe. Is it true that your Godson, the Lord Potter, is in a Betrothal Contract?”

“Yes, but he is also an American citizen,” Sirius said, “We will be taking steps to see that he and his Betrothed are not affected by this blasted Law if it still exists by the time they qualify for it.”

“If your loved ones aren't affected by this Law, why do you care about it then?” Barnabus asked.

“My friends are affected by it,” Sirius argued. “People I care about, and the future of Wizarding Great Britain, they're affected by this law. For the better or worse, well, I suppose we'll all find that out, won't we?”

“I can quote you on that?” Barnabus asked, smiling.

“Do whatever you want,” Sirius huffed.

“Thank you,” Barnabus said, writing a few words on a notepad in front of him. “This truly will help my article. Now, what can I do you for?”

“Amelia and I have two announcements, and I have one more that I wouldn't mind if it was in the Daily Prophet,” Sirius said. “The first is that on Christmas morning, the former Tracey Davis became my daughter, Tracey Andromeda Black, through a Blood Adoption Ritual. She is the Heiress Presumptive of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, until I have a son to pass on my name.”


“It did,” Sirius said, “But I highly doubt that needs to be addressed to all of Great Britain. You don't need a photograph for that article.”

Barnabus frowned. “Duly noted. And the other announcements?”

“Lady Bones is to be my future Lady Black,” Sirius said, “We are engaged and have plans for a wedding come Easter holiday. She is also currently pregnant with my future Heir or Heiress.”

Barnabus smiled. “Congratulations to the both of you! I would be very happy to personally announce this to wizarding Great Britain. You haven't been together very long. Was this pregnancy and engagement unplanned?”

“The pregnancy was unplanned, but not unwelcome,” Amelia said. “Also, this isn't our first time dating each other. We were nearly engaged several years ago, but I was young and selfish back then, believing I could only do one life-changing thing, and marriage wasn't the right thing at the time. I was wrong, however. I am thrilled to be where I am in my life right now.”

“We only needed a few weeks of dating for me to know we were still perfect for each other,” Sirius
said, “I already had plans to ask her on Christmas, and that is exactly what I did. It wouldn't have mattered whether she was pregnant or not.”

“Are you going to leave it be a surprise what you're going to have, or do you want to be prepared?” Barnabus asked.

“All I care about is that my baby is healthy,” Amelia said, “Either a boy or a girl would be great. If it is a girl, brilliant. If Sirius wants a son to be the future Lord Black, then we'll try again, if we have a girl.”

Sirius smiled and squeezed Amelia's hand he had been holding.

“All I care about is that my baby is healthy,” Amelia said, “Either a boy or a girl would be great. If it is a girl, brilliant. If Sirius wants a son to be the future Lord Black, then we'll try again, if we have a girl.”

Sirius smiled and squeezed Amelia's hand he had been holding.

“Any details you can give me about the planned wedding?” Barnabus asked.

“It will be a private wedding for our friends and family,” Sirius said, “We don't want the details made public. We will, however, give you pictures and details after all is said and done.”

“Very well,” Barnabus said.

Sirius and Amelia gave Barnabus a couple official quotes for his article, and then their meeting was finished. Sirius and Amelia then left, eager to return to Hogwarts to spend time with their growing family.

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**Somewhere in England...**

Albus Dumbledore walked down a gravel country road that led toward one single house. He had a meeting scheduled with an old friend, although said 'old friend' didn't know he was coming. He hoped his friend was home.

As he walked, his mind also wandered. He was thinking about the candidates for the Minister of Magic. While Arthur Weasley – his choice for Minister of Magic, of course – was the only Light Alliance candidate, he wouldn't be the only candidate the Light Alliance would have interest in voting for.

