Chosen Darkness
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**Chosen Darkness**

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**Summary**

An ostracised Harry trapped in the Muggle world starts plotting when a Dementor in Little Whinging forces to defend himself and his cousin. Harry’s choice to save Dudley changes his relationship with his cousin. If only that were all it changed...

**Notes**

DISCLAIMER: We do not in any way shape or form own Harry Potter or any other licensed or trademarked items that may happen to be present in this story. As sad as that may be...

This all came about from donnethan.valentyne.9 [Ff.net]/donnethan [AO3] wanting to read something and not being able to find it. soooo we took it upon ourselves to write it. It's new and definitely different but we hope you'll like it just as much as we do. Thank You!

AU after Book 4.
A tilted world

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Title: Chosen Darkness

Pairings: HarryxGeorge, FredxHermione, Future drarry

Summary: An ostracised Harry trapped in the Muggle world starts plotting when a Dementor in Little Whinging forces to defend himself and his cousin. Harry’s choice to save Dudley changes his relationship with his cousin.

Chapter 1- A tilted world

Apparently, wanting to know what was going on in the world was a crime.

Every time he wrote to Sirius, Hermione or Ron they brushed him off, told him not to worry about it or said they couldn't say in case the owl went astray.

The Daily Prophet was about useless with its feverous insistence that Voldemort wasn't back which was spoon-fed to them by Ministry.

He got sick of letters saying they were 'busy' and couldn't talk.

Hadn't he showed that he could handle things? He was a Triwizard Champion, he duelled Voldemort, he beat a basilisk and even beat the professors' chambers to find the philosopher's stone.

He was a bit miffed at the whole thing.

Of course he was lying under a window to hear the Muggle news because hopefully they'd at least mention anything strange...

The six o'clock news came to an end.

Aunt Petunia called out the opened window that was vainly attempting to make use of a non-existent breeze.

"Harry!"

Harry wiggled out of the flowerbed as silently as he could and dusted himself off.

"Yes?"

Aunt Petunia's nose wrinkled, "What were you doing napping in the dirt? Dudley's manners are better then that."

Harry sighed, "It's so hot that the closer you are to ground the cooler it is."

"Go call,
Petunia's words were drowned out by a loud noise like a gunshot.

Harry knew that noise; it sounded an awful lot like Apparating.

Who could it be? An Order come to tell him when he'd finally get to go stay with Sirius?

Petunia hissed, "What did you do?"

Harry frowned, "I didn't do anything."

Honestly he was getting sick of being accused of things all the time.

It started when he was young with Dudley accusing him of stealing his food...

Then it progressed to whatever mess Dudley made and blamed on him until the day it became quite clear he'd never do anything right.

Getting good marks ended up in arguments about his being a cheater or trying to upset his cousin. So his effort into school declined.

It wasn't until last year during the tournament that he actually tried to work on his studies seriously. Without Ron to distract him he had decent Marks. Nothing like Hermione but he did better then usual.

He actually managed to brew a few potions well enough that Snape was quiet, no insults but no compliments either. Which probably meant he did all right...

He hated being treated like a liar, a cheater and a thief...

You could act like a good boy and no one bought it.

If he was such a perfect Gryffindor why did the Hat want to put him in Slytherin?

"Don't lie to me boy." Petunia snapped.

"I'm not lying! I didn't do anything." He held out his hands, "I haven't got any sort of noisemaker."

"Fine! Don't go getting up to mischief. Go fetch Dudley for dinner; he's at Mrs. Polkiss'. They had him over for tea."

Harry nodded putting his hands in his pockets.

One thing was for sure Dudley most certainly didn't spend tea at a different mate's house every day of summer break.

Dudley spent his days beating up primary school kids for money and smoking on street corners.

Apparently his cousin had won some prestigious boxing match. Brilliant just let a bully get praised for being able to throw a hamfisted punch. Well he must have had some use for having served as Dudley's punching bag for eleven years.

Harry ambled Privet Drive towards the park he knew that he knew was frequented by Dudley and his 'gang.'

He found them but they were exiting the park by the Magnolia road entrance.
Since he'd come for no real reason he didn't see a need to actually call out to his cousin.

So he just trotted along behind him boredly, snatches of their conversation floating back to him.

It was rather boring since it was about some poor kid Dudley and his gang beat up.

Since he didn't want to be the next target he said nothing.

The group split up halfway down Magnolia Road, by the time Dudley reached Magnolia Crescent he was alone. Dudley was clearly hungry because he was already hurrying his whale sized frame.

It wasn't until they neared the alley that led to Wisteria Walk that Harry sensed trouble.

Month of them hovering around Hogwarts and you get to sense them.

Dementors...

What were Dementors doing in Little Whinging?

Harry wasn't skilled at 'Harry hunting' for no reason, he darted in front of Dudley and tugged his wand out.

"Dudley get down and close your mouth."

Dudley growled, "Get out of my way freak! I'll be late for dinner."

Harry scanned the area with a frown, "This is my world here. A monster is here Dudley the sort of monster that eats souls. I know you don't much care about me but have a thought for yourself, it will kill you if I let it. Personally, I'd rather not be accused of killing you."

Then cold filled the alley from both ends, a thick fog condensed around them. The indigo sky that was just beginning to shimmer with stars as they'd walked was blotted out like the shadow cast by a giant had fallen over them.

Harry hissed, "Back against the wall Dudley. Cover your mouth! Don't open it! Whatever you do don't open it!"

Dudley didn't argue with him, the fact that he was pointing his wand away from him probably had something to do with it.

"You know stories about grim reapers and boogie men? That's what's causing this. So stay still."

Harry heard the Dementors take long deep breaths, which he remembered from Remus' lectures that were their way of tasting a prospective victim.

"Hang the Restriction on Underage Sorcery!" Harry muttered, "Lumos."

The wand lit up the alley so bright that that Harry quickly realized that there were two Dementors just like he suspected.

"I don't think you can see them but I know you can feel them. Stay behind me. I'll keep them away."

Harry closed his eyes and selected his memory of Sirius inviting him to live with him.

He yelled, "Expecto Patronum!"
His stag leapt at the first with his horns up and tossed it into the air before whirling and landing hooves first in the other Dementor's chest.

It writhed and screamed which was more like a loud sucking sound before it seemed to smoke.

Pinned the ground by a Patronus it couldn't free itself and the light from Patronus apparently managed to kill it, leaving nothing but a scrap of rotting black fabric.

The stag looked bored.

Harry had an inspiration, "Find Padfoot. Tell him that there were Dementors in Little Whinging but I'm alright for now."

The stag bowed and then leapt into the air.

The sky, stars and street lamps at the ends of the alley had popped back to life. They had always been there just beyond the foggy island of cold dark despair. The sight of them was like the promise of heaven.

Dudley had slid down the wall and was shivering, his hands still clamped to his mouth.

Then their neighbour and Harry's sometime babysitter Ms. Figg ran into the alley panting. She looked panicked, her grey hair falling from its hairnet and her tartan carpet slippers were half off her feet. Clutched in her hand was a string shopping bag full of cat food cans.

Harry let out a pent up breath and began to slip his wand back into his back pocket.

She hissed at him, "No! Don't put it away! There might be more of them. I told Albus not to hire him. He's unreliable. Mundungus is nothing more than a sneaky thief."

Harry frowned at her, "Who?"

"Mundungus Fletcher is your Order Bodyguard. You think that Albus would leave you with You-Know-Who around without protection? Really leaving you to my care? Over a bunch of cauldrons that just happened to fall off a broom! You're more important then a handful of sickles. I'm going to beat him or better yet, mince him and feed him to my cats I will. Come along we've got to get you out of sight." Ms. Figg said wringing her hands.

Harry blinked at her but turned to Dudley, "The monsters are gone. It's okay to breathe now."

Dudley was looking a bit ill and blue in the face.

Dudley was shaking as he unwrapped his huge arms from his face and took in great wheezing breaths.

Harry held out a hand, "Come on. In case the one that got away decides to come back lets get out of here."

"To find a more defensible position." Dudley gasped.

Harry stared at him.

"I pay Warcraft and D'nD!" Dudley growled, "I know that you don't want to get trapped in a place like this. Seriously, what a team to fight monsters with: a wizard, a cat lady armed with a shopping bag filled with tin cans of cat food and me."
Harry snickered, "What would your parents say if they knew you played a game like that?"

"They shouldn't have bought me a computer for school." Dudley retorted weakly. "Everyone plays it at school. Sort of like what is that game you play?"

"Quidditch it's played on a broom and I play for my House." Harry said dully.

The three unlikely companions made their way to Ms. Figg's at Number 7.

It was filled with cats that at closer glance reminded Harry of Crookshanks so they must be part Kneazel.

"I'm not a witch Harry, I don't know what to do." Ms. Figg said wringing her hands.

"Chocolate." Harry said frowning, "That's what Remus gave us it has a calming affect.

"I can't have chocolate because Snowy's allergic to it and she adores it."

Sighing Harry called out, "Dobby?"

Not even sure if the elf could hear him.

It took two minutes for the elf to appear.

Dobby appeared and grinned, "Master Harry Potter sir be calling Dobby? How can Dobby help Harry Potter sir?"

Dudley let out a girly scream making everyone else look at him oddly.

"We had a bit of a run in with Dementors. Would there be anyway we could get chocolate?" Harry asked.

Dobby grinned, "Dumbledore buy Dobby chocolate with his wages. Dobby gladly share."

The elf disappeared with a pop.

Harry nodded, "I knew I heard the crack of apparition before."

"I told you that was Mundungus. He's never been very quiet about his Apparating. He likes to make an entrance and an exit. The useless fool."

Dobby came back with a large bar of chocolate.

Harry accepted it gratefully and broke off half for Dudley, "Since it's made the Muggle way I'm sure it's safe. I know Colin gave some to his dad before."

Dudley stared at the chocolate.

Harry smirked taking an indecently large bite, "See? It's not poisoned."

"What's that?" Dudley stammered.

"I is being Dobby. You is Master Harry Potter's cousin. Master Harry Potter sir is the greatest of wizards and is very kind. Dobby is a house elf. A free house elf. I is liking being paid. Dobby hasn't many friends. Dobby is odd among his kind."

Harry sighed, "Just eat the chocolate Dudley."
Dudley, who never met a sweet he didn't like tore into the chocolate and moaned. "This is the best I've ever eaten."

Harry smirked, "I know."

Ms. Figg's door opened and the strong smell of alcohol and sweat filled the room.

A short man in a ragged overcoat with bandy legs entered, an invisibily cloak over his arm. He was swaying. "Wot's up Figgy?"

Ms. Figg got in his face, "Dementors you lousy sneak thief! I told you not to leave your post. Now your charge is in a lot of trouble no doubt! Dementors. If you'd been here then you could have dealt with them and saved Harry the trouble."

"Ain't you the cousin?"

Dudley sneered, "Yeah, what's it to you?"

"Ya cast magic in front of him?"

Harry snorted. "It may be a violation of the Decree against Underage Sorcery but it's hardly that bad. I probably saved his life. Dudley already knows about magic because he knows I'm a wizard."

Dudley nodded, "Yeah."

"You go do something useful and go tell Dumbledore."

Mundungus stormed out

A large tawny owl flew in Ms. Figg's open window.

It landed on Harry's shoulder and stuck its leg out.

Harry had a sickening feeling as he opened it.

'Dear Mr. Potter,

We have received intelligence that you performed the Patronus Charm at three minutes past nine this evening in a Muggle-inhabited area and in the presence of a Muggle.

The severity of this breach of the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery has resulted in your expulsion from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Ministry representatives will be calling at your place of residence shortly to destroy your wand.

As you have already received an official warning for a previous offence under Section 13 of the International Confederation of Warlocks' Statute of Secrecy, we regret to inform you that your presence is required at a disciplinary hearing at the Ministry of Magic at 9 a.m. on the twelfth of August.

Hoping you are well,

Yours sincerely,

Mafalda Hopkirk

Improper Use of Magic Office
Harry blinked at the comment about his wand. He looked at Dobby. "I know you aren't allowed to have one. But take my wand to Sirius Black. I'd rather be without it then give it up to be snapped. I don't care what anyone says the Ministry isn't getting my wand."

Dobby swallowed nervously, "You know they'll kill Dobby if they find out."

"Who would tell? We've got a Muggle, a squib and an expelled wizard." Harry snarled. "Besides you owe me. It's your fault I got my room turned into a jail cell. You know you're the one who destroyed Aunt Petunia's crystal bowl."

Dobby wrung his long fingered hands. "Dobby take it but Dobby not touch it."

Harry tugged off his sweat and dirt stained t-shirt, "Keep that." He wrapped the wand in it, "Hurry!"

Dobby disappeared with a soft pop.

Dudley frowned, "That's not right! You got expelled for protecting me! You saved your own life. It's self-defense! I know I'm not very bright but even I know that you can defend yourself. Is this because you might of killed one?"

Harry snorted, "They're just mad because I used Magic in front of you."

"I already know about magic! That stupid giant man of a man gave me a pig's tail." Dudley huffed, he pulled out a pack of cigarettes and frowned at Ms. Figg, "Do you mind?"

She shrugged, "It's not illegal and you need to cool off."

Dudley lit it and then handed it to Harry, "You need it too. Start with small breaths. Don't breathe too deep at first."

Harry took it, he stared at it a moment before he took a puff. He let out a sigh, "Damn, that feels nice."

"You try living as mum's pet. It's sick all her babyish nicknames. It's like I'm a dog or something. They don't know anything about me. You know what's funny? I'm not great at academics but I'm a whiz with computers. I'm designing my own games. I don't want to work for Dad at Grunions, I want to make video games. Maybe even work for Wizards of the Coast on a WOW expansion pack or a new game..." Dudley groused puffing away.

"I don't know what I want to do years from now. I know it's fifth year and I'm supposed to know but I don't. Not yet." Harry shrugged.

They were starting to relax when the next owl arrived.

Harry opened it with a sigh, letting out the smoke he'd just inhaled.

Harry -

Dumbledore's just arrived at the Ministry and he's trying to sort it all out. DO NOT LEAVE YOUR AUNT AND UNCLE'S HOUSE. DO NOT DO ANY MORE MAGIC. DO NOT SURRENDER YOUR WAND.

Arthur Weasley
He snorted. "Already did. Just not to them. I hate the lot of them." He crumbled the letter and threw it. He glared at the owl, "No reply. Dumbledore'll sort it out? Hah! Lock me up all summer and leave me here for first time in four years for my birthday and tell me to hang on? I'm sick of this. 'Keep your nose clean Harry. Stay out of trouble Harry' Like Sirius would be a good boy and stay out of trouble! Sirius is innocent and Dumbledore didn't even try to get him off! If they have their wands it's got to be simple to check who blew up a fucking street!"

"Well you better be heading back. Dudley's parents will be worried sick it's past dinner."

The two boys sighed and left the house. They both stared at Number Four with surprisingly equal loathing.

"You know when I have kids I won't spoil them. A guy wants a dad to tell him what he can't do, to tell him about rules and stuff. I've seen what sort of parents my friends have and I'm jealous. Mine just give me stuff and praise me but I don't think they really know me." Dudley muttered.

Harry chuckled, "You? With kids?"

Dudley coughed, "There is a girls school near mine. There is this really nice girl I've met through socials. I started boxing to get in shape. I'm a bit embarrassed about my weight."

"What if you have a magical kid?"

Dudley shrugged, "Not tell mum. I'd probably try to find you and get you to help. I'm... sort of sorry for being an arse to you. You saved my life from the dementors..."

"Dementors." Harry corrected.

"Dementors." Dudley echoed. "I know I've been horrible but I don't think you're a waste of space anymore. I only picked on you because I was jealous, you were smart and the teachers praised you. The only class I did better in was Phys Ed."

Harry smirked, "Only because you made sure I was picked last."

They reluctantly crossed the street and made their way inside.

"Diddy?"

Dudley winced, "Hi mum. Is there any dinner left?"

"You're late! Harry! Didn't we send you fetch him?"

Harry opened his mouth to speak.

"I talked too long with my friends. Harry tried to hurry me up but I ignored it. By the time I realized it was this late something bad happened."

Uncle Vernon threw Harry to the ground, "What did you do to my son?"

Dudley did something unexpected, "Get off him!" he threw his father down the hall, then leaned over and held out his hand, "You okay Harry Monsterslayer?"

His mother stared at him like he'd grown two heads.

"I'm used to it Big D." Harry shrugged. realizing he was shirtless, he awkwardly missed his shirt it would have protected him a bit and cushioned his fall.
"It's not right." Dudley grumbled. "When I said something bad happened that doesn't mean Harry did it." Dudley was standing between his parents and Harry. "There were these monsters that attacked us on the way home. Harry saved me! I couldn't see them but they were scary. They blotted out the sky, the stars and the streetlights; I couldn't even see my own hand. Then Harry pulled out his wand and told me to stay back. The monster would have sucked out my soul. Harry saved me and he even killed one of the Monsters. It was like being dropped in a frozen pond at night. It was cold and dark. It felt like all my happiness was being drained. Sort of like vampire drinks blood."

"You saved my Dudders from a Dementor?" Aunt Petunia gasped.

Harry stared at her like he'd never see her before, "You know about Dementors?"

"What's a Dementor."

The three spoke as one, "Dementor."

"I heard - that awful boy - telling her about them - years ago," Petunia said jerkily looking apologetically at Uncle Vernon. "They didn't get your...soul did they?"

Dudley snorted, "Of course not! Harry told me to shut up and cover my mouth. They didn't get within five feet of us. I didn't see them but I saw the shiny ghost deer thingy."

Harry blinked, "You can't see Dementors but you saw my patronus?"

"I saw dark smoke coming from the spots where the deer thing attacked. I think it tossed the first into the air and the other it tackled to the ground." Dudley frowned.

"So what's..."

An owl flew through the window.

Harry snarled, "Not another one! Jerks. I'm surprised they haven't shown up yet. Morons at the Ministry! You'd think they'd actually investigate. They let me off last time! But noooo, just because I said You Know Who returned, I'm the bad guy!"

He tore open the letter.

Dear Mr. Potter,

Further to our letter of approximately twenty-two minutes ago, the Ministry of Magic has revised its decision to destroy your wand forthwith. You may retain your wand until your disciplinary hearing on the twelfth of August, at which time an official decision will be taken.

Following discussions with the Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the Ministry has agreed that the question of your expulsion will also be decided at that time. You should therefore consider yourself suspended from school pending further enquiries.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Mafalda Hopkirk

Improper Use of Magic Office

Ministry of Magic'
Dudley peered over his shoulder reading with him. "Idiots! So now you're 'suspended' not expelled. You save our lives and they want to punish you? What are they trolls?"

"You know Big D if you had an ounce of magic you'd make a fine member of my quest."

Dudley punched him in the shoulder grinning, "I'd take you any day."

Aunt Petunia looked scandalised.

Vernon's face was so purple it looked like his head would explode.

Another owl, it looked like Ron's Pig the tiny owl was so ADD it was insane. He caught the owl in his fist and took the letter.

"What now?" Vernon snapped. "I'm sick of these damn owls."

'Dobby just told us what's happened. What were you thinking giving up your wand to a house elf? Especially at a time like this? Don't leave the house again, whatever you do.

Hermione'

Then Harry looked at the owl. It winked at him.

It wasn't Pig at all.

"Well...you should eat." Petunia stammered.

"Yeah come on Harry." Dudley said slinging a friendly arm on his shoulder.

They ate a strained dinner.

The adults looked like they were in another world.

Petunia was clearly in shock and Vernon looked apoplectic.

Dudley dished himself and Harry decent plates of food. Technically, he gave Harry half his normal portion.

Which made them even more visibly upset.

"Hey Harry does your lot have old-fashioned notions about saving someone's life? We learned about it in Anthropology. It used to be believed that is you saved a life you owned them until they saved yours and you were even or something."

Harry shrugged, "I don't know. I've saved a few people and no one mentioned it before."

"You remember Dwayne and Eli who were a few years ahead of us in school?"

"Yeah." Harry said between bites.

"Remember that big fight they had during recess and then they were best friends?" Dudley said after a swallow of milk.

"Yeah why?"

"That's you and me. Only you saved my life or at least my soul. You're a decent bloke. Don't let them kick you out of Hogwarts. You're happy there and you've got friends. You actually do your
homework. I bet you could do anything you wanted if you want. Maybe you should teach those
idiots a lesson."

Harry was thoughtful. "That might be fun. You know Dudley you might have an idea. Paint me into
a corner and see what I do. Cage me and poke me with sticks I'll lash out."

The cousins ate dinner and wandered up stairs.

"I've got two things of chocolate you want one?" Harry asked boredly.

"Is it like the chocolate the elf had?" Dudley was practically drooling at the idea of more of that
decadent chocolate.

Harry nodded, "Two huge boxes."

Dudley grinned, "Diet or no diet I can't say no to chocolate."

Harry pulled him into his dreary room and popped up the loose floorboard. He pulled out one of the
boxes of chocolate he was sent for his birthday.

"Consider it a late birthday present and a thanks for standing up for me." Harry handed it over.

"Where do you get them?"

"From Honeydukes. I'll buy you some before I head home next June."

"Can't you send me some for Christmas or Easter?" Dudley whinged

"In some ways you haven't changed at all, still whinging for sweets." Harry snorted.

"Felt bad that day. You looked so out of place without anything. I did it on purpose 'case mum
wouldn't get you anything." Dudley admitted ruefully.

"Huh?" Harry blinked.

"The Knickerbocker Glory." Dudley chuckled. "Consider it eleven years of birthday cake."

"What?" Harry stammered.

"I was embarrassed you weren't getting anything so I made a stink about not having enough ice

"Can Dobby talk now?"

Harry smirked, "You still an owl?"

The house elf smirked, "No." he changed back, "They're going get you tomorrow night. Dobby
overheard them arguing after Dobby handed over the thing." Dobby shivered. "Your Padfoot was
gonna kill Dobby. If Herm had't said Dobby was a friend they would have. Dobby hand over
thing. They start yelling. Dobby tell that Master Harry Potter give it over for safekeeping. They yell
more. Then they decide you must be taken tomorrow.

"About freaking time. They're late this year. Some friends. I've heard more from Hermione then Ron.
Ron's keeps trying to sound important but Hermione sounds upset she can't talk. My birthday present
was writing in Hermione's handwriting. It said from Ron and Hermione but it wasn't. Ron actually
forgot my birthday after I forgave him for his abandoning me and calling me a cheater last year. I
'save' him from the Black Lake and he calls me an idiot. What a waste of time that was, especially since he was never in danger geez." Harry grumbled.

"So he's leaving tomorrow? What time?" Dudley frowned.

"Dinner?" Dobby offered. "Having issues trying to figure how to get them out of the house."

Dudley smirked tapping his box of chocolate, "Tell them I'll handle it. I'll start a hue and cry about waiting to eat out. They won't want to believe tonight happened or that we're friends. Clean up this mess Harry. I'll bring you the spare key to your lock in the morning, as Dad's going to want to lock you in. Make sure you eat decent. We studied the effects of anorexia in health class. Sorry Harry I didn't realize the health issues of missing meals before. That's why I try to leave extra. If I'd known Jasmine before I'd have stuck to the diet the school nurse put me on. I'm just eating less and trying to get exercise. I don't exactly beat up kids, I challenge their elder brothers to street fights. I'm not beating up little kids. That boxing match I won the guy was out cold for over half an hour. If I punched a kid I'd probably kill them."

Harry sighed, "Pack? Is getting out of here tomorrow what are they getting at? Leaving me locked up and kept in the dark with regards to what's going on and now they'll let me out? No offence Dudley but this house is hell."

"That's why I'm going to tutoring after school and I'm in study groups. I'm going to go to college so I can get away from this house." Dudley nodded.

"Dobby tell that Mister Dudley get the weird mean Muggles out."

"Thanks Dobby. Tell them I'd really like some answers." Harry snorted.

"Well I'm going to turn in. Between the fight and the Dementor I'm beat. Have a good summer Harry and make sure you get off clean. You need me, you know when I'll be." Dudley said holding out his hand.

"Doubt they'll listen to a Muggle. They tend to dislike and not trust you." Harry scowled but shook the offered hand.

"So did you. But you saved me." Dudley retorted.

"Good point Big D."

"Night."

Harry was left alone.

He and Dudley were friends, he was suspended from Hogwarts and he was going to be taken away tomorrow?

The world seemed very tilted right now...

Chapter End Notes
Harry woke to being shaken.

"Wake up you lazy prat."

Harry woke up to see Dudley with a tray of food.

"It's not much just eggs, toast and sausage. I brought orange juice. Here."

Harry was surprised, his cousin brought him breakfast?

"It's not going to vanish on you and it isn't a joke. I cooked it but I'm decent. I figured if I was going to live on my own I ought to take a cooking class. Mum sure won't teach me."

Harry sat up and accepted the tray.

Sitting on it was pack of cigarettes and a hot pink lighter.

Harry frowned.

"With the days you've got coming up you'll need them. I've only got two packs left or I'd give you more. I'm going get Gordon's brother to buy us more. I'll give him the winnings from my next fight. I try to only smoke outside when they're out or I'm out. Maybe you've got an older friend or two who'll get 'em for you. Sorry about the lighter, Jasmine gave it to me. I'm just not crazy on pink."

"Don't worry Dud, I actually kind of like it. Besides, it's a Zippo." then Harry tore into his breakfast, "It's good."

"What you think I'd poison you or something? Seriously. I can cook. Mum about had a heart attack when she came down and I was cooking. I said I missed her birthday cause I was in school and thought I'd do something nice for her for once. She actually started crying." Dudley scoffed, "Wanted an excuse to bring the leftovers upstairs. Told 'em I made too much and that I'd eat it later. Figured if you're going away I oughta at least be sure you eat one decent meal today."

"Are you treating this like a quest?" Harry teased between bites of toast.

"If I had a little magic I could see your world. I'm a bit jealous really. It's the one thing I can't have." Dudley admitted ruefully.

"When you're eighteen I'll take you to the Leaky Cauldron for a drink." Harry offered.

Dudley frowned, "Won't you be underage?"

Harry snorted, "It's a Wizard pub and they'll serve me when I'm seventeen 'cause that's when I'm
legal. Since you're a Muggle I oughta follow your rules."

"Why don't we go for your birthday? Just call me your...what's Old Figg again?"

"A squib, that means her parents had magic but she doesn't." Harry offered as he dug into his eggs.

"Yeah call me your squib cousin. Surely they'll like me better if I'm a squib. I mean my aunt and uncle were magical, you're magical so I'm almost a squib."

Harry burst out laughing and choked on his eggs.

Dudley pounded him on the back., "My food isn't that bad."

"No...I have a friend who called himself that. His parents were magical but he's kind of weak." Harry shrugged.

"Well I'd rather be a squib then a Muggle and a wizard over a squib. I think Magic's pretty cool and I wish I could do it. I won't tell you're a wizard but I'd like to see what you can see."

"Trust me things like Dementors no one wants to see. They are like rotting corpses, slimy like it's been in water, wearing a black cloak. They don't have eyes but they have these hideous mouths. They feed on happiness and souls wanting to drain you of both." Harry said drearily.

"What happened that gives you nightmares? And who is Cedric? Your boyfriend?"

Harry blanched, "What?"

"I've walked past your room at night sometimes. I've heard you screaming 'Not Cedric! No! Please don't be dead!' so what's that about?"

"I saw him murdered." Harry hid his face in his hands, "The man who betrayed my parents and got them killed, killed him. I suppose being his thirteenth murder it gets easier. I hate him. I almost wish I'd let Sirius kill him. Then maybe Cedric would still be alive. We weren't dating but we were rivals. We were in this dangerous tournament and we won. His reward was his death. Mine." Harry rubbed his scar from the knife subconsciously, " was that I helped bring the guy who killed my parents back. He was sort of a ghost but they put him back in a body."

"The evil wizard that the giant talked about is back?"

"Yeah. So they've ostracised me with no news, a lot of people like the Ministry don't believe me about Voldy." Harry grumbled. "I show up in shock, panicked and bleeding while clutching a dead body. I had to get dragged away. Of course the person who took me away almost killed me. It seems to be part of my school life that something or someone is always trying to kill me."

"Crazy. If I had to watch someone die I'd probably have nightmares too." Dudley admitted ruefully.

"Tell me about it." Harry muttered turning to his breakfast.

"Well your room looks a bit better. Shouldn't you do laundry?"

Harry nodded, "My dirty clothes are in that old box."

"Well hurry up and finish eating so you can get on with it. I'll talk dad into going out to eat. Don't forget we've got an appointment."

"We'll got to the Leaky Cauldron on my birthday. Promise." Harry finished his breakfast and handed
the tray back after taking the cigarettes and the lighter.

"Let me know if you get off. I'm sure that owl of yours can find me."

"Kay."

"Now go wash your clothes."

Harry stretched, "Yes Master Dudley sir." Mimicking Dobby.

"Oh shut up." Dudley said shutting his door.

Harry realized there was something cool in his hand. He turned the lighter over to find a key taped to it.

Damn wasn't Dudley ingenious, what do they teach in Warcraft?

Harry hid the lighter, the key and the cigarettes in his trunk before heading down to do laundry.

Chapter End Notes

A/N yeah, i know. cliff hangers... sadly, you'll just have to get used to them as I'm sure they'll be abundant... *sigh*
Chapter Notes

WARNING: this will eventually be a Male/Male, SLASH, Yaoi (whatever you want to call it.) story. And if you don't like it... well, we could care less but you should probably stop reading sometime soon as we're continuing on regardless.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 3- A snarky Harry

Dudley smuggled him up a sandwich and a bag of crisps before Uncle Vernon locked him in.

Harry sat back and waited.

The Dursleys weren't gone thirty minutes before he heard a crash and clatter from the Kitchen.

Harry frowned and unlocked his door with the key from Dudley and tiptoed down the stairs.

The house was dark and he could hear stumbling.

"Oh dang it all! Lumos!'' came a female voice he didn't recognize.

Standing there in the light of the wand was a girl with purple hair, Mad-Eye Moody, Remus, a tall bald black wizard with a gold earring, a slim woman with black hair and bright eyes, an older man with a white beard and the man with the purple frock coat and hat he remembered meeting twice before.

"Well he looks like I always imagined." The girl with purple hair said, "Wocher Harry."

"We ought to be sure it's him. Don't want to bring a spy back with us." Moody muttered.

"What's your patronus?'' Remus asked.

"A stag like Prong's." Harry frowned.

"That's him." Remus smiled warily at him as he held out his wand.

Harry shook his head, "As long as I don't have a wand, I can't get it taken away. I won't let them take it and snap it like they did to Hagrid."

"A wizard without a wand is a Muggle." Mad-Eye glared at him.

"So?"

Remus pulled out a leather holster like he'd seen some of the older students with. Remus put the wand in it, "I know it's late but happy birthday. Its from Padfoot and Moony." He held it out to
Harry, "Hang it from your belt. Hermione mentioned you lost it during the Riot last year at the World
Cup. It's charmed against Expelliarmus and summoning charms. I choose it cause it looks just like
James'."

Harry unbuckled his belt and put it on. Even with his Muggle attire it seemed to fit him nicely. It was
fashioned with black dragon hide and what looked like silver. "Thanks I guess."

"This place is really clean. Scarily so. My dad's a Muggleborn and he's a bit messy." the purple
haired witch whistled.

Harry snorted, "Everyone on this street but Figg is like that, the pretentious snobs. It's so clean you
could eat off the floor. I ought to know she makes me clean it like a house elf most of the time. Can
we go? I'm packed already and I can't wait to clear out of this hell hole." Harry stated darkly

"Watch yourself laddie." Mad-Eye snapped.

"Why? They hate me and I loathe them. Only decent one's Dudley and I didn't know that 'til I save
him from Dementors and got myself in trouble. What's with that anyway? If this place is so safe how
in Godric's name can Dementors and Ministry Owls find me? Nosy useless morons at the Ministry.
Dudley's right, they've got brains like trolls." Harry retorted.

The two women recoiled along with the black guy and the old man.

Remus groaned, "Please watch your mouth Harry. You'll just get yourself in worse trouble with
them."

"It's a witch hunt I tell you. I'm sick of this nonsense. If one of you will summon my trunk you can
get me out of this place. The sooner we leave the sooner you can all be rid of me and can go back to
insulting me in private where I can't hear you." Harry snipped crossing his arms.

"We can't leave without an all-clear." Remus said exasperated.

"Why? If we're invisible who cares?" Harry snorted. "How are we supposed to be leaving?"

"By broom." The purple haired witch offered toying with the handle of hers.

"Between my Firebolt and my invisibility cloak I'm practically non-existent." Harry shrugged. "I
want to be out of here before they get back. Dudley said he'd get them out of the house but not how
long he could keep them out."

Remus sighed, rubbing his temples and muttered, "Accio Harry's trunk."

Harry dug out his invisibility cloak and his Firebolt. He pulled on the cloak leaving only his head
visible. "Somebody shrink that for me and I'm ready."

A silvery patronus, a weasel arrived and talked in Mr. Weasley's voice.

"No sign of wizards or witches. It's clear."

Harry smirked, "Can we go then?"

The others seemed stunned at him.

Mad-Eye was furious and Remus resigned.

"Alright but we all stay in formation. If anyone dies keep going even if our package is a brat. Albus
told me he was good kid."

Harry snorted.

Remus poked him, "Please behave."

"I am 'behaved'. I'm sick of being trapped in this house and told to be a 'good boy'. I defend myself and now I'm the evil spawn of Satan even in the Wizarding World. Really like it s my fault Voldy's back! If I'd realized that the scum coming was Wormtail maybe I'd have done something and Cedric would be alive but no I was an idiot child who didn't realize the danger, injured and relying on a pathetic Hufflepuff!" Harry spat.

"Cedric was a great guy!" the purple haired witch snapped.

"Oh really? He had to get spoon-fed the challenges by me a Fourth Year and the Fake Moody. A giant Man-eating spider I saved him from really would have eaten him if I hadn't saved him. I told him to take the Cup but he insisted I do it. We shared it and he got killed because he was too stupid to react like the adult he was and take up a defensive stance. I'm sorry he's dead but its partially his fault." Harry fumed. "I'd like to know how the Ministry explained his death away if Wormtail didn't kill him on Voldy's orders." Harry shivered slightly at the memory of Voldemort's 'Kill the spare'.

The purple hair witch crossed her arms. "You're very different then I thought."

"Sorry to disappoint you." Harry snorted.

"He's in a temper like Lily." Remus sighed. "We should go." He shrunk Harry's trunk and handed it to him.

They made their way towards the kitchen casting disillusionment charms on themselves with the exception of Harry.

Harry climbed on his Firebolt.

Remus disillusioned the broom and cast sticking charms on the cloak to hold it to the broom and Harry.

Harry could somewhat make out his adult companions.

They surrounded him and they all kicked off together.

Following Remus who seemed to reluctantly take point.

Mad-Eye was behind them and his staring did not improve Harry's mood. He really didn't care much for that weird ass eye...

Harry was sandwiched by the two witches who didn't seem to like him much.

That was fine with Harry he was not out to make friends with Adult strangers. He was peeved with adults in general and it would take quite a bit for Remus and Sirius to get on his good side.

Chapter End Notes
Harry's first impression of 'Headquarters' was that hiding it between two Muggle Houses was idiotic. It was dark, dreary and who the hell lived here?

Remus led him inside.

The first thing that Harry noticed was he was tackled by a large black dog and licked to death.

"Gerroff." He said shoving the dog off.

The dog shimmered and turned into Sirius who was pouting.

"Come on! I have seen you in months! Let me be a little happy you're here."

"Oh I'm happy you all finally saw reason to get me out of that hell hole and I'm grateful to be anywhere but the Dursleys, the pretentious rotten gits. I'm furious you had me spied on by a useless moron who let me be attacked by Dementors. I'm on better terms with my cousin, thank Merlin I have an ally in that terrible place now. But I blame you adults for letting me be in such a situation. You have me ostracised as if I did something wrong. Ordering me to be a good boy and stay out of trouble. Yet one of your number let me get in a fix like this. I'm suspended and its not fair. I'm mature enough to know life isn't fair if it were I'd be a normal boy with parents but no I'm the thrice damned Boy Who Effing Lived."

"Feel better?" Sirius asked warily.

Harry nodded. "For the moment. Now if you'll show me where I'm sleeping I'll toss my stuff."

"You're sleeping with me." Ron interrupted.

"The hell I am." Harry snorted. "I want my own room. If I'm going to stay somewhere I want some space that's mine. Not a dormitory I share with other boys or a room full of unwanted junk that should have been put in the bin."

Sirius chuckled, "That's fine. I'll put you in my old room and Ron can move elsewhere."

Harry followed Sirius up a steep staircase framed by walls with peeling paper and mounted house elf heads.

He was led into a room that was decorated in Gryffindor colours and covered with posters of still motorcycles and Muggle women in skimpy bikinis.

Harry was sick at the sight of them. "No thank you. Ron can kip in here and I'll find new accommodations."

He walked across the hall and opened a door to find green and silver, the four-poster had green velvet curtains and the wood was black. Carved into it were trees and dragons.
"I'll take this."

There were no practically naked women. There were some tasteful tapestries but no posters or paintings.

"What? Why do you want Reg's room?" Sirius stammered.

"Well I think the Gryffindor thing in the other is overdone and two I don't like the look of those posters. Besides the bed is cool and it looks comfortable. Who is 'Reg'?"

Sirius sighed, "My brother Regulus, he was a year behind me and a Slytherin. He was the family's 'good boy' because he was a Slytherin and did everything he was supposed to. He even became a Death Eater the summer before his would be seventh year. Died though. It was in the paper. No cause of death was given. Father died soon after. He didn't take the news well. For an absentee father ruled by my mother, he died over that? I never understood him."

"Well I like this room and I'll sleep here." Harry said stubbornly as he pulled his trunk out, "Can't you unshrink this?"

"No. The wards are created to keep the ministry from sticking their nose into Black business. Even the Trace is null and void here. You can use all the magic you want and the Ministry can go fuck themselves."

"Sirius! Language. Hello Harry."

Mrs. Weasley…

She hadn't sent him anything for his birthday either. No cakes, no fudge, no food... not even one of those idiotic sweaters she was so fond of forcing on her brood and so yeah he was bit miffed with her too.

"Hi." Harry ignored her mostly, "Finite incantatem."

"Aren't you in enough trouble for using magic?" Molly snipped.

"I have permission. The Ministry can go hang themselves. I had no choice but to do magic. I really don't care what they have to say. They aren't getting my wand and if they expel me I'm never returning to the Dursleys. I hate them, they hate me."

"Now Harry I know they're Muggles so they are a bit different and not like us."

"Not like us? Hardly, they hate magic. They hate me and I don't much care for them either. They told me my parents died in a car accident and my father was a unemployed drunk. They made me sleep in a cupboard and work like a house elf. My window had bars on it again. There is a cat flap in my door and I'm locked in my room when I'm not supposed to be cleaning. So pardon me if I wish my aunt would accidentally burn down her house someday while cooking and my uncle gets killed by one those giant drills his company makes." Harry said with his back to them.

"Harry such venom it's just not like you. I thought you were a sweet boy…" Molly said with a sad tone.

"Sweet? Me? No just ask Snape. I'm a spoilt arrogant little brat who can't be bothered to apply himself. My aunt would gladly tell you I'm a worthless little freak who will never amount to anything. My uncle said that Hogwarts is St. Brutus' School for Incurable Criminal Boys and I'll end up in trouble with the law some day. His sister thinks I'm not being punished enough and wants to
have the school informed to beat me more because its obviously not having the proper affect."

"Harry I'm sure your relatives wouldn't say anything like that." Molly said shaking her head at him tutting.

"Oh really? Ask your husband what sort of people he met when he blew out their electric fire last summer? They still aren't happy and had to buy a new one last winter because it never worked right after 'our lot' meddled with it. If the Ministry bothered to deflate my aunt and Obliviate her why didn't they do the same to the rest of my Muggle family?" Harry snapped exasperated as he went to put his clean clothes in the wardrobe to find them full. He set his own clothes down and held up the shirt to find it fit roughly.

"Well I assume that's because it was an accident so they didn't bother. Besides it was accidental magic." Molly said shortly.

"Well my first warning wasn't even my fault! It was Dobby's. He levitated the crystal bowl and then dropped it when I wouldn't promise not to return to Hogwarts. The punishment for that was to be locked in my room, to have bars put in my window and to have Hedwig padlocked in her cage. If Ron and the twins hadn't borrowed your precious flying car I'd still be locked in there."

"Maybe Percy is right and you do try to get attention on purpose."

"People like you are reasons I don't trust or like adults." Harry muttered. "Can I have these? I know they are old but they are great sight better then mine. I'll give the rest of my Muggle clothes to Dobby maybe he can make a quilt for something with the junk."

Sirius shrugged, "If you want Reg's clothes I don't care. No one else wants them."

Harry glared at Molly, "Really? I lied and said Voldy was back, I killed Cedric, summoned Death Eaters with a Dark Mark I don't have and pretended to be Voldy. I cast the Cruciatous on one of his followers for disloyalty. I sabotaged the tournament; I was responsible for the death of both Crouch's. Oh and I gave myself rope burns, cut myself with an invisible knife and I've been in touch with Ron's rat Scabbers."

"Really," Molly sniffed, "There is no reason to be like that."

"Hah!" Harry threw his 'clean' clothes in a pile then and dug out his pink Zippo and the cigarettes. He shoved them in pocket and stormed off.

"How rude! Walking off in the middle of a conversation!" Molly grumbled.

Harry turned and glared, "Only to keep myself from inflating you like I did Aunt Marge."

"Where are you going Harry?" Sirius called out.

"Somewhere in this house away from her!" Harry snarled stomping off.

Leaving Sirius and Molly to argue.

Harry found a dreary cupboard down the hall that was obviously a linen closet and banished a good patch of dust. He leaned against the window and lit a cigarette taking in drags. He was extremely grateful to Dudley for introducing him to smoking and for giving him his first pack.

Molly! What a bitch! Why in the world was she invited to the Third Task as his 'family' anyway? Why not Remus and Padfoot? He looked for them but they didn't come until after he ended up in the
infirmary. Then Dumbledore chased them out right away with errands for his fucking Order.

So he was a bit miffed with everyone.

He kept puffing away…

Then he was startled by a large popping noise.

Standing there was one of the Weasley twins.

"Harry? What are you doing here?"

"What you doing here?" Harry retorted still smoking.

"What's wrong?" the twin said sitting next to him.

"No offence but which are you?"

"George."

"Seriously?"

"You think I'd lie to our investor and secret partner?" George asked frowning.

Harry shrugged, "I'm a bit out of trust at the moment."

"I heard Mum, she's a bit out there. I'm not fond of her at all."

"Who is?" Harry drawled puffing away.

"Since when did you smoke?"

"Since a Dementor tried to kill me and my cousin." Harry shrugged.

"Wow. I never pegged you as a real delinquent. I mean sure you slipped out of Hogwarts using the map a few times when they kept you locked up thinking Sirius was out to get you. Batty the lot of them." George said companionably.

"I didn't here from you all summer either. So why you being so nice?"

"We were trying to buy a place and sneaking off to file paperwork to make our mail-order service a legal company. Sorry mate. Didn't mean to seem like we're ungrateful. I mean if it weren't for you we'd be sunk. Especially with that cheating git Bagman tricking us out of our life savings and paying us with Leprechaun gold so he bankrupted us. We were told it wasn't safe to send you owls so we saved our letters to give you when we saw you. Acio letters to Harry Potter."

Letters flew through the cupboard door.

George caught them and handed them over. "I figured since it was you were our investor we ought to account for how we spent the money even if you didn't want it. Our lawyer said it was a good idea. He insisted we make you one-third partner for legalities sake even if you didn't want it known. Besides I remembered how upset you were getting no letters in second year when they were sent so I wrote you a lot but I wasn't supposed to send them."

Harry found ten when he counted, "Really?"
"Well I figured you wouldn't want to be forgotten so with a stack of letters you'd know you were important to someone." George shrugged.

"Ron didn't even bother to send me a present and he only owled once." Harry grumbled between drags and skimming the letters.

"He's acting pompous. He's like a junior Percy." George scowled.

"What's been happening?" Harry asked not looking up from his letters.

"Well Percy got promoted, the git. Mum's beside herself and Dad is furious with him."

"What do they have to do with each other?"

"Percy is junior undersecretary to the Minister and there is an Anti-Dumbledore campaign at the Ministry. Dumbledore's being accused of lying about Voldy being back to make trouble. They had a row the week after term ended. Dad and Percy screamed at each other, they almost came to blows. Mum cries when you mention Percy and dad destroys things by either shattering his glass in his hand or hurling it at the nearest wall. He might loose his job because he's friendly with Dumbledore. If we get the shop up and running maybe he can work for us. Rather Dad didn't work for a bunch of idiots like the Ministry anyway."

"Wow. Anything else?" Harry snorted.

"Yeah the reason Ron's acting like a git is because he's a prefect. Some moron decided that's apparently a good idea. Have you see his marks? Are they crazy?"

Harry choked on his drag, "They did what?"

"McGonagall looked like someone threw a dungbomb under her nose when he announced it. They both came to 'congratulate us' before announcing that we'd be soon moved to Order Headquarters if they wished to retain their membership for our 'own protection.' Thank Merlin we took our Apparition exams at the end of April before this all went nuts. I can so see them denying us our apparition licenses until we swore some loyalty oath to the Ministry. Fat chance." George grumbled.

Harry snorted incredulously, "Ron's prefect? He can't even be bothered to do his own homework he always guilted Hermione into it. His marks last year have to be atrocious since she wasn't helping him by doing his work for him."

"Oh that's what he's been doing? I'll be sure to tell Fred that. He's been drooling over Hermione since she got here. He keeps saying she got hot. I just don't see it."

"Fred likes Hermione? I thought he was with Angelina." Harry frowned.

"Yeah right. He's a born playboy. Something like Uncle Fabian apparently or Sirius, I heard them swap stories." George shivered.

"Cold?"

"No a bit disgusted. I'm not interested in girls." George shrugged.

"What? You're a poof?" Harry asked banishing the cigarette butt.

"So? It's not like it's a crime or anything. Anymore then smoking is. So what if I like wizards? I don't really like witches much. Angelina would be alright if she stop trying to capture Fred. I wish he'd
leave Hermione alone, she's a decent sort. Really didn't you think it odd I never attended the Yule Ball? I was holed up in my secret potions' lab all night. I didn't see any reason to make some girl think I liked them by inviting them." George scowled. "Besides, the guy I was going with invited someone else."

"I didn't know it was okay to like guys. I've been raised to think it's bad." Harry shrugged.

"You're not a freak, you're not a liar or a cheater. There is no reason why you shouldn't be allowed to like whoever you like. You're Harry Potter you can like whoever you want." George grinned teasingly. "Even if it's a Slytherin..."

Harry was startled, "What?"

"Oh nothing." George chuckled to himself.

The door was pulled open.

"Oh there you are. Dinner's ready. What is that horrid smell?"

Harry glared at the speaker.

It was Ginny.

"Hi Harry." She simpered and batted her eyelashes.

"What is wrong with you? You got something in your eye?" Harry frowned at her.

She blinked at him, "No. Aren't you coming?"

"Did your mother cook?" he snarled.

The soon-to-be Fourth Year recoiled, "Yes?" she squeaked.

"Then I'm not hungry." Harry glared. "I'd rather starve in case she slips potions in my food to make me 'behave'. I don't trust her at all."

Ginny's eyes filled with tears, "Why are you so mean?"

"Because I'm sick of being treated like a child, a waste of space and a bad boy. I'll avoid your mother as long as we stay in the same house." Harry proceeded to light another cigarette.

Ginny started coughing and ran the door slamming behind her.

"Good riddance." Harry drawled.

"I know she's annoying but did you really have to take your anger out on her? Mum's trying to talk Sirius and Albus into having you two betrothed."

Harry snorted, "Betrothed? To her? Are you nuts? She's an annoying little girl who blushes and runs out of the room when I'm around. She just has a hero complex with me since I saved her life in the Chamber of Secrets."

"She likes you..." George frowned.

"So? She's only someone's little sister to me, an annoying one at that. Why do I care if she likes me?"
"I'm not fond of her either and she is a bit annoying." George admitted with a non-committal shrug. Harry noticed George eyeing his cigarette and passed him the box. "Help yourself."

Arguing out in the hall interrupted their quiet room.

"Hermione and the Icky Prefect." George grumbled lighting the cigarette.

The door was thrown open.

"First you insult my mother and now my sister? What in the world is wrong with you Harry?" Ron snapped.

"I wanted a little privacy. As for your mother she was being rude so I told her off. After that she expect me to come with my tail between my legs and apologize so I can eat? No way. I want nothing to do with her. I won't apologize either. It's not my fault your sister has some idiotic crush on me. I'm not in the mood for a lecture from a false friend like you. Don't put on airs 'cause some twit made you of all people a prefect."

"You're just jealous because I'm prefect and you're not." Ron tossed back spitefully.

"Why in the world would I want that thankless job? I'm no Percy." Harry snapped, "Besides I have no reason to want to enforce rules. Who would make someone like you prefect? Hermione does your homework. If she's dumb enough to keep doing it after they make her Prefect I'll turn her into McGonagall myself."

"I've only been helping because we're friends." Hermione admitted quietly.

"Ron takes advantage of you because he's lazy and won't do the work himself. He conned me into doing the same thing because we wasted time and couldn't do the work in time. I am sorry I did that. It was stupid and cheating. I did a lot of thought being trapped in that evil house with Mad Muggles."

"Harry!" Hermione chastised.

"Don't Harry me. I've got no patience for people who ignore me all summer. Don't tell me what to do. Ron even forgot my birthday and didn't bother to write once. You didn't even tell me your supposed 'best friend' that you were made a prefect."

