The Road Less Traveled

by Alinora

Summary

When Harry first joined the wizarding world, he did everything he was supposed to do. He sorted to Gryffindor, he was part of the Golden Trio and he was willing to die to defeat the man that had killed his parents. Unfortunately all that got him were seven uncomfortable years leading to an even more uncomfortable conversation with Dumbledore after he had apparently died. But while Harry was still considering his options between staying dead and Dumbledore's suggestion of somehow returning to finally defeat Voldemort once and for all, a third path was presented that would give him the chance to choose a different road to take on the day he'd first learned that Magic existed.

Notes

Written during the April 2016 Rough Trade Second Chances challenge. Goal was to write 40K where your character gets a second chance at something - whether it was their life, a relationship or a chance to right a wrong or fix a mistake.

My inspiration was the following:

The Road Not Taken
By Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Harry stood, in the misty representation of Kings Cross Station, and steeled himself to make the decision Dumbledore had all but implied he needed to do – to go back and face Voldemort again. In the distance he could hear the sound of a train approaching and it hit him that he wasn’t all that sure he wanted to go back. Not to the war and the bigotry and only being seen as ‘The-Boy-Who-Lived’ and not simply ‘Harry’. It would be so easy to just get on the train and just… go on.

He hesitated, ignoring the disturbing noises coming from the piece of Tom Riddle somewhere behind him and Dumbledore’s smiling, twinkly eyed gaze, and wished there was a better option. He didn’t want to leave everyone to deal with Voldemort alone, but…

“If another option is what you’re looking for, Harry, I have one I’d like to present to you.”

Both Harry and Dumbledore turned in shock at hearing another voice in this place and stared in amazement at the richly adorned man standing behind them. While his expression was fairly bland, Harry got the impression that he was rather amused at having startled them.

“Who are you to break into our private conversation,” Dumbledore blustered.

“The fact that you even have to ask that question is the main reason I’m here to speak with the newly ordained Master of Death. I am the Lord of Magic, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, and I would think that as a former Professor and Headmaster that you would recognize the person who gave you the gift of Magic, no matter how much you took that gift for granted.” He sneered. “But no matter, as you’re dead, you have no further say in this conversation so you should return to where you belong.”

With a wave of his hand, the protesting form of Dumbledore faded into the mist that surrounded them.

Harry could tell that he was staring embarrassingly in a wide open mouthed fashion, but was having a hard time controlling it despite the now obvious amusement coming from his companion. He gave himself a bit of a mental shake and convinced his mouth to close. He took a deep breath before looking over at his companion.

“Surprisingly, I always thought the personification of Magic would be female.”

The man snorted and rolled his eyes. “I’m not the personification of anything, I am the Lord of Magic and I am definitely male.”
Harry looked the man up and down, at the long dark hair and elaborate robes and jewelry he was wearing, and grinned. “Well I hope you can forgive me my confusion.” He sobered then. “You said you had another option for me? A different choice other than to simply return to the war or go on to be with my family?”

He was gestured over to a bench and the two sat down.

“Yes, while you would go back and defeat Voldemort, nothing would change. The wizarding world would continue down the path it’s on of bigotry and hatred and their actions would slowly kill off the very magic they think so important in their world. They’ve forgotten where their gift comes from and to respect what it can do. They’ve forgotten me.”

He sighed. “All those people died to defeat one crazy wizard and I can do little about it because they’ve forgotten about me and therefore my power there is almost gone. And when it’s completely gone, the magic too will leave.”

“How can I help? I’m one person and my influence is… spotty on the best of days,” Harry said ruefully.

“One person applied at the correct moment in time can change the world, Harry. I propose that you go back, but not as Dumbledore would have you, to the moment you died, but far earlier. At this moment, you are the Master of Death, which is what allows you to return at all. This is your realm and you can go back or go on as you choose. I am the Lord of Magic and that combined with what you are means I can send you back to the moment that I truly entered your life. The day you discovered that Magic existed.

“Once you’re back you can be my emissary and start the process of bringing me back into the world. I can take back control of my gift and enact some Justice based on how it has been abused. You will indeed vanquish the Dark Lord by calling on me for Justice. Unfortunately I appear to be the power he, and everyone else, ‘knows not’. Once that’s done I can take it from there.”

“You’re not planning to kill everyone off are you?”

“I said Justice, Harry, not Extermination. But with Justice there will be some deaths. People who have used my gifts to do horrible things willingly will not be left to continue their actions. Rabid dogs must be put down. But others, who have not committed such hideous acts will be punished more accordingly, though some may prefer death than life without their magic once I take it back from them.”

Harry considered some of the wizards he’d met and had to agree that some would certainly choose death over the loss of their magic. In the long run, this seemed to be a better option for the long term health of the wizarding world, though he couldn’t comprehend how anything he could do would have that much of an impact. The thought of reliving his Hogwarts years was both pleasant and totally depressing. While he loved Hogwarts, he’d often had a rough time within her walls.

“Will you do it, Harry? Will you return to your past and help me return with you? I won’t promise that your actions won’t cause deaths, but I will promise that they will be Just and deserved by those that do. But changes need to be made before I am gone and the magical world disappears forever.”

Slowly Harry nodded and with a relieved smile from the Lord sitting beside him, the two settled down to review the details of the plan, refining it until both agreed that it was as planned out as it could be with contingencies on top of contingencies agreed.

Harry had no idea how long they had been talking but at the end of it The Lord of Magic thanked
him quite sincerely and placed his hand on Harry’s forehead. There was a slight jolt where his scar had always been and the next thing he knew there was a loud crash and Hagrid was entering the small shack where Harry had again just turned eleven.

* * * *

Even knowing it was going to happen, finding himself back in his eleven year old body, without his wand, was a shock. Though it certainly helped him give Hagrid the necessary portrayal of someone with no idea of the wizarding world or magic. He could barely calm his mind enough to sleep until the morning, but knew he’d need to be rested for what was likely going to be one of the busiest days of his life.

When he was woken the next morning by the owl delivering the newspaper, he liberated some spare paper while searching for the knuts to pay the bird and was able to scratch out a quick note for the Goblins while Hagrid was distracted with waking up.

Seeing Diagon Alley again was like seeing it for the first time. It had been so different the last time he’d been there and seeing all the people was shocking. He’d still gotten mobbed in the Leaky Cauldron, but otherwise they’d made good time to Gringotts. While Hagrid was digging to find Harry’s key and the letter from Dumbledore about the you-know-what in vault 713, Harry managed to slip his note to the teller. He received an odd look in return, but the teller simply nodded and the note disappeared.

Expecting to do a bit more shopping this time around, Harry picked up more money from his vault and began his rounds as before. Their first stop was Madam Malkin’s where Hagrid left him to have a medicinal pint.

“Hogwarts, dear?” he was asked as he walked in. “Got the lot here – another young man being fitted up just now, in the back.”

“Yes, ma’am, but I also need a lot of other items as well, so I’d like to look around for a bit if you want to finish helping him.” Harry smiled and wandered over to a display to begin looking at the various clothing options they offered. Previously he’d only bought the bare minimum required by Hogwarts and had been forced to wear the Dursleys’ hand-me-downs frequently. He wasn’t doing that again.

He’d made a number of choices before he heard signs that Draco was finished with his fitting and made himself scarce. He was determined to not have their first meeting be here. He watched the young blond leave to join his parents as Hagrid arrived to wait outside.

“Now then, young man, thank you for your patience. Let’s get you measured up and you can tell me what all you’re looking for.” Madam Malkin came bustling over to him with a smile.

“I’m basically in need of a full wardrobe and I’m especially going to need something to wear out of here,” he said in disgust, gesturing down at the tied on pants and too-large t-shirt hanging off of him.

Her grimace was enough of an agreement and he was soon standing on a foot stool being measured as they discussed his requirements. He was soon set up with a new set of clothes and the beginnings of his new wardrobe. She’d been happy to point him in the direction for new shoes and other shops that could provide him with the miscellaneous items on his list.

“Thank you, Madam, you’ve most helpful. Please send my order to my attention care of Gringotts.” He quickly provided his details and was impressed that she only widened her eyes slightly in
surprise upon seeing his name.

With a smile and a wave, Harry was out the door feeling less of a misfit dressed in clothes that didn’t mark him as an obvious outsider. Despite taking longer this time than last, the ice cream Hagrid had brought him was still mostly frozen and he ate it slowly while contemplating where to go next.

“Hagrid, how am I supposed to get all my stuff to school? With all the items on the list, I don’t think there’s a suitcase big enough to hold it all. Let alone keep things from getting mashed up and broken.”

“Blimey, Harry, we’ll be getting you a trunk to carry it all in. Magical trunks are made to hold all your bits and bobs. We can head over there next so you can put your purchases in it directly.” With that he seemed to realize that Harry wasn’t carrying any bags.

“Oh, the order is going to take a bit,” Harry said with a shrug, “they’re going to deliver it later. But the trunk sounds good. I’ve never seen a magical trunk before.”

Hagrid smiled happily at him and lumbered to his feet. “Well then, let’s be heading off. There’s a good shop just off the main Alley. It’s not the normal one students go to, but it has more interesting things. The owner is a right funny chap, but he does good work.”

Harry hurried to keep up as they started towards a shop that they had never gone to previously. They’d just picked up a standard trunk, one compartment so everything was thrown in together which had led to ink spills and broken quills on many occasions. He’d been planning to see if there was anything better this time around, but anywhere that Hagrid considered interesting was bound to be just that, if not also slightly dangerous.

He was happy to see that they weren’t heading towards Knockturn Alley, but a half hidden side street just up from something that looked to Harry like a junk shop, but who knew what they were actually supposed to be selling. The side street was much calmer, causing Harry to take a deep breath and relax a bit for the first time in hours. He lagged behind a bit, staring at the shops he hadn’t known existed, then had to hurry to catch up as he watched Hagrid disappear into a building with a sign for ‘Storage Solutions’ hanging from a pole.

Hagrid was correct, they did have very interesting things and Harry was able to get a trunk with all the bells and whistles and built in magical goodies he could want. He also invested in a good bag for his school books and other stuff, also well-endowed with useful charms, as well as a special insert especially created to safely hold all his potion equipment and ingredients.

Harry considered it a very worthwhile stop and waxed quite enthusiastically about it to Hagrid as they made their way to Flourish and Blotts to pick up his school books. This time though he didn’t limit it to just those and spent a bit of time perusing the rest of the store looking for other books he thought were interesting. He especially was checking to see if there was anything on the origin of Magic, or specifically the Lord of Magic, but there was nothing to be found.

Somehow he wasn’t surprised.

He checked out with an impressive stack of books that the cashier was happy to help him load into the proper part of his new trunk, where they’d be sorted and cataloged for him to easily find what he was needing in the future. And this time he didn’t let Hagrid talk him out of Curses and Countercurses, though he was quite determined to never see the Dursleys again if it were at all possible so Hagrid’s fear of him really using it on Dudley were unfounded.
Finally it was time to get his wand, after a heartbreaking stop to reacquire Hedwig. He’d been hard pressed to control the tears when Hagrid again presented him with his beloved owl, once more alive and as beautiful as he remembered.

Harry followed Hagrid into Ollivander’s cramped shop, wondering if he could short circuit the process, instead of going through everything he had the first time, and simply ask to be given the brother wand to Tom’s.

“Ah, Mr. Potter, I was wondering when I’d be seeing you in here.” Ollivander emerged from the back room to greet them but stopped upon getting a good look at Harry. Then he smiled. “It is nice to see someone so touched by true Magic enter my shop. You’re here for your wand, I imagine.”

“Yes,” Harry said a bit hesitantly as he set Hedwig’s cage down and moved forward. “Aren’t all wizards and witches touched by magic, Mr. Ollivander?”

“Only in a manner of speaking, Mr. Potter, but I’m sure you’re aware that not all realize what a gift that is. I can see that you do.”

“And you do as well,” Harry said with no doubt in his voice.

“I have always cherished the gifts that I have been given and those that gifted me with them. Things that are not appreciated can be taken away.”

“Like naughty children,” Harry agreed, “if you can’t treat your belongings well, maybe you shouldn’t be trusted with them.”

“I see you do understand.” Mr. Ollivander smiled and glanced once at his forehead before saying in a slightly louder tone of voice, “Which is your wand hand, Mr. Potter?” Without waiting for an answer though he pulled out his tape measure and began measuring Harry. While that was happening, he returned to the back room and came back with a couple of boxes, though not the narrow wand ones Harry was expecting.

He placed them on the counter and removed the lids exposing what Harry felt were probably wand making components.

“Right, I think your gift is one that will take something a bit different from my usual fare. I want you to place your wand hand over the first box. When something inside the box begins to glow, remove your hand and step back.”

Harry stepped forward curiously and looked down at what looked to be a box of various types of wood. He put out his hand and focused on his magic. He was so focused that the box glowing startled him quite a bit and he quickly stepped away and let the wandmaker approach.

Mr. Ollivander gently floated the glowing wood out of the box, humming a bit under his breath, then pulled the next box over and gestured at him to step forward again. This time the box was a mix of random items that Harry couldn’t completely identify, though he saw a few feathers and things that could be hair.

He held his hand over the box until the glow began then moved out of the way so Ollivander could remove the glowing feather from the box. Because of the glow it was hard to know for sure, but it looked like a Phoenix feather.

The third box was filled with different types of stone. Some looked like gems, but others more like pebbles you’d find laying on the ground anywhere. Though he held his hand over the box for what seemed like an hour, nothing ever started to glow.
“Curious,” Ollivander murmured as he moved to shift the box away from Harry.

“What’s curious?”

“All wands I make this way take 3 elements – the wood, the core and some form of stone. Apparently your wand has decided that it’ll find its own stone.”

He gathered up the other items and retreated into his workroom, leaving Harry to wait with a gently snoring Hagrid. He’d fallen asleep not long after they’d arrived and had thankfully missed most of his interactions with the wandmaker.

“Here you go, Mr. Potter. One 13 inch Holly wand with a Firebird feather core. Not an easy wand to master but I have a feeling the two of you will evolve together nicely.”

“Firebird? I thought it was a Phoenix feather?”

“They are very similar, both having a meaning of rebirth, but the Firebird also tends to come into the lives of those about to embark on a difficult quest. Those Magic touches, Mr. Potter, share a great responsibility and I believe you have a larger share than others to bare. I have a feeling the wand will suit you well.”

Harry nodded slowly before looking down to examine his new wand. It was longer than the one he’d carried previously, though it otherwise looked and felt very similar. If anyone was expecting him to carry the wand he’d had in the previous timeline, this one looked close enough to fool them.

He picked up a maintenance kit as well as a wand holster that he immediately put on then went to wake Hagrid. “Wand acquired, Hagrid! Anything else on the list?”

Hagrid slowly opened his eyes, “What was that, Harry?”

“I have my wand. Isn’t it great?” He happily showed Hagrid his new wand before putting it away to gather up Hedwig.

Hagrid got to his feet and stretched, leaning forward a bit to not knock into the ceiling. “Blimey, Harry, that’s great. I’m sure it’s thumping good one too. Mr. Ollivander’s the best when it comes to wands.” They said their goodbyes and headed out.

There was nothing else on the list to acquire, so Hagrid escorted him to the train station as expected. He was given a ticket to return to the Dursleys’ as well as his ticket to board the Hogwarts Express in a month. Harry thanked Hagrid for all his help and slipped onto the train, moving quickly to exit the car again through a different door.

Peering around carefully he saw that Hagrid had once again disappeared leaving him free to make his way back to Gringotts.

He’d had a lot of customizations made on his trunk by the shop owner who was certainly made along the same lines as Hagrid as he saw no problems giving an eleven year old some pretty powerful customizations for magical tricks it could do without him needing his wand. One of which was to shrink it, safely, to a size he could easily tuck in a pocket. He made his way into a restroom and ducked into an empty stall to shrink the trunk and stow it away. He waited for things to clear out before leaving again. He’d taken Hedwig out of her cage so he could stow it as well, so he walked out as quickly as possible hoping to get outside before someone thought to ask why he was walking around carrying an owl.

“Okay, Hedwig,” he said once they made it outside, “I need to go to Gringotts for a while. I’m
going to let you go hunt or explore on your own for now. I don’t know where I’ll be this evening, but hopefully it will be on the Alley somewhere. Come find me then.”

She nuzzle him a bit then took off, disappearing quickly from his sight and he began the trek back to Gringotts.

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It was late enough in the day that the bank wasn’t too crowded so he was able to find an open teller fairly quickly.

“Greetings. I’m Harry Potter and I’d requested an appointment for this afternoon. Do you know if Gringotts was able to indulge my request?”

The Goblin at the counter gave him what he felt was a look halfway between confused and irritated, but responded, “I will check on that for you.” He pulled out a piece of parchment and quickly penned a note that was placed into an empty tray to his right. Within two minutes a reply appeared in tray. The Goblin picked it up to read and his eyes widened slightly before he looked over at Harry.

“Your request for an appointment was granted. As you were unable to state exactly when you’d be available, you will need to wait a bit before they can meet with you. Someone will be along momentarily to escort you to a waiting room.”

He had no sooner stopped speaking when an obviously armed Goblin approached. “Mr. Potter, if you would follow me?”

“My thanks for your help,” Harry said with a nod to the teller, before turning to the other Goblin. “Yes, thank you.”

The two walked off and quickly exited the main lobby into a side hall. They passed a number of closed doors before coming to an open one that he was led through. The room had a comfortable seating area as well as a small table that would fit four comfortably.

“If you would wait here. It will be at least 30 minutes but not more than an hour.” The Goblin nodded his head at Harry then left the room, closing the door behind him.

Harry pulled out his trunk, resized it and pulled out the blank journal he’d picked up at a shop earlier as well as his quill and ink. As soon as he could make a trip to the muggle world he planned to pick up some normal notebooks and pens, but for now this would do. He settled down in one of the chairs, setting his ink on the side table, and started jotting down notes on what he needed to accomplish in the next couple of weeks.

He still remembered most of his conversation with the Lord of Magic, but this was the first time he’d had the chance to sit down and really consider just what they were trying to accomplish. It was quite daunting and without the Goblins he wasn’t sure it would be possible. While the Lord had been confident that they would help, Harry was refusing to count on it until they’d actually agreed.

On top of their plans were generally the things he wanted to do differently this time around. He’d spent so much time reacting the first time, not understanding enough about the magical world to even know what questions to be asking, and getting caught up in situations that really weren’t his responsibility. Hopefully with the work he was doing now, most of those situations would never happen and he could instead actually learn the magic he was attending Hogwarts for. Though there
needed to be some changes there too…

He broke off his note taking when the door opened again and another Guard entered. He took up position to the side of the door and was followed in by three other Goblins, the first of which looked to be of a high rank based on the signs he’d been told to look for, and then a second guard who closed the door and took up position across from the first guard.

“Mr. Potter, I am Chieftain Ragnok, Lord of Gringotts. I was intrigued to see your request for a meeting.”

“Magic’s blessing on you and your clan, Lord Ragnok, I am honored that you chose to speak with me personally as I know you must be busy,” Harry said with a bow, a thrill of excitement going through him.

Ragnok took a seat at the head of the table and gestured at Harry to take a seat to his left. “The Horde would not be well served to ignore a request from one touched by the Lord of All.”

Harry took his seat, with one of the so far unnamed Goblins across from him while the third settled at the foot of the table, immediately pulling out parchment and a quill and looked ready to take notes.

“The Lord of All?” Harry questioned.

“Magic is what keeps us alive, Mr. Potter, so the Lord of Magic is of great importance to all that wizards call ‘magical creatures’. He is our Lord of All. We could tell from your note that you’ve been touched by him, but, seeing you now, it’s obvious that you’ve been more than touched by his power.”

“That’s… yes, I… how can you tell?”

“For those who know how to look, you quite obviously bear his mark,” Ragnok replied, gesturing at Harry’s forehead.

“My scar?” he asked, reaching up to touch the familiar lightning shaped mark on his forehead that was thankfully starting to heal. He’d been promised that by the time Voldemort was gone, so too would be the scar.

Ragnok smiled, “Not that mark, but one that only those that believe will be able to see. You can be taught to make it visible to non-believers, but to those that know the truth it will always be visible.”

He shifted in his chair slightly and gestured to the Goblin across from Harry. “Now, not knowing what your business would encompass, I felt it was at least beneficial to bring the Potter account manager to this meeting as well as he’s been most interested in meeting with you about your accounts.”

Harry was a bit stunned and had to forcefully keep his hand from feeling for this mark that was supposedly on his forehead. “I am honored to meet you,” he said with a nod. “My business here is two-fold and one of which was certainly to hopefully speak to someone about my accounts and I was bidden to request an inheritance check as well. But the main reason I was told to come to the Goblins was to ask for their help in finally removing the taint of Voldemort from our world and, in doing so, bringing the Lord of Magic back into our world.”

