Summary

Summary: Harry breaks the copy of Sirius’ mirror in 7th year, after the horrific end of the war. He is sent back to 1975 and takes up the mantle of Lord Peverell. He hopes to turn around the tragic Black family story. How? By getting newly widowed Lord Orion Black to fall in love with him. SLASH, Mpreg, Time-Travel, mild Character Bashing.

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Notes

I need your input. Should Harry’s name in the Past be Lord Hadrian, Harrison or Harrigan Peverell?

Hadrian: Hadria was a town in northern Italy (it gave its name to the Adriatic Sea). A famous bearer of the name was Publius Aelius Hadrianus, better known as Hadrian, a 2nd-century
Roman emperor who built a wall across northern Britain.
Harrison: 'Son of Harry', masculine English surname originally.
Harrigan: related to Hanrahan ‘hero’, ‘warrior’, ‘champion’, a title denoting the nobleman next in rank to the king in medieval Ireland. The title was also used to denote court poets of the second rank.
Chapter 1

Title: Black Fortunes
Genre: Drama/Family/Romance/Time-Travel/SLASH
Pairing: Orion Black/Harry Potter
Summary: Harry breaks the copy of Sirius’ mirror in 7th year, after the horrific end of the war. He is sent back to 1975 and takes up the mantle of Lord Peverell. He hopes to turn around the tragic Black family story. How? By getting newly widowed Lord Orion Black to fall in love with him. SLASH, Mpreg, Time-Travel, mild Character Bashing.

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One

Harry James Potter stared around himself with blank emerald eyes. Nothing had been worth this. Hogwarts was an empty shell, more than half of it was destroyed, the rest was uninhabitable ruins. Everybody he knew was dead, practically. The only ones left beside himself were Charlie Weasley, locked in a coma after the death of his entire family, Kingsley Shacklebolt, blind and unable to hear in his left ear and Neville Longbottom, beside his parents in St. Mungo’s thanks to the Lestrange brothers, who had driven him insane after he slaughtered Bellatrix in the final battle.

In his hands he held a single object, a mirror. Twin to the one he had shattered after Sirius’ death, it was once perhaps a beautiful object. Now, stained by blood and dirt from his hands it was something unrecognisable. He stared at the man in the mirror, unable to recognise himself, let alone the mirror. He had a scar across the left side of his face, courtesy of an exploding metal bar, his skin was pallid after spending nearly two years hiding underneath the school in the Chamber of Secrets and he was thin, more so than Sirius after 12 years unjustly imprisoned.

Now that he thought about, actually, the Black family had gotten quite the racket. Sirius was dead after being in Azkaban, Andromeda and her family had been murdered by Death Eaters since she had ‘spoiled her purity’ by marrying a Muggleborn, Bellatrix had been driven insane by her husband and the Dark Lord she had been pressed into serving so blindly. Regulus had been dragged underwater and drowned by Inferi, Narcissa and Draco had been killed for Lucius’ second failure in the war, not that Harry grieved for Narcissa.

He had honestly grieved for Draco Malfoy, however. The young man hadn’t known what he was getting himself into; all he wanted was to please his exacting and demanding Mother. Lucius hadn’t been guilt-free in raising his son either, but from what Harry knew most of it had been Narcissa’s fault. Draco had lost everything, including his life, because he was afraid to stand up for himself and possibly disappoint his family.

Even Orion Black had suffered. Harry hadn’t known Sirius’ father, but he did know that the man had been forced into a betrothal contract with his own cousin, a cold shrew of a woman who couldn’t have been easy to live with. Sirius hadn’t spoken much of his father aside from a paranoia about Muggles, but that could have easily come from ignorance and family traditions. The fact that he hadn’t spoken much about the man was in his favour, it meant that he hadn’t been one to punish Sirius or his brother often.
Suddenly hit by the injustice of everything that had been dealt to the magical world and the Black family in general, Harry yelled in fury and threw the mirror away from him. It struck a tree, shattering into a few hundred fragments of glass and larger chunks of metal.

Struck by a dizzy spell he leaned forward, closing his eyes. As the world began to swirl around him in a haze of colour and he was slowly falling unconscious, the last thought that struck him was a humourous *I guess there is some truth to that adage about breaking mirrors.*
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

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Aldric: French for 'Old Power'

Two

He felt as though he had been squeezed through a particularly long Apparition, or so was Harry’s first thought when he woke. It was dark and he tasted dirt under his lips, which were against the ground. With a groan he rolled over, noting immediately the hard surface under his back, with grooves that dug into his sensitive spine and ribs. Opening his eyes he noted a dark alley of sorts, dingy back doors of shops on both sides.

Twenty years old and trained by Alastor Moody himself in Auror basics, he quickly scanned with his senses, noting a large amount of latent magic from witches, wizards and magical beings. His ears caught the low murmurs of conversations and the sharp *snick* of heels on something rough, perhaps stone. He inhaled deeply and noted the stale air that stank of alcohol, wizarding drugs and other unsavory things.

He sat up, looking at the ground. It was cobblestone, he noted, not pavement. Either a very old section of Muggle London or the magical world. He would guess the latter from what he had noted so far. He stood carefully, wiping his face on his sleeve and digging into his pocket. He pulled out his wand and his face fell into dismay. The wand that had gotten him through school and the war was snapped cleanly into three pieces. There would be no repairing it.

He realized a few things in quick succession. The mirror he had broken had transported him here, somehow. He wasn’t sure where he was, though getting out of this dingy back alley would clear things up somewhat. He had no money on him at the moment, which meant that he needed to get to Gringotts, which was an easy enough goal.

He left the alley, thanking Merlin for the removal of his scar through Muggle surgery and the potion that had fixed his eyes. He was unrecognizable to the populace of the magical world if he was careful enough and fighting a fierce and bloody war for the last 4 years had taught him that much.

He left the alley and was startled to realize that he was in Knockturn, just past Borgin and Burkes. He moved swiftly, not wanting to remain in this Alley for much longer. A few quick minutes of walking brought him out into Diagon, right next to the *Daily Prophet* office. There was a magical newsstand next to him, selling current issues of the *Prophet*. He stared in shock at the headline which screamed *Massive Attack by He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named in Dover! 19 Fatalities, 12 Injured!*

What?! He’s dead! Harry practically screamed. Then he noted the date of the paper and just about fell over in shock. Sunday 12 October, 1975. He was in the past by almost 25 years. His pa-

Harry frowned. J- Why couldn’t he remember? He had just known their names a moment ago.

He hesitated for a moment longer and then spotted the glossy white building of Gringotts. Right, that
was his goal at the moment, his lapse in memory could be addressed later.

Strange things can happen to those who mess with time, Harry. A voice warned, but for all his struggles he couldn’t for the life of him remember who the voice belonged to.

He moved swiftly now, needing to deal with his lack funds and a form of defense, though he was capable of higher than average wandless magic, it was draining to use for long amounts of time. He entered Gringotts slowly, a voice in his head admonishing, Yea, that’s a goblin Harry. Not a creature you want to mess with, goblins.

Shaking his head slightly to get rid of the voices he couldn’t place, he moved to one of the goblins and said quietly, “I need an inheritance test to see if I have vaults to claim.”

The goblin nodded curtly and motioned another forward. “He will take you to one of our open managers, sir.”

As they walked Harry frowned to himself. He hadn’t meant to say those words; all he needed to do was access either the B- or Po-. Really? What was going on?

“Bloodclaw, this wizard needs an inheritance test and to claim any vaults in his name,” his guide said after a moment and he realised that they had entered a fairly small but private office with basic furnishings and another goblin sitting behind a desk.

Bloodclaw motioned for him to sit down and said, “Inheritance tests cost two galleons, sir. Will you be able to afford it if you don’t have anything here at Gringotts for you?”

Thanking Merlin for his habit of carrying around spare change he nodded. “I will be able to pay, though I am fairly sure I have a vault waiting for me.”

“Prick your finger on this blade and press the blood into this parchment,” Bloodclaw handed him a wicked looking little dagger and a piece of pale gold parchment.

Harry pricked his finger carefully with the sharp blade and pressed it against the paper. There was a small zapping sensation at the point where he had cut his finger and then the parchment glowed. It began to write out information from the very top of the page, but the information shocked him.

Name: Harrigan Aldric Peverell

Age: 20

Date of Birth: 31 July, 1955

Father: Lord Aldric Peverell

Mother: Lady Elpis Peverell

Title: Lord of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Peverell

Vaults: 520, 542, 564

Blood Status: Pureblood

What in the hell? Harry thought. He opened his mouth to say that the information wasn’t right and what came out was, ”I believe this needs some explanation, my parents died when I was very young and I was privately educated by distant relatives.”
Bloodclaw looked at the parchment and his eyes went wide. “What this means, Harrigan, is that you are heir and Lord to one of our oldest families. You are not the wealthiest, but you are going to be able to be comfortable for at least your own lifetime. There are a number of families that are descendants of the Peverells and they have claimed a few vaults over the years, ones set specifically aside for them. However, your name is very old; it carries a great deal of weight. There will be those interested in marrying you just for your name. I suggest you be very careful in the future.”

“I will do so. For now, may I take control of my vaults, get a statement and a bank card and be on my way?”

“Certainly, Lord Peverell. Sign these documents while I retrieve a Gringotts bank card for you.”

He signed them with a blood quill, wincing a little at the object for a reason that was quickly slipping away. A frown crossed his face for just a moment before he smoothed it away. Things had changed, obviously. He had come into control of a name that had been extinguished in the male line in his time, one that had been his ancestors. Apparently he had a purpose here; so far he wasn’t sure what.

Bloodclaw came back to his desk with two objects, the first of which he placed on the table. “The Peverell Lordship ring,” he explained.

Harrigan picked up the ring and examined it. It was heavy, made of yellow gold and white gold intertwined together to form an elaborate Celtic knot. The meaning of the knot was ‘Loyalty’, something Harrigan could respect. The stone onto which the main knot was embossed was an oval-cut red diamond, so deep a red it could have been blood.

Bloodclaw gave him a small golden card, not much larger than a galleon and certainly smaller than a Muggle debit card. “You will need to simply tap this on a receipt and the amount will be paid and a receipt sent to your vaults. We publish statements every month on the 2nd of the month; your first statement will be received in about 2 weeks by owl. No one can access your statements aside from yourself until you bring them in here and give them access to your accounts.”

“Thank you Bloodclaw. I have one more question. Is there such a thing as a Permanent Aging Potion? I am a little young for such a title as this one and I wish to make an impact on the wizarding world. My voice will have more weight if I am even a few years older.”

Bloodclaw looked at him with something akin to budding respect. “Certainly there is a permanent form, Lord Peverell. It can only age you a maximum of 10 years and can only be used once. Done here at Gringotts it cannot be traced in your blood by any scan, spell or historical potion. It costs 30 galleons, purely the cost of the ingredients and the labor of the Potions Master needed to brew it.”

“I would like to use one then, Bloodclaw. Debit my account for the appropriate amount. I think the maximum of 10 years would be appropriate. People tend to respect 30 more than 20,” he finished wryly.

The potion was brought to him and he drank it in a single go, wrinkling his nose at the unpleasant taste. It didn’t change his height or physical features much, but he could tell it worked when Bloodclaw bowed and said, “Much more appropriate for your conduct and behaviour, my Lord. Have a good day.”

“May your bank overflow with gold,” Harry replied, startled by his slightly deeper voice.

He exited the bank, headed for Ollivander’s. He needed a new wand since his own was broken. Somehow the broken wand made sense now, if he was coming back in time to replace someone who died too soon or wasn’t born at all in his timeline then it wouldn’t be good for the H- P-, not again! It
wouldn’t be good for him to come to Ollivander’s and not have the wand waiting there.

He left Ollivander’s not an hour later in possession of a brand new wand, 12 inches, made of rowan and phoenix feather, fairly rigid. Armed he felt far more comfortable and set out to acquire a new wardrobe. According to the document at Gringotts, he had a seat on the Wizengamot and sessions began again in two weeks. He wanted to make an impact.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

I will keep canon for Orion’s birth year. He was born in 1929, so he is 16 years older than Harrigan, making him 46. Sound about right? Since nobody is sure about James’ parents canon-wise they will be Lord and Lady Harold and Eleanor Potter. This chapter is split into two parts, the first is Orion’s side of things, the next update will be Harrigan’s with a bit of background on how he spent the last 3 months.

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Three

Lord Orion Arcturus Black leaned back in his seat of the Wizengamot and studied his peers. It was 2nd November, 1975 and this was the first session of the new quarter in the British Wizarding government. He studied his known opponents with narrow silvery eyes, clenching his firm lower jaw in an effort to push down his annoyance. He had rather hoped that Lord Harold Potter wouldn’t be recovered from his bout of wizarding flu. The male Potter with his trademark messy hair, his own a mousey brown was undeniably present.

Unofficially the Wizengamot chambers were already splitting into three sections, those of the ‘Dark’, the ‘Light’ and the fairly powerful Neutral section. The most well-known names in the Light section were the Potter, Abbott and Fawcett families. Their Dark equivalent were Orion’s own family, the Malfoys, Lestranges and Flint. The only names of notice for the Neutrals were the Bones and Ogden families. No matter what went on in a war, everyone still bought Ogden’s Firewhiskey so aged Lord Charles Ogden was in good shape.

Seated to his left was his good friend Abraxas Malfoy, a distinguished individual with deep cornflower blue eyes and long, pale blonde hair. The hair was a trademark of the Malfoy family but Orion was fond of teasing Abraxas that his hair was more white than blonde. The man always gave a dismissive sniff and said, “At least it’s not as noticeable as your own, Orion.”

Orion Black was a handsome individual and he knew it. Both of his sons took after him and his side of the Black family, something he was grateful for. He stood an imposing six foot four and possessed broad shoulders, very strong arms and a surprisingly narrow waist for one of 46 winters. Orion was proud of his figure and it helped that it was set off by a pair of misty blue eyes and deep black hair, though he had been amused at the white hairs that had shown already. They made him look even more distinguished than he usually did, confined to a small space at both temples. His hair was cut to fall just at earlobe length with slightly longer fringe that he usually tucked behind his left ear out of habit.
Seated to his right was Lord Lucien Alexis Lestrange who possessed a pair of astonishing silver eyes he shared with his distant relative and namesake, Lucius Malfoy. His twin sons Rodolphus and Rabastan were at Hogwarts along with both of Orion’s sons, in the same year as his oldest, Sirius. Orion frowned slightly to himself, worried about his oldest. Even though he had sent word that Sirius was still welcome home for the holidays after Walburga’s surprising but unlamented death he hadn’t received word back.

A slight snort of amusement made it past firm, expressive lips as he considered the matter of his unexpected widow state. For such a proud and anti-Muggle woman, being brought down by cancer of all things had infuriated his late wife beyond measure. The wizarding world had no better research on the invasive disease than the Muggle one, and Walburga had refused to be treated by anything invented by ‘common filth’, thus she had passed away not even four months previous from Heart Cancer, bitter to the very end. Her foul, withered old heart had been her end, just as Orion had often thought it would be.

The death of that foul old harpy was liberating, to say the least. What? Had one really expected him to have cared about the woman? It had NOT been his choice to marry that old bitch, not in the least! No, his parents Arcturus and Lucretia had somehow come upon the knowledge that their son and heir was bisexual with a strong preference for his own gender, so the old, self-righteous and bigoted pair had secured an ‘acceptable’ future and revenge upon their son’s leanings in one fell swoop, betrothing him to his cousin of all people.

Just before the doors would seal, signaling the beginning of session, a series of murmurs caught his attention. “Now who is that, I wonder?” Lucien murmured in surprise.

Turning to the doors that offered the Lords and Ladies of the Wizengamot entrance (the reporters and such had a lower entrance toward the center of the circular room and had been seated before the Wizengamot began to arrive), Orion Black felt his eyes widen in surprise.

The man walking steadily toward the Speaker’s platform was younger than Orion, though considerably past his teens. He was dressed in a striking combination of leather and silk, the leather pants and boots in a warm shade of bronze and the silk robe in evergreen with bronze tracery. He possessed raven-black hair that was slightly wavy bound back by a thin bronze tie and very pale jade green eyes. His complexion was flawless and while he was obviously male, the creamy skin and soft features of his face gave a certain androgynous nature to his appearance.

“Speaker of the Wizengamot, I wish to claim my seat and votes,” His voice was a surprisingly low tenor, very mellow and smooth.
“Certainly, my Lord. Place your finger upon the black stone please; the magicks of the Chamber will do the rest.”

Their newest companion placed a single long finger upon the black stone resting on the Speaker’s platform, not even flinching at the small bite of blood the stone took. A moment later the magicks of the Chamber filled the room with a loud voice that stated, “The Wizengamot recognises Lord Harrigan of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Peverell.”

Amid the absolute stunned silence of the chamber Abraxas hissed in his ear, “Peverell?”

As both Orion and his esteemed friends knew, the Peverell family was supposedly extinct in the male line. The Lordship hadn’t been claimed in nearly 100 years, 99 to be precise. This was of significance only because of the fact that once a Lordship had gone unclaimed for 100 years it could be claimed by the closest descendants. From the growing scowl on Senior Mugwump Albus Dumbledore’s face, he had been hoping the prestigious line would go to the Potters in another year. They had been able to take one of the smaller vaults as descendants but the title had been denied by Gringotts.

Better yet, nobody could accuse Lord Harrigan of doing something dishonest to gain the title. The Wizengamot Chambers had all manner of spells and wards laid in place, supposedly by Merlin himself, to stop just such a thing from happening. On top of that, the black stone that confirmed a Lord or Lady’s place in the Wizengamot did so with a drop of blood, which no potion in the magical world could falsify. Even Polyjuice just changed the physical make-up, not the blood.

He watched the pale jade eyes scan the room, undoubtedly noting the unofficial break up between factions. Those eyes narrowed a little in contemplation and then a very small smirk crossed his lips. With a deliberately slow turn, Lord Harrigan Peverell made his way carefully toward Orion and his companions, getting an indrawn gasp to cover the mutterings from before.

Orion was equally floored. A look at Abraxas showed that the blonde had tightened his grip on the elegant black cane he held, the only outward sign of his own shock. The Peverells were a firmly Light family in the past, some of the more recent members had been Neutral, certainly none had been Dark. And yet Harrigan Peverell made his way carefully up the stairs and took a seat two down from a slightly-stunned looking Lucien Lestrange.

A blustering Lord Fawcett spoke first. “Lord Peverell, I am not certain you realise where you are sitting. The men in your immediate vicinity are the Lords Black, Malfoy and Lestrange. You are more than welcome over here instead of such dark companionship.”
That low warm voice filled the room again, though Lord Peverell didn’t stand. “I am fully aware of where I sit, Lord Fawcett, thank you.”

“Then why are you sitting with the Dark section? The Peverells are a Light family!” Lord Prewett sputtered.

“Need I remind you, Lord Prewett, that your family was considered Dark as well until the 1940’s, when you thought it prudent to side with Albus Dumbledore when it became obvious Grindelwald was losing the war? Dark is a very general term, in my opinion. Nonetheless, it is not your place to decide where I sit and how I vote and I suggest you be quiet before you make even more of a fool of yourself.”

Lord Ogden gave a hearty chuckle from the Neutral section and Lord Prewett took his seat, face flaming in embarrassment.

*This, Orion mused, is going to be interesting.*
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

A/N: Sorry about the long wait, I’ve been very busy helping my sister move to Alaska, a last-minute kind of thing. I even forgot to pay my bills. Oops. Glad you liked Orion's POV, we'll have to do other characters as well as things progress. Sorry about the short chappie too, I had to get over the gigantic road-bump called writer's block.

Four

Harrigan felt his lips twitch in mild amusement as a sputtering Lord Prewitt took his seat, turning red in embarrassment. Not only had he been caught out attempting to bring a fellow Lord over to the ‘correct’ seating, but he’d been chastised like an unruly child in front of the whole Wizengamot for the same thing. He wouldn’t be recovering anytime soon.

Harrigan had spent the last few weeks buying a proper wardrobe, re-educating himself in wizarding politics and etiquette (something he’d been slacking on rather badly) and familiarizing himself with the Lords and Ladies of the Wizengamot and wizarding nobility in general. It would not do to insult someone by accident this early; not knowing their name or title was a sure way to do so.

Considering his companions, he felt a very small smile cross his lips. It was obvious these very powerful and ‘Dark’ wizards were shocked at his choice of seating, but they maintained a poise and elegance far above most of the room. Lords Abraxas Malfoy, Orion Black and Lucien Lestrange were indeed a force to be reckoned with. He’d read about Lord Black’s recent widowed state in the Daily Prophet (much to his surprise, though he wasn’t sure why) and he had to admit that for 46 years old the man was indeed a sight.

He studied the Wizengamot as they slowly recovered from his sharp reply to Lord Prewitt, in particular studying Senior Mugwump and Headmaster of Hogwarts Albus Dumbledore. The man was staring at him with a very fixated interest even from across the chamber, something that had gained him a few odd looks from other Lords and Ladies. There was something of dislike and enmity from the man and he almost snorted.

He knew very well why the man was annoyed that he had taken his seat. It was very well known that the Potter family were direct descendants of the Peverells and undoubtedly would have gained the familial title in another 6 months. Now that he had claimed it however, the man had lost the chance to make an ally of his a very powerful man. Studying Lord Harold Potter with far more subtlety than the Headmaster, all Harrigan saw was a weary man who appeared somewhat ill.
Leaning toward his closest companion, Lord Lestrange, he murmured quietly, “Do you happen to know if the Lord Potter is ill?”

Lestrange arched an eyebrow at him but answered in a smooth voice, “He just recovered from a bad bout of wizarding flu, my Lord Peverell. He has been particularly susceptible to disease since childhood.”

Indicating his acknowledgement of the statement Harrigan sat back and waited, knowing that Dumbledore would not long be able to hold his tongue. It took a while, long enough for Harrigan to vote in favour of a bill that would require Veritaserum testimony at future trials, something that the man had not been in favour of, strangely enough.

“Madame Minister,” Dumbledore began, eyes twinkling at Minister Bagnold, who frowned at him, “should we even be counting ‘Lord’ Peverell’s votes? Honestly one has to wonder why it has taken him so long to claim his line, certainly the line belongs to the Potter family by right of succession.”

“Minister, if I may answer Senior Mugwump Dumbledore myself, as it is my own reputation he is attacking so boldly?” Harrigan spoke up, warm tenor ringing clearly through the room. The Minister gave him a long, assessing glance and nodded.

Harrigan stood and stepped up to the barrier in front of the seats, making himself clearly visible to all of the Lords, Ladies and the gallery. In a firm, surprisingly cold tone of voice he said, “I am beginning to tire of your glances and insinuations, Senior Mugwump. The Peverell family heritage is mine, claimed by birth and the stone when I entered this chamber. Do you think me a man strong enough to fool what has been enchanted by Merlin himself? The reason why I didn’t claim my seat before now, not that it is any business of yours, is that I had no idea that it waited for me. My parents died when I was very young of a rather suspicious illness while we lived in France and I was raised by resentful distant relatives of my mother. I finally came back to England to see where I was from more than anything else. You can imagine my surprise when I turned out to be from a very influential family, if not the wealthiest.”

“As for your allegations toward the Potter family, we all know that it is 100 years exactly or more, not 99 years and 6 months (as it is in my case) or for that matter 99 years and 364 days. The Potter family is merely that and should Lord Potter hold your same desires I shall remind him that I am head of his direct ancestral family line and it is never too late to disown those who deserve it or merit it.”

Lord Harold Potter looked startled at his words and stated, “I have no intentions of trying to take the Peverell Lordship from you, Lord Harrigan. Indeed, I would be pleased to be able to speak with one of my ancestral family.”
“But he is Dark!” protested Lord Prewitt, who apparently wasn’t smart enough to keep his mouth shut.

“This again, Lord Prewitt,” Harrigan said in exasperation. “The Peverell family and their allegiance has been Dark for many centuries, it was only in recent years that a few Lords tried to change it over. Dark and Light are merely labels in any case, the major reason for the label of ‘Dark’ in the first place is that we still honour the Old Ways and Mother Magic, something that you ‘Light’ wizards seem to take for granted. And yet you still wonder why ‘Light’ families are losing the strength in their magic!”

“The Old Ways are nothing but pureblood supremacy, surely you can see that, Lord Peverell!” this was from an old red-headed male that Harrigan recognised as Lord Septimus Weasley. The words rang a bell for some reason, but Harrigan couldn’t remember for the life of him why.

“I would rather be called a supremacist than a traitor to magic, Lord Weasley! By embracing the ‘Christianity’ of the Muggleborns you are turning your back on the very entity that makes us so special and unique in the first place! Your family has been losing magical strength for centuries and you have yet to wonder why. And by the Father of Storms and Gaia herself I cannot understand why you have blinded yourself so thoroughly!”

A sudden sharp noise made Harrigan jerk his head to his right, where he spotted Lord Ogden bringing his hands together in a firm, heavy clapping motion. “Very well put, Lord Peverell. To bring us back to the original argument, Minister, I believe it best for the Senior Mugwump to hold his tongue. There is nothing he can do to change the Lordship of the Peverell family; so much as he may want to.”

Amongst the reddening face of Dumbledore and the chuckles of both the Dark section and the gallery Harrigan sat, resisting the urge to smirk. He had a feeling the old man wouldn’t be recovering from that little jab anytime soon.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

A/N: I've been busy working and reading other people's works and lost track of my own. Oops. I'm sorry, that's really no excuse for how long this has taken. If you're interested in what I've been reading look up Invisible by DebsTheSlytherinSnapeFan or the multiple works by WyrdSmith and slayerofdestiny. Contract by SnarryvSLarry and Enveloped by Darkness by Brigade are good choices as well. I must add that I neglected to mention WereBunny87's fics as well. :D In this fic Lucius was born on November 15, 1955. :D

Five

When Harrigan Peverell received the invitation, his eyebrows disappeared into his fringe. He hadn't thought that the elegant Dark trio he'd sat near had any interest in him, but then again they were pureblood Lords and held a certain sense of decorum and elegance, especially in the public eye. He'd most likely caught their attention with his sharp rejoinders to Lord Prewett and Dumbledore.

Still, he wasn't one to turn down an invitation to dinner with three of the most powerful men in wizarding England. He swiftly wrote an affirmative reply and sent it with his snowy owl Horus. A certain amount of amusement had been present when he named his snowy owl after the Egyptian god of the sun. Still, the owl's jewel-bright eyes were certainly gold enough to spark a comparison to sunlight.

He summoned his house-elf Tobby and ordered that suitable robes be picked out of his wardrobe and a hot bath with oils to be started. Tobby was a very eager house-elf, though Harrigan was beginning to think he needed to find a female for the very fun-loving male elf. Someone that could tame him and keep him in order.

Shaking his head at his odd thoughts, Harrigan made his way upstairs. His current residence was a small two-story building that he'd bought from the goblins and had appropriately warded, for a price of course. Still, it was an adequate home for a bachelor familial Lord and a single house-elf. More importantly, it wasn't above his funds. He'd spoken with the goblins and had given 1,000 galleons over to investments that the goblins thought suitable. Hopefully they would show a return fairly soon.

He carefully shucked off his robes and threw them across a chair in his bedroom, ignoring the mirror. Harrigan was 5' 11", with fairly slim shoulders and waist for a man. His skin however was flawless aside from a few pale silvery scars and his profile was striking. He would stop a crowded room if he so desired with just the right appearance and expression.

He sank into the hot water with a sigh of pleasure. It smelled of aloe, jasmine and sandalwood, with a thick, dense foam coating the surface. Groaning softly as it eased aches he hadn't realized he had in his back, Harrigan closed his eyes and thought quietly back on the past month.

Harrigan was 5' 11", with fairly slim shoulders and waist for a man. His skin however was flawless aside from a few pale silvery scars and his profile was striking. He would stop a crowded room if he so desired with just the right appearance and expression.

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He had expected a retaliation for his words in the Wizengamot, what he had not expected was the assassin to strike him practically outside the Wizengamot chambers. He had dispatched the idiot with a ruthless ease and left, nodding curtly to the Ministry security as they gaped at the body. All
Harrigan had been attempting was defense until the fool had actually tried to use a spell to blow up a portion of the doorway over the departing gallery of reporters and common citizens. After that he'd simply blasted him into a wall and broken his neck.

After that he'd returned for the remainder of this particular Wizengamot session, if only to irritate his probable assailant with the fact that he remained alive and voting session after session. He had a good idea who had given the orders, if not hired the man himself. As Senior Mugwump Dumbledore wasn't going to risk his position and possible ascension of power by associating himself in any way with the assassin, but he knew who had paid the man.

He wondered how much his death had been worth the first time. 100 galleons? He snorted in amusement. With the article by the Prophet on just how deftly he'd handled his attacker Harrigan had a feeling Dumbledore would be spending quite a bit more than pocket change if he could convince someone else to take an attempt at killing him.

He finally regretfully left his bath, tying back his hair with a deep purple cord that Tobby had left in the bathroom for him. Entering the bedroom he eyed the robes on the bed and said appreciatively to Tobby, "These are perfect Tobby, thank you."

Tobby beamed and squeaked, "Master Harrigan is too good to Tobby!"

"Make sure an appropriate outer cloak is by the door and then you are free for the night, Tobby."

Tobby bowed and cracked away. The robes he'd left were tailored to hug Harrigan's frame all the way from neck to ankles, with a Mandarin collar. The ensemble consisted of black silk trousers under a deep sapphire robe with purple accents in the shape of Celtic knots.

Waiting for him at the door was a simple black cloak and he slipped it on, clipping it shut at his throat and throwing the hood over his head. Though it was early December he noted that the cloak chosen had warming charms and an insulation charm and he chuckled quietly at the intuition of house-elves.

Exiting his home he concentrated and disappeared with soft pop, appearing in front of a Diagon Alley restaurant called 'The Golden Spark'. Making his way inside he handed over his outer cloak to a young house-elf and moved to the hostess, stating in his firm, low voice, "I am with the Malfoy party."

She smiled flirtatiously and stated, "Follow me, my Lord."

She led him past the open tables and into a second, smaller room that was composed of small tables that seated up to four with powerful silencing charms between each table. He recognized Lord Malfoy's distinctive hair all the way in the right-hand corner and followed the hostess deftly through the tables. "Thank you, ma'am."

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She smiled brightly and disappeared, leaving him to greet his companions. "Greetings, my Lords. Thank you for the invitation, I was most surprised and gratified."

"No, thank you, Lord Peverell, for accepting. Please have a seat. And to keep from confusing yourself, please address us by our given names. Mine is Abraxas, my companions are Lucien and Orion."

"Then you must please call me Harrigan," he returned politely, sitting in the empty chair across from Abraxas. Orion was on his right and the dark-haired man smiled, stating, "We were most impressed by your entrance into the Wizengamot, not to mention how you handled yourself with Dumbledore and the Lords Prewett and Fawcett."
"With Dumbledore himself or his assassin," Harrigan mused lightly. "In any case whoever hired that sad excuse for a wizard will find that I am not so easily disposed of."

"I would hope not," Abraxas said with a tight smile. "It would deprive us of many interesting conversations."

Harrigan couldn't help it, he laughed outright. "I shall endeavor to remain alive then, Abraxas, if only to not deprive you of intellectual conversation during the sessions."