"I was sworn to secrecy!" Ron snapped.

"So what?" Harry hissed, "I'm supposed to care? You left me to rot there with no letters and not even a present. Hermione put your name on hers. I'm not stupid."

"We were told it wasn't safe." Hermione protested.

"Really," Harry said still smoking, "I supposed to care? I nearly get killed by Dementors and my friends can't even be bothered to check on me?"

"You sent your patronus and said you were fine." Ron scoffed, "How did you do that? I thought that was an Order thing."

"I told it to tell Padfoot. It must have. Really a fifteen year old says 'Dementors have just attacked me but I'm fine', who wouldn't want to check on them? Oh wait I'm Harry Potter the crazy cheating mad brat. The great freak that lives to ruin peoples lives. The boy who got Cedric killed. Who helped bring Voldy back. The dreaded Heir of Slytherin." Harry said scathingly, "What's the next
accusation? I'm truly insane? I'm lying? Oh maybe I've joined Voldy and become a Death Eater. That'd be new. I'm regular Dark Lord 'cause I can talk to snakes." Harry snarled spitefully.

"Well," Hermione began in a shaking voice, "I think they are trying to make you look a bit mad. So they can keep saying You Know Who's gone."

"Really," Harry said dryly.

"Thanks to Skeeter's article about your scar, the Daily Prophet is painting you as a deluded, attention-seeking person who thinks he's a great tragic hero or something. They've been slipping in snide comments about you. When they print a far-fetched story, they add something like, 'tale worthy of Harry Potter', or if there is a funny accident or anything it's, 'lets hope he hasn't got a scar on his forehead or we'll be asked to worship him next. It's all tripe. Nothing in the Daily Prophet this morning about Dementors in Little Whinging or your suspension. It seems that they hushed it up. Probably waiting until you are officially expelled or something and then they can release some nasty article or something. I think they are trying to portray you as the Boy Who Cried Wolf or in this case 'Cried Voldemort'." Hermione swallowed.

"Worshiped? Hah!" Harry snorted blowing smoke right into their faces. "The Wizarding World can go hang themselves. Voldy's back and I'm the mad one? Well see I save their asses this time. I'd rather have my parents then this ridiculous moniker and fame for some idiotic thing I don't remember."

"I know that Harry." Hermione said exasperated. "I had Fred fetch me books on Wizarding Law this morning. Remus had to go run off to Little Whinging yesterday and today. Molly wouldn't get them for me when I asked. She told me 'to not worry my pretty little head about it and to leave it to Dumbledore'. He can't even help Sirius and he's the Great and Powerful Oz when it comes to trials. He's the Chief Warlock and oversees all trials. He could demand a trial for Sirius but no. I'll trust him to get you off? No way. You really shouldn't be in trouble at all, if they abide by their own laws, there's no case against you."

"You're an expert on Wizarding Law 'cause you read few books? Really Hermione listen to mum and leave it to the adults." Ron snorted.

"I said I wouldn't. I probably know more then they do anyway! I've got an IQ of 300 and a photographic memory. I'm a walking library." Hermione tossed back.

"Then why reread Hogwarts, A History if you're so smart and what is an IQ?" Ron scoffed.

"I like rereading and an IQ is a Muggle measurement of something called an Intelligence Quotient. The closest person in the world is a woman named Marilyn and she's only 228. According to Muggles I'm the smartest person in the world so there."

"Well they aren't very bright are they? A bit dim I'm sure. I bet Dumbledore's smarter then you. Look at what he's done?"

"If he's so great and he can take out Dark Lords, why didn't he deal with Voldy? Let them fight it out like Muggle schoolyard bullies. I'm not involved. I'll let the adults make a mess of things while I sit back and laugh." Harry snorted puffing away on his cigarette.

"Why are you like this? And when did you take up smoking?" Hermione snapped.

"You have no right to tell me what to do, you're not my mother. I'm smoking because I want to. It's apparently not illegal in the Wizarding World. I started yesterday. Dudley gave me one after I saved
"I don't know. Maybe Remus or Sirius would. If you like I can be your legal representative. I can toss all sorts of laws to get you off if you like. I have to have your consent of course." Hermione assured him stammeringly.

"Why should I let you? Two sentence owls that weren't worth the ink they were written with? Normally I get more than that." Harry sneered.

"I'm sorry! I don't have an owl and we were pretty forbidden to write you. I have to wait until you write me and well when I got here I was informed you weren't going to be here for your birthday. I thought you'd be upset so I ordered some chocolate from Honeydukes and sent it anyway. I figured Ron who was bragging about being a Prefect wouldn't dare send you anything so I put both our names on it. I wanted you to know you weren't forgotten. I did write you." she shakily handed over a journal. "I normally write my notes in these. All the parchment got to be a pain. So I scribbled letters and notes when I was alone. I kept it on me so no one would read it. I'm sorry I didn't write properly but here it is."

"You wrote him when we were told not to?" Ron gasped. "Are you trying to lose your prefect badge before you got it?"

Hermione snapped, "Of course not! I was being as good a friend as I could. I didn't agree with the adults. The twins are of age and your mum is refusing them entrance into the Order it's insane. They aren't kids."

George chuckled, "Don't let Fred hear you speaking our defence."

Hermione blushed. "Why?"

Harry and George exchanged glanced and burst out laughing.

There was a pop.

"Is this a private party or can anyone join?" Fred asked.

Harry and George snickered.

"Hermione said mum's nuts for not letting us join the Order."

Fred turned to her, "Really? Aren't you a brilliant beautiful witch for saying such a kind thing."

Hermione coughed, "I only said the truth."

"Mum's not nuts for refusing them. They are still students and ought to focus on school. How many OWLS do you have between you? Seven?" Rob sneered.
George sighed, "Wrong! I passed all my OWLS with Outstandings and Exceeds Expectations. I just had a fake results paper ready for her to read that said I only achieved Charms, Defence and Herbology to annoy her. I made sure I didn't achieve twelve Outstanding so I wouldn't be in the paper. Didn't you think it was funny I still was in Snape's NEWT Potions class? Really with all the products we make you think I wouldn't be exceptionally keen in Charms, Transfiguration and Potions? I make 'em. Fred sells them. Sometimes he comes up with Ideas but I'm the one who has to make it work. Merlin you are oblivious. Rotten git."

"Don't talk to me like that, I'm a prefect." Ron sniffed. "I don't believe you."

George sighed and pulled out a many times folded piece of parchment. "Georgius Cabal Weasley Ordinary Wizarding Levels: Charms- Outstanding. Defence Against the Dark Arts- Outstanding. Transfiguration- Outstanding. History of Magic- Exceeds Expectations. Care of Magical Creatures- Exceeds Expectations. Potions- Outstanding. Ancient Runes- Exceeds Expectations. Herbology- Exceeds Expectations. I only really apply myself to classes I like. I don't like to rub my marks in people's faces. I'm no Percy but I did take Alchemy, it's pretty interesting but only available to sixth and seventh years. I dropped Care of Magical Creatures to take it. I thought Hagrid would be a cool teacher but the class is a joke I learned more from the library or from Charlie. He had the highest marks on a Care of Magical Creature NEWT since Newt Scamander himself and that was before they re-did the exam."

"What about you Fred?" Hermione asked looking very interested.

"Same roughly except I didn't take Ancient Runes." Fred shrugged. "I passed all my OWLS. However I did not achieve an Outstanding in Potions. I choose to achieve an Exceeds Expectations knowing Snape wouldn't let me near his NEWT potions class with that. I had an Outstanding in Care of Magical Creatures, Transfiguration, Defence and Charms. I choose to have Exceeds Expectations in everything else."

"You're lying." Ron glared.

"No. you're just being obtuse. If we showed mum those marks we'd never hear the end of it. You'll never tell her. Obliviate." Fred said pointing his wand at Ron, "You have no memory of being told our OWLS. You are going to go tell mum that we're not hungry and we're not coming down."

Ron looked a bit glassy eyed as he made his way woodenly out of the room.

"So if we're not eating with them what are we doing?" Hermione frowned.

Fred transfigured the empty shelves into a set of chairs and a table. "Harry if you would be so kind as to ask Dobby to bring us something we can eat privately."

Harry called for Dobby who was only too pleased to bring them food despite it being summertime.

Harry rewarded him with the news that there was a pile of clothes in his room here for him on the floor if he wanted them.

The house elf was overjoyed and left after delivering some very yummy Hogwarts food that put Molly Weasley's to shame.
Chapter 5- Pipes, threats and silence

It didn't take Hermione long to get used to the smoke though it had been a bit startling for her.

To top it off the twins pulled out pipes and lit them filling the tobacco-scented air with the smell of cherry and cinnamon.

They had finished their meal and were plotting legal strategies for Hermione to use to get Harry off when their conference was rudely interrupted.

"Well I never! Skipping dinner, upsetting Ginny, insulting me and being rude to your best friend just what in Godric's Name is wrong with you boy? Smoking? Hermione Granger how could you let these boys smoke?"

Hermione sniffed, "To my knowledge smoking is not illegal in the Wizarding World. According to my reading it is a social pastime of wizards for the past nine centuries. Since Fred and George are adults I see no reason to tell them how to manage their affairs when it comes to something so insignificant. Besides why does it matter? We did eat." She gestured at the dishes of half-eaten dessert.

Dobby had been so kind as to bring them their favourites: for Harry there was Treacle tart with Fortescue’s vanilla ice cream, Hermione had a delicious chocolate cherry cheesecake, Fred had an entire cherry pie to himself and George had a cinnamon apple strudel.

"I slaved in that kitchen for hours and I even made treacle tart!" Molly snipped.

"Hah!" Fred snorted taking up Hermione's protest; "You weren't in the kitchen for hours except for the Auror meeting over lunch. You gave us sandwiches and crisps with orders to eat in the garden. That place is a disaster only Neville could love."

"Fred's right since we got dragged here we've been accused of being underfoot, spying and causing mischief. Joining the Order is not causing mischief. Wanting to know why in Merlin's name we're stuck here when you won't tell us anything is what leads us to spying. If you just let us join, we'd stop." George added.

"Really, Ron must have been telling the truth. I've let you spend the summers with us Miss Granger and the way you repay me is to call me insane because I want to keep my children out of this war? To think I was considering letting you join my family." Molly glared, her hands on her hips.

"Your children were brought into it already! Didn't a Dark Artefact befuddle Ginny to do Voldy's bidding attacking defenceless students including myself? Your son was made part of the tournament that Voldy infiltrated. When Harry's broom was cursed, it was the twins who tried to rescue him when that failed they resigned themselves to having to catch him. Your son helped us past the McGonagall's chessboard to protect a stone that HE wanted. He chose to be involved." Hermione
retorted. "I never asked to be invited to The Burrow. You extended the invitation and I accepted. Honestly there is a difference between protecting and coddling. As for joining your family I believe that would be my decision and the choice of the young man who was interested."

"You may be a smart child but you are still a child." Molly snapped.

Hermione glared, "I may be a child but according to Muggle standards, by which I have been tested twice, I am claimed to be the smartest person in the world. A 300 Intelligence Quotient is not only rare but I'm the first. The closest person to me in a woman named Marilyn only has 228."

"Muggles aren't very smart are they?" Molly said dismissively.

"My parents are doctors thank you very much and they've encouraged me to learn and improve myself by reading!" Hermione snapped.

"Those freaks that cut people open? Really all you need is a knife to do that. Besides I thought your parents were dentists." Molly smirked as if she'd caught her in a lie.

Harry rolled his eyes, "Oh please to be a dentist you must have a doctorate in dentistry, even I know that, therefore they are doctors. Haven't you wondered why your children all run away from home? Bill ran to Egypt, Charlie to Romania and Percy to the Ministry to get away from you. I bet you before the year is out the twins will run away too. If this is how mothers treat their children, I am so glad I don't have one."

"With the way you behave your mother would be extremely disappointed in you!" Molly sneered.

"Molly shut up! I will not have you talking about Lily like that! Not in my House Molly and especially not to Harry. They were my friends. Lily always stood up against injustice, she used to tell me off all the time. if Harry thinks you're wrong and tells you that, he has to have a reason. He's good kid. I told you to lay off. Or Merlin help me I will throw you out and don't let the wards hit on you the way." Sirius thundered from the corridor.

"You can't do that. Albus invited us here. We're members of the Order." Molly snipped.

"This is my House, my inheritance and I can do as I like. You know thank you so much for the inspiration. I've just decided my Secret Keeper." Sirius gave her a malicious grin.

"Who? Albus?" Molly asked.

Sirius smirked, "Nothing so predictable. My favourite person in the entire world!" He frowned at Harry, "Do desist in smoking that trash. If you are going to insist on smoking the four of you ought to join me in the gentleman's parlour in half an hour. Pardon me I'll be finding Tonks."

"How can you let them do something so distasteful?" Molly gasped with her hands on her hips.

"It's my House, my rules, I say it's not illegal and if he wants to smoke he ought to do it properly. No need to skulk in disused cupboards. I think the kitchen has outlived its purpose as a meeting place. I'll let Remus fix the dinning room. I really ought to have not lost my temper." The former Marauder scratched his head sheepishly. "Anyway I grew up around smoking. Besides Remus, James, the traitor and I started about his age. I don't see any reason not to allow him to do the same. Which reminds me, I really need to thank Remus properly for saving my pipe even if he was convinced of my betrayal. Tell me Hermione what does one get a bookworm as a present?"

"Books? We're discussing something serious Sirius! You are just as bad of a guardian as I warned Albus you would be. You are incapable of discipline. He ought to be paddled." Molly snorted.
"You lay one hand on my godson and I'll," Sirius said darkly.

"Do what?" Molly asked smugly.

Sirius glared, "You do not want to know what I will do to you."

"I'm going to tell Albus!" Molly said in a high pitched whinging voice.

"Yes run to him like a tattling child to a parent how mature. I can't wait to have my secret keeper here. About time the Order acquired a healer." Sirius snorted.

"Merlin you can't be serious not her." Molly snorted. "That Slytherin? That woman is as Black as they come and as just as Dark."

"We shall see." Sirius smugly. "Leave the kids alone they don't deserve to be treated that way!"

"You should have stayed away, Harry wouldn't have learned such cheek if you weren't around!" Molly tossed back.

"Auream Silentium. You will be silent until you learn to speak politely. You will consider the words you speak. There isn't a counter spell to that so don't even bother with finites. It will wear off when you learn to watch your words. Now I have a relative to invite for a visit." Sirius sniggered turning on his heel.

Molly stomped her feet and shook her fist before storming away.

"Wow just wow!" Fred stammered.

"Sirius sure told her. Really to stoop to tattle, what is she nine? No wonder Ron and Ginny are so horrid." George shook his head.

Harry started laugh like maniac.

It became contagious and when Dobby returned for their dishes he was very confused at the nearly hysterical laughter.

Chapter End Notes

Well, there you have it: chapter 5. its a short but chuckle worthy chapter. Molly begins to get what's coming to her and Sirius is sirius-ly starting to get annoyed. Now readers, we have a question- how many of you like nice looooong stories?
The gentleman’s parlour

Chapter by KusanoSaku

Chapter Notes

In this chapter and all chapters following, let it be known that the character "Nymphadora Tonks", the Auror or "purple haired witch" does indeed exist. however, neither of us are too fond of her name. so we've changed it to "Persephone Tonks". so when you read that name or the shortened version "Seph' just think of the witch who in canon married werewolf Remus Lupin. that being said, thank you to all readers praise or flame, say what needs said. we want to know what you think.

without further rambling on our part, here for your (hopefully) enjoyment, Chapter 6.

Chapter 6- The gentleman’s parlour

The recently dinner skivvying quartet made their way down to the first floor to search out the room Sirius said to meet him.

Who was this mysterious Slytherin that Molly Weasley complained about? Why did she disapprove of her? Unless that was where Ron got his Slytherin prejudice…

After wandering aimlessly they found the destroyed dining room.

It was filled with splinters of wood and scraps of black velvet, as well as a dissembled motorcycle.

The four sighed.

"I think this is the room Sirius wanted cleaned up." Fred frowned.

"Transfiguration is more your thing Fred. So why don't Harry and I move the motorcycle bits outside? Since we don't know where the room is that we're supposed to meet him in if we cast enough magic he'll find us. Besides I think we ought to start cleaning up the place on our own without Mum badgering us to keep Dad from getting on our case. Anyway if that mad old house elf isn't going to do his job we're going to." George shrugged.

"I know Sirius said we could use magic but are you sure?" Hermione asked with a pensive look.

"Why don't we? I'm in the mood to toss things." Harry smirked.

"I think that's Sirius' flying motorcycle. Hagrid tried to figure out how it worked and took it apart. Then he couldn't put it back together. He brought it over and Sirius said he'd fix it. I have no idea why he put it here." Fred offered.

"We'll be careful with it." Harry begrudgingly sighed.

Sirius had defended him twice from Molly and hadn't been a prat so he figured he'd be careful with
the man's stuff.

Fred conjured an image of a fancy chair with black upholstery, "You think you can turn the splinters of the chairs into this?"

Hermione conjured a mirage of a fancy table she saw on a programme on the telly that was a tour of Buckingham Palace. "I think this would match well enough. What do you think?"

Fred grinned, "You brilliant witch! It's perfect."

Fred and Hermione the transfiguration geniuses set out to transfigure the splinters to the chairs that Fred chose.

George and Harry managed to levitate a few of the motorcycle parts.

Harry only had the concentration to try levitating two at a time while George was levitating about five.

Then George conjured thin ropes and they pulled the parts out to the backyard.

It took three trips to get all the parts out of the dining room.

By the time they returned from the last trip they found Fred and Hermione looking quite smug having transfigured the splinters and scraps into a thirty-person table with accompanying chairs.

The twins knew the all-purpose cleaning charm and were more than happy to teach it to Harry and Hermione.

However Fred transfigured a handkerchief into a large glass jar and summoned the spiders in the china cabinet being careful to seal them in but making tiny air holes in the lid so they wouldn't just die.

The smug look on his face and universal knowledge among the quartet of Ron's phobia led to suspicions of the spider's new home being Sirius' old room that Ron slept in.

They cast sanitising charms on the dishes and the goblets.

Both the glass fronted hutch and the china had a crest on it.

Their cleaning project was interspersed with laughter.

Eventually they heard a clearing throat behind them.

The four turned to find Sirius and a tall witch slim with brown hair.

"Well I said the gentleman's parlour but I suppose I didn't think that you couldn't get there with the junk in the way. Where is my motorcycle and where did the dining set come from?" Sirius asked looking around.

"George and I took the motorcycle parts out back." Harry shrugged.

"I made sure to reinforce the veranda with strengthening charms tied to my blood so they can't be removed to possibly cause it collapse under their weight. It looked rickety." George offered.

"Hermione picked the table design. We both transfigured the table scraps into it. After all one of the rules of magic is that you can't make something out of nothing. So we couldn't banish the pieces."
"It's a far sight better then the heirloom. What happened to the previous table that it was in pieces?" the woman asked glaring at Sirius.

The man actually shivered, "I…well…Dumbledore told me that I couldn't do anything for the Order after the first errand he sent me on. He told me I had to claim this place and you know I hate this house!"

"That arrogant old coot! Really, my breaking a contract with the Malfoy family was bad that I had to be demoted from Head Girl. I didn't see him punishing Prefect Prewett for getting herself knocked up and forcing Arcturus Weasley to break a contract. No he punished me because I'm a Slytherin. You'd think he'd want to make nice to me since it was a Hufflepuff I eloped with. I'm sure he'll be just thrilled to see me. Getting my Persephone mixed up in this Order Business I'm not pleased. However she is an adult and an Auror so she can make her own choices. If Poppy's still a member you are rather pathetically off. After all, that woman is a medi-witch, not a healer. She's not even a good one. Throwing potions at patents all the time is foolish."

"You would be?" Fred asked.

"Andromeda Tonks formerly of the House of Black disowned for Bonding to a Muggleborn. He's also a healer but he deals with the mind and I, the body. Curious how we birthed an Auror, then again she always idolized her Uncle Sirius." The woman snorted.

"You're the witch mum hates? You seem pretty cool to me." Fred smirked.

"You're Mary's son?" she sniffed.

"Their mother goes by Molly now." Sirius sighed.

"That sounds like she has delusions of being a house elf." Andromeda sneered. "Funny she always was a bit pretentious. She ought have been disowned for what she did. No because she was Lord Prewett's precious princess she was given a reward for something any other pureblood witch would have been disowned or locked up in Azkaban."

Sirius glanced around the room, "It sure is an improvement and what did you do the carpet?"

"Fred transfigured it into something else." Hermione offered, "He kept it green through but choose a more vibrant colour."

"Well it's only a shade darker then it was when we were young." Andromeda said pleasantly. "I think that is a far more pleasing shade then Aunt Walpurga had."

"Indeed. I guess I ought to have told you where the gentleman's parlour was." Sirius said walking over to a door at the far end of the room. He opened it and coughed. "Might need to do a bit of cleaning first."

Andromeda pushed past him and within a few flicks of her wand the leather furniture was repaired, the doxie-eaten curtains were replaced, the spider webs banished, the pests removed, the carpet transfigured and the dust disappeared. In short she managed a complete transformation without speaking a single spell.

Sirius applauded, "You always excelled at the housekeeping charms that you were taught. Bella preferred her Dark Arts and Narcissa preferred the cooking lessons. With you five around this place won't be an eye sore and I won't have to listen to Molly rave and rage about how disgusting it is. Or how useless house elves are without masters and how they were incapable of doing anything on their own so they are better off banished."
"House elves do need guidance however I don't agree with Great Aunt Elladora who insisted on beheading her house elves when they were too old to carry tea trays. By the way if you hadn't restored me to the Tapestry I know I certainly couldn't be here." The imperious woman added.

"Leave my favourite cousin disowned? Hardly." Sirius smirked. "Kreacher is still pissed at me for it. I don't know why Reg was fond of Kreacher."

"He was his personal elf and took care of him because Aunt Walpurga didn't want him until you ran off." Andromeda took a seat and summoned a wine goblet. She conjured ice and plainly dressed elf that appeared with wine poured her wine goblet. "Now tell me why I'm here."

Sirius paused to pour himself whiskey that he summoned in a tumbler over conjured ice, "Help yourselves. We're going to have an adult conversation. Fred and George are of age, Hermione will be sixteen in September. If Harry is old enough to be tried he ought to be old enough to drink."

"I've got no problem with it either." Andromeda shrugged. "Persephone drinks and if Lord Black declared you old enough, his elder cousin or not I have no business telling him off for it. Besides, it's customary in the House of Black to start children with watered wine when they are eleven and old enough to eat with the family. By sixteen we were drinking wine at dinner."

Hermione shyly summoned a wine goblet and with a weak charm chilled the glass a bit before holding it out to Andromeda's elf.

Fred blinked, "You drink?"

Hermione blushed, "A little. I like wine…"

Fred whistled, "Never pegged you for the type."

Hermione scoffed, "Just because we share the same House at Hogwarts doesn't mean you know me."

George sniffed, "Is that Fireball?"

Sirius smirked, "Yes."

George had a wide grin as he went to pour some in a similar glass and added conjured ice.

Fred summoned his Honeyduke's Butterscotch schnapps and poured himself a tumbler-full before chilling the glass.

Harry stared at them, "Um…"

Fred poured Harry some of his schnapps, "Here have some of this."

Harry sipped it; it was sweet in his mouth and burned its way to his stomach. He groaned "God that's good."

"Now that we've all got drinks." Andromeda said sipping her wine.

"Yes to business" Sirius began, "Ole' Mouldy Voldy is back. Kidnapped Harry to make it happen. The Death Eaters have returned and we've been trying figure out what they're up to. Dumbledore insisted that I claim this place and we use it for the Order's Headquarters. It seemed like a good idea at the time with the wards and all. Unfortunately, he invited that bitch Molly and her brood to stay here without asking me. Between the two of them they've tried to run the place. It's my house and
frankly I'm sick of it. I have no respect. I'm trapped here, I can't even leave the house under glamours or as dog."

"What? She's not even a Black! She's only related to us by marriage. He bonded is the son of a Black and her Aunt Lucretia is your aunt as well though she bonded to a Prewett. A shame that she had a squib." Andromeda sniffed.

"Mum's gone off the deep end for no reason. She's always been high-strung and bossy but she's gotten ridiculous. Percy was always her golden boy and now that Ron's a prefect he's the next. Bill was before Percy. It's stupid. You become a prefect and you're perfect. Bill's great and not priggish like Percy but seriously even he had his moments or qualities that were annoying," Fred grumbled.

"We didn't want to be treated with ridiculous expectations so we faked our OWL scores. We don't have cool wards like here where you can use magic all you want 'cause the Trace doesn't work. We told Ickly Ronnikins that we Glamoured our scores but we really copied Percy's and edited them. It wasn't hard when mum had it posted prominently in the kitchen. We stole it and took it to school with us. With some work we had fake ones and switched them. Seriously, who would believe we only had seven OWLS between us?" George added.

"She's always been lazy with marks. A shame. Arcturus was hoping to be an Auror. Gideon used to talk about it. Gideon was planning on being a Healer specialising in spell damage revolving around Dark Arts and ward curses." Andromeda mused. "He was only a year ahead of me and we were both aspiring Healers so we talked despite being in different Houses."

"Don't you mean rival Houses? Weren't both Gideon and Fabian Gryffindors?" Fred frowned.

"What lies has that brat been feeding you? Gideon was a Ravenclaw prefect and was nearly Head Boy. They made Francis Longbottom Head Boy though. Francis, Fabian and Arcturus were all Gryffindors that entered Auror training together. They were hurting for persons to fight 'Mouldy Voldy' as Sirius calls the Dark Lord wannabe. A shame someone didn't just put him out of his misery. Then perhaps Reg would be alive." Andromeda shook her head before taking a sip of wine.

"Dad was an Auror?" George frowned, "I had no idea."

"Mary was probably distraught when he was transferred to the mediocre Department he's with now. His reputation was less then pristine thanks to her." Andromeda sneered, "She may play all lily-white but those of us who were there during those years know her for what she is. She stole Arcturus from her own brother by using potions to lure him to bed. He wouldn't have touched her at all despite being a sexually flexible wizard. He had his flings with girls on rare occasion but only with Gideon's knowledge but his betrothed's sister was never on his list of possible partners."

"What is wrong with her? Seducing a betrothed person? Was she nuts? And why did dad agree to bond to her?" Fred hissed.

"I haven't a clue. The pregnancy was discovered during her Fourth Year exams when she fainted in the middle of her Potion's practical. Foolish girl brewing while pregnant, William is lucky he was born healthy. Mary told a story about Arcturus seducing her and she protested weakly but he was stronger and so good-looking. It was a known fact that he was sleeping with witches but he was selective. Despite his initial protests he was forced to take responsibility and agree to the exchange of Mary for Gideon. Gideon took it badly and stopped speaking to him. Poor Fabian was torn between his twin and his good friend and future- they hoped anyway Auror partner."

"She's a nasty piece of work isn't she, putting on airs. She was too busy trying to have a child a year to bother joining the Order. Arthur said complained about his joining the Order the last time and now
she's acting like she's Dumbledore's right hand instead of McGonagall." Sirius growled.

"Well I'd like to see her telling me a Daughter of the House of Black what to do. How a whore like that ended up a Prefect I will never know oh wait they put all the blame on Arthur. He was bonded and then cut off. A pity since he was supposed to be his fathers heir. I wonder who is Lord Septimus' heir now." Andromeda mused.

Hermione stared at her wine in amazement.

"Something interesting?" Andromeda asked with a raised brow.

"I've never tasted anything like it. I normally have blackberry merlot from my parents' collection. They order it by the case so it's no bother to take a few since they drink a glass or two every night. Sometimes it's elderberry they have. But this is beyond words."

"The best wine in the Wizarding world is made by the Veela. The Delacours of Acquataine and the Bianchesshi of Piedmonte are the best. I'm partial to the Turin wines. This is Biana, it's considered a strong wine. Biana is a powerful, full-bodied wine with a cornucopia of subtle flavours, such as strawberry, tobacco, chocolate, vanilla, and white truffles. Sometimes referred to as the 'Queen of Wines,' Biana is best aged at least three years before it is consumed. This wine is made from Nebbolo grapes and brewed with a family recipe. The family is very secretive about the process. I prefer to be aged longer then three years and I drink it to relax. Although as a healer I am never truly off duty so I brew my own sobering potions in case I get called in. Being a birth healer is more stressful then some assume."

"Surprised with your knowledge of Dark Arts that cousin that you didn't become a Healer that specialised in healing injuries by Dark Magic." Sirius teased toying with an ebony cane topped with a silver dragon's claw that clutched a stone shaped like a dragon's egg. It was black with silver veins the talons of the claw were green like emeralds.

Andromeda smirked, "So you claimed the wand. Always worried Bella'd try to get it after Regulus offed himself somehow. I'm surprised as a Black you weren't stole by the Magus Brutus."

Hermione ever the bookworm frowned, "Who is 'Bella' and what are the Magus Brutus?"

"My middle sister Bellatrix Lestrange. Our younger sister Narcissa bonded to my betrothed Lucius Malfoy." Andromeda shrugged nonchalantly. "The Magus Brutus are a division of Magical Law Enforcement that are called in to deal with very dangerous Dark Wizards or Witches. They are rarely spoken of and one can only join by invitation only. They tend to only recruit neutral Slytherins and Ravenclaws. I was approached before my seventh year but refused. It's rare to be recruited outside of Auror or Hit Wizard training."

"Oh. I remembered her from my readings. Didn't she attack the Longbottoms?" Hermione had never heard of the Magus Brutus before, they sounded very secretive.

"Yes Francis Longbottom and Alys formerly of the House of Dearborn." Sirius added.

"So we have the pretentious Mary Prewett trying to take over the Order. My own daughter who has a line of ex-lovers like the Hogwarts Aqueduct, her boss Kingsley who hangs on Albus' every word, Moody the Mad Ex-Auror, Dumbledore the arrogant, spineless Minerva who wouldn't stand up for a Slytherin if it were her own child, Amelia left the Order and you probably have Hestia Jones?"

Sirius sighed, "Emmeline Vane, Sturgis Podmore, Dadelus Diggle and Elphias Doge."

"Doge," Andromeda huffed, "That man worships the ground Albus Dumbledore walks on. Albus
picked his bonded and named his child. Doge is his lapdog to be dragged by the nose."

"The Prewett brothers died and with Gideon gone you're short a healer. So to help keep order in the Order you called me. I'll have this Monstrous House set to rights in two days. Especially if I have the help of these youngsters who did such a lovely job with the Dining room. A drawback of tying a property to a bloodline is that for the house to avoid declining and rotting for a lack of better terms you need to have it inhabited by enough persons with that Blood."

Hermione gasped, "That's what happened?"

"Yes, it doesn't help that tying house elves with a loyalty oath requires them to have orders and structure to prevent them from becoming lethargic. House elves are quite useful and if you treat them well they are very loyal. Great Aunt Elladora was a fool to treat her house elves so despicably. I swear she learned that from the Gaunts; nasty piece of work that family was. An illustrious line fell quite hard, after generations of gambling addiction Cador joined with the Black Family hoping that Elladora's dowry would save them from poverty. However it seems to be a shame that he continued to drive his House into ruin. He died leaving his son with debts and Elladora returned to the family. Marvolo sold his sister to a Potter," Andromeda glanced at Harry, "You have James' hair but Lily's face. You must be Sirius' godson Harry."

Harry blinked nodded, "I've always heard I had her eyes but not her face."

Andromeda snorted, "Idiots. Of course they want to see James, he's the pureblood while Lily was the Muggleborn. Well you have a Black great great-grandmother and a Black grandmother. He should have enough to help cement the family claim. If Persephone and I also reside here as well as Arcturus and his children we shall be alright even though only you and I truly are of Black blood."

Sirius nodded, "I don't care if you're a real member of the Order besides our healer and my Secret Keeper but I'll be a Muggle before I make Albus Secret Keeper. Remus can't be because he's an active member of the Order even though I'd trust him with my life."

"You'd rely on a Dark Witch, a former Slytherin who is a Birth Healer and your bloodtraitor cousin?" Andromeda arched an eyebrow.

"My brilliant cousin who can resist the Imperious curse, has healer training and is bonded to a Hufflepuff." Sirius smirked.

"You prat." She said fondly. "You don't have to go so far."

"Besides, I know the real reason you broke your contract with Lucius." Sirius sniggered, "You're a softy at heart. You know I'd never betray James and with the Godfather bond I couldn't put Harry's life in mortal danger."

Andromeda nodded sharply, "Once a Black gives their loyalty, they are loyal until death unless betrayed."

"So you'll do it? Please Annie? You're the only choice I have. The whole Order has been badgering me for over four weeks to choose Albus. They keep saying if Albus had been James and Lily's Secret Keeper they'd still be alive. It's my House and my choice, I could toss them out if I wanted." His eyes flashed with dark fire, "And if Molly orders me around in my own House again I swear she'd find herself and her belongings on the street!"

"How ill-bred. Mary is a guest in your house and laying down rules? Is she mad?"

Hermione coughed, "I think so, Fred and George are of age and they want to join the Order and she
won't let them. She and Dumbledore forbid us to Owl Harry for a whole month and didn't give us any explanation other than its 'too dangerous' it would put him in peril."

"I can't believe Albus sent Mundungus Fletcher to watch Harry. He left him unguarded to see about cauldrons that fell off a broom. Due to his negligence Dementors attacked Harry. Now he's facing expulsion for Violation of the Decree against Underage Sorcery and International Decree of Secrecy." Sirius growled.

Hermione opened her mouth to correct him.

"I don't care what it's called." He glared at her. "All that matters is that he's in trouble."

"You used your wand in self-defence?" Andromeda frowned at Harry.

Harry nodded, "I cast a Lumos and the Patronus charm. That is it. We were trapped in an alley what was I supposed to do? Let them eat our souls?"

"Of course not." Andromeda scoffed. "What is the violation against the International Confederation of Warlocks' Statute of Secrecy referring to?"

Harry snorted, "I cast magic in front of my cousin and saved his life. He's known since he was eleven that I was wizard since Hagrid told me. He was there and when Uncle Vernon insulted Headmaster Dumbledore Hagrid used his umbrella to attempt to turn him into a pig and only gave him a pig's tail. I live in a neighbourhood filled with Muggles how can help I casting magic around them to save our hides?"

"I always knew that man was irresponsible." Andromeda sniffed.

"And he's part of the Order. Albus in his infamous wisdom sent him to talk to the giants and convince them not to side with Mouldy Voldy." Sirius' voice was thick with sarcasm, "Really? Like they would listen to him, to them he's a mongrel. Giants live to cause destruction. Last time the Ministry had to Obliviate hundreds of Muggles when they destroyed bridges and collapsed buildings. They claimed 'earthquakes' and meteors as well as other nonsense brewed by the Office of Misinformation."

"Isn't that just prejudice like hating Slytherins?" Hermione frowned, referring to the bit about giants.

Andromeda scoffed, "Giants kill because they like destroying things. They aren't like werewolves who were decent until the Dark Lord turned them to his cause. The Vampires never joined because they choose stay as separate as they can from Wizarding affairs to avoid the censure that the Werewolves have. The registry was one of Scamander's little follies. Veelas are neutral creatures and completely self-governed. They are protected by the Veela Accords which are reviewed and ratified every century by the International Confederation of Wizards and then equally ratified by each successive Ministry. Any Ministry failing to ratify them is declared in violation and sanctions are imposed until they comply."

"So why aren't the werewolves treated the same?"

"They lack a cohesive structure and don't have central leadership. There isn't a Ministry that recognizes werewolves as a separate group like the Veela or the Vampires. Vampire Covens are closed and don't often mix with others as a means of staying out of trouble." Andromeda informed them in calm assurance of her information.

"I see. Is it common to mate with wizards?"
"It can happen. Some mate to other Veela although the rumours out there about there not being male Veela is all stuff and nonsense however unlike the vampire covens or werewolf packs, a Veela is under the jurisdiction of the Veela Queen no matter where they live in the world."

"A Feminist society?" Hermione asked.

"After a fashion, legend has it that the ancient Veela were female only and were bonded only to each other but with more interaction with wizards they soon started having relationships with them. Any child born to a Veela is automatically treated as legitimate and is named the sire's heir even if they aren't born into a legal contract. It's in the Veela Accords." Andromeda shrugged.

"Only a child with a Veela bearer and a wizard sire can be born male. Male Veela are precious because females are more common. Veela are often naturally sexually flexible but in rare cases can lean either way. Lucius is bent towards one person and that became dangerously apparent the moment he smelled Narcissa after returning from Malfoy Manor where he spent the solstice and came into his Inheritance. Sanctus, Aurora and I had to cast hexes to take away his sense of smell until I figured out what was wrong with him. However that is for another time. Well we shall we fetch your friend Moony? I am sure he would willingly cast the Fidelius Charm before Dumbledore comes and sticks his bent nose into your business."

"You know quite a bit about laws can I talk you to about how to get Harry off?" Hermione asked cautiously.

Andromeda nodded, "We'll discuss it tomorrow while we start setting this place to rights."

Sirius sanitised his tumbler and replaced it. He opened a door in a small cabinet and called out, "Harry if you want to smoke do it properly and use a pipe. There are a few in here but if you don't like them well I'm sure Remus can pick one up. Now that the room is clean I'll have Remus put our stash in here, the tobacco and the liquor since I know Remus hides his precious chocolate. I'm sure Andromeda can ward this room to Remus and us. We can plot and gripe in here to our hearts content and I can tell you what's going on without having Molly putting her snobby nose where it doesn't belong."

Sirius and Andromeda left the parlour leaving the 'kids' behind.

Harry set down his glass using the same charm as Sirius to clean it. He set it back on the shelf with the other matching glasses before sitting on the floor.

He pulled out box after box opening them and discarding them.

The first had a dragon carved onto its bowl with a black stain on everything but the dragon.

The second had a cauldron clutched in a dragon claw.

The third had the head of a dragon with the bowl inside what would be its skull and the neck of the pipe was the dragon's neck. It looked like a Hebridean Black's head from *Magical Creatures and Where to Find Them* by Newt Scamander.

The fourth had a crouching dragon on relief of a bowl almost as if it had been attached later.

The fifth was a perfect rose before it truly bloomed and seemed very out of place with Dragon themed pipes.

The sixth pipe was different it wasn't a dragon theme nor was the bowl made from wood. It felt like ivory and the stem seemed to be ebony, the bowl had a snake coiled around it and even the scales
were carefully etched or was it carved?

Harry examined the pipe and put it in the case setting it in his lap before putting the dragon pipes back in the cupboard.

When he went to pick up the rose pipe it was missing, he looked around him and then up to see Hermione cradling the pipe with its case under her arm.

She blushed, "I think I'll hold onto this. I don't know if I'll use it but annoying Mrs. Weasley might be worth it."

"With pipes the next thing you need is tobacco." Fred said sagely. "I like black cherry but George's preference his cinnamon. We've been smoking since Percy got atrocious and mum intolerable. Dad bought us pipes and took us to pick our own tobaccos. Its not harmful just relaxing."

Fred pulled out boxes and canisters of tobaccos in a bunch of flavours still talking. "We caught him smoking in his workshop four years ago. Mum is maniacally against so we sort of blackmailed him into letting us do it and we'd keep quiet. He's pretty cool away from Mum but when he's with her, he's a spineless prat."

Harry's nose wrinkled at all of them but the regular tobacco so he took a small canister of that.

Hermione sniffed them too but picked out the regular cherry flavoured tobacco.

"So sad. I wish he'd up and leave her if she did what Andromeda said." George nodded, "If Ginny did such a thing to me I'd raise all sorts of trouble and torment my betrothed until he saw reason. Really flexible or not he ought to have stayed away from girls, the idiot. I mean he was betrothed to his best friend he was just setting himself up for trouble."

"Hey girls are lovely, I don't know what a bloke sees in wizards." Fred shrugged.

George snorted, "I'm bent so I could say the same about witches. I think Hermione is a nice girl and probably pretty but since my taste is Quidditch players well she's not even noticeable as more than a friend."

Hermione blinked, "You're gay?"

"The term is bent and it's perfectly acceptable. Since dad has nothing worth inheriting and we are younger sons we're starting a business to make our own way in the world. There are ways for bent wizards to have kids. Since you are so happy to research and read I shall leave you to learn on your own." George smirked.

"Well it's getting late." Fred sighed, "If Andromeda's even a tiny bit like mum there won't be any lie-in tomorrow. We'll be up very early and eat breakfast before we end up cleaning. We'll probably tackle the drawing room unless she wants to clear another parlour, the receiving room or the library."

The four decided to turn in early…
Harry was awakened by an unfamiliar squeaky voice.  
"Miss Annie be calling Master Harry. Gilly be sent to fetch him. Gilly have a bath waiting."

"What's she want?" Harry grumbled.

"Everyone else be coming to breakfast already. Master Harry be having a lie in. Gilly be told to fetch Master Harry. Gilly have hot towel waiting and will press an outfit for Master Harry."

"Did the crazy witch cook?"

"Gilly cook. Then Miss Annie watch the food while Gilly wake up family and guests."

Harry reluctantly climbed out of bed. He bathed quickly; he'd rarely had the luxury of a bath before. It was always showers at the Dursleys, Hogwarts or the Burrow.

He dried quickly enjoying the hot towel as he exited the bedroom. He found pressed black linen trousers, green silk boxers, a green Egyptian cotton button up dress shirt and white silk socks. On the floor beside the bed were shining leather shoes.
He hurriedly dressed with his stomach complaining at him by growling loudly.

Harry made his way down to the dining room with his pipe and tobacco shrunk to fit in his pocket.

The dining room table wasn't full but with thirty seats it was clear there were divisions.

Sirius was sitting at the head of the left side, with Andromeda on his left and Remus on his right. Fred was beside Remus but between Remus and Hermione. George was beside Andromeda so he was across from his twin.

Molly Weasley sat at the opposite end of the table from Sirius. Her husband was her right and Ron on her left leaving Ginny to sit beside her father.

The witch with the purple hair sat between the two groups as if she couldn't or wouldn't choose between them.

Molly kept glaring at Sirius's side of the table; her glower only grew when Harry took a seat beside George balancing out that side.

Food was plentiful and served on china bearing the Black family crest.

There were pitchers of ice water, orange juice, pumpkin juice, milk and syrup. There were also pots of tea and coffee. There were plates of eggs, sausages, hash browns, bacon and pancakes. There were dishes of fresh fruit, cottage cheese and butter.

Harry was starved; he filled his place to the point of overflowing and chewed away happily.

George poured him some pumpkin juice.

As the meal progressed Andromeda and Sirius discussed their plans for the day.

"I had a look around last night. I think we'll tackle the drawing room." Andromeda said between delicate bites.

"You did such lovely job with these two rooms, the five of you that I'm impressed. It took Molly two days to get the kitchen anywhere decent to eat in. As for the bedrooms she made the youngsters clean the Muggle way despite my comments about the wards. A majority of the house was such a disaster that we practically had to stay at the Burrow. Only my room, my father's, mother's and Reg's were the only ones pristine." Sirius stated lazily to their half of the table.

"We'll need new carpet, new curtains, the furniture will need to be repaired and I'll put the family heirlooms in the attic."

"Yes with the nosiness of some of these kids it might be best. We know what not to mess with but they don't."

"I saw portraits of all our ancestors but Aunt Walpurga. She had to have had one commissioned."

The Weasleys, the purple-hair witch and Sirius cringed.

"She's on the staircase. We've got curtains on her to keep her asleep and silencing charms to stop loud noises from waking her anyway." Sirius grumbled.

"What about taking her off?" Andromeda frowned.

"The mad bitch used blood-tied sticking charms and believe me I've tried. The silencing charms wear
off at awkward intervals. Or more precisely they break when Seph trips over something."

Harry frowned. "Seph?"

Andromeda sighed, "My daughter Persephone Tonks, the brat in the middle of the table. It would not kill you girl to sit with your family."

"I've got no interest in choosing sides." The purple haired witch sniffed.

"This isn't about choosing Persephone Edwina Tonks, blood is loyal to blood."

Molly scribbled fiercely on parchment and held it up.

Andromeda read it scornfully, "What would a bloodtraitor like you know about that?" she stuck her nose in the air, "Says the woman who raped her own brother's betrothed? Your father was a fool to believe you. Arthur wouldn't have touched you since you were his friends' sister."

Arthur turned as red as his hair, "Andromeda I would appreciate it if you wouldn't air such scandals."

Ron hissed, "You're lying you filthy Slytherin. Mum and Dad were in love."

"So in love she had to drug him and conceive a child when he was betrothed to someone else? She nearly destroyed a centuries long friendship between the House of Prewett and the House of Weasley. If she hadn't forced him to break a contract you wouldn't be bloodtraitors. I may have broken a contract myself but I had my reasons and I didn't steal anyone. If anything I was stolen from Lucius but I allowed it."

Persephone frowned, "You were a Slytherin?"

Andromeda sniffed, "Of course I was? Did you think I was a Ravenclaw like Gideon? Hardly. I'm too ambitious for that. I chose my fate. I knew I'd be disowned and declared a bloodtraitor but unlike 'Molly' I didn't elope with Ted for my own greed. I did it for family."

"Well you are back and I quite approve of Ted you should bring him by. He's trustworthy for a badger."

"I accepted Ted because he discovered my dilemma and offered me a solution. Not many persons especially a Hufflepuff would dare try to court a betrothed Queen of Slytherin." Andromeda shrugged. "He spent months trying to convince me. I finally gave in but that is neither here nor there. We're discussing putting the house together."

Sirius picked up the thread of the conversation, "You know why don't you send Gilly to fetch the rest of the Black elves? I believe after mother died with the exception of Kreacher the rest moved to another Black. Some went to our great Aunt Cassiopeia, others to our grandfather Pollux, and some to my grandfather Arcturus. I believe most of them are at Aunt Cassiopeia's. I was outvoted about summoning them. I think that you will enjoy getting them into a rhythm. Perhaps since your Gilly is such a dedicated house elf you can make her head elf?"

Andromeda nodded, snapping her fingers.

Gilly appeared at once, "Miss Annie be needing anything?"

"Go fetch the other Black house elves. With Sirius' recommendation you've been made head elf. We expect you to help us put this property to rights and perhaps have your fellow elves fix up the other
"Houses."

Gilly's eyes filled with tears and she blotted her eyes with her tea towel, "Lord Black be wanting Gilly back? Gilly turned off for being a bad elf."

"For not informing mother of my cousin's elopement. I know. I disagreed with her but since you've served my cousin well her entire life I think you've proved yourself. Do me a favour and deal with Kreacher. He allowed this place to fall into disrepair. He spends his time muttering and has done nothing to help us return it to its former glory." Sirius grumbled.

"It could have something to do with your guests," Andromeda smirked, "After all you have what: a family of bloodtraitor Weasleys, a Muggleborn, your Halfblood godson, myself and my daughter. Not to mention Albus Dumbledore that Aunt Walpurga hated, as well as other Dark Arts hating narrow-minded pricks."

"MOTHER!" Persephone gasped. "Dark Arts are evil!"

"I swore I taught you better about the nature of magic. I did not raise a narrow-minded fool. You spend too much time with the likes of Alastor Moody. The man is insane! You'd have been better off with Scrimgour." Andromeda scoffed.

Sirius groaned, "Moody's in the Order, they sent him as part of the group to retrieve Harry I was against it. Most of those names I gave you last night were who were sent. Most of them are idiots."

Molly was so angry steam was coming out of her ears.

Arthur scurried off to work presumably.

Ron was steaming and Ginny the anti-social brat was cowering.

"Well if we are quite finished Gilly can take return the dishes to the kitchen. I warded it so only myself and Sirius can discuss meals." Andromeda declared.

"I'll leave that to you. After all you were trained in how to run a pureblood house. I was raised to be Lord Black, which I am. However I have no gorgeous witch to run my House. If I were single and young again I'd have my pick of the ladies if I weren't deemed a dangerous murderer." Sirius grumbled.

"Well Gilly you can remove the dishes and then go fetch the other elves. I trust you. Later you can set them about with dishes and perhaps cleaning the other rooms. I plan to restore the drawing room."

Molly scribbled again and held it up.

"There is something dark in the desk? You were going to ask Moody to look at it? It's a Boggart. I'll deal with it. Boggarts are very difficult to obtain and there are useful in a few potions. I'm out of Boggart skin anyway. If I chose to sell it I'd make a tidy sum. Hecate's would pay handsomely for Boggart parts." Andromeda scoffed rising.

As she headed to the door Molly and Ron reached for their wands.

Andromeda whirled around wand raised and with a string of Latin dealt them swiftly before she sneered at them. "Curse me in my house? Apparently Mary you have yet to learn your lesson. Well then I have just bound yours and your son's magic. As long as you reside in this House you can't use your magic. It's Black Family magic so only we know the counterspell. I don't feel like I would want
to remove it. Now if you four will follow me we can take care of the drawing room."

"I'll just see about putting my bike together. I can't believe Hagrid took Iris apart. I was furious." The canine animagus muttered darkly as he left the dinning room.

A bit intimidated by the Secret Keeper's magic the four followed her into a long hallway, lit by a large chandelier and gas lamps. To the left of the entrance hall was another room but they ignored its existence for the moment.

Andromeda muttered under her breath.

Harry finally really looked around to see that the wallpaper was peeling and the carpet had been worn thin.

Hermione pointed to the staircase where there was a set of curtains, "That is the mad portrait."

There was also a hideous troll-leg umbrella stand…

Persephone Tonks scurried around them towards the door and tripped up over the foot of the umbrella stand making a huge clattering noise.

Persephone cowered.

The curtains covering the portrait moved baring it to view. Immediate she seemed to awaken and start screaming.