There was obvious shock at his words from the Goblins in the room though Ragnok was able to quickly recover though he then broke out into a somewhat scary smile. “This has been a wish of the Horde and many of the other magical races for many long years. How can the Horde help you
in your quest?”

Harry took a deep breath to calm his nerves and center his magic then began. “I have been given a… vision so to speak of what is to come in our world if changes are not made. It showed that though Voldemort would eventually be defeated, the wizarding world’s disrespect of the giver of Magic would lead to His loss of power on this world and, because of that, the death of Magic itself here. While this isn’t actually Voldemort’s fault, his beliefs and actions have encourage the way of thinking that has led to this problem.

“Voldemort, or Tom Riddle as he was born, has created a number of Horcruxes that have kept him tied to this world. The Lord of Magic has helped by ridding us of the first one, one that has resided in me since my parents’ death, and has shown me where the others live so that they can be destroyed and the items they are contained in saved, like I myself was. Once this has been accomplished, there is a ritual to be performed that will remove the last remaining part of Riddle’s soul from our world and allow the return of True Magic through the Lord’s Justice.”

Harry paused, the sound of a quill scratching as the Goblin at the end of the table took notes an almost comforting background as he focused on the intent expression on Ragnok’s face. “There is a very short time frame for the first part of the plan. The Horcruxes must be taken care of and Riddle removed within the next two weeks. Hogwarts opens for the school year in a month and there are things that must happen before then. Not to mention the Lord’s Justice will mean that there may be staffing issues before the start of term.” Harry was sure his smile was more of a smirk, but by the answering grins on Ragnok and his account manager’s faces, they certainly weren’t going to be complaining.

“Excellent! The Horde looks forward to your quest. Let’s begin with the inheritance ritual so it can be working while we plan. Then we can discuss these Horcruxes and where they are located.”

The account manager, who Harry was going to have to get a name for eventually, pulled something out of his pocket that he unfolded a number of times until something resembling a writing desk was sitting on the table in front of him. He pulled out a piece of parchment from a drawer and a sharp looking dagger from another then looked over at Harry.

“Mr. Potter, I will need you to add drops of your blood to this document. Each drop represents 100 years in the past for researching any open inheritances you’re eligible for. Add as many or as few as you are moved to do so.”

Harry took the parchment and dagger and once again calmed and centered his magic. Once he was ready he pricked his finger and began dripping blood onto it. He didn’t keep count, but figured there’d been at least 10-15 drops by the time he felt it was time to stop. He watched as the blood was absorbed into the parchment until it was a uniform pink then handed everything back.

The goblin placed the parchment into yet another drawer that started to glow once it was closed then he turned to nod at Ragnok.

“That should take quite a while with how far it will be going back, but at the end you will have a full accounting of your inheritance. Now, let’s discuss these Horcruxes.”

“Of course, Chieftain. The first should be easy to locate as it is here in the bank, located in the vault of Bellatrix Lestrange. It is contained in the Hufflepuff cup. There is a second one located in my Godfather’s house, Grimmauld Place, in the possession of a half-mad House Elf. That one is contained in Slytherin’s locket. Oh,” he paused, “remind me that we need to revisit the subject of my Godfather and his unlawful incarceration in Azkaban.” Without leaving time for any of them to comment, Harry continued.
“The next is currently in the possession of Lucius Malfoy, though I don’t know that he has any idea what he possesses. That one is contained in a Diary that formerly belonged to Tom Riddle. There’s one currently residing in Hogwarts in a room known as the Come and Go room or the Room of Requirements. That one is contained in Ravenclaw’s Diadem. The fifth is in the former Gaunt residence in Little Hangleton. Merope Gaunt was Tom Riddle’s mother and he used the Gaunt family ring for that Horcrux. Once it’s cleansed, I will need the stone from the ring. The last one lives inside Riddle’s familiar, a snake called Nagini. I believe she’s just recently returned to this area and can be found in the Forbidden Forest, not far from Hogwarts.

“I think it’s safe to say that all these Horcruxes will be well guarded and dangerous to retrieve. Some may need a Parselmouth or someone capable of Parselmagic to more safely access them. I am untrained, but I do have the ability if it is needed.”

“Unlike most of the British wizarding world, the rest of the world is not so unforgiving of that ability and Gringotts employs a number of staff with that ability. We will put together teams to acquire each and start sending them out within a day. Now, what can you tell me of any protections surrounding them?”

While the account manager was writing notes and sending them out through what appeared to Harry to be the same sort of tray the teller had used earlier to ask about his meeting, Harry began trying to remember all the traps and complications they’d had to deal with previously when acquiring them. He stopped trying to describe the exact locations of each once he was told that they could use the magical signature of the first, easily located in the Bank, to pinpoint the location of the others, especially as he’d already given them the general location.

Harry had no idea how long he’d been talking to the Goblins when there finally came a halt to all the clarifications they were asking for. He slumped a bit in his chair, just then noticing that he was not only exhausted but that other than breakfast and that ice cream cone, he hadn’t eaten all day and was now quite hungry. As if coming to his attention was a sign, he could suddenly hear his stomach start to growl quite loudly in the room and he blushed.

“I think we have enough information to work with for now, so let us leave it for today and reconvene tomorrow to review where we stand and address your inheritance. Grimrock,” he turned to the Potter account Manager, “Is the Potter residence on Gryffin Lane habitable?”

“Yes, upkeep is automatic and the House Elves report in on the condition quarterly. I’ll notify them that Mr. Potter will be staying at least the night and have them prepare for his arrival. They will be quite excited by his presence,” he finished dryly.

“Thank you, I wasn’t looking forward to going back to the Leaky Cauldron after my experience there this morning and I had no idea where else I could get a room.”

“I’ll procure you a portkey to your residence and an information packet on Wizarding London for you to review. You can look it over tonight and let me know if you have questions.” With that, Grimrock folded his desk back up until it was once again flat and placed it in his pocket. He gave a bow to Ragnok and a nod to Harry before he quickly left the room.

“I too will leave you now. I have much to arrange and there will be many who don’t sleep tonight in these halls. I look forward to it,” he said fiercely as Harry opened his mouth to apologize for that. “The Horde has waited many years for a sign from our Lord on what we can do to help him and there has been nothing. We had not realized that His influence had been so weakened by the ignorance of the Wizarding world that he was unable to tell us directly what he needed. It is our honor to help you with the duty he has assigned to you.”
With that he stood and gave Harry a respectful nod before leaving the room, followed by the scribe and the two guards.

Harry took a deep breath and stood from the table. His legs were a little shaky but he was soon able to move over to where he’d left his trunk earlier. He returned his journal and writing materials into their proper compartment and sat down to wait for the portkey Grimrock had promised him would be coming.

* * * *

A message had come with his portkey requesting that he return to Gringotts not long after they opened the following day and they’d provided a portkey to get him there. Because of that, he hadn’t had a lot of time to explore the house he’d stayed in overnight, but he did get a quick, though enthusiastic, tour from one of the two House Elves primarily employed at that location.

‘That location’ because apparently there were a couple Potter properties out there with House Elf staffs and they were all quite thrilled to know that the heir had been located and actually seen by one of them. They were eagerly awaiting his visits to their properties and he could visualize the flurry of activity that would be going on in the attempt to make an already immaculate home even cleaner.

When he arrived in the morning, Harry was led to a different conference room than before. Though similarly set up, this one could easily hold three times the people. Harry got comfortable and pulled out his notes from the day before to review while he waited.

It wasn’t long before a Guard entered, soon followed by Ragnok, Grimrock, the scribe from the day before and another six people, two of whom weren’t Goblins.

“Magic’s blessing on you and your clan, Chieftain Ragnok. I hope your evening was well,” Harry said as he quickly got to his feet and bowed.

Ragnok snorted as he headed to his usual seat at the table, gesturing Harry back to the seat to his left. “I don’t know if I would say it went well, but it was certainly an interesting one.”

“Interesting isn’t always a good thing though.”

“Well, in this case it will probably be so in the long run, though it bodes well for much work in the short term.”

As they spoke, the others had taken seats around the table, with Grimrock once again across from him and the scribe at the end of the table. One of the two humans in the group was seated to Harry’s left.

“First off, the Horcrux located in the Lestrange vault was found and her vault and any associated with her have been locked down for now. As she’s currently incarcerated in Azkaban, no one should have reason to complain about their lack of access. Do you have a preference for which one we go after next?”

“Ideally the one located in my Godfather’s house or the one in the Gaunt home. I don’t know what the wards are on the Black residence, but I’m sure Sirius would be happy to explain them if you can help him get an audience to have an actual trial take place. The vows he had to take when he became my Godfather would’ve killed him had he actually been responsible for my parents’ betrayal and I find it irritating that the legal system is either useless or corrupt enough to stick a man in prison without actually convicting him of anything.” Harry forced himself to stop and take
a deep breath as this situation was one that had irritated him the most when he’d been informed of just what a ‘Godparent’ was in the wizarding world.

“You mean to tell me that Sirius Black never received a trial?” The man next to Harry spoke up, pulling out his own fold out desk that he was quick to pull out parchment from and start writing a note. “I’ll have them start looking into that, Chieftain, and get the Black family account reps to start an audit of the accounts. Arcturus has been very ill and might not have known to check. I’ll see if someone can get in to see him as well.”

“I didn’t know his Grandfather was still alive,” Harry said softly. “I somehow thought he must be dead to have not done anything about Sirius being in there.”

“In his defense, Arcturus has been ill for a while and not seen out of the house in years. It would be easy for him to be misled about his grandson’s status. That being said,” the man beside him said, “I think I’ll suggest sending a Healer along with whomever goes to talk with him, just in case.”

“Good idea. Based on that conversation we’ll figure out how to handle the Horcrux there. Now, about the Gaunt one, that’s the one you say you need cleansed and given to you. We’ve held off on cleansing the Cup as we weren’t sure if they were needed in this form for the ritual you say you have to perform.”

“No, Chieftain, if the soul piece can be removed from the item and contained in something less valuable, that should certainly be done. I don’t know what process you use, but the soul pieces just need to be present when I do the ritual and at that time they’ll all be destroyed together.”

“In that case, we’ll get started on the Cup and we’ll send the team out to retrieve the Ring immediately.” He nodded at one of the other Goblins at the table who immediately stood up, bowed and left the room.

“Now, your inheritance spell is still working, though we think it’ll be finished within the day. What results have been seen so far, the inheritance group has begun working on. Do you have any questions or concerns about this so far?”

“I honestly have no idea what you’re going to find, so I don’t know what to even ask. The fact that there is Potter property is honestly a huge shock to me considering the stories I grew up on concerning my parents. It was just recently that someone told me that they were murdered and weren’t killed in an accident of their own making. I feel I’m going to need a lot of help understanding what you’re in the process of figuring out.”

“Chieftain,” Grimrock broke in, “I’ll see to getting him trained up in what he needs to know about his accounts, that is my duty as the Potter account manager, but I feel that as part of the full accounting, an entitlement charm should also be used. Who knows what’s been done to the Potter estate, or any other, in the past ten years if not longer?”

“I agree. Have the department start them as soon as they received final confirmation of any inheritances. What else, Mr. Potter?”

Harry blushed a bit in frustration, “I need a healer. I haven’t had the best situation growing up and I know I’m probably not as healthy as I should be. I’m small for my age and I can’t remember the last time I went to the doctor for anything. I need as full a review as I can get from someone trustworthy. I apparently have a bit of a reputation in the Wizarding World which I’m hoping will go away but I don’t want someone helping me because of some ridiculous name I’ve been given.”

“That won’t be an issue, Mr. Potter. Gringotts keeps Healers on staff and they are well aware of
what will happen to them if they compromise client confidentiality. That can be arranged for after
lunch,” he said nodding at one of the Goblins down the table who immediately pulled out supplies
to send off a note about that.

“Roger,” Ragnok continued, looking at the other non-Goblin at the table, “You said there were
some updates on the status of the Inheritance department?”

“Yes, Sir. Overnight quite a few of the Ancient and Noble family records began glowing. That’s
usually a sign that an update will be needed to correct outdated inheritance records. I did wonder if
they were all somehow connected with Mr. Potter’s update, but I spot checked a couple and they
don’t appear to have a connection. They’re not completely glowing yet, they’re pulsing, but the
pulses are getting longer and brighter and I believe it’ll only be a matter of time before they require
maintenance.

“I’ve contacted the account managers for those accounts, though not all of them currently seem to
have an heir associated with them, so I’m not sure what we’ll be able to do about them not
knowing who to test.”

“Originally those books were to self-update, the inheritance testing we did was only to confirm
what the books already said and make sure no one was attempting to used subterfuge to be claimed
as an heir over the real one. That magic hasn’t worked correctly in many, many years and that it
looks to be doing so now is an amazing sign.”

“Well, in possible preparation for doing many inheritance confirmations, my staff have been
getting in extra supplies and preparing schedules for how to get people in based on the various lines
involved. And more are starting to glow, these even older families, so it’s been quite exciting in our
department.”

“I suspect it’ll be an exciting time for all of us for a while to come.

“Scribe, please summarize what we have going on right now in relation to Mr. Potter’s quest.”

Harry sort of hoped that wasn’t really the Goblin’s name, but the one at the end of the table who’d
been taking notes for the past two days collected his parchments and began.

“Gringotts Cursebreaking and Retrieval teams are working on acquiring the six known Horcruxes
of the wizard known as Tom Riddle, AKA Lord Voldemort. The first has been acquired and is in
the process of having the soul piece removed and the Cup cleansed. The team is out now locating
the Gaunt Ring to be processed and the ring given to Mr. Potter.

“Representatives from the bank are contacting Arcturus Black to check on his knowledge of the
status of his Grandson and figure out the best way to acquire the Locket Horcrux located in the
London Black residence. A Healer is attending with the representative on account of Lord Black’s
ill health.

“Mr. Potter’s inheritance request is still in process and expected to complete later today. Those
areas that have been confirmed are being pulled together for his review. Grimrock has agreed to
teach him what he needs to know to manage any accounts he has as a result of this process and
management has agreed that the entitlement spell should be used in relation to each inheritance. In
a related area, the Inheritance Department is seeing signs that many updates to Ancient, Nobel or
previously believed extinct family lines will have updates to their heirs in the near future. It will be
the first time in generations that the books have updated automatically as they are supposed to.

“And finally, a Healer is being located from Gringotts to give Mr. Potter a complete medical
checkup this afternoon and to help him with any issues discovered.”

“Thank you, Scribe, that seems most complete. Does have anyone have anything to add?”

“Two questions, Chieftain.”

Yes, Bogrod?”

“First, when my teams have been searching for the Horcrux signs, they’ve actually found what looks like three in the vicinity of Hogwarts, two mobile and one that fluctuates in strength. Is it possible that we’re wrong about the number of Horcruxes out there?”

Ragnok just turn to look at Harry to answer.

“Ah, right. No, the number of Horcruxes are correct, but what I suspect you’re seeing is the one in Nagini who is mobile in the Forbidden Forest, the one in the Diadem which is in a room that doesn’t always exist at Hogwarts and the third sign that’s moving around… well, that’s most likely the spirit of Voldemort who’s currently possessing one of the Hogwarts professors. That’s one of the reasons we have to take care of this so quickly.”

The sounds of outrage that broke out at that were a bit overwhelming, but Ragnok was able to soon glare them all into submission. “Just to clarify, Mr. Potter, you mean to tell me that the highly lauded Hogwarts wards are currently allowing the shade of Voldemort to possess one of the teachers residing in the castle?”

“Yes, Chieftain, that’s exactly what I’m saying.”

Bogrod sighed and shook his head. “Well, on the bright side, that’ll make acquiring the Horcrux easy. Which leads to the second question - Am I to assume that we’ll have to acquire this professor as well, before the ritual?”

“Yes, I’m afraid so, though probably not until just before we’re ready to do that, unless there’s a reason to pick him up earlier. Speaking of the Ritual, outside of those needed to perform it I’d prefer there not to be many extra witnesses. That being said, I do need two specific people to be in attendance so as to be able to bear witness to Voldemort’s final destruction as well as our calling on the Lord of Magic to Judge the wizarding world that allowed him to come into being. They will be required to vow not to say who performed the ritual, namely myself, but anything else about the process is fine to disclose.”

“And who might these witnesses be?”

“The head Unspeakable, I believe his codename is Croaker. The other is the Head of the DMLE, whom I believe is Amelia Bones.”

“Lovely, I’m sure they’ll be quite pleased to be invited. And on that note, I think it’s time to break for lunch.”

* * * *

Harry read through the summary of the things wrong with him with a bit of amused horror.

Parental Magic Block – age 6 months
Unknown Magic Block – age 15 months
Unknown Magical Gift Block – partial, age 15 months
Weaken Bone structure due to malnutrition
Previously fractured bones – 3, should be replaced
No necessary immunizations, wizard or muggle

Actually, health-wise he was a bit better off than he’d thought he’d be. He was small for his age, but Healer Sarkna had assured him that with a nutrition potion regime his bones would soon improve which would cause him to make up the lack of height and a number of other general less-than-optimal internal workings he was currently suffering with.

The horror came in at seeing the Blocks that were on him, and had previously been on him and not corrected. The Parental one was at least from his parents, something he’d been told was often done with magically active children to keep them from hurting or over extending themselves before they had conscious control over their magic. It normally would’ve been removed by the time he was five years of age.

That it hadn’t been removed and that a second had been added, apparently about the time his parents had died and NOT by his parents, was suspicious. It wasn’t as if his Muggle relatives could’ve done it and there were very few magical people that had had access to him at that age.

The Magical Gift Block was new to him too. It apparently was used to control innate gifts in small children though it was generally only used in severe cases. Healer Sarkna had suggested that it’s possible one of the gifts he had was too obvious for someone who would be residing in a Muggle location, but that it still should’ve been long since removed and him taught how to control whatever it was.

“So, Mr. Potter, do you have any questions about your results?”

“Just, what is the plan to address these?”

“I’ve already sent orders to our potion makers to provide the ones needed to handle your physical issues. I can provide all your necessary immunizations before you leave here today. For the blocks, we will need to do a ritual cleansing as we don’t have access to the individuals who originally cast the spells. It’s also beneficial to do for people who have been ill, or have had health issues, as those can affect your magical abilities too. That can be done tomorrow if you are available.”

“I currently find my time to be mostly spent within these walls, so I should be able to make time for that,” Harry said with a smirk.

“Good. I’ve been told you’re expecting to perform a major ritual within possibly the next week and you should make all efforts to be as healthy as possible before then. You won’t want anything to chance when working with such magic.”

“I will do what I can to make that happen, Healer Sarkna. Now, I believe I have somewhere else I need to be?”

“Yes, the inheritance department has requested some of your time. I’m to notify them when we’re done and they’ll send someone to escort you. So, have a seat, have a bite to eat and take the potions I’m about to give you and I’ll see that your escort is on its way.”

Harry grumbled a bit good naturedly, but took a seat and picked up one of the small sandwiches that had been delivered while he’d been reviewing his results. Two potion bottles were soon placed near him on the table so he gulped them down quickly and followed them up with a drink of water.

It had been a busy… had it really only been two days? Everything that had been accomplished since his return was overwhelming and he was incredibly grateful to all the help the Goblins had
been in accomplishing it. It made him quite angry to think of how they were portrayed in the History of Magic class, as savage creatures always one step away from declaring war on the wizarding world, though considering how they were treated, that really wouldn’t have surprised him. The disrespect that they dealt with daily from their customers had even made him uncomfortable the first time around.

He relaxed into the cushions of the chair knowing that he wouldn’t have long to do so before his next meeting. He was exhausted, but they were doing this on his behalf and to help him out, so he wouldn’t complain.

Not long later there was a knock on the door and he offered his thanks once again to Healer Sarkna before following the guard out of the office.

“Ah, Mr. Potter, I’m glad you were able to make it down here so soon. We think we’re about done with your inheritance work, but as we’ve been told Healer Sarkna’s requested a magical cleansing for you, we will double check that nothing else pops up afterwards.”

“I didn’t realize that blocks could affect any inheritances.”

“Oh yes, it’s why we prefer to have customers go through a full cleansing before starting the inheritance process as blocks to their magic or abilities may mean that they won’t qualify to be Heir or Lord for their family line. In your case, even with your blocks you’re magically gifted enough to meet any requirements there may be, but if there’s anything based on you holding a specific ability that you can’t currently access, that won’t show up, though your association with that family line will. That’s why we’re already making preparations for the updates we know are coming. We’ll have to bring the prospective heirs in, cleanse them magically then run the inheritance spell to confirm that they have the right to the position and that Magic agrees that they’re the best choice for the role. Being the oldest, or male, or the most powerful isn’t always what Magic feels should be the deciding factor.”

“Fascinating, I really had no idea. Do they teach this stuff at Hogwarts, because they really should.”