Orion's very warm smile and intense expression caught him off-guard and he looked away, after a moment he managed to look the trio in the eye and just caught the expressions of amusement on Lucien and Abraxas' faces and exasperation on Orion's. Curious about what that meant but content to leave it for now he instead asked, "Do the three of you have students coming home for the holidays then?"

Abraxas chuckled. "These two do but I do not. My heir Lucius is 21 now, he graduated with honors 4 years ago now. He still will be with me for Yule however; he lives at home while running the executive Muggle side of Malfoy Industries for me. He detests the Muggles, a fault of his mother's no doubt, but he is getting better."

Lucien smiled warmly and said, "You are lucky my friend, my two rascals are coming home and I have another term before they graduate! Honestly what those two get up to at Hogwarts. I've gotten more letters from Hogwarts than I get from my associates and lawyers!"

Abraxas snorted a rather undignified sound and said, "Lucien my dear friend, Rudolphus and Rabastan will be causing trouble for ages, I can assure you of that!"

Lucien groaned pitifully, earning a laugh from Harrigan and Orion. Turning to the intense blue eyes he asked, "And you, Orion?"

Orion gave him a slightly depreciating smile and said, "Well my youngest is coming home at any rate. Regulus is in his 5th year and sometimes I wonder how he avoided Ravenclaw. He is often buried in his books, especially since this is the year of the dreaded O.W.L.s."

Harrigan frowned. "What of your oldest?"

Now the expression couldn't be described as anything but sad. "My Sirius refuses to come anywhere near home, despite the loss of his late, unlamented mother. I assume he burns my letters, the owls come home with empty claws so he at least takes them."

"Where does he go during the summers and holidays?" Harrigan asked, startled.

"Potter Manor, most likely. He is good friends with the Potter Heir, James. He was sorted into Gryffindor you see and my wife tried to remove him from our family tree. I think he believes she succeeded, despite the fact that the title is mine and not through Walburga's side."

"Her side?" Harrigan asked, confused.

"My late wife was also my first cousin," Orion explained with a grim smile. "Not my choice, I can assure you."

"I would think not!" Harrigan replied, startled. "Why on the name of magic would you have wed your own cousin?"

"My parents arranged the marriage because it was suitable," Orion's scorn as he said the last word
said what he thought of it.

"My marriage was also arranged," Abraxas inserted, looking pleased for some reason when Harrigan jumped a little. "The only one of us who's had any luck with an arranged marriage is Lucien, his wife Cynthia is a dear. Belladonna however," he trailed off with a grimace, "It's no surprise she was named for a poisonous plant."

"Enough of our sorry stories, Harrigan, eat!" Lucien said with a warm laugh.

Harrigan dug into his meal and the rest of the night passed in a whirlwind of conversation, good food and good company. Not to mention an excellent wine. It was, he reflected later, an evening that he could easily repeat.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

A/N: I’m sorry; there is really no excuse for how long this has taken. Sorry it’s so short, I’ve had some major bumps in motivation to write and outside influences. The next chapter is going to have the Marauder Trio, would you like to see it in James, Sirius or Remus’ point of view? (3rd person still, I can’t write 1st without getting irritated.)

J.K. Rowling owns everything you recognize.

Six

The lofty manor rose from the surrounding grounds with a gradual pace that still did little to make it seem less like a sore thumb, sticking up three levels from the ground on a flat grassy meadow. It was made of a reddish-black stone that picked up little light, something of a metaphor for a family that had done very little to leave behind a Dark-aligned background despite persuasive efforts.

Harrigan Peverell stared up at the lofty stone griffons guarding the gate, arching an eyebrow at the smug, superior look in the stone faces. Reaching the door he took hold of a gold ring held in a silver lion’s mouth and rapped it sharply thrice upon the solid-looking wood door. Hardly did his hand leave the knocker than the door opened, a small house-elf bowing low and squeaking, “Welcome to Potter Manor, Lord wizard. May I be asking for name?”

“Lord Harrigan Peverell,” he stated as he entered the elegant hall, removing his sable fur-lined cloak with matching gloves and handing it over.

To say he had been surprised to receive the invitation to have lunch with the Lord Potter and his Lady would be an understatement. They may be descendants of his family; however he had thought Lord Potter rather taken aback with his choice to align with the Dark families in the Wizengamot. Something of a hypocrite since his own family was hardly Light.

“Missy was told to wait for you,” the elf squeaked, breaking his thoughts. “Follow me, Lord Peverell.”

He followed the elf quietly, amused at her slightly bossy demeanor. She was much more outspoken than house-elves he’d met before. ‘Could say that his family is bad wizards’ squeaked a voice in his head. He shook his head slightly, annoyed at the little bits and pieces that he was hearing.

They were passing a spacious room that apparently held some occupants by the murmur of voices when one particularly loud one said, “Missy! I was just about to call you but since you are here, pop down into the kitchens and bring us a snack.”

Missy answered, “I will be doing so in a moment, young sir. I-“

“Missy! What you are doing is hardly important! It will take you two seconds to do what I ordered.”

“I is escorting someone to meet your fa-“

“My father’s buddies can wait, Missy!”
This was when Harrigan chose to intrude, to keep what appeared to be the Potter heir by the ‘my father’ from making the mistake of offending him.

“I am not one of your father’s ‘buddies’ Heir Potter,’’ he said calmly, moving to stand just behind Missy.

There were three young men in the sitting room, one of which was obviously the Potter heir, having inherited the messy hair and need for glasses. Another was striking and definitely related to Orion Black, so he was able to surmise that this was the errant Sirius Orion, eldest of the family. The last was entirely unremarkable aside from a pair of arresting amber eyes.

Heir Potter’s eyes travelled to his hand and the Lordship ring and widened before he stuttered, “Sorry, My Lord. I didn’t realise you were following Missy. It can wait.”

“Tell me, Heir Potter, is your kitchens very far from here?”

“No sir, just a few doors down.”

“Then why not fetch your snack with your own two hands?” he continued with a mild bite, “I live on my own in a flat with a single elf and even I do not call him for every whim. Helps me keep a reasonable figure and waistline, as well as exercising a bit of self-reliance and patience.”

The Potter heir’s face flushed and he said, “We shall do so then, My Lord. Sorry for the near-loss of your guide.”

As they were walking away he called, “Black heir, you may find it interesting to actually read your father’s missives rather than burn or toss them. He has missed you greatly and times have changed, especially with the death of Lady Black.”

Sirius stiffened, turned back to look at Harrigan and said, “And how would you know anything of my family, my Lord Peverell?”

Harrigan arched an eyebrow, so at least one of the boys had recognized his ring. “I am a political ally and a friend of your father. Why are you punishing him and your younger brother who loves and admires you so?”

“That, my Lord, is none of your business. Good day,” Sirius nodded curtly, turned on his heel and walked away. After a slightly wary look the Potter heir and their third friend followed.

Harrigan couldn’t help but smile a little, pleased with the outcome of the short conversation. He had guessed that Sirius would respond so, or something of that vein. His conversation with Orion on the subject had proved that Sirius was prickly to the point he could be a little rude. However, the whole point of his conversation had been to make the Black heir think and in that he had succeeded.

It had been difficult, especially with the formal overtones of the conversation. If just one of the boys had asked his name he could have asked for theirs, but they had stuck with his title, demanding the same from him as a common courtesy. Pureblood etiquette was so rigid in places.

He continued to follow Missy with a small smile, his entire goal for the visit accomplished in one short conversation.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

A/N: New computer, had to get used to a different operating system. Yay. Actually it's not that bad. Anyone else out there use Windows 8.1? So the overwhelming choice was for Sirius' point of view (sort of) so here it is.

Sirius Orion Black was used to opulence. The oldest child of Orion and Walburga Black, he had been born to a family that prided purity over everything else, including common sense and a tad bit of insanity. However, no matter what their mental faculties or lack thereof, every Black had an eye for the elegant, expensive things in life. Most couldn't afford them, though they pretended as though they could.

Thus as he stared around the Potter Manor, home sweet home since he was about 13, Sirius could see that even though the Potters preached a 'simpler' lifestyle they were not above a few expensive things. *Hypocrites*, he thought idly, without any venom. Currently the Marauders were holding court in James' private sitting room. Remus was reading a book, while James was chatting rapidly to Sirius, trying to plan some sort of prank.

Sirius found that his mind wasn't on pranks, however. It was preoccupied by the man who had been here almost a week ago. No matter the fact that he was a Lord, who did Harrigan Peverell think he was? Sirius had reasons for his estrangement from his family, ones that didn't need to be explained to a strange Lord, no matter his association with Orion Black and the Potter family.

He did have to admit that he had burned or thrown away a few letters from his father after the first one, which told him about his late mother's un lamented death. For a while he'd wondered if Orion had something to do with it, at least until his father had explained that she'd died of cancer. Sirius had found no end of amusement at the fact that his mother had been brought so low by a Muggle disease of all things.

However, that wasn't the source of his anger with his family, nor the deeper hurts that lingered below. Until some things changed or some people were removed from the Black family he would continue to refuse acknowledging where he came from.

He locked eyes with Peter, who gave him a nervous smile before quickly looking away. It made him frown, remembering Peter's shifty (or more shifty than usual) behaviour. It all couldn't be explained by the fact that he was a rat animagus, though a great deal of it may come from the rodent bleeding into his personality. Sirius well knew that his own laugh had become a great deal more bark-like.

Such was the downfall of becoming unregistered Animagi. While there were great benefits to being able to transform, it tended to affect the witch/wizard's personality and mentality after a while. More so if one spent extensive time in their form, but Sirius had no plans for doing so. It wasn't as if he was on the run or anything, after all.

Lord Peverell hadn't spent very long here in the Manor after scolding the Marauders and commenting on Sirius' lack of conversation with his father. The man was considered a rising player in the politics of Wizarding Britain, not to mention the *Daily Prophet* considered him a hot topic whenever they reported on the doings of the Wizengamot. It had shocked many when the new Lord had chosen to
sit and ally himself with the Dark families, James had ranted long on the subject at first.

Strangely enough Lord Potter had put a quick halt to his son's behaviour and tolerated nothing of the sort from James' friends. He had proceeded to shock his son with the knowledge that the Potter family was traditionally Dark or Grey, having only recently become Light. Sirius already had known this, based on his classes as a young child when his late mother had lamented on the loss of the Potter family to 'the old coot's influences'.

Sirius himself was considered a Dark wizard. It wasn't at all based on ones actions, though it could be influenced with one's actions. No, the initial base for a wizard's standing was in the family genes and the exposure to magicks in the air around a family's home. Sirius' behaviour throughout his life had continued to influence his standing, it couldn't be considered Light by any stretch when he'd caused Severus Snape to almost be killed.

Remus was dark as well, no doubt about it. The influence of the wolf in his head and heart made him Dark, but he'd noticed that Remus himself, though very kind most of the time, had quite a streak of maliciousness hiding deep down. Plus he had a very innocent air about him, one that made him a master at planning pranks and getting away with them. He was a very good liar.

James was on the Darker side of Grey in Sirius' opinion. He was extremely loyal and fairly gentle most of the time, but he had an aggressive streak a mile long and a possessive one just about as long. It had caused the boy to break up with Lily Evans after chasing her for five years. They had been going together for a few months and then Lily had discovered his darker edges, dropping him faster than a letter filled with bubotuber pus.

Sirius scowled privately to himself and turned away from his mental conversations to what his best friend was saying.

"I think we should play a prank on the new Defense teacher when we go back after this summer," James was saying enthusiastically. "We'd have all summer to plan it, just think! It would be perfect since we'd be able to plan out every aspect ahead of time. We could even make sure that we weren't even thought of as the culprits, lay it on the Slytherins or something."

"Sounds good to me," Sirius said absently, looking over to where Remus was sitting.

"Are you going to help us, Remus, or do we have to do without your oh-so-knowledgeable self?"

"I should make you do it yourselves, but since you are such a flatterer Sirius I think I can help out," Remus replied dryly.

"I'll help too!" Peter squeaked.

_Oh joy_, Sirius thought sarcastically, though all he said out loud was, "Sure Wormy, we may be able to think of something suited to your talents," _few though they may be_, Sirius added to himself.

He put the subject of his family and politics behind him, concentrating on planning the best prank _ever_. It was what he was good at, after all.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

So this is more than a month later... Hope 2000+ words helps? I have, according to the books and HP Lexicon, placed the Marauders in their 6th year at the moment. They were all born in 1960, so their Hogwarts years are 1971-1977. This story started in 1975, they were entering their 6th year. They are currently in the 2nd part of 6th.

A nice Orion/Harry moment here...:D

Eight- January 1976

To say that Harrigan had been blindsided by his Yule gift from Orion Black was a severe understatement. He had received a rather lovely and warm white winter cloak with black fur trim from Abraxas Malfoy, merely running his hands over the thick, soft material made him appreciative of the gift in such a bitterly cold winter. From Lucien Lestrange he had an intriguing and complex book on Dark Arts and spell creation, he was almost halfway through it and sometimes he wondered if it carried a compulsion charm, as he seemed unable to put it down for at least 2 hours after beginning to read.

From Lord Orion Arcturus Black however, he had received not one but three items. The first was a bouquet of three flowers, a white rose, a red one and a shockingly beautiful and pale clear one that turned out on close inspection to be made of pure crystal. It was exquisitely detailed and obviously crafted by someone of great skill in both Transfiguration and conjuring. The spell signature on it was Orion's own.

The second was rather plain next to the flowers, comprised of a simple letter written on gold parchment, closed with the Black family crest, imprinted in black on white wax. Closer study revealed the parchment to be woven of pure gold threads however, which undoubtedly made the parchment very expensive.

The last had been a slim bracelet made of platinum with clear crystal-embossed runes etched all the way around the surface.

On their own each of these spectacular objects could be an elegant gift, all together however they represented something of utmost respect and dedication: a Courting Request. After reading the well-written and sincere letter which outlined Orion's intentions and reasons for the amazing request Harrigan had not hesitated to place the bracelet on his left wrist. The metal had heated up for a moment before the clear runes had turned golden, indicating an honest and pure request. Should either individual break the Courting with such a thing as infidelity the runes would turn black on the perpetrator's bracelet, a most shameful thing. Especially since the bracelet couldn't be removed for at least another five days.

Now Harrigan was dressing carefully in an elegant set of bronze and black dress robes with three-quarter sleeves that exposed the bracelet. Swiftly retrieving his lovely cloak from beside the door he walked outside and apparated to the Leaky Cauldron, where he was meeting Orion. The pair were going to dinner at the Golden Spark but they had agreed to meet at the beginning of the Alley so they could enjoy a stroll through the Wizarding market together.
When he arrived in the pub he noted many glances thrown his way, though he ignored all but one. The appreciative gaze and warm, sensual smile that the current Lord Black pointed his way made a slight flush crawl across his cheeks and he took the opportunity of removing his matching fur-lined gloves to look down, though a slight chuckle gave evidence to the fact that his tactic hadn't gone unnoticed.

Still, he had composed himself enough to remain unembarrassed as he raised his head, turned a wry smile in Orion's direction and said, "What you do to my composure, hmm?"

Orion merely smiled and extended his right arm, which Harrigan looped his left arm through, thus elegantly exposing the pair of matching Courting bracelets. The sudden whispers that sprang through the pub sounded nothing more than a very tetchy fire hissing at them, or a temperamental serpent. They exited the pub through the back door, Orion reaching out to tap the correct bricks before resheathing his wand.

Turning to Orion he asked, "Did you enjoy your time with your youngest, Regulus?"

"I did," Orion agreed in his rich baritone. "He told me he wishes to become a spell creator or archivist/researcher at the Ministry. Either one would suit him well, he's very clever and finds both history and spell creation fascinating. Luckily both Spell-Crafting and Research have many of the same pre-requisites, he chose his other classes to suit either one."

"I shall hope he has the good luck necessary in his OWLs then, those are both very high-demand and opportunistic careers," Harrigan replied.

To anyone listening in on their conversation it would seem very stilted or formal, however both Orion and Harrigan were being formal/casual, that is, more formal than casual while in a situation that catered to eavesdroppers and gossiping reporters.

The bracelets glinted brightly in the setting sun, drawing much attention as they made their way through Diagon Alley to the more upscale end, closest to Gringotts. A slight left just past Twilfit & Tatting's left them outside the Golden Spark and both men entered, temporarily dropping their conversation.

"Reservation for two under Black," Orion ordered casually, earning a glance from the hostess who then noted the bracelets with wide eyes. However, she said nothing, turning to a waiter and nodding for him to escort the two men to their seats.

The Golden Spark was a wizarding restaurant that catered to the wealthier, more well-known members of Wizarding Great Britain. It was expensive, even most members of the Wizengamot would hesitate before recommending the restaurant for a casual gathering. However Orion Black was not your average Lord, he shelled out 100 Galleons like it was pocket change.

Chandeliers and marble pillars filled the main room with round tables meant for parties up to four. At the front of the restaurant however was the high-end seating, where Orion and Harrigan were headed. Four pillars separated this from the main room, with walls of mahogany wood between three of the pillars, leaving a sheer gold curtain as the only entryway. The floor here was lush Persian rugs instead of wood, which kept the room warmer and muted conversations. Each two-person table had silencers around it as well and a small personal candle chandelier with white and gold sconces. Those next to the floor-to-ceiling windows needn't worry about prying pedestrians as they were conveniently spelled with one-way glass.

Their escort led Orion and Harrigan to one of the window tables, where Orion held out one of the mahogany chairs for a slightly-flushed Harrigan. Only once he was seated did Orion move to the
other side and sit as well, ordering a bottle of a crisp white wine. That it happened to be one of Harrigan's favourite wines was of no importance, not at all.

This was their first private outing since the Courting began, they had been to one small gathering with Abraxas and Lucien about a week ago, where both Abraxas and Lucien had ribbed Orion for taking so long when they knew that Harrigan had intrigued him from the beginning.

"I took the liberty of pre-ordering for both of us, I hope you don't mind," Orion began. "Some of their best dishes take some time to prepare and I wanted you to enjoy them. I didn't pre-order our dessert, I thought we'd rather like a small break in-between. You wouldn't be able to guess from here, but the Spark contains a gorgeous indoor conservatory in the back with a walking path."

"I am continually amazed by this place, and really by what we are capable of as wizards. Such as that crystal rose you conjured, it is absolutely magnificent, Orion."

Orion's lips twitched at the compliment and he said, "Traditionally you are supposed to select three roses. One white for purity of the request, one red for the depth of love and passion you hold for that individual and one of your choice that best represents the person in your mind. None fit my purpose, so I created that one. I see you as both as strong and fragile as crystal, Harrigan. Some of the things you say are beyond your years, while others remind me that I am talking to and interested in someone 16 years younger than myself. It was one of the things that gave me pause at first, you know."

"In the wizarding world that really doesn't hold much power however," Harrigan pointed out. "We are not like Muggles, who are lucky to live into their 90's. You are just considered in your prime and will be for at least another 50 years."

"Then perhaps it was the fact that you are roughly 14 years older than my eldest son," Orion pointed out.

Harrigan paused and said, "That does seem a little awkward, doesn't it? I would hope you do not feel for me the same that you do your son, however," he added teasingly.

"Merlin, no!" Orion almost yelped, before taking in Harrigan's expression properly. Fixing the younger man with an intense stare he grumbled, "You are incorrigible, Harrigan."

Harrigan snickered slightly and said, "Forgive me, your expression was absolutely perfect."

Orion huffed slightly and said, "You aren't sorry and you know that I know it."

Harrigan's lips twitched in confirmation and Orion shook his head in exasperated amusement.

Their first course arrived just then, saving Harrigan from further scolding, composed of a fresh salad with a tangy dressing that left Harrigan's lips tingling. "I don't know what that dressing is composed of," he began after setting the empty glass bowl to the side, "but that is the most satisfying stuff I've tasted in some time."

"I don't know what it is either," Orion admitted, "and it's a Golden Spark trade secret, so I doubt we'll find out anytime soon."

Their main course arrived a few moments later along with a bottle of a rich red wine. The lid of the tray was lifted, displaying a pair of plates with a bed of wild rice tossed with sage and lemongrass and a medium-rare filet mignon. The meat was so easy to cut Harrigan almost didn't require a knife and his mouth watered a little in anticipation. It was as good as it promised to be, seasoned and cooked to perfection.
They discussed the next Wizengamot session in-between bites of their dinner, more specifically a certain vote that would authorise the Ministry to abstain from holding proper trials for war criminals. Both Orion and Harrigan were against it, as Harrigan pointed out how would you know an individual truly was guilty for their crimes if you simply tossed them to the Dementors?

After they ordered dessert (tiramisu with a side of cappuccino), Orion stood up and gracefully pulled back Harrigan's chair, walking side-by-side the pair passed the main dining area and entered the conservatory. Harrigan felt just full enough that a stroll was appreciated before such an indulgent dessert.

They talked easily, nothing of great importance, more enjoying the other's company than anything else. After two circuits of the small dirt path they returned to their table just as their waiter approached, holding two squares of tiramisu and a cup of steaming cappuccino with cream and chocolate shavings each. Harrigan appreciated the walk more after indulging in the decadent treat.

Orion paid, and the pair left, arms again entwined in the night air as they headed down the Alley to the apparition point. With a pop they appeared in front of Harrigan's home, both lingering where they were.

"I find myself reluctant to let go of you," Orion said at last. "I hope you enjoyed the evening as much as I did."

"I don't think so," when Orion tensed he continued with a small smile, "I enjoyed it far more, I think I will never forget this night."

"Hmm," Orion replied, visible relief in his broad shoulders. Quite abruptly he used the arm still around Harrigan's waist to drag him closer and brought their lips together. He'd moved slowly enough to give Harrigan the chance to pull away, but he didn't feel like it. The kiss was perfect, he loved the taste of the slightly bitter cappuccino mixed with the spicy tang that was all Orion.

Finally however Orion let him go, moved back to the sidewalk and gave him an elegant dipping bow. "Sleep well, Harrigan."

Only once the man was gone did Harrigan let the slightly stupid grin cross his face, humming softly in pleasure as he moved to enter his home.
February 1976

Chapter Summary

A new chapter! Black Fortunes has been nominated to the Non-Canon Awards for Best Harry Slash! If you like this story please vote for it :D I don't own Harry Potter, everything you recognize belongs to J.K. Rowling, a lovely lady with a 'wicked' imagination.

EDIT: Someone very kindly pointed out that we lost three years in the dates. Oops :D

Nine-February 1976

The Wizengamot was back in session today. There had been a nice break through the holidays and now they were back here in this hallowed hall, making decisions that affected all of wizard-kind and magical creatures. Harrigan sat directly next to Orion, ignoring the speculative looks sent his way.

The pair had been photographed leaving the restaurant on their first date as well as their outing to France for Valentine's. That had been Harrigan's planning, he knew that day was also the birthday of the oldest and still estranged Black child, Sirius. Harrigan hoped that his little comment to Sirius was at least making the heir think, he hated seeing the composed disappointment and sadness when Orion's gift was returned unopened.

The almost hatred on Dumbledore's face was somewhat expected, but Harrigan was surprised by just how openly the man was showing his attitude toward Harrigan. He was Lord Peverell after all, while Dumbledore was a senior member of the Wizengamot his position was by election, the man had no family title or great monetary status. It was why he relied so heavily on his supporters, those that had actual titles and some status (excluding the Weasleys by default). Honestly the man acted as if he was impossible to have removed, it was an attitude that was quickly becoming wearisome and annoying.

He ignored Dumbledore, which became something of a necessity as Lucien leaned in his direction and said teasingly, "France, really? Isn't that a bit of a cliché for a Valentine location?"

"It was something last-minute," Harrigan protested with a smile playing on his lips. "If I'd have thought about it better and planned it out, I wouldn't have used such a common destination. We enjoyed it however, took a boat trip down the river and had dinner at a lovely little cafe on la voie des roses."

"Rose Way? That's the magical street of France, correct? It was recently rebuilt, they made it wider and added more plants according to the Prophet."

"Rose plants," Harrigan nodded in agreement. "It's a lovely road, far better than Diagon in my opinion. Even la voie du soir is far better made and high-quality. I must remember to show you the pair of mirrors we picked up in a little shop there."

"Night Way is the equivalent of Knockturn Alley, so why would a 'Dark' shop be selling a pair of mirrors?" Lucien asked, sounding slightly confused.

"Because these mirrors use blood magic," Harrigan answered in a low voice. "They're communication mirrors, solid silver gilt frames, absolutely gorgeous craftsmanship and a very
talented use of Runes."

"You found communication mirrors?" Lucien breathed in astonishment. "They are so rare nowadays, they were outlawed in Great Britain about the same time that magic was split into Light, Grey and Dark."

Harrigan chuckled, "It was funny, Orion was absolutely stunned and almost excited when he found them, I had no idea what they were. I just thought it was that inherited Black vanity popping up because they have such a clear image."

Lucien burst into rich chuckles, which were echoed by Abraxas and accompanied by a slight glare from Orion, whose mouth was twitching slightly. Apparently he wasn't too annoyed at the jab to his 'peacock tendencies', as Harrigan referred to them. Harrigan gave his companion an innocent smile and a slight shrug.

"You are incorrigible," Orion huffed, unable to keep up his pretence of annoyance. He linked an arm around Harrigan's shoulders and tugged him slightly closer, to an accompanying glare from Dumbledore. The man just about flinched when Orion blasted him with an icy glare in return.

"I do not know why he takes such an interest and intense dislike in you, aside from the Lord Peverell matter. If his behaviour continues I'm going to do something about it however, perhaps I will bring it up to the Madame Minister one of these days," he growled, obviously agitated.

"Calm down, Orion," Harrigan soothed. "There is nothing he can do that wouldn't be totally obvious here in the Wizengamot chambers. He is just losing his place on a high horse and he doesn't like it. There are men like him the world over. They get a little bit of power and it goes to their heads. When they begin to learn their true place they resent it and the one who shows them."

"Harrigan is right," Abraxas nodded. "He thinks he is infallible and Harrigan is showing him differently. He is just a man, even if he did defeat Grindelwald. If we truly wanted to do so at the moment it would be all too easy to force him out of the Wizengamot permanently. His judgment is skewed and he should be giving more of his attention to the students and leaving government to those who actually care about our world."

"Perhaps we should force him out," Harrigan mused aloud, earning startled glances from his companions. "He is influencing others in the Wizengamot and forcing through laws that have no place here. Look at the one that gives him total control of orphans once they come of age to attend Hogwarts, for example. He can decide where they are placed at holidays and can even approve or veto marriage contracts. He could make a child's life miserable with that kind of power and yet his supporters backed it without even really thinking about the law at all."

"He could," Orion agreed slowly. "It would be better off if the wizarding world created a center for them to go to on holidays, or placed some with agreeable wizarding parents. Marriage contracts don't matter if they aren't at least a half-blood with some family monies and those that fit that category most likely have some living family."

"And there you hit it on the head," Abraxas stated. "They most likely do have living family, but that family could very well be Dark or Grey. And the all-but acknowledged 'Lord of the Light' would hardly let money go to those he has deemed unworthy."

Heavy sarcasm laced his voice through the entire remark, laced even more heavily on the 'title' Dumbledore had given himself all but publicly. For him to do so without acknowledgement from the Light families was a big no-no for social and political careers, so he kept it unofficial for now.
"How would we go about doing this?" Lucien asked, getting them back on topic.

"We would have to get a majority to agree," Harrigan thought aloud, words slow as if testing them on his tongue. "We would need to approach the Grey families and those of the Light who are disillusioned or never supported him to begin with. We can begin by watching him tonight, noticing who supports him and who needs more cajoling to do so, or refuses outright."

"Then let's begin this grand game called politics, shall we?" Orion stated, just as the doors closed with the usual ringing note that signaled a start of session.

Harrigan leaned into Orion and turned to pay attention as well, concealing a smirk with great effort. It appeared that Dumbledore was soon going to be in for a shock. Maybe he could get a word in to be the one to inform the old man of the loss of his position... His three companions should agree, maybe for the price of a bottle of wine and what would be no doubt a treasured memory.

Let it begin.
April 1976

Chapter Summary

A/N: No excuses. Updates should come faster for a while however as I am on vacation from work. Sorry for my bad French in the last chapter, I was working with a free online translator and it does make errors. Also, I have a feeling the reason why my updates are so slow is because I am bored of working on just two stories, so look for another one from me sometime soon. Perhaps from Notebook *grins*

Information about the Blacks comes from the Black Family Tree which you can find on HP Lexicon. Date for Black Manor is random, Phineas Nigellus was born in 1837 and died in 1925 so I dated the commissioning of Black Manor for when he was 40. His eldest son was born in 1877 so I figured it a good year for such things :D

Ten- April 1976

Sirius Orion Black glowered at the Daily Prophet, more accurately the 'social' section. The photograph of his father escorting Lord Peverell to a fancy private restaurant in Austria stared back up at him. Both men were dressed with the casual, dismissive elegance that seemed to be a pureblood's right and heritage and there was a small smile on his father's face.

That smile. He had never seen such an expression on his father's face around their mother, only rarely directed at him. True he had hardly been around his father by choice when he was old enough to notice and when he had he acted out, loathing his family's 'proper Dark heritage'. It was for this Dark heritage and another private reason that he had sent back his father's birthday gift unopened. Nobody in his family knew the main reason why he loathed almost everything that came with the name Black. Only one person knew and since he was one of the main causes for Sirius' hurt and anger he highly doubted that the man in question would bother asking about it. All anyone knew was that he loathed the name Black and the Slytherins that carried that name to a fervor that startled all of his friends and acquaintances.

He glared at the photo again, angrily staring at the man who had caught his father's attentions. When his father undoubtedly bonded with Lord Peverell he would be well and truly replaced in his father's affections and any chance of reconciliation with his family would be gone. After all, male pregnancy wasn't that uncommon amongst pureblood families and his father was far from being past the age where he could still sire sons.

He flung the paper from him with a rage that startled even his fellow Gryffindors and stalked out of the Great Hall, seeking the distraction of his first class. Potions with Slytherin, wonderful, he thought with a sarcastic snarl.

Since he hardly paid any attention to the table of green and silver now, he didn't notice the concerned frown on a face that almost mirrored his own, nor the piece of parchment that his observer removed from a book bag and began to write a letter upon.
Harrigan laughed at something his companion had said and looked around in the ensuing silence. He had been invited to Malfoy Manor and was stunned at the simple elegance of the home. For some reason his mind had conjured dark woods, heavy drapes and black tile floors with an abundance of snakes. The truth couldn't be farther from that image if Harry had mentioned it aloud for someone to take down.

Huge open floor-to-ceiling windows dominated the wall facing a remarkably beautiful sunset. The pinks, gold and reds filtered through crystal panes and shattered a mosaic of light onto the pure white carpet, deep enough that Harrigan was visited by a strange desire to remove his shoes and wiggle his toes in it. The furniture in this gorgeous 'visiting room' was all cherry, polished to a high gloss and varying from light to a rich dark reddish-purple. The cushions on the multitude of soft chairs and the two couches was silver with rich purple accent pillows, the Malfoy family crest in fine gold stitchery that could hardly be felt, let alone seen.