"Filth! Scum! By-products of dirt and vileness! Half-breeds, mutants, freaks, begone from this place! How dare you befoul the house of my fathers -"

Andromeda scoffed, "A fine way to behave Walpurga Igraine Black."

The old woman's face blanched.

"YOU! I CAST YOU OFF YEARS AGO! AFTER EMBARRASSING US BY RUNNING OFF WITH THAT MUGGLE HOW DARE YOU RETURN? YOU TREACHEROUS BITCH!" she howled, her eyes lit with what seemed to be madness or at least anger. "Blood traitor, abomination,"

"Look who is talking you drove Sirius away and Regulus died probably trying to prove he was good enough to be your son. Seriously." Andromeda cast a spell at all the portraits that had begun to yell.

With a wave of her hand the heavy black velvet curtains shut.

"I never liked her." Then she turned to her daughter, "Seriously? What is wrong with you? Still so clumsy at your age?" She flicked her wand transfiguring the troll's leg into a tree of some sort and the roots seemed to bond to the floor. "Really was such a thing so hard? I see I must Persephone-proof this house like you were still a toddler and likely to fall."

Persephone scurried out the house with her hair black rather then purple and her skin red.

"How can she change her hair and skin like that?" Harry asked interested.

"Persephone is an Metamorphmagus. It runs in the Black bloodline, my Uncle Alphard was one. He ran a private detective business which infuriated Aunt Walpurga."

"Can you learn it?" Harry asked curious.
"I take it you wish to learn to hide that cursed scar of yours? I'm sorry it's an inherited trait. One that used to cause me trouble. She'd change unexpectedly when we were shopping in Godric's Hollow. I don't know how many times I had to Obliviate Muggles. I finally left her with Gilly and went out alone." Andromeda informed them coolly before leading them up the stairs into a room across from the Dining Room.

The drawing room had a pair of long windows facing the street in front of the house. There were black leather furniture like a settee, a love seat and large armchairs.

There also seemed to be a dirty large fireplace that appeared to be a floo as well as a series of dirty tapestries, one of which seemed to take up nearly the entire wall space except for the two on either side of the two windows.

Andromeda glanced at Fred and Hermione, "I suggest you transfigure the leather furniture into pristine replacements like you did to the Dining table and chairs."

The two nodded.

Andromeda headed over to the desk and cast unlocking charms on it. As well as glowing blue wards…

A cloud of grey smoke exited the desk and it morphed into a basilisk.

She sighed and cast at it albeit silently. It transformed into a odd chimera like creature with rooster head and wings on a snake body. It finally seemed to collapse and the imperious witch smirked. Shrinking it she summoned a silver box and levitated the Boggart into it.

Fred and Hermione conjured mirages of various furniture ideas.

Hermione wanted to transform a cracked leather and oak chaise lounge into a black and silver 'fainting couch' with a silver swan making up part of back of the couch.

She had seen one on the telly one and it was so lovely.

Fred argued against the silver but thought that the black velvet idea was great.

Harry and George proceeded to use cleaning charms to clean the tapestries, the walls and the windows.

They seemed to gleam more brightly.

They then turned to cast scorgify on the ceiling and the chandelier that was covered in cobwebs.

Even clean the ceiling was a grey colour but a soft grey…

When Hermione and Fred couldn't come to an agreement they turned their backs on one another and took their time transfiguring the furniture according to their whim.

Hermione transfigured an oak and leather chaise lounge into the lovely silver piece she'd envisioned.

Fred's settee was black velvet with black walnut, it was rather ostentatious with black curlicues and what seemed to be a shining obsidian set in the wood that was polished like a mirror.

They transfigured the carpet to grey and silver that covered the centre of room over an ebony wood floor.
Hermione transfigured the coffee table to a French antique she saw in a book at home.

They managed to agree on a chair and matching ottoman that sort of matched the coffee table.

Harry and George turned to the curio cabinet.

A few cleaning charms had it looking a lot nicer.

The spiders vanished, the cobwebs disappeared, and the cracks in the glass disappeared. The ebony wood was even polished to shine in the light.

Inside they could see an ornate crystal bottle with a large greyish opal set into the stopper, full of what appeared to be blood. Silver boxes inscribed with obscure languages. There was an ebony case with a silver vine frame on its face and thirteen coiled snakes. Dozens of silver frames with family photos and shiny silver daggers with sharp blades. Also there was a spidery instrument, rather like a many-legged pair of tweezers and a large silver ring that bore the Black family crest. There was also a coiled snakeskin.

Then Andromeda was attacked with heavy bolts when she passed by a grandfather clock.

She conjured a metal shield they bounced off muttering darkly under her breath and cast a series of spells at it that stopped the attack and repaired it.

George opened the curio cabinet and removed a music box.

When he opened it, it played a faintly sinister, tinkling tune.

Andromeda spun around, "Don't!" she fired a hexing charm that silenced it and slammed it shut.

That tune nearly knocked everyone out.

"Idiot boy! Do you have any idea how many cursed objects a house belonging to a family as old as the Blacks contains?" Andromeda snapped.

George blinked the magically appearing sleep out of his eyes, "Sorry I wanted a closer look at it."

"Must not have enough Black blood to be exempt from its allure." she muttered, pulling out a silver snuff box. She opened it, "Wartcap powder. I have no use for such a thing perhaps,"

George grinned, "I can think of something…"

Andromeda exchanged the snuffbox for the jewellery box, "There. No one touch this box." She cast a few more spells at it before returning it to the curio cabinet.

Harry watched her frown and retrieve a silver locket with a snake curved into 'S' make from emeralds.

"What is this? I've never seen it before…" then she gasped. Summoning a silver box and transfigured it to lead and floated the locket into it. Andromeda cast charms at her hands. "Devious Morgaine that's the evillest thing I've ever encountered. What is it?"

A filthy elf appeared, "That be Master Regulus'. Mistress would be furious to see her house befouled with Mudbloods, bloodtraitors, filthy Halfbloods and diseased creatures."

"That is not for you to decide!" Andromeda sneered, "That is for Lord Black, these people are his guests until he decides otherwise. Where did Regulus get it?"
"Kreacher not have to tell you. Regulus make Kreacher promise not to tell." The house elf said in an oily voice.

"Where is Regulus? How did he die?"

"Regulus poisoned. Regulus lies unburied not that a bloodtraitor like you would care."

"I broke my contact to save Narcissa's life. If Lucius and I had consummated a bonding, Narcissa would have died when her heart exploded." Andromeda hissed at the House elf, "I sacrificed my own reputation and honour to give her, her life. Don't presume to that I would not care if my cousin died."

"Kreacher mourn Regulus. Only Regulus kind to old Kreacher. Regulus good boy. Regulus not want to serve bad man. Regulus angry because Kreacher hurt. Regulus heal Kreacher and then make Dark Lord pay. Regulus trust Kreacher to his end. Kreacher stay until he die then Kreacher try very hard to destroy that but it not open. It make Kreacher angry all the time. Make Kreacher want to hurt master and mistress. Kreacher lock it away so he safe. That locket bad." The elf spat.

"It is 'bad'. It is in fact evil. I shall dispose of it. Don't worry I shall not claim it for myself. Now go bathe. You are to submit to Gilly's leadership on Sirius'; Lord Black's orders. You will help Gilly keep this place clean."

"Kreacher obey Lord Black but Kreacher no like him."

"Well I shall leave you to finish while I check on Gilly." Andromeda said looking around. She stared at the settee, "It would look better this way."

Andromeda waved her hand and the frame of Fred's settee was silver lime. "I like the velvet but it matches the chaise better this way."

The mirror like jewel remained obsidian though.

Fred pouted.

"By the way the charms for piano are pianoforte reparatione and pianoforte discrepent." She called as she left. "I need to talk to the elves about dinner."

Harry and George decided they were about done and stretched.

Hermione shyly headed towards the piano which was the only unrepaired or replaced object in the room.

The piano was covered in dust and scratches but it was like a tarnished silver box that merely needed shining.

Hermione cast the spells to fix it.

Harry watched as she repaired the shawl on the piano and the velvet and iron wrought bench.

Hermione transfigured the curtains to be silver with green vines and cleaned the windows along with the two small tapestries on either side of the windows.

Harry shook his head when Hermione sat on the piano bench and patted it.

Fred joined her with a smile.
Hermione started to play something on the piano.

Harry rolled his eyes, "Shall we have a drink and a smoke? You can show me how smoke my new pipe."

"Sure." George grinned slinging an arm around his shoulders.

The two left the now redecorated parlour together.
Music, a piano and a stolen kiss

Chapter by KusanoSaku

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 8 pt1. - Music, a piano and a stolen kiss

Hermione didn't even really notice when Harry or George left as she began to play.

She was especially fond of classical music but she did have a soft spot for opera and musicals. She started with Angel of Music from Phantom of the Opera.

"Father once spoke of an angel I used to dream he'd appear. Now as I sing, I can sense him and I know he's here. Here in this room he calls me softly, somewhere inside hiding. Somehow I know he's always with me. He - the unseen genius."

She played Meg's lines without singing as if someone else sang them.

"Angel of Music! Guide and guardian! Grant to me your glory!"

Her playing flowed more naturally as she remembered the music she could not see.

"Angel of Music! Hide no longer! Secret and strange angel. He's with me, even now..."

Then she changed the piece without stopping her playing.

"Think of me, think of me fondly, when we've said goodbye. Remember me once in a while -please promise me you'll try."

"When you find that, once again, you long to take your heart back and be free- if you ever find a moment, spare a thought for me..."

She hummed along to the music break.

XooooooX

Fred had no idea the girl could sing much less like that…

She was even better then his mum's favourite singer Celestina Warbeck.

Her piano was gentle like spring rain in April and her voice like a summer wind awash with trilling birds. He watched her graceful hands traipse across the ivory and ebony keys without even locking. There was no music… she played from memory?

How brilliant was this witch?
"We never said our love was evergreen, or as unchanging as the sea- but if you can still remember, stop and think of me." Hermione paused to breathe before continuing, "Think of all the things we've shared and seen- don't think about the things which might have been ... Think of me, think of me waking, silent and resigned."

As she played the music appeared in front of her.

"Imagine me, trying too hard to put you from my mind. Recall those days, look back on all those times, think of the things we'll never do - there will never be a day, when I won't think of you." Hermione said her voice sure and passionately.

Fred could read music and he started to sing where the name Raoul was, "Can it be? Can it be Christine? What a change! You're really not a bit the gawkish girl that once you were. She may... not remember me, but I remember her..."

Hermione turned to him her fingers stumbling at first and then she started singing again, her face red, "We never said our love was evergreen, or as unchanging as the sea- but please promise me that sometimes you will think ah-ah-ah-ah-aaah-of me!"

Fred leaned over cupping her face in his hands turning her to face and kissed her.

Hermione's eyes widened and her hands shook on the keys.

Fred kept kissing her until they both had to breathe.

Hermione took gasping breaths winded by the sudden kiss. When she'd centred herself she frowned at him, "That was my first kiss you just stole."

"Well was it memorable?"

Hermione turned pink, "What do you think?"

"I think you are a very talented witch and we should sing more." Fred smirked.

Hermione managed to conjure the music for 'All I ask of you' and they sang it but the next music that appeared before them almost frightened her. 'The Point of No Return.'

She stared at the music embarrassed...

Fred nudged her and started to sing, "You have come here in pursuit of your deepest urge. In pursuit of that wish which till now has been silent. Silent. I have brought you that our passions may fuse and merge. In your mind you've already succumbed to me, dropped all defences completely succumbed to me. Now you are here with me. No second thoughts. You've decided, decided."

Hermione's voice shook at the chorus joining him.

"Past the point of no return. No backward glances. Our games of make-believe are at an end. Past all thought of 'if' or 'when'. No use resisting. Abandon thought and let the dream descend."

A very experienced Fred sang of fire, desire and seduction.

Hermione shivered sensing a Don Juan-like aura...
If he were the Phantom and she, Christine she'd leave 'Raoul' for him…

Hermione swallowed and took up Christine's part, "You have brought me to that moment when words run dry. To that moment when speech disappears into silence, silence. I have come here, hardly knowing the reason why," her face flaming, "In my mind I've already imagined our bodies entwining. Defenceless and silent, now I am here with you no second thoughts."

They sang the chorus together but Fred blinked and stared at the male solo.

He sang it softly almost as if he were afraid to say the words.

"Say you'll share with me one love, one lifetime. Lead me, save me from my solitude. Say you want me with you here beside you. Anywhere you go, let me go too." He paused and then sang, "Hermione that's all I ask of you."

Hermione leaned over to kiss him the way she thought Christine ought to have done instead of ripping the mask off.

That was how Andromeda found them later: holding hands while Hermione taught him to play as they sang romantic songs from musicals.

Chapter End Notes

Songs are by Andrew Lloyd Webber.
Chapter 8 pt2. - Pipes and male bonding

The two made their way to the gentleman's parlour.

George poured himself some fireball over conjured ice and then poured Harry some of Fred's butterscotch schnapps.

Two square black marble coasters appeared on the table between them

Harry sat in the black leather armchair and sprawled his legs on the matching ottoman.

George sat on the old-fashioned two-seater that had what seemed like two chairs joined but with a middle that prevented those sitting on it from sitting too close.

George stuck his pipe in his mouth, holding it between his teeth, reaching into his pocket for a tin and pulled a pinch of tobacco from it. He lit it with a weak flame from his wand and took a drag.

Harry set his tin of tobacco and his pipe case on the table, then he re-sized them. Taking the pipe and adding a pinch of tobacco to his pipe, then he took his pink Zippo and lit it not trusting his fire casting abilities. He took a puff and then groaned, "Damn this is better…"

George took a long drag, "I know right?"

"I'll have to buy Dudley a pipe someday."

George frowned at him, "Isn't he that tubby cousin that you disliked for so long?"

"He's not bad," Harry shrugged, "He told his father off for hitting me when we finally got home after being cornered by the Dementors and calmed down at Ms. Figg's. Anyway he snuck me up food and gave me the cigarettes. We talked some. We've got an appointment at the Leaky Cauldron on my birthday next year."

XooooooX

It was strange looking at Harry now, George thought sipping his whiskey and smoking his pipe.

Last year he was a boy and yet in the month since he'd seen him, Harry'd grown up.

The way he carried himself changed…

He had an aura that was damn sexy. Really the kid was barely fifteen and he was seventeen…

He wasn't a player, he was selective of those he slept with but he was single right now since he wasn't seeing anyone. He'd been single since just after the Second Task when he realized that his
lover Cedric's 'precious person' was that stupid Ravenclaw Chang. As if being ditched for the Ball for her wasn't bad enough.

It wasn't until he told Cedric to take a dip in the lake and to leave him alone did the stupid duffer confess that he was two-timing him with Chang. Apparently Diggory had started seeing them at the same time. The arrogant Hufflepuff bastard! He wanted to hex Cedric's bits off but he'd left the other and grumbled that you couldn't trust a badger. Apparently, they were short on loyalty.

At least his relationship with Grant Page, Ravenclaw's Keeper hadn't been that bad. It had been mutual; they'd parted friends at least. Grant was now with Duncan Inglebee of the same House. They were cute together…

Now if only he had the guts to confess to the person he really liked. It's not like he had a chance anyway with that person.

He wasn't looking for anything serious after Cedric but he'd prefer to be with someone who was less likely to cheat. Or as Cedric said it, 'he was flexible so he needed to satisfy his desire for wizards and witches by dating one of each.'

George really wasn't fond of Hufflepuffs and knowing Persephone Tonks, who was in Charlie's year and a former Beater was one, did not endear him to the purple haired witch.

Harry had a very sexy aura…

George was a lot taller and more muscular then the tiny Seeker but damn…his confidence made him ooze sex appeal.

George didn't care much for the theoretical 'height rule' that meant the taller guy was always the dominant one between the sheets. George was one of those people who preferred to take the bottom role in bed. That didn't mean he just lay there either; he liked to be a bit aggressive.

XooooooX

Harry frowned at George, "Is there something wrong with my face? Am I doing it wrong?"

The Gryffindor Beater swallowed and poured himself another two fingers of whiskey. "Just thinking that's all." Turning as red as his hair.

Harry raised an eyebrow, "About what?"

George shrugged, "It's not that important."

"Really? Then why were you thinking so hard then?" Harry teased.

"Just thinking about the last few years. I'm going into my Seventh Year you know. I wonder who I'd ended up seeing this year? Fifth Year was Grant Page, Ravenclaw's Keeper. Last year," George scowled, "was that git Diggory. Who knew that a Hufflepuff would be the type to have a sexual relationship with two people and have them both convinced that he was only seeing them? Told him off after the Second Task. He obviously didn't like me as much as he said since he took Chang to the Ball and she was his hostage. He actually thought he had the right to see us both and string us along."
Harry blinked, "Diggory? He was like that? Here and I was thinking he was pathetic since I saved him twice in the Maze. He actually was a cheater? Does Cho know what a rotten git he was?"

George snorted, "No he said he asked us both out at the same time. He could have had a third sexual partner for all I know."

"So you're not only gay…bent you have experience?" Harry asked curiously, puffing on his pipe as he cleaned his glass and conjured ice and water.

"I told you I'm bent and that I have a thing for Quidditch Players. I think blokes are at their sexiest after a match." George shrugged.

Harry sighed.

"So why'd you try to ask Chang to the Yule Ball anyway?"

"I was expected to ask a girl so I thought since she's nice to me…and she's a good Quidditch player…” Harry shrugged. "Everyone said she was hot."

"So you liked her because everyone else did?" George smirked.

"Yes…no…I don't know maybe." Harry frowned. "Maybe I'm just slow. Even Dudley has a girl, Jasmine. I've not really worried about that. Maybe I'm oblivious or I'm just not ready to be interested in girls."

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George thought, those Muggles really had messed with his head…

Harry spent a good portion of the time staring at Malfoy…

Almost as much as Creevey'd spent starting at Harry his First Year when the Chamber was open…

Seamus too, Merlin the accent the kid had was almost as arousing as Oliver's. Oliver was hot but he knew Percy and Oliver had a fling despite the 'Penelope thing'. But seriously what was wrong with Percy these days? He just got worse than ever with his prattiness all at once…

It wasn't like Harry hadn't stared at him and Fred a lot, after all you don't give just anyone 100,000 Galleons…

Merlin knew he'd stared at his crush enough. He'd been loyal when he'd been with Grant and the arse Diggory, he'd not thought about that person or at least tried not to. He didn't have a shot at him anymore then the Cannons had of winning the British Cup these days.

George had inklings that he was bent but damn his first match and he saw his crush fly and he was drooling. Took him a bit to get his bearings and focus on the match and start hitting beaters at the opposing team.

George didn't see his refusal to talk to the bloke as cowardice more like he'd rather not embarrass himself more then he had with the attempt to bypass the age line and ended up with a long white
"Thinking again?" Harry teased.

George smirked, "Yeah about who I've see you staring at over the years and Chang wasn't really getting your attention off the pitch except for just before the ball."

Harry frowned, "So who was I staring at then?"

"Myself, Fred, Finnigan and Malfoy surprisingly enough. Fred and I have great muscles, Finnigan has that sexy brogue and well Malfoy is clearly one of the hottest blokes in school and the richest." George smirked.

Harry gaped at him, "You must be joking! Malfoy? If I'm looking at him its just because he's always causing trouble."

"I suppose." George shrugged. "I've not really seen you may much attention to the girls. I know that Angelina is considered one of the hottest girls in Hogwarts. I believe the hot ones are Angelina, Chang, Giselle Goyle, Lavender Brown, Deborah Smith and Serotina Vector; two 7th years, two 6th years and a 5th."

"Do you think they are pretty?" Harry asked frowning.

"Not really. I'm indifferent to them mostly." George chuckled. "Fred and I don't really discuss our sex lives because being straight or bent is just about our only real difference besides magical talents."

"Is that odd to have twins' sexual inclinations so different?"

George shrugged, "I doubt it. I mean come on, Uncle Fabian was a bit of a playboy and Uncle Gideon betrothed to dad so I guess not. That's two. I'm pretty sure that Pavarti Patil likes Thomas even if she went with you to the Yule Ball. As for her sister I don't know. It's not uncommon to be bent or flexible. Anyway, I'd still be your friend if you liked blokes. Be a bit hypocritical if I didn't seeing as how I like blokes myself."

"I don't know if I am and you're the second person to bring it up. Dudley thought Cedric was my boyfriend but from what you said I'm glad he wasn't." Harry said thoughtfully.

"I wouldn't wish Diggory on anyone." George muttered darkly.

"I don't know…I'll have to think about." Harry stammered.

George summoned Harry into his lap and snogged his younger teammate.

Harry's eyes widened in stunned surprise.

George cupped the back of his neck licking his lips.

Harry gasped.

A move George took full advantage of, exploring the teen's virgin mouth and enjoying the taste of beard.

XooooooX
tobacco and butterscotch schnapps.

Harry awkwardly found himself kissing him back…

Then his rational thought returned and he flung himself off George and fell sideways into the two-seater's other seat. "What the bloody hell?"

George licked his own lips, "That wasn't bad for a first kiss. You'll be a good kisser eventually provided you get enough practice."

"What are you volunteering?" Harry retorted.

"Why not? You're hot…and I'm sure you'd rather explore with someone you trust. I think you're a great person Harry and that's not just because you the guy who gave us back our dream." George leaned over, "I really do think you are a good person. You're a great guy Harry. You'll make some lucky guy very happy."

Harry frowned and stared puffing nervously on his pipe.

Merlin he had a lot to consider…

George liked him…he thought he was hot and he had kissed him…
Andromeda stumbled in on George and Harry in the gentleman's parlour.

"Well then that solves that question." She smirked. "There is an Order Meeting over lunch. I'll have Gilly serve you in here. If you're in here then you can listen in and we'll discuss the meeting later."

"How will we listen?" George frowned. "We even made a product called extendable ears and we still got caught."

"I'll cast one-way silencing charms on the door. So even if Moody sees you in here, he can't tell you're listening, which he shouldn't if I use Blood-tied magic to hide you. Thankfully there is that four-person table over there. Even if it is meant for cards rather than eating."

"Won't Ronnikin's be jealous?" George smirked.

"You won't tell him or I'll not give you a second chance." Andromeda warned.

George sighed, "Ruin my fun. It would be nice to rub it in."

Andromeda chuckled, "I'm sure it would but its best if you could feign ignorance while being apprised of the situation."

"So um...what's on the menu?" George asked changing the subject.

Andromeda smirked, "Chicken salad sandwiches and a crisp green salad with raspberry vinaigrette dressing. I believe that family is being served mango and peach smoothies."

"Sounds yummy." Harry grinned.

"Very well. I shall have Fred and Hermione summoned here."

"Where are Ron and Ginny eating?"

"I've banned them from the kitchens and this room. With the dining room occupied by the Order they shall be forced most likely to eat outside on the veranda if Sirius has finished repairing his precious Iris. If not, I'm sure the elves will find a place. Gilly can somewhat think for herself."

George nodded, "Well they can do as they are told or not as far am I'm concerned. Ron is being a poney git and as for Ginny, she's a paper person without much personality."

"Very well. We'll critique the meeting after the sycophants leave. The Dumbledore-worshipping narrow-minded imbeciles." Andromeda muttered as she turned on her heel and exited the parlor.

Harry had been grateful for Andromeda's presence to distract him from contemplating George's questions and the kiss. He'd rather not consider what he'd just realised; he'd actually kissed the Gryffindor Beater back. What had he been thinking?
The door opening once more interrupted his thoughts…

A very smug Fred entered the parlour with a very flushed Hermione at his heels.

George raised an eyebrow, "We are truly of the same mind."

Fred snickered, "Indeed. However I think I have the lovelier choice."

"Perhaps, but I think mine will prove to be more intriguing."

"Don't talk about me like an object or like I'm not here you two." Hermione huffed.

"I'm not fond of it either." Harry grumbled darkly.

"Well we're going to have a private lunch and we get to listen in on the Order Meeting for once. Andromeda said she'd fix things so even mad old Moody wouldn't figure it out." George changed the subject even if he was contemplating what sort of a figure Harry had beneath those clothes.

It didn't take long for dishes to appear on the small table.

The four very hungry teens made their way to the table.

Soon they could hear the sounds of people moving around in the dining room that flowed through the door.

"Merlin this is lovely!"

"Yes, if there was a room as fine as this why were we meeting in the kitchen?"

"Because Molly insisted on repairing this house the Muggle way. All it needed was a team of persons skilled in transfiguration who had the patience for it." Sirius' smirk was almost audible.

"What is she doing here?" came Dumbledore's voice.

"Annie? She is my favourite cousin and this is still my house." Sirius growled. "Her daughter Seph is in the Order. Besides, I'm sure we'll need a healer at some point. Pomfrey is getting on in years. She solved the dilemma I had."

Moody snarled, "Tell me you didn't make a Dark Witch our Secret Keeper."

"Of course not." Came Sirius' smug voice, "I made her my Secret Keeper. It has to be someone I trust with my life and that is my cousin Andromeda. If you haven't forgotten she eloped and bonded with a Hufflepuff, a Muggleborn Hufflepuff at that. Annie can't be that Dark if you have someone like Seph in your ranks who is too much of a fence-rider to have an opinion of her own or to stand with her family. I'm surprised Seph isn't too much of a spineless prat to join the Order of the Phoenix."

"Now Sirius," Dumbledore chided, "that really is terrible of you."

Sirius snorted.

"You ought to respect our leader more." Minerva McGonagall sniffed.

"When he earns it. I'm sick of being bossed around in my own House. Grimmauld Place is my birthplace. Meeting here and using Grimmauld as a Headquarters is a privilege, which I think most of you lot have forgotten. Those who refuse to accept that I am Lord Black and the owner of this place
can clear out, that goes especially for Molly."

"Now Sirius you know that because Ronald is Harry's best friend that he is in danger hence why he and his family are here." Albus corrected firmly.

"I could care less." Sirius mumbled.

"How old are you?" McGonagall snapped, "This house isn't a toy to fight over like children."

"Sirius is right, this is his house therefore it is his right to extend or revoke invitations. Especially, to those made without his consent. He is the Head of my House and has reinstated myself and my family to its authority." Andromeda sneered.

"Slytherins have no respect for authority." Kingsley muttered exasperated.

Andromeda's voice was full of disdain, "Does this meeting have a point or is it's only purpose to discuss how unacceptable my position as Secret Keeper is?"

"If you are all quite finished with displays of posturing, perhaps you would be interested in hearing my report?" came the familiar quiet, firm and sharp tones of Severus Snape.

The four Hogwarts Students eavesdropping winced and shivered.

"Of course Severus." Dumbledore said kindly.

Snape sniffed, "The Dark Lord has managed to unite most of his old servants who are free. He's sent ambassadors to the giants, the Veela, the werewolves and the vampires. He is hopeful his return to power will revive old alliances and invite new ones. He sent an Executioner from the Department of Magical Creatures to the giants and Lucius to the Veela Court. We're having difficulty contacting the Elven realm. Greyback has already joined the ranks. As an ally rather than a servant his removal from Wizarding affairs after the Dark Lord's disappearance was ignored. I have forgotten who was sent to the vampire coven."

"Voldemort cannot be allowed to contact Avalon. As for the Vampires they choose to stay out of Wizarding affairs and so the Ministry leaves them alone. We've already sent Hagrid to the giants. The Veela are a historical neutral people and we have no one to send. They ignore wizard or witch allies without Veela blood. We shall have to send Remus to talk to the werewolf packs once more."

Remus snorted, "Any pack loyal to Greyback will side with Voldemort to hopefully gain some sense of power or autonomy. Since the Werewolf Registry was enacted the packs have become more angry with the Ministry. They will not side with us because we can offer them nothing. Especially in light of the legislation that Umbridge is trying to pass that will force werewolves to reveal their condition to employers and force employers who hire them to pay high taxes. Also she has listed occupations we are banned from. The legislation also calls for us to be sterilized and to be forbidden to have children."

Remus shivered and then continued, "Corey's pack is already talking about relocation, they have children and they are a neutral pack as long as they side with no one Greyback has ignored them. With Lord Belby's support there are few voices raised in protest. Few will speak for us and insist we only wish to live in peace."

"Are you refusing to talk sense into them?" Moody growled.

"Just stating my opinion that talking to them will do no more good then last time. Things for us have not gotten any better. Since Voldy's return it has only gotten worse for us." Remus retorted, "I see no
point in wasting my time or anyone else's. Besides, many packs view me with suspicion because I spoke for the Order and the Order did little for us." Remus retorted.

"Lupin is right." Snape sneered, "Greyback speaks for a majority of the packs because they see him as The Alpha. If he has sided with the Dark Lord they will follow suit. It is useless to speak with them. Those who are not loyal to Greyback and wish to leave will to remain safe from both the Ministry and the Dark Lord."

"So you're giving up without even trying?" Kingsley asked, his deep voice thick with displeasure.

"I see no reason to bother them when they have already made a choice. I refuse to go." Remus said crossing his arms.

"Now Remus," Dumbledore chided, "This is not the time for obstinacy."

Remus snorted, "I won't go and they won't listen to any of you either so forget it. I am your expert on werewolves. They won't change sides and we have nothing to offer that is worth shit."

"Remus you could try." Came Mr. Weasley's familiar placating tones.

"I shouldn't have to bother with a useless embassy to the packs when my talents can be used for other means."

"Besides arguing with me about my Secret Keeper and Snape's report do we have any other purpose other than insulting my best friend?" Sirius thundered.

"I'm sure there," an unfamiliar voice began.

Andromeda cut them off, "I suggest you eat so those of you who work at the Ministry can return without arising suspicion. I believe Arcturus is already being watched."

"Unfortunately." Mr. Weasley muttered.

Then the adults went silent aside from small unimportant conversations and chewing noises.

The four turned to their own meal helping themselves to the plate of sandwiches or dishing themselves bowls of salad. There was water and juice to drink to their preference.

It was some time before Sirius stormed in Andromeda and surprisingly Remus at his heels.

"Sycophants." Andromeda muttered darkly.

"That pompous git! Still inviting himself to authority in my house and trying to boss us around. I really have no respect for Albus Dumbledore right now! No wonder Fudge thinks he's stirring up trouble! If Harry and Snivellius hadn't swore Voldy was back I'd have sworn that was what the old fool was up to!" Sirius pulled out a wooden pipe that had a lion carved into the bowl that surprisingly resembled him, added a pinch of tobacco and lit it. He proceeded to puff away at it.

Then Sirius threw himself in the chair that Harry had vacated when George summoned him out of it.

Andromeda pulled out a small black pipe with vines carved into it and lit it before she sedately sat on the settee.

Remus lit his own pipe, it was white and the bowl was carved like a wolf's head. His smoke smelt of chocolate. He took a seat on the chair matching Sirius'.
Gilly appeared to pour them drinks and set them on the black marble coasters before Disapparating with a pop.

The adults sipped their preferred beverages and smoked in brooding silence.

Harry spoke after a while having finished his meal. "So um…are they always that bad?"

Sirius snorted, "They can be worse. Albus is always trying to have his way and McGonagall sides with him. Moody and Kingsley usually echo them. The others can't have an opinion that Albus hasn't given them. Blind sheep following a stubborn arrogant shepherd."

"Sycophants." Andromeda sneered.

"How many times did I have to say that meeting with the packs was stupid?" Remus growled.

"Bit surprised that Snivellius agreed with you."

Remus blushed, "Maybe he feels bad that he forced me from Hogwarts…I had hoped to… never mind." He glared at Sirius, "You know that stupid so-called prank of yours has caused me nothing but trouble. Severus was my friend was helping me with Potions when you pulled that stunt of yours. He stopped being my friend and only spoke to me to insult me. You really should have told him that it was all your idea."

"He couldn't be friends with us!" Sirius whinged, "He would have kept Lily to himself and then we wouldn't have Harry!"

Remus glared, "He never liked her above a friend and he saw her like a sister you pea-brained nitwit. Besides, he likes blokes, which you and James might have learned if you had one iota of sense between you. Thanks to you, I'm still single and I've got grey hair from being unmated and having James and Lily murdered."

The four teenagers were stunned and silent.

"I think you two have forgotten our audience." Andromeda reprimanded them coolly.

"Snape was friends with my mum?" Harry frowned.

"They were so inseparable they might have been twins despite not looking alike. They grew up in the same small town and went to Muggle school together. It wasn't until they got to Hogwarts that they were finally separated first by their Sorting into rival Houses. Later it was because Severus hung around with Muggle-hating future Death Eaters like Andromeda's cousin Evan Rosier and Regulus. There were other reasons too but Sirius and James' bullying didn't help matters. Seriously, what harm could being childhood friends be? If they were going end up together because they were so close, you and James might have had the same fate. Considering that your grandfather was his mother's eldest brother."

"The bloods too close." Sirius grumbled. "His mother and his great grandmother were Blacks. Besides, I don't like blokes, I like witches thanks."

"Yeah well I blame my being alone at thirty-five on you." Remus muttered darkly taking drags on his pipe.

"If I hadn't gotten locked up in Azkaban maybe I'd be bonded and have a few kids. If the Dark Lord never reared his ugly head maybe James and Lily'd still be alive. There are a lot of what ifs Remus and then there is reality. Don't blame me for your relationship issues." The canine animagus retorted.
"Fighting amongst ourselves does no good." Andromeda reprimanded them. "Now did you finish repairing Iris?"

Sirius grumbled, "The damn monster loving git lost a few spark plugs and about six bolts. Remus'll have to pick them up. I'll write a list for him."

"What makes you think I'll be your errand mutt either?" Remus growled.

"I was going to ask!" Sirius snapped. "Merlin! I hate being cooped up here! I hate this place! I hate every bit of it. I hate the mad old bitch my mother who used some sort of permanent sticking charm to attach herself to the wall. I hate that Dumbledore talked me into claiming the place! I hate that disgusting Kreacher who hasn't a good thing to say. He's lucky I'm not my mother and I don't use the Cruciatus as punishment! I've been sorely tempted but I'm sure that bitch Molly would turn me in for it. She already hates me for reasons I can't fathom!"

"So what did you four do today?" Remus asked changing the subject.

"We repaired the drawing room." Harry offered.

"Hermione and I replaced all the furniture." Fred smirked.

"I said that black and silver were a superior choice and Andromeda agreed. She changed your ebony to silver lime." Hermione tossed back.

"Merlin they're like Lily and James. They had to redo the entire cottage and they couldn't even agree on the same wall colour." Sirius groaned.

"Andromeda uncursed a clock that attacked her. It hurled bolts at her. I opened a music box."

George admitted ruefully.

Sirius groaned, "Not that music box."

"Don't worry. I closed it in time, now it's laced with protective charms. I did remove something that didn't belong in the drawing room. I'll be examining it and seeing that it is dealt with. It was something that Regulus died for. It must have some purpose, a dark purpose. I'll deactivate it. I believe it was Slytherin's so I would prefer not to destroy it."

"I'll leave the Cursed Family heirlooms to you, you and Bella were the best at wielding Dark Magic." Sirius waved his hand in a dismissive fashion.

"It's not cursed... and it's not just Dark. The object is evil and I would never use the word lightly. Since I'm stuck here for interim, I would like permission to move my potions lab and my research lab here. I can look over the room Remus has and see if I can add any more protections. I would like to also bring Ted. I think that once we have the House set to rights you are going to have a complete physical. Then Ted and I will discuss treatment. Twelve years in that ghastly place are bound to leave physical and mental scars, we'll help you deal with them." Andromeda said coolly.

"I don't need to let some mind healer play with my brain. I'd rather have it left alone." Sirius scowled.

"Consider it my payment for being secret Keeper. You asked me for a favour. I want you to agree to healing in repayment for accepting that duty; in the meantime I will make myself usefully by stepping in as Mistress of this House, its healer and a second brewer. As talented as Snape is, he has to deal with enough orders as it is. I will take care of our needs as far as that goes, so it is one less thing for the man to deal with. If Snape won't listen to you just take veritaserum and then let him question you. It's simple enough to brew but it will take me a while to finish it. I have recently deceased Bogart to
harvest. Perhaps, I ought to have offered Snape some of it."

Remus frowned at her, "I've captured Boggarts before but you killed one?"

Andromeda shrugged, "The spells I used aren't illegal but regulated. I am out of my Boggart supplies. I'll give you a list of my spells and incantations later. I am surprised that with Lyall Lupin as a grandfather it's no wonder you have a knack with them."

Remus muttered and puffed on his pipe.

"We're all rather morose aren't we?" George shook his head. "Since the idiots mostly left what's the plan?"

"We could tackle another room. Why don't the boys take on receiving room? That parlour doesn't need to be pretty just functional and that case we should leave it for the sycophants. Hermione and I have things to discuss so we'll fix up the ladies parlour that is opposite this. As long as Persephone is going to act so spineless she can share the receiving room with the bootlickers." Andromeda said rising and putting her pipe away as well as finishing the last of her wine.

Hermione followed full of questions.

The two adults and three teenagers sighed and headed to do something about the room to the right of the front door.
Chapter 10 pt1- Harpy and Weasel

Harry was woken up by an unfamiliar elf that hurried him to bathe and dress. It was his second full
day in Grimmauld and three days since Dementors attacked him so it was now the fifth of August.

Yippee he'd been fifteen for five days now…

His dreams last night left him with a sticky bed and a 'small problem' that required attention in the
shower.

Harry was so going to get George back, the smug bastard for asking those sort of questions and the
kiss.

He was still brooding by the time he joined the others at breakfast.

They were still sitting in the same groups as yesterday.

Gilly probably made breakfast because the food smelled better then Mrs. Weasley's, Aunt Petunia's
or his own. This time they had waffles instead of pancakes.

George patted the seat next to him.

Harry sat next to him reluctantly.

"I dreamed about you last night. It was hot…” George whispered when he poured him pumpkin
juice.

Harry hit the smug bastard's thigh.

George yelped in pain, "You didn't have to do that."

Harry gave him an innocent expression. "You should know better then to discuss such things at the
table."

"It's not like that boy has any manners."

Harry, the twins and Hermione groaned.

Mrs. Weasley had her voice back. Now she could complain shrilly at them again just wonderful.

Harry's half of the table ignored her.

Mr. Weasley and Seph Tonks scarfed their food and left for the Ministry.

Andromeda left to floo to retrieve her husband Ted while Sirius and Remus went to go talk
motorcycles.

Harry, Hermione and the twins headed up to the second floor to work on the library.
Molly chased after them with Ron and Ginny in tow.

"You are up to no good aren't you? You're already creating a trio of followers. Are you planning on setting yourself up as the next Dark Lord?"

"Mum we're just going to fix the library like we did the Drawing room, the dining room and the front room." George glared.

"Why don't you find something useful to do and make your stay more pleasant." Perhaps, then Sirius and Andromeda wouldn't find fault in you then." Fred advised.

Harry's back stiffened and he tried to calm down.

"Why should I listen to you? You should be listening to me, I'm your mother." Molly sneered. "You really ought to stop spending so much time with that arrogant upstart Muggleborn and that brat. He thinks because he's the Boy Who Lived he can do anything he wants. It's about time someone taught him a lesson."

Harry growled, his control snapping, "I've had enough lessons. I was locked in a cupboard for eleven years. Then I had my room turned into a dark jail cell. I've been starved and smacked around for thirteen years. I don't have to put up with that from you. Back off you stupid Harpy!"

"Don't talk to my mum like that you bastard!"

Harry's Magic exploded.

Molly turned colours, her skin acquired a jaundiced yellow shade and her hair turned fuschia with vomit green streaks.

It hit the twins and Hermione like a tsunami and kept flowing.

Hermione yelled, "Expelliarmus."

She overpowered the spell and the wands snapped when they were ripped from their hands.

Fred shouted, "Petrificus Totalus."

His spell hit his mother and Ron though he was aiming for his mum.

George pointed his wand at his brother and shouted a string of Latin.

Then at his feet was a shabby weasel with patchy reddish fur, an odd cross between Scabbers and the ferret Malfoy had been transfigured into that Ron had laughed at for a good while every time he saw Malfoy.

The quartet laughed at the state Ron was in.

Fred's mouth twitched at the edges, "Ginny you always wanted a pet, why don't you have Ron?"

The poor girl crumpled in a dead faint.

Sirius and Remus Apparated to where they were...

Their wands out.

Sirius had filled out, his skeletal frame had been hidden by healthy weight.
Remus' greying hair was honey brown again and his wrinkles were repaired.

"What happened? We felt an explosion." Sirius growled, looking around.

"The overgrown garden and the entire backyard just vaporized." Remus looked very concerned.

"Ron and Mum tried to attack Harry magically as well as verbally." George spat. "I ended up turning him into a weasel. I thought a few hours as a ferret-like creature might teach him some humility."

"I didn't mean to break their wands…it just happened." Hermione swallowed.

Remus and Sirius sniggered at the sight of Molly Weasley.

"Who did that?" Remus gasped between chuckled.

"Harry I guess. Magic just exploded from him." Fred frowned.

George led Harry off to the side to calm down while Hermione and Fred told him about what happened.

Sirius was furious, "That loathsome harpy! I told her to leave him alone. I warned her multiple times. That's it! I banish you from the Ancestral House of Black!"

The walls parted and Molly was flung bag and baggage from the House. Then the House slammed behind her.

"She'll never be able to access the House again and I wiped her memory of this place." Sirius snarled.

"She is still petrified. You think tossing her out onto a Muggle street without a wand is wise?" Remus asked.

"She went too far and I'll not forgive her or forget. Albus can lecture or whinge at me all he wants but she's not welcome here." Sirius sneered. "I'll do that to the next person who tries to attack my godson. She's very lucky I didn't do more than throw her out and wipe her memory of this place. I could have cursed her or something."

"I think we need a drink." Remus said.

Hermione levitated Ginny, "Let me put her on the bed in our room."

Harry was still radiating magic like a sun.

George pulled him close and held him, "It's alright. She's gone. You had your revenge she looks like Seph when she's sick. Calm down. Ron can't hurt you either. He's a petrified rodent."

"What do we do with Weasel Ron?"

Remus cast a few spells, "I don't know what you did to him George but I don't think Minerva could change him back. We'll have to wait for the spell to break."

Sirius snapped his fingers.

A house elf appeared, "Master Sirius be wanting Tilly?"

"Yes…this Weasel is our guest Ronald. Please see that he has accommodations fitting his current
state and see that he is fed properly."

"Weasels are carnivores. You can feed him what Crookshanks is eating. A pet weasel is very much like a ferret. They are often fed cat food." Hermione offered returning from stowing Ginny in their shared room.

Fred pulled her into his arms and kissed her, "Ron eating cat food? That's just brilliant. We'll have to take pictures if he eats it."

The house elf picked up Weasel Ron and Apparated away with it.

Remus and Sirius led the four teens back downstairs to the gentleman's parlour for a drink and a smoke most likely.

They could all use a cooling off period after that debacle.
Dudley’s wish

Chapter by KusanoSaku

Chapter Notes

A/N here ya go guys, here’s a curve ball. lol

Some events in this chapter take place right around the time Molly gets expelled.

Chapter 10 pt2- Dudley’s wish

Dudley was eating an apple while playing Warcraft one handed.
He felt what felt like an electric shock slam into his chest.
Then he felt something inside him flash and he started to glow.
His computer and everything electronic in his room spontaneously exploded.
His light bulbs in his overhead light and bedside lamp shattered.
His father roared and his mother screamed.
Dudley couldn't understand what happened.
His cell phone was vaporised as well as his gameboy. His Playstation and TV looked like his computer. There were screws and glass everywhere.
Dudley shouted, "DOBBY!"
The elf showed up frowning, "Master Dudley?"
Dudley held out his hand, a backpack appeared in it and then his Zippo, cigarettes, Honeydukes chocolate, favourite books, his stuffed dog from when he was little and a few of his clothes threw themselves into his backpack.
Dudley stared at it and then at the elf, "I can't stay here. Please take me to Harry."
The elf blinked at him, "Master Harry Potter's cousin be a Muggle."
Dudley swallowed, "I think I was a squib…"
The elf grabbed his arm with his long spindly fingers.
Dudley felt stretched through a tiny tube where he saw snatches of attics and cellars before being dropped into a fancy room.
Harry was there on a black leather settee and sitting with one of those redheads who dropped that
sweet last year that gave him a tongue like a black snake.

The matching redhead was with a pretty girl with curly hair and a nice rack in an odd shaped love seat.

He saw a slightly familiar man with black hair talking to a man with honey-coloured hair and merry amber eyes.

XoooooX

A house elf Apparating into the parlour wasn't new.

Dobby Apparating in with Dudley in tow was.

"Oy what's he doing here? Who are you?" Sirius growled.

Harry looked up and blinked, "Dudley?"

Dudley fell over, still glowing, "What the hell did you do to me? Jesus Christ things just started exploding. First the computer…then my game systems, my TV and my cell phone. Then all the light bulbs shattered. What did you do blow up the wiring?"

Harry frowned, "I don't know what happened. I got angry and it just explode."

"What exploded?" Dudley asked.

"His magic." Hermione answered, "It hit me like a tsunami but it tingled like an electrical shock. It overpowered my spell and snapped wands."

"What is it called when you want something and it just ends up in your hand?" Dudley stammered. "Summoning."

"Just like in Warcraft. Christ this is too much for my head." Dudley grumbled. He opened his backpack and pulled out his cigarettes and his Zippo. He lit it and smoked a whole cigarette before lighting another and digging out a bar of Honeydukes and eating it.

"Dudley did magic? I thought he was a Muggle…" Harry stared at his cousin in confusion.

"Told ya I was a Squib. My magic must have been weak. If I could blow up things and summon, you must have gave me a jumpstart like a dead Auto battery." Dudley muttered.

Hermione frowned, "That doesn't make sense!"

"Didn't you save his life from the Dementors?" Remus asked.

Harry nodded, "There were two, one for each of us. I ended up killing one I think. All that was left was a scrap of its robe."

"Kingsley and I found it. I found traces of a Dementor on it but I have no recollection of one being killed before however did you manage it?"

"The deer thing…it sort of pounced on it." Dudley replied. He frowned scrubbing his eyes with his hands, "You're right…they are hideous. I can sort of see them now in my memories. They were all smoke before. Well it was pinned and the deer thing got really bright. The Dementor just boiled away…"
"What happened when Harry's magic hit you?" Hermione asked curious.

"It felt like a shock, you know when someone touches you and you feel a jolt? It was like that only stronger. It hit me in the chest and then something sort of sparked. I started to glow and then things began exploding." Dudley grumbled. "I was taking on a troll! I almost beat him when it exploded. I hadn't gotten a chance to save!"

"Well Big D I think you got your wish. You're a wizard now."

"I hope I can stay because I don't think I'm any safer with my parents then you are now. I am sorry for showing up unannounced but it was an emergency." Dudley turned to the adults, "I swear."

"If you live under my roof I have two rules." Sirius glared at him.

Dudley swallowed. "What would they be?"

"No telling me what to do and no smoking that crap. Harry can show you where the pipes are. If you don't like one we'll pick on up somewhere. Maybe Remus will take you out. He promised to buy my motorcycle parts." Sirius whinged.

"Alright alright, I'll go. Are you alright Harry?" Remus asked his brow furrowed with worry.

"I'll keep them. I just can't go home."

"Well when is your birthday?" Hermione asked.

"June 27…" the confused boy replied.

"Well then you really ought to be a fifth year. I don't think I can tutor you that far. I've got all my notes and revision for the last four years. You'll need a wand. Since you weren't born magical exactly, you might not have the Trace. Anyway with the wards on this place its fine to teach you."

Fred smirked kissing her check, "That's my 'Mione, the genius. The hat really ought to have made you a Ravenclaw but then we wouldn't be so friends."

Hermione turned red and pushed him off, "Fred behave!"

"So I've got until September to learn how to be a wizard?" Dudley frowned.

"With Hermione I don't see how you could do poorly. Some of us are a dab hand at certain subjects. I'm keen at Charms, Andromeda is a genius at potions, I believe Sirius' best marks were in Defence and well Fred is gifted at Transfiguration."

"I turned Ron's teddy bear into a spider at seven." Fred bragged. "It was even alive enough to scar him for life."

"I can stay awake in History." Hermione piped up.

"Well I think we'll go shopping for school things tomorrow." Sirius smirked. "I'll just come along as Potter's faithful pooch Snuffles. Maybe you can glamour me to look smaller and cuter then my Padfoot Irish wolfhound form."

"What do you want me to make you a dachshund?" Remus teased.

"You better not Moony!"
The two Marauders proceeded to bicker.

The five teenagers giggled.

Dudley snickered, "Are they always like that?"

Fred nodded, "Sirius has never really grown up and when Remus is with him they're kids."

"If it's too dangerous to go to Diagon Alley we could go visit Rue D'Leon instead." Hermione offered.

"What's that?" Harry asked

"It's the French version of Diagon Alley only everything is there, their hospital- St. Vidius, the Paris Gringotts branch and their Ministry." Hermione gushed, "I had so much fun exploring there the summer before third year. I read that you could travel by Chevalier Coach if you were under-age so I just stuck out my wand when I left the hotel we were staying at. It showed up a triple-decker blue bus really quickly. It didn't cost that much to get a ride to Rue D'Leon."

"We really should stay in Britain."

"But it would be safer." Hermione protested.

"I think we'll glamour Dudley and Harry can use his dad's cloak. I'll see who from the Order can come. I know that the twins don't have their school things; since Molly said that they would wait for Harry. I think we'll go tomorrow or the day after depending on when we can get the maximum number of Order members." Sirius smirked. "My French is atrocious so I vote for Diagon."

Hermione pouted.

But Sirius was the man in charge and Harry's godfather so Diagon it was probably going to be…
It took Sirius two days to round up enough Order members for a trip to Diagon Alley, which made it August seventh.

There were five days until his trial…

Andromeda assured him that she and Hermione had everything under control.

Mr. Weasley had arrived at Grimmauld to find his daughter unconscious, his youngest son a weasel and his wife missing.