He snorted, “I agree, but they don’t currently cover it and most probably just think it follows the family line and the heir’s appointed.” He gave a somewhat feral grin, “It might be a bit of a nasty shock to some who’ve abused their positions to see that Magic doesn’t agree with them holding on to their Lordships.”

“I can imagine. So, what do I need to do down here? Is there much of a Potter estate?”

“They told me you knew nothing of your estate, but I didn’t actually think that could be possible. Yes, Mr. Potter, there is actually quite a lot of the Potter estate. I actually have pulled the Lordship ring for it and the rings for the other three family lines that show you as their Lord or Heir. There are also a number of minor lines with no titles that show you as a distant relation so the remaining assets for those will be combined with your other vaults and a full accounting will be provided to you. For now though I need you to accept the rings so we can start the process of recalling all items entailed to your Houses.”

Harry weakly collapsed into a nearby chair and stared up at the Goblin in shock. “I’m the Lord or Heir of FOUR houses? How is that even possible? I’m not… I… I’m just Harry. I spent the past ten years living in a cupboard under the stairs of my Aunt and Uncle’s home and now you say I’m actually a Lord? I can’t even… that doesn’t even seem real to me.” He took a stuttering breath and held it, letting it out slowly before trying again. Finally he felt he’d calmed down enough and looked back at the Goblin who’d been waiting patiently while he got himself under control.
“Okay, what do you need me to do?”

“You simply need to put on the rings. Any finger on either hand, they’ll size to fit.”

“Which… what houses are the rings for?”

“You have lordship rings for the Houses of Potter, Peverell and Slytherin and the Heir ring for the House of Black.”

Harry got up and walked over to the table where four ring boxes were sitting. He reached out and slowly picked up the first one. “Potter?”

“Yes.”

He opened the box and took out the ring, placing it on the ring finger of his right hand. It felt a bit odd as it suddenly tightened around his finger until it was snug, but not uncomfortably tight. He picked up the next box and looked at the Goblin.

“Slytherin.”

Harry removed the ring and placed it on the ring finger of his left hand. As there was only one more box of a similar size he assumed this was the Peverell ring. That one went on the right index finger. The Black Heir ring went on the left index finger.

“Very good. Now I just need you to cast the entailment spell. There are no wand movements, it’s simply cast by the Lord of the line by being spoken allowed.” He handed Harry a piece of parchment and Harry read through it a couple times to be sure he could pronounce everything.

“Omnia ad me convertere et competit ei.”

He felt a bit of a jolt run through him, but otherwise nothing else seemed to happen, though the Goblin seemed pleased.

“That may take a bit but anything affected by it will appear in the appropriate vault and will be noted on the account ledger so you’ll know exactly what you have and what had to be returned.”

“How long does something like that take?”

“Most likely it’ll be done by the morning. I’ll have your various ledgers ready for you in the morning and you can sit down with your account manager… or maybe managers now, I’ll have to check as Peverell has been thought gone for a while and Slytherin technically had an Heir, but the family Magic wouldn’t accept him as the Lord. The Black account manager may wish to speak with you as well while we’re working on freeing Sirius Black.”

“Right, okay then, I’m going to refuse to worry about that until the morning then. Hold up, do people now have to call me Lord something-or-other?”

At that the Goblin grinned very widely. “Actually, yes, Lord Potter Slytherin Peverell.”

Harry groaned. “Okay now, that’s utterly ridiculous. You can’t expect people to really call me all that. It’s a mouthful and totally overwhelming. Surely there’s a shorter version I can go by, a nickname of sorts?”

The goblin laughed. “In formal situations, yes, you’ll go by them all, though if you’re being announced they’ll probably separate them out into the individual titles. You can choose to
primarily go by one title over another and there are benefits depending on which you decide to go with.

“Your father’s title is the most recent one, as well as being the name you were born with. It would be an obvious choice for you. Slytherin is famous, especially in this country, due to Hogwarts, but it’s also feared due to the actions of the so-called Lord Voldemort. By going by that you could help redeem the name. Peverell is an ancient line and there would be a lot of respect to be known by it, though it’s not as easily recognized as the power it actually is. It would be more subtle. Think it over and make your decision.”

Harry nodded slowly, already pondering what to do about that. His first thought had been to stick with Potter, but while he’d always be ‘Harry Potter’, being ‘Lord something-else’ might be a better choice in the long run.

“Thank you, you’ve been very helpful. I… well I don’t know if I can honestly say I’m looking forward to seeing the results of today’s actions, but in the long run it’ll be a good thing.”

“That it will be, young Lord,” he smirked. “Now, I have a note here that says they’ve recovered the ring and are in the process of cleansing it. It should be ready for you in the morning. Healer Sarkna has provided your House Elves with your next set of potions and set of instructions for your care,” he grinned wider at Harry’s groan, “and Chieftain Ragnok has stated that unless you had concerns, you were free for the evening and we’d see you back in the morning. You’ve been provided with a reusable portkey to be tied to you for you to use to come and go.”

He held out a metal bracelet that Harry was quick to put on. “Now you’ll need to bleed on it, just a couple drops,” he clarified as he handed over a dagger.

Harry pricked his finger and pressed it into the engravings that covered the surface and they glowed briefly before going dark again. Harry removed his finger and saw that the cut had healed.

“Good. To get here in the morning, the activation word is ‘Gringotts’. To get home, the activation word is ‘Gryffin’. Any questions?”

“No, I think I’m too overwhelmed for questions. I think I’ll head back, explore the house a bit more and maybe wander around the neighborhood a bit. Just ignore how wonderful and confusing my life has gotten since Magic came into my life.”

“A good plan. Magic’s blessing on you, Lord Potter Slytherin Peverell.”

Harry stuck out his tongue at him, which made him laugh. “Magic’s blessing on you as well. Gryffin,” and he disappeared from the room.

* * * *

Through the work Harry had been doing over the two days he’d had since returning to his past it had expanded the Lord of Magic’s access just enough that he was able to start extending his power out into the Wizarding world for the first time in generations.

His first stop was the Goblins, devoted believers who were overjoyed to finally see signs of his renewed presence. There wasn’t much he could actively do yet, as he was saving most of his power for the ritual and the Justice that he should be summoned for within days, but he soothed the minds of those he could and started the process of resuming his control over the magic of the world. Starting with deciding who had the right to lead in his name – thus the inheritance room was completely reviewed and sweeping changes put in motion.
Outside of Gringotts, his power was weaker as most witches and wizards no longer believed in him. But some remembered hearing about him, even if they didn’t consciously believe he existed, and others were young enough to be open to learning and for those minds he reached out, touching their dreams with his presence and letting them know that he was there. Each night he reached farther, looking for those that it would do the most good for him to connect with and there were some restless nights of sleep because the undivided attention of the Lord of Magic isn’t something easy to bear.

* * * *

“I dreamt again, Mother,” Draco said softly, even though he was aware that his father was across the manor from where he and his mother now sat in their gardens.

“I did too, my son. I’m not sure what it means, but I feel something momentous is approaching. Your father…” she paused not really knowing what to say.

“Father isn’t having the dreams, is he?”

“He’s having dreams, but he’s either ignoring them or doesn’t remember them when he wakes. I think it would be good to take a trip, just for a couple of days maybe as long as a week. I think the house in Paris would be a good location. Close but not too close. We can do a bit of shopping before you’re due to start school. I’ll instruct the House Elves to help you pack and I think I’ll gather up a bit of light reading materials to take with us. We’ll plan to leave before lunch as there’s a café near the Paris house I’ve been wanting to try.”

“A trip sounds lovely, Mother, and there are some supplies that I was hoping to have for school that I couldn’t locate when we went to Diagon Alley. I’ll see to gathering my belongings and meet you in an hour. Maybe you can pick up something for me to read as well.”

They looked at each other solemnly before Draco’s mother reached out and hugged him to her fiercely. When she stepped back her reserve was back in place and they both ignored the brightness in her eyes that she was blinking back.

“Okay then, an hour it is. Off with you.” She shooed him back towards the house before calling out for her personal Elf. “Ming.”

“Yes, Madam Narcissa?” Her elf popped into the space her son had recently vacated and looked at her expectantly.

“Ming, Draco and I have decided to go shopping in Paris for a couple of days. If you could notify Dobby to help you pack for the two of us, let’s say for a week, I’ll be in the Library gathering a few things to add to my trunk. Come find me when you’re done and I’ll have them ready for you. Also plan for Dobby and yourself to accompany us.”

“Of course, I’ll get started on that immediately. Are you planning to entertain while there?”

“Perhaps some minor meals with friends, but nothing formal or extravagant will be needed.”

Ming nodded and popped away leaving Narcissa alone. She took a deep breath and noticed that her hands were shaking slightly. It was one of the few ways you could always tell when she was nervous and she concentrated until she was calm enough for them to stop. She took a deep breath and ran her hands down over the robes she was wearing, decided that they would be fine for traveling and headed into the house.

It was a quick walk to the Library and it was thankfully a ways away from the office her husband
was spending the morning in to review ‘paperwork’. She wasn’t sure what he was doing in there, but couldn’t imagine what paperwork he would need to be doing considering he felt being Lord was enough. While she always remembered Lord Black being quite involved in the family businesses and investments and interested in what members of the family were involved in, Lucius, as Lord Malfoy, preferred to spend their money, talk about how important he was and leave the running of things to the Goblins or those he considered underlings.

Luckily the Goblins were very good at what they do, despite the obvious distaste they had for Lucius, and the family hadn’t suffered… monetarily at least. She did her best to counter her husband’s influence on their son, though Draco still had his moments where he took a bit too much after her husband. She’d done her best to instill some manners and respect.

She put those thoughts to the side to focus instead on what books to take with them. While the house in Paris had a library, the one here was more extensive and therefore more likely to have something related to the dreams they’d been having. She couldn’t remember much about them, but there was a man and something about magic and respect. She wandered about for a while, glancing through a couple areas and picking out a few books that would actually be for light reading, but wasn’t finding anything for the real reason she was here.

Finally she stopped and closed her eyes. When she was little, her grandfather used to tell her when she was frustrated that she needed to stop and concentrate on what she needed and ask her magic to help. It had sounded ridiculous to her at that age, but occasionally over the years she’d tried it and it had appeared that magic had answered. ‘I need to help my son. I need to know what our dreams are about.’

She focused on that thought fiercely until she felt what appeared to be a tug on her core and she moved in the direction it was pulling, somehow avoiding running into any furniture. Finally the feeling stopped and she opened her eyes. She was in a part of the library with books that had fallen out of favor. Not that any of them would ever be gotten rid of, as they were a source of pride – having a large private library was quite the pureblood status symbol – but they weren’t ones anyone would be consulting normally. There were a couple though that had an odd sparkle to them when she saw them out of the corner of her eye and, before she could over think it, she plucked them from the shelf and hurried back to where she’d left the other books she’d chosen. She took the time to select two more that were more Draco’s normal fare before calling for Ming to collect them.

With that done she set about writing a note to Lucius to explain that his wife and son would be gone for a while.

* * * *

“Gran?”

“Yes, Neville?”

“I’ve been… having… dreams.”

“And this is news how? Everybody dreams, Neville.”

Augusta ‘Gran’ Longbottom glared at her brother as she watched her grandson’s expression close off. It had been happening more and more frequently in recent months and had gotten even worse in the days since Neville’s eleventh birthday when he received his Hogwarts letter.

“Algernon, I think that’s quite enough. I think you’ve completely exceeded your welcome in our
home. Bitsy!”

A small House Elf popped into the room beside the chair where she had been eating breakfast. “Yes, Mistress?”

“My brother will be leaving momentarily and won’t be returning. Could you see that his belongings are packed and ready to go?”

She could’ve sworn she almost saw a smirk on the Elf’s face but if so it was gone in an instant when she gave a curtsey and left to take care of things. They sat quietly, Neville with his head bowed and hunched over his plate while Algernon glared back and forth at them both. Every time he started to speak, Augusta would glare at him until he closed his mouth again.

Thank Merlin for the speediness of House Elves as it was only a few minutes later when Bitsy return.

“Sir’s belongings have been packed and left in the Receiving room.”

“Excellent. As he hasn’t been eating anyway, he can leave now. Goodbye, Algernon. Don’t contact us, if we wish to speak with you, which you shouldn’t hold your breath about, we’ll let you know.” With that she nodded at Bitsy who was quick to prod the older man out of the room. She must have also placed a silencing charm on him as she could see his mouth moving but thankfully none of the angry things he was saying could be heard.

Bitsy popped in long enough to nod that she’d made sure he was gone then left them alone again.

“I’m sorry, Neville.”

“Why… what are you sorry about, Gran?” Neville finally asked softly looking up at her.

“I’m sorry for allowing that man to stay here as long as he did. He said he wanted to be close to family and get to know you better before you went off to school, but it’s obvious that he had no such interest as he’s been an arse the entire time he was here. And I let it continue. I have a feeling it’s probably been worse than I even know and for that I am really sorry. This is your home and you shouldn’t have to put up with that.”

“It’s okay, Gran.”

“No, it really isn’t, but we won’t argue about it now. So, what are these dreams you’ve been having? I noticed you looked a little more tired than normal yesterday.”

“He says he’s… the Lord of Magic, Gran. He says that I have an important gift. That I need to nurture it and respect it like I do my plants. Is there… does the Lord of Magic really exist?” He looked up at her, so confused and trusting her to have an answer.

She considered it before answering. “I don’t really know, Neville. I’ve never heard of a Lord of Magic, but that doesn’t mean that there’s not one. There’s so much about magic and where it comes from that’s been lost to us. Old knowledge that has been forgotten or deliberately ‘lost’ by those that didn’t like what it meant. There are many that would not welcome the thought of some power above us and in control of something they consider the right of their birth.”

She sighed, “The thing is, Neville, that I’m sure you do have a gift and no matter what it is or how powerful it is, it should be respected and treated like the gift that it is. And it never hurts to be thankful for what you have and not take it for granted.”
“Do you really think so? I always thought you were disappointed in me. You’re always comparing me to Dad and you never seem to think… well, I never seem to do as well as he did. Uncle Algie said you thought I might be a… squib.”

“Well, ‘Uncle Algie’ is a bloody arsewipe and needs to keep his nose out of other people’s business! Humph! If I hadn’t already thrown him out, I’d certainly do it now. I think I’ll change the wards to do something nasty to him if he tries to come back.” She gave her grandson a sly grin, “We can discuss ideas of what that might be later. Now, though, I believe that we need to complete your school shopping. You’ll be leaving for Hogwarts soon and there’s no need to rush at the last minute to finish everything.”

“I thought we got everything the other day?”

“Not quite, and I also thought you might like a bit more time to just wander around and see if anything looks interesting.”

The dawning smile on his face both made her happy to see and sad that such a small thing as doing some school shopping made him happy. His father at this age… and she stopped herself. Comparing Neville to Frank was part of the problem. They were two different people and needed to be treated as such. So maybe the first thing they’d do after a stop at Gringotts was look for a wand for Neville instead of having him use his father’s. It was a nice idea, but his talents and gifts had to be respected in their own right. Neville had lived long enough in his father’s shadow.

“All right then. Finish up your breakfast and finish getting ready to go out. I’m going to go block Algernon from the manor and get ready myself. We’ll plan to leave in about an hour?”

“Okay, Gran. I’ll be ready.”

* * * *

Harry’s cleansing took place first thing in the morning as apparently it works best on an empty stomach, though it can technically take place whenever. Having the previous afternoon off to relax and explore had been good for him and he was feeling very positive about the day.

The cleansing itself involved a potion and then lying in a ritual circle for a while as Goblin Healers cast on him. The process itself wasn’t comfortable, but it was by no means painful either. Afterwards he felt so light that he periodically had to check to confirm he wasn’t actually floating. Magic was amazing like that sometimes, but each time he checked he was still firmly on the ground. They’d had him bleed a bit more to confirm his inheritance work then he was off for the update meeting with Ragnok and his staff.

“Magic’s blessing to you all. I hope you’ve had a productive day?”

“Magic’s blessing to you as well, Lord Potter Slytherin Peverell,” Ragnok responded, smirking at his grimace at the full title. “Please join us as it has been a productive period since we last spoke and we have some interesting updates. We’ll start with the Locket and Lord Black.”

The man sitting beside Harry gave a nod and began. “Gringotts representatives, including one of our best Healers, visited Lord Black yesterday morning and were able to get an audience almost immediately. He was quite distraught to be told that we believe his Grandson was never given a trial before being locked in Azkaban. The Healer had to take over for a while as he started making himself sick, but they were able to stabilize the situation and even find something that could’ve been causing his illness. He agreed to being treated for what was found as long as Madam Bones was immediately summoned to answer questions about his Grandson.”
“Madam Bones arrived approximately two hours later with the report that there was no evidence of a trial or anything else to support Sirius Black being guilty of an actual crime. She had given orders to have Sirius removed from Azkaban and taken to a secure holding area at the DMLE. After we expressed our concerns at those who’d locked him up originally doing something to cover up their crime, she agreed to have him transferred to a secure area here where he would be held by the Goblins and treated by our healers.

“During the time before Madam Bones arrived, we informed Lord Black that we had discovered that a very dark artifact being hunted by Gringotts was located in his London property. He gave us a pass to enter the house to retrieve the item.

“After Madam Bones left to relocate Sirius Black to Gringotts, our representatives left to acquire the Locket, while the Healer remained to continue to treat Lord Black. Last I heard he was responding well and doing better than he has in many years.

“Sirius Black is in secure holding and has been seen by a Healer and a Mind Healer to access him and document his condition. Once that was accomplish, he was placed on an accelerated treatment schedule to allow him to get back to full capability as soon as possible.

“The locket was retrieved and has been cleansed.”

“Thank you. What’s the status of the Gaunt Ring?”

“It has been cleansed and placed in secure holding, but it was not located there when we checked this morning. There was quite a panic until we realized that as part of the entitlement spell, it had been reclaimed to the Peverell vault. As it has been cleansed and is quite safe, we felt it safe to leave it there as we were simply planning to give it to the new Lord Peverell today anyway.”

“Thank you. I was planning to review the vaults after this anyway, so I’ll get it at that point,” Harry agreed with a nod.

“Excellent. Status on the other Horcruxes?”

“With the removal of Sirius Black from Azkaban, we believe that Dumbledore will soon receive notification of his change in status and will go to the ministry to… offer his wisdom on the situation to the Minister, Madam Bones, basically anyone who will listen. At that time, we plan to send a team in to acquire Nagini, the Diadem as well as the shade possessing the Professor. As we will be within one item of having all the Horcruxes at that point we felt it best to grab him at the same time. He will be kept unconscious and magically bound until it is time to perform the ritual.”

“Speaking of the last Horcrux, the Diary, are there plans for acquiring that one? Lord Malfoy is not one to be cooperative in destroying something of such importance to the creature he bound himself to.”

“One of the family lines whose inheritance book is glowing is that of the Malfoys. It was checked this morning and Draco Malfoy is being requested to come in for testing. We sent out a notice this morning to his mother about bringing him by the bank and the tellers have all been requested to notify me when they arrive. Lady Malfoy doesn’t share her husband’s views and we’re hoping we can get her assistance at removing the Diary from his possession.”

“Very good. Keep me notified of how things progress and let me know if I need to step in,” Ragnok said with a pleased smile. “What of the other inheritance updates?”

“A schedule has been arranged by analyzing the various books. Some of which just seem more
urgent, and those we’ve prioritized and already began sending out notices of. All the notices have been charmed for secrecy and to only be able to be seen by the people directly involved or, in the case of a minor, themselves and a sympathetic adult guardian."

“I hate to interrupt,” one of the goblins at the end of the table broke in, “but I’ve just received word that Dumbledore has left Hogwarts for meetings at the Ministry.”

“Excellent, I’ll get our team moving to acquire the subjects.”

“Will you have any problems with the wards,” Harry asked. “I am Lord Slytherin, do I need to give permission in some way to allow you to remove Hogwarts property, teachers, whatever from the school? Would that help?”

“Very good idea. Scribe, write up a brief legal document for Lord Slytherin to sign to give us authorization to access his property on his behalf.”

The scribe nodded and quickly pulled out a new parchment and started writing. He soon finished and passed the completed document down to Harry to review and sign. As it was very specific about what they were allowed to do, he signed and then felt the urge to press his ring into the bottom of the parchment as well. It left a raised imprint in the parchment. He passed the signed paper to the goblin coordinating the retrieval teams and he was quick to send it off.

“I’ve just been notified that Lady Malfoy and her son have arrived at the bank. With your permission, Chieftain, I’ll leave to discuss the issue with the two of them.”

“Granted. Anything else inheritance related we should be aware of?”

“Not really, though we could have people coming in as soon as today, though we’ve requested that they make appointments if at all possible.”

“Is there anything left to discuss for now?” Ragnok looked around the room to see all were shaking their heads. “Okay, then everyone is dismissed to return to what they’re working on. Lord Potter Slytherin Peverell, I’ll summon someone to escort you to your vaults to do any review you desire. They’ll be here shortly.”