Lord Castor Greengrass was a huge surprise for Albus. He had expected Amelia Bones to be the Great Alliance's pick for their candidate. But Lord Greengrass' nomination was a very smart maneuver, Albus couldn't deny that. He was a member of the Great Alliance, and he had friends in the Neutral Alliance as well. The only other person the Neutral-Light members of the Council would vote for was likely either Castor Greengrass and Rufus Scrimgeour. It wasn't hard to see who would likely get more votes out of the two of them, due to the additional votes to Greengrass from the Light Alliance, especially from those in the Great Alliance.

Dolores Umbridge and Pascal Parkinson would split the votes amongst the rest. Parkinson was a clear Voldemort sympathizer, and he would get the votes from that crew. Anyone who supported Fudge and Umbridge would vote for her.

At the moment, Albus thought that Lord Greengrass had a clear shot at becoming Minister. Unless he, Albus, found a way to encourage others – perhaps in the Dark and Neutral-Dark Alliance to vote for Arthur Weasley instead of Dolores Umbridge. Dolores had one foot out of the Ministry.

Albus nodded, smiling to himself. He simply needed to play dirty and show those who would vote
for Umbridge that she wasn't the best choice. Perhaps an interview with the Daily Prophet about the Triwizard Tournament from Albus himself? He could include Umbridge's snide comments toward Fleur Delacour and blame the changes in the Second Task, due to Umbridge's actions. Yes, that might very well work. With that plan, in addition to giving Arthur a little help in what he should say in his speech, Albus was sure Arthur had a better chance at becoming Minister.

Thinking about Arthur turned Albus' thoughts to the man's wife, and her speech about the Teen Pregnancy Law. While nothing Molly Weasley had laid out during the Wizengamot Council Session was surprising to Albus, that did not mean he didn't like some of it. Almost none of Albus' original intentions for the Law came into play. Sure, it made things at Hogwarts easier, but it took a lot of control out of the hands of him, the Headmaster.

Having to train house-elves who were only trained for cooking and cleaning, now having to be nannies, babysitters and midwives. Albus had no idea how to achieve all of that. It might be better just to find a house-elf breeder and buy nannies and midwives from them!

Then there was the fact that he had to open up the Private Quarters, which hadn't been opened since during the previous war when some students married early at seventeen. He already knew some students younger than sixteen would want to be placed in those Private Quarters if they were Betrothed. Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson were just one of those couples. He wouldn't be surprised if Ginny Weasley wanted to be in one with Neville Longbottom before long.

Some of the students he had to deny entry into the Quarters were children of some Pureblood Houses whom were important to him in the future. He needed their favors, to help with his plans, and they wouldn't give him any favors if he denied some of their children any favors himself. He couldn't do anything about that because once one Betrothed couple younger than sixteen got entry, every other Betrothed couple would want the same. There simply weren't enough Quarters for that!

Then there was the additional staff he had to hire. Two Healers would be coming in to assist Madam Pomfrey. In addition, he had to hire several tutors for the future pregnant witches. Potions, Defense, Transfiguration, Charms. All would need tutors.

That was why Albus was walking down this gravel road toward a lone house at the end of the road. There were absolutely no neighbors around. His old friend liked his quiet retirement.

Suddenly, Albus felt the enchantments of a ward pressing against him.

“Privacy Wards stopping even me?” Albus asked, mostly muttering to himself, “Really, my old friend, how very impolite.”

Albus cast a messenger Patronus, and his phoenix flew through the wards, and let his friend know he was there. A minute later he felt the enchantments lighten, and he smiled and walked forward through them, then continued to the house still several yards away. As he arrived at the front door of the two-story cottage home, the door opened.

In the doorway stood Horace Slughorn, the former Hogwarts Potions Master whom Severus Snape had replaced once the man had retired.

“What do you want, Albus?” Horace asked. “I sent this year's Christmas Card to you, didn't I? I didn't miss you, did I?”

“I received your card, and I very much liked it, my old friend,” Albus said, “But I am here to discuss
something very important with you.”

Horace sighed. “Fine. Come on in. Can I get you something to drink or eat?”

“No thank you,” Albus said, “I will not be here very long.”