A very reluctant Remus went with him to try to find her…

They checked The Burrow to find the family clock said that Molly Weasley was in the Hospital. However a trip to St. Mungos came up empty so Remus called up London hospitals and asked if anyone with yellow looking skin and fuchsia hair had come in. So far there was still no luck.

The house was quieter without her anyway.

Yesterday, Andromeda was so peeved with Seph that she switched Persephone and Hermione's possessions. Thereby giving Hermione her own room and forcing the purple haired Auror to share with a thirteen-soon to be fourteen-year-old witch.

Seph, Andromeda, Ted, Kingsley, Minerva, Remus and Sirius were escorting Hermione, Fred, Ginny, George, Harry and Dudley to Diagon Alley.

Minerva frowned at Dudley, "Who are you?"

Harry smirked, "My cousin, who recently has exhibited magical talent. Apparently the Dementor incident sparked his magic."

"Oh dear you are how old?"

"Fifteen." Dudley supplied.

"You just now are showing magic? How odd." The Head of Gryffindor mused.

"Yes, well he's got to start at Hogwarts. It would be horrid to make him be a first year at his age. If he can pass the end of year exams, don't you think he could skip a few years?" Andromeda offered.

"Well..." the older witch mused.

"He's already caught up on the history. I have all my notes. Anyway he's practising wand work. He just can't cast without his own wand." Hermione jabbered. "Remus said he could give him his Defence exams that he had two years ago if you gave permission."

"It is quite unorthodox." The woman sniffed, "But we have no choice. I'll oversee the exams. I'm
sure I can request them from the professors."

They side-along Apparated the under-age teenagers…

Fred gladly took Hermione while George had Harry.

Andromeda had Dudley leaving Ginny to her daughter who was the girl's roommate.

Arthur couldn't get away from the Ministry despite his wife missing.

Sirius wasn't a dachshund but he was a black shepherd puppy that Remus reluctantly Apparated under his arm.

They arrived just outside Gringotts where they retrieved some money before shopping.

Harry had some money left over from First Year but needed more for Dudley.

While they were sure he wouldn't start as a First Year they didn't know what he would be.

"Why don't we pick up Second and Third Year books? Just to be safe?" Hermione recommended.

"There are the electives to be considered then Hermione." Fred reminded her.

"What are they?" Dudley asked.

"Muggle Studies, Divination, Numerology, Ancient Runes and Care of Magical Creatures are the academic ones."

"Muggle studies sounds easy." Dudley frowned, "Magical Creatures sounds fun."

"Only if Hagrid isn't back from his 'vacation'." George groaned.

"So he'll need the Monster Book of Monsters, Magical Creatures and Where to Find them as well as British Muggles and their Habits. Along with Second and Third Year core texts, at least his Herbology and Potions books don't change." Hermione said thoughtfully.

They went into Flourish and Blotts, which was crowded as usual.

Sirius and Andromeda stayed outside as exterior guards.

Dudley never much of a reader but curious and asked Hermione a lot of questions, after all he was a Muggleborn essentially and she knew more about the Wizarding World then he did.

Fred carried all the books that Hermione chose for herself and Dudley: The Standard Book of Spells Grades 2,3 and 5: A Beginner's Guide to Transfiguration and Intermediate Transfiguration both by Emeric Switch; One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore; Magical Drafts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger; A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot; Magical Theory by Adalbert Waffling and two copies of Defensive Magical Theory by Wilbert Slinkhard. Along with Quidditch Through the Ages and Hogwarts, A History;

The only books he needed was The Standard Book of Spells Grade 7 and a copy of Defensive Magical Theory by Wilbert Slinkhard…

Harry picked up books on snakes and defence as well as the books Hermione and McGonagall recommended since he had yet to receive his book list for this year.
Their next stop was Slug and Jigger's where they picked up potions ingredients for George, Hermione, Harry, and Dudley.

Casting a privacy charm Andromeda asked, "Why the snake books?"

"I'm interested in them you see." He admitted embarrassed, "I'm a Parseltongue…"

"That is a rare, a precious gift no doubt from your great-grandmother Elektra Gaunt. You should practice. A great number of powerful wizards recorded their magical experiments in Parseltongue to hide it from the unenlightened. I can't speak it but I've learned to understand it."

They picked up a number two pewter cauldron for Dudley as well as glass vials, one Pair of Protective Dragon skin Gloves- Dudley chose the Hebredian, a trunk, one plain pointed hat, 1 telescope and 1 set of brass scales.

They all stepped into Madam Malkin's for new robes.

Dudley had to get a plain uniform and was introduced as a formerly hedge-witched student transferring to Hogwarts as well as a cousin of Harry Potter.

The shop assistant heavily flirted with the poor boy and he spent most of the fitting blushing. They made arrangements for Remus to pick up all of the clothing in three days time.

Harry announced that all wizards deserved a broom and dragged them all to Quality Quidditch when he proceeded to order three Nimbus 2001s.

Two of which he handed to the twins who blinked at him.

"No really we're," Fred started.

"Fine without our Comet 260s." George interrupted.

"You want to hammer Slytherin right? At least having the same broom will give you an edge against Crabbe and Goyle. I started on a Nimbus 2000 so a newer model should be alright. Perhaps you can give him a hand?" Harry smirked.

Dudley frowned, "Are you sure this is alright? You buying all this for me?"

Harry nodded, "You're family. I'm sure my parents wouldn't mind."

"I really wish I'd been a better cousin to you…" the thick teen mumbled.

The twins reluctantly agreed to accept the brooms.

"I think we've got everything but the wand and his pet."

Dudley bounced, "I can have a pet? Really? Mum always said she was allergic. She pitched a fit over your owl. What can I have?"

"First years are allowed owls, toads and cats." McGonagall interjected.

"Toad? That's just boring. No offence but your owl is messy and she tends to stink." Dudley wrinkled his nose.

"Well of course when your father locks her in her cage so I can't clean it." Harry grumbled.
"I don't care. I want a cat. Crookshanks is nice but his face is weird like Figg's cats. I want a pretty one." Dudley declared.

"Then you'll have a cat." Harry snickered.

"They are stubborn creatures who want affection on their terms." Hermione warned.

"I don't care I like cats. They were my favourite animals at the zoo." Dudley grinned.

The group made their way to the Magical Menagerie: Remus, Sirius and Seph stayed outside.

Hermione led Dudley over to the cats there were a few white cats, some tabbies and a lot of Kneazels but a very pretty silver cat with bronze streaks and two tails made it's way to Dudley and rubbed itself against him.

Dudley knelt to pet it.

The others noticed it's purring was odd.

Dudley blinked at the cat, "You can talk?"

It sniffed at him.

"I'm sorry…Tama."

The cat purred and jumped up on him.

Dudley caught it, "He says he wants to go home with me. I didn't know cats could talk…"

"Crookshanks is very intelligent." Hermione gushed, "Si…Snuffles talks to him all the time."

"Crookshanks is half Kneazel." Dudley explained to the silver cat.

The cat didn't meow, it nya-ed at him.

"Tama says he knows him…at least he thinks he does. He arrived just before you bought him." Dudley told Hermione.

A shop clerk came up, "That mad cat chose you?"

Dudley's cat hissed at him.

"He says he's not mad he just dislikes you."

"The owner will be glad to be rid of him. Silver nekomatas are rare and he purchased him but they didn't take. So he put him in the shop, many purebloods including a Ravenclaw named Chang was interested in him but he turned his nose up at them all. Not many can afford a nekomata," the clerk sneered. "He's 5,000 Galleons."

Dudley gasped, "5,000 Galleons? How much is that in pounds?"

"15,000." Hermione supplied. "Crookshanks was only 15 galleons."

Harry glared at the man, "How much is the price for Harry Potter?"

A man pushed the clerk out of the way, "Harry Potter wishes to purchase my nekomata?"
Harry sniffed, "Yes for my cousin as a gift."

"I spent 3,000. I have to make some profit so…perhaps, 3,750?"

Harry glared at him, "Really? That's a very high price."

"You see why no one wants him? Despite his colouring, he is a very difficult cat and doesn't get on with others."

The cat hissed.

"He didn't spent that much on Tama. He spent 1000, Tama was a runt and his coat is spoiled by the streaks. His litter mates were pure silver." Dudley interjected.

"He talks to you?" the man snapped.

"Yes." Dudley said glaring at him.

Harry dug out a handful of galleons, "Take it or leave."

The man swallowed and accepted the price.

The group left the Magical Menagerie.

"What an unpleasant person." Hermione scoffed.

"Where to now?" Dudley asked petting his cat.

"Wand." Hermione grinned, "For wands, Ollivander's the best."

The group made their way down to the south side of Diagon Alley to Ollivander's Wands.

They opened the door and all experienced a disconcerting sensation.

They ended up in a different wandshop.

The Order Members looked around and then Remus called out.

"Gareth Ollivander?"

"I go by Louis here but yes that is my name. Remus Lupin? 12 ¾" Supple Hippogriff Feather and Black Laurel am I right?"

Harry blinked, "Hippogriff?"

Remus nodded, "It's always served me well."

"What an honour having you in my shop. Quite unexpected. Dear me, to think Garrick is off on one of his core hunting expeditions; Unicorn hair this time. He asked me to look over the shop. Andromeda Black, a 15" rigid Aventurine Powder and Oleander. Is it true you've become a healer?"

Andromeda nodded. "You made my cousin's wand did you not?"

"Yes Sirius, a pity how he ended up. Ought to have known that he'd have an unlucky life with a Leprechaun Hair wand. Yes 14" Sturdy Blood Wood and Leprechaun hair it was. Hm…so who is it that needs a wand? Are Garrick's malfunctioning?" the man had white blond hair that was a bit wild.
Harry pushed Dudley forward, "My cousin."

"Well you are a strapping young lad aren't you? You have a new magic feel. This is a first wand at your age? What are you sixteen?" Gareth Ollivander asked frowning.

"Fifteen sir." Dudley answered nervously.

"No need to be nervous. A cousin of Harry Potter's is an honour. I made his mother's wand, 10¼" Swishy Willow and Hippogriff Feather. Not as brilliant as her friends. Garrick brags about his Yew and Phoenix feather or his Holly and Phoenix Feather. My finest wand was acacia and Abraxan hair. Yes, Severus Snape has gone far with that one and may go farther. Acacias are great judges of characters…" Gareth circled Dudley, "Favourite future subjects?"

"Defence and Magical Creatures." Dudley replied.

"Interesting. How do you get such muscles?"

Dudley blushed, "I worked out at my school's gym and I'm a boxer."

"Defence, Care of Magical Creatures and great physical strength. That's a Holly wand…now for the core…"

Harry was very surprised to hear that Dudley might end up with a wand of the same wood as himself.

"I am unsure of the wandcore at present. Being Muggle-raised what do you think of gardening? You need a wandcore with ties to a creature. A stone wouldn't do I know that." Gareth mused.

"Hm…I like roses I suppose. Mum never let me in the garden. She always made Harry do the dirty chores. I suppose I like plants." Dudley shrugged.

"What magic have you used since discovering it?"

"Well…" Dudley scratched his head sheepishly, "I sort of blew up things and I summoned without a wand…"

"Hmm…magical and physical strength. Plants…Herbology…Bowtruckle. I bet that would do it." Gareth went over to a stack of wand cases and retrieved a box. "Holly and Bowtruckle skin."

Dudley opened the case and found a 14" wand, whitish silver in colour. He took it in hand and it went off like a firecracker letting off red and gold sparks.

"A Hogwarts student according my experience it seems like you're destined for Gryffindor." The wandmaker strode over to George giving him a piercing look, "Your wand is wrong. What is it?"

"Peach and Unicorn hair?" George stammered.

The adults snickered at him and his face flamed.

"Pah! That's a woman's wand. Tell me Garrick didn't sell that you."

George swallowed, "Mum hasn't bought any of us wands before. At least not Ollivander's, Ron's was a Jimmy Kindle."

"Kindle? That upstart? He wouldn't know wands if You Know Who was after him. Gregorovich now that is a wandmaker, generations of fine wandmakers," Gareth snorted. "Then where did you
get your wand?"

"Mum had a bunch of wands so she let us pick one. This one sort of liked me." George mumbled.

"Peach is a weak wandwood you probably forced it to obey you. House, Talents, interests." Gareth barked.

George sighed, "Charms, Defence, Potions, Herbology, Ancient Runes and Transfiguration."

"Quidditch Position."

"Beater."

"House."

"Gryffindor but I was considered for Ravenclaw and Slytherin."

"OWLS?"

George listed them smugly, "Outstanding in Charms, Potions, Defence Against the Dark Arts and Transfiguration. Exceeds Expectations in History of Magic, Care of Magical Creatures, Ancient Runes and Herbology."

"Desired future occupation."

"I'm an inventor and I recently purchased the premises at #93 Diagon Alley. We're working on storing enough product to be able to open in July. We're going into our 7th year at Hogwarts."

"Inventor, questing, a learner; Sycamore then."

"He's a prankster, always plotting." Harry offered.

"Lucky?"

"Happy-go-lucky." Harry snorted.

"Billywig stinger then. I just happen to have one. It was an odd mixture I wasn't certain would sell."

Ollivander said handing a wand case to the teen

"My wand works just fine." George protested as he opened it.

It was sixteen inches in length and carved like a unicorn horn. It was golden, a soft butter yellow colour and gave off blue and green sparks when grasped.

"Use the Triwizard winnings. Write it off as an expense. I think its necessary." Harry advised.

George sighed reaching into his pocket and took out a handful of galleons. "How much?"

"Seventeen, the wood and the core are difficult to obtain. Sycamore isn't often used though often desired. As for Billywig Stingers, Honeydukes has the main contract for importing them from Australia." The wandmaker informed him.

George swallowed counting out seventeen and handing them over paying the man.

Gareth frowned at Fred barking, "Wand."
"Alligator Juniper and Unicorn hair."

"Healer's wand. You seem very much like your twin. You interested in being a healer son?"

"No Mr. Ollivander." Fred frowned.

"Favourite Classes.

"Transfiguration and Charms. It used to be Care of Magical Creatures before the professor changed."

"OWLS."

"Outstanding in Care of Magical Creatures, Transfiguration, Defence and Charms. Everything else was Exceeds Expectations by choice."

"Also a learner and a creative type, perhaps a sycamore wand might suit as well."

"Transfiguration is his best skill. He transfigured a teddy bear into a spider when he was little before Hogwarts and with a practice wand at that." Hermione boasted.

"A master?"

Andromeda nodded, "I would say so."

"Then perhaps Galena, it is prized by transfiguration masters worldwide. A shame I haven't such a wand however I do have both in my workshop. I shall see if they will pair. If not I would be willing to create it from scratch which would necessitate a trip to retrieve a suitable core and wand wood."

"How much would that cost?" Andromeda frowned.

"If the sycamore and Galena stone pair and that suits him the same price; if not then merely a two galleon fee to create it to suit. I had a problem with young Fleur of the Delacour family. She was suited to a Veela hair and Rosewood but it was something I did not have. I had the rosewood but required a trip to visit her family to retrieve a hair for the core. One of my finest commissions, to think it was in the Triwizard Tournament representing Beauxbatons!" the man exclaimed excitedly.

"Perhaps you would be interested in acquiring something rare for a wand core." Andromeda smirked.

"Boggart. I have in my possession a Boggart that has passed beyond the veil. I have yet to take it to pieces for its parts."

"I've been eager to experiment with Boggart skin but I lack the skill to harvest it myself because they hard to trap and kill."

"I would be willing to return with the Boggart and allow you to harvest some of the skin in exchange for his wand." Andromeda bargained.

"Really? First chance at harvesting? How much can I have?" the man was radiating excitement.

"I think three strips. No more then one inch wide and say a foot long?"

"I'll have the wand ready in two days if they pair. If not then I will inform you when you come that I will be leaving on a trip won't I?" Gareth grinned he pointed at Hermione. "Wand."
"A 10¾" Springy Dragon Heartstring and Vinewood." Hermione replied confused. "I got it at the Diagon Ollivander's."

"Garrick and his three core obsession. If I've told him one I've told him a thousand times that limiting your cores results in inferior matches that are likely to dissolve as quickly as some claim Kelpie hair does. Classes?"

Hermione blushed and listed the classes she was still in, having dropped Divination her third year and Muggle Studies her fourth.

"Ravenclaw?"

"The hat consider Ravenclaw, seemed to have decided it but announced I was a Gryffindor." The girl shyly admitted.

"Future occupation?"

"I'm interested in Law." Hermione blushed.

"Hickory then. Would you be best described as logical, problem solver and insightful? Capable and multi-talented?"

Harry, George and Fred chorused agreements.

"Red Jasper then. I have a few they are quite in demand for my young aspiring lawyers." Gareth said as he dug out three possible wands. "Try the pink jasper."

Weak spark.

"Orange?"

Not much of a reaction at all.

"Perhaps the true red." Gareth handed her the wand.

The moment the wand and Hermione interacted it went off like a firecracker with blue and bronze sparks.

"Well that would be a Springy9¾" true Red Jasper Powder and Hickory wand. Fourteen galleons."

Hermione stammered, "I don't have the money for it."

Harry paid for it, "Consider it an early present for your birthday and for being a prefect."

"But I've not received a letter yet…" Hermione protested.

"You will. They'd be a fool not to." Fred added.

Finally the wandmaker to turned his sights to Harry, "I already know what you have, Garrick likes to brag about your wand and it's brother. The fool. No insult meant but a true Holly wand bearer ought to look like your cousin."

Harry scowled, "Because I'm short?"

"You do lack the size and strength for a Holly wand." The wandmaker shrugged. "As for a Phoenix Feather…your magic is in flux. I don't see it suiting you right now. Perhaps at a later time, perhaps
not. For magic in flux I'd recommend an Ebony to ground you."

"That's a Dark wood!" McGonagall exclaimed.

"Yes it is visually very dynamic and the most famous of Dark woods. Interestingly, it also does very well in Protective Magic and Defence Against the Dark Arts. Ebony has ties to each of the four core elements, and thus all the secondary elements as well. It could be considered on of the best wands for the well-rounded Elemental Magic user, I have found it grounds those in magical flux." Gareth corrected, "I am an Ollivander and we make an extensive study of wandlore. I may not be published in Britain but I am extensively sought out for my studies here. To have a Delacour as a former client who is most pleased with her wand is seen as quite the coup in Southern European wandmaking circles."

McGonagall muttered under her breath.

The wandmaker sniffed at her but continued, "Ebony can work well with any core but someone like you requires a powerful core to help balance your magic. Perhaps, Abraxan? It may take some time to master, but will produce very rewarding results. It is well balanced between speed of casting and power but with strong ties to the air element. Wielders often have an excellent constitution for alcohol consumption. Severus Snape has such a wand…let me see I'm sure I have one."

Gareth poked about and pulled out a wand case he opened it, "Ah yes a fine wand, one of my favourites. The Abraxan was quite a fine one, one of Beauxbatons' prize stallions. Hm 13 ¾" Sturdy Abraxan Feather and Ebony. See how it matches."

Harry took it in hand and it showered them immediately with quite flashy green and silver sparks.

"Would I be wrong to say you aren't a Slytherin?"

Harry swallowed, "I almost was one, the hat wanted me there but I thought Gryffindor was a better choice though it was quite insistent."

The adults with the exception of Remus, Andromeda and Ted were horrified.

"Well it seems happy, can you feel it sing?"

Harry could feel it vibrating with his magic without casting. His holly wand never did that…

"This will be fifteen galleons young sir."

Harry paid him still a bit in awe.

The Order members escorted the teens from the shop after Andromeda made the appointment for Fred's commission wand.

George glared at Harry; "If you can spend the kind of money to buy wands and brooms then we still owe you a birthday present."

"I like to buy things for my friends." Harry protested.

"Well we didn't get a chance to have a decent party for you cause some git decided to lock you up all summer." George retorted.

"Harry wasn't locked up all summer!" Dudley protested. "He had chores- more than he deserved though. Jeez he ate more this summer I know that."
"Because you cooked." Harry snarked.

"So you can spend money on us but we can't on you? Merlin you're thick-headed." Fred muttered.

"I don't need fancy stuff. Some chocolate frogs and I'll be happy." Harry protested.

"That's it! You're going to have something awesome." George smirked, "I know just the thing." He walked over to Andromeda and whispered to her.

She turned to give Harry an appraising look, "I know just the place but look sharp Persephone. It's in Knockturn."

Kingsley, Minerva and Seph started protesting immediately.

"Mother! You can't take them there; there are Dark wizards and witches all over the place. Merlin knows how many Death Eaters!" the purple-haired ex-Hufflepuff Auror protested hotly.

Andromeda turned to Sirius who was still a dog, "You trust me 'Snuffles'?"

Sirius tilted his head and then nodded.

"Good boy. You heard Snuffles." Andromeda turned on her heel and led them to the nearest entrance to Knockturn Alley.

Kingsley, Minerva and Seph muttered darkly, hands on their wands and eyed the crowd with intense suspicion.

Andromeda passed all the dark arts bookshops, the apothecary, Madam Potage's cauldrons and more before stopping at Salazar's Pythons.

"What could ya possibly be wanting here?" Kingsley glared at George.

Minerva turned white, "You can't possibly…George Weasley are you quite mad? You'll set the school off again."

"I don't care. They'll believe him or they won't. Anyone with half a brain would know that Harry wouldn't come back with that git Diggory's body and tell such a story if it weren't true. Really I may feel sorry for his parents but he's no great loss." He glanced at his twin, "You got a problem with this?"

Fred held up his hands in surrender, "It's all yours mate."

George nodded, "Well then Harry, go pick yourself out a snake."

The Aurors and the Deputy Headmistress outright refused to set foot in the shop.

Tama, Dudley's silver nekomata familiar stayed in his arms and hissed at the snakes in warning.

Not that it was needed they were all caged.

A fact that made Harry frown…

The shop was filled with hissing.

"Harry Potter? Harry Potter in my shop?" a dark robed wizard came forward wringing his hands, "It's been two generations since a Potter came here. Before it wasn't to buy a snake it was to inform
us that they were now our owners. What can I do for you?"

"We've come to buy him a snake." George said shortly, his temper on the verge of breaking.

"Of course. Any snake in the shop is available. Even if its labelled sold, anything for a Potter."

Harry muttered darkly, walking amoung the cages: there were pythons, cobras, Runespores, ashwinder hybrids, adders and more.

Harry could hear them arguing about who he would take.

A voice stood out from the rest, "Shut up. He'll take a snake based on their appearance. Most wizards can't speak to us and only want us for potions ingredients."

Harry read the name on her cage…

_Amazonian Rainbow serpent_

Was she ever glorious…

Her scales were the colour of sunset; golden orange to orangey red with black streaks that seemed to outline flames. The scales had an iridescent quality that shimmered like a rainbow or a crystal in the light. She seemed to glow even in the dim light.

Harry leaned over and hissed at her, "Afternoon. I'm Harry."

The snake tilted her head on him, her tongue darting out as if to taste his magic. "You can speak?"

Harry chuckled, "I can. You are only the third snake I've spoken to."

"Tell me they did not belong to you."

"No. One was caged and was from Brazil. He wished to go home though he'd never been to Brazil. The other was a Basilisk…"

"You are strong, very strong. I can taste your magic."

"Would you consent to come home with me?" Harry asked.

"Yes. Anything is better then this tiny cage." She hissed.

"We have owls and cats at home you must not try to eat them or attack their masters." Harry warned.

"I shan't if they don't." she retorted.

Harry held out his hand and the cage opened. "What is your name?"

"Skylla." She replied in a soft hiss.

"What sort of snake are you?"

"I'm a boa." She eyed him with disapproval, "Don't you at least know the difference between snakes?"

Harry huffed, "No. I'm not supposed to embrace being a Parselmouth."

"Then I have a lot to teach you wizard."
"I'm called Harry."

"That is a hard name. I shall call you Ri."

Harry sighed, "If you like."

Skylla slithered up his leg and up his body. She was about seven feet so a little less then a foot taller then the twins.

"What do you eat and how often?"

"I get fed frozen rats mostly but I'll eat small birds, the occasional fish anything I can catch."

"No eating house elves or the weasel." Harry warned.

"Weasels are disgusting creatures." Skylla hissed annoyed as she laid her head on his shoulder. "It's too hot here. I'd like cooler place to sleep."

Harry smirked, "We'll have to make one."

"Something roomier then the cage that I can leave if I like."

"Do leave the arachnid when we get to Hogwarts alone."

George's voice tickled his ear, "Found something you like?"

Harry shivered, snarling in English. "Don't do that…"

George smirked at him, "You seem quite attached."

Harry blushed, "She's smart. Isn't she beautiful?"

Fred whistled, "She glimmers like a rainbow."

"She's a rainbow Amazonian boa. Of course she shines like rainbow." Harry retorted.

"How much?" George asked.

"Her? She's a snappy thing since she arrived three years ago. Normally thirty galleons but for a Potter twenty."

"Not as much as Dudley's cat. That will do." Harry muttered thankful she wasn't horrendously expensive. He wanted most of his Triwizard winnings to fund the shop.

George paid smirking.

"So what do she eat?" Hermione asked with open curiosity.

"Rats and weasels." Harry said with a straight face, "Know where I could find some?"

Rats and weasels were on their list of hated creatures…

Andromeda was a bit smug when she escorted the group back to the alley. "Now we can return home."

Remus picked up Sirius.
Andromeda took hold of Dudley leaving Harry for George and Hermione for Fred.

The very exhausted, slightly perturbed group Apparated back to Grimmauld…

Kingsley and Seph disappearing at once while McGonagall headed for the receiving room to floo back to Hogwarts.

The teens headed to their rooms to put their purchases away.
Chapter Notes

A/N: Hi guys, been gone for a bit i know. just some R/L being clingy. so, here's 3 new chapters. they've been written for a while now i just haven't had the time to post them. sooooo, in the following chapters, there's a few more curve balls and a sex scene or two (mind you detail has been cut WAY back for ratings sake. now, that being said, heres the newness. . . . . WAIT i simply cannot let you continue without expressing my thanks to my wonderful reviewers. you people are wonderful. and a virtual bag of cookies to Atymer for taking some of the sting off those R/L issues that kept me from posting. you're a diamond mate.

[Eventually, I might repost the lemons so they are more descriptive. This was first written to comply with ff.net's rating policy.]

Chapter 12- Molly hunting

Remus was arm twisted again to go with Arthur to try to find Molly against his will. Since he still owed Sirius his motorcycle parts he agreed to go and dragged Dudley out with him.

They Apparated to each Muggle hospital again until they end up at Broadmoor which was started as an asylum for the criminally insane.

Despite sharing a name with the Broadmoor brothers from the Falcons who were James' family Quidditch team they weren't related beyond the Falcon Beaters somewhat insane antics.

When they reached the admissions desk, Remus asked politely, "Has a middle aged woman with yellow skin and fuchsia hair come in?"

The woman nodded, "Yes. She's under a seventy-two hour hold. She was transferred from another hospital because she was catatonic. I believe she is still in that state. Are you a relative?"

Arthur stepped forward, "I'm her husband. I've been looking for her for three days now. What is a seventy-two hour hold?"

"It's a psychiatric medical incarceration in events of psychosis." The woman shrugged, frowning at them.

Remus dragged Arthur to a corner, "They interpreted the petrifaction as catatonia. She also looks a bit crazy with that colouring combination. I don't really know how we'll get her out. I suppose because they specialize in mental disorders something like Ted they sent her here when she didn't respond."

"Can we send Ted to pull her out?"
"Let me see when the hold is up." Remus said walking over to the woman at the desk.

"Yes?"

"My friend is understandably upset. I was wondering when the hold is up." Remus asked politely.

The woman gave him a reassuring smile, "Nine tomorrow morning."

"If we sent her doctor to retrieve her, might she be release into his care?" Remus asked frowning.

"Perhaps, it depends on whether they were skilled to treat her I suppose."

"I believe he is a psychiatrist with a degree in psychology. I don't ask for details, it's a private matter." Remus shrugged.

The woman nodded, 'I understand. Some see mental illness as something to be ashamed of. If she is prone to states of catatonia she needs more serious treatment."

"I believe that this is her first incident if my friend's surprise is anything to go by. I believe that she suffers from mood disorders. Her family recently had a son break with the family over politics and this maybe a delayed reaction to that. Either that or finding out one of her sons is gay." Remus shrugged.

He would tell the Muggle woman anything but the truth.

"Her psychiatrist would need to watch her more carefully…"

"Of course. Thank you. I shall pass the news onto her husband. By the way her name is Mary Weasley of Ottery St. Catchpole. They live on the outskirts of town and they were in London trying to contact her son who works here."

The woman took a note of the name, "I shall pass this on to her doctor."

"Thank you Nurse."

Remus dragged Arthur out of the psychiatric hospital.

"Now you can probably send Ted after her if he can convince them that he is a psychiatrist and her doctor. I'm sure his wife can tell her enough of Molly's behaviour to come up with a believable disorder for her."

Arthur crumbled, "If she finds out she's been in a place like the Janus Thickey Ward Merlin she'll be more insufferable."

"You would have been better off with anyone else."

Arthur winced, "I wouldn't have Bill, Charlie or the twins."

"I notice who you didn't name."

"Ginny is a mouse, Percy isn't a part of this family and Ron is a spoilt brat. I consider them her children and not mine." Arthur grumbled.

Dudley spotted a speciality smoke shop and tugged Remus' arm, "Please? The dragon ones are just weird. I want a cat."
Remus laughed, "What are you a future Gryffindor?"

"Are they of a neutral, good or chaotic alignment?" Dudley frowned.

"I think it depends on the person. Fudge is a neutral. Sirius is definitely chaotic. I think Arthur here could be considered 'good'. James would have been chaotic good unless you asked Severus."

"Who is Severus?"

"Your future Potions teacher. He'll no doubt be overseeing your potions exams. He will try to intimidate you. He pretends to dislike children. He hates his job and really would prefer to spend all day in a lab brewing rather than teaching. He would be happier if he could. He never wanted to teach he just wanted to be the youngest Potions Master, First Class. He did it though." Remus said quietly.

"He means something to do you this Severus." Dudley frowned at him.

"Perhaps, but he prefers to act as if I don't exist. I kept a secret from him and he found out the worst possible way. He broke off our friendship after that." Remus shrugged.

They entered the smoke shop together. Arthur had stayed outside to smoke.

Dudley poked around looking at the speciality pipes and found a white stone lion like a lot like Remus' wolf headed pipe. He nudged the older man, "That one."

Remus nodded and paid for it.

They left the shop.

Dudley pocketed the pipe after Remus shrank it, placing it into the pants Sirius said he could have.

Remus Apparated them to a speciality motorcycle shop that specialized in flying motorcycles where he picked up the missing parts for Sirius to get the canine animagus off his back.

Sometimes being Sirius' legs got old...
Adoptions, flirtations and seduction

Chapter by KusanoSaku

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 13- Adoptions, flirtations and seduction

Andromeda dragged Sirius and Ted up to Sirius' 'study' to talk.

"What are we here for Annie?" Sirius said throwing himself into the comfortable black velvet desk chair.

"I've been thinking that Dumbledore has been allowed too much power. I'd like to adopt the boy, he seems to be a decent sort and with parents so bad he has to run away I'd like to make him officially family. Provided you have no objections." Andromeda announced.

"Dudley seems like a decent kid for being Lily's mad sister's son." Sirius shrugged, "Will they give him up?"

"From what I can gather they've abused Harry for being magical. I can only imagine what they would do to the two of them were they returned to their custody next year." Ted offered. "I haven't any clear findings since I've yet to speak to Harry about it. Annie I insist that you talk Sirius into seeing me. Twelve years in Azkaban and two on the run is a lot of stress for the mind."

Sirius winced, "Harry fixed my physical issues from that. Too bad he didn't fix the other."

"Only Veela can do that. Veela mind healers aren't common and tend to be very closed preferring to stay close to the Court." Andromeda shrugged.

"I have no objections."

"I need copies of the Potter wills and yours. I've come up with a strategy that will infuriate the Ministry but they will have to accept it because they have created a situation and I shall capitulate." The former Slytherin Head Girl smirked.

"Copies of the Potter wills are stored in the Black Family Documents Vault so even if the Potter copies are sealed those aren't. I was named Harry's guardian by both of them. James as sole guardian but Lily wanted me to share with Remus. She thought he would temper my excesses." Sirius chuckled.

"She would have been better off choosing Severus and Remus." Andromeda muttered, "But I digress. I need permission to access the vault."

Sirius scribbled on a piece of parchment, "What are you up to?"

"I'm going to convince the Muggles to sign over custody of they boys to me. Since you are still considered a dangerous murderer you can't have Harry right now legally and I'm sure that Ted would say that you couldn't possibly be completely stable even if you were declared innocent."

"I'm stable enough." Sirius grumbled.
"If Albus knew you were innocent he should have spoken for you. All they have to do is have the wandmaker testify which is your wand and then test it for the last spell cast to see who blew up the street. Besides you haven't a Dark Mark on you anyway." Andromeda scoffed. "Anyone with sense knows you can't have an audience with the Dark Lord Voldy without it unless you're to be marked. Then again since when did a many-headed hydra like the Ministry show sense? They are like Runespore heads fighting until they kill one another."

"Trust a Dark Witch to resort to a Dark Creature analogy." Sirius muttered.

"Would you expect any less?" Andromeda asked raising an eyebrow.

Sirius snorted, "Not really. You put most Dark Witches to shame…"

"Like Bella? Trust me that is not difficult. It's more interesting to have power that intimates and not use it so they always wonder what you could do rather then to show them what you can do. That is where Voldy and Bella stumbled. Its is best to frighten them with their own imagination then to show them what you are capable of."

"Merlin you're an odd one Annie." Sirius shook his head.

Andromeda turned to Ted, "I will require your agreement to remove monies from our vault."

"How much?" Ted worried his lip with his teeth.

"40,000 Galleons." Andromeda shrugged.

"WHAT! That's 200,000 pounds! Why would you need so much?" Ted yelped.

"For the love of Morganna desist with the screeching. I taught you better manners then that." Andromeda snapped.

Sirius scribbled again on parchment and handed it over, "Permission to remove that number from the main vault. I suspect you shall be paying the Muggles off to give up custody?"

Andromeda smirked, "Of course. With the damage done to their house by magic since they hate and distrust it so much they will not be willing to live there after their wiring was destroyed."

"Quite right. You will see that they are suitable punished?"

"I am quite sure that I can arrange something unexpected and untraceable in the future. At present I am concerned with bring Harry under the authority of the House of Black." Andromeda sneered, "The Muggles will pay. I don't dislike Muggles in general but I dislike those who abuse children in their charge for their own son to away out of fear says much about their living environment. Harry did call that place a hell hole and a prison."

The two wizards looked troubled.

"I shall take my leave then. I have errands to run." Andromeda said rising.

XoooooX

Hermione and Fred retreated to the Drawing room where they sat close together on the piano bench. Hermione conjured more music and they began to sing together. Fred did his best to follow her playing.
Hermione choose Into the Woods music this time and began to play, Children will listen. She liked it best sung by Bernadette Peters from the original Broadway cast.

The song started slow and what was before her was the entire song.

"How do you say to your child in the night? Nothing's all black, but then nothing's all white. How do you say it will all be all right when you know that it might not be true?"

Fred just stared at her.

"Careful the things you say, children will listen. Careful the things you do, children will see and learn. Children may not obey, but children will listen. Children will look to you for which way to turn, to learn what to be."

A thoughtful Fred joined in on the Chorus, "Careful the wish you make, wishes are children. Careful the path they take- wishes come true, not free. Careful the spell you cast, not just on children. Sometimes the spell may last past what you see and turn against you."

Hermione's song took a bitter turn; with Voldy back and gaining power was it any wonder?

"How do you say to a child who's in flight: 'Don't slip away and I won't hold so tight'? What can you say that no matter how slight won't be misunderstood? What do you leave to your child when you're dead? Only whatever you put in it's head. Things that your mother and father had said which were left to them too."

Fred understood her point that Molly went too far and didn't know when to stop. You can't control you children always. You have to let them go at some point.

"Careful the things you say, children will listen. Careful you do them too, Children will see and learn. Guide them, but step away. Children will glisten. Tamper with what is true and children will turn if just to be free. Careful before you say 'Listen to me'. Children will listen." Hermione's voice was full of passion, almost a warning to a woman who could not hear or understand.

Hermione startled to pay her other favourite song. "Mother cannot guide you, now you're on your own. Only me beside you. Still, you're not alone. No one is alone, truly, no one is alone. Sometimes people leave you halfway through the wood. Others may deceive you. You decide what's good. You decide alone. But no one is alone."

She paused for Red's line but didn't sing it.

"I know...Mother isn't here now."

Fred took up the baker's part, "Wrong things, right things...Who knows what she'd say? Who can say what's true? Nothing's quite so clear now- do things, fight things...Feel you've lost your way? You decide, but You are not alone, You are not alone. Believe me. No one is alone. No one is alone, Believe me. Truly...

Their voice mingled in harmony

"You move just a finger, say the slightest word, something's bound to linger, be heard. No one acts alone. Careful, no one is alone."

They sang through the song, coming to the end.

"Things will come out right now. We can make it so. Someone is on your side, no one is alone."
Fred pulled her into his arms, kissing her insistently.

The inexperienced Gryffindor was pliant in his hands, eager but shy.

Fred unbound her hair and ran his fingers through it, caressing the soft hair. Tracing her jaw, her neck, and her collarbone, dipping a finger to run along the curve of her breast.

Hermione gasped, her eyes fluttering shut.

Fred kissed her closed eyelids, behind her ears and down her throat pausing to nip and suck the creamy skin.

Hermione shuddered.

"Trust me?"

Hermione's eyes opened, "What?"

"To take this a bit farther? I'll stop if you tell me to. I promise. You have no idea how much I want you."

Hermione swallowed. "If you promise…"

Fred Apparated them to the large bed in Hermione's room…

Hermione blushed.

Fred slowly undressed her looking in her eyes for any sign of fear or a wish to stop.

Hermione felt the urge to cover herself as Fred took away her bra.

Fred saw her embarrassment and kissed her, pulling her into his arms, rubbing her back. "You're gorgeous. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Nothing."

Hermione asked softly, "Really?"

Fred grinned at her, "Absolutely. Merlin "Mione I've never seen a witch as perfect; the six hottest girls in school pale. They don't have your brains, your spirit or your heart. Angelina isn't as lovely."

"Angelina? Isn't as pretty as I am?"

"Absolutely, it's an honour to be your first…" Fred said kissing her neck and bringing his hand to cup her breast.

He started slow with a lot of gentle, exploring foreplay.

By the time he reached her hips she was tearing his clothes off.

He found himself pinned to the bed, Hermione's hands exploring him.

He'd never been with a woman that aggressive in bed.

It wasn't unpleasant at all; he enjoyed it.

When he was about at his limit, Fred flipped them back over. He asked again, "Do you trust me?"

She looked up at him, peering intently as if trying to use Legilimency. She nodded, "Yes."
Fred grinned, reaching for his wand and pointed it at her casting contraceptive charms as well as one that ensured her enjoyment. He used magic to remove the last of their clothes and to put up privacy wards just in case...even if her floor should be empty.

He was careful to prepare her gently, when they were finally joined it was more magical then he'd ever experienced.

Hermione whimpered when he entered her, she'd never been with anyone before. It was foreign and welcome at the same time...

They started slowly, before finding a rhythm that pleased them both.

He'd spent much of the time since she arrived watching her, at her side and they found since Harry arrived that they worked well together.

Fred was brilliant; he encouraged her and didn't ridicule her for having intelligence or using her mind. Then he shifted his angle and reached down caressing her clit with his thumb.

Hermione screamed with pleasure.

Fred took care to make this enjoyable for the brunette witch, he maybe a playboy but he knew what made a witch wild. Not that he was interested in anyone else...it was amazing how much she changed in a month. She was gorgeous...

His orgasm him like a shock spell...yet he was still aware enough to watch her find release and the way she arched up was glorious.

They lay there not saying anything, covered in a light sheen of sweat and just held each other.

XoooooX

Andromeda retrieved 200,000 pounds from Gringotts from one of the Black Vaults with Sirius' written permission. She had also visited Sancus Malfoy, a cousin of Lord Malfoy- her former betrothed who became Head Boy two years after she graduated to retrieve custody transfer papers for both boys.

It didn't take long to Apparate to Little Whinging.

Andromeda paused to visit Arabella Figg; the neighbour across the street from the Dursleys and apparently Harry's former babysitter.

The Kneazle-cat breeder met her at the door, then her hand on her heart. "Oh dear..."

"Peace, It's Andromeda, Persephone's mother."

"Seph?"

Andromeda scowled, "Yes."

"I see come in. I knew that Harry would be taken towards the beginning of August but where is Dudley? He's very different away from his parents. I always thought he was a spoiled rotten boy but he seems a decent sort. I maybe a squib but there was magical explosion in that house after Harry was taken away."

"It was Dudley. He manifested magic without training so that he lost control and he said he blew out the wiring." Andromeda informed the squib coolly.
"Blew out the wiring? I knew magic and electricity couldn't really co-exist well but that is surprising."

"How have the Muggles been?"

"They stormed out of the house after the explosion. Petunia was crying and staying she wouldn't stay there. She kept crying for her Diddy. I never did understand her nicknames for the poor kid. Harry was always 'freak' or 'the boy', I ingratiated myself to Petunia enough to become his babysitter but I had to make him miserable, one of Albus' orders. I told him those Muggles were horrible. I complained to him for years. Harry was out there shovelling snow in non weather appropriate clothing. He missed a lot of school as a child and did chores above his age ability. I told Albus over and over that Harry needed to be somewhere safer. He told me about blood wards and how that he was only safe with Petunia. Safe from Death Eaters perhaps, but not from physical danger." Arabella grumbled.

"Well I'm going to convince them to give them up with no magical influence. I don't wish to be accused of torturing Muggles even if they are loathsome creatures who would deserve it."

Andromeda scoffed.

"You're really going to take him away?"

"I'm adopting Dudley and assuming custody of Harry as his closest magical relative." Andromeda smirked. "With Sirius still seen as a murderer and treacherous Death Eater, he can't be Harry's guardian. Not that he is ready for the right now. He needs time to heal from Azkaban as you can imagine."

The squib shivered, "That horrible place I can imagine. I saw Severus after he came back, he has scars too and he was only there a month."

Andromeda bid good day to Ms. Figg and walked across the street to meets with two very angry Dursleys

The Muggles were inside the house and she could hear them arguing.

The woman wanted to search for her precious Dudders.

The man thundered that if that boy did magic he ought to be expelled. If the freak killed his son they should lock him up in prison and throw away the key.

Andromeda pounded on the door.

It was ripped open by a large bull of man who was very portly and had a face like a bulldog.

Andromeda was tall for a witch, about five eight and very strong from carrying cauldrons and lifting patients. So his attempt to intimidate rolled off her like water hitting a impervious charm. "I will be coming in. It's about the boys."

The man retreated after one look at her expression.

Andromeda took a seat on the couch close to the skinny horse necked woman, "Now. Your son isn't dead. He's magical. He had an outburst tied to his emotions not unlike a child's burst of wild magic. Dudley is the one who blew out your wiring. He was terrified of your reaction, thanks to years of seeing your treatment of Harry. He was removed at once and is staying with Harry's closest magical relations."
"If that useless freak had freakish relations why did we have to raise him? I told you to throw him in the bin Petunia but no. This is entirely your fault! If you hadn't insisted we'd have a normal son and not a freak."

"It should have been safe!" Petunia bawled, "I lived with Lily for years and I never developed freakish tendencies. He did something to my Diddly-kins. Isn't not fair!"

"For what reason were you given that Harry must live here?"

"Apparently, my sister died in a particular way that meant that he must reside with someone of her blood." Petunia sniffed, "I never wanted him. He was a little eyesore, a lazy brat who spoilt our perfect family. He does nothing but cause trouble. He upset Dudders, stole food, made messes and did freakish things. I don't believe Dudley did this. He loves us."

"He's ashamed of you. You ever wonder why he stopped bringing his friends around? He thinks it's disgusting to be called babyish nicknames at his age. I can't blame him. He decided it was better to live with Harry's godfather then here."

"The murderer? My boy is living with a murderer?" Petunia wrung her hands, "He's going to be killed I know it!"

"Sirius is no more a murderer then any other detective." using a Muggle term for Sirius' former position in Magical Law Enforcement, "He got accused of being in the pay of a criminal. Instead of doing a full investigation he didn't even have a trial and was tossed in prison. A fact that will be remedied soon, now I will tell you that Dumbledore lied. There are no blood wards. Therefore there is no reason to keep him. Dudley is a very powerful wizard if his destruction of your wiring and the electronics are anything to go by. He is receiving intense instruction with the hope of starting at the level of a second or third year. For your," Andromeda sneered, "...suffering having to bring up two magical wards I shall offer you the sum of 200,000 pounds in exchange for your signatures on documents transferring legal custody of the boys to me."

Petunia protested, "No Vernon please…"

"If not you'll have two wizards living with you next summer." Andromeda said half in warning, half-threatening.

Vernon agreed, "Alright alright you bitch. I'll sell the freaks. I won't have a son of mine as a freak. I want nothing to do with your lot."

Andromeda held out the custody papers and the bull-like man signed them with malicious relish. He stalked over to the mantle piece and threw a piece of parchment at her.

Andromeda caught it and sneered, "Another Ministry missive? A pity they are accusing Harry of your son's magical outburst. Strange they have yet to register Dudley as one of us. If you like I can make it impossible for Wizards to track you, even Albus."

"You can hide us from him?" Petunia stammered.

"Yes." Andromeda said smugly.

"If Vernon gives Harry away you have to. I don't want to know what he would do if he knew I threw him out."

Andromeda pointed her wand at them and cast a wizard repelling charm that would make them invisible to any with magic. It was a twisted Fidelius charm, which was to protect an individual
rather than a location. With herself as their 'Secret Keeper' only she could find them along with any
she shared the secret with.

Andromeda paid Vernon the money in cash pulling it out of her healer's bag.

Vernon took the money having signed legally binding custody papers, "We shall move. I want to
forget that those two freaks ever existed. We will pretend to be childless. Dudley never existed.
Harry never existed. We want nothing more to do with that lot. No more owls and no more freakish
things."

"Very well." Andromeda said snidely as she rose, "Be warned the Dark Lord is back. No doubt he is
the one who sent the Dementors after your charges. I would be wary, there are Death Eaters on the
rise and they will start wreaking havoc on both our worlds soon. While your address may have been
leaked it is possible that your appearances have been as well. Be on your guard. I would hate to have
to console your son if you died."

Andromeda left as quickly as she arrived and Apparated back to Grimmauld.

XoooooX

Dudley was in 'Uncle Sirius' old room with the sexy bikini models and motorcycles posters. He
wasn't happy to be sharing a room with someone as awful as that Ron whose antics and betrayal he'd
been regaled with by Hermione and Fred who muttered about treacherous weasels. His roommate
was a weasel and they weren't sure when he'd be unweaselled. Was that a word?

Dudley didn't really care whether it was or not…

While he had issues with math and writing, he wasn't that horrid at reading.

It was easy to understand his Wizarding textbooks.

He worked through Hermione's First Year textbooks with ease…

Dudley practiced his spells over and over, reviewing her notes. Hermione was pretty gorgeous for a
genius. Fred was one lucky bloke, he hoped the older boy knew how much.

He'd encouraged Hermione to take a break for a few hours and promised to be a good boy and
study. Being a fifteen-year old First Year was cringe-worthy. Dudley didn't really want to be a
second year either so he studied day and night.

Hermione tutored him in History of Magic, Fred in Transfiguration, Remus in Charms, Andromeda
in Potions and Sirius in Defense. Andromeda was also a dab hand at Astronomy, apparently it was a
Black family passion which made sense considering that she was named after a constellation and
George was keen with Herbology…

Dudley wanted to get good marks for once in his life; he did not want to embarrass Harry or his
tutors.

He loved having magic and living somewhere he could practice was so cool.

He'd been given a hideous goblet to transfigure into a rat and had been surprised to do it the first time
and it even looked like a rat that Piers used to own.

Practicing all the time was like training for a quest…
Dudley usually played as a Tauren Monk from the Ragetotem tribe with a quarterstaff and his fists as his weapons with light armour but a wand was pretty cool. Being a seven-foot tall, four hundred pound Minotaur-like creature made it fun to beat up trolls. Of course with Orcs as allies it was interesting.

He was enjoying his practicing until something snapped like a giant rubber band.

"Fuck George."

Dudley choked.

What the hell?

Sure Harry's room was just across the hall but what the…

He had been a little curious before about whether the Cedric bloke was Harry's boyfriend but seriously he didn't want to here something like that. Dudley wasn't homophobic like his father; he was more ambivalent.

That didn't mean at all that he wanted to hear that sort of thing.

"Harder."

Dudley groaned, tearing through Hermione's notes for silencing charms.

He finally found one and cast it on each and every wall as well as the door.

When he was surrounded by blissful silence, Dudley fell collapsed backwards on his bed.

"I won't be able to look at either of them for a while." The poor boy groaned, "When I can, I swear I'm going to tease them. I did not want to hear that but I can't wait for the weasel to be tormented by it."

Having come from Number Four with no clothes he was happy to find that with some sizing charms that Sirius’ old clothes fit him well.

XoooooX

George had plans to get in Harry's pants.

So he talked Harry into showing him his bedroom.

Was he ever jealous to discover Harry had an en suite bathroom; George had to share with Dudley, Remus, (Ron) and Fred.

Sirius had found his room's contents moved and put in the room theoretically shared by Dudley and Ron. It had been sealed with preserving charms but Sirius had split through Transfiguration the bed into two beds that seemed to be from the Gryffindor dormitory.

Everything was preserved in that room and hadn't decayed like the rest of the house.