Orion, who had escorted him to this gathering, informed him that the family's official colours were silver and purple, fitting in well with the Black family whose official colours were black and silver. His own colours were emerald green and bronze, hence the colour of his robes on the day he had claimed his seat on the Wizengamot.

The soft murmur of many conversations filled the room along with the slight chink of fine crystal flutes as a lovely champagne from the family cellars was passed around, to appreciation from the guests. Abraxas was a very good host, though he had informed Harrigan wryly that these occasions had become much more pleasant with the death of his private shrew Belladonna. In his own words she had made these occasions very uncomfortable with her malignant, oppressive presence lingering in the air like a foul odor.

Quite contrary to his deceased mother's appearance, the young Heir Malfoy moved easily through their guests, conversing with each with an easy, confident air and a tidbit about nearly everyone he met, meaning that those he spoke with felt a closer kinship with one that remembered such a small fact from an insignificant conversation. Harrigan took a moment to study the young man, he had just turned 21 in November.

Lucius Abraxas Malfoy was everything that a pureblood Lord could hope his heir to be. Graceful, handsome, clever and powerful. Liquid silver eyes were so close to Lucien Lestrange's that it was easy to see how the man was not only his godfather but namesake as well. Spiteful individuals had tried to claim that he was Lucien's bastard son as well, but Abraxas had taken measures to discount his distant cousin's claims.

He possessed a river of white blonde hair and skin that appeared to have a natural golden sheen to it, he practically glowed in the light from the windows and the crystal chandelier that hung over their heads. Dressed in silver-trimmed deep amethyst open robes over beige slacks and a crisp white shirt he was an impressive and handsome image. According to Abraxas, he had been betrothed two summers before to Narcissa Black, daughter of Orion's late wife's brother Cygnus and the man's relative with or without his incestuous marriage. The agreement had been made between Belladonna and Walburga and for now it stood.

It was a good match and as neither child had said anything to the contrary so far it stood. Narcissa would be going into her final year of Hogwarts this fall just as Orion's oldest son was, the girl's wedding was set for the summer after she graduated, so little over a year from now. He had yet to meet either Orion's youngest son nor their cousins, though just the thought brought up his chance meeting with Orion's eldest and he controlled a frown, bidding a pleasant goodbye to his current companion and seeking out one of the others.
This little party was far more than a social gathering. It had been Abraxas' idea to host a selection of neutral and more neutrally-Light families at one of their homes for a bit of wine and fine appetizers, trying to subtly bring their guests around to the idea that Albus Dumbledore needed to be removed from either Hogwarts, the Ministry or both. Harrigan tended to believe that it was mostly a success so far, that was why he sought out one of his more experienced companions, to get another opinion on the evening's gather.

He found Orion on the far left edge of the room in pleasant conversation with Lord Ogden. Ogden was currently neutral and was something of a political powerhouse despite his advanced age. His opinion was still highly regarded in the Ministry and the Wizengamot and he had openly made a few comments that Dumbledore was unsuited to Ministry offices, let alone the important position as magical Great Britain's representative on the International Confederation of Wizards.

Abraxas Malfoy would indeed be ideally suited to the position and he had admitted to Harrigan and his companions he would enjoy it. He knew a number of languages and had studied magical cultures from around the world, he would know far better than a man who only concentrated on politics part-time how to interact with important dignitaries from foreign countries without offending them or their cultures.

Harrigan listened from a short distance away as Orion was drawing his conversation with Ogden to a close. The night was late now, the sun was setting in the distance and sending more shades of purple than anything else. His attention was caught by Orion's last comment and he listened in surprised delight as Orion stated to Ogden, "Charles, would you mind spreading about the word that the next of these little gathers will be at Black Manor? It is long since time to open up my family's main estate again and what better occasion, hmm? Make sure and let others know that they are more than welcome to bring company and like-minded individuals."

A genial smile widened Lord Charles Ogden's face and he said, "I shall happily do so, lad. I remember Black Manor but only the vaguest, I believe it was your father that closed it down in favor of Grimmauld. Might I add that you have come a long way? I still remember you when you first joined the Wizengamot just after your marriage. You do the name Black proud, Orion."

A genuine smile crossed Orion's lips at the compliment and he responded lightly, "High praise indeed from one of the oldest Lords still active in our government. Thank you for your kind words and you are correct about the timing for the closure of Black Manor. My father was obsessed with privacy and defensibility, a 9 room townhouse was much easier for him to live in than a 90-plus room Manor."

"He was paranoid, lad, put it plainly. Arcturus was a good man up until about forty and then he turned into a paranoid, uptight, bigoted bastard. I thanked the gods and Magic for a return to sanity and wisdom when we finished the first sessions with you as the new Lord Black."

All Orion did was chuckle in response to Ogden's blunt summary of his father's faults, moving away from the older man and easily slipping an arm through Harrigan's, startling the younger male. He had not thought that Orion noticed him listening to the conversation. "He's right you know," Orion commented, "about my father. They call it the Black family madness and it seems to affect some more than others. My niece Bellatrix for example, she's Regulus' age and I wouldn't trust her with my life if she was sworn to it with an Unbreakable Vow."

"Strange how some can be so awful and others redeem it," Harrigan commented. "We can't chose our families, I believe all of us have a few relatives we'd rather do without if we could. You were lucky, your sons appear to inheirited your sanity over your wife and cousin's madness. Even though he is separated from you, Sirius does display a sane mind most of the time."
Orion grimaced at the mention of his eldest son and said, "It is most obvious when he is angry. There is a certain edge to his eyes that I have tried to keep away as much as possible. I am glad he ran away when he did, I have a feeling Walburga would have driven him farther over the edge than Bellatrix had he stayed and that is a scary thought indeed."

He gave a light, slightly forced smile and said, "But enough on my family, I am surprised that you haven't mentioned my agreement to host the next of these little gathers. Ogden is good about spreading the word, he will make sure that even more come next time. I have a feeling I will have to have the ballroom ready to hold all of us comfortably."

"I am very curious, you Blacks are secretive at best about your residences," Harrigan admitted playfully.

"Not much to say about Black Manor aside from the fact that it has been in the family since the beginning of the line. It was commissioned by Phineas Nigellus in 1877 and has been in the family ever since. I add Nigellus by the way simply because there are not so many different stars and constellations in the skies to name all of my family. There are two Phineas, two Arcturus, my son Regulus is the second of that name and Sirius is the third. Only middle names differentiate between all of us. I am luckily the first and only Orion, Cygnus is also the first."

Harrigan suppressed his laughter with difficulty. "Hopefully if you have more you will be able to give them names that haven't been used as much."

"When, not if. And perhaps when that time comes you will be able to give the children more individual, creative names? Somehow still honoring my family's tradition?" The look Orion gave him was both shrewd and subtly nervous.

Harrigan gave him a long look in return, weighing the comment fully. Orion expected to have more children in his lifetime and from both the comments afterward and their Courting indicated that the elder Lord hoped that he would be the one to bear these future heirs of the Black family magicks and blood. Harrigan couldn't honestly see turning this remarkable and addicting male down when he finally did ask so all he responded was a coy, "Perhaps."

From the private, loving smile Orion bestowed upon him, the man had chosen to take it positively.

Harrigan stayed with Orion for the rest of the evening and well into the morning, unable to keep his mind on politics. Instead it wandered to his possible and most probable future, wondering what children of the Black and Peverell lines would be like. A faint smile remained on his lips, they would always be remarkable to him, after all they would be his.
A/N: No excuses. Dark Roses is two chapters away from being finished though, so these should come a lot faster. Hopefully I catch you by surprise with this little development in one of the side pairings. :D And I fixed the little problem where we somehow lost 3 years in the story. Whoops.

I don't own Harry Potter.

WARNING: Two swear words from those naughty Blacks.

Eleven- Mid-April 1976

Harrigan was wandering the upper levels of 12 Grimmauld Place. He had been invited to the residence that Arcturus had opened after closing Black Manor, which had been the home of Orion since he was born. It was warded beyond belief and closed up tighter than an insane asylum, these being the words of Orion himself. He frowned to himself as he looked around, remembering exactly why he had chosen to wander these dark halls.

Orion had received a letter from Regulus just this afternoon detailing Sirius' current moods, which were swinging towards the very instability that Orion had been trying to keep his eldest from. The reaction that his eldest had shown to just a picture in the social section of the *Daily Prophet* was worrying to the Lord, who was trying to think of how to reply to Regulus without making his youngest more worried than he was.

Hesitantly Harrigan opened another door, smiling at the room inside. This obviously belonged to Regulus, he had Slytherin's green and silver everywhere, in banners, small flags, old uniforms hung proudly in the wardrobe for memories' sake and pictures of him and his friends on the walls. Studying the photos he noted one group off to the side, almost lost in the multitude of images belonging to Regulus' friends.

These were candid shots taken from some ways away of a boy that looked more like Orion than Regulus did, sharply angled and handsome features crowned by slightly wavy black hair and glittering gray-blue eyes. In some he was alone, studying or staring off into the distance, most showed him with three other boys or two of them, hanging out under a tree by a lake or walking down the halls of the great castle that was Hogwarts.

Having met the boy pictured once before, Harrigan quickly realised these were of Sirius, elder son and heir of Orion. The pictures taken by his year younger brother were both sweet and wistful as well as heart-breaking and slightly uncomfortable to look at. Their very distance conveyed Regulus' desire to be closer to his brother and his friends, a longing for a presence that must have been very familiar at one time and now was more distant than ever.

He left the room a few moments later, wandering down the hall toward yet another door, the images Regulus had taken still prominent in his mind. Thus, when he opened the next door, he was rather unprepared for what he was going to see. He blinked, stared and shook his head, resisting a laugh. *This* was obviously Sirius' room and the boy had probably done a very good job of driving his
mother insane.

Pictures of pretty Muggle girls and motorcycles were stuck to the wall, their vapid stares and stillness a very obvious contrast to the moving photos of Sirius and his friends goofing off in the other photos. A large poster of a roaring gold Gryffindor lion emblazoned on a bright scarlet shield shimmered from the wall opposite, while a child's toy version of a dragon skeleton hung from the ceiling, as if it were about to lazily fly around the room. Old textbooks and clothing were scattered everywhere as well as some very unusual magazines.

The wardrobe looked to have been shoved against the wall at some point and there were a few pieces of parchment visible from underneath. The layers of dust on the floor spoke of just how long the wardrobe had been in its old spot. Curious, Harrigan walked through the errant child's room and picked them up. Turning the whole pile over he noted that they were a series of letters between Sirius and someone else. Hoping his indiscretion wouldn't be pushing his luck with Orion and his sons he started to read the top letter.

**Dear Sirius,**

*I think of you every day, you know. Corny, isn't it? It is still true. Though I have just graduated I feel lost knowing that on the 1st of September I won't be seeing you on the platform. I will wish you luck with your 5th year now, not knowing when I will be able to write or speak to you again.*

*Perhaps if your family comes over this summer I will finally be able to show you my favorite spot in the gardens, my love. I am there now, writing this letter to you and wishing you were here so that I could hold you and watch your expression as you look around this place... no doubt you would think it beautiful and I would without question say that you are far more beautiful than any garden.*

*Are you blushing? I would hope so, I fear I am becoming very sappy, a very unusual trait in the house of snakes. I suppose it no longer matters for I am through with school. As much as I will miss you my star, I will not miss the political games and maneuvering of my house, though Father tells me it is good practise for the real world.*

*Now I wait only until you are going to graduate and then I will approach your father and ask for a betrothal contract between our families. Do not worry about him saying no, beloved star, who would turn down a union with the Noble and Ancient House of Malfoy?*

*Always,*

*Lucius*

Stunned, Harrigan looked to the next letter, dated a year and a half ago. It was by Sirius and was so blotched and stained in places it was hardly legible, several lines were viciously crossed out as well.

**Heir Malfoy,**

*Are you feeling good right now, you smug bastard? I hope so, my mother just announced the WONDERFUL news about my cousin Narcissa's engagement to the MALFOY heir. Considering there is only one, I know she means you. I bet you are laughing at me right now.*

*I hate you. No, that doesn't convey the depth of my feelings. I doubt there is a word that can but for now I will say that I absolutely LOATHE you. Did you enjoy playing with me, did it make you feel pleasure to see the purest love and devotion in my eyes and know that it was nothing but empty feelings for you?*
I will NEVER forgive you for any of this, the very least of all the gardens this summer. Do you know how important that was to me? DO YOU! No, I hardly think so, after all you are the 'Heir of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Malfoy'.

You got what you wanted, you sick arsehole, a marriage to the House of Black. I hope my cousin makes your life miserable, she's so shallow it's a surprise she hasn't followed her mythological namesake yet and wasted away staring at her reflection.

Suffice to say, HEIR MALFOY, that if I see you again I don't know what I will do, so I never want to. Stay out of my life, stay out of my sight and rot in whatever dark corner you can find, I can think of several.

Regards,

Sirius Orion Black

Heir of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black

Unable to believe what he had just read, Harrigan immediately left Sirius’ room, both letters in hand and headed to Orion's office. Unless he had severely misunderstood, he now knew exactly why Sirius Orion Black wanted nothing to do with his father and brother, not to mention the purebloods in general.

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When Lucius was summoned to his Father's office he was very curious. Their lessons on business and politics were over for the week and he knew of no other reason to get such an official summons. Regardless, he bound his loose hair back with a simple tie and made sure he looked presentable before heading for his Father's private office.

When he reached the door he gave a single brisk knock and was rewarded with a warm, "Come in."

Lucius pushed open the door and was more than relieved for his precautions when he was met with the sight of not only his father but Lord Orion Black himself as well as Lord Harrigan Peverell. He had spoken to both men at his father's little gathering a few weeks prior and had been impressed with both men, as well as relieved that they treated him like his opinions mattered instead of simply talking over his head or ignoring him all together.

"Take a seat, Lucius. Don't worry, you're not in trouble or anything of the like."

He took a seat, greatly relieved by the reassurance. But why did these three powerful individuals want to talk with him? He was flattered of course, anyone would be, but he held no illusions about his influence or input. He was not necessary in their goals.

"Heir Malfoy, I am here on something of a sensitive subject. I know it may be difficult to talk about but it concerns your engagement to my niece Narcissa," Lord Black began.

"Heir Malfoy, I must ask you, did you want this engagement to Narcissa?"

The question caught him totally off-guard. He sat still for a long moment, blinking. When he finally registered it he said, "Of course I did, Lord Black. An alliance with the House of Black is an
"That is not what he asked," Lord Peverell put in shrewdly, staring at him with more insight than Lucius quite frankly liked at the moment. "He asked whether you wanted the engagement to Narcissa, not the House of Black."

Wondering what the man was getting at he said, "I knew what Lord Black meant and my answer still stands."

"Would it, if you saw these?" Harrigan waved a couple old pieces of parchment and handed them to Lucius, who stared at him in a somewhat bewildered manner.

"You are meant to read them, Lucius," Harrigan said somewhat primly.

Lucius looked down and his heart leapt into his throat when he saw at the top of the first page the words, *Dear Sirius*. He didn't need to read any further. His throat tightened and his eyes burned as he stared at the second page, obviously the first draft of the venomous and hurt letter he had received just a week after his betrothal to Narcissa. He didn't need to read it, the words were burned into his memory.

Setting them down he stared firmly at Lord Black and said, "Obviously you have read these, my Lord Black. The question now is, what is the real reason for your presence here today?"

Staring shrewdly at him through a face that reminded him painfully of his beloveds', Orion stated, "The reason for my presence, as you so put it, is to ask *why*. Why you didn't decline the betrothal to Narcissa? Why you haven't approached me about my eldest, or why did you hurt my eldest, my beloved Dog Star, in this manner?"

Hearing the familiar nickname from father to son, so similar to what he called Sirius himself made Lucius break eye contact and stare at the marble floor for a moment. Gathering his courage he looked up and began to speak.

"As you know, my mother Belladonna was a vicious and self-centered woman who cared nothing about her families' happiness and everything about her status and influence. I do not know how, but she must have managed to catch sight of me an Sirius at one point that summer. She hated homosexuals, despite the fact that they can still produce children."

"One day about a month into the summer, she requested my presence. In the sunroom with her were the Ladies Walburga Black and Druella Rosier-Black. She confronted me about Sirius and I told her bluntly that I wanted him and him only, that I had fallen for him when I was in my 5th year. She was disgusted and told me in no uncertain terms that she refuse to have a Consort Malfoy over a Lady Malfoy while she still lived. She told me that in two days Cygnus Black would approach my father with a contract between myself and Narcissa and I was to agree to it."

"I would have told my mother exactly what she could do with her narrow-minded demands if Lady Walburga had not added that unless I did this it would be very easy for Sirius to have a sudden accident and either die tragically young or be rendered barren for the rest of his life. I may have fought with my own life, but I love Sirius more than anything in this world and I know that Walburga would have found a way to hurt or kill him. I couldn't risk it, so I agreed. One of the 'terms' to our little agreement was that I couldn't even tell Sirius why I had done this, so I ended up hurting him very badly, which I wish with all my heart I could have taken back."

There was silence after he finished his little tale and it was a few minutes at most before Orion Black hissed in anger and snarled, "That bitch couldn't have died soon enough! I know she hated Sirius for
some reason but this?! No wonder he won't come home, he thought I knew about it!"

Seeing Lord Black's very emotional reaction to the story made Lucius slightly uncomfortable but also very hopeful. Making a quick decision he stood up and moved to stand in front of the formidable wizard. "Lord Orion Black, may I make a request of you as Head of House Black?"

The formal terms made Orion calm down and stand as well, staring down a few inches at Lucius' face with an imposing mask upon his features. "And what would this request be, Heir of House Malfoy?"

"I formally request your aid as Head of House Black in dissolving the betrothal contract between myself and Narcissa Druella Black, daughter of Cygnus Black. She is unsuitable to me as a wife and bonded. There is another I wish to have as partner for House Malfoy."

The beginnings of a smile twitched upon the elder Lord's face and he turned to Abraxas. His old friend's eyes were sparking with pleasure as he stated, "Lord Malfoy, would you happen to have the betrothal contract in question available?"

Equally pleased, Abraxas responded, "I do, Lord Black."

He opened a drawer and retrieved a piece of gold-coloured parchment.

"Would you have any objections to this dissolution, Lord Malfoy?"

"No, Lord Black, I would not. I agree with my Heir on the suitability of Miss Narcissa Black."

A warm, genuine smile crossed Orion's features as he stated firmly, "Then upon my power as Head of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black, I declare the betrothal contract between Lucius Abraxas Malfoy, Heir of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Malfoy and Miss Narcissa Black, daughter of Cygnus Black and Druella Black nee Rosier to be null and void, so mote it be!"

The parchment on the desk dissolved into bright red and orange flames that scorched neither desk nor the papers Abraxas had been working on when they had Flooed in.

Turning to Lucius the Lord Black smiled warmly and said, "Hopefully with this removed you may fix the situation between yourself and my eldest and perhaps cause the rift between myself and my precious Dog Star to heal as well. I must warn you, the House of Black is famous for it's temper and you may find it difficult to talk to him."

"If I can get him alone I can convince him," Lucius replied firmly, mind awhirl with details. "The hardest bit will be getting him alone. I may know of one of his Gryffindor compatriots that will help, however."

"Good luck, Heir Malfoy. You will need it."

As Lords Black and Peverell made their goodbyes and Flooed back to where they had previously been, Lucius wryly thought to himself, Good luck indeed. I remember my beloved's skill with hexes and curses.

If he could fix this however, it would be more than worth it.
Late April 1977

Chapter Summary

New Chapter, hope it lives up to expectations :D

I don't own Harry Potter.

Twelve-Late April 1977

To Remus Lupin with highest regards,

I believe I should be grateful you chose to even open this letter, let alone read it. First of all, I must ask how your classes are going? I know you desire to teach, which is an admirable choice of career for anyone. You, I believe, would have the patience necessary to teach young witches and wizards what they need to know, or even young Muggles should you chose to do so. However, I did not send this letter just for a chat.

I know you may not want to have anything to do with me after the disastrous start to what was your 5th year. You have no reason to trust me or believe in me, but I did not want that to happen. I do not play with another's feelings, certainly not ones like Sirius felt for me. Hopefully he still does feel that way for me, we shall certainly know soon enough.

You see, Remus, Lord Orion Black was generous enough to dissolve the betrothal contract between myself and the vapid creature known as Narcissa Druella Black. It was not my choice to enter the betrothal, there were several other factors that you do deserve to know, but my beloved star deserves to know them first. He was the one I hurt the greatest, after all. I know you have no reason to trust me, Remus, but I do believe we were getting along well enough there towards the fatal end. This is why I appeal to you now instead of the Potter Heir.

I need to speak with Sirius, but I need to do so without him knowing it is me at first. You know as well as I do that he would rather spit on his late mother's grave (may she get what she deserved) than speak to me at the moment. To that end I need your help, Remus. In two days I will be in that wondrous room we discovered, the one that was impossible to place on your Map. I will be there from quarter past noon to one in the afternoon. Please ensure that Sirius comes, if you can.

I know this means I am asking you to lie to your friend, but he will forgive you. And I will always be in your debt for being a facilitator to fixing this Merlin be damned mess that I have gotten the one I love above all others into.

Hopeful Regards,

Lucius A. Malfoy

Remus had no idea how many times he had read and re-read this letter. His first instinct had been to burn the damn thing, but something always stopped his hand. He kept remembering the broken and hurting imitation of his best friend from a year and some months ago, more recently the almost
unstable aggression towards all things pureblood or Slytherin. Sirius had not gotten over Lucius, no matter how much he declared it so.

The relationship had been a shock to both houses. It had been a mostly secret affair, but Remus and James had discovered the couple up on the Astronomy tower when James had forgotten his star chart after a particularly dull lesson. They had back-tracked up the tower and come upon their best friend being expertly kissed to a breathless daze and for the next few weeks it seemed things would remain sour.

Instead James and Sirius had given Remus another reason to marvel at the tightness of their friendship. After an intense questioning session and about a week of awkward interactions things had gone back to just the same as they had been. They had even begun to get to know some of the Slytherins, namely Bellatrix Black and Regulus. Regulus had never seen his brother and the Malfoy heir together, Sirius had been afraid to bring the subject up before he knew how far it was going to go.

And then in the second week of their fifth year the social section of the *Prophet* had blatantly advertised the betrothal agreement between Heir Malfoy and Miss Narcissa Black, gushing over the suitability of the match and the blending of two powerful old bloodlines. Sirius' copy of the paper had burned to ash in a spectacular bit of accidental magic and it had taken him three days and countless copies to finally write out the scathing, furiously hurt letter he had written Lucius.

Three days of which two were spent in an almost catatonic state of mingled grief, betrayal and anger. They had done their best to support their friend, but what could be done to correct that kind of hurt? What words could they have said that would not seem insufficient and cumbersome? Their silence served better, their shoulder a convenient pillow to rest an exhausted and fuzzy head upon.

If only they could have done something similar for his heart, perhaps Sirius would not have devolved into the bitter, angry individual he had become over the last year. Perhaps he would not have taken his anger out on an unknowing Severus Snape, nearly killing the older boy. Perhaps he would not have become so vindictive and foul toward anything and everything of his old life. But did he dare take this step?

Staring at Sirius, who was joking with James about something, he attempted to consider both sides of this story. He knew Sirius' side very well, but what about Lucius? From the tone of the letter he was desperate to speak with Sirius, even if the Marauder simply screamed at him and said it was all over and he wanted nothing to do with the other pureblood. In the end, even if that was what happened, even if he lost his friend, it was the right thing to do. Both sides needed closure to this old hurt.

Bracing himself, Remus prepared to lie to one of his two best friends. In the end, it was much easier to do than he would have initially thought.

"Hey Pads?"

Sirius turned to look at him with a cocky grin on his face, one that didn't quite cover lingering emotions far deeper than what Sirius' rivals here at school would have thought him capable of.

"Yeah, Moony?"

"You know that Ravenclaw girl you've been chasing for the past week? The one who was actually smart enough to turn you down?"

Sirius grumbled good-naturedly at his friend but nodded.
"She changed her mind. Said she'd meet you in 30 minutes up in that room we found, the one that we can't get on the Map for some reason."

"Why'd she get a hold of you, I wonder?" Sirius asked.

"Are you kidding, my friend? Are we not in each other's company more often than not?"

"True," Sirius replied with a grin. "Suppose I'd better move it then, I'm not surprised she changed her mind. I'm irresistible, after all!"

James snorted and replied, "Only in your dreams, Paddy."

Sirius stuck out his tongue rather than come up with a verbal retort and headed out the portrait hole without a backward glance. Remus released a soft sigh and hoped to whatever deities existed that he hadn't lost one of his best friends.

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Sirius hummed quietly to himself as he traversed one of the back passages, heading for the hidden room. He was in an exceptionally good mood, his 6th year was almost over. One more term and he'd be a Hogwarts graduate. At this point in time he had no idea what he wanted to do with himself after graduating, he wasn't too worried about it at the moment. His great-uncle Alphard had left him enough to be comfortable on for a while.

He would miss this school, however. Here he could ignore the changing world outside the gates, here he could be nothing more than a mischievous schoolboy who exasperated his teachers to no end with his flying colours and lack of studying. He considered his detentions record to be something of note and was determined to leave behind a legacy worthy of future generations of pranksters.

The heck with pureblood values and reputation anyway. He scowled, shaking himself lightly not unlike his animagus form to rid himself of those thoughts. They were a rather dark road, one he had been traversing more often of late. Instead he smoothed his features of any and all sign of internal conflict and let one of his cocky smiles fall into place. The mask was one tradition and piece of Slytherin education that he had taken away from his lessons. It was useful, letting him hide his hurt and anger at his family and others and appear to be his happy-go-lucky self.

Reaching the blank wall he thought hard about what he was here for and paced back in front of it three times. The door appeared on the last pass and he smiled triumphantly, clicking he handle and letting himself into the room.

The very first thing he noticed were the muted colours and spacious floor plan. Then he noted who was standing in the room and his face paled rapidly in anger and his grey eyes flashed. He most certainly did not want to see the tall, elegant and ever-graceful form of Lucius Malfoy. After a moment anger overwhelmed his desire to leave and give the traitorous Lupin a piece of his mind and his wand smacked firmly into his palm as he swiftly threw the first hex he thought of in the other male's direction.

To his irritation Lucius dodged the Tongue-Tying jinx easily, making no move to retaliate with a spell of his own. He merely weaved out of the way, watching Sirius carefully.

A succession of spells left his wand swiftly after that and Lucius dodged every single one, moving more like a dancer than a combatant. Sirius was so focused on his use of spells that he failed to notice one important fact. Lucius was not only dodging his spells, but advancing slowly and surely in his direction.
Thus, he was caught entirely off-guard when the other simply launched in his direction, grabbing his wand arm by the wrist and snatching his wand, throwing it halfway across the room. Letting out a yell of outraged fury Sirius brought his left arm around and punched the other squarely in the shoulder, forcing him back.

"What the hell are you doing here?!"

"I wanted to speak with you," Lucius replied calmly, rubbing his shoulder slightly.

"And what makes you think I want to hear anything you have to say? Or for that matter, why should I believe anything you say to be honest?" Sirius replied coldly.

Lucius winced, so his barb had cut deep had it? Good.

"Considering your wand is lost somewhere in this room, will you at least listen? I will swear it on my magic if that is what it takes."

This stopped Sirius from his immediate reply of 'no'. For someone to even consider swearing on their magic meant they had nothing to lose. It also generally meant they were saying the truth, not many purebloods especially would swear on their magic and then lie.

"I will listen, but that doesn't mean I'm going to believe you straight away."

"I would not expect it," he answered softly. He waved at a chair.

Sirius sneered, "Just because I'm willing to listen doesn't mean I want to be anywhere near you."

Lucius sighed and dropped onto a settee. "First of all, you should know that the betrothal contract between myself and Narcissa is now voided."

"And let me guess, I'm your backup plan?" Sirius asked harshly. "No thanks, you can go without a spouse from the Black family for all I care. Did Narcissa get a laugh out of how easily you led me around? Did you tell her what I so willingly gave you because a silly little Gryffindor believed a Slytherin was capable of love?"

"Sirius," Lucius interrupted harshly, "do not mock my feelings for you! Your own mother threatened your life, what was I supposed to do?!!"

Sirius froze and said hoarsely, "What? What did you say?"

"Walburga threatened to have you killed or in an 'accident' that would render you incapable of having children at any time in your life if I refused to take the betrothal contract," Lucius said wearily. He was also watching Sirius warily and appeared startled when an expression of fury crossed Sirius' face.

"I knew my family hated me, but this? To actually go so far as to ruin what little happiness I had gained away from them?"

"It was not your entire family, Sirius." Lucius corrected, "Just your mother. You father was impressively furious when he heard what she'd done."

Sirius snorted. "Yeah right. He doesn't give a care what happens to me, he's got his perfect little Reggie and his stuffy beau, Lord Peverell."

"You're wrong," Lucius said softly.
"You dare to come in here on top of everything that you have done to me and feel you have the right to correct me? I lived with them, I know how they are."

"Then you know that Regulus has been watching you carefully and very wistfully for the last two years, that he wrote your father feeling very concerned after your reaction to seeing your father and Lord Peverell on the social pages? You know that your father was very worried about you and trying to reassure his younger son about his eldest's stability? You know that Lord Peverell found the first draft of the letter you sent me in your room and it led to your father and mine dissolving the contract? I'm very impressed and surprised, you must be one hell of a Seer."

Sirius glared at the coffee table in front of the settee, refusing to look Lucius in the eyes. He could not even begin to explain the effect the other's words had on him. His father and brother had been worried about him? Suddenly one part of that registered in his brain and he snatched onto the new reason to be angry.

"What the hell was Lord Peverell doing in my private room, anyway? He had to have been snooping to find those letters!"

"Lord Peverell had never been to Grimmauld Place before then, he was curious. And apparently your room was quite torn apart, the wardrobe had been shoved almost completely over against the other wall and the letters were covered in quite a bit of dust."

"What do you want?" he spat, still looking at the coffee table. "Things can't go back to the way they were."

Lucius' voice was much closer when he replied, "I never wanted them to. I know I hurt you quite badly, but I couldn't risk your life, my beloved star. I'd rather you were mad at me for the rest of your life and alive than dead in my arms."

He took an instinctive step back and looked up, startled to find Lucius most certainly in his personal space. His breath caught sharply, pulse racing in spite of his firm belief that he was over this man. Apparently he wasn't.

When Lucius' lips brushed his he froze in place at first, standing rigidly still. However, against the warmth and lean build of the one he had loved more than anyone else he couldn’t hold his fierce anger and hurt for long and he collapsed against the taller boy, opening his mouth hesitantly in response to a questioning tongue. He honestly thought he was going to pass out by the time Lucius pulled back, and when had the other man's arm wrapped around his waist?

Reaching up with his free hand Lucius brushed his thumb across Sirius' kiss-bruised mouth and whispered softly, "You were always the only one for me, my beloved star. Can we attempt to try this again?"

Sirius registered the use of the private name this time, a soft sob of reaction leaving his lips without permission. He had been hurting for far too long and though he was still furious about the whole situation he couldn't keep this up. He wasn't very good at being alone, after all. He nodded, just once.