Horace led him into a small sitting room, and motioned to a chair to sit down. Albus did as was requested, and Horace sat in another chair. Albus looked around the room, and smiled at the many photos of Horace with important wizards and witches of magical Great Britain, and also old pictures of Horace with former students of his.

“You're not here to ask me to come teach for you again, are you?” Horace asked.

“I am,” Albus said.

Horace sighed. “I was afraid of that.”

“But it would only be for part-time,” Albus said. “Unless you're needed full time, which is possible.”

Horace raised bushy eyebrows. “Young Severus giving you problems?”

“Recently he's become problematic, yes,” Albus said. “I fear he may either quit, or force me to sack him in the near future. I feel as if he has no purpose in the castle anymore.”

Albus knew that if Severus no long cared for Lily Potter, then he wouldn't care to keep his promise to Albus to fight for her, or her son. Therefore, he had no real reason to keep sanctuary within Hogwarts anymore, nor accept his role as Dumbledore's spy. Severus was useful, but if the man caused him problems then he would wear out his usefulness.

“I know other Potions Masters and Mistresses you could use who you wouldn't have to bring out of their retirement,” Horace said. “Andromeda Tonks, for example.”

“She is an option, but I may need more than one,” Albus said. “You have your connections, but you might not have heard about this one.”

Horace listened with wide eyes as Albus detailed the Teen Pregnancy Law. When Albus finished, Horace was silent for a minute, contemplating.

“Controversial Law, but ingenious as well,” Horace said; he sighed as he gazed at pictures of his former students, “So many Houses went extinct during the war. How many students do you have at Hogwarts these days? Three-fourths of what it was when I taught? Half?”

“Half of what it was when you started teaching,” Albus said.

“That is a real tragedy,” Horace said. “The children, the next generations are the future of our society. How could anyone oppose such a gift that brings forth a new generation?”

“Very true,” Albus said.

“So I can see the need for more teachers like me,” Horace said. “Part-time Professors – tutors, right? To teach the pregnant students lessons that are safer for the mothers-to-be, and their children.”
“And to do so while also guiding them to doing well on their NEWTs,” Albus added, nodding. “So will you help if this helps toward bringing forth a new generation?”

“I suppose so,” Horace said, “Part-time is alright for me, but if you need me full-time, I suppose I can do it. But I want a better office than I had last time!”

“You have it,” Albus said. “What about bringing back the Slug Club?”

Horace laughed. “I wouldn’t be me without my old Club. I can make new connections. I could help these pregnant witches and their Betrothed find promising jobs.”

“Perhaps you could also help me with a problem of mine too,” Albus said. “I am sure you have heard that Lily Potter, formerly Evans, is not as dead as we all had believed.”

“I have!” Horace said, “I couldn't wipe the smile off my face when I saw the article in the Daily Prophet with her interview. And written by my good friend Barnabus Cuffe. I've been meaning to get in contact with her, but a letter just doesn't seem enough. One of my very favorite students, you remember. It is better to reunite face-to-face with someone like that.”

“She is currently at Hogwarts and will be until late June or end of July when she will be returning to America,” Albus said.

“Returning to America?” Horace asked, “This is her home!”

Albus smiled. “Perhaps you can remind her of that. You could also reunite with Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, and meet with Lily’s children. And there are other students – whom are friends of Lily's children who might be good members of your Slug Club.”

“I will have to see them for myself,” Horace said. “But I will most certainly like to reunite with Lily and meet her dear children, especially if they are as wonderful as her.”

“I will expect you back by next Saturday,” Albus said. “Next Monday, tutoring lessons will begin for those witches who will be pregnant by the end of summer.”

“I will be there,” Horace said.

Albus smiled. That was far easier than he had hoped for. The man's unexpected, but welcomed, support of the Teen Pregnancy Law helped with that of course. But Horace always did support the Purebloods. Having been Head of Slytherin had helped with that. If he had to sack Severus, then perhaps Horace would also like his old title of Head of Slytherin back.