Harry contained his grimace at the long title, but smiled and bowed in thanks to the Chieftain.

He moved to a more comfortable seat as the others packed up and left the room, nodding in respect to him as they left. He pulled a book out of his bag and began to read a bit further in it. It was a journal of sorts written by a Potter ancestor that he’d found in the house and he was enjoying finally getting some information about his family.

He was interrupted a little while later by the door opening again.

“Excuse me, my Lord, but I was told you wanted to visit your vaults?” The Goblin at the door seemed rather young in comparison to most he’d seen the past couple of days, but like the other guards he’d seen he was well armed and seemed comfortable enough wearing all those weapons to likely be extremely proficient with them too.

“Yes, thanks, I need to visit at least one of them now. The Peverell vault.”

“Then that’s what we’ll do. If you’d follow me.”

Harry quickly got up and joined at the door where he turned and lead him down the hall to one of the carts that led to the vaults.
“If you could press your ring for the vault here,” he pointed to an area on the front of the cart and, once they were settled, Harry complied.

The car was quick to speed off and this ride was even better than the last as the Peverell vault was an older one and there were many more twists and turns to go through before they arrived. Harry was grinning from ear to ear by the time the cart came to a stop and he was able to exit.

“Please turn the top of the ring towards your palm and press here,” the Goblin instructed and Harry stepped forward to do so. “On your next visit you’ll just need to press the ring here, but the first time it needs blood and magic in addition to the Lordship ring to allow admittance. Only you will be able to enter and if ever you are under the influence of any spells, charms, potions or curses to control your actions or cloud your mind, the vault will not allow entrance and will notify Gringotts staff to come to your assistance.”

“Wow, that’s amazing! Are all Lordship vaults set up like that?”

“Many have similar restrictions, though most will allow family members or spouses on the approved list to enter the vault.”

“How do I know what precautions are on all my vaults and can I add to them if I want to?”

“All protections on the vaults will be detailed inside the content ledger, viewable for you and your account manager only. You can discuss any changes you want to implement with them.”

“Thanks, that’s very helpful,” Harry smiled then turned to place his hand on the door in the designated location. There was a quick stab of pain that just as quickly disappeared and the door glowed briefly before creaking open. It had obviously been a very long time since it had been accessed.

Lanterns lit around the vault as he walked in and he could see that it was a very large vault filled with a large assortment of items from books the furniture to weapons to jewelry to the expected piles of money.

While he looked forward to exploring all the contents eventually, he was currently most concerned with locating the Gaunt Ring that held the Resurrection Stone. He wasn’t sure if it was because he’d been the Master of Death in the future or something else, but he’d been drawn to reacquiring the Hallows since coming back and the Stone had been the focus of most of that. Glancing around, nothing jumped out at him as to where it was located and he drew his wand to do a Point Me spell. He hadn’t started Hogwarts yet so any tracking that they might try to add to his wand shouldn’t exist yet, not that he could imagine something like that working in the Goblin’s Vaults.

The magic practically leapt from his wand and he was immediately tugged further into the Vault and towards a partly hidden alcove. The closer he got, the harder the tugging until his wand was actually pulled from his hand to go flying the remaining couple of feet to land on a pillar within, beside the ring, whose stone appeared to have broken off of it, and another very familiar wand.

Harry had barely a moment to wonder what Dumbledore had thought when he woke up to find his wand missing, before his wand, the Resurrection Stone and the Elder Wand all... merged.

The glow that produced blinded him momentarily and he was trying to blink away the remaining spots in his vision as he slowly covered the last few feet to see what his wand now looked like.

All in all, it wasn’t that different. It was a bit more knobby than the original version and had some elaborate carving covering the length of it that hadn’t been there before, but otherwise there was
nothing that would hint at the elements that had gone into its making.

He hesitantly reached out to pick it up, but it felt incredibly comfortable in his hand. He felt a wave of warmth flow through him and he closed his eyes and sent out a fierce mental ‘Thank you! But if this thing swallows up my Invisibility Cloak too we will have to have words.’

There was the answering feeling of laughter and he smiled before holstering his wand. He looked around, wondering if there was anything else he should be taking with him and slowly made his way over to where the jewelry was held. He picked up a few things there that spoke to him then found an area with what seemed to be family journals and took a few of those as well. While he knew little about his other titles, he knew the least about the Peverell line. Hopefully these could tell him something about the family.

He looked around a bit more before remembering the poor Goblin stuck standing outside while he explored. He flushed a bit and hurried back to the doors to the vault. They closed softly behind him as he exited.

“Sorry about that, I got a bit caught up in seeing what all is there.”

“No worries, my Lord, are you ready to return?”

“Yes, thank you.”

The ride back was as enjoyable as ever, though his eyes had gotten itchy during the ride and his vision was a bit blurred. He stumbled a bit exiting the cart which had a concerned Goblin escorting him back to Healer Sarkna for a checkup.

“Ah, Lord Potter Slytherin Peverell, I see the cleansing is having an effect.” She helped him to a seat and removed his glasses.

“Hey now, I can’t see without those!”

“Really, are you sure about that?”

That caused Harry to pause and, trying again to rub the itchiness away, he peered around the room. Slowly the fuzziness he’d always dealt with when something happened to his glasses cleared and he was soon seeing the room perfectly.

“What… how did that happen?”

“Magic.” She laughed at his glare. “Well, honestly in this case it would actually be the absence of magic. The cleansing appears to have removed a block on a metamorphic ability. The death of your parents and the block that was placed on you appears to have locked your form into one very similar to that of your father. Now, with the block removed, you’re becoming more… yourself, for the lack of a better word. Take a look.”

She pointed him to a mirror and he shakily stood and walked closer. Peering intently at his reflection he could see the changes. Other than the obvious one of no glasses, his hair was starting to develop a bit of a reddish cast and lighten from the black he’d always seen. It was also not quite as unruly, almost looking like it was getting a bit of a wave which meant that there might not be a shaggy hair phase this time around if his hair tended toward curls. He was relieved to see that other than his improved vision, his eyes retained their emerald green shade. The shape of his face seemed to be slightly different as well, but it was subtle and he couldn’t quite make out what had changed. Habitually he checked the scar on his forehead and was over joyed to see that it was almost completely gone.
“Wow. I don’t look like a midget version of my dad anymore, do I?”

“No, you appear to be becoming a more even mix of both with your own twist on it. So, otherwise are you feeling alright?”

“Yes, I’m feeling quite good actually. I’ve been sleeping well and the House Elves have been diligent about feeding me and making sure I take your potions on time.”

“Excellent. Well, then I think you can leave. I’ll check back with you before this ritual you’re doing so I can monitor how your health is. They can be quite stressful on the body and you’re still recovering.”

“Thank you again, Healer Sarkna.”

Harry headed out and decided to run by the inheritance office to see if he could get copies of his ledgers or take a look at them to see what he now owned.

He wasn’t even considering that they might be involved with other customers as he walked in which meant he was a bit embarrassed to see that there were two people already there. They all turned at his entrance and he felt his face heat. He quickly turned to leave them to their privacy when he was called back.

“Ah, just who I needed, Lord Potter, please join us.”

Harry was surprised at the lack of full title, especially since the Goblins were quite the stickler for proper address, not to mention they all seemed greatly amused by his being uncomfortable with his titles. He stopped and nodded slightly and crossed the room to join them.

“I was just explaining the cleansing and inheritance process to Lady Longbottom and her grandson Neville. As you just went through the process yourself, I was hoping you could put their minds at ease.

* * * *

It had actually been so long since he’d first met Neville and he’d changed so much over the years since that Harry hadn’t recognized him when he’d come in. Which was probably for the best as they officially had never met. He slowly made his way over to Neville and his Grandmother, suddenly wishing he’d been given some lessons on what it meant to be a Lord.

“Lady Longbottom, Neville, it’s a pleasure to meet you both. I have indeed gone through the whole process within the past few days and I will try to answer any questions you have to put your mind at ease.”

“Lord Potter, the pleasure is ours. I trust the Goblins and Gringotts, but I’m loath to put my Grandson through anything without understanding what’s involved.”

“I completely understand. Neville is to be envied that he has you to look after his well-being. Why don’t we sit down,” he gestured towards some seating off to the side of the room, “and I’ll explain the process as I experienced it.”

The two agreed and they headed to get comfortable, leaving the Goblin on duty to get back to what he’d been working on previously.

“First off, there are a couple steps to the process and an order they’re best to go through. I went through them a bit backwards so I had to duplicate things a bit. The best way to do things is
actually to start with a visit to one of their Healers for a checkup. This might not be as necessary for you, Neville, growing up in a magical family, but I had had a number of magical blocks placed on me when I was younger, at least one by my parents, and they needed to be removed before I had full use of my abilities. It was explained to me that those blocks could cause me to not be able to claim all my properties or titles if I couldn’t meet the criteria for them.

“After the Healer has signed off on things, you should do the cleansing. It’s a potion and a brief ritual. A little uncomfortable and possibly embarrassing as you’re lying in middle of a bunch of Goblins casting at you, but it wasn’t painful.

“Finally is the actual inheritance test. All it involves is bleeding on a specific parchment however much you want the magic to look into your past. As I knew nothing about my family, I bled quite a bit so the search took a little over a day. And, as I’d done things out of order and the blocks weren’t found and me cleansed properly beforehand, I re-did the test afterwards. I actually haven’t received those updates. It was one of the reasons I was stopping by.”

“Thank you, Lord Potter, your firsthand knowledge is quite appreciated. Having just done so, do you suggest a more thorough inheritance test? I’d just thought to go back a generation or so as we’re quite familiar with the Longbottom and Mackenzie lines.”

“If Neville’s okay with it,” he said looking at Neville who was intently watching the conversation, “I’d say go back as far as you feel you should. There were some surprises for me in mine; there may be some in yours as well, and they could be important. Let Magic guide you, Neville.”

Neville started at that. “Magic? I’ve been… have you…”

“Just ask, Neville. I can’t imagine you’d ask anything that would bother or insult me,” Harry said giving Neville what he hoped was a comforting smile.

“I was telling Gran this morning that I’ve been having dreams these last few days about a… about a Lord of Magic. He says I have a gift and that I need to respect that gift. Do you think I’m crazy? Are you having dreams too?”

“I don’t think you’re crazy at all, Neville.” He paused, trying to figure out how best to explain what he could to them. “I hope you don’t think I’m crazy, I have been thoroughly checked out by the Goblin Healers you know, but I truly believe in the existence of the Lord of Magic. He has profoundly affected my life in the few days that I’ve been aware of the existence of Magic and I believe he’s… none too pleased with how the wizarding world has taken His gifts for granted. His influence was weakened for a long time it seems, but it’s growing again and I believe we’re all going to see some drastic changes in our world in the coming months.

“So, yes, Neville, I believe in the existence of the Lord of Magic. That you’re dreaming of him means that he finds you worthy of the gift he’s given you. If he wasn’t I think you’d find the dreams less pleasant. I’ve seen him in mine and listened to the advice he’s given and it’s made all the difference in my life. The Goblins are true believers, they call him the Lord of All. I think the witches and wizards will soon learn to respect that which he has given them or they may not have it for much longer.”

“I sense, Lord Potter, that you may know a bit more than you’re saying,” Lady Longbottom said wryly.

“Please, call me Harry, Lady Longbottom, Neville, I’m not yet use to the title and I’d prefer to be on friendlier terms. And yes, I do know more than I’m saying, but there are reasons behind that and I will not break the confidences I’ve been given.”
“Thank you, Harry. You may call me Augusta or Gran, as Neville does, as we’re actually family of a sort, though you may not be aware of it. My daughter in law, Neville’s mum, is your Godmother. Though she’s is unable to fulfill those duties, I’d be happy to have you come stay with us for a while before Neville and yourself start at Hogwarts.”

Harry broke out in a wide smile, looking over at Neville to see if he agreed.

“Yes, it would be nice to have you come visit. I don’t know many of our classmates and it would be good to have a friend before we start.”

“Well, I have a bit more business to do with the Goblins to clear up the worst of the issues with my estate. So many things are a mess – do you know that they were never allowed to enact my parents’ will? It’s shocking how the wizarding government has hobbled Gringotts from doing their job when it comes to my estate, but now that I’ve claimed my title we’re working our way through things. But once I get the worst of things taken care of, I’d love to come visit for a while and get to know my family.”

“Well, send us a note when you’ll be available and we’ll give you directions on how to get there. Now, Neville, I think we should see about getting you seen by a Healer and cleansed so you can update your inheritance information. Depending on how long that takes, we can do our shopping afterwards or come back tomorrow if need be. Is that okay with you?”

Neville looked like he wasn’t used to being consulted by such things, but nodded in agreement. “Maybe if we get done in time, Harry can join us for lunch? Or dinner if things run late?”

Augusta nodded, “That would be fine, if he’s available.” They both looked at Harry questioningly.

He grinned. “I would be fine with either. I’m here at the convenience of the Goblins who are helping me get my affairs in order. My plans for the day are fluid and mainly revolve around becoming familiar with my accounts. Why don’t I let you get back to your business here and you have the Goblins page me when you’re available for a meal. If I don’t hear from you by a late lunch period, I’ll eat without you as I am on a potion regime and can’t afford to miss meals and will plan to meet you for dinner.”

“That would be fine, Harry.”

Harry smiled at them both and rose from his chair, crossing to the desk where the Goblin was working. “I believe the Longbottoms are ready for you now. Are my account ledgers available for review?”

“They’re in the possession of the Potter account manager. I’ll summon a Guard to escort you to him.”

“Thank you.”

* * * * *

Augusta and Neville watched Harry go speak with the Goblin they’d been working with earlier then leave with a Guard as the Goblin rejoined them.

“Have you made your decision on how you’d like to precede?”

Augusta looked over at Neville and nodded at him to answer. He gulped a bit but looked back at the Goblin and replied. “Yes, Sir, I’d like to follow the process Harry described of seeing a Healer first, then doing the cleanse and inheritance test. Can we set that up through you or do we need to
speak with someone else?”

The Goblin smiled at him which he didn’t find as terrifying as he had in the past. Seeing Harry’s ease with him had calmed his fears considerably.

“Yes, I’ll contact the Healers immediately to see if they are available now. We’re expecting quite a few people to come in for the process in the coming weeks, so it is good that you were so prompt to respond to our request to come in.” He returned to his desk and sent a note off, presumably to the Healers. Not long after he apparently received a reply as he rejoined them.

“The Healers have an opening now. A Guard will be here in a few minutes to escort you to them.”

“Thank you for your assistance. May I ask you a question,” Augusta said hesitantly, “that I hope you won’t find insulting?” She continued at his nod. “Lord Potter is quite young and by his own accounting only days familiar with the Magical world yet it is obvious that his association with Gringotts is unaccountably close. How did that come to be?”

“Lord Potter has been touched by our Lord. It is obvious for those who know how to look for the sign and he is a sign of hope for us that His power is once more in control of our world. Since Lord Potter joined the wizarding world, we have felt His touch upon us and His power once more fills our halls. The inheritance books once updated automatically with the knowledge of Lords and Ladies and Heirs, but that ability has been gone from us for generations. Two days ago the books began to glow again. True Magic is coming back into the world and it will be a good thing for us all, though those who have abused their gifts or not respected them might be less pleased to have His gaze upon them.”

Augusta wasn’t sure how to respond to that and was saved from trying by the arrival of a Guard to escort them to their appointment with the Healers. They thanked him and headed off.

* * * * *

Their visit with the Healers didn’t go as smoothly as Augusta had naively assumed that it would.

“You mean to tell me that my Grandson has been living with blocks on his magic all this time?”

“Yes, the one from his parents makes sense if Neville was a magically active child. The other ones appear to have been applied by family members, though not his parents.”

“Were they all from the same person? Can you identify a magical signature I can use to press charges? I am the only one legally allowed to approve spells like that on Neville since his parents’… incapacitation. Heads will roll for daring to cast on him!”

“We can harvest the signature for you to provide to the DMLE, though having an idea of who they should check it against will help their search.”

“Oh, I have a very good idea of who they need to look into,” Augusta said through gritted teeth. “How is he doing otherwise?”

“Generally very well. There’s signs that he had a broken arm at some point that I suggest he take a dose or two of bone strengthener to finish the healing process for. He may need a bit of extra rest once the blocks are removed as they are quite strong and have been muffling his abilities for quite a while.”

“Neville dear, when did you break your arm?”
“I’m not sure, Gran. I remember it hurt for a bit after Uncle Algie dropped me from that window a couple years ago.”

“He dropped you out a window?” Augusta was beginning to think she might need the Healer before they left.

“Yes, but I bounced when I hit the ground and you were all so happy I showed magic that no one seemed to care what caused it.”

“I asked him and he told me you were trying to harvest a tree cutting and slipped before he could catch you. Has your Uncle caused you any more accidents that I’m unaware of?”

“Well, he pushed me off a pier once and I couldn’t swim. I thought I was going to drown.”

“He told me you slipped and fell in,” she was gritting her teeth so hard she was afraid she might break them. “Okay, Neville, I think we’re going to need to have a long conversation with an Auror about these accidents that your Uncle has been present for. I can’t believe I believed him when he told me you were just clumsy, was too busy doing something else to pay attention to what you were doing. How can you ever forgive me for letting him be around you for so long when he was doing things like this to you?”

Neville quickly got off the examining table he’d been sitting on and ran over to hug his Gran. “It’s not your fault! I thought you knew he was doing it and didn’t care. I should’ve said something but you seemed so disappointed by my lack of magic. I’m sorry.”

Augusta chuckled weakly, blinking back tears as she hugged her Grandson tightly. Pulling back slightly she brushed his bangs back off his forehead and cupped his cheek so he’d look at her. “We’ll both do better going forward about talking to each other. In fact I think we’ll be getting you an owl to take to school so we can send letters back and forth and you can tell me how your classes are going and about all the people you’re meeting. Okay?”

“Okay.” Neville smiled and stepped back, going back to sit in front of the Healer. “Okay, so I’ll take the potions and I need to have the blocks removed. Is that all? Can we have the blocks removed soon? I’m supposed to be getting my wand and I still need to do the inheritance test too.”

The Healer looked at him kindly, having been trying to stay out of the way while the two reconnected. “Yes, I’ll give you the potion for the cleansing now and the potions for your bones to take with you for later. I’ll tell the cleansing team to harvest any magical signatures from the blocks they remove and Gringotts will provide a report of what was found that you and your Grandmother can take to the DMLE if you’re planning to press charges. Let me check on the ritual timing. I’ll be right back.”

The two sat there quietly until he returned. “They can get you in in about half an hour. I’d offer you refreshments, but the emptier the stomach, the easier the process.” He handed Neville a potion and led him over to sit with Augusta. “I’ve been told that Lord Potter has already explained the process he went through to you and I don’t foresee you having a much different experience. The ritual should take no more than an hour and they can do the inheritance test just after. You may be a bit tired and will probably be hungry as well. I suggest you eat not long after.”

“We were tentatively planning to meet Lord Potter for lunch if our schedules aligned. Could I bother you for some parchment and a quill to send him a note with our current plans?”

He was happy to comply and she was soon writing out a note that he was able to pass along to the Potter account manager for them to get to Harry. Not long after they were ushered out to finish
preparing for the ritual cleansing.

* * * * *

Lady Malfoy and her son entered Gringotts at the tail end of the morning rush. Narcissa had received their communication not long before she and Draco had been planning to leave for Paris and she’d had the House Elves hold her note for Lucius while they went to see what they were being summoned for. She wasn’t sure why she felt it was related to the conversation she and Draco had had that morning, but if it was it was too important to wait until she could visit the Paris branch.

She waited until she could approach one of the furthest tellers to limit who might overhear their conversation. “Good morning. I’ve received a summons to speak with the Malfoy account manager.” She handed over the letter she’d received and the Goblin reviewed it. He gave a nod and quickly wrote out a note that he placed in his out box. It disappeared in a brief flash of light.

Apparently a reply wasn’t needed as he then summoned over a guard. “Please take Lady Malfoy and her son to their meeting.”

They were escorted off, Narcissa gesturing at Draco not to voice any of the questions she could see he wanted to ask about the odd behavior of the Goblins.

They didn’t have far to go before they were ushered into a small conference room. There were three Goblins already seated at the table and the Guard followed them in and took up a position in front of the closed door. The Malfoy account manager was the only one she recognized.

“Day’s blessing to you, Grimtoe, and your clan. I received your summons, what can I and my son do for Gringotts?”

“Lady Malfoy, Draco, Magic’s blessing on you both. Please have a seat. We have two important topics to discuss and time is limited on both.”

“Then please tell me what we can do,” she replied as Draco held her seat for her before taking the seat beside her.

“Gringotts has identified a number of Black Arts artifacts that we are in the process of cleansing. There’s a set of seven of them and we’ve tracked one of them to Malfoy Manor. As you can imagine, Lord Malfoy would likely not be… receptive to helping us cleanse this evil from our world, so we come to you in the hope that you can assist us in its acquisition.”