The smile that lit Lucius' face couldn't have been any brighter at his tentative response, however.

"I'm still angry with Moony for setting this up though," he muttered.

"You may be right now," Lucius agreed softly, "but don't let it linger. After all, he did it out of concern for you, just like your family."
For now, Sirius was content to ignore the particulars.
May 21st, 1977

Chapter Summary

A/N: *pokes head inside* Sorry! I have no excuses aside from a lack of motivation. In good news however, this is now my primary fic, followed by Liberation. *ducks back out*

Harrigan Peverell shook his head, once again stunned by the opulent magnificence of Black Manor. It suited the moniker, covered inside in mostly dark hues of rich brocades and silks and richly-hued wood, some were black, others dark brown, certain pieces were a deep shade of reddish-brown that was disconcertingly similar to the colour of dried blood. The floor beneath his feet was black marble swirled with deep gray, fading to hardwood covered with thick Persian rugs in the actual living spaces.

Black Manor had been built quite some time ago, the art of such construction now mostly lost. Two levels but massive in length, the pride of Black Manor was the oratory on the far right side of the Manor, used for celebrations of the Old Ways (bondings, naming ceremonies, that sort of thing). Meant to provide a more intimate setting, the room inside the half-bubble of pure, clear crystal had a deep amethyst runner on a pure white carpet, wall sconces with crystal covers that had the Black Family Crest embossed on the surface and a beautiful old table built in a long, slender crescent with seating for 15, both the table and chairs were made of a pure white wood and the cushions on the chairs were white with the crest in pale silver.

It was an absolutely awe-inspiring sight, as Harrigan had seen himself when Orion had shown it to him for the first time. The timing had been obviously planned out, there was a certain mischievous expression on Orion's face when he had grandly gestured Harrigan through a white door into the beautiful room, a particularly magnificent sunset shattering radiant colour onto the carpet and table. Orion had told him, with a somewhat grimly humourous expression on his face, that the last event the room had seen was in fact his official betrothal to Walburga.

Thoughts of Orion's thankfully deceased wife reminded Harrigan of Sirius. The young man had agreed to meet his father in a café in Hogsmeade a week after Lucius had finally explained the truth of things. Orion admitted that it had been very awkward at first, but he had been too relieved to finally see his eldest again to care.

The relationship between father and eldest son had been improving, slowly. Harrigan had accompanied Orion the next time, on Sirius' own invitation surprisingly enough. The young man had explained when they arrived that it only seemed fair, considering the fact that he always had Lucius around for these little gatherings. Watching the interactions of the younger couple had made an amused smile cross Harrigan's face, they were obviously very besotted with each other.

Harrigan strolled through the Manor, taking in the paintings and the wealth of antiques. A wizarding museum would faint in stunned shock if they ever obtained some of these pieces. Harrigan didn't know much about these pieces or their time periods, but even his untrained eye could see that they were rare and most likely priceless objects.

He had ended up in the front parlour somehow and was just contemplating heading to his quarters (Orion had insisted that Harrigan stay with him, insisting that it was 'too damn quiet' here without
company.) He and his house elf Tobby had been ensconced in a private suite within hours of the original conversation, Orion didn't take no for an answer and could be very persuasive. He flushed a little in memory of said persuasion, he was certain that most didn't win arguments by giving very passionate kisses to their opponent.

However, as he passed by the front doors on his way back he paused. There was someone there, standing just inside. He frowned, wondering why Orion's elf Dilly hadn't come to escort him to Orion yet. The little female was very proper and somewhat controlling for a house-elf, she seemed to have been 'mothering' Orion since the passing of his late, unlamented wife.

The man standing just a few metres away from Harrigan was tall, almost Orion's height, with blonde hair that was perfectly straight and just brushed his shoulders. He was dressed to impress in the latest fashions, posture ram-rod straight and stiff. His eyes were a pale, cold blue colour and appeared to lack any sort of life.

Spotting Harrigan just around a corner he barked, "You, take me to Lord Black this moment!"

Harrigan raised an eyebrow, realising that the man thought him some sort of servant. He stepped fully into the man's line of sight, revealing his elegant, expensive tailored rust-coloured silk tunic and black cotton slacks. And of course, his Lordship ring.

"I would certainly be willing to escort you to Orion's study, should you first give me your name, sir. For future reference, my own is Lord Harrigan Peverell."

Pale eyes narrowed in sudden contemplation and after a moment he said in the same cold tone as before, "I am Cygnus Black."

"Ah," Harrigan said in recognition. "You would be the father of Andromeda, Narcissa and Bellatrix, correct?"

The man's eyes narrowed even further and he stated, "Yes," in such a tone that conveyed both a warning as to the topic at hand and his own irritation at only having sired daughters. Apparently he was one of those of the mind that daughters were useless aside from their importance as bribery objects for other men's sons.

"Come with me," Harry said, turning away. He did not wait for Cygnus, nor did he slow his long, elegant strides. As such he reached the office a few paces in front of Cygnus and when he opened the door he was able to convey a slight wordless warning to Orion. The current Lord of the Black family stood gracefully and moved around the desk, presenting a solid, impressive image to his cousin.

"Good afternoon, Cygnus," he stated in a quiet, warm tone.

"Skip with the pleasantries, cousin!" Cygnus barked. "I want to know why the contract between my second eldest and Heir Malfoy burned on top of my desk the other day, and I have a feeling you know exactly why."

Orion arched a sculpted brow and in a much colder tone said, "Your cousin I may be, Cygnus, but I am Lord of our family house and you would do well to keep a more civil tongue in your head, no matter your distress."

Cygnus froze and appeared to take in what he'd said. Realising the truth of it he said in a grudging tone, "I apologise cousin. Please do explain this if you can."

"Certainly," Orion replied, voice still containing a cold and now slightly sarcastic tone. "Have a seat.
Would you like a drink?"

"No, thank you," he replied. He stared somewhat askance at Harrigan and said after a moment, "Is it necessary for your friend to be here?"

Orion fixed a frigid stare on his cousin and said, "I know you may be behind the times, Cygnus, but it is public knowledge that Harrigan and I are in a courting contract and if the Goddess chooses to continue bestowing her good nature upon, it will be a betrothal contract soon. So yes, it is 'necessary' for Harrigan to be here, after all, this will become his family."

Harrigan didn't know quite how to react to Orion's statement about their relationship, not to mention his hopes for. He eventually settled for a warm gaze to Orion and then a cool stare at Cygnus for the insinuation in his statement. To his amused surprise, the man actually flushed a little and looked away.

"Please explain, cousin," he repeated.

"Did you ever ask your wife Druella about the contract when she first brought it up, Cygnus? Specifically her conviction that it would be agreed upon by Heir Malfoy?"

"I can't say that I did, cousin. You know how women are, they say they have a 'feeling' about something," he snorted. "It's not very logical or solid, but I was surprised to realise that for once she was right."

"She was right, it turned out, because Belladonna Malfoy turned out to be homophobic, as well as my late wife. They found out about Heir Malfoy's relationship with my eldest Sirius and threatened his life in order to get him to agree to the contract. Quite frankly, I'm not sure how much longer I would have let it stand had Heir Malfoy not formally asked me to dissolve it as Lord of House Black."

"What?!" Cygnus bellowed, turning red with rage. "That little upstart! My daughter should be good enough for anyone, let alone a stuffy poppycock Malfoy. And you're letting this insult stand! I knew you should never have been given the title of Lord Black, you didn't deserve it!"

"Sit down, Cygnus," If Orion's voice had been cold before it was frigid now. Cygnus sat before he could think about it and once he had he actually took in his cousin's appearance. Whatever he saw made him change his mind about speaking again and instead he sat absolutely still.

"I knew you were enraged about not becoming Lord Black, but get over it! My father was the elder son and it passes to the eldest son of his, of which I happened to be the only son. The title was mine by default and you are whining over it like a small spoilt brat that hasn't gotten their way. I am Lord Black, so deal with it. Otherwise I may look into removing a spoiled branch of the family tree," Orion hissed.

"Your daughter will not become Lady Malfoy. Nor will Bellatrix become Lady Lestrange, I saw fit to end that contract as well. I am not about to let the Black Family be dragged into a private war by a man who may or not be who he claims he is. I have been doing my own research into him and his claims are less than supportable. As you have not seen fit to care first for your family I am taking controlling custody of your two daughters, Bellatrix and Narcissa. They may stay with you until they graduate, but their further education and marriage contracts are now my concern, not yours. Be glad you and your wife are being left with your own vault, I am not pleased with your behaviour as of late."

When Cygnus started to open his mouth, most likely to complain, Orion snapped, "Be careful. You
are only my second cousin and I am not that fond of you, certainly not as of late."

"I see there is no changing your mind," Cygnus said stiffly, rising slowly. His shoulders were tense and his hand twitched as though he dearly wanted to draw his wand. "You will regret it, when the Dark Lord rises."

"I highly doubt it," Orion replied off-handedly. "Campaigns of any type require funds and supporters. There are many that follow this family, without it your 'Dark Lord' won't get far."

A hint of red rose in Cygnus' cheeks and he stared at Orion for a long moment. "Good day, cousin," he finally said curtly. "I will show myself out."

"No, I don't think so," Orion replied in a smooth tone. "Dilly will show you out. One can easily get lost in the Manor, after all."

Once Cygnus left the office Orion stood, walked around the front of his desk and leaned against it, placing his thumb and finger against the bridge of his nose in clear exasperation. After a long moment he walked over to a cabinet and retrieved a bottle of Ogden's Finest, pouring a generous finger into two glasses. Offering one to Harrigan he took a long gulp of his own and sighed in relief.

"Cygnus is my second cousin. He is my late wife's brother and we were born the same year. I had to endure his spiteful comments about what he was going to do when he became Lord Black all through our childhood years and schooling. When my father announced he was following tradition and made me his official Heir in our 6th year he went into a towering rage that lasted all of Yule break. As you saw, he has never gotten over it, nor has he learned to control his emotions and his considerable greed. Probably the only thing he saw in his daughter's contracts was the considerable bride-price for both of them."

"My sympathies for handling a man like him all your life," Harrigan offered, making the older man chuckle.

"Thank you. Now, I have had enough of paperwork. Shall we head out onto the grounds and I will show you the walking path through the orchards?"

"Sounds delightful. I shall go retrieve my cloak and meet you at the front doors."

Orion snagged his hand and dragged him closer, pressing a warm, chaste kiss on his mouth before letting him go.

"Agreed," was all he said.

Harrigan smiled and left the office. Brushing his fingers over his mouth he wondered to himself, *will Orion's kisses ever stop knocking me for a loop? Oh, I certainly hope not.*
Chapter Summary

A/N: No apologies for this. Only 1700 words and I am ashamed it took two months for me to post an update here. My life has been *insane* recently and sometimes I wonder if I've become Fate's scratching post…

Thanks to the reviewer who pointed out the oddity about the Lestrange brothers. I originally didn't have them as decent individuals and I forgot about the change. Also, kudos to the one who gave me the idea of 'fixing' Bellatrix before she became a problem.

As Harrigan stared down at the parchment in his hands, the corner of his mouth twitched despite his best attempts. Once the incredulity of it sank in, his reaction was a foregone conclusion and he gave in to the inevitable, laying his head back on the armchair he sat in and descending into what he would later try and convince himself was *manly laughter*, not an insane rather feminine-sounding cackle.

Ever since beginning their little attack against Dumbledore, Harrigan, Orion and their companions had been trying to figure out a way into the school. It was commonly believed by the four Lords that Dumbledore's little preaches of 'equality' and his magnamous manner were a front and the school was his domain where he shaped students into what he wanted them to be. A few random comments from Sirius over the summer seemed to confirm some of it at least, and it was a big one. Prejudice apparently ran rampant at the school, 'bullies' under the name of pranksters ran unchecked and when caught out were able to get away with a small slap on the wrist.

A quietly ashamed Sirius had admitted to his own wrongdoing, listing a few incidents that he had been a part of with his friends, including one incident with a Slytherin in their own year that should have resulted in expulsion. Orion had been very angry at his eldest son and demanded that he prepare a proper apology for when he next saw one Severus Tobias Snape. Though it was unacceptable even against a student of no history, Sirius had been even more ashamed and horrified at his actions when a frowning Lucius revealed that Severus was Heir to the line of Prince. He would technically be Lord Prince when Sirius next spoke with him.

While the Prince family didn't soar quite as highly as their falcon emblem would have liked over the past few decades, the family was still old blood, producing some of the finest individuals in the fields of Potions, Spell Crafting and Herbology that were seen in Wizarding Great Britain. Severus was well on his way to becoming one of the youngest Potions Masters in the field, if not the youngest. According to Sirius' rueful comments, that could end up being a double Mastery with Spell-Crafting.
On the subject of bullying and favoritism, however, Sirius easily admitted that the very worst offenses had been against Slytherin and he agreed that more than three-quarters of these incidents had been by Gryffindor students. The four friends had agreed, they needed a way into the school, pronto.

And here the solution to their problem had literally soared into his lap, delivered by a very grumpy screech owl. After dismissing the foul bird Harrigan had read through it swiftly the first time. Unable to comprehend what he had read, a second and even *third* reading had been taken far more slowly.

Apparently the school governors (of which Abraxas was a member) had decided that a closer eye needed to be kept on this year's crop of graduating students. To this end they had declined the Headmaster's appointing of a truly dismal choice for the teacher's post of Defense Against The Dark Arts for a term of one year. They had informed a likely infuriated Dumbledore that they would be choosing the replacement instructor. To this end they had sent an inquiry to Harrigan asking if he would so kindly consider taking the post of Defense for one term starting August 25th. Apparently teachers started preparing for the arrival of the students a bit ahead of time.

Harrigan didn't truly know how much influence Abraxas had over his fellow governors, but the timing of this little gem was absolutely superb. If it was *not* his doing, then Harrigan would be giving the Mother some well-deserved thanks.

Picking up the missive he stood, stretched luxuriously and headed for Orion's office, a smug little grin creeping onto his lips at the thought of the other man's reaction. The thought of Orion brought Harrigan to their Courting and he was thankful the hallway was empty as he was unable to repress a slight blush. He was quickly coming to think of Orion as his beloved, and even thinking the name in his head brought a small smile to his lips.

They had only been Courting for 6 full months but Harrigan was beginning to wonder if they would last a whole *year* before Orion proposed. The older man seemed determined to have Harrigan as his life-time companion, something which both delighted and confused the younger man. Orion could have anyone he wanted, after all. He was wealthy, good-looking and incredibly influential. But for some reason he seemed to want Harrigan, and he was reasonably convinced by now that it wasn't because of his name.

They certainly hadn't moved as quickly as Sirius and Lucius, but the young were far more impatient. Having only settled their past in April, the pair had been officially betrothed as of late June. Sirius was ecstatic and the Malfoy heir only a little less so. Orion was in his office actually working on certain things involved in the pair's betrothal, or rather to do with Lucius' ex-fiancée Narcissa Black and her sisters.
Between visits with his betrothed, Sirius was bonding once again with his year-younger brother Regulus, who was very happy to be with his older brother again. They had been close once before Sirius had become so bitter after Lucius' betrothal to Narcissa and both young men were hopeful about regaining that closeness. They shared many common interests and Harrigan was happy to observe them growing closer day by day.

Cygnus had been outraged when Orion had taken control of the man's daughters from him and his truly awful wife, Druella Black nee Rosier. Harrigan imagined that the man had been near apocalyptic when he found out that Orion had met with the disinherited eldest, Andromeda and her Muggleborn husband Ted Tonks.

Orion had been impressed with the younger man's courage at meeting him face to face and the already apparent talents of their young daughter Nymphadora, who showed a powerful Metamorphagus talent from birth. This had resulted in the oldest daughter being welcomed back into the official family and the release of her dowry, in the form of some of Walburga's own. Orion had admitted later that he took great amusement at giving part of Walburga's dowry to a 'shame' and her half-blood daughter.

Narcissa had been firmly warned away from interfering in Sirius and Lucius' betrothal at the cost of her graduation from Hogwarts. Orion also held a betrothal contract for both her and her sister Bellatrix, to be filled in at his discretion and approval should Narcissa not come to agreement by legal, approved means with an appropriate young man. Furious but afraid of being removed from Hogwarts in her final year, Narcissa had agreed.

Now Orion was setting up appointments with a mind-Healer to meet with Bellatrix, the middle daughter. She had been severely tortured by both Orion's dead wife and her own mother's family, much to Orion's disgust. The girl was partially unstable but there were high hopes that she could return to the normal young witch of incredible talents and sharp wit that she had been before. Orion was hopeful about the situation.

Having finally reached Orion's office, Harrigan rapped on the door in warning and opened it. Orion was inside sitting at his desk looking relieved at his appearance and frustrated with the piles of paperwork strewn about his desk in messy, random piles. Harrigan took one look at Orion's expression and crossed the spacious office to a small cabinet. Opening one of the glass-fronted doors he retrieved a bottle of Ogden's Finest and poured a generous finger into a small shot-glass and placed it in front of the older wizard.

Orion looked incredibly relieved and smiled at him, downing the small glass in a single go. Standing up, he crossed around the desk and wrapped his arms around Harrigan's waist, drawing him into a warm embrace. "Thank you," he rumbled quietly in his ear.
"You are very welcome," Harrigan said warmly, "it looked as if you needed something to help you relax."

"I did, this paperwork seems endless. But on the plus side I have arranged meetings with a mind-Healer for Bellatrix and she has agreed to meet the woman this weekend at St. Mungo's. She has her license to Apparate so there is no way for Cygnus and Druella to refuse. I always knew that the Rosiers were bastards, but I never imagined them capable of this. Now the only thing I was wishing for is a way to keep an eye on the two girls and my sons at the school."

"I may be able to help with that," Harrigan said slyly, offering Orion the parchment with their golden opportunity.

He watched the man's expressive eyes and he knew when Orion had read to the right point because they widened slowly and his mouth parted in surprise. Once he had finished reading the parchment he looked at Harrigan and murmured quietly, "Is this real?"

"Very. Either we owe Abraxas a very big favor or the Mother is smiling at us, for this exactly what we needed on two fronts. I can keep an eye on the assorted Blacks, Lestranges and various others and we can see how genteel Albus Dumbledore acts on his own turf. On the downside however, I will have to put up with the man for a year," Harrigan grumbled the last part.

Orion threw back his head and laughed. "Then we shall make sure that you are ready to deal with him for the next few months, hmm? What a perfect opportunity. I feel like things have just started to fall into place since we met you, my love. Shall we head out to dinner after giving our friends the news?"

"Why not make it a group dinner?" Harrigan suggested.

"Perfect, just like you," Orion murmured, leaning in and catching his lips in a hard, passionate claim. Harrigan shuddered and returned it, savouring the taste of Orion and a slight hint of Firewhiskey.

*If I am perfect to you,* Harrigan thought, *than you are beyond so to me, Orion.*
Harrigan had not told Sirius and Regulus he would be at the school. He would take great amusement in their reactions. Equally amusing had been the reactions of their group, the two other Lords had been shell-shocked behind their pureblood masks. Abraxas has admitted that he had in fact suggested that the Board of Governors keep an eye on the school this year, but he had no idea they would ask Harrigan to take the post. An inquiry as to why had brought an answer that had both pleased and humbled Harrigan. Apparently though he was new to his title, Harrigan was a respected member of the Wizengamot despite his official stance as Dark. He was trusted to be impartial and a good influence on the students as well as keeping an eye on his fellow staff members.

He was to leave in five days, so Orion had arranged for the pair of them to travel overseas for a few days. They were in Venice at the moment and Harrigan was awed by the beautiful city on the water. They had made several side-trips the last few days to famous wine regions within Apparition distance (including the magical Zabini vineyards, which were quite magnificent) and to a few smaller cities, notably Verona where they had stopped at the location Muggles believed to be the location where Juliet from Shakespeare's famous play had resided. Though a Muggle himself, Shakespeare was accounted special status in the magical world due to his 'surreal talent' in poems, plays and sonnets. It was considered part of the well-educated pureblood child to learn a few of each.

Tonight however they were headed to Rome for dinner in the 'Eternal City's' magical district. Apparently it was one of the best restaurants in all of mainland magical Europe and Orion wanted to indulge him before he had to spend the next 4 months with students and more taxing, Albus Dumbledore.

Harrigan was wearing a simple yet extravagant robe in deep forest green silk with elaborate Celtic knots in silver, standing out richly on the fabric due to a thin black border that made them almost appear like actual metal had been woven into the fabric. His wavy black hair was pulled back and tied with a small silver chain on which hung a clasp of an actual emerald about the size of his thumbnail.

Orion had not been able to take his eyes off of him since he had entered the mutual sitting room of their hotel suite. The older man looked equally fetching in an ensemble of deep violet, gold and black. The pair had been drawing appreciative looks from both sexes the entire time they had been walking down the ancient cobblestones of Eternus Animus, which was 'Eternal Souls' in Latin. It was a fitting name for what happened to be one of the oldest magical alleys in existence.

Once they stepped inside the restaurant Harrigan's eyes widened. It was simply stunning. It had once been a Roman spa and none of the original architecture had been altered, nor the stunning paintings of the Roman gods and goddesses on the walls. They had been braced and preserved in their current state and would remain so for hundreds of years more at a minimum. The colours were deep and rich and the figures amazingly accurate for work that was more than two thousand years old.
The lighting was all the original scones on the walls plus a few magnificent torches that had been made to mimic the original style. None of the tables had room for more than two people and were strategically arranged so that an elaborate floor mosaic's most amazing designs were never covered up.

They were led to one of the tables near a window which overlooked a powerfully breathtaking scene of the city. Once they ordered Harrigan was unable to resist the power of the window and stood, making his way to the glass so that he could gaze at the bustling activity that still filled this ancient city. It was humbling, certainly, to stand in building that was this old and gaze at a city that had been here for so long. Certainly nothing the modern Muggles were building would last this long. Their own work could hardly stand up to nature, let alone time.

"I am glad you have liked our time away so much, Harrigan," Orion said quietly from his side, also looking out at the city. "I have wanted to bring you somewhere special for a while now and I have always wanted to visit this country."

"I have a feeling," Harrigan stated mischievously, "that this will not be our only visit."

"I certainly hope not," Orion agreed, before motioning to their table, where a waiter was just beginning to set out their appetizers and wine.

The meal was as delightful as promised and Harrigan sighed softly in enjoyment as he sat back after his last bite of dessert, a decadent, rich slice of marbled cheesecake flavoured with dark, milk and white chocolate.

Orion signaled their waiter to approach and paid their bill, giving a generous tip for the swift service and exceptional food. Then he stood and offered Harrigan his arm, steering him out onto the alley. Harrigan had a feeling the night was not over and he was right, their next stop was at a nighttime ampitheatre where they were showing a Muggle-produced version of an (ironically) Shakespearean play, 'Antony & Cleopatra'.

Both men agreed afterwards that it had been well produced and the actors well-selected, but some things could have used a magical touch to be just a little bit more convincing and dramatic. It had certainly been enjoyable however and the pair thought it time well-spent. They agreed that the next time they came to Italy, they would have to try out the opera and the famous Italian singing voices.

Orion wrapped his arm around Harrigan's waist and drew him close, Apparating them without
warning. Harrigan was surprised but trusted his judgment and was rewarded with what felt like stone under his feet. He looked around and blinked, stunned. They were standing in one of the top rows of a gigantic stadium.

"Is this the Colosseum?" he breathed.

Orion nodded. "It is one of those things I have seen in pictures but they simply cannot catch the magnificence of the real thing. I thought we could watch the sunrise from here, it has passed late and gone into early some time ago."

Harrigan beamed at the older man and said, "A fine suggestion. Shall we take a seat?"

So the pair sat there, Orion's arm wrapped around Harrigan's waist with the younger man's head on his shoulder, watching as the dark sky was slowly and dramatically lit with purples, pinks, oranges and yellows, both agreeing quietly that even man's greatest plays had nothing on nature itself for stunning performances and absolute beauty.

Once the sun had fully risen, Orion placed a small box on Harrigan's knee with slightly shaking fingers. Shooting the older man a questioning look Harrigan picked up the box and cracked it open. He stared in shocked realisation at the small band of pure crystal set with a solitaire diamond. When he lifted his eyes to gaze at Orion the man was on one knee on the stair below him and gazed steadily into his eyes.

"When Walburga died, all I felt was a sense of relief. I had been forced into the marriage and I could never have described myself as anything but unhappy. The day you walked into the Wizengamot chambers I was intrigued and attracted. Here this stunning stranger had come waltzing into the room with the biggest stunner to reach Britain in many years. I was almost forced into admitting my desire to know and learn about you by my friends after our meeting and I was beyond relieved when you agreed to the courting contract."

"After spending the past seven months with you I cannot possibly contemplate living alone and the speed at which you have entered my life stuns me and fills me with simultaneous joy and nerves. Joy at having found someone to be with the rest of my life, someone who is my choice and not any other. Nerves because I cannot even begin to imagine life without you and your presence. I ask of you, Harrigan Peverell, will you bond with me?"

"I could hardly see myself without you, Orion," Harrigan whispered, overwhelmed. "I will be yours, I already am."
With unmuted joy in his eyes, Orion placed the band on Harrigan's finger and banished the box. He stood, as did Harrigan. Moving to stand on the same step they stared into each other's eyes for a long moment before their mouths came together. There was no fierceness, no urgency in this kiss. Instead it simply was, as they were, an affirmation of mutual love and an unvoiced hope for a future of happiness together.
September 1st, 1977

Chapter Summary

Lord Harrigan Peverell is now at Hogwarts :D What you recognize belongs to J.K. Rowling, alternate situation and other characters are mine, hehe.

Sixteen- September 1st, 1977

Harrigan was sitting at the Head Table in the Great Hall, waiting for the students to arrive. He had been here for a few days and already he wanted to strangle the old man who called himself 'Headmaster'. The man's barely-concealed shock and irritation at seeing him there had been his only amusement, that and the fact that the old coot couldn't get him removed. Harrigan had no doubt the man had already tried, perhaps mentioning a conflict of interest since he was engaged to the father of two students. Whatever he had done or said it hadn't mattered much, for here he was, sitting at the table with the staff and trying to ignore the urge to roll his eyes as he listened to the old man's 'grave' conversation a few chairs down about the new threat posed by this 'Voldemort' character.

Honestly it was behaviour like this that was enflaming the wannabe's importance in wizarding Britain more than anything. He wasn't going to get anywhere, not without the Lestranges, Blacks or Malfoy families at his back. They were three of the most well-respected and regarded old names in the so-called 'Dark' families and there weren't many that were willing to go against their decisions. As Orion had made it clear to his cousin Cygnus a few weeks ago, they were not going to be supporting this upstart. Without them, he had no chance.

Investigation into this 'Lord Voldemort' had revealed that while he was the Heir of Slytherin, he was also a half-blood, product of a near-Squib and a Muggle. None of the self-respecting pureblood families would ever bow to a half-blood and call him their Lord, no matter his bloodline. If he hadn't wanted to be discovered, he really shouldn't have made an anagram of his real name…

He was distracted from his thoughts by the appearance of the students, at least those who had taken the carriages. The first years would be traveling over the Black Lake and Harrigan didn't envy them the slightest, staring up at the enchanted ceiling with its ominous thunderclouds and the pouring rain. He was glad that he was not a Head of House, there were probably a number of terrified new students who hated something about the stormy weather, either the sound or the sudden flashes of light.

He smiled when he saw Regulus approaching the Slytherin table with a few of his friends and his older cousin Bellatrix. He had genuinely liked the younger brother from the start and thought he had a good head on his shoulders. He wanted to be a Healer and Harrigan thought it suited him perfectly. He was calm and reassuring and had a steady hand and mind, all of which would be essential as a
Healer. He was also talented in Potions, Charms and Herbology, three of the most important classes for an aspiring Healer.

Bellatrix meanwhile was beginning to come to terms with the fact that she did have a choice on her future. Druella Rosier and her family had damaged the young woman incredibly, not to mention her sire Cygnus and his sneering comments on the lack of importance that women had in their society. All of which were antiquated views, which when talking about wizards who still used quills and parchment was really saying something.

With Orion's steadying presence and the help of a mind-Healer Bellatrix Black was well on her way to a full recovery and the young, sharp-witted woman had a promising career awaiting her in Arithmancy. Her brain was ideally suited to the logical puzzles and numbers that made up the archaic study of magical numbers and their use in calculations. If not for her parent's interference and threats the young woman would have been a shoo-in for Ravenclaw.

Regulus idly flicked his eyes up to the Head Table, studying the faces there with little interest, at least until steadily widening pale blue eyes landed on him. Regulus looked stunned, amused and a little ruefully shaking his head at the nice stunt his future stepfather had pulled. He made a quiet comment to Bellatrix who looked, saw him and gave a surprised laugh. They both sat down, highly amused and no doubt looking forward to their Defense classes for once.

Slytherin had proceeded in first as a whole, sitting down without the slightest of arguments at what were obviously pre-arranged places. Their hierarchy determined each and every student's place in the House from the moment of their Sorting. While there was always a bit of infighting and social maneuvering they always presented a united front outside of Slytherin, Orion had explained to him a few days ago. So few stood on the side of the green and silver that they had to do it for themselves.

Hufflepuff followed along with Ravenclaw, the more patient of the two Houses all the way across the room from Slytherin, while the intelligent ones who could value the Slytherin's cunning were directly next to them, a buffer between the two major rivals of Slytherin and Gryffindor. The lions were last, a rowdy bunch of laughing, smiling students who playfully shoved other students out of 'their' places and exchanged jokes and news in a mild cacophony of noise.

Harrigan spotted Sirius easily, the elder boy was looking happier than he had in a long time, it was such a difference from the almost sullen child he had met in Potter manor the previous year that he could only marvel at the change. Sirius was well-suited for Gryffindor, his easy smile, quicksilver temper that matched his grey eyes and love of pranks wouldn't have let him go anywhere else, even if he had wanted to. His friends all smiled and laughed with him, the Potter heir giving a playful shove in retaliation to an obviously friendly jibe.

Gryffindors were also far more open with their reactions, Harrigan reflected in distinct amusement as
he watched Sirius scan the Head Table and notice him sitting in the chair for the Defense instructor. Grey eyes widened in shock and his jaw literally dropped in surprise. Harrigan concealed his desire to laugh and simply smirked back at his obviously stunned future stepson. It was really a priceless reaction and he would have to share it with Orion when he next saw his fiancée.

Sirius obviously knew how to take a joke and burst out into low chuckles, poking James Potter in the side and making a comment to both him and Remus Lupin, seated across the way from Sirius. Sitting in front of James was a smaller boy with mousy hair and a slightly jumpy, skittish personality.

His name was Peter Pettigrew, according to Harrigan. The boy left him on his guard for some reason and he stared at him for a long moment, taking in his slightly skittish behaviour and the way his slightly reedy laugh had an unexplainable edge to it. He resolved to keep a closer eye on the boy this year and see if he couldn't figure out what was going on with him.

He took his attention away from Gryffindor as Deputy Headmistress McGonagall led in a group of tiny students who looked a mix of excited, nervous and downright terrified. His lip twitched a little, they would be all right. Every new experience was scary when you were that small. He watched quietly as the Sorting began, officially starting his stint as a Professor of Defense Against the Dark Arts.