Regulus' room was awesome…

"Seen enough?" Harry snarked a bit bored.

"The kid seriously seemed studious with a desk like that. To think he died at my age…"
"Real depressing George." Harry grumbled.

"You need me to cheer you up?" George smirked.

Harry frowned at him, "What are you plotting now?"

"This," George tumbled him onto the bed, pressing his body tight to the younger teen's body and kissed him.

Harry kissed him back…

Since that first kiss George was forever touching him. He dreamt about those large hands on his body. Damn, Harry could feel how hard George was and it made him even harder in response.

Harry ripped George's t-shirt, "You're been teasing me since I got here."

"You got hot. Can't blame a bent wizard for being interested." George smirked, wielding just enough magic to strip them.

In response their cocks brushed against one another.

"Gods that feels good." Harry groaned.

George flipped them over and treated the Seeker to foreplay: grinding, frotting, teasing touches, licks, nips and sucking.

Harry was almost overwhelmed by this…

George took immense pleasure in treating the teen to his first non-self induced awake orgasm via a blowjob.

Harry came hard, trying and failing to shove George off before he came in his mouth.

George drank it all smugly, licking his lips before making Harry hard again.

Harry groaned, "George! Fuck! Not again…"

When he was hard enough, George cast preparing charms on himself and lube on them both. With a smirk, George sunk down on his friend.

Harry blinked, his hips snapping up in reflex, "Fuck!"

"That's why they kept coming back." George smirked, "Until of course they found someone else." he said darkly, he seemed to be a convenient fuck until his lovers found someone else.

"Fuck that feels amazing."

Harry loved the feel of George's arse…

At some point Harry flipped them over, pinning George's hips to the bed and began pounding into him.

Wards snapped around them.

"Fuck George!"

George was vaguely aware that the privacy wards snapped but he was too horny to care. He hadn't
had good sex since what December? One's hands were only so good…besides it was hard to get off properly with Fred around all the time.

"Harder." George ordered.

They got more intense the closer they came to orgasm…

George was surprised how long Harry had held out the second time. he'd half expected him to come soon after getting inside him but was pleased to find the younger lion had more endurance then that. Damn he was a natural…

Harry came hard again, a bit sheepish when it was inside the Beater.

George finally came spraying them both and falling back against the pillows, "Fuck…that was amazing…"

"You're telling me." Harry groaned.

George groaned, "Damn…I'm going to be sore later."

Harry flushed, "Uh sorry?"

"Nothing to be sorry about. I've got pain potions for this. I sort of pilfered a book for bent wizards back when I was fourteen. I'll lend it to you." George winked at Harry.

Chapter End Notes

Children will listen is by Stephan Sondheim I believe.
Chapter 14– Custody and adoption

Andromeda Apparated to the Public Apparation point nearest the entrance to the Ministry and phoned in. The Muggle looking phone booth brought her to the Atrium.

Andromeda inwardly sneered at the arrogance of the sculpture in the centre of the atrium.

Idiots…

She took the lift down to the third level.

Andromeda made her way to the Department for Magical Children.

The secretary frowned at her, "Can I help you ma'am?"

"Healer Tonks." Andromeda sniffed, "And I need to speak with Madam Greengrass. It is an emergency."

"Oh?" the woman asked in a bored tone.

"Regarding the abuse of magical children."

"I'll see if she is available." The secretary scribbled on parchment and then tapped it with her wand.

It folded itself into a paper bird and flew towards the office at the back of a long room.

There were cubicles with at least two-dozen workers in them.

It didn't take long for the door to open.

Andromeda took that as an invitation and madder her way to the inner office.

"Andromeda." The woman greeted her shortly and the door closed behind her.

"Aurora."

"What is this about?" the slightly younger former Slytherin Prefect asked.

Aurora Greengrass was in Bellatrix's year and it was her twin Demeter Lovegood who became Head Girl that year.

"Harry Potter."

"Oh really and what is your connection to the Boy Who Lived?"
"He is my cousin's godson and his grandmother was my great grandfather's youngest sister."
Andromeda replied coolly taking a seat. "I have recently become aware of his address as well as his need for a suitable guardian. He was placed illegally I'm sure with a Muggle relation who treated him like a house elf."

Aurora scoffed.

"Trust me he has been his cousin has admitted to it."

"A Muggle cousin?"

Andromeda smirked, "A Muggleborn cousin. I am surprised you didn't think to ask the Improper Use of Magic Office. He has had several infractions…"

"So he's in trouble?"

Andromeda scoffed, "For self-defence. There are two witnesses to his being attacked by Dementors. He's accused of using magic in front of a Muggle but his cousin is magical so that charge should be thrown out. His first offence was caused by a house elf so that shouldn't be relevant. As for the second it was a burst of wild magic. He accidentally inflated a Muggle aunt but they let him off because Sirius just escaped. That was excused so they best not bring that up."

She pulled out copies of the Potters' wills, Sirius' will and the custody transfer papers. "I have these. I managed to retrieve the copies from the Black document vault. Sirius was named co-executor of the Potter Estate. As you can see Sirius was named guardian but in the case of his inability they named Remus and Severus. However, Remus can't take custody thanks to the current legislation before the Wizengamot. As Sirius' nearest relative, I have also gotten his Muggle relations to give me custody. They refused to allow two magical children under their roof. They had since moved and I have no way to contact them. I am a trained healer, Harry shows signs of physical abuse and starvation while his cousin was grotesquely overfed. They both are in need of the care of a trained healer and at least one of them suffered psychological abuse since my husband as a mind healer his services are no doubt needed."

"What sort of psychological abuse?"

"He was called Freak or boy instead of his name. Their son ran away via house elf when his magic manifested and blew out the wiring. He is a big kid but even he was horrified to live under their roof. When I informed his parents he was magical they blew up. It was like being told your child is a squib. They agreed at once to sign over custody, they don't want them. As Harry's nearest blood relation I'm taking him in. I want to adopt his cousin. Dudley is a good boy, sharp as a tack. He has the build of a Beater. The boy maybe new to magic and a late bloomer but he's studying hard. I want to give him family to be proud of."

Aurora nodded, skimming the documents. "I was not happy that the Chief Warlock placed him illegally. An orphaned child is under the authority of this Department. Granted we were in flux at one point because my predecessor was revealed as Death Eater. He would have most likely ended up with you unless we found a closer relation. I would never place a magical child with Muggles blood or not. They can't raise a magical child properly."

"So with these proofs he's mine?" Andromeda smirked.

"Of course." The Head of the Department of Magical Children quickly drafted official recognition of
her status as the Guardian of the Boy Who Lived.

"I would like special dispensation to adopt the boy written as Dudley Dursley. I would like to blood adopt him. While my bonded is a lowly Muggleborn and I am a supposed bloodtraitor even as a Halfblood he would have more status and prestige."

"Does the boy agree?" Aurora frowned.

"His parents disowned him for being magical. I believe he would like to feel he has a home and a family beyond his cousin."

"I shall grant you permission to blood adopt if he consents. You may register him as your son this week if he agrees." Aurora wrote legal consent to application for blood adoption as well as receipt of custody.

Andromeda accepted the documents, "Thank you. I've always wanted to give my husband a son."

"I am sure that my bonded would have liked one but as the Head of a Female-entailed line there is not much need for one."

"I know my father would have liked one but he sired three daughters; one who would have been better drowned at birth."

"Ah Bellatrix, a pity to share blood with such a one." Aurora shook her head.

"Narcissa is a sight better, saner I should think." Andromeda sniffed.

"Well her husband has a lot of pull in the Ministry. Many have forgotten his ties to the Death Eaters. I am glad that the Dark Lord has not returned."

Andromeda sneered, "He has. When he rose any Dark Inclined witch or wizard felt his power return. I will laugh in Fudge's face when he has to eat Dragon dung and admit he was wrong. Harry did not have the power to kill Cedric Diggory. He saw his murder and tried to tell. The Ministry has branded him a liar and is trying to expel him. Expulsion should be left up to the School and the Board, not the Ministry. The Ministry has never had power over Hogwarts, they are autonomous and always have been. The Ministry can recommend expulsion but not enforce it."

"True. I do hope he gets acquitted if he is as innocent as you say."

"If your daughters were attacked in the summer wouldn't you hope they would defend themselves?"

"My daughters are never alone. They are with house elves, their sire or myself. They would be removed immediately from such danger. Who would send Dementors after a teenager?"

"Either a Death Eater or a loyalist. I shall ensure that my charges are safe." Andromeda smirked, "I can't wait to see what sort of reaction the old coot has to my obtaining custody of his precious golden boy."

"Dumbledore? I have no like for him."

Andromeda smirked, "I would recommend that you have the address Number Four Privet Drive in Little Whinging, Surrey purchased. There is a squib across the street who might have it arranged. If
you have it examined, I am sure that you could try the Headmaster for accessory to abuse of a minor. A legal way to get revenge on him for bypassing the authority of this Department."

Aurora snickered, "I shall look into that."

Andromeda made her way to the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, which was on the floor above her.

She slipped in past the secretary and let herself into Amelia's office.

Ted sometimes worked there with those who were arrested or were victims.

Amelia was also her replacement as Head Girl following her elopement.

Amelia looked up grinning, "Andromeda."

"Amelia. I've come with information you may be able to use to your advantage."

Amelia gestured at the seat across from her desk, "Do tell." While raising her privacy wards…

"What would if benefit you if you proved that Sirius Black may have been innocent, that Dumbledore and the Minister possibly with your predecessor had him imprisoned falsely to attempt to gave the custody of the Boy Who Lived?"

"How would Sirius be innocent? He was the Potters' Secret Keeper…"

"He wasn't. Sirius was a decoy; he knew that he would be a target so he had them switch at the last minute. If you like I could send an elf to pick up the real traitor. He just happens to be the man who killed Diggory." Andromeda replied conspiratorially.

"Oh? So who blew up the street?"

"Why don't you check the wands? Sirius' was bloodwood and leprechaun hair made by the Ollivander who runs the Paris shop and goes by the name Louis. I don't know who made the traitor's."

"Was it Lupin?"

"No." Andromeda smirked.

"You can't mean…"

"Harry said he was a rat animagus and Ronald's rat escaped at the same time as Sirius did from Hogwarts. Sirius never tried to attack Harry, you can ask him. He was after the rat."

"Animagi are required to register." Amelia frowned.

"I know of three that didn't." Andromeda replied snidely. "One is dead so he can't be punished."

"You want me to arrange a secret investigation into Sirius Black's case?"

"At least three of your Aurors know he's innocent and haven't approached you either. Unless you
still have Moody retired."

"Who is refusing to have him proved innocent?"

"Dumbledore. Which is why I think he's conspiring to keep Sirius deemed an escaped prisoner to be killed on sight. Sirius is the Potters' choice for their sons guardian, at least one of them."

"You've seen the Potters' wills?"

"Sirius was their executor and copies were stored in the Black documents vault. Those copies weren't sealed. Aurora has copies."

"Oh really?" the former Hufflepuff asked steepling her fingers.

"And information that proves Dumbledore illegally usurped her authority and placed Potter with Muggles who abused him. If the property he was previously residing in was purchased and examined I am sure that you both would find serious evidence of his abuse at their hands." Andromeda smirked.

"You really think Fudge is involved with the possible conspiracy?"

"He's now conspiring to have Harry kicked out of Hogwarts which should be a choice for the Headmaster and the Governors. They can recommend it but they can't expel him as you well know."

"I've talked them into not having him meet before the entire Wizengamot. He is only being called before the Council."

"Really? But the full council doesn't try minors unless it's a serious crime. Self-defence or even the use of magic during the summer shouldn't count."

"You'd think he murdered that Muggle." Amelia frowned.

"Oh you will enjoy the look on Cornelius and Dolores' faces with my defence. They will hate me and there won't be anything they can do about it." Andromeda smirked.

"I will since I am the Head of the Council of Magical Law. We replaced Crouch who was dismissed due to his possible involvement with his son's escape. We tested the body at Azkaban and found despite the features of Barty Jr. it was in fact his wife. Crouch's replacement is Lucius."

"Well that will be interesting…it has been some time since I've spoken to him. I will enjoy that…considering who one of my witnesses will be." Andromeda snickered.

"I am definitely looking forward to this."

"It will be very…entertaining to be sure. Albus already hates me; I've taken over a position he wanted. Needless to say Persephone isn't pleased either."

"I will see you at nine am on the twelfth. You will not be informed but the venue will be Courtroom ten."

"What? That hasn't been used since the Death Eater trials." Andromeda glared.
"Apparently they wish to avoid being seen by anyone else. It is to be a sealed trial."

"Well then, I shall have to take a lot of joy in embarrassing certain members."

Andromeda took her leave quite smug about the seeds she'd laid.

'Albus, the last thing you ever want is to make me an enemy. You treated me callously in school, you send my favourite cousin to Azkaban. You allow family to be abused; oh I shall take great pleasure in destroying you. And how nice of Fudge to be making this so easy…'

XoooooX

Tama had never gotten along with other cats before but Crookshanks was a decent sort.

The Kneazel introduced him to a game of 'kick the ferret' but now that the spell that made him stiff like ice the game was 'chase the ferret'.

The fact that the Kneazel said that the ferret was a bad person who had tried to kick him made Tama very eager to teach the 'human' a lesson.

Crookshanks liked that he could torment his tormentor…

The house elves fed them divinely with silver dishes that had their names engraved on them.

It was like he was perfect rather then a runt or had a coat spoilt with bronze.

They had compared stories of their breeders. Crookshanks had been weeks from being adopted when he arrived at the shop. Crookshanks hadn't had any friends either; his litter mates had all been adopted years before himself.

Crookshanks taught him how to tell an animal wasn't an animal.

They were spoilt and even their humans doted on them and expected them to share their bed at night.

Crookshanks' human Hermione taught his human Dudley how to brush their fur and even taught him how to bathe him. Tama did not like water or baths but he preferred it to those charms that left his fur all staticky. So he put up with it and saw it as Dudley's way of serving him.

The snake wasn't so bad; Skylla liked exploring and kicking the dead puffsins out from under furniture to embarrass the house elves.

The one called Gilly would lecture the other elves if she found them.

Skylla wasn't as social as Crookshanks…

Skylla liked her human who she called Ri and expected him to be at her whim…

If the other pets were his human's school were this interesting perhaps, he'd have more friends.
Ted was reluctantly roped into retrieving Molly who infuriated his wife so but under strict promises from Arthur that he would not attempt to return Mary to Grimmauld but would return her to the Burrow.

He was dressed in a Muggle suit and had faked certification from the Ministry to deal with wizarding folk who must be retrieved by a psychiatrist rather than a policeman.

He had a file that thrown together for Mary and she would not like what he had but if it would get her out of a Muggle Psychiatric Hospital she better forgive him. Then again he firmly believed she was crazy…

Ted entered the hospital with Arthur who had sent a message that he would be in late to the Ministry. They approached the desk and were asked to wait for Molly's hospital psychiatrist.

Ted had read up on the DSM to see what they would possibly assess Molly with- Manic Depression, fugue states, catatonia, obsessive compulsive, irrational jealousy and possessiveness to name a few. The only thing that finally drove the Weasley-Prewett scandal out was his elopement with Annie…

He pitied Arthur but there was little he could do…

They were escorted back to a conference room.

Arthur was under strict orders to be silent and let him do the talking…

They managed to convince the Muggle Psychiatrist that he was indeed Molly's therapist and that she had escaped her husband while in London. It would be best if she returned to a familiar environment where she was calm.

Molly was escorted out with leather restraints that had sheepskin to the restraints from leaving marks.

Molly blinked at them, "Arthur? Where am I? How did I get here?"

Ted tapped her mind with Legilimency, 'You're here because a Muggle mistook a body binding curse for a condition called catatonia. That coupled with your garish colouring made them send you here.'

'Where is here?'

'A Muggle version of the Janus Thickey ward. They believe that I am the Muggle version of a Mind healer. You will go along with this if you wish to leave.'

'Fine.'

Ted cancelled the spell and stepped forward to take her hands, "Mary we've told you that you must stay with Arthur. I warned him that a city like London was too much for you. You should have
listened. I am sorry about Percy. You are upset, we've come to take you home."

"Where is this place?"

"Some place I warned you that you might be sent if you didn't succeed with my treatment. This is Broadmoor…"

Molly cringed, "I'm sorry…"

Ted unbound her wrist and took her hand placing it in Arthur's, "I'll sign your release papers and then we'll head to the car."

Ted signed the medical release to have Molly released into his custody.

Afterwards Ted led Arthur and Molly out to his ministry reserved car. He paused on his way out to cast a forgetfulness charm on the hospital so that anyone entering to forget that Molly was ever there. Then he silently summoned Molly's file. He'd cast an invisibility charm on it before. Once he had it, it was a very thorough job erasing her presence.

Ted let them into the car and his driver drove towards the Ministry garage in Whitehall.

"Now there are a few ground rules, according to my contract with the Ministry that when I do something like this I responsible for the person I remove. You will be required to have at least twelve sessions with me. Should you miss or refuse you will be placed in the Janus Thickey ward. I own you until I release you from my care. Having a witch or wizard even without a wand in such a place violates the International Decree of Secrecy. I am expected to treat you for whatever equivalent diagnosis that I believe you have."

"I am sane Ted Tonks. I don't need you messing my head." The redhead witch declared.

"With your behaviour of late? I doubt that. Since your wand was damaged I am putting you on wand suspension until I deem you mentally competent for a wand."

"How can you say that I'm not allowed to have a wand? Without a wand I'm a Muggle! I can't even Apparate!" Molly snapped.

"It could be worse you could be wandless and trapped as an animal. It makes no difference. You will remain wandless until I declare you competent to own one. If I find you took her Arthur you don't want to know what I will do. I will also be informing Kindle and the Ollivanders of the injunction."

Ted warned.

Arthur swallowed and nodded.

"You're doing this because your mad Dark Witch of a bonded put you up to this!" Molly snarled.

"Irrational anger that may result in violence is not a way to get me to change my mind.

"Irrational? You are refusing to let me have a wand! I'm not a suspended person! I'm a witch, owning a wand is my right."

"Actually, it is a privilege that can be rescinded. There are ways to make one incapable of using a wand that are completely legal. I am fully allowed legally to cast it on my patients without censure. I
will if you force me. You can return home and allow me to treat you. If you are reasonable and work hard I shall revoke my injunction. The longer and harder you fight me the longer you will be without a wand." Ted retorted.

Molly crossed her arms and glared at him.

Ted cursed at her for her childishness, "I'll release the Anti-Apparition egress wards. You will be able to Apparate to the Burrow."

"Weren't we supposed to stay else where for safety?" Molly pouted.

"Your right to stay there was revoked for violating the rules of the safe house. You are not welcome there. You will be restricted from any meetings that are held there. You can raise the blood wards if there are any on the property. That ought to make you as safe as possible."

"The Burrow has no blood wards." Molly retorted.

"Well then you ought to have considered that deficiency when you chose it to be the home you were going to live during the first war." Ted snorted. "Arthur was an Auror back when the qualifications weren't as high. Surely despite the hurried training he learned some wards that might come in handy. For future reference I don't think it is wise to insult your host even if your stay is reluctant or begrudgingly allowed. If you'd pulled such stunts at Lavender Vale Annie would have tossed you out after the first warning at your second offence. Good day. I have other duties."

Arthur reluctantly Apparated away with his still petulant bonded.

Ted groaned and tapped the glass partition.

His driver lowered it, "Yes Mind healer?"

"Take me to St. Mungos' please."

"Of course mind healer. If you'll excuse me for saying it that woman has the lungs of a harpy."

"You know you are in agreement with a lot of persons who have had the misfortune to meet her." Ted groaned leaning back on his seat and resetting the Anti-Apparition Egress ward.

XoooooX

A very smug Andromeda entered the library to find Dudley studying defence with Sirius.

"Is it lunch time already?" her cousin asked.

"Just about. I finished my errands."

The three made their way down to the dining room to join Harry, the twins, Hermione and the practically invisible Ginny.
Later that afternoon Andromeda accompanied Dudley to the potions lab she'd refurbished where she had been instructing him in the fine art of brewing.

"What are we doing today Healer Tonks?" Dudley asked politely but nervously.

"We shall brew the forgetfulness potion. First recite the twelve uses for dragon's blood from your reading."

Dudley recited seven and then grinned, "The least known is it has healing properties to those with active creature inheritances. The two most commonly known are oven cleaner and spot remover."

"Now I would like to speak to you honestly. This morning I paid a visit to Number Four."

Dudley blanched, "Privet Drive Number Four? My parents?"

Andromeda frowned. "I spoke with them and I paid them two hundred thousand pounds for the 'care' they've given you both. I found no blood wards that would protect Harry the way that Dumbledore asserted. That was a cauldron of spoilt potion. Now they signed over custody of you both to me. I am according to the Ministry and Gringotts your legal guardian. I have permission from the Department of Magical Children to adopt you as my son. I can with your permission make you biologically my son if you desire it. It would be as if you were a son born to me."

Dudley swallowed, "They really don't want me? I've been trying not the think about it."

Andromeda shrugged, "Then don't. You are very bright young man from what I hear. Ted and I have discussed it and he is in favour of the idea of adopting you."

"Really?" Dudley asked like a kid being offered a sweet.

"Of course. We would expect that you continue to study hard. You will be given the same chances as everyone else. We will trust that you will try hard to improve yourself. Ted and I have a home that hopefully you can spend the solstice holidays at. I will have a room prepared there. Unfortunately, our wards aren't as strong or as ancient as those on this place so you can't decorate it yourself. I will instruct Gilly to do so. It will be your private place, Gilly may look after you a bit but I will expect you to be organized."

Dudley frowned, "What about Harry?"

"While he is legally my ward he will have a place in my home but my guardianship is mostly in name. As long as Sirius takes care of himself I shall allow him to have input in Harry's care as long as Harry remains a minor."

Dudley nodded, "As long as Harry is given responsible care I have no objection. I would prefer to be the son of persons who were proud of me for proper reasons and didn't call me babyish nicknames"
that made me unlikely to invite friends to visit."

"As for friends I would have to meet them first and their parents. During times as dangerous as this I would prefer to be careful." Andromeda warned.

Dudley shrugged.

"I believe that this potion is part of Severus' first year exam. However in light of his dislike of Harry he may treat you similarly. So we will practice the difficult potions are quizzes he may give you. Trust me once you have the fundamentals I shall attempt to intimidate you and make you forget." Andromeda sniffed.

Dudley retrieved his potions textbook from his pocket and tapped it to return it to full size.

He then proceeded to open it to proper page he skimmed the list of ingredients again before retrieving them and setting them out in order of use. He set his wand on the table beside his book and began to brew.

Andromeda watched him and said little. The boy has some talent, if she could get him to shrug off her intimidation when he knew what to do and how to do it properly she dared Severus Snape to upset him and make him fail.

XoooooX

After Dinner Andromeda, Ted, Sirius and Dudley headed to her spell lab where they would cast the blood adoption charm.

They used silver knives to shed small amounts of blood.

Andromeda and Ted squeezed their blood into one silver goblet while Dudley did so in another.

Sirius using the Black family wand cast the spell in conjunction with his cousin and her bonded.

"Sanguinem mutatio adoptionis."

Dudley crumbled to the floor, fighting to bit back whimpers. He hadn't realized that having his blood changed hurt! She left that bit out on purpose, that meant this was a test. While never fond of pain he experienced, Dudley took it as stoically as he could. He supposed that it was due punishment for tormenting Harry for a dozen years.

Then the pain went away…

Dudley sat on the stone floor gasping.

"You did well. Now that you are our son we can talk about a name. You've spent fifteen years going by Dudley so I suppose we ought to keep it. According to Dursley your middle name was Basil. If you wish to have it changed to something fitting the son of a Black."

"I'm not partial to the name Basil." Dudley shrugged.
"How about Hercules? You look a lot slimmer and more like Ted now in the facial structure but you have the height and build of a Black." Andromeda observed conjuring a mirror.

"Perfect for a Beater and with the twins graduating you'll probably be trained." Sirius smirked.

Dudley examined his reflection, his muscles stood out more, and he wasn't as podgy as he's been before. His build was a lot like Sirius'…surely the man's clothes from his younger years that he'd been given would fit better now. He chuckled to himself, making a muscle, "Hercules huh? Dudley Hercules Tonks…"

"Black-Tonks." Sirius smirked. "I'm going to file with Gringotts for the Crouch estate. The mother of former Head of that family was a Black. He was part of my being locked up and I think he owes it to me."

Andromeda shook her head, "Wait on that. I've got Amelia looking into your farce of a trial. She's not pleased at all that Persephone and some of her other Aurors know you're innocent and possibly your whereabouts but haven't started an investigation. I planted seeds to have Albus investigated for misconduct. As my son, if Gilly is registered as his personal elf she can sneak notes from them about how the school is running, which I can pass on to Amelia. While the School is above and outside the Ministry's control if the Headmaster breaks Ministry laws they can and ought to try him."

"So um what am I to do now…mother?" Dudley asked nicely.

"Take a nap. I'll wake you for your Astronomy lesson." Andromeda instructed.

Dudley nodded, "Yes mother."

Dudley left the room.

XoooooX

Seph stormed into the drawing room where Andromeda, Ted and Sirius were relaxing.

"Mother! You spoke with Madam Bones today? How could you?" The purple haired witch stomped.

"Amelia and I were schoolmates and prefects together. She was a year and housemate of your father. I see no reason why I cannot visit such a person."

"Dad!" Seph whinged, "She stormed into the Auror Department and chewed us all out. She made it very clear that anyone found withholding evidence of escaped persons; injustice or other such rot would be suspended pending investigation. She's got us all on a leash! She ordered Head Auror Scrimgour to keep an eye on the lot of us. Kingsley's is such hot water…"

"So are Hestia and Emmeline, I imagine. While fighting Voldy is a good idea, recruiting Aurors who might find themselves on the wrong side of their superiors is foolish." Sirius snorted. "Back when I was an Auror, a good number of us doubled as Order members. Because the Ministry didn't care as
long as the job was done, they even gave us permission to use Unforgivables."

"Sometimes you have to fight Fiendfyre with Fiendfyre instead of Water Phoenix wards."
Andromeda shrugged.

"Honestly mother, everything shouldn't have to come down to Dark Magic. Being a Black warps you. Perhaps, Molly's right." The purple-haired Auror sniffed.

Ted glared at his daughter, "Right about what?"

"That Blacks are mad." Seph snapped.

"You will apologize to your mother at once." Ted said sharply.

"I don't have to. I'm an adult and an Auror." The purple-haired Auror grumbled.

"You are the daughter of a Black who is part of the family."

"A family that didn't take notice of us before. If you think I'm going to listen to an escaped prisoner and accused murderer. We have no proof he's telling the truth. He could attack Harry at any time."

"Family is loyal to family." Andromeda snapped, "I taught you better then that."

"You told me my Uncle Sirius went away. That he was a good man. You lied to me. I saw the evidence." Seph snapped.

Harry entered to hear her rant and snorted, "Words cried by Peter before he blew up the street and turned into a rat? I saw Pettigrew and heard his admittance of guilt. He admitted it in front of four witnesses."

George followed, well because they seemed to come us a pair these days. George was like his shadow or something.

"Anyway," Hermione added having come in behind them, Fred practically glued to her side.
"Muggle testimony isn't admissible to the Council of Magical Law. I learned that in the books on Wizarding Law."

Sirius grumbled. "True they ought to have done a full investigation. You forgot I was an Auror. I know how things are supposed to be."

"How many times were you written up for excessive force?" Seph sneered.

"So? James was just as bad. You don't see anyone accusing James of things like that," Sirius grumbled. "Look at Moody's record! They came in dead or broken if they came in at all. At least mine were walking."

"Give yourself all the excuses you want. Kingsley and I ought to turn you over to Fudge for the Kiss." Seph fumed.

"You're taken your anger at me out on my cousin. I won't stand for it." Andromeda frowned at her daughter.
"You're acting all high and mighty? Really? You're a bloodtraitor and I get treated like dirt for it."

"I sacrificed my honour to save my sister." Andromeda sighed, "Something you have yet to learn. I tried to hard to give you siblings so that you could understand what it was like to have someone who mattered that you would sacrifice everything for. I just wish it had happened sooner."

"What happened?" George asked curious as always.

"That we found the right sort of person to join our family. When magic and healing failed us we tried adopting but her uncle who headed the Department of Magical Children turned us down every year. We were often ignored by his replacement as well." Ted shook his head sadly.

"Don't tell me you adopted the tubby kid who looks like he ate half of Honeydukes." Seph snorted.

Harry growled under his breath.

"His name is Dudley and he is biologically your brother. I obtained permission from Aurora to blood adopt him. His parent threw them out and moved away when they discovered he was a wizard." Andromeda said coolly.

"I'm supposed to care? You made someone part of our family without asking me! You joined the Order and started a rift putting me in the middle. Are you trying to ruin my life?" Seph clenched her fists.

"Do desist with the melodramatics. Honestly whatever became of the manners I tried to teach you?" Andromeda bemoaned.

"I threw them out with all the other nonsense like Sirius being a decent sort. He's a bully, he's arrogant and I don't like him. The Order should arrest him and claim this place for ourselves."

"Foolish girl! This is Sirius'. If you forcefully eject him and arrest him it will seal itself. It belongs to him and bonded to him." Fred snorted.

"That is why the purebloods out to be abolished and their properties seized and shared."

"Merlin she sounds like a Communist." Ted groaned.

"Don't make Sirius evict you like Molly." Andromeda warned.

"What is he going to do toss us all out? He granted this place as the Order Headquarters."

"On terms that have yet to be followed. If they are not honoured he has the right to revoke them." Andromeda snorted.

"Excuses for arrogant pureblood autocratic behaviour. Harry ought to be removed from this place." Seph sneered.

"That's it." Andromeda waved her hand, "You will go to bed and rest. You had a horrid day at work. You will not verbally attack your mother, father or Head of House. You will show proper respect to your superiors. You will treat the other inhabitants of this house with respect. If you cannot treat your adopted brother Dudley with respect you shall ignore him. If you cannot keep a civil tongue in your head of your own choice I shall ensure that you have one at least in this house."
Andromeda ordered, "Now go."

Seph turned on her heel and woodenly existed the drawing room.

"What did you do to her?" George asked curiously.

"Ah, that is half Obliviate and half a non-illegal variant of the Imperious. It's a spell taught to healers to deal with stubborn patients."

"How often do you use your wand?" Harry frowned.

"I conduct my magic through it but I don't often physically touch it." Andromeda shrugged. "I do if it I am examining a patient. They tend to get unnerved if they don't hear and see me casting the spells. It slows me down yet but it keeps them from getting anxious and expelling wild magic that disrupts my scans."

"Can I learn to do that?" Harry asked.

"Anyone can if they practice. Most are too lazy to learn any sort of wandless magic. Sometimes I think that forcing us to use a wand limits our magic." Andromeda shrugged.

"You should be in bed." Sirius frowned.

Harry waved a hand dismissively. We were going but we heard the ruckus from the stairs. The brat left the door open." 

"Hopefully, that settles her. I hate using such punishments on her now that she's an adult. Really we didn't raise her to be that way."

"I know Annie. I'm sure Dudley will turn out to be a decent sort." Ted placated her.

"Run along. You have tutoring tomorrow to prepare for before breakfast right?" Sirius reminded them.

Hermione, Fred and George nodded.

Harry grumbled.

But the four teens left the adults to talk for a while longer…
Chapter Notes

A/N: Seph's issues will be discussed in a future chapter we promise. Her name is going to stay Persephone. This is AU after Book four so we reserve the right to rearrange or completely alter the HP universe after that point. Hence Tonks' changed first name and well Dudley being Magical. In kusanosakura's Birthday [May 5th] we're posting up a handful for chapters. Thank you!

Chapter 15- The Trial of Harry James Potter

The day of trial arrived, August twelfth.

Andromeda sent Gilly to wake Harry and Dudley while she woke Ted and Hermione.

Her original strategy had altered some since she began plotting with the brilliant witch.

Hermione Granger ought to have been a Slytherin or a Ravenclaw. Her mind was wasted in Gryffindor. Were she younger she might have been a reincarnated Lily Evans.

The five had an early breakfast it was light and Andromeda handed the teenagers calming draughts that wouldn't interfere with veritaserum.

Flooing directly to the Ministry would alert them more fully of Grimmauld being back on the network again.

Andromeda decided apparition was best and Apparated Hermione and Dudley.

A double side-along apparition was frowned upon and discouraged but Andromeda had practice so she didn't care.

Ted took Harry.

They arrived at one of the Ministry phone booths and called in so they were transported to the Atrium.

They ignored the welcome witch refusing to register or turn in their wands.

No one argued with the Healers Tonks.

They took the lift together down to the fifth floor.

By passing the Department of Mysteries to the rarely used Courtroom Ten.

The quintet paused before entering.
Andromeda turned to Harry, "Now would be an excellent time to call your elf friend."

Harry hissed his voice low, "Dobby."

The wacky dressed house elf appeared.

"Master Harry Potter sir be needing Dobby?"

Andromeda fixed him with a glare, "Your little incident his Second Year has got him into this mess. He needs you to admit that you were responsible for his warning that time."

The house elf swallowed, "They won't listen to Dobby. Dobby be a house elf and they be wizard folk."

Remus arrived with Arabella Figg, "As promised."

Andromeda grinned at her, "You just tell the truth and he'll be fine."

The squib nodded toying with her handbag.

At two to nine they entered the courtroom together.

Remus stayed outside since it was best to lay low. Andromeda would let him know when to return.

Lady Umbridge and Minister Fudge did not look pleased to see them early.

Neither were Doge and Dumbledore pleased to see them arrive together.

With Sirius on the run technically and Arthur dealing with Molly, who did they expect to take Harry? Remus?

The other justices were ambivalent, or in Amelia's case silently smug.

"Well it was nice of you to inform us of the Courtroom change. Considering the illegality of this trial its courteous of you to avoid embarrassing yourself further."

Delores Umbridge was puce with fury.

"Why are you here Healers Tonks?"

Andromeda smirked, "I? I am here to represent my ward."

Albus glared, "What are you talking about? You cannot be his guardian."

"Really? Is that because you say so Headmaster? Or are you here as the Chief Warlock?"

Andromeda purred.

"Does it matter? I am eligible to attend."

"Really what hat you wear is of no bearing on this farce anyway."

"Be careful healer, he is the Chief Warlock."

"But for how long will he continue to hold that title?"

"We are here to discuss Mr. Potter's infractions. Not whether the Chief Warlock has the right to attend this trial."

Umbridge said in a sickly sweet tone.
"Who are they and why are they here?" Lady Augusta Longbottom asked.

"Mrs. Granger is an observer and my assistant. Ted is a recognized mind healer and has agreed to offer testimony."

"What is a house elf doing here?" Lucius drawled.

"Oh Dobby? I was worried you would bring up his previous so-called infractions. Dobby has bearing on the first infraction. House elves suffer no ill effects under veritaserum. He is a free elf and has offered his testimony." Andromeda smirked at her former betrothed.

"Elves have no rights and I think this is a waste of our time." the toad-like woman sniffed.

"If the case is a waste of time why are we all here Dolores?" Andromeda asked pointedly.

"I meant that non-wizard testimony ought to be excluded." Umbridge sneered.

"I'll allow it." Amelia said boredly. "If it's Veritaserum it can't lie can it?"

Lucius echoed Umbridge, "I agree that it ought to be excluded."

"Really Lucius? Afraid he'll say something embarrassing?" Andromeda simpered.

Lucius Malfoy glared at her but went silent.

"What are the charges as you see them Dolores?" Andromeda asked.

"Violation of the Decree against Underage Sorcery and violation of the Decree of Secrecy." The toadyish woman in pink read off.

"Well we'll start with you." Andromeda gestured for Dudley to take the witness stand—well the seat at the centre of the floor.

Dudley sat rather uncomfortably in the chair it was a bit tight.

"Please state your name for the Council."

"My name is Dudley Hercules Tonks, formerly Dudley Basil Dursley."

Dumbledore turned ashen.

"Who are you?"

"I was Harry Potter's cousin and we grew up at Number Four Privet Drive."

"How old are you?"

"Fifteen on June the twenty-seventh."

"Were you present at the time of Harry's use of Magic?"

"I was."

"Are you the Muggle the charges refer to?"

"I was."
A frizzy-haired elderly witch sat up straighter, "What do you mean young man?"

"At the time of the incident ma'am you might have called me squib. I was never a real Muggle you see. Real Muggles know nothing about your…I mean our world do they?" Dudley replied politely.

"What do you mean by were a squib?" Lucius sneered.

"I'm a wizard now. I think my magic was just really weak before so I didn't exist to you lot. I never had a letter. I didn't do the weird things Harry did as a child."

"What sort of weird things did he do?" Fudge asked leaning closer to the railing of the dais.

Dudley glanced at Andromeda.

She nodded.

Dudley answered, "Well when we were about eight I think he turned our teacher's hair blue. Mum tried to give him this hideous sweater I had as a gift and refused to wear. He didn't like it either. The more she tried to make him wear it the smaller it got. Then there was the time she made him have this terrible haircut, it grew back on the way home. She screamed about it for hours." He shrugged, "I wouldn't have wanted to go to school like that. The last one I remember was when we were playing a game. It was sort of like hide and seek. I was looking for him and he was hiding. One minute he darted behind a dumpster and the next he was on the Kitchen roof. Must of Apparated accidentally."

"You don't Apparated as a child with no training." Elphias Doge scoffed.

Dumbledore looked unnervingly curious.

Dudley shrugged, "I don't care if you don't believe it's possible. He did it. I could ask my friends but you don't trust the word of Muggles. I laughed it off and said we mistook for a cat for him when he was on the roof the whole time. I didn't even tell my former parents."

"Why?"

"Rather not say." Dudley muttered

"Andromeda."

"Lady Longbottom if he don't wish to say that means it has no bearing on the case."

"Back to the incident in question. You were present?"

Dudley nodded.

Dudley sighed, "I didn't even know he was behind me. Not until he darted in front of me his wand out and ordered me to cover my mouth and be quiet. It got dark fast. The stars were coming out you know it was after nine so it was about twilight. The street lamps were usually lit at the ends of the alley on the streets. They just went out like the power went out but the stars were gone to. There was this thick fog that seemed to reach inside you and squeeze your heart. Harry stood in front of me, his eyes darting between either ends of the alley. I couldn't really see them then; the black fog and the cold just flowed from these dark patches. Like a black hole, we learned about them in science. When my magic awoke when I remembered I could see them…they had these nasty ragged black robes, when they sucked in a breath they seemed to be half tasting, half…drinking in your fear."

"What did you think they were?"
"At the time? Harry described them as the Muggle grim reaper and told me to cover my mouth and be quiet. I trusted him. He pointed his wand at the Dementor to our right. His patronus...I didn't know it what it was called at the time so I called it a glowing deer thingy."

"You could see it?" Amelia asked curious.

"Yes ma'am." Dudley nodded, "It ran off toward the dark patch of fog which was the Dementor with its head down. It tossed the Dementor up in the air. I saw it hit something and seem to toss it. Then it turned around and ran toward the other patch of darkness. It didn't throw this one."

"What did it do?" Albus asked.

"It was weird." He frowned at Andromeda.

She shrugged.

"It leaped and landed, hovering about a body's thickness above the ground. The fog changed colours. You could sort of smell this rotting smell. It seemed to boil almost. Then the deer thingy, the patronus was standing on a scrap of black cloth."

"You expect us to believe that you were attacked by Dementors? That you killed one? You can't kill a Dementor!" Fudge snorted.

"Why because they feed on souls and are theoretically ammortal? Ha!" Andromeda sneered. "Anyone with sense can tell you they're a twisted permanently animated Inferi."

Andromeda grinned at Kingsley, "You took a look at the location didn't you? Sometime after Harry was supposedly expelled?"

Amelia glared at him, "Well? If you are involved why are you on this panel? You ought to have recused yourself."

"It was to be a full Council!" the Order member protested.

"Tell us what you found Kingsley." Amelia snapped.

"Signs of a Dementor. Well two. The casting of a patronus charm. Plus the scrap of fabric that had traces of Dementor, strong traces but no reasoning why it would be there." Kingsley shrugged.

Dumbledore eyed Harry strangely, "I have no knowledge of a Dementor being killed rather than chased off."

"Just because you do not know of such a possibility does not make it impossible."

"How do we know he is who he says he is or that he's telling the truth? Our magic said that he was a Muggle."

"Blacks would call my Bonded a Muggle. The spells are old. Magic in front of a Muggle or a Muggleborn it is still the same we can't tell the difference. Now if you don't believe my son that he is magical."

"How is he your son?" Dumbledore snapped. "Did you kill off his parents?"

"Of course not. I am not the sort of fool that Bellatrix is. I coolly informed them of their son being magical. They did not take the news well. They had fled as far from our ilk. The thought of having a freak as a son and having to look after two persons with the ability to turn them into toads did not sit
well. Anyway your third or fourth accusation of magic during the holidays the explosion? That wasn't Harry ether." Andromeda smirked; it was after a fashion but not inside the Dudley's house.

"Really what happened?" Amelia asked adjusting her spectacles.

"My Magic just exploded. I was playing a computer game and eating an apple. Mu...Petunia wouldn't make me stick to a diet when I was younger. She overfed me but I decided to fix my eating habits myself so I was careful to eat less and it just happened."

"Tell me. I'm always interested in a child's first manifestation of magic. My grandson fell out of a window when my brother-in-law accidentally knocked him and bounced around the garden."

"Yes...well it was like a shock...being hit with lighting I suppose. It sparked something inside me; my magical core I'm told and I started glowing. Then my computer exploded. All of my Muggle game systems and my cell phone blew up too. Even the bulbs were spraying shards of glass. It appears that I blew up the wiring." Dudley shrugged.

"You don't sound repentant." Umbridge sniffed.

"Why should I be? It wasn't like I meant to do it. I was having fun with my game. I knew magic in the summer wasn't allowed sure but I wasn't a student at Hogwarts at the time. I'd never experienced this before. I just ran away." Dudley grumbled darkly, "I don't want to think about what Da...Vernon would do to me for using magic. He was an abusive Muggle who hated and feared magic. He tried to make me hate magic, Harry and a list of other persons he didn't like. Really, I think racism and homophobia are stupid. I don't care who you marry or have sex with as long as I don't have watch or listen. Some things are better off private."

"Will you prove that you have magic?" Lady Longbottom ask.

Dudley glanced at Andromeda.

She nodded, "I have no objection Lady Longbottom.

Dudley pulled out his wand out of his sleeve, "I still need a holster. Harry's is so cool. I'll wait until I earn it of course." Dudley pulled one of his textbooks out of his pockets and tapped it to return it to normal size. He then muttered a charm that had it tap dancing across the floor.

"What else can you do?"

Dudley pointed his wand with a smirk, "Expecto patronum!"

Out of his wand came a wisp of white smoke that formed a large lithe greyish spotted cat that proceeded to leap around the courtroom.

Dudley smirked, "Is that proof enough? I know the spell is supposed to be difficult but I managed it the third try."

Dumbledore looked positively green.

"Hm...what else can you speak on?" Andromeda mused, "Oh yes...the Aunt incident. Can you explain to them what happened that time?"

"Oh that. I don't blame Harry at all now. I was pretty sore at the time. I was thirteen and well we tend to make mistakes then. My former father had a mean-tempered sister who raised bulldogs. My former parents have convinced her that Harry's parents were unemployed scum. That his father never held a...
job in his life and that he was a drunk. We were told growing up that his parents died in a car crash. I bought the story until a giant of a man told Harry the truth much to my former parents' horror."

Kingsley frowned, "James wasn't much of a drinker. A shot or two but he was less keen on that once his son was born."

"I am sure he was. I'm merely stating what we were told. So this was the story she believed and she liked to discuss loudly with my father how Harry would end up a no account bum like his father, probably dead in his early twenties. My former father won't admit Harry attends Hogwarts so he claims he attends St. Brutus' School for Incurably Criminal Boys. Another story that Marge Dursley relishes. She said Harry would be a drunken layabout when he grew up and she thought he'd murder us in our beds. She said that his father was probably drunk when he crashed the car and kill himself and Harry's mother." Dudley paused to breathe.

"Harry told her that they were murdered to which Petunia yelled shut up. Harry must have thought Aunt Marge was full of hot air and wanted her to go away. She started to swell with air and started to float. Harry couldn't have used magic consciously. His school things like his broom, robes, books and wand were all locked up in the cupboard. Harry grabbed his things and ran. Good thing too Vernon would have killed him for using his freakishness on his sister. The mad woman had it coming. She tormented Harry and I think its sick." Dudley snorted.

"This was an incident that Minister Fudge himself excused due to Sirius' escape from Azkaban. He said and I quote, 'We don't send kids to Azkaban for blowing up their aunt it was an accident. He had no wand and he knew after the last time you falsely accused him of magic during the summer and he was horrendously punished for it.'"

"This is the incident that the house elf would speak on?" Lady Longbottom asked.

"Yes."

"Very well."

Andromeda gestured for Dudley to leave his seat.

Dobby moved up.

"Please state your name, race and occupation." Andromeda ordered

"I is being called Dobby. I be a house elf, a free house elf. I is formerly a Malfoy elf. House elves always be hearing things. And we know things we be told to close our ears. Closing ears be hard work. Not work well. Dobby knew bad things were to happen at Hogwarts. Dobby not know how but Dobby worried. Dobby knew of a great wizard who made the bad man go away. Dobby didn't want this great and brave wizard to be hurt. Dobby tried to keep him from school. Dobby beg him not to go to Hogwarts. He said he had to that it was just awful there. Dobby being stupid and not seeing big picture. Dobby decided to get him in trouble. Dobby use his magic to levitate a bowl full of plum pudding. When Master Harry Potter sir not agree to stay home Dobby dropped the bowl. There be no hover charm. Dobby prove it." the elf gestured with a long fingered hand, the book Dudley made tap dance rose and floated through the air. "That not be a hover charm. House elves don't have magic like wizards. We no need taught."

Amelia nodded, giving Lucius a look during Dobby's testimony.

The platinum haired wizard looked scandalized.

"So you're excused his violations of the underage sorcery decree. Do you have any other defence?"
"Dobby can you hand me the note you retrieved from Hogwarts?"

Dobby pulled it out and handed it to Andromeda.

"I know evidence obtained this way is usually not admissible but perhaps you would like to know just who signed Harry Potter's Hogsmeade permission slip."

Dumbledore turned white, "How is that relative?"

"I will explain." Andromeda shrugged. "Minerva McGonagall believed because Albus told her Harry's guardians were his Muggle relations. Due to the inflating aunt incident his permission slip was not signed. However following the Sirius Black escape from Hogwarts, Harry turned in a note signed with this moniker, 'Padfoot'. It was not only accepted as legal permission Dumbledore overrode the Head of Gryffindor and accepted it, deeming it signed by a guardian. Unfortunately, the Headmaster made a mistake. He spent years pretending to be Harry Potter's guardian when in fact he had no legal leg to stand on. Harry's legal guardian,"

"You forget yourself Healer." Dumbledore snarled.

"Really? The Chief Warlock oversees criminal cases." Andromeda raised an eyebrow.

"Harry's parents were murdered and his parents had appointed Sirius Black sole custody. Given the evidence he couldn't have the boy." Lady Longbottom frowned.

"Sirius had sole custody? That is patently untrue." Andromeda retorted

Dumbledore stuttered incomprehensively.

"Really? You only sealed the Potter copies of their wills. You missed the Blacks. Apparently you failed to read them; Sirius was an executor of their wills and his joint guardian with another close friend. However if Sirius were unable to care for Harry there was a list of other suitable guardians. The Dursleys were only too willing to be rid of both boys. Really Albus lying to Muggles? I was very surprised to see no evidence of blood wards. Nay any sign of magical protection."

"Are you claiming to know more then I do?" Albus snapped.

Andromeda smirked, "Perhaps. There were no such protections. I maybe a healer but I am also a First Class Potions Mistress and a magical researcher in what little free time I have available now that I am a part of the Healers College at St. Mungos."

"A foolish appointment." Dumbledore muttered.

"Because I'm supposedly a Dark Witch?" Andromeda asked with a raised eyebrow, "Or because I am a so-called Bloodtraitor?"

"Of course. Why would a pureblood witch with a pedigree like yours wished to tie themselves to a Muggle?" Umbridge sniffed.

"The only person who ought to be tossing such comments would be Lucius and I fail to see Lucius Malfoy insulting me for my bonding choices. If anyone ought to it's the wizard I supposedly jilted. I think he is much more pleased to be bonded to a more serene Narcissa. I had my reasons for my elopement. I have been returned the bosom of the family and my relationship legitimised by the acceptance of the Head of my Family."

"Who would that be? Regulus is dead. Sirius is on the run. All the senior males of your line are
passed to the Veil and one knows that a woman can't be the true head of a male-entailed family no matter how much Walpurga styled herself as that role we knew it was all pretence and Orion's weakness of character." Lady Longbottom snorted.

"The Head of my House must be considered of age by the Ministry." Andromeda said sweetly.

The wizards on the Council recoiled at once as one. Amelia was fighting a twitch that seemed a prelude to laughter.

"What are you speaking of Slytherin?" Fudge was purple with rage.

"I am only referring to the situation you created Minister. You and Dumbledore accidentally granted Harry Potter emancipation."

The dais exploded with twitters, shouts and exclamations of shock.

"What are you speaking of Healer?" Umbridge bristled as if she were a hedgehog rather pink draped toad.

"Oh just the tournament. Let us recount the Minister and the Headmaster's decisions. That only of age persons could enter the Tournament. An un-foolable age line cast by the Headmaster of Hogwarts, your Chief Warlock to ensure that only of age persons could attempt to add their name successfully. Barty Crouch who was impersonating former Auror and member of this body Alastor Moody, who was a great friend of the Headmaster, crossed the age-line after Dumbledore had invited him of all people to teach students. This man confounded the Goblet of Fire and it selected Harry as a champion for a fourth school. A tournament that he was supposedly bound by magical contract to participate. Ignoring two key facts."