Narcissa’s eyes widened and she quickly placed her hand on Draco’s arm where she could tell he was tense. “As I’m sure you’re aware, my husband is a bit of a… collector of such things. Can you easily identify what you’re looking for?”

“Yes, we actually have a description of the item and if you’re able to help us, we can send some of our curse breakers with you to confirm that no one is hurt while collecting it.” He gestured to one of the other Goblins at the table who nodded in agreement.

“Mother…” Draco whispered softly.

“Hush, my son, Black Arts are a blight upon Magic itself. Your father knows I would never agree to have something that evil in our home, especially if it could potentially hurt you.” She looked at the Goblin she was assuming was part of their curse breaking department. “There are a couple of places in the house he likes to store such things and I never access them so I can’t help you locate it more specifically even if you do know exactly what it looks like. Also, my husband was home
when we left to come here and I suspect one of the entrances is from his office.”

The Goblins exchanged glances and the third spoke up. “I think we can manufacture a reason to get him away from the house long enough for you to escort a team in to find it. Once they’re within the wards, they will be able to track it and find where he’s stored it.”

“Not to be insulting, but it will have to be a good reason as my husband doesn’t feel the need to respond promptly to those he considers beneath him.”

“We are well aware of Lord Malfoy’s views towards Goblins, Lady Malfoy, you need have no fear of insulting us by mentioning it, but in this case the question will be around the legitimacy of him retaining his Lordship, so I believe he’ll respond quickly.”

“Is there actually a question about its legitimacy?” Narcissa asked with a shiver of fear.

“Yes and no. We don’t foresee him losing his claim to the Lordship currently, but changes are coming and there may come a day when Magic no longer considers him as having the best claim. That’s also the other reason you were requested to come in today. We’d like to do an inheritance test on your son Draco. The book itself is requesting it which means that there are updates needed that affect him.

“There are a number of inheritance books needing update and we’re trying to get everyone in in a timely manner. We deem Draco’s test as important enough that we wanted him in quickly.”

“The Lord of Magic, Mother,” Draco said softly, “is this why I’ve been dreaming…”

“The Lord of Magic controls the books. If you’re dreaming of him, there’s a reason for it,” their account manager said, staring intently at him.

Narcissa tighten her grip on Draco’s arm. “If you can get Lucius out of the Manor, I’ll accompany your team to retrieve the item you’re looking for. I will authorize the process of doing the inheritance test on Draco, but I want to know exactly what it will entail and I want a vow on your magic that no harm will come to my son while I’m gone.”

“Gladly, Lady Malfoy, anyone touched by the Lord of Magic is important to us. I vow on my magic that he will come to no harm while you’re gone.”

She nodded slowly, “Okay, what is the process?”

“We’ve changed it recently as we’ve discovered a distressing trend of spells being placed on prospective heirs to control them or their magic in such a way that might mean they are unable to inherit. Because of that, we require a full review by one of our Healers to identify any issues that need to be addressed. Next is a ritual cleanse and finally the inheritance test itself. Due to the issues with Magic in recent generations, we suggest going back further than standard testing dictates. Too many lines have been lost to history and we think by going back further we can locate the heirs to some of them.”

She turned in her seat to look at Draco, “Are you okay with this?”

“Yes, Mother, I trust them. If this is important I’ll deal with this while you help with the Black Magic object. You need to be careful though. If Father finds out what you’ve done…”

“Yes, it would go badly for me. It still needs to be done though.”

“I know. Be careful. We still have our trip to Paris.”
She kissed him on the forehead then turned back to the Goblins. “I’m ready whenever you are.”

“We’ve sent notice to Lord Malfoy already that his urgent presence is need at Gringotts to handle a discrepancy with his accounts that could cause him to lose access to them. Our team is already prepped and we’re just waiting for word that he’s entered the building. If you’re ready, you can join them so they’re ready to go immediately. Draco can head to the Healers to start that process. Are there any spells that should be on him at this point that we should not remove if found?”

“No, nothing. All protections our family use are item based and Draco can remove those for the purpose of any scan or if they will adversely affect any part of the process. Otherwise there should be nothing on him. I removed the parental block we had on him when he turned five as is required.”

“Okay, I’ll escort him to the Healer and stay with him until you return. Unless something unexpected comes up, we’ll follow the process as outlined and we should be done in a couple hours.”

They got to their feet and Narcissa hugged her son tight before stepping back and letting him leave with Grimtoe.

She was escorted out and led to a room with a mixed group of wizards and Goblins. There was a floo connection in the room, but there was no way they’d all be able to use that to enter the Manor.

“Floo access is strictly controlled, you won’t be able to enter that way. You’ll have to come in through a door.”

“Okay, then we can floo close to the house and apparate to wherever you can get us in.”

She considered. “I’ll go in first and clear the main floor. I will meet you at the front door so you won’t have to knock and register on the admittance wards. You’ll be able to track it once in the house?”

“Yes, this isn’t the first one we’ve located and we have the magical signature we’re looking for. Even if it’s masked, we can find it.”

They left soon after as Lucius had been sighted on Diagon Alley headed towards Gringotts. They wouldn’t enter the house until they received word that he’d actually made his appointment.

Narcissa returned and summoned the House Elves associated with the Manor. “I and Draco will be spending the week in Paris. While we’re gone I want the entire Manor cleansed from top to bottom. Draco will be leaving for school soon and I want this place to shine before he leaves. Anything you find that you can’t deal with, or an area that you can’t safely access, you leave it for me. Ming and Dobby have already left for the Paris house to make sure it is in order for our arrival. If you need me, contact me through them.

“Now Lucius had an appointment so I’d like you all to start on the family levels so you’ll be done with that before he returns and will need to access his rooms. Unless you’re needed for cooking or other urgent work, this is your focus. Thank you.”

The House Elves nodded or curtseyed and popped out. Narcissa hurried to the front door and opened it to find the team waiting. She held up a hand to keep them from entering then extended the hand to the one closest to her. He took it and she pulled him inside. She repeated the process for the rest then closed the doors behind them.

“Okay, the Elves are busy upstairs. Hopefully what you’re looking for is on the lower levels.”
One of the team took out what appeared to be a smoke filled ball. He held it out, moving it back and forth until he apparently saw something in one of the directions and started walking that way. Any time there was a possible turn he stopped and consulted the ball again before continuing on. Eventually they arrived in the Library which was not where Narcissa was expecting them to be.

The team spread out to examine the warding of the room while the one with the ball slowly wandered the aisles seeing if any area in particular reacted with the ball. Narcissa remained near the door. She felt slightly ill at the thought that something so horrible could be located in an area that she and her son so regularly inhabited. There was anger too and it was growing. Their family had barely survived Lucius’ stupidity at getting involved with the so called Lord Voldemort during the previous war and yet he still allowed things like this to reside in their home? What if this had been the DMLE doing a raid and not Gringotts looking for something specific? They at least didn’t have the ability to arrest their family and she was willing to do almost anything to stay on the good side of the Goblin Horde.

“Found it!”

They all converged in the area in front of an area of shelves.

“Family journals,” she murmured. “This section is all supposed to be journals related to members of the Malfoy family. The Black family journals are in another area.”

The team exchanged glances and she was pulled back away from where they were working. The team converged on the shelves and began casting detection spells.

“Found it. It’s not heavily warded, but it itself is really nasty with some compulsions on it, like the others, but different.”

“What are the chances he’d notice it was gone if we just took it?”

Narcissa considered, “He doesn’t come in here all that often that I’ve noticed. The books he refers to most often he keeps in his office. This is mainly for appearances in his mind. That being said, if he thinks this item is important, he may periodically check to be sure it’s still here. If you can take care of it while it physically stays here, that would be best.”

The team consulted briefly, but ultimately decided that they could do what needed to be done there and they got to work.

Narcissa left them to their work, not wanting to get in their way. As the minutes ticked by she began to fidget, walking back and forth in the front of the Library, constantly afraid that Lucius would appear. She had no illusions at how he’d see her actions today and she was well aware that life would become very difficult for both her and Draco should they be discovered.

Finally the team appeared from the shelves. They looked tired, but happy.

“We all need to be leaving now. I’ve received notice that they won’t be able to stall Lord Malfoy much longer.”

Narcissa quickly led them back to the door and escorted them back through the wards. Once they were all out, one of the Goblins pulled out a portkey and they all made sure to be touching it before it was triggered.

They reappeared in a secure room she assumed was within Gringotts as they were soon joined by a Goblin Guard. The curse breaking team offered her their thanks before heading out and she turned to the Guard.
“I’d like to see my son now.”

She was escorted out of the room and down to an overlook of a ritual chamber. Draco was lying in the center of a ritual circle and she could feel the magic in the room like pressure against her skin.

She was soon joined by Grimtoe who motioned her back away from the balcony.

“Lady Malfoy, I’m glad to see that you have returned. I take it you were successful?”

“Yes, they found what they were looking for and were able to take care of it there to make it less obvious it had been found. How is Draco? I admit I thought he’d be finished by now.”

“They’re almost done now, but there were some complications when Draco was scanned by the Healer.” He paused and Narcissa could feel her magic reacting to her anger at the thought of something wrong with her son.

“He’s physically fine,” Grimtoe was quick to say.

“Then what were the complications?”

“There were several spells on Draco to eventually effect his feelings and actions. They were geared to slowly change things so as to make them seem natural and not magically created. There were also signs that he’d been given potions, we think to make him more susceptible to the spells that were placed on him. He’s been fighting them though, so there haven’t really been any changes yet. They were fairly recent, within the past couple months.”

Narcissa consciously unclenched her hands and took a deep breath before speaking. “I will need all the evidence you captured on what was found on him as well as any evidence concerning the magical signature of who placed the spells. I doubt you can tell anything about who gave him the potions, but any information about them would be appreciate. I apparently will need to be having a conversation with someone legally about what was done to my son.”

“I anticipated your request and had them pull together all information they discovered. Unfortunately this isn’t the first time such information has come to light recently.”

Narcissa moved forward again so she could see Draco within the circle. They appeared to be finished and he was slowly starting to move.

“I need to get down to my son and I want him to finish the inheritance test then I plan to remove him from this area until I have time to figure out how to handle the most logical source of those spells. I think we both know that it was most likely my husband, which makes it complicated. We are both of the house of Malfoy and he’s our current Lord.”

“Well, Lady Malfoy, things change and Magic is not always patient with the laws of mankind. Also, we’ve recently been in contact with Lord Black concerning some issues with his accounts. He may be another avenue for you to explore. If nothing else, renewing your relationship couldn’t hurt.”

“Thank you, Grimtoe, I will consider your advice. Now, my son?”

With a smile, he turned to lead her to where Draco was recovering from the ritual.

* * * * *

Amelia Bones often wondered if she was pleased or not that she’d been named the head of the
DMLE. She’d always wanted to protect and serve and had dreamed of being an Auror and making the world safe for children like her niece to grow up with their parents. Her rose-colored glasses hadn’t lasted long though once she’d joined the Auror academy and saw just how the legal system really worked.

But she’d worked her way up, hoping that the higher she went, the better she could influence the process and make it more fair and actually be able to get some of the people she knew were guilty off the streets. Unfortunately it hadn’t worked that way as many were able to buy their way out of Azkaban and pass legislation through the Wizengamot to subjugate those they thought weren’t as important or as powerful as they were.

It was almost enough to make her quit and take up a less dangerous livelihood.

When she’d been contacted by Gringotts earlier in the week concerning some inheritance violations, she wasn’t sure what she was going to be able to do about it. While it was illegal to cast spells to block the magic of minors, proving it was done for nefarious purposes would be difficult and the most many of the offenders would get is a slap on the wrist and told not to do it again. It was frustrating, but still, she’d see what she can do.

At the same time as she’d been given information on the inheritance issues, she’d also been invited to witness a bit of Gringotts internal magical dealings. They wouldn’t tell her what it was, but that it would be something she would find interesting and that she’d have to vow not to mention who was involved in the ritual she was invited to attend.

She did consider it for a while, but could find no reason not to make the vow, especially after they confirmed that nothing illegal was being done that she would be asked to cover for. So, barely a week into August she found herself taking the afternoon off work to head to Gringotts.

She was led into a balcony area that overlooked a large ritual area. It was already set up for the ritual to be performed, but she wasn’t familiar enough with it to know what they were doing. There was a cloaked figure leaving the area just after she arrived and she would swear it looked like an Unspeakable.

Not long after the person entered the balcony and she recognized the form of Croaker, head of the Unspeakables. Though recognize might be a bit strong as like always she was unable to see who was wearing the cloak, but they were wearing the medallion Croker wears so that would have to do.

“Madam Bones.”

“Croaker. I see you were invited to witness as well?”

“Yes, a rare honor. They allowed me to inspect the ritual circle. I wasn’t able to tell what ritual they are going to perform, but there are some powerful containment runes ready to be initialized. I take it you had to vow to keep the identity of the person performing the ritual secret as well?”

“Yes. It seems a strange request, but I couldn’t see a reason not to do so.”

The two settled into seats and only had to wait a couple minutes before six Goblins proceeded out into the ritual area each carrying what looked to be a smoke-filled glass orb.

“Soul orbs,” Croaker muttered softly and Amelia couldn’t tell if he was talking to her or just to himself.

After the orbs were in place a number of the runic wards began glowing lightly and the Goblins
retreated to circle the ritual area. Once they were in place four more Goblins came out carrying a stretcher with a man lying on it. Amelia felt a bit of trepidation when she saw him placed inside the runic wards, all of which began glowing strongly once he was settled and the Goblins stepped back to join the others.

Finally a final figure emerged and she first thought it was a very thin Goblin until she realized that instead this was a human child. He looked vaguely familiar, but she couldn’t place him. She started getting concerned when he took the primary position in the ritual format and pulled his wand. She made a movement, she wasn’t even sure what she thought she was going to do, but Croaker put a hand on her arm to stop her from moving or speaking out against what was about to happen.

“No, wait. We’re here to bear witness, not to interfere. We must let this play out.”

She settled back to observe while she felt the magical pressure in the air build around her. Was this child doing this?

“May the Lord of Magic bless us in our endeavors this day.” At the boy’s words all the runes began to glow brightly and there almost appeared to be a haze around him now too.

“In the name of the Lord of Magic and the Master of Death I call the Judgement of Magic down upon the wizard born Tom Marvolo Riddle and known as Lord Voldemort. I call Judgement on him for his misuse of the gifts granted to him by the Lord of Magic. I call Judgement on him for his attempts to thwart Death with the creation of multiple Horcruxes. I call Judgement on him for his corruption that he infected those known as his followers with. I call Judgement on him for his disrespect of life and Magic by killing and directing his followers to kill those he felt didn’t deserve the gift granted to them by the Lord of Magic.”

With each word the boy spoke, the pressure in the room grew until it was at a point that Amelia almost felt it was hard to breathe. Croaker had placed his hand on his chest practically from the moment the ritual had begun and appeared to be laboring to breathe himself. She couldn’t imagine why she’d been concerned with this child leading the ritual seeing the power he was currently controlling.

The misty glow surrounding him had coalesced into two figures that were superimposed over him. One a tall man with long dark hair and elaborate wizarding robes, the other tall and covered in a black hooded cloak. She shivered remembering that Death had been called upon in this ritual, which gave her a good idea who that was.

As the crimes against Lord Voldemort were listed the orbs began floating around the figure in the center of the runes. As the pressure began to reach a point when she wasn’t sure she was going to be able to bear it much longer, the figure in the center gave a jerk and a seventh ball of mist erupted from him. This one wasn’t contained in an orb, but the others around it seemed to be keeping it under control.

“Tom Marvolo Riddle, by the powers vested in me by the Lord of Magic and the Master of Death, Judgement has been passed on you and you are to be forever more banished from the world. Let the web of Judgement start with you and reach out to touch all those effected by your actions as well as those whose actions affected you. Let the Lord of Magic’s power be felt once again in the wizarding world and His judgement be the final word on what actions are Just when it comes to the use of His gifts and who should have use of them. So Mote It Be!”

There was a clap of thunder as the orbs all raced towards the center mass and impacted with each other. There was a flash of lightning that blinded her briefly and when her eyes cleared the orbs were gone and the pressure was gone. The runes were no longer glowing and the wizard who’d
conducted the ritual was swaying a bit on his feet. One of the Goblins was quick to join him and offer him a supporting arm while another four came to collect the man who had been part of the ritual and apparently had been housing part of the soul of Voldemort.

They all exited the ritual space leaving Amelia and Croaker as the lone occupants of the room.

“Well, that is certainly going to cause an interesting mess.”

Amelia turned to look at Croaker, curious about the almost pained amusement she could hear in his voice. He was still rubbing his chest a bit and taking deep breaths.

“How so?”

“It’s not well known, but all Unspeakables vow to the Lord of Magic when they are appointed to their position. It’s always been considered a figure of speech, but apparently there is an actual Lord of Magic and I can’t imagine he’s going to be pleased with the wizarding world. I’ve felt a pain since the ritual began, as if I’m being warned to mind my vows.

“That young man basically just called down Magic’s Judgment on the entire wizarding world as we created the society that allowed Voldemort to develop then didn’t do anything to fix it once he became a problem. I can’t imagine there will be many people out there that won’t pay some sort of price for that. I just wonder what that price will be.”

“You are right to be concerned,” came a gravelly voice from behind them. Turning they found Chieftain Ragnok flanked by two guards and a very tired looking wizarding child. “The Lord of Magic has once again turned His gaze upon His creations and if we can’t conduct ourselves as He expects then we will be punished accordingly. The corruption and disrespect that is so rampant in our world will not please Him and His web of Judgement will stretch far.

“Though speaking of that,” he turned his gaze upon the boy, “your ritual was much wider focused than I imagined it would be.”

“Tom Riddle was a problem that the Lord of Magic and Death wanted dealt with, but he was more a symptom of a larger problem that’s the attitude of the witches and wizards who feel that they’re better than magical creatures, muggles, someone with ‘less pure’ blood, take your pick. He wasn’t going to simply punish one Dark Wizard for his actions and ignore the people who created the world that created and nurtured him and prodded him into the role he eventually played in our world. I was just speaking on His behalf.”

“I know we vowed not to reveal your identity, but can we know who you are?” Croaker looked at him curiously.

He blushed, “My apologies, my name is Harry Potter. It’s a pleasure to meet you both.”

Amelia was shocked. “Harry Potter? I thought you looked vaguely familiar but I’d heard you looked a lot like your father and had a scar on your forehead from when Voldemort previously tried to kill you.”

“I’ve been curious about that actually. I’ve lived in the Muggle world, barely going anywhere, since the death of my parents. Exactly how was it that people recognized me as soon as I set foot in the Leaky Cauldron and they all expected to see a scar on my forehead?”

“There are books,” she started to reply then stopped. “No reporters ever spoke to you, did they?”

He shook his head. “Interesting, then you probably weren’t getting any money from all the books that have been published over the years on you and how you defeated the Dark Lord. Though
apparently they had the timing and method completely wrong on that,” she offered with a wry smile.

“Well, I’ll have to look into the legalities of people using my name or assumed image to sell books or other things, but otherwise I’m happy to not be known as the person who coordinated the final defeat of Voldemort. As far as I’m concerned, my mother defeated him ten years ago and I was merely the vessel the Lord of Magic used this time to start his cleanup of the bits left behind. But, the two of you can spread the knowledge that Lord Voldemort has finally been completely eradicated from our world with no chance of coming back as you witnessed the ritual that cast him from our world. The Lord of Magic will take care of the rest,” Harry said with an evil smirk.

* * * * *

Dumbledore had been having a rough week. He’d been sleeping badly for days now, having disturbing dreams where he was being yelled at by various people he’d known over the years. Calling his actions into question. Accusing him of horrible things. He’d been looking forward to the start of the year when he’d be reintroducing Harry Potter to the wizarding world, but his constant headache from lack of sleep wasn’t allowing him time to bask in the thought of his plans for the year.

Then, a couple days ago, he somehow misplaced his wand. He wasn’t sure how it had happened, but maybe the lack of sleep played a part. All he knew was it wasn’t on his night stand when he woke up one morning. He’d had to resort to using his old wand which wasn’t improving his mood. The few teachers already in residence before the start of the year had begun to avoid him whenever possible.

And speaking of teachers, Professor Quirrell had had apparently left on an errand two days ago and not come back. Considering how important his presence is for Dumbledore’s plans for the year, locating him had become a priority. Unfortunately, none of his tracking methods were having any luck. He wondered if he had his normal wand would his spells be more successful?

If he wasn’t able to find Quirrell, he’d need to locate another DADA professor and they weren’t easy to come by, at least not with the skill level he wanted them to have. It wasn’t easy controlling the student population of the wizarding world in order to keep them from getting too powerful. Look what had happened with Grindelwald and what the Riddle boy had done. It was for the best to limit the power and knowledge of the young minds he had coming through Hogwarts.