“I must be on my way,” Albus said, “I need to look for other tutors as well.”

If Horace became the permanent Professor again, then he'd need a tutor. He wondered if Molly Weasley would like a part-time job, so she could spend time with her youngest children.

Chapter End Notes
Chapter finished. So this chapter was mostly for focus on other opinions toward the Teenage Pregnancy Law. I liked showcasing some of the Pureblood opinions.

Reminder: The house Slughorn lived in, in Half-Blood Prince, was not his own, it was a house he had broken into, while the owners were on vacation.

Next Chapters: Reactions to some Daily Prophet articles, and maybe the articles themselves. Harry and Daphne are invited to a meeting regarding the Teen Pregnancy Law, and Hermione decides to go too (just because she's interested in what will happen, and Betrothal is an option, even if the Law probably won't affect her), and we get some reactions from some students regarding the Laws. And possibly more! New Year's Eve Party at the French Minister's Manor in TWO Chapters!
Prelude To A Meeting

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: Sorry for the delay. This story isn't abandoned or anything.

In the previous chapter, I changed "Heiress Apparent" to "Heiress Presumptive" when discussing Tracey Black. She is only Heiress until Sirius has a son to be the future Lord Black.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Monday, December 28th, 1994

Early Monday morning, Harry was sitting at the dining room table in the House Potter Tent with his mother and Remus. Rose was still asleep, and Sirius was at Bones Manor with Amelia. He was reading a few articles in the Daily Prophet, while his mother and Remus were sorting through mail.

The top of the front page focused on the candidates for the British Minister of Magic. The article had the names of the candidates, and a few facts as well. On the second and third pages of the newspaper, there were more on the candidates, but they were mostly opinion pieces, and the Daily Prophet's view of each candidate. Harry was quite surprised that he could find absolutely no bias toward one candidate more than another. Each opinion piece had both good and bad things to say about each.

The bottom of the front page focused solely on the so-called 'Teen Pregnancy Law'. Harry skimmed through that article, but it said nothing that his mother and Sirius hadn't told him the day before when they had returned from the Wizengamot Council meeting.

The final line of the article informed Betrothed teens and their parents that pamphlets about the 'Teen Pregnancy Law' would be delivered to them in the post by day's end. Harry was just wondering whether or not he would be sent one of those pamphlets, when two owls flew into the tent. The owls dropped off their mail in the box near the door where all mail went for precautionary purposes. As the owls flew back out of the tent, Remus stood up from the table and walked over to the box. He picked up the newly delivered mail, and brought them over to the table. He held two thick envelopes, and a scroll.

"These are addressed to the both of you, respectively, and appear to be from the Ministry of Magic," Remus said, indicating the thick envelopes; then he looked at the scroll, "And this... appears to be from Albus Dumbledore, addressed to Harry."

As Remus cast his wand over the mail, using detection charms for hexes and such, Lily narrowed her eyes at the scroll.

"If Albus wanted to discuss a meeting between us and him," she said, "he would have written to me and not to Harry."

"True," Remus said, "Perhaps it is far more innocent than that. No dangerous hexes or anything on
any of them.”

Lily snorted. “The words ‘innocent’ and ‘Albus Dumbledore’ should never be placed in the same sentence.”

Remus smiled in amusement, as he set one of the thick envelopes, and the scroll in front of Harry, and the other envelope in front of Lily. Lily opened the envelope and pulled out what appeared to be a thick pamphlet.

“It is the pamphlet regarding the ‘Teen Pregnancy Law’,” Lily said.

Harry opened his own envelope and pulled out the pamphlet. The front cover was quite simplistic, and showed absolutely no artistic design to it. In glaring bold words, the title of the pamphlet read:

The Prominent Pureblood Preservation Law
A Sub-Law of the Pureblood Heritage Act

“But,” Harry said, as he eyed the pamphlet, “Even if the law would affect me, I’m not going to be sixteen for another year and a half.”