"What were those?" Amelia asked clearly enjoying this.

"That the Ministry previously declared that only of age persons could enter and participate. Harry was fourteen and three months a far cry to seventeen. No one could claim a person of that age belonged in a tournament that dangerous. Instead of properly investigating this highly unusual event and the boy's insistence he never entered he was declared a Triwizard Champion. Thus begins the belief that Potter Lies. So he is forced to compete in a Dangerous Tournament he never entered freely. His rights as a Minor were ignored; he could not enter a legal contract without the consent of a guardian." Andromeda recounted.

She snorted, "Dumbledore's agreement to allow him to compete was erroneous due to his not being in anyway Harry Potter's Guardian. By allowing him to compete you declared him of age. A minor is not to be interviewed by a reporter and be named without the consent of a guardian. Why therefore was he allowed to be interviewed by Skeeter with the other champions without the consent of a guardian? Did anyone oversee his interview with Skeeter? He was practically kidnapped and trapped in a cupboard with that crazy witch. Did anyone review the article before publication? Amelia, Lady Longbottom and Lucius all have minors in their care. Surely if Potter were in their care they would have been more circumspect." Andromeda snorted.

"You want us to believe that we the Ministry made a mistake and declared Potter of age?" Fudge hissed.

"It is highly unusually that given a person of Potter's history that you never sent anyone to verify he was alright. You didn't investigate the use of magic in the Dursleys' house. You assumed that magic used by a house elf was a Wizarding levitation charm. They are nothing alike. Who is this 'Mafalda
Hopkirk’ and if she is this inept she ought to be transferred somewhere where she can do less damage like the Centaur Liaison Office." Andromeda snorted. "What sort of Ministry are you running Cornelius?"

The Centaur Liaison Office was a colloquialism that implied that a person was to be fired. There had never been a Centaur Liaison in that office unlike the Goblin Liaison who was always present to berate wizards and witches alike for infractions real and imagined against the Charter of Gringotts or the Golden Goblin Concordat which was the agreement between the Goblin King, the International Council of Wizards and its subordinant National Ministries.

"I am still the Minister and I will be treated with respect." The odious man grumbled.

"Explain to me why two Dementors escaped Azkaban? A fact verified by one of your number who is also a Senior Auror." Andromeda asked in faux innocence.

"That should be impossible." Lady Longbottom frowned.

"I can answer that." Amelia smirked.

"Really?" Dumbledore snapped.

"Someone requested the Potter file from the Improper Use of Magic Office." Amelia offered.

Percy Weasley who was the Council's scribe stiffened.

"A member of the Minister's office, an junior assistant was sent to retrieve it. With authorization by the Senior Undersecretary." Amelia turned to Umbridge, "Dolores would you like to explain why you needed to know his excused incidents of supposed violations of Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery?"

"The brat was causing trouble by spouting nonsense about He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named being returned. He's dead everyone knows he's dead." The toady woman snapped. "I just wanted to know where he was so I could have a talk with him and perhaps get him to tell the truth. His previous infractions proved he had no respect for authority. Percival was only too happy to tell me of his rule breaking and rewards for it in school."

"Did you send Dementors to Little Whinging?" Andromeda asked not expecting an honest answer.

"Of course not. I wanted the address for other purposes." Umbridge snorted.

"As for the first we gave evidence that he was not the one who used magic to levitate the crystal bowl of pudding. The only persons who knew Potter's location were members of the Order of the Phoenix, Dobby the house elf, the inhabitants of Number Four Privet Drive and Mafalda Hopkirk. Yet Dolores requested that file. I don't believe her reasons and anyone with sense ought to not either." Andromeda smirked.

Hermione piped up smugly, "If you need yet another witness to prove Harry Potter's innocent of wanton breaking of the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery we can provide one. While Paragraph C of the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery states that it is a crime to knowingly use magic in a Muggle-inhabited area and in the presence of a Muggle. Clause 7 of said decree also states that Magic can be used both in a Muggle area and in front of Muggles in exceptional circumstances, including situations when the life of the witch or wizard is threatened, or the lives of other witches, wizards and Muggles are threatened. The Ilfracombe Incident which occurred in 1932 when a Rogue Common Welsh Green Dragon attacked a group of sunbathers at Ilfracombe in Devon, England. The Toke family cast the largest group of Memory
Charms on the Muggles for which they received an Order of Merlin."

"Hermione is correct, Dragons and Dementors are both dangerous and can be considered Wizard killers. Harry Potter managed to do what anyone facing a Dementor only wishes they can do eliminate it as a threat. He was protecting himself and his cousin from a fate worse then death. No one wants to be soulless. It's a state of nonbeing that prevents you from passing beyond the Veil." Andromeda continued Hermione's train of thought.

"Who is your final witness?" another elderly woman who was clearly older then even Dumbledore.

"Councillor Marchbanks," Andromeda curtsied. "This is Arabella Figg his neighbour, she lives across the street from Number Four at Number Seven. She is a Squib and a former member of the Order of the Phoenix and has lived on Privet Drive since December of 1981."

"First a House elf and now a Squib?" Fudge sneered, "Are you making a mockery of this council?"

"Of course not Minister." Andromeda said serenely, "What need have I to do so when you and your office have already done so in such a spectacular fashion? Besides, she is of magical lineage. It is not her fault she lacks magic. I never understood this infatuation of treating magical creatures and squibs as lesser beings. "

"Or Muggle, they aren't that different." Hermione brought her chin but defiantly, "So they don't have magic? They live lives not much different from yours. They have their own Dark Lords like Hitler and Dark Ladies like Cleopatra. They have Unforgivables of their own. Mind-altering drugs that affect one like the Imperious. There are bombs, diseases and poisons that that kill as suddenly as the Death Curse. They even have trained torturers like Bellatrix Lestrange, who are to force divulging of sensitive information. During martial law they even suspend rights and limits on force."

"They still sound like creatures of lower intelligence." Umbridge sniffed.

"Do you understand the concept of Atomic Theory? Nuclear theory? The consequences of Global Warming? The Moral arguments revolving the use or possession of atomic weapons, hydrogen bombs or even neutron bombs?" Hermione glared.

"What is a neutron bomb?" Lady Longbottom frowned.

"A weapon that vaporises all organic matter and yet nothing is left to poison the future inhabitants that can just move in. it is a horrible perversion of science." Hermione shrugged. "I am sure that a witch or a wizard could create such a device but the Ministry would seize it and its related research while calling it Dark."

Umbridge looked interested, "How do you make such a weapon?"

"It is a very complex theory and process. I never really studied such things. I prefer the sciences of life and not death." Hermione snorted, "If I could I would vanish all related weapons into nonbeing."

Umbridge sniffed as it that was childish.

"I think we have all the evidence we need. We shall deliberate." Amelia announced bringing them back to the issue at hand.

A privacy ward was erected upon the dais and nine members of the Council of Magical Law proceeded to argue.

    XoooooX
Harry had watched the verbal sparring match between Andromeda and the Council in bemused fashion waiting to see if he was needed to speak.

To his surprise and pleasure he was never called on to speak.

He'd enjoyed it when Hermione tossed out the dragon reference.

Comparing dragons to Dementors how interesting…

So a Dementor was a twisted Inferi that was something he'd never learned in Defence Against the Dark Arts.

Where did Andromeda learn such things?

Why didn't she teach Defence?

The silencing ward coming down interrupted his musing…

XoooooX

Amelia smirked, "By a majority vote the charges are dismissed without prejudice and the file in the Improper Use of Magic office is to be destroyed. The Minister's office will return their copy to me by the end of the day so I can burn it."

"With all due respect I would like to poll the Council." Hermione asked.

"Granted."

"Councillor Griselda Marchbanks Not Guilty."

"Councillor and Chief Warlock Albus Dumbledore abstain."

"Councillor Elphias Doge abstain."

"Councillor Augusta Longbottom Not Guilty."

"Councillor and Minister Cornelius Fudge Guilty."

"Councillor Dolores Umbridge Guilty."

"Councillor Amelia Bones Not Guilty."

"Councillor Kingsley Shacklebolt Not Guilty."

"Councillor Lucius Malfoy Not Guilty."

"With two votes guilty, two abstains and five not guilty the charges were dismissed." Amelia smirked.

"Well then we shall leave you." Andromeda turned her back slowly on the Council fixing them all with a pointed stare.

Lady Longbottom called out, "Wait a moment Andromeda."

The older woman made her way down to the floor and strode over to Harry. She gave him a penetrating look before speaking. "I am glad you are alright young man. Neville was quite worried when he heard that I was to oversee a case regarding you. I couldn't give details. The poor boy was
worried you were to be tried for Diggory's murder. I would like to thank you for being kind to him. He says you are a good friend and he looks forward to seeing you on the Train."

Harry swallowed, "Give him my regards. I hope he had a less tumultuous summer."

"He had nothing like yours I am glad to say. I hope that the next fortnight or so treats you well. Good luck on your Hogwarts exams young Master Tonks. I do hope you like up to your adopted mother's expectations. She was a formidable witch in school. My Francis would speak of her. He was only a year above her and became Head Boy before she was Head Girl."

Dudley swallowed, "I am studying hard and hope to sit my exams soon. I really, really don't want to be a fifteen-year-old First or Second Year. It would be highly embarrassing."

The woman laughed, "I will tell Neville to look out for you." she bowed to Harry, suddenly serious, "If it turns out Sirius is innocent I will have to offer an apology on behalf of the Pettigrews. I am the last. With my sister-in-law Enid recently passed and my brother gone there are none left to continue the line. Thus it falls to Neville through myself."

"I saw Peter. He's alive."

"Well then. I shall see about sending an elf to locate him unless he's remembered its possible and prevented such things the foolish boy." Augusta said stiffly before leaving.

Amelia winked at Andromeda before chasing after Kingsley no doubt to verbally eviscerate him again.

The party of five from Grimmauld and Arabella Figg left the courtroom to track down Remus. Dobby disappeared no doubt to crow the news to any and all he could tell.
Andromeda, Remus and Ted returned to Grimmauld Place with Harry, Hermione and Dudley.

The others met them at the door.

Sirius was smirking and winked at Andromeda.

Fred scooped up Hermione, spinning her around and kissing her, "I told you! I told you!"

"That Harry would get off? Legally they hadn't a case." Hermione blushed pushing him off.

Fred snorted, "That too but seriously you're Prefect! Next stop Head Girl!" still spinning her.

"Like they'd give it to anyone else? She maybe a git and a rotten friend but she has the best marks of our year." came a very unwelcome voice.

"You must be my roommate." Dudley eyed him up and down. "I preferred you as a weasel."

Ron scowled, "Who are you?"

"Dudley Tonks." Dudley snapped.

"Wasn't Harry's nasty Muggle cousin named Dudley?" Ron sneered.

"Nice to meet you too. I had hoped you would be a bit nicer." Dudley shrugged.

"Well we're going to have lunch soon but dinner's planned as a celebration," Sirius smirked, "of Harry, Hermione and Andromeda thumbing it to the Ministry as well as Hermione being a prefect."

"What about my being prefect?" Ron grumbled.

"You've been celebrating and lording over us all summer." Fred snorted finally setting a dizzy Hermione on her feet.

"You're just jealous that you're not a prefect." Ron retorted.

George snorted, "McGonagall told me in third and fourth if I stopped being so incorrigible that I could be a prefect. I told her I didn't have that kind of ambition. I was a bit crude and ended up with two weeks of detention. I wouldn't be a prefect if you paid me."

"Yeah right." Ron sniggered.

"Why don't you go away?" Fred glared, "You obviously aren't wanted. I wish you'd ended up with mum."

Hermione and Dudley snickered.

Tama had told Dudley about the weasel games who gleefully recounted the tales during a History of
Magic lesson.

"What's so funny?" Ron snarled.

"Nothing Ronnikins..." Dudley retorted.

The other teens present burst into gales of laughter.

Ted pointed his wand unobtrusively and removed the memories jumbled though they were of Ron's life as a weasel. He believed that it was unhealthy for him and his mind could not handle it...

After a glorious dinner of prime rib and lobster with a chocolate lava cake for dessert the approved persons headed into the gentleman's parlour for a smoke and a drink before heading to bed early.

Dudley had the night off so there would be no astronomy lesson due to the early morning and the trial.

Afterwards they all headed up to bed.

Dudley and Tama weren't exactly pleased to have Ron unweaselled but they made the best of it by ignoring the git.

The teen and his cat curled up on their bed together and went to sleep.

George and Fred dressed for bed

George snuck out first tiptoeing past Remus' door he was just next door. Then past Sirius' and the room Dudley unfortunately shared with Ron. Poor sod...

He tapped lightly on Harry's door and then entered with a smug look.

Harry was leaning back lazily against the headboard wearing only his skin.

George stripped out of his worn pyjamas that once belonged to Charlie, they were patched and mended but still threadbare. Once the shop started bringing in decent money he would buy a decent wardrobe.

Harry tackled him to the bed and set out to ravish him.
However they both forgot silencing charms and privacy wards.

XoooooX

Sirius was about to drift off to sleep when the sounds of sex filtered through his bathroom’s open door.

"Yes! Just like that! Harder Harry! Make me feel it tomorrow!"

Oh fuck…

That was George's voice…

"So tight…you want hard? Then lay back and enjoy it."

Harry was…sure they spent a lot of time together but seriously…

Sirius groaned. He was so not cut out for parenting…

Raising someone like Fred who was a lot like himself was easy…

He had no idea how to deal with Harry being bent. Sure he loved him no matter what but he expected him to turn out just like James. Being bent was not in his expectations.

Sirius walked into his bathroom and cast a privacy ward that shielded him from the sounds of sex from Regulus' old room.

He collapsed on his bed naked; it was his preferred sleeping attire. Damn listening to them have sex was a bit annoying. Before he’d been arrested sure due to the war, Auror training, his caseload and his duties as an Order member, his sex life was sporadic at best but he was always able to pick up birds when he wanted them.

Sure he was careful casting the contraception charms on himself, strong ones since he hadn't been interested in siring kids with his hook ups.

He really, really wanted to be declared an innocent man so he could get on with his life and live life like a normal wizard. He'd also like to do things that would make Remus' life better like having the Anti-werewolf legislation thrown out.

If the Ministry/Wizengamot really thought Harry was of age then he should counsel Harry to ask Annie to serve as his representative in the Wizengamot. She could do a lot of good, she may have bonded beneath her and become a jilt but her work as a Healer and a First Class Potions Mistress had to have redeemed her enough. Her views on magical creatures and politics while not exactly his own or Harry's would do some good.

Andromeda could fight for him and for Remus as well as place limits on the influence of a seated Headmaster on the Wizengamot or requirements for a Chief Warlock.

If Albus refused to do his duty as a Chief Warlock he ought to be removed.

Look how Albus had treated himself and Harry? Who else had he taken authority over and screwed with or ruined their lives? Lucky for them that Dudley hadn't been discovered before. Who knew
what other horrors the man was responsible! He at least deserved a real trial. He was sentenced without a chance to defend himself; which was illegal and he was tried on hearsay from Muggle witnesses, which wasn't admissible. If Ministry Obliviators took the memories from the Muggles and examined them for flaws before Obliviating them.

It would be a long sleepless night thanks to Harry's thoughtlessness.

XoooooX

Fred slipped into Hermione's room to find her already under the covers. He undressed and slid in with her passing only to cast contraceptive charms as well as those that would loosen her up.

He then disappeared under the covers to rock her world; he had every intention of using his mouth and hands to come until he had her begging for him.

Best thing about magic was that pregnancy was almost completely preventable: well 95%. But it was better then nothing right? He really liked Hermione and sex with her was brilliant, the best he'd ever had. Damn that girl was a wild cat in bed.

Pleasing her in new ways was a great reward don't you think?

XoooooX

Hermione was complexly embarrassed; she'd showered quickly taking care with her hair so that it was clean and yet merely curly not a frizzy mess.

She dried and slipped into the bed without dressing.

She'd cast privacy charms and silencing wards after their first time in case he spent the night. Especially since she shared a wall with his father's room and didn't wish to disturb him or alert him. It wasn't as if she was ashamed of being Fred's lover, she just felt that what happened in the bedroom should stay there. She wasn't comfortable with public displays of affection, which is why his behaviour after the trial when he congratulated her for becoming prefect had upset her. She should have been angry with him for opening her letter from their Head of House…

Fred didn't take too long to slip into her room.

He stripped for her; Hermione practically drooled over his perfectly sculpted muscular body. He was tall about six feet, two inches she was sure. At seventeen he may or may not be done.

Her man slid into bed with her and cast the charms she knew about as well as a few new ones but before she was able to ask he'd spread her legs and was between them.

Then her world exploded…

Once she'd let Fred Weasley take her to bed she should have known she would never be the same.

Talk about celebrating…
Ron was furious.

Harry's Muggle cousin was now a wizard and had taken over his room that he should have shared with Harry.

His own brother had stolen his best friend.

Hermione thought she was a queen since Fred set his eye on her.

Ha! They'd be lucky to last the summer. Fred slept around and went through girls as often as Snape took points for ludicrous reasons.

His brothers never had time for him and bullied him all the time.

He was a prefect now; let them try those tactics now. Ron sneered into his pillow he'd toss them in detention so fast.

Another cat? Merlin he hated cats.

Skylla was wrapped on a leather blanket her human Ri laced with heating charms that duplicated the proper weather of her species' native home. While she hadn't been bred there her body acted like it was.

She was a bit annoyed at Ri for copulating all the time.

At five years and 7ft she had yet to copulate.

Salazar's kept the shop too warm for them to be subjected to the affects or a breeding season. Yet her human was thoughtful enough to make it possible…

If only she could find a worthy snake…

Surely her human would fault her for wanting to breed.

If he did, well she could be very snappy and treat him with distain. She had almost four years of practice in showing her displeasure at Salazar's. She intended to follow him often; she tolerated his abandonment her because the house was interesting. One sight of the large bird thing in the place the elves called the attic and Skylla was cured of exploring there. With the slow temperature adjustment she sensed that her breeding cycle might approach normally.

What chance was there of finding a worthy snake in such a place? She'd been told that the pets were not food.

A pity the weasel was off the menu…back when he was a weasel. He was preferable as such.
A fact that the cats complained about…

Hopefully he stayed away from her human.

She may not be allowed to be poisonous all the time but she could still bit him. Magical snakes regardless of type were all poisonous but they could choose when to secrete venom. It was rare that snake venom from non-Runespoors or basilisks to be fatal to wizards.

Skylla coiled her body around her head and choose to sleep.

She was naturally nocturnal but in this house it was easiest if she followed the diurnal habits of the humans and the cats.
Andromeda left her room that she shared with Ted to catch Fred sneaking out of Hermione's room. She cleared her throat. The teen boys turned and looked at her. Fred turned as red as his hair and disApparated on the spot. Cowardly Gryffindor… Andromeda would send Sirius to lecture him.

XooooX

Andromeda forced Sirius to agree to give Fred and Dudley lectures on safe sex and dragged Hermione into the ladies parlour after breakfast. "So tell me and be honest how long you and Fred have been intimate?" Andromeda frowned at the young woman. Hermione blushed, "Um…a few days?"

"How many exactly? I'm not asking as a parent but as a healer who specialises in Women's health and child bearing. We're talking as a healer and patient therefore I can't inform your parents without your permission or unless this activity resulted in a pregnancy that threatened your life which isn't probable." Andromeda said sharply.

"Five maybe?" Hermione offered in a small voice.

"Was he responsible enough to cast contraceptive charms?"

Hermione nodded, "He said he did. My body turned cold and blue for a short while."

Andromeda nodded, "At least he has some sense." She took her arm and Apparated them to Diagon
Alley.

They appeared in front of Flourish and Blots.

Andromeda dragged her into the store and through the shelves until they came to a stop.

Andromeda skimmed the titles of several books before fishing one out. "Here."

Hermione accepted it.

'Your body and you: A witch's guide to sex, contraception and pregnancy.'

Hermione flushed.

"You ought to not always leave it up to your partner. Sometimes in the heat of the moment they
forget. There is a list of potions and incantations that will protect you from accidents. At your age,
you ought to focus on school rather than being forced to deal with a bonded and a child."

Hermione swallowed, "Thank you?"

"Well you're an adult in the healing field pick out anything here you want. I have a few particular
favourites." Andromeda walked over to the romance shelves and retrieved three titles. "Diamante
Bianchessi and Jacqueline Farley, personal favourites."

Hermione picked up a book, and skimmed it.

An animated illustration caught her eye and she coughed nearly dropping the book.

"Is something wrong Hermione?" Andromeda asked with an arched eyebrow.

"I didn't expect to see anything so…graphic."

"You didn't expect a still photo or a sketch like in a Muggle Harlequin novel did you?" Andromeda
teleaved.

Hermione swallowed, "I wasn't sure what to expect."

"Seduced by the Veela, The Veela Affair and Kidnapped, my life as a Veela's sex slave. I
recommend these. I find them to be quite stimulating…" Andromeda pointed out the titles.

Hermione accepted them blushing.

"I think this shall suffice. We have a few stores to visit."

XooooooX

A very tired looking Sirius had begged him to talk to Harry and remind him about privacy wards on
their way to breakfast.

So since Sirius had been forced to talk to Fred and Dudley in the smoking parlour, a reluctant Remus
pushed Harry and George up to the library.

Harry sighed, "What is it?"
"Apparently you forgot silencing charms or privacy wards." Remus chided them. "Sirius apparently got an earful before he blocked you two from his side. I really don't care if you are sexually active but do take care to be polite to others. I should have a problem with this since George is of age and you're not. However I'm going to air on the notion that you know what you're doing. Since neither of you can conceive as easily as a witch it's safer. I had thought perhaps you and Hermione,"

Harry coughed, "What? No way. She's the closest thing to a sister I've got."

"Well a pity but if George make you happy," Remus began.

"We're just friends." George interrupted. "Nothing more or less. I'm just here for release and experience. It's best if he learns with someone he trusts."

"Odd, usually Potters are only sexually interested in one person. James only wanted Lily and was celibate until she let him take her to bed." Remus frowned.

"Then I guess I'm not as much like my father." Harry shrugged.

"Well that's not necessarily a bad thing. Now if I could just make Severus to see you're not James. I think Sirius finally realised it. A pity it took hearing you have sex with another wizard to get that through his thick head." Remus chuckled. "Teaching you for a year helped me see you as your own person. I thought you would be more like James. While you have some recklessness, you are a thoughtful young man. Though I think you have Lily's temper…"

"Well he is feisty." George teased nudging Harry who promptly scowled at him.

XoooooX

Sirius lit his pipe and took a few drags before beginning. "I'm sure you know why you're here Fred."

Fred winced, "Because Andromeda caught me coming out of Hermione's bedroom."

Dudley choked on his coffee, "I knew you were close but damn you must work fast."

"Girls like Hermione don't show up often." Fred shrugged.

"She's a nice girl." Sirius admitted, "Were I twenty years younger I might chase her myself."

"I'm not a sharer." Fred warned.

Sirius shrugged, "I didn't say I was serious. I said if I were twenty years younger I'd consider it. Now you are practicing safe sex correct?"

Fred nodded, "Before I touch her usually, I'd like to be careful. She's bright and could really go places. Saddling her with a kid at her age would be cruel and selfish."

"Well if you are going to have sex don't do it in public and always use contraception. She deserves better then a fumble in the dormitory." Sirius warned, "Or in deserted classrooms and alcoves."

"All things you did in school." Fred snickered, "Really to be serious Sirius I've got no reason to treat her like she's a fling. She's smart, gorgeous and she doesn't think my pranks are stupid."
"They are bloody brilliant. I had Remus transfer some of my galleons into your business vault some time ago when he helped you out with setting up a business vault. So when you officially go into business and I'm declared an innocent man well you can add me to the list of investors."

Fred gaped at him forgetting his manners.

"Well a Marauder ought to help out a fellow prankster shouldn't they?" Sirius raised an eyebrow.

"Marauder…you're one of 'em? Which one?"

"Padfoot at your service."

"That means..." Fred stammered.

"That James was Prongs because he was a stag just like Harry's patronus. Remus is Moony and the traitor you already met. He was Ron's pet rat Scabbers and went by the nickname of Wormtail because his tail looked like a worm. I was rather silent on all four paws so I was Padfoot."

"Why is Remus Moony anyway...?" Dudley asked.

"Because he's a werewolf..." Fred answered.

Fred hadn't known until the Order meeting they eavesdropped on before Dudley showed up.

"As for you Dudley, sex is alright with wizards and witches. Just with witches you ought to use protection. Muggle methods are useless for wizards so don't bother with them. I'm sure Ted will pick you up a book or Fred will teach you some spells. Andromeda may teach you a potion if you ask nicely." Sirius shrugged.

"I don't care that Harry like blokes and George is a decent sort but I prefer girls. I had a good friend Jasmine when I went to my old school. She attended an all girls academy nearby and we had socials. I lost her number when my phone blew up." The former 'Squib' admitted ruefully, "I had hoped she'd agree to be my girl this year but there is nothing I can do about it now. Trying to have a relationship when I'm a wizard violates the Decree of Secrecy. I spent fourteen years without magic, I don't want to go back to the Muggle world and pretend it doesn't exist."

"Wise boy." Sirius smirked.

"So if I had a girl and I wanted to have sex, it's okay if she's willing and I'm safe about it?" Dudley asked.

"Be careful going with pureblood witches. If you have an accident, their fathers or the Head of their Family will force you to bond." Sirius warned.

"Noted." Dudley swallowed.

"Well then you're released. I believe you have a Transfiguration lesson."

A voice came from the Dining Room.

"Sirius?"

Sirius groaned, "Coming Minerva." He existed the room and scowled at the Deputy Headmistress.

"You wanted me?"

Fred and Dudley tried to sneak out.
"Mr. Dursley." Minerva snapped.

"It's Tonks." Dudley said quietly.

"Adopted then?"

"Blood adopted." Sirius corrected pleasantly.

"Well then, I merely came to tell you that your first exams will be in two days on the fifteenth. Filius, Pomona, Severus and Aurora agreed to oversee your exams. I will escort you to Hogwarts and give you your History of Magic and Transfiguration exams. Remus will give you a Defense exam as well. The other professors have taken the time from their summers to test you so I suggest you not waste our time." Minerva frowned at him.

Dudley gave her a fake smile, "You really think with a mother like Andromeda, that I would be allowed to fool around? She takes my marks seriously and I am under orders to do well."

"We shall see. If you pass these exams the other professors have agreed to allow you to sit the Second year exams on the twenty-seventh. If you pass you will be allowed attend as a Third Year." Minerva sniffed, "I know that this whole situation is out of the ordinary. However I fail to see how one can learn two years worth of material in so short a time. A year in ten days? Another in twelve?"

"Well being a fifteen-year-old First Year would be a horror don't you think?" Sirius smirked.

"We shall see." The stern witch left them.

Dudley swallowed, "I hope she's not my Head of House."

"Well with a Slytherin adopted mother and Hufflepuff for a father who knows where you might end up. Your aunt Lily was a Gryffindor but she might have done well in Ravenclaw." Sirius mused.

Fred and Dudley headed off to practice Transfiguration in the front parlour.

XooooooX

Andromeda led Hermione into Bacchean Alley, a side street off Diagon where the more erotic sort of shops were.

They stopped in Aphrodite's Girdles and picked up sexy underwear for the blushing Gryffindor.

Every young woman deserved things that made her feel sexy and made her lover wild.

They picked up a few potions that one could only pick up in Bacchean: morning after potions and contraception ones.

"I will teach you to brew your own but just in cause. There are daily potions, monthly and biannually. You should discuss with your lover, which would be best. Charms are only potent for a few hours at most." Andromeda warned. "Often I advise the witch to make the choice themselves but perhaps you would prefer to talk about it. Especially if you are serious about him."

Hermione blushed, "I do like him. He has a little bit of the bad boy streak but he is smarter then I suspected. He's fun to talk to…"
"Amoung other things." Andromeda snickered.

"He can sing..." Hermione blushed.

"Another one of his charms perhaps." The healer shrugged.

Hermione swallowed, "One of them…"

Andromeda showed her around some more and even took her into a store that sold sex toys. She even told her how they worked, why and which were meant for witches.

By the time they returned to Grimmauld Hermione was as red-faced as Fred's hair.

Andromeda went to fetch Dudley for a potions' lesson while Hermione went to take a very cold shower…
Chapter 18 - Exams

Remus woke Dudley purposely being noisy to disturb Ron whom he disliked for trying to attack Harry. He was more preferable as a petrified weasel then as troublesome arrogant teenager. He was completely insufferable.

They met Minerva at eight in the Receiving Room and she escorted them through the floo to Hogwarts. They emerged in her private office near her classroom on the ground floor near the Transfiguration Courtyard.

"Your first exam will be Transfiguration. Since you have not been in my classes I have not seen your spell work."

Dudley pulled out a stack of essays, "A benefit of being tutored by Hermione and Fred. They kicked my arse to write at least half of the first year essays. My spelling is atrocious and my handwriting illegible. They taught me spelling correction charms and a handwriting charm that are both reversible. If you wish to see what I wrote before it was corrected its fine." He shrugged, "Hermione reckons I have a writing disorder not unlike dyslexia."

Minerva accepted them and pointed at a set of objects.

Dudley successfully transfigured a rat to a goblet, reversed the transfiguration and then to snuff boxes that looked very much like the one that George owned that contained something called Wartcap powder whatever that was. The desk became a pig that became a crystal goblet. He successfully transfigured a match to needle and switched the pig for an owl.

Dudley was a bit smug, "What do you think? Did I pass?"

"You did alright. I shall have to examine your essays." Minerva sniffed.

Remus turned to her, "Where to next?"

"Filius is up the staircase that's down the Corridor. He's waiting."

Dudley and Remus went to leave.
"Wait. Pop question."

Dudley turned, "Yes?"

"The Transfiguration formula."

Dudley restrained himself from rolling his eyes, she was trying to intimidate him, "An intended transformation is directly influenced by (a) bodyweight, (v) viciousness, (w) wand power, (c) concentration, and (Z) a fifth unknown variable."

Minerva explained what the variable of 'Z' was.

Dudley nodded, "Trust a Transfiguration Mistress to remember something like that. Like you said, I've only been studying magic for ten days. You can't possibly expect me to remember everything."

"I shall review and grade your essays."

"Thanks and good day." Dudley said leaving the classroom. He did not like her much…

Remus led him on to Filius' classroom, which was 2E despite being on the third floor.

"Dudley Tonks? My, my I taught your adopted parents and your aunt. Both were phenomenal at my branch of Study. Andromeda became a respected healer and Lily went on to work for the Department of Experimental Charms as a researcher." Filius said shaking his hand. "Your cousin is talented as well, when he isn't being distracted by Mr. Weasley of course."

"The way the summer is going, you shan't have to deal with that. They hardly speak." Dudley shrugged, "About my exam?"

"Yes well now I normally have seen students work in class all year so I just have a pineapple." Filius frowned.

"I learned all sort of cool charms from Remus." Dudley grinned, "What do you want to see?"

"Now Remus was another outstanding student. He was utterly wasted as a Defense Instructor. He may know the subject but he was extraordinarily gifted at the subject of Charms. Severus was the only duellist who ever really beat me and he did so the first time at fifteen. He's a fine potion master but he could have gone farther with duelling if he took the effort." Filius sighed.

"I have essays. It was part of my studying, between Hermione and Remus they made sure I completed a number of the assigned essays to prove I know the subject." Dudley offered handing over a shrunken stack of essays, "They were only edited for errors and my dreadful handwriting."

"How ingenious. I wish I'd thought to ask the whole situation is quite unusual and I hadn't really had much of a change to decide how to test you. I merely pulled out a handful of props from a few of the memorable lesions." Filius skimmed the essays, "I think you'll do quite well."

Dudley retrieved his wand from his sleeve and pointed it at the feather. "Wingardium Leviosa."

It soared into the air at first cast and danced in circles until he cast a finite at it, which caused it to flutter to the tabletop.

Filius clapped, "Well done! Remus I knew you should be teaching this class!"

Dudley held his wand up and spoke, "Lumos."
His wand tip lit up magnificently nearly blinding them.

"Oh sorry. Nox." Dudley blushed; he'd overpowered it again.

"Why don't you burn the feather young man?" Filius advised.

Dudley pointed his wand at it, "Incendio."

It ignited and soon disappeared into ash.

"Spongify." Dudley cast at the table and the pineapple slowly bobbed like it was on a trampoline.

"I know you used the tap dancing charm on a textbook at the Council of Magical Law but might I have a look?" Filius asked.

Smirking, Dudley cast the spell before ending the charm on the table.

It was quite funny to see the pineapple trying to dance on an unfirm surface.

The three laughed.

"Mr. Tonks you will be a delight. Almost as fun as watching Lily and Remus in class or even Ted; I taught them all. I haven't been here as long as Albus but I have been here the second longest. I predated Minerva and Pomona though to be fair Minerva started just two years after graduation. Such a shame poor woman…” Filius gave them a forced smile, "Well happier thoughts. I'll have a look at these essays but I think that you'll pass with an Exceeds Expectations for you have but without the essays you're bordering on Outstanding already."

"Who is next?"

"Minerva will be last for History of Magic. She had to write the exam due to the pathetic excuse that Binns arranged. The textbook ends at 1950 and he tests on something in 1962? Bah! He should be replaced. He died during Dippet's tenure and was never replaced." The Charms Master grumbled. "Aurora had me charm the ceiling of the Great Hall to look like the night sky. Over each house are the stars for a single season. She wanted to give the impression of astronomy. She's next. Then Severus and Pomona."

"I suppose I'm after Pomona then?"

"Yes. The test is waiting in your old classroom." Filius replied.

Remus nodded, "Off to the Great Hall then."

It was just nine now, the two wizards hurried.

Remus smiled at Aurora Sinistra whom had been a bit older then he was but they were now former colleagues. "Aurora."

"Remus. Mr. Tonks, your test is on the sol system. Using the quill and ink provided please fill in the planets and what moons you remember." A slim but yet beautiful black woman instructed.

Dudley nodded sitting down at the second table where the test was laid out.

Sol.

Mercury.
No moon.
Venus.
No moon.
Earth/Terra.
1 moon:
  Luna
  Mars
2 Moons:
  Deimos
  Phobos
  Ceres
No moon.
Jupiter
  Andromeda had said there were 64 but likely only 16 would be expected.
  Adrastea
  Amalthea
  Ananke
  Callisto
  Carme
  Elara
  Europa
  Ganymede
  Himalia
  Io
  Leda
  Lysithea
  Metis
  Pasiphae
  Sinope
Thebe
Themisto

So he listed seventeen rather than sixteen, that ought to give him more points right? And it would please his mother.

Next was Saturn of course.

Atlas
Calypso
Dione
Enceladus
Epimetheus
Helene
Hyperion
Iapetus
Janus
Mimas
Pan
Pandora
Prometheus
Rhea
Telesto
Thetys
Titan

There were 62 but he had seventeen. They usually asked for twelve.

It was helpful that the Blacks were obsessed with astronomy…

Uranus was next and it had twenty-seven

Ariel
Belinda
Bianca
Cordelia
Cressida
Desdemona
Juliet
Miranda
Oberon
Orphelia
Perdita
Portia
Puck
Rosalind
Titania
Umbriel
That made sixteen.
Neptune had thirteen.
Despina
Galatea
Larissa
Naiad
Nereid
Proteus
Thalassa
Triton
They wanted seven and he gave them eight.
Pluto had five.
Charon
Nyx
Hydra
Morpheus
Cerberus
Eris had one.

Dysnomia

Makemake

No moons.

Haumea

Two moons:

Hi’iaka

Namaka

Unlike his Muggle science classes Andromeda said there were fourteen planets.

The last was Typhon, which had two moons

Charybdis

Scylla

Typhon was huge, larger then Jupiter and sometimes altered the orbits of other planets. It was only visible by wizards which led to suspicions that either Muggles weren't advanced enough to see it or it was inhabited by a magical race that allowed it to cloak itself.

Dudley signed his exam with a flourish and then tapped it to adjust his atrocious spelling. He also altered his handwriting to be legible.

"What are you doing Mr. Tonks?"

"Fixing my spelling and making it readable." Dudley said handing over the exams.

"Surprising. How did you manage to learn all that in ten days?" the woman frowned at him.

"My adopted mother is a Black. Andromeda Tonks? She insisted as the son of a Black I had to learn it. She had me reading books and up late at night to watch the stars." Dudley shrugged.

"Outstanding. You'll pass this subject at least."

Dudley handed over five essays. "I did these as well. They aren't all the essays but a few."

Aurora accepted them. "That will do then. Best to not keep Severus waiting."

A very nervous Remus escorted him down to the dungeons. The werewolf knocked on the door.

A gruff voice came from within. "Enter."

Dudley sighed; he can't be all bad if Remus liked him.

They entered together.

"Lupin! You did your duty now get out. I won't have you in here. The only brewers worse then you are Pettigrew and Longbottom."
The werewolf sighed, "Nice to see you too Severus. I'll be outside Dudley. Good luck."

"He'll need it." Snape sneered.

All false bravado, Dudley noticed. The man actually looked pained when Remus left shutting the door behind him without a protest.

"I heard Andromeda taught you."

"Mother is very good. First Class."

"Well." Severus sneered, "We'll see if you prove to be worthy of her time."

Dudley was quizzed on the twelve uses of dragons blood, ordered to retrieve the ingredients for Wiggenweld Potion, and asked about Aconite, Bezoars and what an infusion of wormwood and powdered asphodel would make.

He answered them calmly not being intimidated by the man. He swore his mother invented intimidation.

"Very well now brew the Forgetfulness potion."

With clear concise gestures taught by Andromeda, Dudley selected his ingredients, arranged them in order of usage and prepared them in the proper form. He heated the cauldron checking it with thermometer charms before correctly adding and mixing the ingredients. When it was finished without any mistakes he bottled it and escorted it to his proctor.

Severus Snape sneered at him, "You seem to be alright at the subject."

"Andromeda made me do these." Dudley handed over seven essays on potions that Hermione and Andromeda remembered.

Severus snatched them, "At least you're writing isn't as horrid as your cousin's."

Dudley smirked, "Oh it is. This is after spelling correction charms and handwriting adjusting charms. You wouldn't be able to read it at all without them. I never was any good at spelling. We typed our papers at Smeltings. I didn't really learn how to write essays until then because they were stricter there then at St. Gregory's. Then again I used to disrupt class then. It wasn't until I realized how much I didn't learn that I started to buckle down and pay attention."

"A pity someone related to Lily would be a poor student then again Petunia wasn't very academically inclined and was extremely jealous of Lily." Severus grumbled.

"You knew Petunia?" Dudley frowned.

"We lived in the same town and went to the same primary school. Lily and I were friends from the time we were seven. I was the first person to tell her she was a witch."

The potions master shrugged.

"Were you friends forever? Why doesn't Harry like you or know this? He never mentioned it." Dudley frowned.

"I don't treat my students any better or worse for knowing their parents. Mr. Potter is a spoilt attention seeking, rule breaking gloryhound."

"Harry's not spoilt. He was starved and kept in a cupboard. He worked like a house elf. He had my hand-me-downs; he never had anything of his own until he came here. Vernon used to smack him"
around. After your lot came into the picture with his letters, he got my second bedroom that was full of junk."

"What are you talking about?" Severus stared at him.

"He's my cousin and I wasn't always nice to him. My parents wanted me to hate him. They took me on expensive trips and we left him with Ms. Figg. He never had a decent birthday present or even a Christmas present until he came here likely. I know he's recieved gifts from Hermione. He had old socks; a wire hanger and other junk but not like me. I had all sort of crap I broke or didn't use. All of which was tossed in the room Harry slept in. He was still sleeping in my old convertible toddler bed when the Order took him away for good. He had a bunch of locks on his door and bars in the windows. Vernon was a bit mad I think." Dudley shrugged.

"You can't be serious. Surely, Albus would have taken him away." The Death Eater spy glared.

"He didn't even bother to get Harry off when he knew he was innocent. No he just let the Ministry try him illegally for saving us. Morons." The former boxer grumbled.

"Get off with you and take your tales with you." Snape growled.

"If you don't believe me you can go check out the house yourself." Dudley said making his way outside.

"How did it go?" Remus asked nervously.

"I lectured him about his obviously misconceptions about Harry and he told me to get out." Dudley frowned.

"He thinks Harry is just like James however I fail to see it. Harry hasn't singled out any Slytherins for torture, torment and pranking." Remus sighed.

They made their way out to the greenhouse where Dudley met the Herbology Professor.

"My my, the boy of the year. Ready to be quizzed?"

Dudley identified all of the plants he was asked to and had to use Incendio to subdue the Devil's Snare that tried to attack him.

He handed off his Herbology essays and was bid farewell.

Dudley then was taken back to the third floor where the Defence against the Dark Arts exam would be held.

Remus conjured dummies and asked Dudley to show his spellwork by casting the Curse of the Bogies, the Knockback jinx and Verdimillious.

The Lumos had already been successfully demonstrated to Filius.

Then Remus asked him to explain the process of diagnosing and treating werewolf bites.

Remus patted the large boy's shoulder, "Outstanding."

Dudley handed over the essays that Sirius had assigned from the list Hermione gave him.

"I'll read these and tell you what I think of them. Now it's back to Minerva to sit your History of Magic exam."
They returned to Minerva who was bit surprised to see them.

"Finished already?"

Remus nodded.

"Very well the history exam is on that desk." Minerva waved and turned back to his essays.

Dudley examined it.

It wasn't about self-stirring cauldrons that was for sure. Rather it was something from the textbook at least.

It was a list of five essay questions on the Soap Blizzard of 1378, Werewolf Code of Conduct, Emeric the Evil, Uric the Oddball and Elfric the Eager.

He had to answer three so he chose the Soap Blizzard of 1378, the Werewolf Code of Conduct and Elfric the Eager.

Dudley finished them with a tired groan and tapped the exam with his wand to correct his spelling and alter his handwriting to something legible.

Then he handed the essay to the Transfiguration Mistress.

He handed her the seven essays that Hermione had assigned him.

"Very well. You will be informed of your results tomorrow. If you receive at least Acceptables you will be allowed to sit the Second Year exams on the twenty-seventh."

Dudley was starving when they flooed back to Grimmauld for what felt like a late lunch.

His teenage tutors were all excited and babbled questions at him about what his exams were and how they differed from the ones they'd had.

"Children! Give him a break. I think he deserves a reward for his hard work. He has the day off from studying." Andromeda ordered.

Dudley gave her a grateful and worshipful look.

"Instead he may have his first Flying lesson. Whether he is officially a third year or a second year in September, he may have his own broom. He might as well have a lesson. After all, every witch or wizard should know how to fly whether they enjoy it or not." Andromeda smirked.
Chapter 19 - A Flying Lesson by the Weasleys

After lunch a very excited Dudley hurried up to his room to fetch his broom from under the bed.

Ron having little else to do followed him, "Why do you have that broom?"

"Harry thought I needed a broom. He said he learned on a Nimbus and it was good for a beginner. Since I've always been good a Phys Ed he thought I'd be decent at it." Dudley shrugged, "Why do you care?"

"My prefect gift was supposed to be my own broom. But I'm going to need another wand. Dad won't tell me what sort of wand I'll have." Ron pouted. "I got a new one last time but it was only a Kindle because they couldn't afford an Ollivander."

"With your behaviour prefect or not you don't deserve a new wand." Dudley sniffed as he left.

"Like you're much better." Ron hollered after him.

"At least I'm trying to mend my ways." Dudley muttered as he headed out to the cleared backyard.

Well Harry's temper had a few good results.

The twins were up on their new brooms testing them out and Harry was up doing dizzying antics on that broom he called a Firebolt.

Harry grinned, "Just a minute."

Then he did a spectacular dive that had Dudley's heart in his throat.

George shouted, "Damn it Harry! I know you're talented but fuck! That's a Wronski Feint, the most dangerous move in Quidditch."
Dudley watched stunned when Harry managed to pull up three feet from the ground and then his cousin landed.

George scowled at him when he joined him on the ground. "Idiot, you're not Krum!"

"How am I going to get anything like him if I don't practice?" Harry scoffed.

"You're not a professional Quidditch player!" George snapped.

"I don't want to be one! I think I'll become a snake breeder. Knowing I own that snake shop and those books on snakes made me think about it. You're a damn fine Beater but you won't consider flying anymore then Charlie!" Harry tossed back.

Fred groaned, "Stop yelling. Merlin! It's just a stunt. He wasn't hurt. It's not like the time when his Nimbus was cursed and he was almost thrown seventy feet to the ground. Or the time when the Bludger went nuts and tried to kill him and he ended up with a broken arm or the time when he fell off in the storm. When he's not affected by curses, mad Bludgers or storms he's a keen Seeker. The youngest in a century, remember?"

George pouted.

"You're just miffed if he'd hurt you'll be blamed or what not. Like he'd be banned by Andromeda from sex if that happened." Fred scoffed.

George turned red, "That's not true! He's just my friend. I don't want him to put himself in danger! Between threats related to old Snakeface every year and the Dursleys I don't think he should risk his life anymore then he has to!"

Hermione chuckled, "You're both crazy."

"Just because you don't like flying don't pretend to know anything." Harry glared.

"I might not enjoy flying but I enjoy the sport. I just prefer to keep my feet on the ground. I'm not like Percy with two left feet when it comes to flying." Hermione snorted.

"How did you know that?" Fred frowned.

"I might have overheard Oliver teasing him once." Hermione shrugged.

Dudley cleared his throat, "If you are quite through I thought I had a flying lesson."

The twins and Harry crowded near him and showed him how to mount his broom, how to grip the broom handle and where so he'd have the most control.

Dudley watched curious, nervously copying their gestures and positions.

Hermione had a dreary old blanket that she'd used to sprawl out with a few books.

Perhaps she was plotting for his lessons already.

Dudley ignored her, putting studying out of his head.

XooooooX

The three Gryffindor Quidditch team members taught Dudley how fly and found the boy was a natural.
"Well now...he reminds me of Sirius on a broom."

The four looked down to see Remus watching them.

Under Remus' left arm was a crate of Quidditch balls and in his hand was a Nimbus 2001.

Sirius who was standing beside him had a Firebolt.

Harry called out, "When did you two have brooms?"

Remus grumbled, "Sirius made me go buy them. I was to buy two Firebolts but I chose a cheaper model. At that price I was not spending that much on a broom. Especially with the cost of a deluxe practice Quidditch set."

"What's a deluxe?" Fred asked.

"It comes it all the normal Quidditch stuff but has two sets of Beater bats." Remus shrugged. "It's a bit boring for a Quidditch match right now but Charlie is due back from Romania about the time of Dudley's second set of exams. He's a former seeker. We can have a real match then if we can scrounge up some Keepers."

"Why don't we ask Bill and maybe Oliver? Ollie maybe a Quidditch fiend but he is a decent wizard. He'd be a set of eyes in the Quidditch circles." Fred offered.

"Well what are we going to do since we're a few short?" Harry asked curious.

"Toss the Quaffle around. Something like Muggle Volleyball or Keep away."

Dudley smirked, "I always was very good at Keep Away."

"Not hard when you tower over people you big lummox." Harry grumbled.

"Well you still could grow. You can't possible stay 5'1" forever."

"I'm 5'2" you idiot!" Harry glared.

"My mistake." Dudley laughed.

The Quaffle was released and the wizards set out to play.

Remus, Sirius and Harry versus Fred, Dudley and George started to play.

Hermione paused in her reading to glance up every so often to watch them because they were laughing loudly.
The day after Dudley's tests August 16th, Arthur had to take his youngest shopping. Since Ginny had been left behind when the Order took Harry to go shopping for school things with the twins and Hermione Arthur had to take Ron and Ginny.

To his complete annoyance, Molly insisted on attending.

The only problem was that Ron required a new wand and the Diagon Alley wandshops had been informed Molly's wand right had been suspended despite her having need of a new one due to the accidentally destruction of her previous wand.

She was furious about having to cook and clean the Muggle way.

Molly was lazier then he ever realized.

He retrieved Ron and Ginny from Grimmauld and flooing back to the Burrow. They immediately flooed to Diagon Alley picking up used copies of Ron's new Transfiguration text and there was thankfully one copy of the defence test in the second hand shop.

Ron pouted, "It's all Harry's fault. I wanted a new broom for my prefect reward."

"Perhaps for your birthday or as a reward for passing your OWLS. You should focus on your marks this year." Molly soothed him.

"It's not fair! I don't want a new wand!" Ron grumbled.

"You could go without." Arthur said tersely.

Molly gaped at him, "Arthur!"

"I was just saying that if he kept complaining he could stay home this year and be a fifth year with Ginny the following September."

They had to visit a second-hand robe shop to pick up robes for Ron and Ginny.

If Ron wasn't such a stick he could wear his brothers' old robes but they were too patched to retain another charm.

He worked hard but never saw much of his money having entrusted it to Molly. They were usually living from one month's pay to then next.

Arthur had been the almost spoiled heir once upon a time but his disgrace had gotten him in trouble.

How Molly managed to survive with so little when she was once the pampered only heiress of the Prewett he didn't know.
No wonder the witch was insufferable…

They headed to another second hand shop…

Ron groaned, "Please Dad no…even a Kindle would be better."

"Thanks to your mother I don't have money for a new wand. I save a little every month for school things."

"You should have more since Fred and George bought their own stuff." Ron glared.

"I have to pay for your mother's sessions with Ted."

"I don't need them." Molly sniffed.

"That's for Ted to decide, unless you want to join Lockhart and the Longbottoms." Arthur glared.