His contemplations of what to do about a possible new DADA professor were interrupted by the entrance of Professor McGonagall.

“Albus, something’s wrong with Severus. He apparently fell ill yesterday afternoon, though he refused Madam Pomfrey’s help. He was due to meet with the other Heads of House this morning and when he didn’t show we found him unconscious in his rooms.

“So far Poppy hasn’t been able to figure out what’s causing his illness and has been treating the symptoms he’s been showing. We think St. Mungo’s should be contacted, just in case this is something that could be contagious.”

“Nonsense, I’m sure Madam Pomfrey will be able to handle Severus just fine. He has always been a quick healer and a very private man. He wouldn’t thank us for making his condition public.”

“Be that as it may, it is also our duty to make sure that we won’t be bringing in an entire school’s worth of students in less than three weeks if there’s a chance they could catch something harmful from being here.”
“I think you’re over exaggerating the situation, Minerva. There’s plenty of time before classes start for Severus to recover. If for some reason that isn’t the case, then we can worry about it, but I’m sure Severus will be up and around in no time at all.” He smiled congenially at her and only just stopped himself from patting her on the hand. Like the cat she sometimes was, Minerva only liked to be touched on her own terms.

She snorted. “Fine, I’ll give it a week, but if he isn’t up and around by then, this decision will need to be reconsidered.” She turned to head back to the door, but paused before exiting to turn back to him. “Another thing, Albus. Quirrell’s final lesson plan was due yesterday and I haven’t received it from him yet. I’ve attempted to contact him, but he apparently has left the castle. I had my reservations of him taking over this class to begin with as he’s not a strong Defense candidate, but I need the lesson plan soon so it can be approved for use.”

“I shall be sure to let him know to get that to you as soon as I see him,” he said agreeably.

She finally left and he settled back to contemplate how to handle the disappearance of one of his professors just before classes were to start. Never once did it occur to him to contact the Aurors to report him missing.

* * * * *

Amelia was working on paperwork, the bane of any administrator’s job, when someone knocked on her office door. She called out, “Enter,” and watched as one of her best Aurors entered.

“Sorry to bother you, Amelia, but there’s some strange things happening at Azkaban.” Kingsley Shacklebolt took the seat in front of her desk when she gestured him to it. “You know I’ve been spending time out there looking over things since we got word that Sirius Black was illegally incarcerated. I’ve been reviewing the files on all the prisoners and there are some I’ve already found that look a bit… suspect.”

“While that’s not good, or really all that unexpected considering, it wouldn’t be described as strange.”

“No, but what is strange is that we’ve had a number of sudden illnesses among those considered the worst offenders. Bellatrix Lestrange died this morning without having shown any signs of serious illness beforehand. I had her taken to a Healer to see if they could figure out what caused her death, but from everything they could find, she died a natural, though painful based on the expression on her face, death.”

“And? You have that look…”

“And they also found she had a… mark on her chest. I’d say it was a tattoo, but it wasn’t. It almost looked like metal runes were embedded in her skin. I made a sketch.” He pulled out a parchment and handed it over.

Amelia unrolled it and at first it just looked like random lines and swirls, but the longer she looked at it, the more it seemed to come into focus until suddenly she could see how it was the entwined runes for Magic and Death.

She rubbed at her temples where she’d had a low grade headache all day, probably from the bad night’s sleep she’d had. She’d relived a number of difficult memories in her dreams the night before and woke up feeling like she’d been judged and could only hope that she hadn’t been found wanting. Now on top of that was proof that the spell of Justice she’d watched begin yesterday had begun to make itself felt among the followers of Lord Voldemort.
She took a deep breath and laid the parchment down on her desk to focus on her employee. “Okay, finish the paperwork for Bellatrix’s death and close out her file. How many more are ill?”

“Five that seem really bad, but there are dozens that appear to have a low grade something. Mostly Death Eaters, at least in the beginning, but there are prisoners in there that weren’t there for that reason that are ill too. And some Death Eaters that are so far completely well.” He paused then abruptly continued, “Oh, and there appear to be fewer Dementors as well. They haven’t left the grounds as they haven’t passed the wards, but there were fewer doing rounds this morning.”

“Lovely. Make sure we have enough Auror guards to cover the rounds, especially as so many prisoners seem to be ill. We also need to be sure that if we need to remove them from their cells to get them medical help that they are actually sick and not just trying to take advantage of the situation.”

“I’ll make sure of it.” He stared at her intently for a moment. “I have a feeling that you know more about this than you’re saying. Now, I’m not going to ask you what it is, but once you’re ready to talk, I hope I’ll be among the first to know. Now,” He said, getting to his feet with a slight grin, “I’m going to let you get back to your paperwork while I go deal with the mess we have brewing at Azkaban. If things change, for the better or worse, I’ll let you know, but otherwise expect an update in a day or two.”

“Thanks, Kingsley, I appreciate it. And once I have something to tell you, you’ll be top of my list.”

He nodded and left the office, closing the door behind him.

Amelia barely controlled the impulse to bang her head on her desk top, but instead pulled out some parchment and a quill to write a request for a meeting with the Head of the Unspeakables. They apparently had things to talk about.

* * * * *

Narcissa was relaxing with a cup of tea when a House Elf brought the mail. Draco was in his room reading after their morning shopping trip and she’d been enjoying the peace. They were only planning to stay another day or two currently in the Paris house, and she wasn’t looking forward to their return. Draco had been doing very well after their visit to Gringotts and the Healer and she wasn’t sure how to protect him from further interference from his father.

She flipped through the post, glancing at the letters from friends in the area – invitations to dinners, most likely, or perhaps a party, though they knew she was due to leave soon. She froze when she saw the one from Lucius.

She carefully set it to the side before going through the rest. At the end was an official looking letter from Gringotts and she set the other letters aside and quickly broke the seal.

_Lady Narcissa Malfoy,_

_The results have completed for your son Draco’s inheritance test and it is very important we see him as soon as you can bring him in. I believe you mentioned that you would be visiting Paris for a while and, while you could visit that branch if necessary, it would be best to visit the London branch. If you will be unable to come in within the next two to three days, please let us know so we can make other arrangements._

_There are changes coming to our world and I believe it would be to both you and your son’s advantage to be prepared for them._
Magic’s blessing,
Grimtoe
Malfoy Account Manager
Gringotts London

Well, that was… interesting. She put that letter down and carefully picked up the one from her husband as if it might bite her if handled roughly. She honestly didn’t have to worry about charms or curses on it as the House Elves were amazing about being able to find and remove things like that, but that didn’t mean the contents couldn’t be as damaging as being cursed.

Narcissa,

I’ve found the absence of you and our son to be distracting. My sleep is restless and my dreams haunted. I would sleep easier if we were all together so I request that you cut short your trip in order to return to your place at my side. It is my hope that having my loving wife and loyal son with me, that I will find my normal calm returning.

I shall tell the House Elves to freshen your rooms in anticipation of your arrival.

Your Husband,
Lucius
Lord Malfoy

She carefully refolded the letter and replaced it in its envelope. She tapped it gently on the table beside her as she considered how to work this. She couldn’t refuse to go back, that would be basically a death sentence in defying him openly, but there were things she could do to protect themselves first.

The first step would be to go to Gringotts. If there was an inheritance her son could claim heir to, that could protect him from his father’s control. For her though… she was weighing her options when Ming popped into the room.

“Pardon, My Lady, but an urgent letter just arrived from Lord Black.” She handed over the thick envelop with the familiar, though not recently seen, seal of the House of Black.

“Thank you, Ming. Please remain until I’ve read it, then I’ll need you to take a message to Draco.” She broke the seal and pulled out the letter.

My Dear Narcissa,

I am sorry that ill health and depression over the loss of my wife have kept me from staying in contact with you as I should. I’m afraid that the loss of so many family – both to Death and Azkaban – damaged me for quite a while. It has been only recently that I was able to get help for my ill health as well as for my broken spirit.

I am writing for a number of reasons. The first is that I have missed you. I wish to once more become familiar with both you and your son, Draco. I believe he is to start Hogwarts this year. It’s amazing how time passes so quickly. I realize that this is rather sudden, but I’ve recently come to realize just how important family is and how little time I may have left to enjoy those I still have.

The next reason is to share a bit of happy news with you. I’ve recently discovered that your Cousin Sirius never had a trial and was sent quite illegally to Azkaban. While that certainly couldn’t be considered ‘happy news’, the fact that this has now been discovered and corrected certainly is. Sirius is currently residing with me and getting help from Healers of both mind and body. He’s
doing exceedingly well considering the years he spent in that horrible place and I only wish I’d known sooner so he could’ve been freed earlier.

While his temper and emotions in general are still volatile at times, he is pleased to be free and eager to renew relations with family and friends. He’s expressed an interest in seeing you and your son, though I’ll admit his temper would not be able to accommodate your husband. I hope you will not hold that against him. We would both love to see you soon.

Which brings me to my final reason for writing, though it is not necessarily a happy one. I received notification yesterday that your sister, Bellatrix, died in Azkaban. I’ve been told that she went quickly and that her magic just went out on her and she passed not long after. I plan to have her interred in the family plot tomorrow evening, with only a few people in to witness. While I did not agree with your sister’s politics or actions, she was still a Black and I will do my duty by her. If you are able to come, let me know and I’ll send a portkey to get you and Draco, if he wishes to join you, past the wards.

I’m sorry to end on such sad news, but I still look forward to rekindling the relationship I should’ve had with you and your son. I hope to hear from you soon.

Your loving Grandfather,
Arcturus Black
Lord of the House of Black

‘Well, that certainly opened up some interesting possibilities,’ she thought as she considered how best to work this. First was to tell the Goblins that they’d be there first thing in the morning tomorrow, after arriving back from Paris. Any protection they could offer her son, she’d take.

Next would be to contact Lord Black and accept his offer to visit to attend her dear departed sister’s funeral. She shuddered at what would’ve happened had she ever been released from Azkaban. This was probably for the best. She wouldn’t have wanted Draco to be around her or her husband and brother-in-law.

Finally she’d have to write Lucius and tell him it would be at least another day or so before they could return as there had been an unexpected death and she needed to pay her respects. He wouldn’t be pleased but considering it was Lord Black, he’d hold his tongue. And considering how the two men had gotten along the few times they’d met before Lord Black had become a recluse, Lucius would be happy to have not been asked to join them. Though he would be most interested in hearing about Sirius and that it was Bellatrix that had died.

“Ming, I need you to tell Draco to have Dobby help him pack his things. We return to London tomorrow to meet with the Goblins and visit with Lord Black. His Aunt Bellatrix has died and we will be attending her funeral before returning to the manor the following day. Then I’ll need you to start packing my belongings as well.”

“As you wish, Lady Narcissa.”

She gave a quick nod before popping out and Narcissa took a deep breath and relaxed back into the seat cushions, picking up the now cooled cup of tea. With a slight bit of magic she reheated it and took a sip, gathering her thoughts before she had to start responding to her correspondence. It was going to be a busy couple of days.

* * * * *

Harry’s days had been busy enough that he was beginning to think that School would be relaxing.
A thought he’d never had about his time at Hogwarts in the past. After his meeting with the Longbottoms, he’d spent as much time with his account manager as possible. He was determined to figure out his roles and responsibilities when it came to his various lordships and he needed to do it fast. Or at least get the basics down.

He had been able to meet Neville and Augusta, he was working on the ‘Gran’ thing, for lunch, but Neville was so tired from the cleansing that they made plans to meet the next day and do some shopping.

Harry had gotten a run down on where things stood with what the Goblin’s were working on and had discussed the needs for the ritual. He’d been told that his invites had been passed along for those to witness the unlamented passing of Tom Riddle and that Madam Bones had his and a number of other individuals’ claims of illegal spells and tampering with inheritance lines. They cautioned him that charging such things was difficult, but it couldn’t hurt to let the DMLE have the evidence in case it became useful later on.

He’d met the Longbottoms the next day after lunch and accompanied them around Diagon Alley, doing a lot of window shopping, as neither he nor Neville had ever really had much time to just explore and he’d been studying the information Grimrock had given him on wizarding London and had a number of places he was curious to see. They did manage to pick up a new wand for Neville – the same thirteen inch cherry wood and unicorn hair one he’d eventually carried in the future. The look on his face when the magic first filled him once it had been located still made Harry grin when he thought of it.

Mr. Ollivander hadn’t commented on his wand but had simply given him an amused look and said that he was sure Harry would be well served by it.

He’d convinced Neville to get a wand holster as well, he really wasn’t sure why they weren’t standard as they were much safer than having students shove them in pockets or wherever they could find to put them.

After their wand shopping they’d visited the pet shop where Neville was almost immediately adopted by a female Tawny owl. They’d barely made it into the shop before she had flown down and perched herself on his shoulder. Thankfully she was a small breed and had a good grip on him as he’d flinched violently when she’d first landed.

The relationship improved from there and by the time they left with all the supplies he’d need and some things he probably didn’t, she’d been named Ceres. She’d been directed to meet them at home later and with a last nuzzle, she left them to continue their shopping.

They’d had a good afternoon. Neville slowly straightened out of his slightly hunched posture and started smiling more easily. Augusta was willing to answer all the questions Harry could think to ask and, as he was supposedly new to the magical world and in reality didn’t really know all that much about it even after seven years, he had a lot of them.

Some of the information she told him seemed to surprise even Neville and he caught brief looks of sadness on her face at times because of it. Generally though they had a good time and she reissued her invitation to come stay with them for a while. They tentatively agreed to Harry visiting in about a week, with details to be finalized closer to the actual date.

The rest of his time since then had been prepping for the ritual, performing the actual ritual then recovering from it. It had been surprisingly exhausting to be the conduit of the Lord of Magic, but he willingly did it. It was all worth it to see the last trace of Tom Riddle be removed from the world and know that this time, he wasn’t coming back. Death had been a physical presence during the
ritual, which had also been odd as he could feel the connection between them. Master of Death, it appears, wasn’t simply a token title.

He’d felt the pulse go out upon Riddle’s destruction and was interested to see the results of Magic taking back control in the world.

Within a day Gringotts was already getting notifications of Deaths in families of known Death Eaters, and warnings that current Heads of House might not be able to hold the position much longer for various reasons. Generally, he was told, this meant that they didn’t have enough Magic to be considered able to have the role. The Goblins were trying to get notices out as quickly as possible to those families they could to solidify the next in line to take control once the current Head lost power. Literally, in most cases.

By the weekend Harry was ready for a break from the constant rush and excitement filling Gringotts and happily sent Hedwig to Augusta with news that he could come for a visit, if the time was still convenient. She responded that they would be conducting business at the bank the next day and he could travel back with them if that worked for him.

So Harry packed up some of his new belongings and portkeyed back to Gringotts before lunch four days after the ritual.

They were to meet in the atrium of the Bank after the Longbottoms completed their business and Harry could tell they appeared a little shell-shocked as he approached.

“Magic’s blessing, Augusta and Neville, are you doing well?” He asked hesitantly as he reached them.

Augusta gave herself a shake and smiled faintly at him. “Harry, yes, we’re well. We just had a bit of… shocking news this morning and are still processing it.”

“No, now,” Neville was quick to interject, “please come. I’ve been looking forward to it all week.”

Harry glanced up at Augusta questioningly and relaxed at her slight nod. “Brilliant, I’ve been looking forward to it too.”

“Well then, let’s head back to the house and we can discuss our plans for the week,” Augusta said briskly. “Have you traveled yet by floo, Harry,” she asked as she made her way over to one of the public Flos.

“I haven’t, though I’ve been told about them.”

“Alright then. What you’ll need to do is take some of this powder,” she pointed to a pot attached to the wall beside an enormous fire place, “step into the fireplace, firmly and clearly state where you wish to go and throw the powder at your feet. You’ll feel a whirling sensation that may make you a bit ill the first couple times you travel this way, but you’ll end up in the destination fireplace. You’ll want to exit the fireplace fairly quickly as you don’t know if someone will be trying to travel there behind you.

“Now, Gringotts sets up their flos so there’s a privacy ward around them to keep people from hearing where you’re going, but most publicly available flos aren’t set up that way so if you want to hide where you’re traveling, you’ll need to take steps to conceal it yourself.

“Neville, why don’t you go first, Harry will follow you and I’ll come last. That way you can help
him when he arrives and he can see how it works by watching you.”

Neville smiled at Harry before stepping forward, taking some powder and saying, “Longbottom Manor.”

He disappeared in a flash of green flame and they waited a minute or so before Harry stepped forward to repeat the process.

He arrived slightly disoriented, but at least, he was happy to see, in the correct location judging by Neville’s smile as he supported him as he exited the fireplace. A much better first try this go-round.

Augusta soon joined them and they left the receiving room and headed further into the house to what looked to be a family sitting room.

“Posy,” she called and a nicely dressed House Elf popped into the room.

“Yes, Madam?”

“Please take Harry’s bag to his room, the one next to Neville’s that we set up. And if you could tell Cook that we will be ready for lunch in about an hour.”

Posy nodded and turned to Harry who quickly passed her his bag. She smiled and popped from the room.

“So,” Harry said a bit hesitantly, “you two looked a bit… out of sorts when I saw you in the bank. Are you okay?”

Augusta sighed and looked over at Neville who was biting his lip. He took a deep breath though and started to speak.

“We went back to get my inheritance test results today. There was a delay in getting them back as they’ve apparently been doing so many in the past week.” He paused and Harry nodded, knowing how crazy things had been around Gringotts since he came into their lives and brought back their Lord of All.

“Anyway,” he finally continued, “we got the notice Friday afternoon to come in, but were busy yesterday so went this morning. I wasn’t expecting anything. My father is Lord Longbottom and…”

Harry knew Neville had always found it hard to talk about his parents and their condition.

“You might not know, but just after your parents were murdered my family was attacked. I was with Gran for the evening when Death Eaters broke into the house we were staying in and… they were tortured, supposedly for information on the whereabouts of… Lord Voldemort. They were found by Aurors before they were killed, but they… they’re insane. They stay in the Janus Thickey Ward at St. Mungo’s. Despite that, Dad was still recognized as Lord Longbottom with Gran acting as Regent until I get old enough to take over.

“Well, we found out today that Magic now recognizes me as the Lord of our House. It’s flattering to know that I’m the best choice, but I don’t know that this is the way that I wanted to have it happen.”

“I would’ve preferred my Dad be here to be Lord Potter now too, Neville.” Harry said softly. “Since he can’t do it, I’m doing all I can to do it the best I can for him. It’s intimidating.”
Neville nodded quickly in agreement. “So, that was bittersweet, then we got the shocking part of the results. I wasn’t aware we had any other major family lines in our history, or at least nothing major since many of the old families do split off from important lines in the wizarding world. Most of those were thought to have died off or the Magic in them so divested that there was no clear Line anymore to have a Lord or Lady. Well, it seems that the Mackenzie line, my Mum’s family, is a pretty direct line from Godric Gryffindor and can lay claim to the Lordship. I’m the first Lord Gryffindor in hundreds of years.”

Harry could tell that Neville was still quite shocked by the thought, but knowing how he was in the future? the past? when he’d known him before, he could totally believe that Neville fit the role.

“I have a feeling there’s going to be a lot of shakeups in the various family lines. I had a couple myself. I hadn’t even known that there was a Potter lordship when they had me do the inheritance test, I just wanted to know more about my family. It turns out that I have a couple surprises in my line too. I’m Lord Slytherin from my Mum’s side, of all things,” he grinned at their shocked faces, “and on Dad’s side there’s the Peverell lordship.”

Augusta looked at him in shock. “You’re the Lord of Potter, Slytherin AND Peverell?”

“I was shocked too,” Harry said. “It’s intimidating and the Goblins love to call me ‘Lord Potter Slytherin Peverell’ because they know it makes me uncomfortable. To get them to stop I apparently need to choose a primary lordship or something to be officially known by. I’m still considering the pros and cons of them.”

“That’s…” Augusta paused, mouth open but nothing coming out. She took a deep breath and tried again. “Peverell is an ancient line and almost mythological in this time. It’s a fairy tale told to wizarding children. If you don’t know it, I know we have it in our Library. Slytherin is a line that has unfortunately become synonymous with evil wizards. It was at one time though a highly respected name, and not just because Salazar Slytherin was one of the Founders of Hogwarts. Of course Potter is always a good choice, honoring your Father’s line.”

“Well, no matter what I choose, I’ll still be Lord of all three, but whichever one I pick will send a message. I just don’t know what message I want to send. I know what I’m leaning towards…” He trailed off uncertainly.

“You don’t have to tell us,” Augusta said kindly, “but if you want to talk it out with us, we’d be happy to do so.”

Harry looked over at Neville, who nodded encouragingly.