Regulus shook his head a little as he saw his brother's rather obvious reaction to Harry's (the older man had told them that he was fine with a shorter form of his name in private) appointment as their new Defense professor. His brother didn't know how to be subtle for the most part and he wished Lucius luck with his chosen spouse, though he was happy for the pair. He had been stunned when the reason for his brother's behaviour had gotten out, though a bit later it had seemed to be a rather obvious conclusion.

His furious rage and uncontrollable hatred towards all things Slytherin had started after the announcement of Lucius and Narcissa's betrothal. Sometimes he felt as though he had betrayed his elder brother for not realising just how close he had been to Lucius Malfoy. Their little get-togethers before Sirius' fall-out had revealed a mutual attraction between the two boys, but Regulus had thought it wouldn't go beyond a one-night stand that both were well-known for.

He wondered quietly if they would start up their little meetings again, hiding out and enjoying friendship without rivalry in the amazing room that couldn't be plotted, not that Sirius and his friends hadn't tried with that map of theirs. He knew all of their former members would be happy to begin the little gatherings again, it had been a source of light-hearted relief from the growing tension outside the school and indeed, outside the walls of their special room.
The rivalry between Houses was getting worse, some of the Dark families were beginning to place more and more on one's blood, which was a stupid thing to go by. One of his best friends, Severus Snape, was one of the most talented young wizards in Great Britain and headed for a very promising dual-Mastery in Potions and Spell-Crafting. He also happened to be a half-blood, son of a very talented witch and a Muggle. Severus rarely mentioned his father, it was only ever in passing and even then it was said with pure hatred.

After the last student had been sorted (Zabini, Gregori) the Headmaster stood up and smiled at them with projected benevolence. Of course, this face never extended to reality, at least not for the Slytherins. Studying the Headmaster's face carefully as he began welcoming the students back and projecting his kindly, powerful persona Regulus noted the slight tension in the man's mouth and around his eyes. The Headmaster may be a powerful man who had learned to control his instincts and reactions finely over the ages, but Regulus was a pureblood, trained from a young age to read the expressions and body language of his opponents and friends. A lot could be said without even saying a word. His actions at the moment depicted a slight irritation, and Regulus knew exactly where that emotion was pointed at.

"And finally, we must welcome Lord Harrigan Peverell to Hogwarts this year. Along with being a more physical face of the Board of Governors, he will be the Defense Against the Dark Arts instructor this year, please note that he will be called Professor Peverell inside the classroom."

There was a polite scattering of applause throughout the Hall as Harrigan stood and raised a hand in acknowledgement of his welcome. He had grace, good looks and intelligence on his side, not to mention a powerful presence that radiated off his very frame. Without even trying to, he made a more powerful impression on the students than the Headmaster himself, and the older man was obviously displeased.

After the ridiculous school song was sung at the top of their lungs, they were dismissed to their dormitories. Regulus' last thought as he gazed back at Lord Harrigan was a rueful, well this ought to be interesting.
September 5th

Chapter Summary

A/N: 60 hour work weeks do not make for a lot of time or energy to write. This is the earliest I could do, despite good intentions. Several people had mentioned Horcruxes in reviews, they do not exist. Sorry I didn't make that clearer in the beginning. You will note both the non-canon first names for students and the top-heavy Slytherin Class. I couldn't find a list of students for this year so I made do with what I could get from the Lexicon. Where a first name didn't exist, I chose one from a website.

NOTE: I wondered why Alice Cooper sounded familiar... No I didn't do that on purpose! I actually don't know a lot about music and had to look that up. Her last name is changed to 'Maddox' unless someone knows what the canon name for Neville's mother really is.

Harrigan had been warned to expect a prank from the Marauders the morning of September 2nd and it had come as predicted. Unfortunately for the foursome of pranksters, Harrigan was a true expert in Defense and had noticed something off about his morning cup of tea. He had subtly flicked his wand under the table, transferring the contents of his cup to the four pranksters and just for fun, Regulus as well.

The students at large had burst into laughter when the five teenagers were 'gifted' with bright pink and purple striped hair that sparkled with gold and silver glitter. Once the four had realised their prank had been turned back on them, they had burst out laughing as well, aside from Pettigrew, who had complained vociferously about not having brewed the antidote. Sirius had apparently told him to shut up after a few moments because he had subsided into a very ungracious sulk.

Regulus had taken it much more gracefully than Harrigan had thought he would, staring at it in the shine of his goblet before shaking his head a little and chuckling at a no-doubt dry comment his friend Severus Snape had made. Over the past few days Harrigan had noted that the dark-haired teen had a smart mouth and an even sharper mind, which he used most efficiently against the Marauder's good-natured taunts and the less genteel ones of the more uppity pureblood students.

Today was his first class with the Gryffindor and Slytherin 7th years and he was looking forward to it. According to Minerva McGonagall, these two groups could be incredibly difficult to teach together, but he felt that he was up to the challenge. With a few of the things he had planned for today they wouldn't know what hit them. He was almost mentally rubbing his hands together in glee and amusement, when he had outlined this plan to Orion the older man had stared and him and then burst out laughing.
The first bell for the class rang and he watched as the Slytherins arrived, almost all in one group. They were together in small groups of no more than four but no less than two, and it saddened Harrigan a bit when he remembered Orion explaining that the students traveled in such a manner because they were prone to being attacked if they ventured out alone.

The very last of the Gryffindors, meanwhile, arrived at the classroom just before the last bell rang. With a bit of amusement Harrigan stated, "While we let the Gryffindors catch their breath," a few Slytherins sniggered, "you all might as well stay standing. There will be assigned seating and groups in this class for the entirety of the year."

No laughter after that, they all stared at him in shock. He continued on, "I am well aware that I haven’t done that with my previous classes of Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, but the notoriety of the rivalry between Gryffindor and Slytherin has spread far beyond this school and it stops now, in this classroom. I do not tolerate bigotry or prejudice of any kind, so let's start off with a few rules, shall we?"

Seeing that he had their attention, he flipped over the chalkboard to a blank slate and smacked it once with his wand, the sharp rapping noise making several students jump in surprise. The words Code & Conduct appeared on the board in neat, slightly slanted calligraphy before the chalk dropped a row and wrote the Roman numeral one, waiting for his words.

"Number one: Within this classroom the school houses do not exist. Lockers will be provided for students to place their school robes. Each student will wear a colour of robe according to their skill ranking within Defense, to be tested by the Professor. Colours are from lowest to highest: Black, Red, Blue, Green, Purple, Ivory, Bronze, Silver and Gold."

"Number two: The word 'Mudblood' or another equivalent is worthy of immediate expulsion from the day's class. A make-up session will be offered, either written or demonstrative, on the student's own free-time. Calling a student a 'Death Eater' or something similar will receive the same response and punishment."

"Number three: Everything you will learn in this class is sanctioned by the Board of Governors, who have a full class schedule for the year. Thus, threats of taking a day's contents to the Headmaster are a waste of time and will be give a loss of points. Increased threats to do so, or to go to one's Head of House, will be treated equally. Notice: there is no ceiling limit for loss of points."

"Number four: Your groups are permanent, requests to change will be ignored, even if you have convinced someone from another team to switch with you. You are being placed with your fellow students for a reason, you have something to learn from them and they from you."
"Grading is as follows: Tests are worth 20% of your final grade, Participation is worth 20%, Individual papers are worth 20%, Group work and results are worth 40%. So should you wish to pass this class with an Exceeds, let alone an Outstanding, it requires working together."

The mutters that had started with the first rule had risen exponentially and by the last, there were many students that were visibly outraged. Harrigan placed a weak Sonorous on himself and said, "Enough. There is only one last thing, refrain from speaking about the rules until then."

Once the mutters had silenced, he stated the last bit, which was written in slightly larger letters on the bottom of the chalkboard.

"Once the school houses are stripped away, once blood is stripped away, you are all equal students in this school. Treat your group as a team, respect each individual. There may come a day when you will rely on them to defend your back and keep you alive, or you may be able to save them. Magic is magic, it cares not for human restrictions."

Most of the student's faces were coldly closed off and a few looked outright angry. Harrigan was not surprised. Nothing of this type had ever been attempted at Hogwarts before, he had encountered extreme resistance from the Headmaster when he had revealed his curriculum for the year. Professors Flitwick, Sprout, Sinastra and Vector had supported his idea however, saying that something of this type was long overdue.

Harrigan had taken it to the Board of Governors and after what had been actually a surprisingly short debate, they had agreed that he could use this pattern exclusively on his Gryffindor/Slytherin classes. The other two houses got along fine, but the divide between these two was getting more and more alarming with each graduating class.

"So, before we begin, place your house robes and bags in the lockers along the west wall, keeping only your wands. Your house ties as well, please, as well as any Prefect and Head badges. I am your authority in this class and if you are to be equal you need to remove rank as well."

Harrigan had changed the classroom considerably. Taking advantage of Hogwarts' adjustment wards, he had asked a few house elves to remove all the shelving in the room aside from the back wall beside his office, replace the large desk with a smaller one, bring in a few small round tables that could seat five students and place a row of double high lockers on the west wall. This left a considerable amount of space, plenty enough for two medium dueling rings placed side by side width-wise. Of course the only indicator that they were there was a shimmering white line of pure magic that created the edge of the rings.
The students moved over and reluctantly removed their robes, ties and badges, placing them in the lockers along with their book bags. As the students closed the doors, finely scripted handwriting appeared on the face of the locker listing which student's belongings were in each. Once they were again assembled in front of him, Harrigan spoke.

"Good, now we can begin. As I call your name, you will come join me here in the dueling ring. We will then have a short duel of your full arsenal aside from illegal spells and I will place you in your respective rankings based on your skills. I will warn you ahead of time, none of you will probably place above Ivory to start with."

"Then why even include the other three?" a Slytherin sneered.

"Your name?" Harrigan asked mildly.

"Zachary Selwyn," he spat in irritation.

"Well then, Mr. Selwyn, the reason for that is the fact that one is actually able to progress in skill during this course. There is no reason why you can't attain a higher level by the end of the year if you participate in classes and make the effort. As a side note, I would suggest you lose your current tone when speaking to me. I am your Professor and I assure you, I will show that I am worth your respect. Your blood and family name mean nothing in here, am I clear?"

"Yes, Professor," he muttered.

"Good, let us begin."

And so the testing began, Harrigan dispatching the first few students with ease, even when he restricted himself to basic spells, nothing above 5th year level. The first challenge of the day, however, came with his next student.

"Black, Bellatrix."

She moved forward slowly, cautiously approaching him. She had seen how swiftly he had dispatched the first few students, even a couple of Slytherins who had been very confident of their survival. Instead of attacking, she put herself into a guard position, earning herself a tick to the positive in Harrigan's mind.
He flicked a weak *Accio* in the direction of her wand, noting her speed and economy of motion in the deflection. He followed that with a simple chain (*Expulso, Expelliarmus*) which she also deflected and evaded. He snapped his wand in a swift flicking motion and repeated the *Expelliarmus*, disarming her. The students clapped politely and then stared in surprise as he stated firmly, "Ivory."

She smiled a little as her robes gained a soft off-white border. She was the first to gain an Ivory rank, the previous highest had been Alice Cooper, a Gryffindor who had received Purple-edged robes. There were a few mutters as the testing continued when Sirius Black sauntered forwards and received Ivory robes as well.

And on it went. The Marauders were split in power levels, much to Harrigan's surprise. For some reason he had expected them to be much the same, but while Sirius and James were both Ivory, Remus was a respectable Purple and Peter Pettigrew a spectacularly lousy Red. There were only three students in Red robes at the end of the session, Peter Pettigrew following Enzo Crabbe and Reijo Goyle.

A slight surprise had come with Lily Evans, she was a bright witch but Harrigan had noticed her closed-mindedness, something that came often with Muggleborn students. She had been embarrassed and obviously angry when she received Green robes. She had obviously thought that she would beat out the Marauders, people she did not regard highly at all.

In the end, of eighteen students, the ranks were as followed:

**Ivory**: Bellatrix Black, Sirius Black, James Potter, Rabastan Lestrange and Severus Snape.

**Purple**: Alice Maddox, Remus Lupin, Frank Longbottom and Rudolphus Lestrange.

**Green**: Lily Evans, Zachary Selwyn, Walden McNair and Evan Rosier.

**Blue**: Cadmus Avery and Augustus Rookwood.

**Red**: Enzo Crabbe, Reijo Goyle and Peter Pettigrew.

"I am impressed," Harrigan stated when testing was over. "Half of you are Purple or Ivory, certainly more than I expected. Now it is time to split you into your groups. There will be three groups of six and please remember Rule number four, there is *no switching groups.*"

"Group one will be composed of: Cadmus Avery, Bellatrix Black, Lily Evans, Rudolphus Lestrange, James Potter and Severus Snape."
"Group two will be composed of: Sirius Black, Enzo Crabbe, Frank Longbottom, Remus Lupin, Evan Rosier and Zachary Selwyn."

"Group three will be composed of: Alice Maddox, Reijo Goyle, Rabastan Lestrange, Walden McNair, Peter Pettigrew and Augustus Rookwood."

"For your next session, please write a short paper, no word limit, on why I possibly picked your groups as I did. And I do not want to see 'you mixed Gryffindor and Slytherin' as an answer. Remember the first rule: In this class, there are no houses. Dismissed."

After he said this, the bell rang signaling the end of class. Students made their way over to the lockers, picked out their things and hung up their basic dueling robes with the coloured edges. He could hear mutters as they left, but for the most part they seemed more interested than angry.

Hopefully they would remain that way. Harrigan was not optimistic at this point.
A/N: Please take no offense at my remark on religion, specifically Christianity. I have nothing against any religion, my family is Christian even though I am not part of any faith myself. However, it is common knowledge that there is a line against witchcraft in the Bible.

Sirius walked towards Defense with his friends, musing on the changes to the class. He had been right in thinking that his soon-to-be stepfather would rustle a few things, but the degree to which he would do so was both shocking and amusing. According to his cousin Bella, Slytherins were absolutely outraged as a majority about the changes in the class, many had written their parents, expecting things to go back to the way they had been. She admitted it had been highly amusing to see their stunned and put-out reactions when they had received their replies.

As Professor Peverell had told them, the entire thing was sanctioned by the Board of Governors and more importantly (he had not mentioned this) the Wizengamot. There would be no changes made as long as students were not harmed by his teaching methods. As the only thing that had happened so far was a few ruffled feathers and lost points so far, Sirius didn't see it changing anytime soon. He was an interesting teacher and made the Defense class far more challenging than it had been for the past six years.

Their first two sessions after the ruffling introduction had been debates on what spells were actually Light and Dark and which had just been classified by the Ministry as that way due to what had become their common usage. Evans had just about thrown a fit in that class, demanding to know how a 'Light' spell could be used in a bad manner. Harrigan's reply had been chilling to say the least.

"Miss Evans, I think it is time you open your eyes. The magical world is a dangerous place outside of these protected walls and it certainly has no place for your narrow-minded way of thinking. How can a 'Light' spell be used for 'Dark' purposes, you ask? I can think of several ways off the top of my head. The Levitation spell for example. You scoff at me, but a spell that can levitate a feather could certainly lift a chunk of stone over someone's head and be released, couldn't it? For that matter, you could use it to levitate your opponent themselves out of an open window from a few floors up and kill them that way."

"Defodio is used for plants, but what's to stop someone from using a milder cutting spell the same way more severe ones are used, to slice open an opponents' throat? The Tickling Charm could be used as a lighter form of the Cruciatus, causing severe nerve damage from overexposure or even causing important blood vessels to break. I've seen people use Scourgify as a prank to fill someone's mouth with bubbles, that could very well cause them to choke, couldn't it?"
"You need to stop thinking about spells as Dark and Light and start seeing them the way they are, Miss Evans. Every single one of you is given a weapon at the age of eleven, you are given the means to kill someone at the age of eleven with the wrongful usage of even a single spell. If you want to make it in this world, Miss Evans, you need to set aside the naivety that there is only good and evil. There is far more to Magic than that."

"You only say that because you're a Pagan," she accused him.

He turned and looked her straight in the eyes with an almost glacial stare. "You will find, Miss Evans, that most witches and wizards are what you call Pagan. Considering the fact that the Christian religion demands the death of all those that practice witchcraft, you could very well be considered a hypocrite. My religious beliefs have nothing to do with what I am teaching you here in this school and that insolent accusation has gained you a loss of 25 house points and a detention with Argus Filch. I expected more from a Head Girl who's Head of House praises her so highly."

Lily Evans had unknowingly insulted quite a few people that day. After word had spread about what she had said to a teacher younger students came to her less and less, afraid of accusation based on their beliefs. Older students had lost their respect for her as well and several teachers had come up to her and expressed their disappointment in her behaviour and conduct.

Much to Sirius' relief, James had not taken her words too harshly. He had given up his pursuit of her in 5th year, much to her seeming indignation. It all made Sirius want to shake his head at her. If she had actually wanted James, why had she been so scathingly negative towards him? It made him honestly glad that he'd never really been interested in women. They were so confusingly complicated.

By this point they had reached the Defense classroom and Sirius pushed open the door. The first thing he spotted was the chalkboard, which had been pulled into the centre of the classroom and had the following words neatly printed on it in Lord Peverell's handwriting.

Once you have changed robes and placed away your belongings, bring only you wands and come down to the edge of the Black Lake by Hagrid's hut. Your Defense session today will take place outside.

James read the board as well and whistled lowly. "That promises to be interesting."

Sirius nodded and added, "Not to mention incredibly vague."
The Marauders switched out their robes and headed back out of the classroom. As they passed students headed for their class they passed on the message, gaining surprised and some suspicious glances. Remus shook his head and said to Sirius, "Thanks to you and James people don't believe us when we're actually telling the truth, Padfoot! Lovely!"

"I know you enjoy the confusion, Moony," he teased back. "I recall your planning for several pranks taking distinct advantage of that particular fact."

Remus looked forward, poked his nose in the air and said with an entirely false indignation, "I have no idea what you are talking about!"

All four burst out laughing and continued to tease and banter with each other as they made their way out to the appointed spot. When they got there, they stopped and stared in surprise, for the place was empty of Lord Peverell's presence aside from three rings side by side, large enough to hold each defense group. Shooting each other looks they shrugged and split up into their rings, waiting for the other students.

Bellatrix, Severus and Avery were the next to arrive, taking stock of the situation before doing the same as the Marauders had. Eventually, all three groups had each of their members present. As the very last student stepped into their ring they all flashed simultaneously and disappeared. Instead each group had a band around their wrists with the number of their group in Roman numerals.

From seemingly all around them the voice of Lord Peverell began speaking, drawing a shocked squeak from a few students. "Welcome to your first practical Defense class. Before you lies the Black Lake, but to your left is your objective. The Forbidden Forest today holds a Gold Ring in the center. The first group to reach this ring wins the challenge. The centaurs have kindly agreed to keep an eye out on you, but they will not clear all of your opponents for you. There are both creatures and traps within the Forest which you will have to avoid."

"You are to be given only the most basic of maps, it shows your beginning location and the end point. If you run into trouble and can't complete the challenge, send up red sparks. One last note: for the win to count, each member of your team must cross into the gold ring. Good luck and you may begin when you see green sparks."

There was a flash of light and a piece of paper flashed in front of each group. Severus snagged it for group One. When James began to protest on habit more than anything else Severus looked at him and said in mild exasperation, "Look, Potter, do you even know how to read an unlabelled map?"
Sheepishly James replied, "No, I don't Snape. It's more habit than anything else. Sorry."

Rudolphus Lestrange snorted out a small laugh of amusement and said to Severus, "Go on then, where do we need to get to?"

"Northeast," Severus said simply, keeping his voice low to avoid alerting the other two groups. "I suggest we stick together, since we all must cross to count as a completion. Also, there is strength in numbers."

"I agree," James stated, "there is also likely to be challenges along the way that will require more than one person to either get through or avoid."

Lily glared at the two men and huffed, "It is a far more likely chance for success if we split up."

"Don't be daft, Evans," James said impatiently, shaking his head at her. "We have to all cross the line for it to count. We can't do that each on our own. Snape is right, we have to work together."

Lily opened her mouth to make an outraged comment about the word 'daft' when Bellatrix cut over her. "Look, it's going to get awkward using surnames when we're working together. Let's use first names here, please?"

"I would be ameable to that," Severus agreed, the barest of reluctance in his voice.

"So would I," James agreed as well.

"Before we start," Cadmus Avery began, "do all of us know how to use a basic Compass spell?"

"A good thing to ask," Rudolphus nodded. "It's a simple 'pointus' with your wand laying flat on your palm."

"Look!" Lily said suddenly, she had been ignoring the others since they refused to listen to her. "Green sparks!"
All of the students moved at almost the same time, some entering the Forest a bit more reluctantly than their counterparts. Lily suddenly jerked off to the right, prompting an exasperated "Lily!" from her teammates. She didn't pay any attention to them, much to their annoyance.

"I really don't know what you saw in her, James!" Bellatrix snapped.

"I don't either, at the moment."

"Well, we can't go after her," Severus said finally, sounding disgusted. "Let's continue on, shall we?"

In agreement, they set off together, taking a more lighted path that was slightly off from their destination rather than blindly heading off into the dark like Lily had done. Their first challenge was a few Devil's Snare, luckily Severus identified them quickly due to his Potions and knocked the greedy vines away with a small jet of flames pointed at the centre of the plant. They made sure to move well out of range before the plant had recovered, breathing a little more heavily than they had been originally.

Their next trap was triggered when James activated what they realised later was a tripwire, triggering a complete set of magically-enchanted dueling dummies. The fastest to defeat hers was Bellatrix, who then teamed up with James to finish off his, the two splitting up after that to help others in their group. James was surprised and impressed by how capable of a dueler Bellatrix Black actually was, she was quick on her feet and clever with her spells. Before now she had reminded him more of Moony, being clever with words and quick to learn from books.

Since Lily had taken off, they had lacked one person to go after the last dummy, which meant they had all been at a slight disadvantage to start with an extra opponent wandering around and attempting to distract them. James ended up with a scratch above his eye, while both Cadmus and Bellatrix gained a scrape each on their arms.

Rudolphus muttered a breathless *pointus* and they turned in the direction indicated, each student casting a *pointus* themselves at what they agreed should be four minute intervals. For their first practical, they were doing very well as a group, James realised. He had underestimated what Bellatrix, Rudolphus, Cadmus and Severus were actually capable of and he found it humbling. He was doing well working with them, finding out in particular that he and Severus worked rather well together on dueling, hexing and shielding in wordless tandem.

They were beginning to reach the centre of the Forest when Bellatrix pointed to their right, "Look! Red sparks!"
They pushed on after a moment, invigorated to realise how well they were actually doing. James saw a glint of gold in front of him and said, "Yes! There's the ring!"

"Evans is still missing though," Rudolphus said in mild disgust. "Even if we are the first to pass into the ring we won't win the challenge without her. Should we go look for her? The Compass spell will point us in her direction."

"No," Bellatrix spat. "We don't go back for her. We finish this together as we had started out and we let the centaurs and Professor Peverell find her if she really is lost. For all we know those red sparks were hers."

James nodded slowly. "I agree with Bellatrix," he said. "It's her own fault that she took off without us, she was just being churlish after we rejected her idea. Let's finish this now."

They all nodded and took off, jogging for the centre of the Forest and the gold ring. As they crossed it they noticed that the misty ring was actually made entirely of protection Runes. Their professor was waiting for them, standing towards the back of the ring. He counted off their group with his eyes and said quietly, "You're still missing one."

"We know, sir," Cadmus spoke from the back of the group, respectfully. "She didn't much like the idea that we shot down her plan to split up and as soon as we entered the Forest after making our plan she took off on her own. We chose to finish it in our group and let you or the Centaurs handle her."

Professor Peverell tilted his head back and appeared to sigh softly before he nodded, conjuring chairs and offering them water from bottles that had been chilling in a bucket at his feet. They sat down, feeling exhausted and accomplished aside from their lost member, who was causing more irritation than anxiety.

The next group with Sirius and Remus crossed the line whole and with each person present, Sirius gave a thrilled laugh when he heard they were the first complete team to cross the line. Spotting James and his group he said, "How did we beat you?"

James scowled and answered, "Evans decided to revert to a two-year-old and took off on her own in a fit of spite after we rejected her plan."
Sirius and Remus both winced and said, "Sorry Prongs. Fun though, right? And just a bit challenging. If not for Evan Rosier we wouldn't have had any idea what that funky gold mist was!"

"Anti-Gravity mist," James nodded. "We ran into it as well and once Severus described it to us we decided to go around rather than through. Worked better for us since some of our team are afraid of heights."

Sirius laughed. "We just went through. It was fun, but certainly a bit disorienting at first."

His teammate Selwyn scowled at the laughing Gryffindor, crossing his arms and standing as far away from the group as possible.

Team three appeared at the same time as a Centaur carried a shaking Lily Evans into the clearing, placing her on her feet just outside the circle. She stepped over it, ignoring the glares she was getting from her teammates.

"All right then, first is Team Two, second was Team Three and Team One came in last. We are going to try and do something outside at least once a month, it might have to be something in the castle if the weather is not permitting, I don't want you lot to get ill doing this. Your goal today was to learn to work together, which most of you did so admirably."

He shot looks at Lily Evans, Zachary Selwyn and Augustus Rookwood as he said this, pointing out the troublemakers from each group. "Those of you who did not do so well," he continued softly, "need to learn that you are not invincible, that others can come up with good ideas and plans and finally the fact that book smarts do not contribute to practical logic and cunning."

"Dismissed, you have approximately 15 minutes before the start of your next class, so I suggest you hurry."

None of those from Team One even looked at Lily Evans as they left, making her frown in annoyance. It wasn't her fault she'd run into every trap in the challenge! She'd done well making it through dummies, mist, a snare and multiple others on her own. She huffed, stared angrily at their Professor for a moment before taking off, determined to catch the others before they'd left the Forest.

She would be able to make them see that she was valuable to the team, right?
November 5th

Chapter Summary

A/N: I truly have no excuses for not updating since July. If you are interested in the person behind the computer however, about the time I stopped updating my 71 year old mother began having severe pain in her back. I, her youngest, was her primary caretaker as well as working full time. She had to have surgery the end of August, thankfully it was far less than expected. Add onto this a new position at my job (which I gave up for various reasons) and such severe stress and worry that I was actually losing hair… Yeah. Now that hair loss is back to normal (my mother swears I shed as badly as a dog) I am working as we speak on a chapter of all my stories.

2nd A/N: Several have compared Lily to Hermione. This is just how I see it, so well done. In my mind Lily is Hermione, only Lily didn't grow up and harden to the reality of things as fast as Hermione had to with Harry as a friend. She is simply put a spoiled, naïve version of Hermione. When she graduates she will get a shock, the real-world isn't so plain as black and white.

Sirius Black leaned against his betrothed, laughing. It was a Saturday and to the Gryffindor's delight they had restarted their little get-togethers in the lovely Room of Requirement. For this occasion they had turned it into a cozy little common room in neutral colours. Those who said that Gryffindors and Slytherins can't possibly get along would die of shock if they could see the room's occupants, for those two houses were the only ones represented and not a single spell had been cast other than one to light a fire in the empty hearth.

Lucius Malfoy had come and joined them, just as pleased as Sirius to once again be surrounded by friends and able to relax completely. Other than his betrothed, there were the mischievous, elegant twins Rudolphus and Rabastan, Bellatrix, his brother Regulus and the dryly sarcastic Severus Snape. Gryffindor was represented by the Marauders minus Peter who had detention today. Despite being outnumbered Sirius felt comfortable in the Slytherin-heavy gathering.

He watched with amusement as his brother flushed a little, having finally noticed the attention he was getting from one of their companions. Bellatrix was deep in conversation with Remus, the pair seated on the floor and discussing a book on Runes that was opened between them. Remus seemed a little nervous, which made Sirius want to laugh. Bellatrix was a very intense female, he knew Remus was attracted to her but he was afraid of how she'd react to his lycanthropy.

Severus sat in between the Lestrange twins, gaining a raised eyebrow from the three Gryffindors when they'd first taken up the position. "That's new," Remus commented.
"Perhaps to the unobservant, Lupin," Severus smirked.

Sirius had decided not to try and figure out the complexity of that relationship, desperately trying not to flush in embarrassment and curious arousal at how a threesome would work, so to speak. He could certainly imagine such a thing, but doing it? Yeah, best not to think about that too much. He was content with just one blonde Malfoy.

Since the first practical Defense lesson his future step-father had been keeping classes interesting to say the least. After their obstacle course through the Forbidden Forest they had held two debate-style competitions in the classroom and one dueling competition, which had been won by James' team, redeeming their failure thanks to Evans in the Forest. Remus' group had won the debate-style competition, Harrigan had been very impressed with some of the knowledge contained within just Remus. He was truly lethal when it came to logic and obscure facts.

Evans had gotten worse, not better. She was reprimanded almost every Defense session by Harrigan and James had lost it completely with her after the dueling competition, when she'd very nearly lost it for her whole team due to some spectacularly bad shields. She refused to use the more powerful shields demonstrated and mentioned by their Professor, sticking stubbornly with what she considered 'light' and acceptable.

Her whole team now simply acted as if she didn't even exist. This had not improved her moods or her behaviour, but they didn't care. She wouldn't be a person that would ever carry weight for her team, nor would they trust her to do so. She had already had some truly nasty arguments with Bellatrix, all but calling her some extraordinarily foul names. James had been furious and had actually reported her to Harrigan, who had kicked her out for the rest of that day's session.

Outside of Defense, their final year was proceeding smoothly, if not a little nerve-wracking. Their coursework was complex and time-pressed, stressing out even the calmest of their year. Some of the Ravenclaws had already had fits of hysterics, needing to be treated by Madam Pomfrey. Even the Hufflepuffs were looking a little pale, and they were normally the most easy-going and laid back about the exams. Not that they were idiots in any sense of the word, some of the top students of their year were Hufflepuffs, but normally they didn't cave under pressure so easily.

Days like this were becoming necessary at least once a week. They had all noticed a difference in their moods throughout the week when they were able to unwind and ignore everything for even a single day. Plus, Sirius was able to see his betrothed, which was a bonus in his eyes. Despite attempts to do so, Dumbledore hadn't been able to restrict Lucius from school grounds. Sirius had been surprised that he had tried it in the first place, he'd always thought the Headmaster liked the students that made up the Marauders.

The Headmaster's behaviour toward Harrigan had not changed. In fact his moods towards the
Defense Professor seemed almost poisonous recently. He did not like the fact that Harrigan's revolutionary teaching ideas was backed by the Board, nor did he like the idea that there was a representative of the Board physically present at the school. Harrigan seemed unruffled by the older man's behaviour, acting as if the old man was being as cordial to him as he was to the other staff. He also refused to cater to the Headmaster's whims regarding Voldemort.

He had coached the Defense students to call this 'Dark Lord' by name, now all of them said it without so much as a stutter. Pointing out that fear was one of the greatest weapons held in common by all historical Dark Lords, he had stated that this psychotic man would not get far if he couldn't garner fear in the population, fear and supporters. He pointed out that the man had no stated aims and seemed to be attacking anything and everything on a whim. He likened the man to a small toddler who was destroying his toys merely to get attention.