"He wouldn't dare." Molly glared

"Believe what you want but I won't spend any money on a wand for you without permission."

"Coward." Molly snipped.

"I'm trying to keep you out of St. Mungos." Arthur glared. "Stay out here with Ginny. Ginny if you give your mother your wand for any reason I will take it until I deliver you to the train."

"What do you think I'll do? Use it to try to cast a glamour?" Molly glared.

"I couldn't cast a working glamour on that. It's something that will no doubt wear off in time."

"It's embarrassing." Molly whinged.

"Well if you hadn't been being an idiot it wouldn't happened." Arthur chided pushing Ron into the second-hand wands shop.

"Well now how can I help you?"

"My son is in need of his third wand." Arthur grumbled.

"Previous wand?" the man asked.

"His first was a 12" Ash and unicorn hair while the second was a 14" Willow and unicorn hair."

"Well that's interesting. They have nothing in common." The man frowned. "I'm not Ollivander but what are his best subjects?"

"Care of Magic Creations and Defence." Ron sneered.

Arthur pinched his shoulder and was rewarded with a glare.

"I haven't any Holly they sell out quickly."

"I don't want a wand like Dudley or Harry the gits." Ron snorted.

"You'll accept the first wand that accepts you." Arthur snapped.

The man handed him wand after wand until one sparked weakly.
"Let me see that." The man snatched it back, "7 ¾ brittle Bowtruckle and Sequoia. An Auror won it in a duel and sold it to me. It's not a decent wand. A pity, Ollivander says that shorter wands usually imply some weakness of character that must be overcome."

Arthur snorted, "Somehow it seems quite fitting."

Ron glared.

Arthur paid the galleon and ten sickles asked. It was better then the amount that the twins spent on their wands.

XooooooX

Knowing Ron would no doubt end up in their shared room while he was having his Charms lessons with Remus and his Defence ones with Sirius. Dudley plotted revenge.

He removed the silencing charms knowing that George and Harry would no doubt end up here this afternoon. Those two were worse sex fiends then Hermione and Fred.

He caught George on the staircase and whispered his plan.

George turned red and nodded. "Sure. It would torment Ickly Prefect Ronnikins and hopefully send him running back to The Burrow."

Dudley slapped his on the back, "Thanks a lot. Your assistance is appreciated. Using you like this is my revenge."

George frowned, "Revenge for what?"

Dudley leaved over, "For letting me hear you whilst I was trying to study charms. I took down my silencing charms so he has to listen. Since I took all my charms things unless he knows silencing spells or privacy wards he's screwed the git."

George swallowed, "After the lecture from Remus I'm not sure how keen Harry will be on it."

"How keen I'll be on what?"

"Dudley's prank on Ronnikin's." George shrugged.

"Oh? Do tell." Harry smirked, leaning in conspiratorially

Dudley whispered, "I took down the silencing charms on my room. I figured you'd head up for sex while I've got Remus and Sirius distracted with my lessons."

Harry snickered, "Oh he won't like that I'm stuffing George."

The front door slammed.

"Look who is probably back?" George muttered.

Ron ran up the stairs stomping and muttering loud enough to be heard.
Dudley saluted the pair, "That's my cue to make myself scarce and yours to put the prank in action."

The three split up.

Dudley sniggered when Ron gave him a death glare before heading off to tutoring.

XoooooX

Harry flung George into the bedroom door at least casting a locking charm before snogging the Beater.

George banished their clothes to hang over the desk's chair, and leaving down a bit painfully to snog the Seeker.

Harry grumbled, "Fuck you're too damn tall."

George wisely kept his mouth shut about Harry being a foot shorter, pausing to cast charms to prepare himself.

They were both pretty randy when Harry sunk into George's arse.

"Fuck! It feels so good when you're inside me."

"Since we're just in it for the sex you probably say that to everyone."

"Only had two guys before; Page and I fumbled for a while. But Diggory the git wasn't as great between the sheets as he thought he was."

"Enough about your previous lovers." Harry muttered before starting an almost brutal rhythm that had George hissing and shouting with pleasure...

They were cursing like wild cats, while George rocked into his thrusts.

XoooooX

Ron's fuming was interrupted when something hard was thrown into the door of Harry's room.

"Fuck you're too damn tall."

What the hell!

There were more fumbling sounds...

"Fuck! It feels so good when you're inside me."

"Since we're just in it for the sex you probably say that to everyone."

"Only had two guys before; Page and I fumbled for a while. But Diggory the git wasn't as great between the sheets as he thought he was."
“Enough about your previous lovers...”

Merlin Harry and George were bent? That was disgusting!

Why weren't they at least smart enough to remember to use silencing charms?

Wait if he didn't know any why would Harry?

This sucked…

To make it worse when he tried to open the bedroom door it was locked.

That stupid ex-Mudblood! He'd kill him as he slept for this…

He hated Dudley Tonks…

He hated Harry for stuffing his nasty brother.

The twins probably switched places and took turns with Harry and Hermione. The gits were probably just screwing with his former friends; he wouldn't even feel sorry for them. They were probably just asking for it.

Who the hell was Page and why would Diggory want George when he had Chang? Mum was right, George was liar…
Severus grumbled and pouted while Andromeda's adopted son's scornful words were turning in his head.

How could he have been so wrong about Potter?

He had struggled to disbelieve the former nephew of his childhood friend Lily…

Now standing here in the form of an animal…

His animagus form was that of a silver fox but he couldn't sneak into a magically sealed house that way.

It was labelled condemned since the wiring was destroyed…

It was enterable by Aurors, knowing the magical signatures of several Aurors through the Order it wasn't hard to adjust his own and slip in when he made the back door transparent.

He padded around as a cat not unlike Minerva's tabby having effortlessly transfigured his fox into a house cat.

He opened the cupboard under the stairs and found dusty signs of former habitation. A ratty blanket, a cot and a folded blanket in a pillow case that was clearly meant to serve as a pillow. There were a few green army men and a childish scrawl of a picture. It had two dark haired persons with green eyes holding hands with a small boy that he assumed was supposed to be Harry himself.

Severus fell back on his arse; barely remembering to swish his tail out of the way before he sat on it.

Dudley was right…

Almost afraid of what he would find in the 'bedroom' that the boy inhabited since his Hogwarts letter arrived; Severus made his way up the stairs carefully and then he easily found a door with a cat flap in it.

He entered to find it 'clean' but filled with broken junk that ought to have been put out in the bin.

There was the convertible toddler bed, a broken telly and a great many other pieces of discarded junk.

There were bars in the windows…

Severus plodded almost drunkenly out of the House and Apparated to the last place he would have gone he were of a saner mindset.

Grimmauld Place…

He ended up exiting the Drawing Room floo and the first person he saw was his enemy Black.
Sirius Black sneered at him and then seemed to think better of it because he sighed, "Probably shouldn't do that. You look a bit green and I'm not really in the mood to fight with Remus."

"What are you talking about?" Severus snapped.

"I think you know that Remus never was involved with the so-called prank. It wasn't really a prank. It was thoughtless and I should have gotten in more trouble for it. I might have gotten you killed and Remus in trouble. I didn't know you two were a couple. James and I thought you liked Lily. Remus said if we had one iota of sense between us we would have know better. I thought scaring you away would keep you from Lily."

Severus blinked at him, "You are apologizing?"

Sirius groaned, "Yes…for reasons I can't and don't wish to understand because my only surviving friend likes you of all people. As a good friend I at least have to attempt to treat you politely. I just don't have to like you."

"You're serious? Remus wasn't involved?"

"Of course not, and for the record James was epically furious with me for it, he shook me until my brains rattled and punched me. He was furious and panicked that Lily would learn of it. He was terrified she'd think he was involved…"

"So he wasn't in on it either?" Severus said dumbly.

"Of course not! He never was as into tormenting you as I was. Especially when Lily showed up and lectured him for tormenting you and then he was completely distracted." Sirius shrugged then he gave Severus a piercing look. "What is wrong with you? Should I call Annie? Or Ted? You look ill…"

"I saw the conditions that Pot…Harry lived in. I thought he was a spoilt brat like his father…I was wrong."

Sirius laughed woodenly, "It happens to the best of us. I swore the rat could be trusted. We know how wrong I was, do we not?"

"Hm…"

"If you don't want Annie or Ted, I'll send Remus in." Sirius said rising.

Severus didn't say a word as he collapsed on the silver lime wood and black velvet settee.

Sirius shrugged and left him behind.

XooooooX

Sirius made his way across the hall to the library.

Remus and Dudley looked up.

"Is it time for my Defence lesson already?" Dudley asked frowning.

Sirius nodded, "For the moment yes. Remus has a visitor. They are in the parlour. No, I did not call them names and I have not insulted them. He's in shock…I think he came here wanting to talk to you…"
Remus rose frowning, "Severus? He's here?"

Sirius nodded.

Remus left the room in a sort of daze.

Sirius turned to his pupil, "Where is your homework?"

Dudley summoned his defence text.

Sirius was using Hermione's old book *Confronting the Faceless* as his textbook.

He had attached his essay with light sticking charms.

Remus entered the Drawing Room and found Severus with his face in his hands.

He gingerly sat beside him.

"Surprised the git didn't send Harry." Severus muttered.

"He sent me. He thought maybe you came to see me." Remus said quietly. "I think he's probably wrong."

"He said you had nothing to do with the 'first incident in the Shrieking Shack'…"

Remus blinked, "What? He said he wouldn't tell you that…"

"Well he did. Didn't even call me that name…he actually *apologized*…"

Remus grinned, "He actually did that? He's a softy beneath his bluster; to think that he could actually be kind to you because he knew I liked you."

"Shocked me…" Severus grumbled.

"So will you tell me what happened that upset you this badly?" Remus asked.

"Only if you tell why in Salazar's name you didn't tell me that you were a werewolf when Black, Pettigrew and Potter knew."

"I didn't tell them either. I was afraid that they wouldn't be my friends anymore. They found out on their own that that was why they became Animagi." Remus sighed, "It was their way of supporting me. Then Sirius went and did what he did…"

"Why didn't you tell me?" Severus repeated.

"I was afraid you wouldn't like me anymore, that you would call me a monster." Remus sighed.

"I would have taken it better if you'd told me instead of learning that way…" Severus grumbled.

'I should have told you. I planned to before we slept together. Then we slept together and I kept putting it off because it wasn't the 'right time'. Then before I knew it you were telling me in the hospital wing that we were over. We were both crushed…the wolf and I. He became more brutal as if he blamed me, Moony seemed to blame me more then Sirius. Lily couldn't understand why we weren't friends anymore and then there was the incident that broke your friendship. Sirius and James
said you finally showed your true colours. I thought you just lost your temper. I didn't think you meant to call her that." Remus admitted ruefully.

"I didn't…it just came out. I forgot where I was. I would never have used that word if I knew how badly she would take. I should have known better. Those two were always tormenting me." Severus mumbled.

"I should have tried harder to stop them. Even as a prefect it was difficult to know how far I could tell them off without jeopardising our friendship. Lily used to tell me to 'grow a pair' or to 'man up'." Remus sighed.

"You should have, you git…" Severus grumbled.

Remus leaned over and for the first time since he was sixteen, he kissed Severus.

Severus grabbed his shirt in his fists, "Damn you. Damn you."

They hung onto each other; as if afraid the other would disappear.

XoooooX

Hermione decided that George and Harry needed to gain some culture and dragged them towards the Drawing Room to give them piano lessons.

Fred was preparing for Dudley's next Transfiguration lesson.

George could see over Hermione's shoulder and he was shrunk dumb at the sight for his former Defence professor and his Potions teacher snogging.

Severus Snape seemed kinder almost.

Harry grumbled, "Stop blocking the door!"

The adults pulled apart.

Severus glowered at them. "What do you want?"

"We just came to…" Hermione stated.

George finished for the flustered girl, smirking, "To be forced to learn how to play the piano. Hermione said we needed 'culture'. I didn't expect that but you make a hot couple."

"Who makes a hot couple? Fucking giants."

"Language Mr. Potter." Severus snapped.

Remus finally found his tongue, "Um why don't we take this conversation somewhere more private."

"Snake and Remus?" Harry called out in shock, "What were you doing snogging?"

"That would be an accurate assessment. You have a problem with that Mr. Potter?"

George snickered, "I doubt it. He likes to pin me down and snog me."

Severus choked, "He's bent?"

George smirked, "Most definitely. My sore arse can attest to that."
Remus coughed, "Too much information George." He rose, "Come on Severus. They'll leave us alone if we depart."

"Fine."

Hermione and George quickly exited the doorway by entering the room and giving the adults a path to the door.

Unfortunately, Harry stood in the doorway with his arms crossed, "Since when were you a couple?"

Remus groaned, "He sounds just like Lily."

Severus frowned at him, "I don't see why that is any of your business Mr. Potter."

Remus sighed, "Really Sev is that anyway to talk to him? We were a couple in School during our Sixth Year but we were friends because of Lily. Severus helped me pass my Potions OWL. We broke up because of something Sirius did that Severus thought I was a part of. When if he thought about it, he should have known I wasn't."

"I admit it. I was wrong, about a lot of things. I suppose I owe you an apology too Mr. Potter."

Severus admitted grudgingly.

"Merlin! You're not a professor right now. He's the son of your oldest friend. Give it a rest Sev."

Remus said exasperated.

"Fine! Harry then. I am sorry I called you a spoilt brat. Your cousin was right and I was wrong. You might have the misfortune of being James Potter's son but I ought to have remembered that you were Lily's son as well."

"You were my mother's friend?" Harry frowned.

"We grew up in the same town and were friends from the time we were seven until we nearly seventeen. If I hadn't accidentally called her that word, we'd have still been friends. It is a shame I have to live with as well as bearing the Dark Mark. I was angry, I was alone and I was a fool when I took this trice-damned mark. I never really wanted to be a Death Eater; if I wasn't needed as a spy I'd quit and go into hiding. I hate that man- if the Dark Lord can still be called that." Severus snapped.

Harry tilted his head, "Were you the one to tell my mum about Dementors?"

Severus nodded sharply, "Of course."

Harry frowned, "Then you're 'that awful boy'?"

Severus snorted, "That was what Petunia called me. She blamed me for her sister being a freak. She didn't want us to play together and tried keep us apart until her mother caught her at it. I spent a lot of time at the Evans' to get away from my parents. That is enough discussion on my sordid past. I still don't like you much Harry."

"The feeling is mutual." Harry glared.

Remus groaned, "Seriously! You're acting like Sirius and Severus stop it! You will please at least be polite. If you can't speak nicely then just don't talk!"

"Fine!" Harry grumbled.

"That is…acceptable."
"Well then Sev I say we leave them the Drawing Room and I'll take you to my room to talk."

George sniggered. "To 'talk'…"

"We are not as rude as you two have been. We have no intention of torturing you with such things. Whether we sleep together or not is our business." Remus left the Drawing Room.

Severus followed, his robes billowing behind him like black wings and his spin ramrod straight.

Harry spotted Skylla, "You two play without me. I'm going talk to Skylla and practice my Parseltongue. Maybe I'll find Andromeda as well. I need to clear my head."

"You didn't see them kissing." Hermione blushed.

"I'm glad I don't have that image in my head…"

"You don't have a photographic memory." Hermione groaned, "I'll be stick with that picture in my head forever."

"Have Ted take it away then." Harry called back as he left.
Seeing George, Fred, Remus, Hermione and Sirius studying and preparing for Dudley’s lessons had rubbed off. He caught up on his summer homework; finishing his Charms, Transfiguration and Herbology easily when George was otherwise occupied. Well everything but History of Magic, Divination and Potions.

With Hermione distracted between Fred, preparing for her history lesions and drilling facts and dates into Dudley’s head; she wasn’t available. With Dudley’s First Year exams out of the way and passed, Dudley was studying like mad for his Second Year exams in hopes of starting the year off as a Third Year at least in September.

How someone who had learning issues could study so much was baffling.

So he couldn’t ask Hermione, so he figured since Andromeda seemed well read and she was a Potions Mistress, First Class as well as a Healer he could ask her to clarify the assignment.

If she wasn’t in one of the parlours off the dining room she was most often found in her potions lab.

After checking both the parlours for Andromeda, Harry slipped down the stairs into the cellar. Upon reaching the lab’s door, he knocked twice and waited.

“Come in.”

Harry opened the door, “Am I interrupting at a critical point?”

“Nothing I can’t wait on. Brilliant things stasis charms.” Andromeda said wiping her hands on a green apron she was wearing over her high necked black shirt and green skirt. “What do you need?”

“Well I’m not so good at Potions and History of Magic. Granted I have issues with Divination as well but I’ll muddle through that like I always do but I was hoping you could help explain it. Maybe you could just read it?”
“A brilliant young man like you?”

“Well I missed a lot of school when I was a kid. So I’m a terrible writer and I’m still sloppy with a quill. I can’t seem to get the trick of it.” Harry mumbled.

“Speak up when requesting favours. It shows respect.” Andromeda reproached.

Harry swallowed, “I wanted ask mostly if you could explain my Potions and History summer homework. It’s Goblin to me.”

“So what is Snape’s potions assignments then?”

“A six-foot essay citing incidents when the use of Forgetfulness Potions is appropriate. A four foot essay comparing and contrasting the ingredients in memory sharpening and forgetfulness potions. The final essay is three-feet on potions using salamander blood.” Harry recited.

“It seems Severus has grown a sense of humour.” Andromeda said dryly.

Harry blinked, “Snape? A sense of humour?”

“Well he was never fond of people of lesser intelligence. He is overfond of using the word dunderhead is he not?”

Harry nodded, “Yeah, he tends to upset people and make them lose confidence so they become evil-fingered and make mistakes.”

“Assigning essays on the Forgetfulness Potions,” Andromeda snickered, “I will have to applaud him for his wit.”

“So…um can you help me?” Harry asked rubbing his neck.
“Give me some ingredients for the Forgetfulness potion.” Andromeda barked.

Harry glanced at his chicken scratch of an essay, “Well…” he squinted and tried to read his own handwriting.

“If you can’t read it yourself it’s too sloppy and deserves poor marks.” Andromeda snipped.

“I can’t help it if I was locked in my cupboard for days and I’ve never received much instruction. I’m lucky I can string a sentence together and have it make even a small amount of sense.” Harry scowled.

Andromeda sighed, “I thought Dudley’s reading and writing was bad with his issues. I see that I’ll have to give you assistance as well.”

“I’m not an idiot. I don’t have physical or intellectual limitations I just have gaps in my knowledge.” Harry grumbled.

Andromeda frowned, “What sort of ‘gaps’?”

“I can’t hold my concentration long.” Harry shrugged. “I get distracted easily. Only things like Magical Creatures and Defence come easily. Sometimes Charms but it’s not always easy…I can’t study like Hermione. Reading tends to give me headaches.”

“Odd. Your father was a quick study and he accumulated knowledge by simply touching his textbook. Lily also seemed to quickly acquire knowledge, she had a nearly photographic memory and devoured books.” Andromeda narrowed her eyes pondering his excuses and admissions regarding his memory when he had scrambled to explain his essay. “Continue telling me about the essay then.”

Something to discuss with Severus, Remus and Sirius perhaps? Harry seemed quite intelligent and came from such highly accomplished parents; learning should be easier for him than this. Maybe he was cursed? Perhaps, it was a targeted memory spell or related to the Imperious? Mental magic was Ted’s field and gift while potions were hers. Maybe he could ascertain if any such spell had been used.

Andromeda held up a hand to cease the jumble falling from Harry’s mouth.
When that didn’t stop the boy’s stammering, Andromeda barked, “That’s enough. I have enough to determine your understanding and capabilities at present. I can assist you with Potions but Occlumency, rather most mental magic is outside my expertise. However I know who might be able to determine the nature of your memory issues. Ted did a similar determination for your cousin before we began his tutoring so we would know how best to teach him.”

Harry scowled, “It’s not that big of a deal. So I’m not so great at some subjects, it’s not like I’m as incompetent as Crabbe and Goyle or as lazy as Ron. I’ve got along this long this way and I’m fine continuing the same just with more focus on schoolwork since Ron’s not around to distract me.”

“Perhaps when you had no real guardian who gave a knut about you that was true. However you are my charge and I expect more of you then mediocre effort. If Dudley can struggle and surpass his seeming limitations why can’t you? He’s learned strategies to combat his issues with writing and reading. I’m sure you can learn the same charms to fix your writing. Now why don’t you fetch your Potions text and we’ll see whether you can properly brew a potion without Severus hovering around your cauldron.”

Harry scowled, “Alright. Don’t see how this will help but alright.”

“Firstly you have an essay regarding the ingredients of a Forgetfulness potion. If you brew the potions the essay is referring to you will have a greater understanding of their uses. If you tell me the ingredients I can explain their uses and why you have to add them in a particular fashion.”

Harry was distracted by this, “Really? I’ve always wondered that. Especially with the way Snape always yells at Neville.”

Andromeda was intrigued, “How does he yell at my godson?”

Harry blinked, “WHAT?”

“I delivered him. His parents were a year ahead of me and I would count Alys as a friend of sorts before she was attacked.” Andromeda shrugged. “I told them that boy was no squib. I delivered him and he was born with exceptionally strong magic. Augusta was always stubborn. He should never have been raised by her yet she is the Head of his line due to her marriage to his Grandfather. Since she’s a member of the Council of Magical Law I hadn’t a chance at custody. He would have even been better off raised by his second cousin’s family, the Woods.”
“I’ll go fetch that book now…” Harry muttered, distracted from answering Andromeda question about Snape’s comments to Neville.

“Very well then I shall return to my potion until you return.” Andromeda said turning her back on him.

Harry got the feeling such an act was a form of acceptance and trust for the witch.

After all he had never seen her truly do such a thing to Molly Weasley…
After fetching his Potions book Harry returned to Andromeda’s lab, he set up his work table the way Hermione always set up.

Arranging the potion ingredients by use and making sure that he had the tools such as a silver knife, a stirring rod- the recipe said marble so Harry had to fetch one before he could begin as well as a marble mortar and pestle set. Measuring was imperative so he required measuring spoons and cups.

“Reading for any great length causes headaches but you have no difficulty with quick glances?” Andromeda clarified.

Harry shrugged. “It never bothered me before.” Barely looking up as he checked to see if he was ready to begin.

Once he was satisfied Harry lit a fire under his cauldron and waited for it to heat while he prepared the ingredients.

“Add twelve drops of Lethe River Water to cauldron and slowly simmer for twenty seconds. Then cast a stasis charm.” Harry mused reaching for the vial and gently tipped the drops. He counted to twenty and cast the charm.

“Add six Valerian sprigs to mixture and return to heat while stirring three times clockwise.”

Harry did so with intense focus that he didn’t notice, normally he had Hermione harping at him or Ron distracting him when he was attempting to brew.

XooooooX

Andromeda frowned, given his claim to be terrible she hadn’t expected such behaviour. Sensing a
magic signature approaching them she raised a silencing ward around Harry so that he wouldn’t be disturbed.

There was a sharp knock as if to announce their presence and then it opened.

Andromeda turned to the door and frowned, “I suspected it was you.”

Severus Snape entered the potions lab, “Am I interrupting?”

Andromeda snorted, “Not really. I’m testing Harry’s skills at Potions.”

Severus snorted, “He’s not very gifted in that subject.”

Andromeda raised an eyebrow, “I thought you two were going to be pleasant to one another given your relationship with Remus.”

Severus sniffed, “I was being honest. He lacks talent and I will be quite glad come his sixth year to see that he does not continue in my NEWTS course. I require Outstandings.”

Andromeda pointed at Harry, “He can’t hear us but does that look like someone who can’t brew? He has some skill even I can tell, I teach healing potions to healers in training at St. Mungos.”

Severus narrowed his eyes, “That can’t be. He’s not as dreadful as Longbottom who destroys a cauldron every class but he is lucky to brew a mediocre potion. Occasionally he ruins a cauldron.”

“We had an interesting conversation regarding your summer homework. He wished to have me look over his essays.”

“Interesting…he never seemed to care what he wrote like his sidekick Mr. Weasley. Granger writes too small and always writes exactly my minimum length when she could write more. By limiting herself her essays often are clearly missing things as if she eliminated entire paragraphs to restrict herself the assumed limits.” Severus snorted.
“Why don’t you explain that they could be longer and that three feet is only a minimum?”
Andromeda frowned.

“And have them write nonsense to attempt to gain more points? The best Essays I have read are written by Nott, Thomas, George Weasley and Draco Malfoy. They have some talent worth cultivating. Intriguing since many of my finest brewers are naturally Slytherins but Weasley and Thomas are Gryffindors. Then again only Ronald and girl Weasley lack talent. Fred doesn’t have the grasp that George does, you can tell in their essays, which is the best in that subject though they seemed to brew in equal measure in class. Hence why only George continued on to my NEWTS Potions class…”

“Perhaps, between your intimidation tactics and having a lazy student for a ‘sidekick’ as you call Ronald, he was distracted. He is quite intelligent.”

“With the essays he turned in I have my doubts.” Severus shrugged.

“Do you remember the cupboard you found that he lived in? Apparently when he was in Muggle school they locked him up and he missed lessons. He also has never properly learned to write with a quill so his writing is terrible. I believe that with the same spells that Dudley uses that he might produce a better essay. I will endeavour to also teach him how to write an essay yet there is something about him that troubles me.”

“What would that be?”

“He claims to get headaches when he reads. Also that he is incapable of focusing on a task. Harry said that information tends to get lost after learning it. I was immediately suspicious of a memory altering curse. Have you not noticed how immediately following a lecture he has no memory of it?”

“Excuses.” Severus waved his hand dismissively.

“I am familiar with curses Severus Snape.” Andromeda snapped, “I have little talent besides shielding my own mind at mental magic and that took time. In our partnership it is Ted who has the superior skills at Metal magic.”

“Not all have the inborn talent of the Prince Line.” Severus smirked.
“Yes I know. It is no wonder that you would have been recruited by the Dark Lord to spy at Hogwarts if you possess exceptional shields.” Andromeda mused.

“I do have exceptionally strong Occlumency shields as well as being a naturally skilled Legilimens.” Severus bragged preening.

“Well you can check Harry to see if there is any evidence of such a spell in his mind if you doubt me. I was going to ask Ted and I still might. He helped figure out that the source of Dudley’s learning difficulties were still remaining despite his blood adoption. His mind showed evidence of a bloodline type curse affecting his brain’s ability to process numerical information visually and to communicate properly through writing. Such things apparently aren’t changeable via blood adoption. It is entirely possible that such a curse affects Harry. I ought to have considered it.” Andromeda frowned.

“I think he is more lazy then impaired by a curse.”

“Then check yourself.”

“Uh Andromeda?”

They both turned.

“Hi Snape.” Harry said shifting awkwardly.

“You finished?” Andromeda smirked.

“Yeah.” Harry mumbled.

“Why don’t you check his potion?” Andromeda tossed at Severus.

The Potions Master of Hogwarts shrugged and snatched the vial examining it. He scowled, “It is above Potter’s normal work.”
“Well I didn’t have you hovering about my cauldron waiting for me to trip up. Ron wasn’t muttering in my ear and I didn’t have Hermione snipping. I like Hermione but not much when she is always correcting me.” Harry scowled.

“I don’t quite believe your suppositions Andromeda. Yet perhaps, his comment about my so-called ‘hovering’ has merit.” Severus begrudgingly admitted.

“Like I said you are a skilled Legilimens, you could examine his mind,” Andromeda retorted.


“It wouldn’t hurt if you have no shields. Were I to encounter shields, which in your case is unlikely you might have a slight headache if I hit them.” Severus sneered.

Harry glared, “Hit them?”

“Think about it like a bird flying along and they bump into a window because it’s clear and they don’t see it.” Severus shrugged.

“How do you look into a mind to see if they have a shield?” Harry asked.

“You use Legilimency and cast the spell Legilimens.” Severus replied. “I inherited great skill at Mental Magic and potions from my mother’s family. My shields are impenetrable even by Albus and the Dark Lord. Trust me they have tried even when I’ve been asleep and they can’t. Their ‘knocking’ wakes me up immediately.”

“Fine. But if you sense a shield then leave, I get enough headaches trying to study.” Harry scowled.

Severus nodded sharply, “Very well. I could do it nonverbally and wandlessly but for Remus’ sake I’ll be vocal and apparent, Legilimens.”

Harry’s eyes widened and he felt something like a needle dive into his right eye.
Then he felt the needle slam into something, he screamed.

Immediately the needle recoiled and was withdrawn.

Harry fell to his knees, “You said I wouldn’t have one…”

Severus snapped, “I said probably. You have the misfortune of having the strongest shields I’ve ever encountered. Stronger then Albus or the Dark Lord and you are untrained. Even a skilled Mind Healer would have difficulty. He must learn Occlumency if anyone were to penetrate his mind. Surprisingly, Albus claims his mind is weak and will lay open to the Dark Lord. He believed that so he kept Harry sequestered from all knowledge this summer. How he could believe that when even I can’t penetrate his natural shields is surprising.”

“Albus is an arrogant old fool.” Andromeda snorted, “What is he smoking or imbibing to be so uninformed?”

“Odd he is always so well-informed, scarly so. Sometimes I wonder if he has a second spy among the Death Eaters. He knew so much already before I became a counter-spy. Of course for our own protection and to have multiple eyes I can see that he wouldn’t tell me such things.” Severus shrugged. “He is not the type to have merely one set of eyes. He had multiple Aurors, a few Hit wizards and a few others, even a St. Mungos’ Healer in the First Order. Eyes in multiple places, the only place I know he couldn’t get eyes was the Magnus Brutus.”

“Andromeda mentioned them before…” Harry mused.

“Real secretive bunch the Magnus Brutus; the Death Eaters hate them more then the Order of the Phoenix and that says something. They claim you take a blood oath to secrecy and have to swear a sort of Unbreakable Vow to them and the Ministry. Sometimes they take out threats before they happen. They tried to approach the Dark Lord in school but he laughed at them. Then knowing about them, he kept a low profile until he had serious power. You could say he made a study of Dark Lords. Due to the Magnus Brutus Dark Lords and Ladies don’t really rise here. They tend to on the Continent where there is more room to hide and Ministries are secretive.” Severus offered.

“Given your skills were you approached?” Andromeda asked.

“No. While I had the talent I didn’t have the right sort of background being a Halfblood son of a bloodtraitor.” Severus shrugged. “You?”
“Of course.” Andromeda said smugly. “They even asked again after I eloped with Ted. That was a surprise but I still said no. With my natural abilities as both a healer and a Dark Witch I knew how easily I could be tempted. Ted grounds me and healing keeps me too distracted to be involved much with Dark Magic. I experiment mostly on treating injuries caused by Dark Magic even though my field is caring for pregnant witches and wizards.”

“WHAT? Wizards can have babies? What the hell?” Harry yelped.

“Really Potter do you have to yell? How do you think a bent wizard procreates?” Severus sneered.

“Adoption was what I thought or using a surrogate.” Then Harry frowned, “That’s what Remus meant by saying that bent wizards couldn’t conceive as easily as witches?”

Andromeda sighed, “Yes. It requires a potion, the main ingredients are seed spilt willingly by the prospective fathers. The potion is stronger and more likely to prove viable if brewed by at least one. It’s something like implanting already fertilized eggs into a woman’s womb. The potion not only creates a sort of womb inside the wizard chosen to be the bearer but the womb forms with the already fused sperm. Sometimes more than one conception is found but often in the case of multiple foetuses it is because of splits creating seemingly identical foetuses something like Fred and George.”

“Oh…” Harry thought about possibly having his own children, his hand actually drifting unconsciously to his own stomach. He wasn’t sure when he’d consider the idea really or who he’d trust to sire his children but Harry had never really had a family and wanted as large a family as he could get.

“I came because you wanted to discuss something with myself, Sirius and Remus?” Severus frowned.

“Yes, yes.” Andromeda said setting her lab to rights with a wave of her hand. “I believe that it is George who is giving Dudley his lesson out in the garden so we can probably find Sirius in the study. I wanted to discuss the ramifications of Lily and James’ wills.”

Severus scowled, “You have custody what does it matter?”

“Sirius’ memory of them is distorted somewhat, no doubt because of the years in Azkaban.” Andromeda sniffed.
“So he isn’t Harry’s legal guardian?” Severus frowned.

“To a point he is and he also is not.” Andromeda said cryptically as she ushered them out of her lab locking the door behind her with little effort.

Severus insisted that Harry led the way and kept Andromeda at his side rather than his back.

Slytherins and their trust issues… Harry thought glumly.

They made their way to the second floor’s study next to the library.

Remus was sprawled on a rug before the fire with essays and other preparatory things around him. He glanced up as they entered, “Is it that time already?”

Andromeda nodded regally and sat down on a nearby armchair, “Now that we are all here.”

Sirius remained in his chair, while Remus joined Severus on the settee so Harry appropriated the vacated rug.

“I would like to discuss Lily and James’ wills. First off James’ custody choices are technically void because Lily outlived him by almost ten minutes. Both however agreed that Sirius were he able was to manage Harry’s estate until he was seventeen or graduated from Hogwarts if Sirius felt he needed an extra year to be mature enough to manage it. Was anyone aware that year they had written new wills?”

Severus frowned and shook his head while Remus looked perplexed.

Sirius shrugged, “I don’t remember much I was still working as an Auror and well Azkaban managed to make me care about two things: Harry and revenge. That was what kept me mostly sane…”

“Then you don’t know that Lily was pregnant then?” Andromeda asked.
Severus looked like he’d been slapped while Harry was furious, “I was going to have a brother?”

Andromeda snorted, “A sister. While Sirius would maintain financial responsibility, legal custody of Herodotus James and Coraline Selene Potter were to be granted jointly to Severus Snape, Lord Prince and Remus Lupin.”

“What sort of a name is Herodotus?” Harry scowled.

Andromeda sighed, “It’s Latin and it means given to the hero. She says that Harry was named according to the naming traditions of the Princes and the Potters. Coraline was to be called Cora, Coraline was chosen because of the maternal naming tradition of Lily’s adopted mother since it was a floral name and Selene was in honour of the Blacks.”

“Why in the world would Lily name Harry for the Princes?” Sirius scowled.

“Because she wanted to honour her greatest friend apparently, she had forgiven him, by the time that happened Severus had pulled away from all of you. Lily hoped that joint custody would help Severus and Remus rekindle their relationship. She never believed that Severus was anything but a spy or forced to take the Mark. While I have legal custody of Harry I am willing to relinquish my control over his estate to Lord Black when he is cleared by Amelia of all charges.” Andromeda smirked, “This will be quite easy if Augusta Longbottom, formerly of the House of Pettigrew can manage to have her wayward treacherous nephew Peter tracked and perhaps, apprehended by a Pettigrew elf. With Peter alive, you are clearly not guilty of his murder. Veritaserum and the testing of both of your wands would reveal who cast the blasting charm correct? As for the charge of being a Death Eater a quick check of your left forearm should clear that up should it not?” Andromeda said smugly.

Sirius smirked as he bared his left arm, “See Annie, no snake.”

Severus winced.

Remus pulled him closer, “I don’t care. That chapter is over is it not? You’re not a real Death Eater, you’re our spy even if I don’t really like it. At least He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is too weak of a Legilimens to know that…”

Severus coughed, “Speaking of Legilimens, Harry and Andromeda were suspicious of a memory
altering charm being cast on Harry. I attempted with both of their permission to ascertain if he really had such a thing.”

Harry rubbed his temples.

Remus frowned, “Are you hurt pup?”

Severus sighed, “I unintentionally gave him a headache. He possesses mental shields the likes of which I have never seen, Albus and the Dark Lord’s pale in comparison. If I didn’t know any better I would say he had Prince blood.”

“He might.” Andromeda shrugged, “Who knows what sort of blood Lily possessed considering she was descended from squibs because she was a Muggleborn. She might have had Prince blood diluted though it must have been.”

Severus scowled, “Such shields normally only occur in those with strong Prince Magic…”

“You were from the same village were you not?” Andromeda frowned thoughtfully.

Severus nodded, “What of it?”

“There were no other Wizarding folk in that village?” Andromeda asked.

Severus shook his head, “None that I met.”

“Curious…” Andromeda mused, “Dudley possesses no such shields.”

“Perhaps, we should brew a hereditary potion.” Severus mused. “We already know James’ ancestry at least the last few generations. Surely, if Dudley is taught by a witch of your skill Andromeda he could accomplish it.”

“Yes but he was blood adopted.” Andromeda frowned.
Severus smirked, “You still have his hair from before the adoption do you not? You could track his birth parents and take blood from Petunia to see what her ancestry is and compare it to Harry’s.”

“Perhaps, that would be wise. Some families have gone extinct in the male line if they are related to them they could claim it.” Andromeda nodded.

“Even with a blood adoption?” Harry asked with a perplexed look.

Andromeda shrugged, “It depends on if he is the closest relation. Gringotts would demand a proper test; the blood of his birth mother would satisfy them.”

“I remember father mentioning that only in grave emergency was blood adoption acceptable. While blood can be changed depending on the age of the adoptee that they may still carry something of their birth nature which is why adopting a Muggleborn as the heir to the Black Title was all but forbidden.” Sirius mused. “Hence his bloodline curse still affecting him beyond his blood adoption having changed his blood.”

“Well you better get on with finding a consort,” Andromeda smirked, “because at present as my son Dudley is the legal Black heir, were he to decline it would logically pass to Draco. Wouldn’t that be a shame?”

Sirius scowled, “You know that Dudley can’t inherit even if he blood adopted! I just said that!”

“You said it was all but forbidden, not that it was forbidden. Remember while I told the Ministry that Harry was your heir, he isn’t that close by blood and Gringotts would protest strongly. When Regulus died without issue the estate reverted to you, were Draco a witch and I had not adopted Dudley than perhaps, Harry might be the closest heir.” Andromeda said smugly.

Sirius hurled a scrap of crumpled parchment at her, “Merlin save me from your sharp mind.”

Andromeda smirked, “You invited me here because it and because you needed an ally who would be loyal due of blood and because of all the Dumbledore worshiping sycophants were annoying you.”
Harry was still stunned; Sirius wasn’t meant to be his real guardian? It was Snape and Remus? What had his parents been thinking? He felt one of his study headaches coming along, oh Merlin.
Harry and George made their way down to the dining room to hear Hermione talking to Sirius and Andromeda.

“I know that Dudley and Harry are completely happy with wearing Regulus and Sirius’ old clothes but aren’t they out of date?” Hermione mused.

Andromeda nodded, “To be sure.”

“If Harry is the heir to two lordships and Dudley is the scion of a Great House now, their clothes should reflect their status should it not? Since they don’t have to return to Number Four, they don’t have to worry about what those Muggles would say about their attire.” Hermione continued, “We can’t really go traipsing about Diagon Alley and Sirius,” Hermione glared, “refuses to go to Rue de Leon. So I’ve come up with a compromise…”

Andromeda steepled her fingers, “What sort of compromise?”

“Well, if they can’t be dressed in suitable Wizarding attire; why not go with the Muggle equivalent? After all properly fitted and tailored clothing will be noticed. Besides,” Hermione blushed, “I have to buy new tops and under things…”

“Where would you suggest?” Andromeda smirked.


Dudley swallowed, “Westfield? I know Mu…Petunia always wanted to go shopping there but Vernon wouldn’t let her. He said it was too expensive.”

“Nothing is too expensive for the Blacks.” Sirius snorted. “After all the work you have put into returning the house to a state of glory, I think a shopping trip for new wardrobes would be excellent repayment. I think that we should visit Gringotts and have them pull the money from the main vault. I think we all need new wardrobes, can you imagine how eccentric I would be if I started dressing in high-fashion Muggle attire once I’m free? Especially now that physically I show no sign of ever been in that ghastly place, the birds would come crawling and beg for my attentions.”

“How much would you recommend?” Andromeda frowned.

Hermione shrugged, “I never go shopping without at least twenty thousand, but for a full wardrobe? At least fifty thousand I’d say, maybe eighty…”

Severus scowled, “Who all should go on this ‘adventure’?”

Hermione grinned at him, “Well, I was thinking myself, Fred, George, Harry, Dudley, Andromeda, Sirius under a glamour of course, Remus and I hoped you’d come professor. You’re always applying
for the Defence post and you’re like a god at potions…you’d be an excellent guard.”

Severus scowled, “I have no need or desire to go shopping with a group of teenagers.”

Remus sighed, “You’d trust Sirius in Muggle London under a glamour with only Andromeda to keep him in line? You know how he was in school with the ladies; can you imagine him as an adult?”

Severus groaned, “Horrors, a rich pampered playboy loose in London at a high-class shopping centre no doubt filled with rich bitches? Merlin…what a nightmare…”

“Then you’ll come?” Hermione asked winsomely innocent.

“As if I have a choice…” Severus grumbled.

Remus squeezed his hand grinning, “Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me yet.” Severus said darkly.

“Gringotts first. Then how to get to Westfield London?” Sirius frowned in thought.

“I’ve practiced making portkeys…” Hermione blushed. “I think I’m pretty decent at it. Let’s see it’s a Thursday and it’s hot today. So I think that the top floor of the parking garage should be empty. Mum’s parked there before so I know it. It wouldn’t be hard to make a portkey that would take us there. It should be relatively safe. We can deposit the money from Gringotts into my personal account, the people at the bank know me. With some spells on the cash they should be very accommodating. The money will immediately available and so when the charges hit my account first thing tomorrow morning there will be plenty of money. It helps that we bank with Halifax which is the largest bank in the UK and they just happen to have a branch at Westfield London. Normally I deposit a check from father but this time I’ll have cash and bodyguards as well as my usual female attendant. Although I’ve never gone shopping with friends…”

“It’s settled then. We’ll want to appear stylish correct?” Andromeda said imperiously.

Hermione nodded, “I’ll fetch my Vogues and i-D,” she clapped her hands, “Oh wouldn’t you look just fetching dress like Princess Diana…”

Andromeda coughed, “The Princess of Wales? I think that is rather overreaching for a healer.”

Sirius chuckled, “Not if you remain the Public and Political face of the House of Black. Anything good enough for Muggle Royalty is plenty good enough for a Black, Mother used to say that Blacks were the Royalty of the Wizarding World…”

Andromeda flushed, “Well…”

“Any way you’ve helped gain power in my own house, you marshalled us into fixing this place up properly and you got Harry off. I think that dressing you like a Queen, or in this case a Princess is the best way I can repay you. After all, you were the Queen of Slytherin for what seven years?” Sirius said smugly, “Besides, I have to make up for what mother put you through during her reign as Head of the House of Black.”

“Then I suppose I have no choice other than to accept gracefully.” Andromeda begrudgingly admitted.

Hermione turned her attention to Remus, “As for you Professor you can’t go around in those horrid
robes one more minute. Bah! The Slytherins couldn’t keep from insulting you all the time even if you were the best teacher we ever had. I don’t think your clothes will take another mending charm.”

Remus frowned, “I wouldn’t take advantage of Sirius that way. Its bad enough I had to sell my parents’ home to cover part of their debts and live with Sirius until I could get a job of any kind. After Sirius was arrested well, I couldn’t stay at Baskerville and with Ivy Cottage destroyed well that was out. I ended up with Damocles and Corey’s pack…until well Dumbledore asked me to teach. I stayed with them off and on until Sirius reclaimed this place.”

Andromeda pulled out two scrolls of parchment, “I, James Castor Potter, son of Lord Charlus Weylyn Potter being of sound mind and magic do here inscribe my last will and testament. To Remus Lupin I bequeath 100,000 Galleons and the property Faire Fields so that he might always have a place to live. Just in case narrow-minded fools discover his ‘furry little problem’ or his having to declare bankruptcy to deal with his parents’ debts continues to plague him.”

Then she opened the second parchment, “I, Lillias Anastasia Potter nee Snape, daughter of Eileen Marcia Snape nee Prince and Oran Edward Nott being of sound mind and magic do here inscribe my last will and testament. To Remus I grant my work with experimental charms, which is to include all my resources and research. I beg him to finish my work and to be sure to credit himself. To be sure that only he can read it, it is written in code and the key is only legible to him due to my having given him the key as a gift. To Remus Lupin I also leave this piece of advice: if you truly love him then fight for him. He deserves love more than anyone else I know. If not, let him go. Perhaps, he might find love with another but I know my brother’s heart. If you break it again, I will find a way to punish you from beyond the Veil. As you can see James left you a property and they both left you 200,000 Galleons.”

Sirius smirked, “Well there you have it Remus, see you can always pay me back later. It will be far simpler to have Andromeda remove the money from the main Black Vault. Once the Potter wills were read I believe the Gringotts custodian of the Potter estate would have seen to it that whatever vault you still had access to had the monies deposited.”

Hermione smirked, “Since Professor Snape is Lord Prince, he too can repay,”

“No.” Sirius said stiffly, “I owe him for nearly getting him killed and for my ill-treatment in school. It’s about time I began to right my mistakes. I know galleons can’t really repay for the hurt I’ve caused but at least I can help him be presentable so no one thinks ill of him.”

“I don’t want to be beholden to you.” Severus scowled.

“Careful now, you promised to be pleasant to one another.” Remus frowned.

“This of my way of apologizing…” Sirius sniffed, “I’m sure 80,000 Galleons is nothing to a Prince…”

Severus returned his attentions to his breakfast without commenting on his acceptance or lack of it.

Hermione bounced a little in her seat.

Fred leaned in to tease her, “I take it you like shopping?”

Hermione blushed, “Oh yes…I usually leave all my good clothes at home though I’ve regretted it whenever I saw all the fine clothes that the Slytherins, Ravenclaws and people like Lavender wore outside classes. I had decided that I should bring them anyway; I’m not a little girl anymore. I hoped I’d be a prefect and as comfortable as jumpers and denims are well they aren’t always everything.
Just because that’s ‘the fashion’ in America doesn’t mean that it’s quite as caught on here. I think that some fine cut suits for Sirius, Remus and Severus wouldn’t be amiss. I know just the outfit for Andromeda…the boys are my main problem…if it weren’t so hot Fred and Dudley would rock in leather.”

“What if we used cooling charms?” Fred smirked, “I’ve always wanted a leather jacket, but mum wouldn’t approve even when Charlie sent us dragon hides. Mum would up and sell them instead…”

Sirius frowned, “Dragon hide fetches quite a handful or so of galleons and your family is still seen as poor. What a pity…”

“More like what does the wench do with it? Salt it away for a rainy day? To pay for Percival’s campaign if he decides to go into politics? Ronald or Ginevra’s future apprenticeships? Perhaps that’s how Percy was hired so quickly as Crouch’s assistant? Perhaps, she bribes Albus…”

Andromeda snipped. “She obviously hasn’t given the two of you a knut.”

George snorted, “We’re lucky to have school supplies and clothes on our backs as she often reminds us. It’s horrible that given their former status as pureblood heir and heiress respectfully, that we have so little. No wonder Malfoy makes fun of us…”

“Well,” Andromeda said pompously, “with the proper attire even if its Muggle then you’re at least look the part of purebloods. If the Houses of Prewett and Weasley can’t be bothered to look out for you then as the grandchildren of the House of Black I don’t see why Sirius can’t take you under his wing. Especially since you are both pranksters…”

Ginny’s quiet voice came from the other side of the table, “Can we come?”

Ron was glaring daggers at all of them, “We don’t need charity.” He snarled.

Sirius snorted, “Charity? Do I look the least bit charitable? Hah Blacks don’t hold to charity. I’m paying for the work they did fixing up this monstrosity. It just happens that they have Black blood running through their veins. I checked the family tapestry; you’ve got it on both sides. Cedrella Azaleh, daughter of the House of Black born to Arcturus Severus Black and Lysandra Penelope of the House of Yaxley. Your great-grandmother Lucida Prewett was my Aunt on my father Orion’s side. Your grandfather was Drystan Naos Prewett, her firstborn and only magical child who was bonded to Donu Hassaleh of the House of Burke. Donu was born to Betria Livia of the House of Black and Heber Aurelian of the House of Burke. Two Black grandmothers and a great-grandmother, that makes you as Black as I am even if you are Legally Weasleys and not born to the Elder line.”

“Who wants to be a Black?” Ron spat, “Blacks are filthy Slytherins like Bellatrix Lestrange and the Malfoys. We have a feud with Malfoys and if the Blacks tie blood with them we should spurn them too like the filth they are.”

Andromeda groaned, “Merlin, the feud with Malfoys? What Feud with the Malfoys? You share blood with them and it’s certainly more the just Black blood. Or has Molly forgot that Lucius’ grandmother was born Muriel Prewett? That would be her Great Aunt, after all Muriel is her Grandfather Cador’s younger sister. If madness running in the Black blood I’d say Miss Molly has it.”

“We don’t share blood with Malfoys other than Black.” Ron snarled.

“You do, Muriel is just as egocentric, eccentric and blood conscious as her deceased bonded Ajax. She can’t say one nice thing about Muggleborns, even though it’s considered ill-bred she calls them
Mudbloods. She takes pleasure in lecturing me about my shame. I didn’t bond to Ted to be defiant nor did I bond to Ted because I don’t believe in my pureblood values. I bonded to Ted because I enjoy his company, I was in a pretty pickle and he was gentleman enough to help me out. He was intelligent enough to guess my predicament and offered me another option. I took it, do I regret my choice? Not especially, would I like my trust vault back? It would be easier to get by if I had it, would I trade my work to be a political hostess? Never, I never desired to live that life, Lucius and I made decent partners in prefect business but he would never have allowed me the amount of freedom I desired. With his mother out of the house, he is worse then ever since he woke up. Sirius can we please send him to his mother?” Andromeda sniffed.

“You can’t do that! I’ll be a target! I’m Harry’s best friend.” Ron scowled.

Harry snorted, “My best friend? You turned on me in the tournament. You have done nothing but make me miserable since I got here. That damn badge has gone to your head. I see no bloody reason to accept your authority. We’re not in school and I probably wouldn’t listen to you anyway.”