“I imagine these pamphlets are going out to all the Betrothed teens, Harry,” Remus said, “And not just to those who are sixteen or older.”

Harry nodded and frowned at the wording of the act. “Prominent Pureblood Preservation Law? What kind of name is that? They would have been better off going with the ‘Teen Pregnancy Law’ nickname and be done with it.”

“Can't you see what the Ministry is doing here?” Remus asked. “They're trying to change the minds of the naysayers of this law. Prominent is a big word. They're basically trying to reward those who abide by the law, calling them prominent, raising them high above others. How many teenage Pureblood wizards and witches of Great Britain are, or will, actually be affected by this law? Half... maybe. The Pureblood Heritage Act Committee might very well be trying to raise those numbers up. The term 'Prominent Pureblood' could be something we see in the future. It is basically saying that if you're not Betrothed, you're not prominent amongst the purebloods. After all, if you're not Betrothed, you're not affected by this law.”

“The Committee is trying to influence more Betrothal Contracts,” Harry said.

“Yes,” Remus said, “What better way to preserve the future of purebloods in Great Britain than making sure that most pureblood teens will be forced to follow this law?”

“All they're doing is trying to give the law a better name than the 'Teen Pregnancy Law',” Lily said, “Make it sound more respectable in casual conversation. Open Dumbledore's scroll, Harry. What does he want?”

Harry did as was asked, and unrolled the scroll. He read through it and frowned.

“I have been invited, with my Betrothed, Daphne,” he said, “to a meeting in the Great Hall this afternoon regarding the Prominent Pureblood Preservation Law. All Betrothed students thirteen years old and older are invited to attend.”

“It would appear that Albus has gotten word of your Betrothal Contract to Daphne,” Remus said.
“He would have discovered it eventually,” Lily said, “There's really no harm in him finding out.”

“I wouldn’t say that,” Harry said, “I mean, he could believe that me being Betrothed to Daphne is a good reason for me to stay in Great Britain.”

“He can believe it all he wants, Harry,” Lily said. “Either way, it wouldn't be true.”

Harry nodded as he stared at Dumbledore's letter for a few moments, deep in thought. He considered the invitation, and whether or not he should accept. Then he looked back at his mother and Remus.

“What do you think I should do?” he asked.

“I think,” Lily said, “That you should speak to Daphne about this. I imagine she has also received an invitation from Dumbledore. Make a decision together.”

Harry nodded and threw the letter onto the table, carelessly. “I'll go see if she's awake.”

He stood and proceeded to leave the tent, without another word.

(A couple minutes earlier)

Hermione Granger was lounging in the rocking chair in her tent, reading her Animagus book that Harry had given her for Christmas in addition to her Promise Ring. Even though it wasn't in her near-future plans to learn how to become an Animagus, Harry and his mother and 'honorary uncles' had promised her they would help her if they had time in the future. Right now they were focused on several other things which was understandable. Harry's part in the Triwizard Tournament was merely one of the things they were quite busy with.

On the nearby sofa, Daphne and Tracey were cuddling together and reading the new edition of the Daily Prophet. Hermione had taken one look at it earlier, saw the Teen Pregnancy Law article and decided against reading it.

“You're missing out on reading this, Hermione,” Tracey said, looking up from the newspaper, “Cuffe's article regarding the news about me, and also Sirius and Amelia's engagement and pregnancy is a pretty good read.”

Hermione snorted. “Cut out the article if you want me to read it.”

“This is about the article regarding the details in the law, isn't it?” Daphne asked. “It isn't too bad, and there isn't anything in here that Lily, Sirius and Amelia didn't tell us about yesterday.”

After Sirius and Amelia had returned from their meetings with Narcissa Malfoy and Barnabus Cuffe, the two of them and Lily had sat down with Hermione, Harry, and Hermione's tent-mates and told them all about the final details regarding the Teen Pregnancy Law.