"If we ignore him and his behaviour, he will soon enough dissolve like the smoke and mist which are the basis of his anger. Men like him require attention to gain strength, they do not like being ignored. By doing so, we will take the 'wind from his sails' before he even begins."

It was a strong contrast to the Headmaster, who cautioned them to be wary of this Dark Lord and his 'Death Eaters'. He spoke in mysterious tones of this He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and compared him to Grindelwald, whom he had personally fought. He predicted in ominous tones of a bad war which would likely last generations. It was like he was trying to make them afraid of the man or something.

Harrigan had told him privately to ignore the Headmaster's words and that Dumbledore would soon get a warning from the Board, telling him to stop with his fear-mongering and concentrate on the students, not a wannabe Dark Lord. He anticipated that the Headmaster would not be a pleasant man to deal with until the insult of being scolded had worn off, so he cautioned Sirius and through him his friends and associates to behave for a while as so not to draw the old man's attention and misplaced ire.

When Sirius had worriedly pointed out that doing so would leave Harrigan to the old man's temper Harrigan had simply smiled at Sirius and said, "I can handle him, don't worry. If he gets too annoying I'm sure your father would love to come to school and put him back in his place."

Sirius had laughed very hard at the mental image and left smiling in agreement. That would make his father's day, to come to the school and publicly scold the Headmaster like he was still a schoolboy. Merlin only knew he was good at it, Sirius remembered getting scolded by his father on a few occasions, the man knew just how to make someone feel guilty.

Sirius smiled, glad Harrigan Peverell had come into his life. Who knew how things might have turned out otherwise?
December 9th: Hogwarts & Black Manor

Chapter Summary

A/N: NaNoWriMo 2015. Is that enough of a reason for delayed updates?

December 9th

So far Harrigan had enjoyed teaching. He had some truly amusing students in his classes, as well as those that were very talented. Of course in between the two were the slackers and those that thought they deserved their grades for their family name, but he had been handling them all right. He sighed, staring at his paperwork. Good Merlin, he hated grading. It gave him an even worse headache than going over papers for the Wizengamot and that was truly saying something!

It was almost the Yule holidays however, he was looking forward to getting away from the students and seeing his fiancé for the first time in a couple of months. It was rather pathetic how much he missed having Orion around, even if the older man was simply working on his own paperwork or sorting out some family issue or other. It was something of a portent for their future and he smiled at the mental image that gave him. He was truly looking forward to life with Orion Black.

Sighing, he pulled a stack of second year papers closer, the younger years were easier than the older ones, some of their mistakes were actually quite humourous. He pulled a quill and a bottle of red ink to his place, frowning as the ink conjured a random voice saying 'I think we should just get him a pot of everlasting red ink, the greasy git!' He shook his head, wondering where these random things came from. They were similar to memories, but it was like they were just out of reach.

He started to read the top paper, noting thankfully that it was a Ravenclaw, which meant that it would at least have some effort towards grammar, spelling and punctuation. Not to say that all of the Ravenclaws were the best at writing, he'd come across some that were truly hideous quality writing. He'd placed an unmarked copy of them aside to show to Filius, surely the man could get them some help with their writing?

He had finished the second years and was halfway through third when there was a knock at his door. "Come in!"

The door opened hesitantly and Sirius Black poked his head around the corner. Harrigan smiled at his stepson to be, saying, "Come on in, Sirius. I'm just grading at the moment."
He stepped inside and carefully shut the door before walking over and sitting in the chair across from Harrigan. Harrigan took the cover of reading the paper to study the young Gryffindor and he didn't like what he saw. Sirius was pale, his shoulders rounded slightly and he was twisting his hands in his lap. Whatever he wanted to say, he was incredibly nervous about. Harrigan pursed his lips slightly and finished working on his paper, leaving Sirius to think a bit more before finally he settled the paper and quill down and looked at him.

"What can I do for you, Sirius? You seem nervous about something."

"I need help," the teen said hoarsely, "and I don't want my Father to be angry with me."

Harrigan sat back, considering. Obviously this was something big if Sirius was worried about Orion being angry in the first place. He debated his relationship with the man and the trust Orion had placed in him before carefully selecting his words. "I will listen without judging, but if it is something that is affecting your health or wellbeing you do need to tell your father."

Sirius rocked a little in his chair and then, staring down at his hands he said very quietly, "I think I might be pregnant."

Harrigan's eyes widened. Of all things he had not been expecting that! Carefully keeping any judgment out of his tone he said, "I take it Lucius is the father?"

"Yes," the teen whispered. "I know we are only betrothed and I am only seventeen, but if I am pregnant I don't want to get rid of the baby."

"Of course not," Harrigan reassured. "How far along do you think you are?"

Sirius licked his lips. "Three months, approximately."

And there was the reason why Orion might be angry. "Why have you delayed having it confirmed and telling anyone so long?"

"Because I was worried Abraxas and my father might try and break the betrothal, since I am not a virgin," there were tears in Sirius' eyes. "Lucius is the only person I've been with, I swear it!"
"Sirius, I highly doubt your father nor Abraxas would break your betrothal. If anything they might want to push your engagement and bonding forward so that the baby is born the legitimate heir, but that is all. If anything, your father will be angry because he is worried," Harrigan said softly.

"Why would he be worried?" Sirius said through tears, looking at him.

"Because male pregnancies can be fragile things and a best kept a careful eye on. You are risking your health as well as that of your baby waiting so long to have it confirmed."

Sirius paled. "I didn't know that! I hope the baby's okay."

"I think I need to Floo your father. Stay here in my office, we will come and get you," Harrigan reassured. "It will be okay, Sirius. He's not going to yell at you."

Harrigan Flooed over to Black Manor, striding gracefully through the hallways towards Orion's office. He was rather amused, this situation meant that he could see his bonded to be a bit sooner than he had previously thought.

He knocked on the heavy door and then opened it, spotting Orion sitting at his desk perusing a document of some sort. The older man looked up, spotted him and his eyes widened. "Harrigan! It's the middle of the day, why are you here? Is everything all right?"

"Hush, Orion," Harrigan smiled reassuringly. "I'm fine, your sons are fine. There is just something of a situation at the school, one that requires your presence."

"What kind of situation?" Orion asked, curious and still obviously a little worried.

"It has to do with Sirius. I'm actually not entirely sure how to put it," Harrigan admitted.

Orion groaned, "What has he gotten himself into now? I thought his pranking had stopped or at least reduced a bit. I haven't had anyone from Hogwarts contact me all this year."

"It's not a prank, Orion. It's more of a personal situation."
"What is it then, is he all right?" Orion looked a little worried.

Harrigan took a deep breath and then said, "He's pregnant, Orion. Or at least he thinks he is, he must be wearing a Glamour because he's not showing any visible signs. The baby is Lucius', he panicked and didn't tell anyone because he was worried you or Abraxas would want to break the betrothal. He's around three months, or so he estimates."

Orion had stilled at his first words, shock on his face. Then he frowned, considering Harrigan's words. However, at the last bit, more specifically 'three months' he looked more than a little annoyed. "Three months," he said in little more than a whisper.

"Yes," Harrigan replied. Please control your temper, it's one of the reasons he was so reluctant to tell anybody. He doesn't want you to be angry with him. I can tell he feels awful about the situation and the fact that the pregnancy is unplanned, but he says Lucius is the only person he's been with and I can tell he isn't lying. Now that I think about it, there were a couple of lines in his letter to Lucius just after Narcissa was betrothed to him that indicate they had a physical relationship going."

Orion frowned, but nodded curtly. "Where is Sirius now?"

"My office, I told him to wait for us there. Shall we?"

The older man stalked out of his office instead of answering, requesting a cloak from a house elf. He donned it as well as a pair of gloves and they walked to the Floo room, Orion following Harrigan through into his personal quarters at the school. Harrigan knew they would need to move swiftly, the Headmaster would be notified that someone other than personnel and students was in the school.

Sirius was sitting just where Harrigan had left him, still twisting his hands in his lap, or more specifically Harrigan noted, the betrothal ring on his finger. He had his head down and his shoulders were still rounded, so he hadn't noticed them enter the room. Harrigan chanced a glance at Orion and noted with some relief that the man's fierce posture had softened and his eyes were now more thoughtful and deliberating than anything else.

Sirius happened to glance up and noticed the addition of Harrigan and his father. He paled momentarily before a glitter entered grey eyes and he stood up, chin lifting defiantly. "I know that I should have waited until we were wed for a physical relationship with Lucius, I know that I am only seventeen. Regardless of these things, if you think for one second that I will obey you if you want me to abort this child you have another thing coming! I am going to take responsibility for what has
become from this and I love this child already, no matter what happens to me."

Orion considered his son for a long moment and finally stated in a firm, quiet voice that gave away no emotion, "If you are wearing a Glamour, son, I would like you to drop it."

Despite his sudden, shocking defiance Sirius' hands wavered slightly as he retrieved his wand from the holster on his arm, flicking it lightly. The Glamour shimmered and disappeared, revealing slightly rounder, softer facial features due to the weight gain that centered on the very slight thickening of his waistline.

Orion studied his son for a long moment before he moved to stand less than a hands width from Sirius, reaching out to cup his face with one gloved hand. "I am not going to be making any such demands, my son. I am actually rather hurt that you think I would do so. While this situation is not ideal, you have yet to take your NEWTs or even finish schooling, we will work around it. Luckily there is nothing against a pregnant student finishing their education in the Charter. If anything, I am displeased that you waited so long to tell anyone and thus risked the health of yourself and my unborn grandchild."

For a moment Sirius' grey eyes shimmered with tears, but he held onto his control over what were no doubt wild emotions and simply hugged his father, relief in every line of his body. Harrigan was relieved as well, this situation could have gone a lot worse than it had. Luckily Orion was a logical man, he didn't go around blasting off words that he may very well regret in the heat of the moment. Of course that had something to do with being an ex-Slytherin, Harrigan was sure.

They left the school before they could be found out by Albus, taking Sirius to the Black Manor and summoning a Healer from a private clinic. She was sworn to the confidentiality oath that all Healers took upon graduating with their degree, so she couldn't go out and release this interesting little tidbit to anyone. She confirmed that Sirius was in fact pregnant, due around mid-June. Despite having no care done earlier in his pregnancy both Sirius and his unborn babe were very healthy.

After that they Flooed Malfoy Manor and requested the presence of both Abraxas and his Heir as promptly as possible. Sirius sat nervously in a chair, refraining somehow from twisting his betrothal ring on his finger again. Despite his nerves he beamed nevertheless at his betrothed when the pair entered Orion's study not even ten minutes after the call.

Lucius immediately went to sit with Sirius, entwining his betrothed's hand in his. The sight of the happy pair made Harrigan smile, the love they held for each other was obvious. Abraxas watched his Heir with an amused twitch of his lips, Lucius had at least remembered to properly greet Harrigan and Orion before seating himself. The way of those who were young and in love.
"What was the reason for the summons, Lord Black?" Abraxas stated formally.

"It's Orion as you well know," Orion answered, smirking slightly. Even in formal situations he refused to use titles around friends unless required by ritual.

Abraxas gave a snort and didn't waver in his gaze, prompting a muffled laugh from Harrigan. When Abraxas was aware that someone was hiding information from him, he was rather like a dog after a bone, absolutely relentless in his need to know.

"My son approached Harrigan and myself today with some rather startling information that may require modification to the betrothal contract between your Heir Lucius and my Sirius. Before you get too offended," Orion raised a hand to still Abraxas' words, not to mention a shocked, slightly angry Lucius', "the modification that I am suggesting is not in any way an unpleasant one. I simply believe that is best if the pair wed rather soon, perhaps over the Yule holidays."

Abraxas' eyes narrowed in contemplation and he stated, "I know that you would not suggest such a thing unless it were absolutely necessary, Orion. What has come up that would cause such a drastic change, as we were both thinking before that the bonding would need to wait until at least after Sirius had graduated?"

"My son is three months pregnant with our mutual grandchild, Abraxas. He is due in mid-June, which as you know is not very long after graduation. As he will require a certain advancement in his practical NEWT exams, we will need to notify the Board of Governors as well as the meddlesome Headmaster. As you know and should well remember, not much in Hogwarts goes unknown for long."

There was dead silence for a few moments, during which a distinctly amused Sirius dropped the Glamour he had temporarily replaced. Lucius reacted first, since his hand was resting against the slight curve in Sirius' abdomen. He blinked, muttered a few words unintelligibly and then broke out into one of the most ridiculous, sappy smiles Harrigan had ever seen. He turned and cupped Sirius' face in his hands, planting a firm kiss on his lips and whispering something softly to the younger man.

Abraxas studied the pair for a moment, Sirius noticing him first and watching the man with nervous eyes. When Lucius finally looked at his father he noted a frown on the older man's face and a look in his eyes that said they would be talking later in private. Harrigan didn't envy Lucius that conversation with his father, it would no doubt be long and rather tedious.

"While it does come as quite the surprise," here Abraxas' eyes flicked to Harrigan himself, who was
rather unable to contain his expression from showing something of the humour he felt at the entire situation, "I do agree to your solution, as well as the date. It will not be as grand as something between two such houses should be, but I think the two involved would rather prefer an intimate gathering in any case."

Orion flicked his eyes to take in the besotted pair, who were all but ignoring the conversation their father's were having. "I highly doubt it, Abraxas," he drawled, "considering the fact that they are not even paying attention to our conversation."

"I will speak to the Board of Governors and get written confirmation that Sirius may finish his education and take his NEWTs early, at least the practical exams. I shall also make sure that they cover his absence from classes due to medical examinations and the dangerous nature of Potions and practical Defense Against the Dark Arts. I take it you have ideas on how to cover his inability to do practical work, Harrigan?"

"I have a few ideas. Rest assured that Sirius and his child will be well-protected in my classroom and I will make sure that he stops practical work before the strain on his magic becomes too much for him and the babe. Might I add a congratulations to the two grandsires-to-be?" While he started out serious, his last words were nothing but mischievous.

Orion huffed on what might have been a laugh and ignored his fiancé in favour of addressing Abraxas again. "We shall speak with the pair when they are more inclined to pay attention and work on invitations, colour scheme, location, that sort of thing. When you speak with your son get some tentative ideas for a date from him, Harrigan can speak to Sirius and see if he cares for any of those days in particular."

Abraxas nodded. "Then I think our business is concluded?"

"It is," Orion confirmed.

"Lucius!" Abraxas stated firmly, gaining a slightly startled look from his heir. "Bid goodbye to your fiancé for now and we shall head back to the Manor."

Sirius looked slightly crestfallen at having such a short amount of time with Lucius, but perked up after a moment and stated, "May I escort Lucius to the Floo Room, Father?"

Orion looked as if he wanted to roll his eyes at his son's words, but nodded. "Do not delay, Sirius."
We will need to discuss the conversation that you and your fiancé just completely ignored."

Sirius had the grace to blush, but not much else. He looped his arm through the one Lucius offered and the besotted pair exited the room after Lucius elegantly bowed and thanked Orion for his benevolence and leeway regarding the situation, as he clearly knew Orion could have become incredibly angry at Lucius beginning an intimate relationship before the pair were wed.

Abraxas gave the pair a couple of minutes head start and then stood, nodding to Orion and Harrigan before sweeping out of the room after the young couple.

After they had left Harrigan turned to Orion with an amused smirk and said, "Grandsire Orion, I believe this is where I ask you if you are feeling old yet? Perhaps you will soon need that cane of yours for real, rather than just a prop for your formal attire."

Orion glowered at his fiancé, chosing instead of a verbal response to hit Harrigan with a Tickling Hex. And no, he was not controlling a treacherous smile at the query. Not at all. Honest.
Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

Sorry this took so long, I hit a slump after the holidays. They're always crazy at my house *phew*

I wonder how many of you saw the end of this chapter coming :D

It was strange, standing here. If anyone had asked James Potter which of the Marauders would be the first to marry, his guess wouldn't have been Sirius. Not even close. But, James reflected in amusement, he of course had to break the pattern in his usual flair. To say that he had been shocked when Sirius had admitted that his rapid engagement and marriage was due to an unplanned pregnancy, well, the surprise had been great enough to knock a usually composed Remus right onto the floor, much to their usual gather's amusement.

They had all agreed to be witnesses for the couples' Bonding ceremony, so here they all were on the 27th of December, 1977, standing in the stunning half-glass oratory of Black Manor. James flicked what he hoped was a discreet glance over, noting that Sirius' brother Regulus looked absolutely stunning in the plain but fitted slate grey robes he wore. He looked much better in the robes than James ever would. He flushed, turning his gaze away. All of the witnesses wore the same colour of robes as to leave the attention on the centre of the room, where Lucius and Sirius were standing in robes of brilliant white edged with gold. Floor-length with high collars and draping sleeves, the pair looked very sophisticated.

Sirius' robes had an additional trim as well. His friend had outright refused the traditional colour of pale pink thread bordering the golden trim and had suggested an alternative of violet, which had been acceptable to both families. Consort's or bridal robes were marked with such as to clearly display the hierarchy in a traditional wizarding Bonding. Some were turning to a Muggle-style wedding ceremony, but those who still held to traditional ways chose Bonding as it was a permanent commitment. The only way out of a Bonding was death and when one of a Bonded pair died it was considered shameful if the widower didn't wear black in some shape or form for a time afterwards. Traditional measure of such garments was one month for every year of marriage.

Even the officiator requested through the Ministry wore the same somber color, so that the focus was entirely on the young couple, as was proper. James scanned his eyes over the gathering, noting with smug amusement that Narcissa Black was present, her face expressionless and her eyes a very cold blue. If not for what was probably a very heavy threat by her uncle and caretaker Lord Orion she would have probably preferred to be anywhere but here, watching her cousin marry the man her mother and aunt had tried to force into making her his bride.

She was promised to the Zabini Lord, which would take her entirely out of the British wizarding politics her father had wished to embroil her in, the Zabini seat being firmly rooted in Italy. Marcel Zabini was 28 years old and according to Lucius and the two Lestrange brothers, a very unforgiving individual focused entirely on his status and standing. It was the only acceptable marriage for her, however. Those in the students' little group had refused to marry the girl and Orion was adamant not to embroil any of the Black family in the upstart 'Dark Lord's' politics.
There was quite a gathering here in the room, surrounded by draping silks and rich velvets in white
trimmed with sapphire blue, the pair's chosen colours. James watched the ceremony with his full
attention, smiling to himself at how clearly ecstatic his best friend was. It was such a difference from
the sullen, dangerous behaviour Sirius had exhibited the past two years.

Once the final words were spoken and Lucius chastely kissed his new Consort on the lips the
ribbons binding their hands together exploded in a shower of golden sparks, announcing a correctly
completed ceremony. Around their right wrists were matching cuffs in platinum with runes for
Family, Fidelity, Love, Good Luck and Happiness imprinted on the top of the metal.

James patiently waited his turn to congratulate the couple, finding amusement once again in just how
many people were currently in one room. The Lord Lestrange and his two sons, Narcissa and
Bellatrix, Orion and Regulus, Lords Malfoy and Peverell, James, Remus and Severus. With the
official they numbered two participants and twelve witnesses. It was considered a good number,
twelve being a multiple of three, considered one of the most powerful magical numbers.

"Congratulations, Sirius," he said to his best friend. Turning to Lucius with a mischeivious yet
serious smile, he stated, "Congratulations to you as well, Lucius. Treat my friend with the respect he
deserves, otherwise you'll be hearing from me."

"James!" Sirius protested, flushing. However, Lucius simply smiled and replied, "I expected
something of the sort from you, Heir Potter. I know my Consort has been more like a brother than a
friend to you. Rest assured, my Star will never want for anything."

Sirius' cheeks turned even redder at his new husbands' words, though there was a happy smile
gracing his lips as well. Satisfied, he turned away, moving to where Lord Orion and Abraxas stood.
"Congratulations on the joining of your families, my Lords," he said.

Orion dipped his head in acknowledgment, a slight smile on his lips. "Many thanks, Heir Potter.
While the joining of two such families is advantageous, the most important thing to me is that my son
is happy, both of them."

James controlled his flush with effort, wondering if the older man had somehow discerned his
fascination with Sirius' younger brother. He moved away, taking a seat at the long table across from
Sirius. The two Lords sat on the side closest to their sons, with Harrigan on Orion's left followed by
Regulus. Their meal was incredibly good, murmured conversations accompanying compliments on
the choice of dishes.

Afterwards came the gifts, Sirius smiling in delight at the painting James had commissioned for his
friend’s wedding from a photograph of the newly-married couple relaxing near the fire in the Room
of Requirement at Hogwarts.

Orion and Harrigan stood together, indicating that theirs was a joint gift. They were traditionally last
as the Consort's parents, Abraxas had preceded them with the gift of a two-week vacation after Sirius
graduated and informing Lucius that he was now his father's joint partner in the sprawling Malfoy
Industries.

"Our gift will actually not be quite ready until after your child is born," Harrigan began.

Orion took over, snapping his fingers. Two house elves appeared, standing before the couple.
"These are Tobby and Dilly, our personal elves. They have informed us that they were blessed with
an elfling. It is tradition that a young elf is given as a gift once training is complete. Elves mature
faster than humans, by the time your child is born their son will be ready to join with your family and
serve as a nanny elf."
"Our son is being Dobby," Dilly squeaked. "We hopes you will be pleased with his work."

Orion dismissed the pair, after which the young couple thanked the pair for the generous gift, for really a house elf was an invaluable aid to running a wizarding household.

It was traditional for the guests to see the pair away for their bonding night so they took to the patio, where Abraxas handed the young couple a Portkey which would take them to a villa in France. They would be able to spend a week there before Sirius had to return to Hogwarts.

James smiled and watched next to Remus as the pair disappeared in a swirl of colour. Unexpected, certainly, but this was one of those unexpected things that he felt was for the best.

*Be happy, Sirius. You deserve it.*
23rd February, 1978

Chapter Summary

I love how people liked the mention of Dobby. I couldn't resist throwing him in here. Looking at this story now, I realize it's more of a parallel universe than a good old-fashioned time travel. Oh well. This ought to make my patient readers happy; I have put my other stories on an unofficial hiatus until I finish Black Fortunes. I started this story on August 23rd of 2013, that makes two plus years for 22 chapters. It's time to finish this story. Originally it was going to end up being more detailed, covering the next year or so, but I think now we'll end with the birth of Lucius and Sirius' baby and a have a truly massive epilogue. So look for this story to be winding down.

NOTE: the date of this chapter is the correct one, I need to go back and fix the others.

Harrigan Peverell scowled at the innocent floor of a random corridor in Hogwarts. He was on his way to the Headmaster's office, the man having summoned him like one of the regular staff, no doubt to throw a fit at the arrival after the holidays of a newly-bonded and obviously pregnant Sirius Black-Malfoy. Luckily he had been able to give Orion a head's up that this was likely to happen, so he had sent a flash of Floo powder to the Black Manor, a pre-arranged signal that he was being summoned.

No doubt the Headmaster thought he would be able to question and railroad Harrigan on his own. He would be getting a rude disappointment in the arrival of Sirius' very protective sire and a reminder of whom Harrigan represented. Harrigan's bad mood was only enhanced by his current work, he had been interviewing students that the Marauders and their Slytherin friends recommended and he was getting an alarming picture of the goings on in Hogwarts these days.

Reaching the gargoyle that guarded the Headmaster's office he glowered at the creature. He refused to use the silly password passed on by Professor Filius Flitwick, instead snapping, "Lord Harrigan Peverell, representative of the Board of Governors."

The door sprang aside, seeming to sense his growing bad mood. Harrigan stalked gracefully up the winding staircase, reaching the door and giving one firm rap to announce his presence. A cheerful 'come in!' made him stop, take a deep breath and force the tense muscles in his body to relax.

He strolled into the room, giving away nothing of the fact that he had wanted to just draw his wand and hex the old man into oblivion moments before. The room was cluttered with books and trinkets, the revered Sorting Hat delegated to being squashed on a shelf, bent almost double. Next to the desk covered in papers and a large bowl of sweets was a wood perch upon which rested Fawkes, a phoenix of legend. Harrigan studied the bird's brilliant plumage for a moment before he strolled up to the Headmaster's desk.
Noting the absence of chairs he flicked his wand, transfiguring an elegant wood chair with a high back. He sat, noting with some pleasure the discreet flick of annoyance in the Headmaster's blue eyes. "You summoned me?" Harrigan asked dryly.

Albus cleared his throat. "Yes, I did. I couldn't help but notice the elder Black's new ring and obvious condition. Now Sirius Black has always been--,"

"Black-Malfoy," Harrigan interrupted smoothly. "As you said, the ring is quite new, but he deserves the courtesy of using his proper name, even if he is absent."

The annoyance in Dumbledore's eyes grew. "Yes," he flicked his hand as if it were inconsequential, "Black-Malfoy. Now, as I was saying. Sirius Black-Malfoy has always been a favorite student of the staff, he is talented in the field of Transfiguration as well. As it stands however, it is against school rules for a pregnant student to attend Hogwarts. As is, he will have to leave the school. I do feel for him, seeing as he is scheduled to graduate this June, but the rules must be kept."

Harrigan was just opening his mouth to reply to the bunch of lies Dumbledore was spewing when there was a firm rap on the door. He closed his mouth, just keeping the smirk from his lips. Perfect timing.

"Who is there?" Dumbledore called impatiently.

The door opened. Harrigan would not have missed this moment for anything to see the expression that crossed Dumbledore's face when the elegant, impressive form of Lord Orion Black was revealed behind the door. Disbelief and irritation chased each other across the man's face for a moment before irritation dominated, only doubling when Orion strolled up and conjured a duplicate of Harrigan's chair.

"Lord Orion, your timing is impeccable. We were just discussing Sirius. The Headmaster seems to think that it is against school rules for a pregnant student to attend Hogwarts. He was just about to kick him out and refuse his graduation."

Orion scowled, an openly annoyed expression on his face. "I don't know who you think you are, Albus, but the school Charter holds the rules for the running of Hogwarts, not each individual Head. All of us in this room know that there is nothing in the Charter against a pregnant student finishing out the year. As it stands, the Board of Governors interviewed my son and have agreed that he may graduate so long as he passes his tests, which he will. His practical have already been scheduled since the unborn will be messing with his magic by May, but he will easily sit the written exams with his fellow students."
So there! Harrigan added in his head, greatly amused by Orion's annoyed/scolding tone. Albus looked increasingly unhappy and finally stated in a dismissive tone of voice, "So you have reminded me. Thank you, that is all."

Orion scowled at the rude dismissal, but Harrigan stood gracefully, looping his arm through Orion’s and steering the slightly hot-headed Lord away from an infuriating old man. They exited the office, walked down the spiral staircase and only once the gargoyle closed did Orion let go of an explosive, angry sigh.

"That man needs to be removed," he growled furiously, once Harrigan had thrown up a quick Privacy shield.

"He will be," Harrigan soothed, touching his fiancé's arm. "With the information I have been getting over the past few days from the Board he will be out of here just after Sirius and the rest graduate. We will have to wait until then, I want that report to have the most possible impact. First we need to get him out of the Wizengamot and we both know he'll do that himself easily enough."

Orion relaxed. "It's that damaging?"

Harrigan chuckled, "Love, if he is not thrown out on his arse without so much as a severance pay I will be very surprised. And no, I can't show you the details," he added at the man's hopeful look.

"Tease," Orion grumbled, but he was looking much happier.

"You love it," Harrigan laughed back.

Orion sighed, kissed Harrigan firmly and said, "Be careful, I imagine he's in a foul mood right now."

"Oh I would bet on it. Don't worry about me, you just concentrate on convincing those last few Lords we need to get him out."

Orion departed, leaving Harrigan in the corridor. He removed the Privacy shield and headed for his office, not only to resume work on his report but to grade a few papers as well. He crinkled his nose slightly, at least these papers were older years. They shouldn't have as many grammar and spelling
All of their planning, all of the research and it was going to end like this. Harrigan wanted to burst out laughing, but it would be strange with the serious mood that had fallen amongst him and his companions, not to mention the Aurors that would be arriving soon would look at him like he was going insane. Instead, Harrigan leveled his wand carefully, pointing it directly into the eyes of his defeated opponent.

Eyes filled with crazed hatred, silky black hair, fine features. If not for the spark of insanity in the blue eyes (blue? No, crimson, bright and bloody), the man who called himself 'Lord Voldemort' might be considered handsome. Such an odious, strange title for a half-blood wizard with a decent given name. Harrigan mused on what had made Tom Marvolo Riddle decide on his title, other than the fact that it was a convienient anagram of his full name.

He wondered what moment of insanity had given Riddle the idea that he could attack and take Black Manor of all places. Sliding a glance sideways at Cygnus Black, pinned on his knees with Orion's wand in his face, his doubt slid away. Greed had been Cygnus' downfall and he had dragged his precious 'Dark Lord' with him. Harrigan snorted to himself, staring at the upstart little 'Lord' himself.

Charismatic he may have been, but his campaign had been short-lived to say the least. Harrigan wondered what fate awaited Riddle, it was a shame he had started this fight of hate an intolerance to begin with, a man like him could have gone far in just about any career. Prefect, Head Boy, top of his class, the last direct descendant of Salazar Slytherin himself. The world could have been his oyster.

The fight had been short but brutal, the moment Orion had realised his wards were being attacked he had called Lucien and Abraxas over to the Manor, then Harrigan. Abraxas had brought Lucius with him, the young man proving that he was talented and dedicated to his dueling abilities. Harrigan was very glad that the men around him had not been converted to this terrorist's campaign. He had the Selwyns, Crabbes, Goyles and Parkinsons but none of these families stood out to wizarding society, the Crabbes and Goyles hardly had a brain between them.

Those four pureblood families in particular had just committed social suicide. While they may eventually be able to slide back into their former places of the heirarchy, not one of the other families would ever forget that they had been part of the failed attempt of a madman, bowing at the feet of a half-blood no less.

The Aurors appeared in a series of rapid 'cracks', breaking Harrigan out of his musing. A man with dark eyes and hair moved rapidly in his direction, bearing a few scars across his face and arms. He
stared at the man in front of Harrigan and exclaimed, "Voldemort!"

"Thomas Marvolo Riddle, actually," Harrigan stated casually, "a half-blood. We've been doing a bit of research into his background. We hoped to be able to take him out on his own turf, but he rather foolishly decided to attack Black Manor instead."

"Well done, I'm thoroughly impressed," the man growled. He looked around, spotting the rest of the man's so called 'Death Eaters'. "Got the whole lot of them, seems like. This will be a big relief to the Ministry. Alastor Moody, Head of the First Response Auror team."

"Lord Harrigan Peverell, a pleasure I'm sure. Now, not that I am attempting to do your job for you, but do you happen to have magical restraint cuffs for this particular individual on hand?"

Moody barked out a laugh. "I sure do, and I don't blame you for making sure. I doubt you want to have to do this all over again."

"No, not particularly," Harrigan replied dryly, keeping his wand focused on Riddle while Moody applied the cuffs. He handed over the man's pure white wand, moving in Orion's direction. The man had a shallow cut on his shoulder, superficial at the worst.

He let go of a sigh of relief and wrapped his arms around the man, ignoring their company. Orion's returning grip was just as strong as always, maybe a bit more so as he got over the shock and adrenaline of the sudden battle.