“Well, I’m leaning towards Slytherin. The Goblins said that I could go a long way towards healing the rift between Dark and Light wizards if they see someone every one associates with ‘the Light’ openly going by a title associated with ‘Dark’ families. Also, since it was my parents that Voldemort murdered, it would show that I don’t hold any ill will towards those in the Slytherin house. Things like that.

“I’ll always be Harry Potter, and I wouldn’t change that for anything, but going by ‘Lord Potter’ just acknowledges my dad’s family. It’s expected but short sighted in the long run.

“You’re also right that most people either think of Peverell as a children’s story or have forgotten them completely. It would be good to bring them back into people’s minds, bring back the respect for Magic and those forces we can’t see but that impact our lives – like Death – that the name represents. But I don’t think I want to fight that battle that overtly. I can be Lord Peverell without going by it day in and day out.
“But Slytherin I think needs me most. I’ve heard about the problems in Hogwarts between the Houses and I think it’s ridiculous. If I can do something to help that by showing that I’m not ashamed to be known as the Lord of Slytherin, that I don’t feel that it’s an evil thing, then hopefully I can convince others to also feel that way.”

“Well, that certainly does seem well thought out. I also think your reasoning is sound. Others might not agree though. Are you prepared for that?”

Harry smirked at her. “Well, conveniently I’m the Lord of three very prominent and wealthy families and the Heir, though second in line currently, of a fourth, so I think I’ll be able to get away with quite a bit.”

“What House are you Heir to, Harry,” Neville asked curiously.

“The House of Black,” Harry said cheerfully, enjoying their looks of astonishment. “Granted, I’m perfectly fine staying the Heir there for a very long time, or even being replaced by a child of my Godfather, but for now I’m it.”

“Yes, I think you’ll be able to get away with wealthy and eccentric, especially as you grew up in the Muggle world. Unfortunately wizards always expect a bit of usualness from Muggleborn and Muggle-raised wizards.”

“Which is why I’m studying as hard as I can to learn all the traditional things Magical children learn growing up, so they won’t disregard my words just because they think I don’t know any better.”

“Well, Neville and I would be happy to help you with that. We can review the family information that every child tends to learn growing up as well as the things you’re expected to know as a Lord.” She winked at him, “Once you know them though, you can of course choose whether you will follow them or not.”

“Because then it’ll just be an example of my eccentricity and not simply ignorance?” He grinned at her, listening to Neville giggle softly.

“Exactly. And all the best Lords should have a bit of that to them, assuming they use it appropriately.”

“Oh, I plan to use my Lordships in all sorts of appropriate ways. They just might not appreciate what I consider appropriate.”

* * * * *

Ragnok sat back at his desk and relaxed for what felt like the first time in weeks. Which wasn’t that far off actually. Since young Harry Potter had returned to the wizarding world and visited Gringotts with the mark of the Lord of Magic on his forehead, things had been busy. But he would take it. A sign that their Lord of All was still out there, the first major one in generations, was worth the work the child had been the precursor for.

He was proud of his staff. In less than a week they’d helped remove one of the most evil wizards to terrorize their world. While Harry had given them the keys to do it by showing them what to look for, they were the ones to find them, cleanse them, then help Harry banish his spirit from the world. It was very satisfying.

On top of that though was the day-to-day business of the bank which had hinted at the changes to come almost from the beginning. A day after Harry’s first visit, the inheritance books began to
glow for the first time in generations. Once they’d proactively monitored the families whose lines they tracked, updating automatically when changes happened and signaling when a new Lord or Lady was to be christened. The Lordship updates had been the first to go, Magic no longer strong enough to enforce His will. The updating ability had been weakening since and they’d had to bolster it the with the magic of the Horde to keep the updates going, but they’d been unable to get the books to do all the updates, follow the unacknowledged lines or those of the so-called squibs sent out into the Muggle world and stricken from the Family Tree.

Now that the Lord of Magic’s influence was again being felt, the books were trying to update everything, all at once, and they were being run ragged trying to keep on top of the changes and send out notifications to those who were being effected. If they even knew who they were. So many old lines were now showing as having Heirs, but due to the years where the books couldn’t track, they were unable to tell them who they were.

Which was why the Goblins were slowly trying to bring in all their customers for inheritance testing. They were starting with known families. Ones they knew had Heirs, but that might also be Heir to older lines. Three of the Founder lines had been rediscovered in the past week and numerous lines thought died out completely had been located as well among their more regular clients. They were trying to test all the students as they came in to get their funds for school shopping, but some had already come in before this started and they weren’t sure how best to bring them back.

On the negative side of the changes, though in a way still a positive, was all the discoveries of spells and curses they’d found on those being tested. Their files to provide to the DMLE had grown exponentially over the last couple of days as they expanded their regular inheritance testing procedure to include a mandatory Healer screening beforehand. Only a few had protested the change, but most people had agreed and been horrified at what was found.

Not that everyone was laboring under nasty spells, but he was amazed that there were as many as there were. Madam Bones had taken a look at the first three he’d sent her, not sure that she’d be able to do anything about it considering the status of those involved, but she’d been so horrified at the amounts that developed that she’d brought in her own niece just a couple days ago and the both of them had gone through the process together.

Luckily nothing major had been found with either of them, though there were signs that people had tried to potion Madam Bones on a number of occasions. Their staff are checked regularly for that though, especially at her level, and nothing appeared to have had any detrimental effect. She did arrange for the Goblin Healers to keep her stocked with their standard flushing droughts though and to call her in immediately if they found she wasn’t taking them regularly.

Their inheritance tests were still running, though they weren’t expecting anything shocking to come out of it. Amelia was the current Head of the family Bones with her niece Susan as her Heir. Once things are confirmed, they planned to come officially get the Heir ring for Susan. She hadn’t planned to originally, not thinking Susan would need it before school started, but now wanted her to have the added safety it would give her when she was no longer regularly under her Aunt’s protection.

Since the ritual there had been a revitalization in the Horde and the employees that worked with them. They’d all felt the wave that had gone out when Voldemort had been destroyed. There had been a couple that had been slightly ill for a day afterwards that they’d had to check to see why Magic had tagged them. Luckily none had been major problems, but there had been signs that someone outside Gringotts was trying to influence them, though they hadn’t yet been successful. They’d started files on those issues as well as they were internal problems that might be needed
eventually for the DMLE.

Outside the walls of Gringotts, signs of His influence were almost immediate. Bellatrix Lestrange, long considered one of Lord Voldemort’s most vicious and devoted supporters, died within hours of His return. He’d heard rumors that she bore the mark of their Lord and Death on her when she was found. She’d obviously been found lacking.

Other Death Eater families were having problems as well. In fact there were so many complaints of illness or feelings of weakness among the adults of those families that St. Mungo’s had assigned a ward just to them. While some had recovered with most of their powers and abilities, some showed signs that they were losing their magic completely.

The Lord of Magic did not approve of the misuse of the gifts He’d given them.

Rumors were starting to swirl around the wizarding population and Ragnok knew that something would have to be done soon to head off a panic. Despite the Death Eaters seemingly being the target, whispers of ‘he-who-must-not-be-named’ were making the rounds and he suspected that if he cared to investigate the source of them, they’d lead back to Dumbledore.

He wasn’t sure why Dumbledore was so fixated on Lord Voldemort or Harry Potter, as he’d certainly shown that interest over the years what with locking his parents’ wills and sticking him, illegally, with muggle relatives. There had been a number of interesting conversations with Harry about what things were like for him growing up over the past week. Even sending Hagrid to escort Harry around Diagon was suspect as, no matter how nice Hagrid is, he’s not qualified to be the first contact for a muggle-raised wizard.

Even the Goblins were aware that sending someone who wasn’t legally allowed to do magic to be a first contact where you often need to prove that Magic is real and that this isn’t all a hoax to trick them would be a bad idea. The fact that he is completely loyal to Dumbledore so willing to pass along his party line without even realizing that’s what he’s doing is the only reason for him to go. It’s not like he really fits in physically in the Muggle world any more than Ragnok himself does.

But, he had to admit, that Hagrid being Harry’s chaperon that day had allowed Harry more freedom than someone like McGonagall would have, and Ragnok wasn’t fool enough to think that Harry, acting under direction of the Lord of Magic, hadn’t taken complete advantage of that fact.

Ragnok grinned fiercely to himself at the thought of his Lord’s emissary as there was a knock at the door. “Enter.”

The door opened and his second in command walked in, amusement pouring off him and holding what appeared to be a newspaper. “I have something you’re going to want to see,” he said smirking.

“Baldur, I know you’re aware of how I feel about The Daily Prophet…”

“I am, which is why this isn’t that paper.”

He reached out and laid it on Ragnok’s desk where he was surprised to see it was indeed not The Prophet but instead The Quibbler. He shot him a suspicious look before picking it up and glancing at the article on the cover.

*The Lord of Magic Returns to the Wizarding World!*

Well now, that was certainly more blunt than he’d generally expect from Xenophilius Lovegood…
Just over a week ago a disturbance was felt in the magic of those sensitive enough to feel it, dear Readers. It wasn’t an omen of bad things to come, though I’m sure not all will agree with my assessment, but the heralding of the return of the one that first granted Magic to our world so many years ago. For generations His touch has been absent from us, blocked by the very ignorance and feelings of superiority that have plagued our world for ages.

While I am unaware currently of what might have allowed His return to us, I can say with all certainty that this will be the beginning of a time of change in the magical world as we once more learn that the magic we wield so unthinkingly is actually a responsibility we all bear. We should use it wisely and treat it with respect or we may find that, like errant children, our toys are taken away from us.

It was unfortunate that so many considered The Quibbler to be a publication by a crazy person for other crazy people and therefore it was ignored by a majority of the British wizarding world, but it was good to see that there were wizards out there who recognized the change and also welcomed it.

“What are the chances anyone will take real notice of this?”

“Unfortunately, not many, but it has been announced now so it will be interesting to see who takes notice.”

I’ve heard that Madam Bones will be putting out a statement herself in the next day or two, because of all the illness and deaths at Azkaban.”

Ragnok nodded, “Yes, she needs to get ahead of the rumors that Dumbledore is whispering to convince people that Voldemort is back and punishing his followers for their lack of… who knows what. I’ve heard a number of different ideas as to why he’d be angry at them.”

His SIC shook his head in disgust before changing the subject. “We’ve located a fourth Founder’s Heir. What are the odds that all four Houses would come back into prominence at this particular time?”

“With the Lord of Magic, all things are possible.” Ragnok grinned at the look of irritation on his face. “In all seriousness, if not for the actions of Harry Potter, acting under His instructions, it’s likely none would’ve ever been found. The fact that they have means that it’s probably important for some reason.

“Look into the all information we have on the history of Hogwarts and the charter it operates under. Changes have been needed there for many years, and I’m not just talking about the travesty of a Headmaster running the show. So much knowledge has been lost or is just not being taught. It would be nice to be able to hire already trained staff without having to build in an additional year or more of training before we can trust them to know what they’re doing.”

“I’ll get our researchers on that immediately, Chieftain. Anything else for right now?”

“Set up a meeting with all four for mid-week. We should be able to have general information summarized for them by then and classes start soon. This is obviously important so we don’t want to linger too long.”

“As you will, Chieftain.” He gave a bow and left the office, leaving Ragnok to wonder just what changes would come to light next. He couldn’t wait to find out.

* * * *

While Harry hadn’t actually physically been to the Bank while staying with the Longbottoms, he
had exchanged a great deal of correspondence with them, so he was a bit surprised to find he’d actually missed being physically in Gringotts. He’d gotten to know quite a few employees during the time he’d spent there and it took him a while to notice the odd looks he was getting from Augusta and Neville as he greeted those he passed.

He shrugged and gave them a bit of a grin, “So I’ve spent a bit of time here and I ask a lot of questions.”

They had to agree with that as he’d asked a lot of questions while he was with them as well. He had questions about everything, and he wasn’t always satisfied with the first answer he was given. There was almost always a ‘but why…’ or a ‘well, what about…’ involved. They weren’t always able to give him an answer.

They’d kept up with the news of the so-called illness sweeping the local wizarding population. While it had started apparently in Azkaban among the incarcerated Death Eaters, there were rumors now that some higher ranking members of the Ministry of Magic were also suffering from something similar. No one had seen Fudge in a couple of days.

Dumbledore had been reported as saying this was a plot by ‘Dark Wizards’, insinuating that they were somehow attempting to disrupt the running of the wizarding world by taking out the ‘Heads of our oldest and most respected families’.

Harry could only roll his eyes then laugh when Neville muttered, “Since when is Bellatrix Lestrange considered respected?”

They’d had a private celebration when the news had broke of her unlamented passing.

In retaliation, an article had been released by St. Mungo’s stating that while they were sure it wasn’t a true illness and was unlike any curse they’d ever heard about, that if you were showing a certain set of symptoms to come in and they would at least monitor you and make sure you were comfortable until whatever it was had run its course.

There were supposedly about three outcomes of those who’d contracted whatever this was – Death, surviving the experience but with some level of reduction in their magical ability (both their available power levels and the types of spells they were able to cast), or finally a fairly complete recovery though there were often quirks in their Magic as well. All who were touched by this had a runic mark on them somewhere.

The wizarding public couldn’t decide if they were fascinated or terrified.

With all this going on, it was a nice change to get out of the house and see what the Goblins wanted to speak to them about. Their letter had been brief, just that there were some details surrounding their Lordships they wished to bring to their attention.

They were early, so Harry figured they’d be the first to the room, but when they were escorted in, Ragnok was already seated at the head of the table.

“Chieftain Ragnok, Magic’s blessing to you and your clan. I wasn’t expecting you to be leading this meeting. We are honored.”

“Who else would I trust to work with some of our most valued customers?” He gestured at them to take seats and Neville seated his grandmother before taking a seat himself.

They hadn’t been seated for long when the door was opened again and Madam Bones and a red-headed girl who looked to be their age were ushered.
“Madam Bones, Lady Hufflepuff, please take a seat. We’re almost all here.”

They quickly introduced themselves, Harry making no sign that he’d ever met Amelia Bones before. They’d just begun some idle chitchat when the door opened once more. This time Narcissa and Draco Malfoy entered.

“Lady Black, Lord Ravenclaw, it’s a pleasure. Please join us.”

That… was unexpected. Lady Black? Lord Ravenclaw? This was looking more and more like an interesting meeting.

“Thank you all for attending, considering how busy I know you must all be. It is for an important purpose though, so I appreciate your indulgence. The four of you represent the ruling Heirs of the four Founders of Hogwarts. That means that you have some unique privileges when it comes to the school, but also a great responsibility.

“There have been no Heirs for many years, which means that the running of the school has largely been left to the whim of whatever Headmaster is currently in control and what politics are influencing the School Governors.

“While you will often hear Hogwarts referred to as the finest wizarding school, in reality it scores very low in comparison to other schools around the world. At one time, it was THE school to attend, but the quality of education Hogwarts offers has suffered over the years.”

“I’m not pleased to hear that the school I’m about to start attending offers such a substandard education, but why are you telling us this? What can we do about it?” Harry asked, glancing through the reports Ragnok had passed around as he’d begun speaking. It was laid out within, the differences in classes offered, both then and now as well as a current day comparison with other magical school. Grade averages, extracurricular options, even estimated power levels of the student body at each. Hogwarts was consistently in the bottom 20% in all the rankings shown. It was a depressing sight.

“I’m bringing this to your attention because, as the Heirs and new Lords and Lady of Hogwarts, you have control over the school. If you want to change things – new classes, different professors, more options – you can make it happen. Unfortunately there’s only a week and a half before classes resume, so there’s not much time to decide what to do and implement it. I asked you here today to show you what’s going on with the school and tell you your rights in this situation because I know that, if I don’t, you’ll not find out from anyone at the school. Whether on purpose or because they aren’t aware either.”

Draco looked up at that, from where he’d been intently staring at the wood grain in the table.

“What rights do we have? I thought all were equal at Hogwarts, not even Heirs or Lords are given any preferential treatment?”

“And generally, for normal Lordships, you would be correct. Lord Potter or Lord Longbottom,” he clarified, gesturing at Harry and Neville, “would be treated as simply Mr. Potter and Mr. Longbottom, but Lord Slytherin and Lord Gryffindor have rights when it comes to them residing in the school.

“First off, Heirs have the option to not be sorted. They officially represent their respective Houses. They don’t stay in the dorms, but have a set of rooms near their Common Room. They can still earn points or have points taken from them for their Houses. While technically they don’t have to obey the regular rules for curfew and leaving campus, it’s generally expected for you to set a good example and only break those rules for an emergency or official Hogwarts business.
“As I’ve already mentioned, you have the ability to change the class schedule, hire and fire Professors and other staff, though you have to be in agreement to do so. One of you can’t take over and make all the decisions against the wishes of the other three.”

Susan spoke up for the first time, cheeks flushing a bit in embarrassment. “None of us have even been to Hogwarts yet, how can we agree what changes should be made? Though I don’t like the fact that we don’t have all the options available to other schools. How could we implement new classes, get qualified instructors and have students sign up and get necessary materials in the short amount of time we have left?”

“I’ve spoken to the Head of the Unspeakables and, between people they know are experts in various fields and people who work for Gringotts, we feel we can provide qualified Professors for at least the following school year. You can decide at that point if you’d like to offer them a longer contract or find a more permanent replacement. They may wish to go back to their previous job, but it would give you coverage now when you need it.”

So far the adults had been silent, letting the Heirs have their say, but it was obvious that the four were hoping for a bit of guidance now judging by the slightly pleading looks they were getting. Narcissa, Amelia and Augusta exchanged looks then nodded that Augusta should begin.

“I think you owe it to yourselves and your fellow students to provide the best possible education you can. We are all understandably proud of our school, but it is painful to hear how little, in the long run, we have to take pride in. That the Headmaster has let standards sink so low when he’s in contact with educators all over the world is criminally negligent. I don’t believe there’s any excuse he could give to make it better as he’s either an idiot, in which case he shouldn’t be the one in charge, or he’s doing it on purpose, in which case he really shouldn’t be in charge and should probably be brought up on criminal charges.”

Amelia made a slight choking noise while Narcissa was obviously hiding a smile behind her hand. Harry knew he was grinning widely and could see that Neville looked an equal mixture of shocked and proud.

“Tell us how you really think, Augusta,” Amelia murmured with a grin and Augusta winked at her. “I have to say I agree though. There’s so much taught in the Auror academy that seemed to me like it should be standard information taught to everyone, but maybe that’s the problem, it isn’t being taught to everyone anymore. Depending on what you need, I would be willing to see if I have qualified employees to help out as well, perhaps on a rotating basis so I don’t lose anyone for a whole year. Though I have to say that the thought of having an Auror on staff this year would make me feel better considering all the changes we’re proposing.”

“While I agree with everything you’ve said,” Narcissa said, waving a hand to encompass everyone at the table, “and am actually quite jealous at the thought of some of the classes you may be adding, how exactly are we going to be able to do this with Dumbledore as Headmaster? Whether he’s criminally negligent or simply incompetent, in the public eye he can do no wrong and I can’t see him going along willingly with changes made by eleven year olds, Founders’ Heirs or not.”

The grin on Ragnok’s face would’ve scared Harry if he wasn’t so familiar with him by now, but he could tell it was close to terrifying the others.

“I have a way to handle that, that will have Dumbledore out of Hogwarts by the weekend.”

“Legally?” Amelia asked wryly.

“Completely,” he smirked. “Hogwarts is their school, their property, and Magic will honor that.
The school itself was built for a purpose that has been corrupted and it wants to make things right. If we strengthen the Magic of the school, it’ll start fixing the school physically, which will include evicting anyone it doesn’t want residing there. The Headmaster isn’t exempt from that.”

“Excellent,” Harry said happily. “What,” he asked, seeing the slightly shocked looks on the faces around him, “you guys might have grown up worshipping the man, but I’ve never met him and would be happy to continue that streak based on everything I’ve heard about him. If Magic can kick him out for us and keep him from coming back, I’m all for it. How do we do it,” he asked, turning to Ragnok again.

“Bleed on your Ring and request that Magic cleanse Hogwarts and restore her to her former glory.”

The other Lords and Lady looked to their family member first before reaching for the knives Ragnok had quietly provided. Harry though immediately took one closest to him and gave Ragnok a nod before lightly pricking one of his fingers and pressing it to the top of the Slytherin ring.

‘Lord of Magic, hear my plea. We wish to cleanse Hogwarts of the corruption that has been done to her and pulled her from her true duty – the safety and education of our young witches and wizards. Help her to rid herself of anyone unwilling or unable to contribute to that duty and allow us to find good replacements for the positions we wish to fill.’ He paused in his mental request before giving a bit of a mental shrug and adding one last thing, ‘And if you could take care of the huge basilisk hiding out in the so-called Chamber of Secrets, I’d really appreciate it.’

He would swear he heard laughter after that, though the wave of warmth that swept over him he was positive he wasn’t imagining.