Hermione had mixed reactions. It was obvious the Committee was trying to do their best to make sure the teen parents-to-be would benefit from this, and remain healthy. But still, it was Betrothed
teenagers – students – who would have to be pregnant! Hermione couldn't imagine having to face being pregnant or a mother while still finishing up her education. Plus her parents would be absolutely horrified if that happened to her!

Suddenly, two owls came into the room, and both headed in the direction of Daphne and Tracey. One owl dropped a large thick envelope, while the other dropped a simple envelope, both in front of Daphne.

“Hold up,” Tonks said, from her chair near Daphne and Tracey, “Bodyguard duty. Have to check for hexes and such.”

Tonks quickly used detection charms on the envelopes and passed them as okay.

She picked up large envelope.

“I am guessing this is from the Ministry – it is likely that pamphlet the article mentioned that gives more information about the Law,” Tonks said, handing the larger envelope to Daphne; “And this one... er... is from the Headmaster.”

“How did the Ministry know you're Betrothed, Daphne?” Hermione asked.

“Never heard of the Hall of Records?” Daphne replied.

Hermione nodded. “Ooh, right. Yes, I have. I guess when you and Harry signed the Betrothal, a record of it was placed in the Hall of Records?”

“Yep,” Daphne said, “Betrothals, marriages, births, deaths, et cetera. It is how the Committee knows who to send these pamphlets to. They're sending it to me because I am a teen who is old enough to at least prepare to take part in the Law. They don't know that I have plans to be away from Britain at that point in time. Harry's likely also in the Records just because he's part of the Contract. Which means he likely got the pamphlet too.”

She opened the envelope which was apparently from Dumbledore, and read through the letter.

“Well, it appears Dumbledore knows Harry and I are Betrothed,” Daphne said. “He's invited us both to a meeting this afternoon in the Great Hall. All the Betrothed students of Hogwarts ages thirteen and older – those of whom are at Hogwarts currently – are invited.”

“Why are students younger than sixteen invited?” Hermione asked. “Fifteen I can understand, because they'll be sixteen soon enough. But thirteen and fourteen year olds?”

“Preparing us early,” Daphne said, with a snort.

“Are you going to go, Hermione?” Luna asked. “It doesn't appear you're invited, but... aren't you and Harry considering getting Betrothed?”

“There's a possibility yes,” Hermione said, “But I'm hoping to be in America by the time this affects me, Luna.” She bit her lip, and pondered, “However... it might be nice just to learn about it. Just in case...”

“I agree,” Daphne said, “Who knows what could happen between now and the time we turn sixteen?”
Hermione nodded. “Even though I'm not invited, I suppose I'll go. I imagine there will be others going who aren't Betrothed, but could possibly be in the future.”

“Are you going, Tracey?” Daphne asked.

“Nah,” Tracey said, “If I go, it might send a wrong message.”

“I'll stay with Tracey,” Tonks said, “I'm sure you'll be quite safe with Harry and Hermione, Daphne. My bodyguard duties aren't needed with such a strong young man like Harry around.”

“If Sirius is around I might hang around with him,” Tracey said. “Don't you want to hang out with Sebastian, Tonks?”

Tonks blushed and shrugged. “I'll consider it. He is pretty handsome, isn't he?”

Hermione smiled. She knew Tonks had hit it off well with the American wizard during their date at the Yule Ball.

Ten minutes later, as Hermione and the other girls were discussing random topics, Harry's voice was heard outside the tent.

“Morning girls, may I come inside?” Harry said, from outside the door of the tent.

“Yes, you may,” Hermione said, grinning as she hopped up from her chair.

She made her way over to the tent's entrance as Harry entered. He smiled at her as she wrapped her arms around him and they shared a sweet kiss. The other girls greeted Harry with “good morning's” as the couple separated. Hermione dragged Harry over to the chair she had been sitting in and pushed him down onto it, then sat down on his lap and made herself comfortable.

“Daphne, did you, by chance, receive a letter from a certain Headmaster of yours?” Harry asked.

“I did,” Daphne said, “I am assuming you received one as well.”