As their other companions gathered around Harrigan turned in Orion's arms enough to watch the Aurors gather together the heads of families and their precious 'Lord'. After agreeing to give a statement tomorrow at the latest the Aurors departed, prisoners in hand.

There was a moment of silence before Harrigan stated, "Did any of you think it would end up being *this* anti-climatic after all of our research?"

A bubble of slightly hysterical laughter broke out as they all reacted to the relief of it being *over*. Just like that, the minor threat that had been 'Lord Voldemort' was removed on February 23rd, 1978.
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

I know some of you were rather…taken aback at the swift ending to the Voldemort plot line. That was rather the point of it, however. It's why he was hardly ever mentioned, nor were there any chapters with his 'side' of things. In this parallel world, he's not the big fish. Dumbledore is the real antagonist in this fic, Voldemort was merely a bump in the road. Sorry it seemed abrupt, I couldn't come up with a better way to do it and I am *horrible* at writing combat scenes.

The wizarding world was in an uproar over the sudden end to the threat that had been 'Lord Voldemort'. Numerous articles had been printed on the man's attack of Black Manor, most agreeing that it had been a very foolish move without some more detailed reconnaissance at the least. Praise was heaped upon the shoulders of Lord Peverell, Black, Malfoy and Lestrange for stopping the growing unrest.

Politically, the four men would have an even bigger voice going into the next Wizengamot term. After stopping what had seemed like such a huge problem so neatly, they were considered magical powerhouses of a sort, considerable opponents. Their new allies were no doubt patting themselves on their backs and congratulating themselves on having made such an advantageous alliance just before the four men became the 'hot' item in the eyes of the wizarding public.

Articles had also been printed on the history of this 'Dark Lord'. Thomas Marvolo Riddle was a half-blood, a former Prefect and Head Boy at Hogwarts School, charming almost everyone he met during his seven years as a member of Slytherin house. He'd been awarded a Special Services to the school for 'catching' the one responsible for the death of a student. Under the Veritaserum issued at his trial (compulsory now due to the first argument Lord Peverell had won) it had been learned that Riddle himself had committed the crime, using a Basilisk that was still alive in the school.

Rubeus Hagrid had been tracked down on the Hogwarts grounds, informed that he was acquitted of the crime and could now obtain a wand legally and finish his education through private programs. The formidable young man had glared at the Aurors, said curtly that it was "abou' time," and promptly left the school and Scotland in its entirety. Crotchety old Argus Filch had leapt at the opportunity (almost literally, surprising the member of the Board who had visited him) to exit the school filled with 'brats and hooligans' and be left to the relative privacy of the grounds.

Trial aside, today was not going to be a day full of politics. It was a glorious late March and since the students were out for the Easter hols, Sirius, Regulus and their assorted friends were in attendance for one of the biggest social events of the season. The long-awaited bonding of Lords Orion Black and Harrigan Peverell.
"How are you not nervous!" Sirius exclaimed, gazing in bewilderment at the picture of calm that Harrigan gave off. The seventeen-year-old sported a now noticeable swell to his waistline no matter what he wore, prompting him to give up on his loose robes to hide his state and return to elegant, close-fitting silks and wools.

Harrigan looked at Sirius in amusement through pale-green eyes and smiled. The older man looked stunning in robes of silver and ivory silk with a mandarin collar and long, fluttering sleeves. There were gold runes adorning the hem of the robes, just above the rich green trim. "Just because you were a nervous wreck doesn't mean we all have to be!" Harrigan teased.

Sirius snorted a laugh and said, "But really, you aren't nervous at all?"

Harrigan turned fully to face Sirius, robes swishing gently as he took a careful seat in one of the chairs. "I am a little bit of course, anyone would be at such a change in their lives. But I want this more than anything. What I am worried about is if you accept me fully into your family. Regulus told me so in the oblique way Slytherins are raised by, or so Orion dutifully informed me later. I know you had the most problems with it to begin with however, so I would like to know that I have your acceptance in my life with your Father."

Sirius blinked. He thought back and realised that somewhere along the line he'd forgotten to reassure Harrigan on this very subject. He felt very much like an idiot at that moment and almost scowled. He caught himself however, knowing that would likely be taken the wrong way.

"I'm sorry," he said finally. "I am a royal idiot. I haven't had a problem with you and Father being together for months, but somewhere along the line I forgot to say so. I've seen how happy you make him, how much he cares about you and how you do in return. Thank you, for bringing him back. He's so different from how he was when Mother was alive, I know now that it was how he was before her. I more than support the two of you being together."

As Harrigan looked relieved he added impishly, "Though you'll have to hurry up if you want my baby to have an Aunt or Uncle not much younger than them!"

The resulting flush of colour high on Harrigan's fine cheekbones made Sirius break out into peals of laughter, dissolving into giggles at the mock glower the older man was giving him.

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Orion stared at himself quietly in the mirror, fidgeting with a cuff as his thoughts wandered. He was wearing black robes with a white trim and silver runes, cut to mimic a military suit. While very
opulent, he wasn't worried about his appearance, he was used to this kind of lifestyle, growing up in the House of Black.

No, he was remembering the last time he'd been wearing robes similar to these, when his parents had forced him to marry his already unstable second cousin. Prejudiced in the extreme, they were no doubt rolling in their graves with the knowledge that here he was, 20 years later, bonding with another man. This time at least he could say he was looking forward to the actual event and the years to follow.

He turned his thoughts away from the past and exited his private quarters, strolling downstairs at a relaxed pace to join his guests for a bit of pre-ceremony small talk. Spotting vibrant, garish robes out of the corner of his eye he gritted his teeth and turned away, determined to not let the presence of Albus Dumbledore ruin this day. Unfortunately, they couldn't afford to not invite the man.

Instead he turned to Abraxas and Lucien, holding court with a few of the more notable families including to his surprise, Bones, Greengrass and Ogden. As the familial heads greeted him, Orion nodded and thanked them for coming. His pale blue eyes caught the deeper blue and silver of his old friends and flicked just slightly in Dumbledore's direction, the man watching them with a small frown on his lips.

Lucien almost visibly grimaced at the bright robes, prompting Orion to hide a laugh with a strategic cough. Abraxas merely closed his eyes for a moment and then turned away from the sight, instead smiling at Orion warmly.

"Nervous old friend?" he asked.

"Just slightly," Orion replied, waiting until their companions had left to add, "but I am looking forward to it this time, not like Walburga."

Lucien snorted. "If you had been looking forward to marrying Walburga I would have taken you to St. Mungo's by force to have your head checked as well as your potions regime."

Orion burst out laughing, unable to hold back his humour this time as Lucien caught him off-guard with one of his rare very frank statements. "There are times I wonder how you escaped Gryffindor with that blunt conversation of yours, old friend!"

Lucien huffed, but the corners of his mouth had turned up. "What a travesty that! No, Slytherin or
Ravenclaw for the Lestranges, so it has been for hundreds of years. I wasn't stuck up enough to fit into Ravenclaw, honestly they have some of the worst egos due to their intelligence."

Abraxas gave a small snort of laughter himself, throwing a gaze sparkling with humour at his friend. "I would say you are 'stuck up enough' for Ravenclaw with your tone right now, Lucien."

"Will you two quit ganging up on me?!" he said in exasperation. "I mean really, we have enough ammunition for a month with the vaunted Headmaster and those robes of his, they really are an eyesore."

Orion dipped his head in agreement. "I would rather have preferred to not invite him to this, but we really can't afford it otherwise. Right now politically we are almost untouchable, but he still has enough of a social and political standing to merit an invitation."

All humour disappeared from Lucien's face and a rather feral smile crossed his lips instead. "Not for long, my friends. I for one am greatly anticipating his fall from grace."

As a man dressed in slate grey caught Orion's attention he cast a quick Tempus, taking a deep breath and nodding quietly to his friends. "I believe I need to be addressing my guests, my friends. I will see you later."

Murmurs of encouragement and luck followed him as Orion slowly made his way through the crowd. He spotted his sons as well as their friends not far off, a small smile making its way across his mouth as he did so. Eventually he ended up at the small platform with the official in grey and turned to the crowd, casting a demi-Sonorous.

"To all of my guests, family and friends, welcome." The crowd of brightly dressed people turned and looked at him. Luckily he was not a shy person, otherwise publicly speaking to the amount of people that had been invited to his bonding would be very daunting indeed.

"Outside of these walls, the people of the magical world celebrate the end of a man who thought to bring a reign of terror to the wizarding world. While I myself am very thankful for this end as well, today we are here to celebrate a beginning. I had thought after the death of my wife Walburga I would live the rest of my life on my own, and while not the happiest of prospects it was certainly not one I would have regretted."

"Then to my everlasting surprise and joy Harrigan Peverell walked onto the political scene of
Wizarding Great Britain and into my life. He has been my true friend, companion and support ever since then. I thank you all for coming here to celebrate with me as Harrigan and I join in what is the most permanent and symbolic relationship available in our world."

Polite clapping followed his words and the guests began to make their way to the silver coloured chairs with white and gold taffeta ribbons wound around the arms and legs, the Black and Peverell coat of arms sharing space across the back rest. A pure white carpet was revealed on the elegant ballroom floor. While the Oratory was considered the traditional space for bonding ceremonies by the Black family, the sheer amount of people present for this event deemed the small space not only impractical but impossible.

Orion took his place and waited patiently, taking deep breaths to steady himself. Lucien and Abraxas sat in the front row, minute smiles of reassurance on their faces. Soft murmurs of surprise and appreciation warned him of Harrigan's appearance, though it did not prepare him for the sight itself. Orion froze, hardly daring to breathe lest the image in front of him shatter. He felt as if he were dreaming, watching Harrigan stride gracefully and confidently in his direction.

He was not dreaming however, as Harrigan joined him on the platform and they linked left hand to right as they were directed by the official. With hands crossed at the wrists Orion felt as though he could finally relax and breathe. Now only words separated him from sharing the rest of his life with the extraordinary man across from him and his relief and love could not be put into words.

Regulus sat next to his brother Sirius in the front row, a smile crossing his face as he watched the elegant ceremony. He never would have believed that he would see his father this happy in his lifetime. Orion had been so miserable married to Walburga, sticking around for his sons only. He knew for a fact once the pair of them had gone to Hogwarts for the school year his father disappeared, returning only for school holidays.

He could not imagine being so miserable, spending his entire married life avoiding his spouse. He was thankful that his father was so against marriage contracts being made at a young age. Walburga had tried to betroth him to a young witch from France when he was nine, Orion had found out about it and he had been furious. While a contract had been enacted between Lucius and Sirius it was only after his brother had accepted Lucius' proposal.

He glanced along the front line to his right, spotting his brothers' friends not far down the line. Or at least James, Remus had been delegated to the second row along with the Lestrange brothers and Severus as they were not immediate family of either participant. James Potter sat quietly still next to his father, his mother having succumbed to a fever three years previously. The Potter heir looked very handsome in bronze robes, his dark brown hair for once lying mostly flat. He'd switched out his blocky glasses for frameless oval ones with gold arms, which made his expressive hazel eyes stand out.
Regulus turned his gaze back to the front lest he be caught staring at the other teen. He had apparently been staring for longer than he'd thought, the official was just finishing the formal closing words to the ceremony. He watched as his father lifted his hands, hands now freed from the brightly coloured ribbons that had disappeared in a flash of bright magic. Smiling openly, the Lord Black captured Harrigan's face and jaw with his right hand, leaning forward and sealing their lips together.

People stood, applauding politely as the couple broke the chaste kiss, leaving their hands linked together as they turned to face their family and guests. They were announced as Lords Orion and Harrigan Peverell-Black. Regulus smiled proudly at the expression of happiness in his father's face and wondered if his thankfulness to Harrigan could ever be properly expressed.

He greatly doubted it.
Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

Some of you asked for a political chapter, it just so happened that was next. Dumbledore makes an idiotic move against four people in very high regard (Harrigan and co.)

Twenty-Four

Harrigan smiled in a reserved manner at something his husband had whispered in his ear, well aware of the way the pair had attracted the attention of the masses the moment they had simultaneously Apparated into the Ministry of Magic. It was the start of a new session of the Wizengamot and as such, Harrigan was excused from his classes (not that he had any on Thursday normally) and had been met by his husband at the front courtyard of Hogwarts. Both Regulus and Sirius had come up to bid their father hello, talking with the pair for a few moments before they had to depart. It was the first time they had seen him since the pair returned from their vacation three days previously.

Orion seemed determined to share the world with Harrigan and had surprised the younger male with a trip to the United States of all places, specifically the island of Oahu, part of the state of Hawaii. It was a beautiful place, surrounded by bright blue ocean and covered in the richest, broadest range of greenery Harrigan had ever seen. The pair had greatly enjoyed their short, whirlwind vacation, Harrigan somehow managing to come home with a tan (Orion seemed incapable of tanning, his skin simply skipped to burnt).

But now it was time for the first session of the Wizengamot since that winter and more specifically, the first since the threat that Tom Riddle had posed was taken care of. Harrigan was anticipating some uncomfortable tension with Dumbledore and his party, who no doubt had taken offense at the subtle insinuations in the Prophet that there had been unnecessary 'fear-mongering' going on behind the scenes that had 'undermined the individual witch or wizard's confidence' in their ability to stop the threat before it became real.

It was true, however. Harrigan had seen it first-hand at the school, Dumbledore sowing the seeds of fear and dread in impressionable minds as he treated Riddle like he was more than just a half-blood with daddy issues and an inferiority complex. Harrigan still shuddered sometimes as he imagined how it could have gone if no one had the common sense and strength to ignore Dumbledore's words and see through the image Riddle had projected.

Orion and Harrigan approached the entry for the Lords and Ladies of the Wizengamot, stopping in front of the guards and waiting patiently as they scanned the pair with complex spells, checking for any illegal objects, poisons or signs of mental or physical tampering. If either of the latter two were discovered, the affected Lord or Lady was escorted aside by one of the guards and an on-call expert
from St. Mungo's was summoned to examine them and prescribe treatment.

Considering each and every one of the individuals that passed through this doorway were responsible for the rules and laws that governed the whole of the magical UK it was a precaution that no one argued with. The consequences could be disastrous if a single individual with considerable pull in the Wizengamot was allowed through with any such sign. For example, an influential member of the Wizengamot that was under the Imperius Curse or any number of mind-control potions could pass through detrimental bills simply because their voice was so trusted by the masses.

Once it was assured that the pair were hale, healthy and possessed no illegal object or weapon they were ushered through the huge wooden doors, engraved with the seal of the Ministry which was then embossed with real white gold, hammered into place by expert members of the Goblin Nation.

The opulent chambers inside never failed to dazzle newcomers, with the elaborate black, white and gold mosaic floor and the rich mahogany bleachers with the comfortably plush wood and purple silk chairs. Rows of chairs were separated by a staircase lined with a rich purple runner and gold handrails.

The bottom level of the chambers were the busiest, with pages running back and forth to hand out the day's schedule of events to the members of the Wizengamot, reporters for each major and minor paper in the UK and some international papers scratching away with their quills and the Wizengamot scribe typing away on an old typewriter, filing which members were present for today's session as well as the name and titles of the presiding officials. The upper levels were peacefully quiet, raised far enough above the floor to allow the Lords and Ladies to peruse the schedule or speak quietly to each other without being forced to raise their voices.

Orion and Harrigan made their way to where Abraxas and Lucien were seated in the fourth level of the third section, near enough in the middle of the seven-section seating area. These were their customary seats, allowing a good vantage point and excellent acoustics so as to hear and be heard by their fellow peers. Harrigan took the seat next to Abraxas, letting Orion take the one on his other side next to Lucien. Abraxas handed them both a copy of the day's agenda and Harrigan hummed in thanks, crossing his legs casually and staring intently at the three pages embossed with the Ministry logo.

This appeared to be a quiet session, at least until Harrigan spotted the very last bill. Put forward by Dumbledore himself, it appealed for a restriction from the open practices of the Old Ways by students at Hogwarts as well as a release in the subject of Wizarding Studies and Religion for Muggle-raised students. Harrigan frowned just slightly, pointing it out quietly to his husband.

"I take it you spotted it, then? Clever of the old fool to hide it for last, he's hoping people will be too tired and ready for the End of Session to argue with him," stated Abraxas in a tight voice. It was
obvious by his voice and face that he was more than annoyed with the boldness of the bill.

"It won't go through," Harrigan promised his companions in a low voice, a sub-vocal growl almost audible in his voice.

Harrigan bided his time, waiting carefully. He flicked his gaze from their supporters to Dumbledore, sitting smugly in a seat so near to the presiding officials it nearly put him amongst them. Wouldn't he just love to be there officially, Harrigan mused. He wouldn't be, nor would he be part of this body at all someday soon.

Finally, almost three hours later, the disgusting bill came up. Dumbledore stood and made his speech, listing the statistics of students that had come to him and asked to be transferred to another class, had failed it outright or had not bothered to go in the first place. He finished in such a way that it projected the class was doomed to failure anyway and the practice of the religion could be done just as quietly as it was open now.

Smiling in an almost feral way, Harrigan stood slowly, regally. He rolled his shoulders back into a straight, imposing line, drawing the eyes of most the Wizengamot before Minister Bagnold had even turned in his direction. "Wizengamot recognizes Lord Harrigan Peverell-Black."

Harrigan allowed himself a small smile at the form of address, proudly acknowledging the bond between himself and the graceful, eye-catching Lord seated to his right. Then he looked straight into the bright blue eyes that contained a barely-withheld annoyance and said firmly, "Your proposal is all well and good for the Muggleborn and Muggle-raised students, Headmaster. But what message does it give to the students who are from magical families, those who have been raised from birth to celebrate unashamedly their connection to Magic and the Goddess? I can tell you now, it tells them that they are not worth as much to you, that their beliefs are lesser."

Harrigan took a deep breath and allowed his own magic to enter his voice, to flood his whole being. "This is in no way acceptable. Pureblood students actually have an option of Muggle Studies, but you listen to the whining and complaints of students new to our world and actually would change the whole of Hogwarts' curriculum to fit their demands? I can see wanting to make them more comfortable in their new world, but not to the point of bending over backwards for them. They have come into our world, they can put up with a single class that lasts half a school year."

"Our traditions, our beliefs, our government cannot be forced to change because of a few individuals that don't like the way it works. They are children, Headmaster, treat them as such. If they refuse to go to the class, assign them punishment as fits the system. If they deliberately fail the class or whine about it, make it clear that such infantile behaviour will not be tolerated and if they should think to fail it deliberately, make sure they know they will have to complete it again. It is our duty to educate them about what they are coming into, whether or not we change their minds is not even an
"If they are going to be part of this world, Headmaster, they need to know about every part of it, not just what appeals to their childish dreams and imagery of what magic is and it's history. The more we have individuals like this going out after graduation, unaware of our laws and their own obligations, the more we risk being discovered by the Muggle world and *that* is something we do not need."

Slowly, starting over in the second section and reaching all around the Wizengamot, people began clapping. Softly at first, it quickly gained in volume as even those that were on the lower level scurrying back and forth stopped and listened to Harrigan's speech. Dumbledore, who had been opening his mouth to object, closed it and gave Harrigan a glare so dark it was a wonder Harrigan was still alive.

Harrigan raised a hand in gentle acknowledgement of the applause and sat, leaning back. Abraxas leaned a little towards him and said with a smirk in his voice, "If eyes could convey spells I think you would be dismembered at the very least right now."

Harrigan looked over and snorted. "If he wants to bring such a one-sided proposal to the Wizengamot he should expect to be shot down like the child his behaviour matches. Honestly, what did he think such a proposal would bring?"

"Now that we have had our voices for and against the last Bill, we shall bring it to vote. You may only vote once, Yea or Nay. You may abstain from the vote if you feel that your voice is not necessary to pass or reject the Bill."

"Those for?"

Dumbledore raised his wand confidently, accompanied by less than half of the Wizengamot. They kept their wands raised as the vote was tallied, then lowered them and waited patiently.

"Those against?"

Harrigan and his three companions raised their wands, followed by the entirety of those who had not voted with Dumbledore. He could see a flush of colour rising in Dumbledore's face as he registered the amount of people who were voting against his bill.
"Final count is 20 for; 34 against. The bill has been rejected."

"Are there any other measures to be brought in today's session?" the Minister called.

After a short measure of silence passed, Bagnold called, "Then I officially declare this day's session to be closed. Clerk, note the official time. The results of the votes are to be published in the morning papers and be placed in the official court records. Thank you Lords and Ladies, please enjoy your evening and we will be back in session in a week's time."

Harrigan stood, walked down the stairs and waited for his husband, linking his arm through Orion's. The group of friends watched as Dumbledore huffily departed through the massive doors, snapping impatiently at one of the guards.

"One would think he'd lost an important battle, rather than had a bill shot down," Lucien commented offhandedly.

His companions chuckled, passing through the doorway in good humour and deciding on a celebratory dinner. After all, Lucien pointed out with a rather mischievous smirk, they had yet to share any details, interesting or otherwise, from their vacation.
Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

Here's an update, finally. This lifelong Harry Potter fan just got back from Universal Studios Hollywood, seeing Hogsmeade and Hogwarts up close and personal! What a wonderful place, if you can get the time and money together it is well worth the trip for the 'Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey' ride alone :D

Twenty-Five

Harrigan sat in his office, carefully writing on a long sheet of parchment. His self-inking quill and never-ending parchment were certainly coming in handy, this report was going to be truly massive. He set out and wrote this report far more carefully than anything else he'd written, laying it out just so and placing all of the truly damaging pieces of information where they would have the most impact. This was his final report for the Board of Governors after a year at Hogwarts School and he knew once they read these words, once they realised the amount of damage one Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore had been doing to their children, the future of Wizarding Britain, the man was done for.

The most gratifying part of this report was the fact that absolutely none of it had been falsified. The most damning pieces of evidence had come from students, willingly offered and backed with Veritaserum authorized by their parents. Sirius and his friends had agreed to speak with him, all but Pettigrew which bothered Harrigan for a reason he couldn't quite pin down. He would have offered to leave off the Veritaserum but unfortunately without it the testimony didn't hold the necessary weight. No matter, James, Sirius, Severus and the graduated Lucius Malfoy had given some of the most weighted evidence in the whole report. Harrigan could only commend Sirius, James and Severus on their courage to speak about the matter that had happened one night on Hogwarts grounds below a very dangerous tree.

The 'Willow Incident' as it was referred to was one of the most powerful pieces of evidence that Harrigan had towards the blatant favoritism by Dumbledore of one House over others. As much as Harrigan loved his stepson and was fond of his distant cousin the two boys should never have gotten away as lightly as they did for endangering the life of another student, leaving him exposed to a powerful, dangerous transformed creature. Yes he understood James had pulled Severus away, but he should never have gone down there himself in the first place. The right thing to do would have been to get a teacher, but he had been more afraid of his friend being expelled than what could have gone horribly wrong.

Harrigan slowly ceased writing, laid down his quill on a scrap piece of parchment and stood, stretching his cramping fingers. He stared out the window down to the Black Lake, pale jade eyes thoughtful. He had enjoyed teaching this past year, his classes had been entertaining, some of the
students were openly disappointed that he would not be returning the next term. All of his 7th year students had improved as both open-minded individuals and as witches and wizards, aside from one.

Lily Evans. Bright, beautiful, clever. A powerful witch despite her Muggle parentage, not that he had anything against her for her parents. No, his sole problem with her was her closed-minded attitude. She loathed the idea that Dark and Light were anything more than what she had conceived them to be at the beginning of her education, she refused to learn about Magical religion, tradition and laws. She was one of those that had refused to attend Wizarding Studies in her first year. It was a real waste. She would go out into the magical world after her graduation and find that very few doors would be open to her due to her lack of ability to consider other things than what she herself believed in.

Thoughts of Evans brought to mind another aspect he'd been noticing over the past year and it brought a twitch of a smile to his lips. It seemed the revelation of Sirius' relationship with Lucius and their mending of broken fences had been something of a cue for their friends. He had noticed that Remus and a rapidly improving Bellatrix were rather close over the past couple of months, often found in the Library researching more into a topic that had intrigued them in class. And then there were James' almost painfully shy advances towards Regulus, whom Harrigan could tell was close to reaching the end of his tether with his patience for James to finally make a move.

Severus remained in the close-knit circle of friends, from what Harrigan had seen he was getting steadily closer in his own reserved way to Lucien Lestrange's oldest, Rodolphus. The two suited each other, closed-off in public with sharp wits and an even keener mind. Severus was rapidly on his way to becoming a Potions Master of great renown while Rodolphus was no slouch himself, taking on the difficult, dangerous but rewarding field of Spell Crafting with the voracious appetite of a perfectionist.

Harrigan was very proud of all of them, honored to have been part of their education. He would never regret spending this last year with them, helping them grow as individuals and fostering the bright talents he had seen in them from the first moment he had met them only a year prior. He knew Orion was very proud of his sons, the smile that filled the man's face when either of them were mentioned enough for anyone to see how much he loved his sons.

No, he would never regret coming here. It had been an eventful year, but he certainly wouldn't have had it any other way. Harrigan turned back to his desk and seated himself again, studying the last several paragraphs of his report to pick up his thought process again. Picking up his quill, he set to it with a firm determination. This would be Dumbledore's last year here, he would make sure of it.

Regulus stood next to his father, gazing wistfully at the mass of students sitting arrayed by houses in the Great Hall. The usual tables had been removed, the students sat in individual seats. Standing or sitting around the edges of the Hall were their friends and family. With Regulus and Orion were both
Lucien Lestrange and Abraxas Malfoy. Abraxas' only son had since graduated, but the man was fond of his son-in-law and proud to be witness to his graduation at almost six months pregnant.

Fondly, Regulus remembered how much his brother had struggled over the past few months to keep up with his studies when his growing child was exhausting him at times. Hormones had not helped, particularly difficult classes had driven him to tears. Their circle of friends had always been around to help their fellow teen, staying calm and steady and not over-reacting to his emotional outbursts.

Regulus was struggling a bit with a growing sense of loneliness, all of his friends were graduating this year. He would be on his own in his 7th year unless he managed to reach out to a couple of his fellow students, something he had always struggled with. Sirius had always been his closest friend, up until Lucius' betrothal to Narcissa. After they began to fall apart he had grown to rely more on Severus and the Lestrange twins. It didn't help that his crush on his brother's best friend had moved to a full-blown infatuation and the stupid wanker still hadn't gotten over his sudden shyness to make a move.

His sharp mercury gaze found Sirius, sitting amongst his peers in rich crimson robes trimmed in gold with the Gryffindor lion emblazoned across the back. He looked dignified and elegant in his graduation attire, a warm smile on his face which was practically glowing in happiness and contentment. His sharp eyes found Regulus amongst the crowd and he smiled softly in understanding, realizing that his younger brother was maybe feeling a bit bereft.

Turning his eyes away from his brother's knowing gaze for a moment Regulus looked to the Head Table, or where the Head Table normally resided. Today there was a podium and a long row of chairs. Currently Dumbledore was giving some long, dull speech about graduation that had probably not changed much in the last century. Three chairs from the end of the row sat Harrigan, sharp jade eyes watching Dumbledore and listening intently to his words. Regulus smiled proudly at the sight of his stepfather, composed and elegant in black, silver and rich bronze robes.

Finally Dumbledore's speech came to an end. The students started clapping and Regulus' eyes narrowed in annoyance when Evans reached over a student seated between her and James to poke him in the arm and hiss, no doubt he hadn't been paying much attention to the speech. Only James' clearly hostile, annoyed body language made Regulus relax from his almost defensive stance. That narrow-minded female had her chance, she'd lost it years ago.

The students stood and Dumbledore began calling out their names in alphabetical order. One by one they made their way up, shook hands with each of the professors and took their scroll pronouncing them a graduate from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Regulus clapped firmly and a little bit loudly first for 'Bellatrix Black' and 'Sirius Black-Malfoy', then 'Rabastan Lestrange', 'Rodolphus Lestrange', 'Remus Lupin', 'James Potter' and 'Severus Snape'. 
He clapped politely if a bit distantly for the rest, such as his cousin Narcissa and the Evans girl. Finally it was time to announce the valedictorian and hear the student speech. There were several obvious choices, Severus, Rodolphus and Evans (unfortunately). To Regulus' absolute delight the announcement of top student went to one Remus Lupin, who looked absolutely shell-shocked.

Sirius started laughing at his friends' reaction along with James, who gave him a playful shove forward. Remus' little impromptu speech was well thought out, reminding students that while they had shared seven eventful years here, separated by houses, there was a big wide world out there that didn't care about your house, your grades or your sports records. He reminded them all that there had been a major threat to wizarding society not even a few months ago, to always be mindful of the past and open to what the future could and would bring.

Finally all of the graduated students took out their wands, holding them above their heads. Led by Remus they swirled them slowly, generating all of the colors for the various houses above the tips of their wands. Slowly, majestically they flung their wands forward, releasing all of the colors above the chairs where they had been sitting. They swirled together and after a bright flash of white light a shimmering, gigantic version of the Hogwarts Crest appeared with the animals actually moving within their sections.

This signaled a release of applause from the crowd and the students descending amongst each other in a big group, finding friends and hugging, laughing and congratulating each other as various parents made their way amongst the crowd, proudly seeking out their former student and congratulating others as they passed. Regulus took a page out of his father's book, at least he was going to. Then he saw Evans making her way through the crowd and placing her hand on James' shoulder, pressing close as she talked to him.

Incensed, Regulus stalked through the crowd. He reached his brother and his friends about the same time that James was starting to push Evans away, telling her he'd had enough of her behaviour. That was not enough to calm the rising inferno of emotions in one Regulus Arcturus Black. His family always got what they wanted and he would be damned if he was the first to let his slip by.

He caught James' eyes and snarled, "I have had enough of waiting for you to make up your blasted mind and make a move. You are mine!"

He took two steps forward, ignoring the surprised look on James' face and the amused one on their friends, rooted his fingers in James' purposefully wild looking dark locks and yanked the newly-graduated Gryffindor into a fierce, emotional kiss. It was better than he'd imagined it to be, at least until he heard an annoyed huff.

Breaking his kiss with a still breathless, shocked Potter heir Regulus looked directly at Evans and said, "Go away, girl. You had your chance and decided you didn't want him. We Slytherins don't
give second chances with what is ours. Open your eyes while you're at it, or do us all a favor and go back to the Muggle world you love so much!"

All of their friends burst out laughing and Evans stormed away with an indignant huff. Regulus stayed directly by his Gryffindor, absorbing their happy, amused chatter with a small smile. Yes it would be hard being away from them for a whole term, but he would make it. The future that awaited them all seemed bright indeed, it was worth waiting for.
10th June, 1977

Chapter Summary

Umm...hello? It's been forever, I know. No excuses, not this time. Here's an update. We're skipping the extraordinarily dull meeting by the Board of Governors and moving forward a couple of weeks at least, you'll see. Hopefully I don't get yelled at too much for skipping? Pretty please?

Harrigan strolled quietly through Malfoy Manor, leaving behind him the conversation between his husband, Abraxas and young Lucius on some political topic. While Harrigan enjoyed politics and the Wizengamot somewhat, it did get rather dull after the first couple of hours. There were certainly a few major battles left, but Harrigan felt safe leaving the topic alone for a while, instead searching out the recent graduates.