* * * * *

In Hogwarts, Magic began to shift through the stones of the castle. Starting from the top of the towers and flowing downward, it made its way into every nook and cranny, seeking out all the bits of magic that had been added over the years that had eaten away at her ability to do her job. It would take a while to complete, but the cleansing had begun.

In his office, Dumbledore was looking over the paperwork associated with finding a last minute DADA Professor, as Quirrell had not yet returned, and a temporary Potions Professor, as Severus was still in a coma. From his perch, Fawkes gave a happy trill that for once didn’t lift his spirits. In fact, it almost sounded like Fawkes was laughing at him and that sent a chill through him. Suddenly he felt a pain in his chest and a throbbing began in his head to match the one in his hand from the paperwork. Honestly, could this day get any worse?

* * * * *

The rest of Harry’s week with the Longbottoms was very different from the first half. Mainly because they spent a great deal of their time with the other Heirs at Gringotts pouring over potential course listings and debating the merits of potential Professors for them. It was actually a lot of fun though they often had to get someone to explain what certain courses would cover and how they were relevant to future classes or jobs outside of Hogwarts as they had never heard of them.

There were a surprising number of people who were willing, and qualified, to teach the new classes they were agreeing on. Enough even to split classes according to level – the older, more advanced students with one and the beginner students with another.

It hadn’t taken long before the first irate visitor from Hogwarts arrived, confused as to why
Hogwarts was prompting them to show up. McGonagall arrived bright and early the second day, wanting to know what was going on with her school and why things were so different.

“That had been a fun conversation,” Harry snorted to himself. For someone who had always seemed the most hardcore supporter of the Headmaster, she was surprisingly willing to entertain the thought of chucking him out of the position and getting someone more suitable in. He had to wonder if Magic had cleansed her of some interesting extras as well.

Her main concerns were 1) she didn’t want to be Headmaster herself – she preferred teaching – and 2) did they really have time before classes started to do a whole scale change of the course lineup and have students be able to get all their necessary supplies or even really know what they were taking.

They reviewed the historical listing of what had been offered and made a list of what they no longer carried. They then compared it to classes being offered around the world at other magical schools and added any classes they didn’t have listed and marked all those that others covered that were already on their list.

By the end they had a very comprehensive list of all possible choices, so far at least, to look over and see what they wanted to incorporate. They each took a copy with them at the end of the day to review in the evening so they could start the decision making process the next day.

Harry, Neville and Augusta discussed the various classes for hours once they got back to the manor, the House Elves having to remind them to come to dinner. They had started their discussion in the Sitting Room but quickly relocated to the Library when they realized that they would have to look up quite a few topics to know what they were even discussing. The house elf in charge of managing the Library was excitedly running around to collect the books they wanted to reference.

Neville started writing down summaries of what the classes should cover, in their opinion, or at least how they were interpreting them, so they would be able to more easily explain their reasoning the next day when they started up the discussion again. Harry was very pleased to see that, while he was still a bit embarrassed by their praise for his idea, he didn’t duck his head and look uncomfortable, but simply smiled happily at them.

They were in a different room the next morning as Minerva returned with Professors Sprout and Flitwick in tow.

“Professor McGonagall, welcome back. Professor Sprout, Professor Flitwick, we’re glad you could join us for these discussions as well. Has Minerva explained the situation we find ourselves in to you both?”

“She has,” Sprout confirmed, “but I’ll admit it’s hard to take in. I’d asked her why the Headmaster wasn’t involved in these discussions and she told me I’d best get that answer from you.”

Ragnok nodded. “Dumbledore wasn’t invited as, for one, he has no say in the decisions made by the Heirs on behalf of Hogwarts if they don’t invite him to provide it. They haven’t. And second, we are all fairly well convinced that he will not be the Headmaster within the next couple of days.”

They could see that Sprout was getting quite agitated by that thought, but Flitwick placed a calming hand on her arm and addressed Ragnok himself. “Is this related to the disturbances I’ve been feeling in the Magic around us for the past couple weeks? There has been a change in the magic of Hogwarts since the beginning of the month, but it was really impacted two days ago and has been very obvious in its presence since then. I can stand and watch the change in parts of the
castle as things seem to heal themselves, brighten up or change completely to something else.”

“The Lord of Magic has returned to our world, Filius, and His impact is being felt everywhere once again. As for Hogwarts specifically, the Heirs requested Magic cleanse and fix her two days ago, which is why you’re noticing the changes. She’s removing anything that is keeping her from doing her job – effectively teaching the magical children and keeping them safe. We expect for her to begin kicking people out by the weekend,” he finished almost gleefully.

“Kicking people out,” Sprout asked in horror.

“Honestly, Pomona, we’ve wanted Albus to get rid of Cuthbert Binns for years and is Sybill really teaching the students anything or simply using us for a location to store her Sherry bottles?” Minerva’s tone was quite scornful and Pomona simply nod in agreement.

“Well, anyone Hogwarts is not happy with, for whatever reason, will be escorted from the school whether they want to leave or not. If she finds you to be a deterrent to her mission, you will leave. I suspect the three of you have passed her tests as you were directed here. Everyone else are likely still being evaluated. If they’re currently in residence, they’ll be removed. If they’re currently gone, then their belongings will be packed and sent to them.”

“Will she be able to help Severus?”

“What’s wrong with Professor Snape? I had wondered why the Head of Slytherin hadn’t joined you in these meetings.”

“He’s been ill for over a week now. I told Albus he should be sent to St. Mungo’s, but he insisted that he remain in Hogwarts under Madam Pomfrey’s care. He’s been in a coma for days now.”

Draco made a sound somewhere between a gasp and a sob, cut off almost as soon as he realized he was making it. Narcissa’s eyes were wide and she pressed a slightly shaking hand to her mouth.

“Lord Ravenclaw, Lady Black, are you okay?”

“Severus is… close to our family. He is Draco’s Godfather and we’ve been concerned that we hadn’t heard from him, especially considering… what’s happened to others in our family recently. Is there anything we can do to help him?”

Ragnok looked at her compassionately but shook his head. “He’s in Magic’s hands now. He’s being judged for his previous actions and, based on what the Lord of Magic discovers in his head, he will recover or not. The fact that he’s been ill for this long means that likely there are extenuating circumstances that are being taken into account, so he will most likely live, but I couldn’t say what price he’ll pay for the consequences of his actions.”

“Then we will hope for his safe return to us. If he’s in a coma though, he cannot be Head of Slytherin or teach Potions when classes start. We should take that into consideration in our decisions. Also,” Narcissa gave a half smile, “when he returns we might consider making him the Professor for the older students and perhaps having him run an independent study group or a Potions research class as that’s where his interests really lie.”

“Excellent point, Narcissa,” Minerva said firmly, “Teaching the lower levels is not a strong point as he has little patience for them. With older students though, that already have the basics down, I think he would do well.”

“So, is there anyone else we should not be including in our plans?”
“Well, Professor Quirrell has been missing for weeks now. Albus was looking into replacements for him, finally.”

“Yes, that’s one that won’t be returning to Hogwarts,” Ragnok said with satisfaction as he made notes on their list of needed Professors. Harry could tell that the others wanted to ask, but decided that they didn’t really want to know the answer to that right now.

They went back to discussing the classes they wanted to add and the ones they already had that they wanted to change, be it the Professor teaching it or adding another Professor to lighten the load. Neville continued to update his list of class descriptions and by the end of the day they had a tentatively agreed final list. No idea who they would get to teach everything, but at least a list of classes and a description for students to refer to when making their choices.

Just before they were going to break for the day to let everyone relax for a while before they began again, Ragnok received a report from one of his staff. He began to read through it and didn’t get far before he started to laugh.

Still chuckling, he handed it off to Harry to read to the others.

Status Report from Hogwarts

• A preliminary scan of my structure shows anomalies too many to count. Six staff members have been identified, so far, to be removed from my premises. The first, Sybill Trelawney was packed and delivered to St. Mungo’s today for alcohol treatment and a psych assessment. Professor Binns will be removed in the morning when he shows up to teach his class. The concept of 'Summer Break' apparently left his mind at the same time his life left his body.

• Professor Dumbledore has been contained to his office and personal quarters. I find him irritating. Fawkes is threatening to force a burning day to get away from him for a while.

• I’ve located a rather large snake in the bowels of my premises and agreed to Fawkes’ burning day if he would deliver a rooster to the snake’s location before he did so. He was not pleased that I neglected to mention the snake was a basilisk, but he returned safely.

• I request that Gringotts prepare a team to come harvest and remove the remains as soon as possible.

• I’ve put the House Elves to work cleaning the property. I will need to know housing needs as soon as they are identified so I can begin reconfiguring. I’m old and I move slowly.

Harry was laughing hard by the end of it and he passed the report around the table for everyone to look at.

Minerva was giggling. “I shouldn’t be laughing – there was a basilisk in the school and we didn’t know! But you can just hear how completely tired she already is at dealing with the mess we’ve made of her.”

“No us, Minerva,” Filius corrected. “We didn’t cause the problems, though we certainly probably didn’t help them much either. But now that we know, we can take care of things.”

“So, next steps?” Amelia questioned briskly.

“We have the list of classes for you all to consider tonight. We can vote in the morning on whether you want to try to cover them all. I’ll get the list of potential Professors from Croaker and add it to the one I put together. I’ll try to align them with the class listing so you can see what your pool of
applicants looks like. Depending on how quickly things go, we can bring people in for interviews so you can start deciding who to offer jobs to.”

“Can you find the employment package details for us too, Ragnok? So we know what we’ll be offering them. Is it up-to-date and comparable to what they’d get paid elsewhere? We should check that for current employees as well. Review the school’s finances in general. I know nothing about that,” Harry said with a worried frown.

“Gringotts manages the account, but a review should be done to ensure nothing has been missed. I’ll get a team on that tonight so it’ll be ready by tomorrow. We’ll also review the current employment contract and have any suggested changes ready as well.”

After a few more details they split for the day to handle their homework in advance of the new school year.

Things progressed over the next couple of days. They agreed a class list, started finding Professors to cover them and went through the steps to get them officially hired on so they could get to work on lesson plans and choosing course materials.

It was a lot of work, but everyone was working well together and understood that the final decision was always to be made by the Heirs.

The highlight of the day though, without fail, was receiving the daily report from Hogwarts on how the cleanse was going.

• I’ve cleaned out the dorms for the students. While there were some magical nastiness to deal with, most of it was simply nastiness of a more physical variety. I’ve spoken with the House Elves and this will not be acceptable in the future. I house witches and wizards, not pigs.

• I need a new caretaker immediately. The one I have is cranky and ineffective. He also has scary items of both magical and non-magical nature in his office. What idiotic Headmaster would allow the caretaker of a school to have implements of torture in his office? Oh…

• Binns has been fired. It’s about time.

• While I’m working on the castle, someone needs to be making the so-called Forbidden Forest a bit less Forbidden. I found spider remains in the tunnels around where the snake was found. They were quite large. Let’s get a team out to take care of that, shall we? I can’t do all of this myself.

• Dumbledore has been restricted to his personal quarters by request of the portraits in the Headmaster’s office. They said his crazy ramblings were annoying them and they were there first. As they’re annoying me too, I agreed.

• Madam Pomfrey has been relieved from duty. I believe her to be as crazy as Dumbledore. She has been dropped off at St Mungo’s as well with a request for a full psych review and the removal of her medical credentials. Proof of what could be a legal case against her and others has been forwarded to Gringotts’ Legal Counsel.

• The preliminary sweep has been completed. Anything troublesome that I could not handle has been segregated and awaits a team from Gringotts to come and handle them. Soon. Which means tomorrow at the latest. I want these things off my property.

• Chambers have been assigned for the new Professors that have been hired. They will need to forward any space requirements for their personal accommodations as well as the classroom they will be assigned to teach in.
Madam Pince has avoided my suggestions to leave the Library while I was working, so I was forced to work around her. She survived mainly unscathed and has requested that I forward a list of books she wishes to have added to the Library. She’s a bit obsessed, but I believe that’s a good quality considering her position.

I found something in a room off the third floor that needs to be returned to its rightful owner. I’ve had it forwarded to Gringotts with details of where it should be sent. The troll I found nearby also will need to be gotten rid of, but I opted to contain it here and not have it sent to Gringotts. I felt it wouldn’t be well received.

Harry now had an image of a middle aged woman, brown hair pulled back into a bun with wispy hairs escaping to straggle around her face, standing with her hands on her hips, foot tapping and shooting them death glares at what she was having to put up with. It made him laugh every time.

The best update though was the one that came towards the end of the week.

I’ve had enough of that man! Dumbledore has been packed and dumped outside the gates of the school and will not come back. I refuse to deal with him any more after the mess he’s made around here. Fawkes should be happy that I normally like him or I would’ve chucked him out as well as he’s been laughing at me all week and delaying his re-growth just so he wouldn’t have to help me. Am considering regulating him to the Owlry for a few months.

Once Dumbledore was gone, they were able to go full steam ahead on getting the school ready for students to arrive. Each of the new professors took possession of their rooms and began to get their classrooms set up. Books were ordered both for the Library in general – as no one wanted to annoy the scary book-obsessed woman – as well as books for the new classes as there wouldn’t be time for the students to get their own copies before classes began.

Updated course listings were sent out to all students so they were aware of the new options available for them. They would be given an opportunity to select classes when they arrived at Hogwarts.

The Heirs toured the castle a couple days before they were actually due to take the train to begin their schooling. Of them, Harry was the only one who’d seen the school before and was therefore able to see the vast difference there was now.

While he’d always felt at home in Hogwarts, even when the other students treated him like an outcast, he’d always felt she was rather dark. Now, she was bright, some might say even shiny, cheerful and just felt... happy.

Doors opened as they approached, lights turned on when they entered a room and the House Elves were constantly checking in to give updates on the last minute details they were looking into.

They ended the tour in the Headmaster’s office, now occupied by a wizard named Polare who had been recommended by Croaker as being a good all-round administrator. While no one was saying he was probably an Unspeakable, Harry was sure they were all thinking it. And even if it wasn’t true, he found it amusing to consider.

There was a small table set up to the side of the room with a stack of parchment and something that reminded Harry of a Dict-o-Quill. As they entered it began to write and when it stopped, Polare went to pick up the parchment and read it.

He smiled over at them and gestured them to take seats. “Hogwarts wishes to welcome you to Hogwarts, or back to Hogwarts for those former students,” he said grinning at Augusta, Amelia and
Narcissa who were touring with them. “She hopes everything is as you were expecting.”

“This is brilliant,” Harry said. “Everything is wonderful and feels really welcoming. Is there anything else you need before the invasion of students begins?”

They all kept an eye on the quill, but it didn’t move, so Harry continued. “Well, if that changes let us know and we’ll see what we can do.”

He then focused back on Polare. “Are you set for the new school year? You’ve been thrown to the wolves here a bit. Do you need anything?”

“I’m doing well. We received the last shipment of school books this morning and got them placed in the appropriate classrooms to be handed out to the students. All the supply orders have arrived and been verified. The Professors, old and new, seem to be settling in well and handling all the changes with generally a lot of maturity.

“I think we’re ready.”

“Excellent,” Susan said with a smile. “We’ll be riding in with the rest of the students on the Hogwarts Express Sunday and will come in with the other 1st years. We’ve opted to not be sorted and simply join our namesake houses. I assume that can be announced that evening along with all the other start of term announcements and information on arranging class schedules.”

“That will be fine. Once school starts, I expect the Professors and staff to treat you like normal students. If a situation arises where you need to act as the Lord or Lady of your House, please let me know as soon as possible. Hopefully it won’t be necessary though and you can focus on why you’re here – your studies.”

“We’re looking forward to it,” Neville said shyly.

“Yes,” Draco agree, “after the weeks we’ve had getting ready for this, classes sound almost relaxing!”

They laughed.

“Well, in that case I think we should head out so everyone can enjoy their last bit of free time before catching the train.” Amelia said, standing up. The others followed suit, calling out goodbyes and thank yous to the others in the room and Hogwarts herself.

“So,” Narcissa said as they were leaving the grounds and heading towards Hogsmeade to head home, “You ladies want to get together for lunch after we drop these guys off for the train? Catch up on things not related to Hogwarts for a bit?”

“That sounds lovely. Owl me what you’re thinking as far as location and I’ll set up a reservation.” Augusta agreed. “Amelia?”

“It’ll be the weekend, I should be free. Count me in.”

“So while we’re heading off for four months of hard work, you’re going to be celebrating our being gone? That is what you’ll be doing isn’t it?” Draco glared at his mother.

“Of course dear, that’s what we parents do when our children leave home for the first time. Keeps us from crying or carrying on, either in sadness or happiness.” She smirked at him as he held the door for her to enter the Three Broomsticks to floo home.
Harry settled into an empty car on the Hogwarts Express. He’d gotten there early to have some
time to relax before the craziness of arrival started. While he hoped he’d changed a number of the
events that had fed into the whole ‘boy-who-lived’ craze, he wasn’t foolish enough to think there
wouldn’t be any of it. It would help that he no longer looked like a clone of James Potter or had the
distinctive scar on his forehead (that he still found suspicious that everyone knew about despite
him not growing up in the magical world). But he still had the name and that would be enough.

He took a deep breath and closed his eyes for a bit. He’d decided to spend his last day at the only
Potter property he’d be able to visit so far and the House Elves had been happy to have him
back. He’d spent quite a bit of time talking with as many that worked for him as possible, coming
up with plans for what they would be working on while he was in school. He didn’t want them to
be bored, but he didn’t want them to think they had to be constantly cleaning either. It had been an
interesting discussion, lasting quite late so he was tired this morning.

He’d hoped he’d get to see Sirius before school started, but had to satisfy himself with letters from
him as well as Lord Black, explaining that while he wanted to see Harry, he was still mentally and
physically a mess from his years in prison. They’d exchanged letters a couple of times, talking
about themselves and their families. It was from Lord Black’s letter though that he heard about
what had happened to the former Lord Malfoy.

It appears that he hadn’t taken the loss of his magic at all well and had had plans to take that anger
and frustration out on his wife and son. While Harry hadn’t heard for sure who finally ended the
life of Lucius Malfoy, he wasn’t sorry he was gone, except for the now understandable signs of
pain he had seen in Narcissa and Draco during their meetings.

Sirius hadn’t dwelt on Lucius in his letters, there was no love lost there, but had mentioned seeing
‘Cissa and Draco’ at the small service they’d had for Bellatrix. He was trying to not hold his anger
at Lucius against them, and was seeing a mind healer to work on his general issues with anger and
trust and loss. He fully admitted he was a mess.

They’d tentatively made plans to meet sometime over the Yule break, depending on what came up
between now and then.

Harry heard noises outside the train and opened his eyes to see that the platform was starting to get
busier. The Heirs had all agreed to arrive early so they could get settled before everyone else
arrived. This was so very different from any other time he’d ever ridden the Express, no last minute
scramble to get to the station, no being unable to find the platform or being unable to get to it at
all. He’d laughed when he’d heard that Dobby was Draco’s personal elf this time around and
having to deal with his devoted service.

He wasn’t sure how the friendships he’d developed the first time around would change during his
do-over. He really couldn’t see Ron’s complete hatred for anything Slytherin overcoming his
fascination for getting close to ‘the-boy-who-lived’, though he had a feeling that unthinking hatred
was getting a battering from the Lord of Magic. Only time would tell if Ron was able to get past
his own ingrained bigotry and superiority complex.

And Hermione… he thought they might still be able to be friends, but him not being the totally
ignorant boy she’d met last time who needed her to research things for him and make him do his
homework might make that more complicated. She might be better off in Ravenclaw this time
around, instead of Gryffindor, where her study habits would fit in better.

It was foolish to worry too much about it though, as he had a feeling things were going to be
completely different this time around. He was starting school with friends already. Dumbledore was gone and no longer allowed anywhere around the school or Hogsmeade. There would be no spirit of Voldemort possessing Quirrell to kill unicorns and give Harry headaches in class. There were lots of interesting classes and good professors to teach them that he planned to take full advantage of this time around.

He’d respect the gift he’d been given, both with the magic inside him and the second chance to make things right, and make sure he learned all he could so he would be the best Lord Potter Slytherin Peverell, Lord Slytherin for short, that he could be. He wouldn’t be led this time, but would learn so he could take the lead. He wasn’t sure how being the Master of Death would affect things either, but so far all it meant was he had an amazing Invisibility Cloak to wander around Hogwarts in again if he didn’t want to flaunt his privileges and a wand that sometimes made his hair stand on end when he held it.

His one decision to take what was behind door number three, to believe in the Lord of Magic and that He could fix the problems their world was having had made all the difference. If he had to do it all over again, he knew he’d make the same choice. ‘Though,’ he was quick to think, ‘I’m fine with not going through it all again. Really, all good with things as they are now.’

He felt the now familiar sensation of laughter in his mind and warmth run through his body and smiled. There were still many things to be done, issues to correct, but everything was looking pretty amazing for now and that made all the difference.

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