“Yes,” Harry said, “Which is why I am here.”

“You mean you're not hear to spend time with me?” Hermione asked, in a teasing, mock-offended voice.

“Of course I am,” Harry said, kissing her on the cheek, “But this is also important. It appears that Dumbledore is holding a meeting in the Great Hall later and all the Betrothed students have been invited. Including you and I, Daphne.”

“Mmhmm,” Daphne said, nodding.

“You don't look surprised that Dumbledore knows we're Betrothed, Daphne,” Harry said.

“I'm not, for a number of reasons, Harry,” Daphne said, “The first is that Betrothal Contracts are recorded in the Hall of Records in the Ministry of Magic. Albus Dumbledore, as Chief Warlock, has permission to freely peruse the Hall of Records.”
“So you believe he found out that way?” Harry asked.

“Maybe,” Daphne said, “If he had, I am sure he had only gone there to confirm his suspicions. While we didn't inform him that we are Betrothed, you did inform him last month that you placed me under House Potter protection. If I was Dumbledore, I'd find it strange that you offered House Protection to someone you barely knew at the time.”

“But your Houses are Allies!” Hermione argued. “And Dumbledore already knew Luna and I were under House Protection, so why would he find it strange that he offered it to you?”

“House Potter has many allies, Hermione,” Daphne countered. “If Dumbledore had paid any attention to Harry, on the first night he was here, he would have known that you and Luna were the first two Hogwarts students Harry met. Then you became friends.”

“As far as Dumbledore knew, you and I had no contact with each other,” Harry said.

“Correct,” Daphne said, “So why would I be important enough, aside from being a daughter of one of the House Potter allies, to suddenly be under House Potter protection? Maybe Dumbledore didn't suspect at the time that Harry and I are Betrothed, but since then?”

“The day of the Winter Solstice Session,” Tracey said, “During that whole ordeal where I was doing my part to help Daddy get permission to do a Blood Adoption with me, certain... insinuations were made, remember? Lord Davis basically told everyone you two were Betrothed without actually saying it.”

“Which Dumbledore probably noticed,” Harry said, nodding. “Alright then. That explains how he knows.”

“But it doesn't explain why he invited the pair of you to a meeting concerning the Teen Pregnancy Law,” Hermione said, “It wouldn't affect you for a couple of years, and even if it did --”

“Even if it did, we have plans to be away from Britain when it happens,” Daphne said, “But Dumbledore doesn't exactly know that, does he?”

“No,” Harry said, “He believes that with this law, he has trapped me here in Great Britain, just as he hoped for. I'm sure he believes inviting us to this meeting will make us feel as if we're affected by it.”

“Maybe,” Tracey said, “Maybe not.”

“What are you thinking, sweetheart?” Daphne asked.

“Dumbledore believes you have to defeat... V-Voldemort right?” Tracey asked, looking at Harry; Harry nodded. “So maybe the old man is afraid that you'll be headed back to America. He's hoping he can get you to see what would happen if you go back. We know why this law was brought up. Dumbledore knows V-Voldemort isn't dead, knows he'll come back sooner or later. This law was brought up to protect the Pureblood Houses from dying out.

“Say you go to this meeting. You see all the Betrothed couples who are going to be affected by this insane law, who will be forced to become parents early. Maybe Dumbledore is trying to get you to see what will happen if you leave magical Great Britain to deal with V-Voldemort and the coming war, without its prophesied savior to defeat Voldemort and save us. This law is just the start – sixteen and seventeen year old witches and wizards being the first... victims.”
“Blimey,” Tonks muttered, “I don't know whether to call that theory insane, or to believe it.”

Hermione frowned and looked at Harry, whose expression was almost unreadable. He seemed to be processing what Tracey had said. Then, unexpectedly, he snorted.

“I think you're giving Dumbledore a bit too much credit there, Trace,” Harry said; before Tracey or the others could reply to that, he continued. “So, Daphne, are we going to this meeting or not?”