He found Sirius, James, Regulus and Remus in a small sitting room on the second floor, adjacent to the suite set aside for the Heir and his new Consort. Sirius had settled in well to his new life over the past six months, clearly enjoying normal life after the finish to his school career on the 1st of June, graduating students being allowed to leave before the end of the actual term.

In Sirius' arms as he sat and talked to his friends was a small bundle wrapped in a very soft silver and blue blanket, a truly tiny hand visible over the edge of the fabric. The babe was five days old, born a full two weeks early just a few days after Sirius had graduated. Despite his early arrival, the littlest Malfoy heir was healthy and strong, doted on by his entire family. Abandoning the usual route with godparents this little boy had two godfathers, James and Severus had both been surprised but honored with the position.

Sirius had promised to let his spouse name the baby, so the little one was officially Draco Lucius Malfoy. The first name had pleased his grandsire Orion but not so much Sirius, who thought his family tradition was overly used. As a compromise Sirius had been firm in adding Lucius as the middle name, wanting to honor his beloved husband. Lucius had conceded the point with admirable grace (he had wanted to name the babe Draco Sirius).

Harrigan walked into the room and sat next to his stepson, wriggling his fingers and getting a small chuckle from Sirius, who obligingly handed over little Draco, who was surprisingly heavy for all that he'd weighed only six and a half pounds at birth. The little boy had pale hair which was getting paler by the day and at the moment the typical bright cornflower blue eyes of a newborn. Draco was capable of being quite demanding, but at the moment he was content to sleep in Harrigan's arms, bright eyes fluttering closed and his small fist wrapped tightly around the edge of his blanket.
Harrigan stared quietly at Draco, mind wandering as he held the comfortable weight of the little babe in his arms. He could not have hoped for a better result from the meeting with the Board of Governors, they had voted unanimously to remove Albus Dumbledore from the school. Along with three Aurors the Board had gone to Hogwarts and quietly but firmly informed the former Headmaster that he had a week to vacate the premises or risk losing his retirement stipend from the Board entirely.

Originally they had thought to remove the stipend anyway, but some of the Board had reasonably pointed out that the man was going to be annoyed enough at losing his job, if they took the stipend away as well he was more likely to cause trouble for the school later on down the road or even immediately, what's to say he wouldn't curse one of the positions, like the Defense position seemed to be?

Jumping on the mentioned position, Harrigan had politely suggested that some re-structuring was needed for the school and the faculty as well. Binns for example, he had the lowest rate of passing students in the entire history of the faculty, even when alive. Not to mention the ghost was a dismal teacher, making what could be a very interesting subject a school-wide 'nap time'.

The newly installed Sybil Trelawney as well. How the woman had gotten the position of Divination was beyond Harrigan, but really the whole class needed to be revamped or removed entirely, with tutoring offered through the Education Department to those who showed beyond normal talent for one of the arcane gifts.

Something physical besides Quidditch wouldn't go amiss either, it would even tie in with Defense. After all, how could one expect to survive a duel with an opponent if they were badly out of shape, or if their opponent used a weapon, like magically-enhanced swords or daggers? Some of the Board had sneered at him originally for mentioning the idea, but they had been more thoughtful at the end, after all it was known that some preferred to use physical weapons aside from their magic.

And so the changes began. Minerva McGonagall had been passed over as Headmistress, much to her ruffled offense. The fiery Scot maintained a high level of respect amongst the Board, but part of Harrigan's review of the school pointed out that she was not the best nor most approachable Head in the school, preferring to maintain a professional attitude towards students.

Instead Filius Flitwick was approached. The diminutive but clever Charms teacher was a very good Head, installing a level of trust with his students and maintaining an 'open door, closed mouth' policy unless it was a matter that affected the student's health or the school at large. He was firm, taking no nonsense from students and not favoring one House over another.

Filius had been very surprised to be approached with the position of Headmaster, but after some consideration had taken the job, admitting that his teaching road was reaching an end, he was getting
on in years after all. He seemed genuinely pleased and excited about the changes coming to Hogwarts starting with the very next term, eagerly assisting the Board and their hired experts whenever possible.

The points system had been done away with entirely, now the still in place House Cup was based on academics, with a very small contributing amount from the school Quidditch games. The Houses themselves had been changed just slightly, more on the scheduling level so that each House had classes with the other three in each year, not just a couple or even one other. A new student position was added as well, the Mediator.

Harrigan had suggested this to the Board very early on in his term teaching at the school, it had been met with more enthusiasm than he had expected from such a radical idea. He had noticed that often when the Prefects and even the Head Boy and Girl had gotten involved in a student argument, the students with the higher responsibility and standing had usually wavered towards supporting their own House, even if they were in fact in the wrong.

To answer this entered the Mediator. Chosen from the sixth year students, the Mediator was a student that had shown over the course of their education to be far more impartial than most others, able to look at a situation with an unprejudiced eye. If students felt that their argument had not been settled fairly by a Prefect or Head Boy/Girl, they could request the presence of the Mediator. The whole argument would be suspended if the Mediator was in classes, then at the first available free moment the Mediator would listen to all sides of the disagreement and decide in favor of the correct group, not favoring their own House or even a friend's.

As Sirius, Regulus and their friends heard about the changes coming to the school through the paper or tidbits from the older adults they commented on them, usually favorably. Regulus looked actually very curious and excited to return to school for his final year, not quite as morose as he had been recently considering he would have to leave his brother and new boy friend behind. Regulus and James had signed into a formal courting contract, James presenting Regulus with a very masculine but impressively beautiful ring that had been in his family for a long time.

Bellatrix and Remus seemed content with a far more informal relationship, getting slowly and steadily closer as they bonded over dates and small, private outings. Remus had still asked Orion for permission, amusing Harrigan's husband immensely, though gaining his respect as well. Bellatrix may not be heir to any of the Black or Rosier estates, but she still had her family names behind her and a considerable dowry, though the young woman was actually unaware that Orion had considerably boosted his niece's paltry sum from her father.

Harrigan came out of his musings as Lucius walked into the room and approached where Sirius and Harrigan were sitting. Harrigan stood, reluctantly handing over the sleepy warmth of Draco to the proud young father, leaving the small room with a wave that few of the chatting teenagers noticed. Amused, he walked slowly through the Manor, seeking out his husband.
He found Orion outside on the back veranda, leaning against the wrought-iron railing and staring quietly out into the massive riot of carefully arranged colour that was the Malfoy gardens. The older man didn't notice his approach until Harrigan's body cast a shadow over his arms. He turned his head, a smile crossing his lips at the sight of Harrigan. Orion reached out a hand to Harrigan, who took it and allowed the older, taller man to pull him close, framing his shorter body against the railing with Orion's breath tickling the back of his neck.

Amused, he huffed out a short laugh and mock-glared at his husband over his right shoulder. Orion was smirking, clearly enjoying this little moment where he could smugly point out his superior height yet again. Really, it wasn't Harrigan's fault that Orion was taller than normal, he was a perfectly respectable 6'! Orion leaned forward and caught his lips in a kiss, passionate as usual but restrained, since they were still technically in plain sight.

Once Harrigan got both his breath and senses back after the kiss a warm, genuinely pleased smile crossed his lips, prompting a slightly quizzical response from his older husband. "I know you enjoy our kisses, Harrigan, but tell me what prompts that little smile of yours?"

"Can I not just be generally happy with life?" Harrigan teased back, breaking free of his husband's arms and stepping down onto the immaculate lawn.

Orion pursued with an amused smile of his own, long legs bringing him easily back into reach of Harrigan, who's pale green eyes glittered with a range of pleasant emotions. One skilled in reading such emotions as Orion could easily see happiness, contentment, love and a delight that puzzled the man slightly.

"Certainly, but your evasive answers are pointing at something specific, you know."

Harrigan shook his head with exasperated fondness, tilting his head to the side as he said, "How is it I can never hide anything from you for very long, Orion?"

"Maybe because you never truly try to hide anything from me?" Orion suggested, "Or perhaps my love for you and yours for me makes us an open book to each other?"

"I rather prefer the second," Harrigan smirked.

"You would," Orion retorted. "I hope the first, it will make guessing things much easier in my life
"You find me unpredictable then?" Harrigan asked, a false air of puzzlement in his voice.

Orion rolled his eyes, not something he did often. Truly he enjoyed the light banter with his husband, Harrigan was quick-witted and very clever. Orion had a feeling he would not get bored very often in his life anymore, Harrigan was not the most predictable of creatures.

"That false air does not become you, husband mine."

Harrigan huffed in mock offence, a traitorous smile crossing his lips gave him away however. "Oh fine, I can be slightly unpredictable. You can't tell me you don't enjoy it however."

"I do enjoy it, keeping on my toes around you keeps me in shape," Orion smirked, to the laughter of his husband.

"Fine, your persistence has won me over, as usual. Ask and I shall answer."

"What has made you so unusually bubbly, my love?" Orion replied, watching as Harrigan about grumbled under his breath at the word 'bubbly'.

"Well," Harrigan replied slowly, taking his time. "I have been contemplating our future. The removal of that old fool from Hogwarts is half our goal, the extended family of former students are all doing well. I also have an unlimited supply of teasing material for Abraxas with how much he dotes on little Draco."

Orion snorted at the last, knowing it was only the truth. Abraxas was very involved with his little grandson, not that Orion was any less involved. Generally he let the two parents handle the little boy however, offering a tidbit or so of advice and when truly bored and annoyed with his paperwork, a bit of babysitting as well, at least for a couple of hours so the young parents could take a break.

"That is not the extent of it, however," Harrigan continued. "I am also wondering what you are going to be like in about seven months, when a Healer places your third child into your arms."
Harrigan was studying his face, clearly waiting for his reaction. At first Orion didn't seem to realise what Harrigan had said, caught up in a few amusing memories of Abraxas hovering over little Draco. However, his husband's words slowly penetrated his thoughts, their meaning chasing hot on the heels.

Orion froze, his eyes lighting up with a wild range of emotion as he stared at his husband, needing confirmation of his words. Harrigan's smile widened and he dipped his head in a small nod. It took Orion only a moment longer to react, moving a pace forward and actually picking Harrigan off the ground to the younger man's laughter.

They spun in almost a full circle before Orion reluctantly settled Harrigan back on his feet, seizing his husband's lips in a searing kiss. Framing Harrigan's face with his hands Orion murmured, "I love you, husband mine."

Harrigan simply smiled, his expression answer enough.
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

I do apologize for making you wait this long, between my job, family issues and a true lack of willingness to write, this has been delayed FAR too long. I think it is time to bring a two-year old fic to an end, so this is the last official chapter of Black Fortunes. Only thing left is an epilogue. Thanks to all who have read this fic and stuck with me this long. However...I don't apologize for the end :D

Harrigan was plotting. Normally an activity that he indulged in with others, his current frustration had him keeping to himself. Occasionally he vented his annoyance with stubborn loopholes by blasting a nearby hapless ornament to smithereens. It did not solve his problems but it did help him relax and distract himself for a moment. Nearly since the birth of Draco the former Headmaster of Hogwarts had been quiet, no doubt building up to something he thought truly impressive. Harrigan knew the man wasn't going to be satisfied with merely humiliating Harrigan, Orion and their friends, he wanted to hurt them, destroy them even.

All the while, Harrigan had this burning feeling that something was going to go horribly wrong. He didn't know where, he didn't know how, but it itched at his nerves and drove him to distraction. So he plotted, hoping to cover every possible way the old coot could strike at them. He couldn't get to them through Regulus, the only student remaining. He was forbidden from entering school grounds again, let go from the educational department and forcibly retired. Those of the staff that had been his 'allies' so to say were under surveillance, making sure that they wouldn't help the former Headmaster out of some misguided sense of 'duty'.

His attempts to generate hype and worry with a 'Dark Lord' had failed as well. Thomas Riddle was in Azkaban prison under wards, vigilant guard and several dementors. Having grown up in a Muggle orphanage and with several murders already under his belt, his reaction to dementors was apparently very bad. Harrigan felt no sympathy for the psychopath, he would have happily carved a bloody path through wizarding England and very likely moved on to greater Europe afterwards if given the chance.

The only way the old man could attack them now was politically. At the moment there were no policies that seemed potentially dangerous, but perhaps there was something hidden in one of them. That seemed likely, with all of the political and legal jargon in each and every proposed measure, it would be very easy to sneak in something detrimental to a certain group of magical society. He would need to go over each and every proposed offer for the next session of the Wizengamot, which met in less than a week.

It would be a massive undertaking, there were almost twenty proposals for this group, a very large
number. Harrigan figured he would start in the middle and work his way towards the end, theoretically that would be the place that Dumbledore or one of his political allies would hide something harmful. By that long into session, most would be tired and mentally worn out, wanting the day's session to be over with. It would be very easy to sneak in something under tired noses and have it pass.

Plan decided on, Harrigan settled onto a comfortable settee and summoned a hot cup of tea. Might as well be relaxed and comfortable while working through pages upon pages of very boring papers. Harrigan riffled through the papers, selected measure 10 and began to read.

* Orion Black found his newly pregnant husband seven hours later, asleep on the settee with several measures spread out on a coffee table in front of him, another page covered with notes. Fondly he gazed at his mate for a while, amazed that he had found someone like Harrigan so late in his life. Part of him heavily regretted not having found him earlier, while the logical part of him reminded that he would probably not have his two sons and adorable grandson if that had happened.

He was very curious and excited about his newest child however. He was intensely curious what this little one would be like, would they take after Harrigan's looks or his own? He hoped it was more of the former, Sirius was nearly his miniature and Regulus not far behind. The Black family had very potent genetics, combined with their habit of inbreeding it made for very unique, striking features. One did not doubt when a witch or wizard had Black blood in their veins.

Orion privately hoped for a daughter. It was not considered a respectable thing to many pureblood families, having a daughter. He had never been like the vast majority of his kind however. He had two amazing, talented sons, now he wanted a little girl with Harrigan's pale jade eyes and bright smile to spoil. He wanted her so badly he could picture her very easily, she would be beautiful, clever and stubborn. A proud, independent young woman who would make a future husband (or wife for that matter), fight for her.

He moved quietly across the room and sat at Harrigan's head, drawing the fine, silky locks into his fingers and letting Harrigan use him as a pillow. He summoned the measures Harrigan had been reading along with his notes, choosing to read the notes first. Harrigan had been hiding himself away in this office for a few days now, working incredibly hard at something. There were bruises under his eyes and a slight paleness to his features that Orion didn't like.

Harrigan was far too stubborn and secretive to ask for help, so Orion was, for lack of better word, snooping. It didn't take him long into reading Harrigan's notes to realise what he was looking for and a gentle smile crossed his lips. Harrigan had beat him, Abraxas and Lucien to it, it seemed. They had been debating on what Dumbledore's next move was likely to be, only just yesterday deciding that one of the various new measures was the man's likely mode of attack. If they could find what it was, expose the man's real agenda, find some piece of evidence that would be so shocking it couldn't be turned down, they could get the man out.
Harrigan it seemed had come to that conclusion himself, starting to scan the measures for the phrasing and ideas that were Dumbledore's common weapons. Picking up the next measure on the list, Orion continued his husband's plan.

He had read two measures full of some of the most mind-numbing drivel he had ever seen when Harrigan stirred. The younger man sat up, gave a jaw-cracking yawn and summoned a house elf, requesting a cup of strong tea. Orion added one for himself as well, setting the last proposal down and leaning back with a sigh.

Harrigan noted his handwriting on the scroll full of scribbled notes and said wryly, "I take it you guessed what I was up to?"

Orion took a long sip of his strong black tea and said, "You actually just beat us to the punch love. Abraxas, Lucien and I had just decided that the most likely plan of attack was political. With the work you've already done over the past several hours if we each take two measures we can finish reading these proposals and start scanning them for the most likely candidate well before the next meeting of the Wizengamot."

Harrigan finished off his tea and laid his head on his husband's shoulder. "Good. I can safely say after this I shall never try and read that many proposals in a short period of time again. That is some of the most dry, mind-numbing drivel I have read in my entire life, let alone the past few hours."

Orion snorted, picked up the first four measures and summoned Dippy the house elf, ordering the elf to take the papers to Abraxas and Lucien. Once the elf popped out, the older man took the last four, handing two to his spouse. With a long, lingering kiss, the pair got to work.

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It had taken longer than they anticipated to find the sneaky piece that Dumbledore was trying to pass. To Harrigan's disgruntled annoyance, it was in the third bill, not later as he had guessed. It was very carefully worded, but once it was deciphered was truly frightening to contemplate. Dumbledore was trying to remove the Dark families entirely.

Oh, it wasn't worded as such, but he was calling for an investigation into the backgrounds and histories of many bills, looking to remove outdated information and 'change' some rules. The one listed as his example, however, was originally brought up by the Flints and was the precursor to the way students were currently accepted into Hogwarts as per the Charter. Harrigan and his small group of friends knew that if this bill was passed, Dumbledore would remove the Dark families contribution to the magical government entirely if possible and who knew what that meant for future bills and laws.
While Orion, Abraxas and Lucien were looking into ways to highlight Dumbledore's move and get it thrown out or modified, Harrigan was looking into ways to rattle the old man and his standing in the Ministry significantly enough to get him thrown out or imprisoned. It looked like after months of searching and investigating false leads he may have found just the thing. The most quarrelsome part of the whole thing had been speaking to Aberforth, Albus' younger, slightly strange brother.

Aberforth had been persuaded that getting his brother out of politics and his realm of influence over magical Britain was for the best, so he had provided his memories on the subject that Harrigan sought, knowing that his word wouldn't be taken well with the lies Albus had spread about his brother and his 'strange ways'. There was no love lost between the two and Aberforth had stated firmly that it would be 'good riddance' to be rid of his older brother, who had never gone without lording his success and power over his more average sibling.

And so, well armed for their fight against Albus, Harrigan, Orion and their two best friends entered the Wizengamot meeting chambers together, taking their seats and ignoring the rampant whispers that their presence and power encouraged. Harrigan leaned against his husband's left side, chatting quietly with Lucien over his boys, Rabastan and Rodolphus, who were both doing very well in their chosen careers as Aurors. According to Lucien Rabastan was even being considered for joining the Combative section of the Unspeakables, a magical equivalent to the MI6. It was impressive for a 19 year old to be considered, speaking to Rabastan's dedication to improving himself and his abilities.

The Call to Order sounded as the great doors swung shut, settling a quiet attentiveness amongst the Lords and a great deal of anticipation for Harrigan and his companions. The first two bills were debated heatedly by opposing sides, Harrigan listening closely but not bothering to speak on either one. Still, he made his decision and voted appropriately, surprising most when his choice on the second bill was in agreement with Dumbledore. He watched with private amusement as the old man seemed caught between a rock and a hard place, on one hand not wanting to vote alongside a Dark family, but wanting the bill to pass.

Next was the third bill. It had been decided as a group that they would let the people who had been chosen to offer the opposing sides give their opinions before raising their objection to the hidden clause. Speaking for the bill was one of Dumbledore's political lackeys, Lady Vance. On the opposing side was, surprisingly, Lord Charlus Potter. Harrigan watched appraisingly as his distant kin argued his point, surprising many with the fierceness of his argument. But then, the majority of Potters were from the House of Lions.

Once both seemed to have exhausted themselves, Orion stood. Harrigan was smugly proud of his husband's presence and influence, he drew the attention of the crowd effortlessly. Resting his hands on the balcony in front of him Orion leaned forward and said, "I have listened to both sides of this argument, there are things I agree and disagree with for both sides as I am sure many of you can agree. However, there is one thing I would like to bring attention to. If you would please draw your attention to the wording of the sixth clause on the second page, you may find yourself agreeing with
my concerns."

Predictably, Albus stood. "There is nothing wrong with that clause, Lord Black. I helped Lady Vance draft this bill myself."

Orion smirked. "Perhaps therein lies the problem, Dumbledore. To me, as well as most of our fellow Lords and Ladies, this clause and the bill that it lies within, gives the Minister and Supreme Mugwump the ability to dissolve any rule, or rewrite it, that they find to be obscure. You are not known for your tolerance of any but the Light families, Dumbledore. The very example you, I mean Lady Vance, list is that of the Flint family."

"You are trying to make the Lords and Ladies of the Wizengamot jump at shadows," Albus said scathingly. "As you well know, I am not Supreme Mugwump of the Wizengamot, so my decided preference for those whose actions show some sort of integrity has no impact on this bill."

Orion merely arched an eyebrow as a rise of angry mutters spread through the Lords and Ladies. Two seats down from Dumbledore an angry Lady Edgecombe snapped, "Well that was stereotypical in the extreme, Dumbledore. Are you implying that none of your precious Light allies families can do any wrong? I seem to remember a certain report filed against your behaviour in Hogwarts, as I recall it got you sacked!"

Harrigan coughed quietly to conceal a surprised laugh at the Lady's words, unexpected and surprisingly sharp. He hadn't thought about it, but his report really had paved the way to exposing Albus' prejudice and extreme favoritism for what fit with his point of view.

Albus seemed to realize he'd put his foot in his mouth rather significantly and attempted to backtrack, but the Wizengamot was unforgiving and not so swift to let his words fade. He was pursued, as if he were the next meal for a hungry pack of wolves who had been taunted for too long.

"The way I see it, Albus, you want to erase the influence that the Dark families have had over the Wizengamot for centuries and this is your stepping stone, no matter whose name is on the bill. I certainly am not jumping at shadows, as you so eloquently put it, not when you are the most likely candidate for the position of Supreme Mugwump when it comes up in the next few months," Orion timed his words perfectly, letting Albus sweat a little before regaining the attention of what was swiftly becoming an angry horde.

The bill was voted on, and Harrigan felt nothing but extreme relief when it was almost unanimously voted down. With this latest humiliation fresh on Albus' mind, it was time to go for the jugular on Albus' career and end his poisonous influence once and for all. Harrigan waited patiently, tapping a
folder against his knee as nerves and excitement flared near the end of the session.

Once the last bill was voted on, Harrigan stood. Acknowledged by Minister Bagnold, he began. Not even his husband and friends knew about this information, their reactions needed to be genuine.

"Minister, Lords, Ladies. When we elect someone to a public office here in the Wizengamot, they need to have certain qualities. The ability to persevere on their chosen course, integrity to avoid corruption and bribes, a good face with the public; after all we do represent the governing body for our country not only in day-to-day affairs but also overseas as a member of the International Confederation of Wizards."

"Most importantly, however, they need to have a clean background. Now, I'm not talking of infractions back in school, if eligibility for a public position was based on the amount of detentions as a student, well, the Wizengamot chambers would likely be a great deal emptier."

Several chuckles and nods accompanied his humor. He took a deep breath and continued. "The type of thing I am talking about is a criminal record, things like murder, embezzlement, fraud, perjury under oath. Sadly, one of our body is guilty of several of these things. I would like to raise an investigation, here at the end of session, into the suitability of one Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore as a candidate for the Supreme Mugwump position."

The rage on Dumbledore's face would have been a frightening thing to Harrigan, if not for the fact that he could see the fear in blue eyes even across the Wizengamot chambers. "I protest! These Lords have it out for me, can't you see that?"

"Protest overruled, Dumbledore. Sit or be silenced. Do you have proof of your accusations, Lord Harrigan Peverell?"

"I do, Minister. Copies of official documents as well as testimony provided by a witness, the brother of the accused, Aberforth Dumbledore."

"My brother is not a credible witness," Albus sneered. "He's a drunk with a record of his own, no doubt dips into his own stores in that dirty little pub."

Amongst rising whispers Harrigan remained still and calm. "Aberforth is well aware of how you have poisoned general opinion of him, which is why he has submitted Pensieve memories instead of a verbal testimony. No matter how drunk one may get, memories can't be easily forged, wouldn't you
agree? Certainly not by one you have often said is a very average wizard."

Trapped by his own words, Albus settled a fierce, annoyed stare on Harrigan and didn't reply. Harrigan handed over the Pensieve memories in a small jar to an official clerk, who brought them to the Minister. "Before we begin, what are the accusations against the accused?"

"Perjury in official court and first-degree murder," Harrigan replied, earning a stream of surprised hisses from the Wizengamot. Down in the gallery, court reporters were almost frantic to make sure their quills were copying every single word, watching the byplay with rapt attention.

The memories were played, and the shocked reactions of the Wizengamot to the intimate relationship Albus had shared with Gellert Grindlewald, the murder of his sometimes-stable sister Ariana after she witnessed them using Unforgivables on Muggles and the treacherous reality of his famous 'duel', which actually was him poisoning his very willing lover when Gellert had gotten cold feet and threatened to turn Albus and himself in after the death of Ariana were well worth it. Memory after memory played, all of them sharp and clear, captivating and holding the Wizengamot and gallery's attention.

When it was over, a shocked Minister dismissed the Wizengamot, holding back the official guards and pronouncing Albus Dumbledore to be under arrest pending more investigation into his activities. Satisfied, Harrigan looked in amusement over at his husband and friends, who were looking at him rather shell-shocked. Orion finally stirred, opening his mouth to make a comment.

Instead Harrigan spotted a burst of colour out of the corner of his eye as Abraxas tackled them both to the floor. Catching his head on the corner of a chair on the way down, Harrigan blacked out, the last sight in his eyes that of a pair of very scared, loving grey eyes.
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

Larissa f Greek Mythology (Latinized)
Variant of Larisa. It has been commonly used as an English given name only since the 20th century. In 1991 this name was given to one of the moons of Neptune, in honour of the mythological character.

Rhiannon f Welsh Mythology Probably derived from the old Celtic name Rigantona meaning "great queen". It is speculated that this was the name of an otherwise unattested Celtic goddess of fertility and the moon. The name Rhiannon appears later in Welsh legend in the Mabinogion, borne by the wife of Pwyll and the mother of Pryderi.

Dragos m Romanian
'Precious'

Galen m Celtic
'Healer'

Hadrian
Variant of Harry, Harrison. Roman Emperor who commissioned Hadrian's Wall.

Here it is, the epilogue of Black Fortunes. Thanks to all who have read this fic and stuck with me this long, you know who you are :D

Five Years Later…

A baby's cry broke the silence in the small room, bringing smiles and happy tears as the sound of the first indignant wail carried through. This little one's arrival had been highly anticipated, just like the recent rash of arrivals after that fateful day in the Wizengamot. Many things had changed since then, tears had been shed, anger had been voiced and acted upon, scandals uncovered. However, for the Black family and their friends, life had gone on.

Orion's smile and congratulations to the new grandparents were distracted by an annoyed-sounding whimper in his arms at the loud, distracting sound. He chuckled softly and soothed the babe in his arms, talking to his newest son with a quiet, steady tone. Only a few months old, little Dragos Galen Black was a handsome bugger, with Harrigan's pale features, Orion's rich black hair and silvery-green eyes. Once Dragos had drifted back to sleep, he looked over to see how Harrigan and Rodolphus were handling his nearly five-year old daughter, Larissa Rhiannon. Larissa was a beautiful little girl, with a full head of rich dark brown curls and the bluest eyes Orion had ever seen.

She was most certainly daddy's girl, Orion had been wrapped around her tiny fingers from the
moment she'd been placed in his arms, crying softly with those bright blue eyes staring at him. As his only daughter, she was perhaps just a little bit spoiled, but Orion turned a blind eye to that. It was a husband's duty to control his wife, not a father's. He indulged her shamelessly for the most part as Harrigan looked on, shaking his head in fond exasperation at his husband's lack of control.

Orion had nearly lost his husband and daughter five years ago, his new son wouldn't have even been a possibility. His grip tightened just slightly on Dragos, when the babe made a small noise of protest he brought him to his shoulder instead, savouring the warmth and baby scent from the full head of black hair resting happily on his shoulder.

Albus Dumbledore was dead. Five years ago in the Wizengamot session where Harrigan had revealed his shocking evidence about Dumbledore, Grindelwald and young Ariana Dumbledore's death, a lifelong imprisonment had been the future Albus had been looking forward to, not Supreme Mugwump of the Wizengamot. Enraged by the loss of both his seat as Headmaster and now his position in the Ministry, Albus Dumbledore had thrown a Killing Curse at Harrigan.

Orion had pushed his husband to the floor and braced for the impact of the spell. It had never come, instead the floor had vibrated from a body landing nearby. Amidst the screaming, shouting and echoes of spells flying in the room, Orion had turned his head and looked, afraid of what he was going to see. It turned out he had lost someone after all, just not his pregnant new spouse.

His dear friend Lucien Lestrange had been the one laying there, a peaceful blank look on his aristocratic features. Abraxas had been kneeling at his side, a look of shocked grief clear on his face. Not many had known exactly how close the pair had been, Orion was one of them. If Harrigan had guessed that the two were lovers, he hadn't said a word. And now Abraxas was staring at his long-time lover with a blank, lost expression on his face.

When informed of their father's death and who had caused it, Rodolphus and Rabastan had shown a horrible but understandable mix of rage and grief. The day after taking possession of the Lordship ring worn by his father, Rodolphus had stormed into the Ministry, into a full meeting of the Wizengamot court and demanded the death of the man who had killed his father. When faced with the grief-filled fury of the young man and the memory of his aristocratic, highly-respected father none of the Wizengamot court had been able to meet Rodolphus' eyes.

It had been unanimous, Dumbledore had received the Dementor's Kiss, which was about the same as a death sentence in the wizarding world. His body had not lasted even a half-hour without the soul to hold it together and not many had found themselves mourning a manipulative old man with far too many dark secrets in his past.

Their lives had been going well since that day, Larissa had been born without any further excitement in Harrigan's pregnancy. About two days after her birth James Potter had proposed to her older half-
brother Regulus, the pair bonding four months later. Remus and Bellatrix had continued to date informally, though Orion suspected that an engagement wasn't far off for the intellectual pair, who got along very well.

Today however it was time to meet the newest member of the family. Harrigan calmed their daughter, straightening her small dress with a smile and a few soft words to calm her down. She slipped her fingers into Rodolphus' hand, the other being held by Severus. Larissa was infatuated with Rodolphus, something that everyone in their little family group found adorable. She was often found sitting with him and Severus, curiously watching Rodolphus work on a project or asking Severus to explain what one of the 'big words' in his texts meant.

Moving towards the doorway, Orion motioned others through first, as such he was one of the last to enter the room and see the tired but besotted expression on his younger son's face as he cuddled a small bundle of blue blankets in his arms. Dark hair was just visible peeking over the edge of the blanket as well as a tiny set of fingers that were clenching the soft embroidered edge.

James Potter had an incredibly bright smile on his face as he gazed, besotted, into the small face from Regulus' right. Looking up, he grinned at their assorted family members and friends.

"Family, friends," he began with absolute joy shining in his eyes, "I would like you to meet our son, born on the 31st of October, 1982. This little one is Hadrian James Potter, named in honour of the one I think we can all agree made sure we were able to stick together. Without you, Harrigan, I'm not sure where I would be at this point in time. I can think of no greater way to thank you for simply being a part of my family than to honour you somehow in the name of my son."

Harrigan's eyes were bright with tears as he acknowledged James' words. Orion smiled at his husband, curled his left arm around he shoulders and privately echoed his son-in-law's words.

Thank you Harrigan, for truly turning around the Black family fortunes. Thank you beloved, for turning my life around.

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