“I think we should,” Daphne said, “Just to see what the old man has up his sleeves.”

“I'm going with you,” Hermione said.

“Really?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” Hermione said, “Just in case, you know, this law affects me in the future too.”

Harry kissed Hermione's cheek again. “It won't, but you're welcome to come along if you wish.”

Hermione smiled. However, internally, she was a little upset that Harry had reacted to Tracey's theory so nonchalantly. In her opinion, she thought Tracey had made a pretty good point.

(Early afternoon)

Little did Hermione know, her boyfriend had taken Tracey's theory more seriously than he had let her or the other girls believe. Harry just didn't want the girls to worry how concerned he was. After breakfast, which he had dined with Hermione and the other girls, he had returned to his tent, where he discussed Tracey's idea with his mother and Remus. Lily and Remus shared his concerns that Tracey's theory might have value, and they told him they'd put more thought into it. Harry took it as good news when neither had forbade him from accepting Dumbledore's invitation to attending the meeting.

The meeting would be taking place at two-o-clock in the afternoon, so at a quarter-till, he made his way to the castle with Daphne and Hermione. The trio were in the Entrance Hall of the castle, when Daphne noticed one of her friends and former house-mate standing outside the Great Hall.

“Blaise?” Daphne asked, separating away from Harry and Hermione, and walking over to the dark-skinned Italian teen. “What are you doing here? You're not in a Betrothal Contract, are you?”

Harry and Hermione remained in close proximity to Daphne and her friend, listening to the conversation.

“Not officially,” Blaise said, “I received a letter from my mother today. She informed me that Lord Brocklehurst approached her to discuss a Contract between his daughter, Mandy, and myself. She informed me that she is taking it into consideration. Which basically means it is going to happen, but she is hoping she can persuade Lord Brocklehurst to lower the bride-price.”
“Why is she agreeing to this?” Daphne asked, “Doesn't she know you'll eventually be affected by the Teen Pregnancy Law?”

“Of course she knows,” Blaise said, with a frown, “Why do you think she's agreeing to the Contract? Before today, she's never had any inclination toward placing me in a Betrothal Contract.”

Daphne’s gasp was audible from where Harry stood. “You mean she's --”

“She's supporting the law, yes,” Blaise said, “By agreeing to place me in a Betrothal Contract, she is showing her support. Excuse me, Daphne. I see my soon-to-be Betrothed. I will see you later.”

Blaise moved away from Daphne, and walked over to a young witch Harry recognized as Mandy Brocklehurst, the same girl who had bullied Hermione for so long, and had only recently apologized for it. Meanwhile, Daphne had not moved from where she was standing. She was staring at Blaise, with misty eyes.

“Daphne?” Harry asked, as he slowly approached her.

Daphne sniffled briefly before clearing her throat. When she turned back to Harry, the mist in her eyes had vanished. Now she simply looked angry.

“Aside from Tracey, Blaise has been my only friend in Slytherin since I arrived here,” she said, “He does not deserve to be victimized by this Merlin-be-damned law!”

Her voice was rather high, high enough that those gathered nearby had heard her, and some were staring. If Blaise or Brocklehurst had heard her, they made no indication of it.

“Nobody does, Daphne,” Hermione said, “I'm sorry.”

Daphne merely snorted in response.

“Are you changing your mind about attending the meeting?” Harry asked her.

“No,” Daphne said, “I'm not missing this. Especially if an opportunity arises to voice my... displeasure.”

She turned and headed through the open large oak doors and into the Great Hall. Harry and Hermione hurried after her.

Chapter End Notes

My apologies for the long delay and a shorter than normal chapter. I had planned on putting the Betrothal meeting with Dumbledore in this chapter, but I am having trouble with it, and if I didn't stop here, this chapter likely would take much longer to come out.

I'm not sure when the next chapter will come but hopefully before the end of April. I'm
not abandoning this story at all. The hiatus was due to RL issues (including but not limited to computer issues), and also a bit of writer's block.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter, even though it was short.

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