“You’ll have to! I’m a prefect and you aren’t. You’re just jealous.” Ron glowered.

“What is there to be jealous of? You’re a small-minded boy with a power complex. You can’t be my friend if you don’t act like one. The twins are my friends, Dudley and Hermione are my friends. I won’t be ordered about by the likes of you. Please Sirius, listen to Andromeda and send him back to the Burrow. I think Dudley would like to room alone thank you.” Harry spat.

“I certainly do not enjoy his company.” Dudley admitted.

“Are you whoring yourself to Harry too?” Ron sneered, “Did you earn your precious Nimbus sucking his broomstick or are you the one fucking him?”

Dudley turned green, “That’s just sick. I don’t care if anyone likes blokes as long as they don’t like me. Harry can fool around with George all he wants. As long as I don’t have to see or hear it, then I’m fine with it. I like birds thank you very much. Harry is far too kind after the arse I’ve been but we’re family. He saved my life and well until I save him- which I don’t quite have the skills yet to do then I’m beholden to him. Thanks to him I have family to be proud of. I have a decent mother who doesn’t treat me like a baby and make me disgusted to invite friends over. I have a father who I can talk to and rely on. Plus I’ve got Sirius who is like the fun uncle I never had. Maybe if Harry wasn’t orphaned he’s like what Uncle James would be like.”

“I really am getting sick of idiot Weasleys who refuse to accept correction. This is my house and I have rules. You and your harpy mother break them at every turn.” Sirius snapped his fingers.

Kreacher arrived. “What Master be needing?” he said in a oily voice that reeked of sarcasm.

“Pack this brat’s things and return him to his mother. He has lost his privileges of residence.” Sirius grasped the dragon egg cane that held the Black family wand, glaring at the boy.

Ron went still and crumbled in his chair.

Sirius sneered at him, “He shan’t remember the location or any of its inhabitants. I doubt anyone could recover it.”

It didn’t take long for Kreacher to return with a sick grin of satisfaction gripping Ron’s worn trunk.

“Kreacher be taking out the trash now.”

“Take him to The Burrow.” Sirius ordered.
Kreacher sneered, “Kreacher pleased to be of service.”

Ginny pouted, “What about me? Can I please come?”

“No.” Andromeda snapped.

“Why not? Fred and George can go…” The soon-to-be Fourth Year whinged at them.

“Fred and George are adults, of course they can go.” Sirius snorted.

“What about Harry? It’s too dangerous for him…he should stay.” Ginny looked hopeful and gave Harry a worshipful look.

“I don’t you before I don’t like whiny little girls.” Harry snarled. “Besides, haven’t you heard? I’m stuffing George…”

“He’s just confusing you.” Ginny said sweetly, “You just need a girl, the right sort of girl.”

“Hogwash and spilt potions, if I was going to be straight for a girl it sure as Merlin wouldn’t be you.” Harry said nastily, “It’d be someone older, prettier and a lot less whingy. What are your marks anyway? I’d sooner go with Hermione and I see her as a surrogate sister so that’s not bloody likely. Why have me when she can have someone like Fred? I can think of lots of girls I’d consider before you.”

“Tell what I need to do? I’ll do anything. Please Harry…” Ginny begged. “I’ll even change my hair…is it being red a problem? Does it remind you of your mum?”

Harry stormed to his feet livid, “My mum? What does Lily have to do with anything? If red hair was an issue do you think I’d be stuffing George? Ha! Who fills your head with this nonsense? Molly? I don’t find you the least bit attractive and I never will. Why? Because you’re a bird as Dudley put it and that just does nothing for me. In fact the reason I refused to sleep in the room Dudley has is because those bikini models make me sick. I think the female body is disgusting and I have no desire to ever see you or any other bird naked. The sooner you get it through that thick skull of yours the better off you’ll be. I don’t know which one of you takes the biscuit for thick and talking rubbish. Why don’t we get ready? I want to get the hell out and away from useless wankers. Can’t we send this brat back to where she came from too?”

“If she forgets her place. We’ll have to have Gilly baby-sit or something.” Sirius snorted.

Ginny pouted, “I’m not a baby.”

“You are if you refuse to accept that Harry doesn’t like you at all.” Fred scowled at her, “Really sometimes I wonder if you and Ron really are foundlings. Let’s clear out like we’re being chased by Harry’s Horntail.”

Hermione pointed her wand at her boyfriend. His usual Muggle jeans and plain coloured shirt transformed into a black leather vest cut like it was from a Muggle suit, a blue short-sleeve dress shirt, stone-washed jeans that were practically painted on his arse only to pool at his feet. His trainers were transfigured into motorcycle boots. Honestly, he looked like the guy from that American TV show Full House…

Turning to George his similar original outfit transported into a cotton and silk suit vest that had black and charcoal grey horizontal strips over a seafoam green shirt, and grey slacks.

Dudley also got Converse but his were the high tops version, he had jeans too but he was now
wearing a linen dress shirt open over a black muscle shirt that obscenely clung to his muscles.

Sirius had boots like Fred but his dress shirt was rolled up to above the elbow and it was the colour of a black pearl so it was grey and matched his eyes. He had jeans as well, Tommy’s actually because Hermione made sure that the ‘brand’ label was visible. Sirius’ shirt was unbuttoned to the third one and he had a white muscle shirt underneath.

Hermione transfigured Andromeda’s high-necked blouse and high waist skirt into one of Princess Diana’s summer fashions. It had a high-neck but it was a black sleeveless turtleneck, unlike Princess Di she’d left a bra beneath a black spaghetti strap top. It was paired with a high-waist crimson skirt that cut at the calf. It was worn with a matching crimson belt that’s clasp was made up of an intricate set of knots. She also gave her a pair of black sandal-like heels and black nylons.

Andromeda glanced down at her outfit, “It is suitable. It isn’t something I would have chosen for myself but I like it.”

“Is this something wore by this Princess person?” Sirius smirked, “I think her style suits Annie.”

Hermione twirled her wand, before pointing it at herself, immediately her outfit changed. She was now wearing a pink floral high-waist peasant skirt, a white spaghetti strap top with a crocheted centre panel and a dusty rose crocheted shrug paired with brown leather wedge heels. It happened to be one of her favourite outfits she bought after returning from Hogwarts in July before coming here.

Fred stumbled back, “Sweet Merlin…and I thought you were stunning in jeans and a plain shirt.”

“It seems that Hermione’s been hiding a lot behind her bookish demeanour.” Harry smirked.

Hermione blushed and pointed her wand at Snape and Remus.

Immediately they were clad in black Hugo Boss suits paired with silver and grey dress shirts and patterned ties similar to those her father owned. Remus was red with gold lions and Snape’s was green with silver snakes. They had Gucci shoes that resembled those her father owned.

“No…” Hermione mused, “…comes the trouble with Harry. I want him to look like someone who attends some place like Harrow or Eton. The scion of a great House type and someone with money so they’ll instantly flock to serve him… so what do I do with you?”

Andromeda and Hermione circled him.

“I don’t know much about Muggle fashion but why not a sweater vest paired with a dress shirt like the twins?” Andromeda offered.

“I think that works perfectly. I think he’d suit jeans as well…I can’t think of proper shoes for him. Damn it! He can just have Converse like Dudley.” Hermione pointed her wand at him and fixed his clothes. “As for George, he can have Vans.”

George’s shoes became grey Vans at once.

“I don’t know men’s fragrances…”

Andromeda smirked, “I do. Let’s see. While we can’t have colognes we can use oils that suit their personalities. Severus suits oregano and Spanish sage, Remus cedar and allspice, Sirius suits Tobacco and lime, Fred nutmeg and lemon, George would be vanilla and sweet orange, Dudley is a fir and cinnamon, while Harry should be patchouli and black pepper. I prefer Lavender and Cedar myself, while you would be a fine rose and lavender yourself. I made a study of oils and I own a
collection.” She snapped her fingers and Gilly appeared.

“Yes mistress?”

“My oils case.”

“Right away mistress.” Gilly nodded and disappeared with a pop.

“Once we have the scents applied, I’ll go retrieve the money.” Andromeda said stiffly.

Gilly arrived with a large box.

Andromeda opened it and retrieved two vials and a small dish made of ceramic. “Fir and cinnamon.” She poured a drop of each in the dish and uses a reed to stir it, then lifted the reed to her nose smirked, “Perfect. Come here Dudley.”

Dudley approached her frowning in thought.

“First lesson in appearance son.” Andromeda narrowed her eyes as she applied the oil, “Scent works best when you apply it to a pulse point; the sides of the neck, the wrists and if you’re planning on romance then above the heart. Your lover will then think of you when they smell the scent that you prefer.”

Dudley flushed, “I’ll remember that…I never really had anything before. Mum didn’t really want me to grow up. I think Jasmine gave me Stetson before but I wasn’t able to retrieve it when I left Number Four.” he sniffed his wrist, “It smelled something like this…wood and spice.”

“I will have to look into it then. It may suit you, if it’s wood and spice.” Andromeda said as she waved him off, using a cleaning spell on the dish, “Sirius…tobacco and lime. Ah there they are… tobacco oil is stronger than lime. So two drops of lime to one tobacco then.” She stirred it with a fresh reed, before sniffing, “That will do. Sirius,”

Sirius stepped towards her and allowed her to dab some to his wrists and neck but backed away before she could do more, “I’m sure that will do Annie thank you.”

She sniffed at him and then turned to prepare another, finally snapping, “Harry.”

Harry smelled pepper and something he didn’t recognize when she anointed his neck and wrists.

Then she tended to George, Fred, Hermione, Severus and Remus.

No one really was in the mood to try arguing with her.

“80,000 pounds a piece and there are ten of us so that adds up to 800,000 pounds. That would be 160,000 Galleons and I will be taking it from the Black main vault. Sirius if you would be so good as to write permission to retrieve that I would appreciate it and if someone would be so kind as to create something to carry over three-quarter of a million pounds.”

Hermione summoned two of her purse backpacks, “Lets see, my plaid Burberry or the suede Gucci? I think that the Gucci is more suitable for today.” She winced as she transfigured the Burberry into a copy of her father’s Louis Vuitton briefcase. “That will hold the money. If you need to put an extending charm that’s fine. I’ll want that back later.”

Andromeda nodded, “I appreciate your sacrifice and I will be sure that is returned without damage so you can return it to its previous state.”
Hermione swallowed. "I appreciate it."

Sirius summoned parchment, a quill and ink to write his request.

Harry pulled on Andromeda’s sleeve, “Can I talk to you?”

Andromeda nodded, leading him aside. “What do you want Harry?”

Harry spoke in a low voice; “I don’t want Sirius to pay for it.” he scowled. “I want to.”

Andromeda snickered “Oh Harry you have a lot to learn. I’m afraid this time you’ll have to let your Head of House deal with it. Let him take care of you, that was what your parents wanted. While Severus and Remus had physical custody, Sirius was responsible for your money. Neither of us would let you and besides the goblins would only let you access your trust vault at present. It would practically devastate that. Anyway, it is Sirius’ right and duty to see that you are all properly cared for. I won’t take that away from him. Like he said, if the Prewetts and the Weasleys won’t take care of their own, he will. All of you minus Hermione carry Black blood and he is stepping in as the Head of his House to make sure that you have what you need. While Dudley was your cousin and under the Potter line he was your responsibility. Now that he is my son, he is under Sirius’ authority. You will be the Head of your own House in time, learn from Sirius how to lead and look out for those in your care. Take this as a lesson and not as taking over what should be yours.”

Harry scowled, “Fine.”

“Don’t act like a petulant brat, it doesn’t suit you. This will be interesting.” Andromeda chided.

Sirius called out, “Andromeda!”

Andromeda joined him, “Yes cousin?”

“Here is the letter you requested. Do hurry. We have a lot of shopping to do.” Sirius grumbled.

Andromeda nodded, “Understood. Gilly take me to Gringotts.”

The Black Head Elf nodded, “Yes Mistress.”

Then they disappeared with a pop.

“We will be leaving Ginevra here. I am sure that you can ask Crookshanks, Tama and Skylla to keep an eye on her.” Sirius said quietly.

Dudley smirked, “I think Tama would enjoy it. I don’t think he likes her anymore than that rat of a brother.”

“I know Skylla doesn’t like them either.” Harry shrugged, “I can ask but I can’t guarantee that she will. She’s not all that fond of people.”

“Given some of the visitors and inhabitants I can’t blame her.” Hermione shrugged, “I know sadly, that Crookshanks has never liked Ron. Even more so after he tried to kick him and insisted he killed Scabbers.”

“I think given the trouble Wormtail has caused I almost wish Crookshanks had. Though I’m afraid that cowardly traitor would have given him indigestion.” Sirius scowled.

Andromeda reappeared with a pop.
“That was quick.” Sirius smirked.

Andromeda shrugged, “It helps that the goblins actually like me. They were more than willing to do this to benefit Harry Potter. They have seen to it that James and Lily’s wills were carried out- with the exception of Pettigrew. I had that deposited into the young Longbottom heir’s trust vault. I figured that well it would serve him better and since Peter is responsible for at least fifteen deaths at present that he doesn’t need the money.”

“Shall we go then?” Hermione asked.

“I see no reason why not.” Sirius shrugged.

Hermione summoned a sheet of parchment and tapped it, fixing her chosen destination in her mind. “Portus.” Then she grinned when it glowed properly. “Come on then grab on.”

Once everyone going did so, she tapped it with her wand to activate it.

They all felt the customary hook-in-navel sensation and were hauled along. They arrived at the empty top level of a Muggle parking garage; to be accurate they were in upper carpark D.

“Come along then. Don’t dawdle.” Hermione said, “Glamour up Sirius. I’ll take that.” She snatched the Vuitton briefcase from Andromeda. “Bank first then shopping.”

They took the elevator down to the ground floor, Hermione took firm measured steps as they left the doors of some store called M & S. she stopped outside a bank called Halifax and snapped, “Do keep up. I don’t want to be alone you know.” Gesturing at the briefcase.

Andromeda chuckled as the boys and men looked quite cowed.

They entered the bank as a group.

A man in a suit approached Hermione, “Miss Granger, how might I assist you?”

Hermione smiled, “Alexander, my friends’ parents asked me to take them shopping but they trusted me with the money you see. I was wondering if you could have it deposited? I know it’s more then Daddy gives me, but,”

“Of course. I would be happy to help. You are going shopping today I take it?”

Hermione nodded, “Yes. We’re going back to school next week and well they need the clothes for parties and things they are invited to.”

“I understand completely. How much is there?”

Hermione leaned over, “I was entrusted with 800.”

Alexander gasped, “Thousand? Oh dear.”

Hermione nodded, “That’s why I have two bodyguards.” Gesturing at Snape and Remus, “Mr. Black is my friends’ guardian; he wanted to be sure that they were properly attired. You know mum would never let me shop alone and she sent Mrs. Tonks.”

“Yes, of course. I’ll see to it that it is deposited immediately and that the money is available. It is always a pleasure to do business with the Grangers.” Alexander bowed. “I will return with a receipt Ms. Granger.”
“Thank you Alexander, I knew I could count on you.” Hermione smiled.

Once the banker disappeared with the suitcase, Hermione turned smirking to them, “I told you I’d have it handled.”

Andromeda snickered, “Nicely done. You never cease to amaze me.”

Hermione led them to a set of comfortable armchairs and settees where they waited.

It took Alexander fifteen minutes to return with the briefcase and a receipt. “There you are Ms. Granger. The money is available and I assumed you wanted this back.”

Hermione snatched the briefcase clutching into to her chest, “Yes of course.” Accepting the receipt more calmly, “My apologies, you see this is my father’s and well he doesn’t know I borrowed it.”

“Dear me., then do be sure to return it.” Alexander frowned.

Hermione nodded, “Of course. Thank you for your assistance and good day Alexander.”

Once they’d left the bank, Fred snickered, “And you call Malfoy pompous.”

Hermione coloured, “Was I really? I didn’t realize…”

Andromeda poked him, “I see nothing wrong with her behaviour.”

Hermione recovered herself and looked from two choices, “Hm…Sirius why don’t you and Remus take Dudley and the twins to Barrett’s and look at the shoes? Harry, Andromeda and I are going to Vision Express.”

“Why?” Sirius frowned.

“Harry’s been wearing the same glasses since I’ve met him. Even I think that’s fishy. Since I don’t know anything about Wizarding optometrists,” Hermione said under her breath, “and there is a normal one right there we’re going to get his eyes checked.”

“I’ve wore these since I was six.” Harry shrugged.

Andromeda paled, grabbing his arm, “That’s it. Come along. You’ll not neglect your health even if it’s your eyes one more minute.”

Hermione grabbed his other arm and dragged him into the optometrist’s.

“Hello welcome to Vision Express.”

Hermione smiled, “My friend here has been living with ghastly relations. They’ve made him wear the same glasses for ages. His aunt here just got custody and we’d like to have him fitted for new glasses and maybe contacts as well. I’d like to see what he’d look like without glasses.”

Harry scowled even more fiercely.

“Oh my…he is a handsome devil isn’t he? Claire at your service, I’m merely an assistant and I sell frames. Why don’t you look around while I see if Dr. Stewart is available?”

Hermione nodded, “Thank you Claire, I’m sure we can find something suitable while we wait. If Harry won’t help I’m sure Andromeda will help me find something appropriate.”
Andromeda smirked, “Of course.”

Hermione examined the names of the designers, speaking them aloud, “Ted Baker, Gucci, Hugo Boss, Prada and Oakley. Gucci, Hugo Boss and Prada are notable designers of many things. The black plastic just doesn’t suit you at all.”

“Nor does the full frame.” Andromeda mused as she floated around the room examining the choices.

“What about partial rims? Horned rim suits Percy but I think you’re more a metal.” Hermione muttered.

“Not gold or bronze,” Andromeda said shaking her head, “black wouldn’t suit either.”

“There is bright silver, tarnished silver…platinum.”

“No silver.” Harry growled, “Remus.”

“Well then there is platinum and gun metal.” Hermione offered.

“I’m not into austentatious so no platinum.” Harry snorted.

“Gun metal then.” Hermione advised, “What about these? Semi-rimless gunmetal by Marchon?”

Harry took the glasses from her and examined them, “They aren’t awful.” He reluctantly removed his current oft-mended frames and put the prospective pair on. “I can’t see.”

Hermione clapped her hands, “Oh aren’t they just yummy on you.”

“Mr…”

“Potter.” Andromeda offered.

“Mr. Potter, Dr. Stewart will see you.”

Harry nodded, switching glasses to his normal ones. “Very well.”

He followed Claire back to the exam room.

“Dr. Stewart? This is Mr. Potter.”

“Mr. Potter? How nice to meet you. I hear your last eye exam was quite some time ago?”

Harry scowled, “I was six? I was having trouble reading and the teacher told the school nurse. She gave me an eye test and said I needed glasses. She and the teacher told the Dursleys, my former guardians and they reluctantly got me glasses. They took me to the nearest ASDA optician and bought the cheapest frames imaginable. I’ve banged them up a lot…”

“How old are you Mr. Potter?” Dr. Stewart frowned at him as he ushered him into a chair.

“Fifteen?” Harry replied.

“Nine years with the same glasses? Are they crazy? I know some who can go two or three with the same prescription but I strongly discourage that. I do hope your new guardians are more circumspect.”

Harry scowled, “When Aunt Andromeda found out about that she and my best friend dragged me in
“At least someone’s responsible.” Dr. Stewart sniffed. “Take those off and tell me if you can read anything on the chart.”

Harry squinted and strained before reading aloud, “K H O R.”

“Alright. Try the next line.”

“O Z N H V C.”

“Can you read anything on the next line?”

Harry shook his head.

“Very well, let’s see what lens combination you need to see.” Dr. Stewarts rotated the weird thing Harry vaguely remembered so it was in front of his face.

Harry could hear him fiddling with knobs.

“What about now?”

Harry frowned, “Still fuzzy?”

More fiddling.

“Now?”

“R K S C Z H um V D?”

“Very good. Next?”

“H O O Z B D 8 V N?”


“H O C Z B D S V N?”

“Much better. Next line?”

“S D K H O R C V?”

“Perfect. Now I think I’ve determined your prescription. Are you interested in contacts as well?”

Harry shrugged, “never had them before.”

“Well I’ll have Claire take out one set of disposables. You can try putting them in and we’ll order your glasses. If you like them after wearing them you can order more when you pick up your glasses.”

“How long will that take exactly?” Harry frowned.

“Let’s see. It’s Thursday, so I’d say they will mostly like be here on Monday?”

“If we fax the order to them today, they’ll be made tomorrow and shipped Saturday. They would most likely arrive on Monday sometime.”
“It took almost a week last time.” Harry whistled.

“I suspect you didn’t pay to expedite the order.” Dr. Stewart shrugged.

“I’m returning to school next Friday.” Harry shrugged, “I’ll need them before then.”

“I will be sure that we fax it immediately. Let me notate what your contacts are. Then while it’s faxing Claire can show you how to put them in. You’ll be amazed how freeing contacts can be.”

Harry was ushered out and then Claire was there almost as if she’d Apparated.

“Did everything proceed well Dr. Stewart?”

“Yes, see that his glasses order is faxed out and that he is given a pair of contacts. Then I’m sure his guardian would like a bill.”

Harry grumbled to himself, just knowing it was going to cost a fortune.

XoooooX

Ron was dropped on his head in the middle of The Burrow’s living room with his trunk smashing to bits beside him.

He immediately started coughing.

He couldn’t remember where he had been or why he was face first on the living room rug. He looked around scowling, “Mum? MUM!”

“Stop shouting! Oh there you are Ronald. Where have you been? Your father said you were staying elsewhere for the summer.” Molly grumbled.

“Was I? I can’t remember. All I remember is Harry’s been a right git. George has stolen Harry away and Fred stole Hermione. I’m not allowed to have anything of my own. I still haven’t forgotten that they turned my teddy bear into a spider WHILE I WAS STILL HOLDING IT!” Ron stomped.

“There there, you’re not there anymore are you? I would offer to make you something but Andromeda’s Hufflepuff bonded that insufferable Muggleborn won’t let me have a wand! I’m not allowed to own one or use one.”

“Why can’t you use mine?” Ron scowled.

“Because your father will have my hide, you heard what he told Ginny in Diagon. He’d take her wand away until King’s Cross if she so much as let me touch it. As if having this horrid hair and yellow skin wasn’t cruel enough, I thought better Harry especially since he saved Ginny.”

Ron snorted, “Well that was all my idea. We’d already figured out where the entrance was and how the damn Basilisk was getting around. If stupid Lockhart hadn’t taken my wand and accidentally brought the ceiling down on us and got my leg trapped I would have saved Ginny myself. I’ve been doing all the dangerous stuff! I beat McGonagall’s chess set! I was even knocked out so he could go rescue the damn philosopher’s stone. Then Sirius broke my leg trying to get Harry’s attention. Sirius destroyed my bed curtains. I’ve gotten nothing but trouble for being that brat’s friend. I become a prefect and he ditches me to shag George? Hermione ditches me to be shagged by Fred; they’ve both
going to be tossed over for their next fling.”

“I won’t be inviting them around anymore.” Molly said sharply.

“So the house is a mess because you’re protesting your lack of wand mum?”

Molly smirked, “Yes, I’ve never been very good at Muggle cleaning,” then she scowled, “and because my old house elf disappeared. She won’t answer or appear. I used to keep her around to watch you if I went shopping or something. She used to make herself look like me. You trying raising seven children, it’s a lot of work and sometimes I got no sleep so I’d want a nap. If she was filling it I knew it’d be fine. I can’t imagine where she’d get off too. Lazy old thing.”

“We have a house elf?” Ron frowned.

Molly sniffed at him, “What sort of self-respecting pureblood doesn’t have at least one house elf? Of course I have one. Arthur was cut off and lost his after we were bonded, it didn’t really matter because I had one. I was taught cleaning and cooking charms. My mother died having Jason, what she was thinking there I don’t know. So Cedrella, a more unpleasant witch I haven’t met, proceeded to take me in and teach me all the things a pureblood heiress was expected to know. Father always busy with Wizengamot and Board of Governor stuff, my brothers spent a lot of time with Arthur, Bilius and Cador.”

“Why haven’t we met any of them?” Ron scowled.

“My family cut me off when I bonded to your father. His cut me off when we had a fight.” Molly shrugged.

“Why did they do that?” Ron scowled.

“Because they think I stole your father, that’s all. My father erroneously talked Septimus into betrothing Arthur to Gideon when Arthur was supposed to be mine. My family was so embarrassed when I had Bill that they couldn’t get away fast enough. “

“Betrothing dad to a guy? Were they nuts? Clearly he liked you if you have seven kids…” Ron was disgusted.

Molly smirked, “Of course once I used my womanly charms, he came round but he needed persuading. I’m sure that any girl would be happy to have you. Perhaps, you just need to make Hermione jealous and then she’ll see that Fred is the wrong Weasley?”

Ron snickered, “Oh I am sure I can. I already know the perfect girl to accomplish that. I know how she detests Lavender…”

Molly chuckled, “I’m not too fond of Hermione but I can see that being with her would be good for your future. How like the twins to seduce poor innocent children. Hopefully, by the time you reach Hogwarts they’ll be dumped and you can be friends again.”

Ron scowled, “I hope so. I’m not going to forgive them if they don’t come begging for forgiveness.”

“Of course they will. Harry forgave you last time didn’t he?” Molly said patting him on the shoulder.

There was a pop.

There stood a shaking elf holding a red envelope.
“To Miss Mary from Lord Prewett.”

“Where have you been Nina? Lord Prewett? I’m the last of the Prewetts!”

The elf laughed, “Last? Are you forgetting Master Jason?”

Molly glared. “He wasn’t listed as Fabian’s heir that I heard so I don’t see why he counted.”

“Master Jason isn’t Lord Prewett.” The elf snipped.

“Who then? Bill? He’s in Egypt. Charlie cares nothing for politics and he’s in Romania of all places.”

“To get away from you. They were always talking about getting jobs far away. If you hadn’t filled Master Percy’s head with being Minister for Magic after failing with Master Bill maybe he’d have gone away too. Masters Fred and George want to get away too. Miss Mary is a bad mother! Bad bonded too! Masters all be deserving better!”

“How dare you Nina! I am your mistress!” Molly snapped.

“Not anymore. I is being relieved of that. I was reassigned.”

“Who dared take you away from me?” Molly stomped.

“Lord Prewett.” The elf said and tossed the howler in the air.

The red envelope exploded, “MARY LYNETTE! HOW DARE YOU! HOW DARE YOU CONTINUE TO BISMIRCH OUR NAME! TO TREAT ARCTURUS AND YOUR OWN CHILDREN THIS BADLY? TO TREAT NINA A TRUSTED ELF LIKE THIS? YOU HAVE DO TOO MUCH TO AVOID CENSURE. I WAS WILLING TO LET YOU ALONE AND TO STAY IN THE SHADOWS. NO MORE! I AM COMING BACK MARY! CONSIDER THIS YOUR ONLY WARNING. I AM COMING BACK AND I WILL CLAIM WHAT WAS ALWAYS MINE YOU UNGRATEFUL WENCH. YOU ARE ABOUT TO LOSE EVERYTHING. YOUR WORSE NIGHTMARE IS COMING TRUE! I AM FABIAN’S HEIR MARY! JUST YOU WAIT UNTIL I TALK TO SEPTIMUS AND CEDRELLA! THEY WILL TAKE YOUR CHILDREN AND I DON’T SEE YOUR KIDS COMPLAINING. I’M COMING FOR YOU MARY!”

The letter exploded in a spray of ash.

Molly collapsed in a chair. “This can’t be happening…he can’t be…Merlin help me and I haven’t got a wand.”

“Even Merlin won’t help you Miss Mary.” Nina sniffed.

“You rotten little talebearer.” Ron pulled out his wand.

Nina flicked her hand and the wand was a flower. Then she snatched it and disappeared.

The two wandless Weasleys stared at one another in shock.

XooooooX
Sirius, Fred, George and Dudley were only too happy to look at the shoes at Barretts.

Severus grumbled and Remus tried not to look interested.

While Harry most assuredly needed new glasses letting one former Muggle and three wizards loose in a shoe store might not be Hermione’s brightest ideas.

Especially since neither of them had been in a store like this ever. Sirius never shopped outside Diagon really, Dudley probably never had to shop in his life and Fred and George never had any money or a chance to shop before.

Severus rolled his eyes as the four darted from display to display with Dudley enthusiastically talking about this shoe and that shoe- who at his old school wore what. What was cool and what was so uncool, what was hot and what was not. Whatever all that nonsense was…

XooooooX

Hermione took care of the bill while Andromeda cast a charm that would make the shop assistant not question it.

Harry struggled to put the contacts in.

It wasn’t working.

Finally, Andromeda spelled his eyes open and put them in herself.

Harry blinked, “I can really see…”

“You got them in alright then?” Claire asked cheerily.

“After a fashion…” Harry replied rubbing his neck anxiously.

Hermione blushed, “Merlin Harry, you really are quite stunning without glasses. It almost seems a shame to have them…”

Harry frowned, “I’m not really sure I like contacts…they are hard to put it.”

Claire frowned, “But you got them in didn’t you?”

Harry flushed, “Andromeda did it.”

“Well it gets easier with practice…” Claire said kindly. “Well you’re all set. We’ve ordered your glasses and contacts. They should both be here on Monday since I put a rush on the order.”

Harry rose blinking, he still wasn’t used to having things on his eye or seeing this clearly since he first got his glasses. He really didn’t know if he liked contacts yet but it was better then using his old glasses or being really blind until his new ones arrived.

They made their way across the shopping mall’s corridor to the shoe store Hermione sent the others.

Hermione found Sirius, Dudley and the twins with shoes and proceeded to pay for them, while Harry and Andromeda with Remus looked around.
Andromeda didn’t find anything to her taste really.

Harry snorted, “No offence but I’ve had enough ratty trainers to last a lifetime. I don’t care if they are previously used or some fancy brand name.”

Dudley winced, “I guess I can understand why you feel that way. Sorry about that mate.”

Harry shrugged, “You’re redeeming yourself, forget it.”

Dudley winced again, “If only that was so easy cousin.”

They left Barrett’s, turning the corner at Pandora, a jewellery store.

The third shop drew Andromeda’s attention, “We shall have to stop there at some point.”

Hermione glanced up at the sign, “Trust someone who made an investigation into essential oils to want to visit somewhere called: The Fragrance Shop. Perhaps, it can be our last shop on this floor.”

They were nearing the opposite end of the Atrium when Hermione stopped in her tracks, her eyes widening at the display at Spitfields All Saints. “Sweet Merlin…I hadn’t even thought to shop there. Cigarette jeans, boots, a white crew shirt and a motorcycle jacket?”

Fred had to stop like he was a Firebolt to avoid crashing into someone. He followed Hermione’s line of sight.

It was a black motorcycle style jacket with a white t-shirt, black jeans and boots.

Hermione started moving to look at the display more carefully, “I don’t like the boots…they wouldn’t work for you. I do want that jacket…”

Fred smirked, “Just think how pissed Mum would be if I wore it to Platform 9 and 3/4s?”

Hermione coughed, “Not one comment about how you would feel in it but how your mother would hate it?” she entered the store and went to find the boots. While comparing the displayed ones to the boxes she decided that model was paired with slot boots. She grabbed a pair of Marshal boots and waved over an associate.

“My name is Josh how can I help you?” the man asked.

Hermione shoved the boots at Fred and then pushed her boyfriend forward, “My friend would like the outfit on the display model in his size. However, his mother has done all his shopping. He was raised in genteel poverty despite attending a private school and has come into a substantial inheritance. I think these boots suit him better. You will have to guess at his size I am afraid…”

Josh looked at Fred, “Girlfriend? I think she has excellent taste. You look to be between a medium and large frame.”

Josh dragged Fred away when Sirius spotted a model wearing another leather jacket; this one was paired with a pair of linen trousers, a white dress shirt and a charcoal jumper. “It’s this brilliant! Can you imagine how I’d look riding Iris wearing this?”

Andromeda inspected the outfit, “Lambswool and angora I believe is what the jumper is made from. The trousers are Italian linen and the shirt is soft cotton.” She regally summoned her own assistant, “My cousin here is much enamoured with this outfit. Unfortunately his tailor has passed on and well he is not used to shopping for commercially made clothes.”
“Really? My name is Sean and I would be delighted to help you. You seem to be appreciating our Griff which is custom made for our company.”

Sirius nodded, “I always made an appointment with my tailor when I was in the mood for more clothes. I never really bothered with shopping.”

“Well let me see you seem to be a medium…we’ll just measure you won’t we?”

Hermione leaned into whisper, “Resizing charms should work well. The pants seem to come in one length.”

Sirius nodded following his assistant.

Dudley tugged on Andromeda, “Please please can I have that?” he pointed at the jacket on a nearby display dummy.

Andromeda checked the tag and groaned, “The Griffin? Merlin, a Hufflepuff daughter and Gryffindor son? The fates hate me…”

“Can I mother?” Dudley pouted at her.

“Heavens shield me. Do not give me such a look. I have no objections. Unlike Mary I see no issue with leather. Properly treated it can be a fine outfit impervious to water and defensible. I believe that would be a great assignment, to learn defence by using the jacket.”

“I see you like the Griffin’s design? Oh with those broad shoulders and that jacket? You’ll have the girls at your feet young man. My name is Julie.”

Dudley flushed, “I just recently started working out. I’m a boxer…”

“We’ll just have to see how scrumptious you look in that outfit. You’re probably a large…”

Dudley winced slightly.

“He has struggled with his weight and is on a diet.” Andromeda said almost kindly.

“Well I still think that the outfit would suit him.”

Hermione nervously paced waiting for Fred to emerge.

Andromeda let the shop girl escort Dudley to try on the model’s outfit in his size. She would have to get used to being the mother of a good looking teenage boy. Though she hoped that Dudley wasn’t as much of a nymphomaniac as Seph was… could the girl keep her legs closed?

It didn’t take that long for all of the guys to return.

Just as Hermione was collecting the outfits tags and bags for Fred, Sirius and Dudley’s previous clothes Harry spotted a purplely-red jacket with a similar design to the other jackets but it had greyish sleeves. He pulled the approximately sized jacket off and thrust it up in George’s face. “Put it on.”

Hermione spun to look at them and gasped, “Please do…it would be quite bold I think…”

The two male assistants Sean and Josh whistled.

Julie gasped, “Why didn’t we consider that before?”
George swallowed, “It’s it a little…well flashy?”

“Put it on.” Harry growled, his eyes flashing.

George groaned, “Fine.”

The jacket instead of overwhelming the outfit or clashing horribly actually accentuated it.

“That is stunning…” Sean swallowed.

“Far more flattering then I would have guessed.”

Hermione held out her card, “Who wants the sale?”

The three looked at one another.

“Sean,” Josh declared, “he’s a little short this week.”

Sean shook his head, “It should be yours…”

“Sean just take it! I don’t want to deal with Josh’s pouting, I prefer his smugness and you can have him make it up to you later. Being best friends and all.” Julie drawled.

George glanced at Josh and Sean; oh they were more than best friends…

“Then Sean can have the credit.” Hermione declared. “So why don’t you take the tags and ring me up. I think we’ll definitely return another time but for now I think we’ll head next door to Diesel…”

Sean took the tags and the card before hurrying to ring up a receipt.

He quickly returned with a pen and Hermione smirked, “Oh and give yourself a 180£ tip. Split it.”

The three blinked at her.

Then they swept out of All Saints Spitfields as quickly as they came in.

Hermione led them to the Diesel store next door.

Hermione threw a few articles of clothing at Remus and Severus, ordering them to go try them in a tone reminiscent of Andromeda that clearly meant she expected to be obeyed.

Harry spotted a leather jacket with Turtleneck-like collar, buttoned cuffs, one centre zipper, two external pockets, and was lined with black cotton.

Andromeda picked it up off the rack, “It’s called Logo, it’s aparently made from something called Nubuk. It appears to be lined with 100% black cotton and has one inside pocket in the left panel. A fine design…but I don’t think it will suit you.”

Harry grumbled, “Because I’m short?”

Andromeda sighed, “That too but I was thinking more along the lines that it wasn’t your style.”

“I still want it.” Harry said stubbornly. “I like it.”

Dudley snickered, “Is that because Vernon hates that type of design?”

Harry’s face took on a smug look, “That too, what is it called? Paisley? He used to shout up a storm
if Aunt Petunia bought it. He said it seemed like it would jump off the fabric and eat him. I guess it’s reminiscent of snakes?"

The design was sewn onto black with brown stitching…

“If you want it…” Andromeda frowned.

Hermione made Remus and Severus model the clothes. She wished she could use her wand damn. Some of the things she picked out were so close…

The jumper Remus was wearing should be a tad darker…

Oh well she’d deal with that later. Colour-changing charms were wonderful things…

Hermione pushed them back into the dressing rooms to change into another outfit…

Severus kept muttering under his breath about how he was so going to make her pay for this.

Hermione just laughed at him. “You are more than welcome to do so Professor in September. We’re not in school now and well this is for your own good.”

Once Hermione was satisfied they managed to get everything she paid the bill with her card. At least no one looked at the prices, Diesel was far more expensive than All Saints.

While Dudley would probably enjoy the Vans store, Hermione led them into the Armani/Exchange.

Hermione proceeded to make Harry and only Harry try on outfits of her choice. She made George of all people pick out Harry’s underwear.

George of course picked just about everything they had and chose one of each colour and style…

It was the pink boxer briefs he snuck into the dressing room Harry was in…

Of course George was a silencing and notice-me-not charms when he Apparated into the dressing room with Harry. Immediately cancelling the notice-me-not charm…

Harry yelped.

George leaned into to kiss him, “Let me help you with that…” he used a switching charm switching Harry’s underwear he inherited from Regulus black to the pink boxer briefs. They of course practically moulded to Harry in an indecent way, so of course George had to push him into the seat, pull out his cock while casting silencing charms on the booth before taking Harry’s cock into his mouth.


George knelt at Harry’s feet and gave him the best blowjob of his life. He’d always fantasized about sucking a lover off in some place like Madam Malkin’s.

Harry could hardly believe it, George was sucking him off in a Muggle store in a semi-public place in a dressing room of all places. He groaned, “How did you get in here?”

“As Apparated of course.” George smirked as he licked up Harry’s shaft while caressing and squeezing his lover’s balls.

“I’m surprised you haven’t perfected Aparation sex…” Harry muttered.
George smirked, “If I thought I could do that without splinching myself I would…”

Hermione’s voice came from outside the cubicle, “Harry? Have you changed yet? I wanted to see what the cords looked like with that cowl marino jumper…”

George let down the silencing ward just enough for Harry to answer.

“Uh…give me ahh…minute…I’ll be…aahh…out soon.” Harry gasped out.

“Are you alright? Should I send George in to help you?”

Harry swallowed, “I’m…fiiiiine…give me a few…”

The silencing ward went back up immediately…

Not too soon because the moment George took Harry’s cock into his throat and swallowed, Harry came with a shout.

“You devious bastard! FUCK!”

George was careful to swallow every drop of cum and lick Harry clean before putting him back inside the hot pink boxer briefs and then pulled the grey pants with the weird fabric up his legs, slipping the belt through the belt loops but left it open. He pulled a black t-shirt over Harry’s head and smoothed it over his developing abs. Harry had begun to get muscular when he arrived at Grimmauld but damn was the sex good for his body. The t-shirt clung in all the right places and he put the short-sleeved button-up shirt on him. Then he kissed him roughly, “Damn…you look so sexy.” Then he was gone…

Harry leaned against the wall gasping, “Merlin…” he took a few calming breaths before stumbling out of the dressing room. “Uh…what do you think ‘Mione…”

“You look like you just had sex.” Fred drawled.

Harry turned red, “That’s kind of impossible isn’t it?” he pointed at the open, very empty dressing room.

“Well the outfit does suit you…” Hermione mused. She shoved the armload of her choices at a clerk, “We’ll take those and that if Harry will change back or at least give you the tags.”

Harry felt a tingle and in his hand were the tags to everything, he coughed, “Um…here…”

Hermione’s eyes narrowed, and then she turned to glare at George. “George…”

George gave her a wounded look, “I was doing exactly what you told me to…picking out Harry’s underwear.”

Hermione groaned, “Merlin…” then she strode off to pay for Harry’s clothes.

After they exited the shop Hermione turned to Andromeda, “If you would cast a finite on my bag…”

Of course when she did so it was when she was surrounded by everyone.

Hermione nodded, “Now I think if we shrink the bags and or at least cast extending charms on the bags then we’ll be just fine.”

Andromeda waved her hand over the plaid Burberry bag and the suede Gucci bag Hermione was
wearing.

Then the two witched proceeded to put the shrunken bags into two backpack purses.

The next shop Hermione dragged them into was of course right next door to the Armani-Exchange: DKNY Jeans.

She smirked when she spotted the reddish purple blazer paired with a lavender dress shirt over jeans. Hermione waved over a clerk and point from the outfit to George, “He wants that in his size.”

Then George was dragged off.

Then Hermione spied a black t-shirt under a herringbone vest paired with jeans, she gestured for another attendant and pushed Dudley at them, “Dudley would like that in his size. He knows it.”

She walked through the store and found a cardigan over a black collared grey dress shirt and grey jeans. “That’s for you Sirius. Go find a shop girl and get it in your size.”

The ‘Make Your Own Beat’ t-shirt was for her Fred and that was put aside to add the tab after she ordered him to find his size. She’d probably charm it to say ‘Make Your Own Rules’…

The stone-coloured Linen shirt was for Remus and it was going with the two-button plaid blazer.

Once everyone returned with the outfits in their size Hermione paid and they left. Andromeda shrunk the bags behind a glamour and put them in the Burberry.

Since they were heading directly for it and Hermione adored Burberry, it was of course their next stop.

Hermione glared at all of them, “I trust you’ve learned enough to be trusted to shop on your own?”

The five adults plus Harry and Dudley winced.

“Yes Mione.” They chorused.

Remus and Severus headed for the black suits of course in the Porsum section.

Dudley paired up with Sirius and Fred heading for The Brit, leaving Harry of course with George who were clearly torn between the Travel Tailoring and Runway Tailoring so they definitely pleased with the London collection.

Hermione headed off with Andromeda for the women’s section

“While this bag style doesn’t suit me Hermione, I can see the quality. Perhaps we could find a bag that I find suitable.”

“Orchard style I think and definitely in Black.” Hermione chuckled.

Andromeda smirked, “I am a Black…”

“That’s why I said black and I think the larger one would be best. We want to make an impression do we not?” Hermione smirked.

“Yes indeed…” Andromeda chuckled darkly, “It will be quite amusing to be returned to my former place now that my sacrifice has been accepted and forgiven.”
They selected two purses…

A Black Orchard Style Tote Bag that was Heritage Grain Leather with Ostrich trim and the second was a green suede Medium sized tote bag trimmed with Python skin.

Then of course because Trench Coats were the Burberry thing and Hermione never could leave without one.

They were looking through the trench coats when Andromeda gasped, “Devious Morganna…”

Hermione spotted the Snake-skin Trench Coat and the Green Trench Coat with the Leather Panels. “You’ve got to be kidding…”

Andromeda caressed them, “I want them…”

Hermione smirked, “Of course you do Queen of Slytherin…”

“Can I help you ladies? My name is Janice.”

Hermione snickered, “We’d like one of each, medium please we’re about the same size.”

Andromeda picked up a Carmel checked trench coat, “This as well, I think it would suit you Hermione.”

Hermione took the coat and admired it, “I like it.”

After picking up the three trench coats and the two purses, they and their shop girl Janice headed into the Jackets.

Hermione found a crimson gabardine trench jacket that she adored, two Shearling jackets, a peplum leather biker style lambskin jacket, Leather Trim Blanket Wrap Jacket and Andromeda found a python jacket.

Andromeda frowned, “It would be far better in green.”

Hermione snickered, “Slytherin.”

“It can always be changed. I’ll take it anyway.” Andromeda said imperiously.

Their assistant was clearly confused but Hermione supposed that Andromeda planned to use a colour changing charm on it later.

They each found a dress they liked; Hermione’s was Animal Print Crépon Silk Dress that was the same colours as the trench coat. Andromeda’s choice was a Silk Herringbone Print Dress- which she said again would be better if the colour-combination was Black and Green rather than Navy and Black.

Hermione chose skirts herself; a Black Gathered Taffeta Skirt, a Navy Gathered Taffeta Skirt, Patent Trim Taffeta Skirt and the Panelled Leather Skirt

Andromeda picked out a camel leather skirt with eyelets that would be interesting to spell into Galleons, a scarlet Panelled Leather Skirt- the colour could be changed, Python Skin Skirt and a Beaded Stretch Wool Skirt that was camel on the rear half.

The Pleat Detail Georgette shirts were so stunning that they had all of them: Amethyst, Black, White, Crimson and Gold added to their choices. They also had a Silk Twill Pale Ochre Brown shirt, three
of the Pleated Peplum shirts in White, Burgundy and Black; a black cotton shirt and the deep claret silk shirt.

Hermione decided they’d better check on the gents to see if they could shop unsupervised…

XoooooX

Sirius, Fred and Dudley headed into the Brit collection each picking out a Trench Coat, A Pea Coat and later a blazer.

Fred stuck to blues while Sirius and Dudley were more drawn to Blacks and Greys.

Dudley spotted a shirt that was called a Raspberry Sorbet Cotton Poplin Military shirt for Harry, it was practically the same colour as that silly pink Zippo Harry liked so much.

Once they had chosen at least one jumper and shirt they were rather bored. So they left the clothes at the front with Hermione’s name on it.

XoooooX

Remus and Severus hadn’t gone shopping alone together since they were at Hogwarts, they were Hogsmeade weekends and they were under glamours of course.

This time they weren’t, mostly because who here from their world would know them.

Remus was almost smug to have Severus looking so delectable and walking at his side. If Muggles weren’t so thick about males in intimate relationships, he’d do a lot more then just walk together. This wasn’t Diagon Alley and even if it were without glamours they couldn’t stroll down the street together…

They were very wary of the wrath of Hermione and Andromeda if they didn’t choose clothing that truly suited them.

Due to their own issues of self worth Remus proposed a compromise.

“I think you should choose my clothes and I’ll choose yours. I know I’ll claim I don’t need it or it doesn’t suit me and I trust you not to make me look horrid. After all my dear Slytherin, you do have to be seen with me.”

“Fine…” Severus grumbled.

Remus squeezed his shoulder, “I’m glad you came…”

“I just hope that letting that mangy mutt run off with those two wasn’t the biggest mistake of my life…”

“Come on Sev, try to enjoy yourself? I don’t think you enjoy being called that greasy dungeon bat. I’d like to see how smashing you look dressed up like you are a Prince…”
Remus managed to talk Sev into trying on three jumpers, three suit jackets, two dressy coats and two dress shirts before his lover stubbornly refused on more outfits.

In retaliation Severus made him try on four jumpers, two dress shirts and two jackets.

By then they were both sorely in need of a break and headed back to where they separated from the others.

On their way Remus spotted a pair of semi-matching gloves, they were the same style but the back of the glove was different. He selected the black pair for Sev and the chocolate backed pair for himself, “Now we’re done.”

They were none too soon, for as they reached the front they caught Sirius, Fred and Dudley trying to sneak out.

Severus barked, “Where do you think you’re going you mangy mutt?”

Sirius stiffened, “For fresh air? This shopping this isn’t my taste…”

“Sneaking out Sirius? Are you that needy for a smoke?” Andromeda asked sharply when she and Hermione drew close enough to see them half-way out of the store.

“I’ve had enough shopping Annie…” Sirius pouted.

“Petulance is not attractive in a man of your age and station Sirius Orion Black.” Andromeda snapped.

Sirius flinched.

“Now I suggest we see where Harry and George are…” Hermione glared at Fred.

“I think I saw them going into London?” Fred said in a very nervous voice as he pointed to where he last saw his twin and Harry.

XoooooX

The one thing no one guessed when Harry and George set out to shop in the London section of Burberry was that they’d actually enjoy it…

To put it plainly, they took to it like Harry had to Flying…

Mostly because they knew instinctively what would suit the other. If George wasn’t shoving Harry into a fitting room with an armful of clothes then Harry was doing it to George. The items they chose seemingly on a ‘whim’ were so flattering that they drew in an audience of clerks.

They finally ended up choosing one each on the basis of personal preference and that was who they ended up half-way flirting with as they added their selections to the growing pile.

If it was purplish, burgundy, brown, camel or gold it was George’s…

If the colour was bluish, pink, green or grey then it was put on Harry.
By the time Hermione found them: George had six dress shirts, eight jumpers and four coats; while Harry had six shirts, eleven jumpers and three coats.

Hermione gasped, “Merlin what have I done to you…”

Andromeda smirked, “Given them a sense of fashion appropriate to their station in life as heirs. For the sake of your sanity and the card I suggest we don’t leave them unsupervised again.”

“I guess shopping isn’t so horrible.” Harry blushed.

“I do approve of those colours I think they will look lovely.” Hermione spotted a teal pair of skinny jeans, “If you’ll get those teal jeans I think we can save Burberry for another time. I’m sure you’ll want to come back to raid their Spring collection come March.”

George gaped, “You mean they change the selection?”

Hermione chuckled, “I forget that you’ve lived quite the sheltered life.”

“You on the other hand have been holding back my sweet.” Fred teased.

Hermione glared at him, “I haven’t forgotten your attempt to run away. I didn’t think you were the cowardly type.”

Fred winced, “I’m just not keen on shopping. I’m a run in, run out sort.”

Hermione sniffed, and then with the help of the groups sales associates proceeded to pay for everything.

They were about to leave when George froze, “Am I seeing things or does that look like the Creevey brothers?”

“HARRY!”

All but running were the Creevey brothers Colin and Dennis, who creepily look more alike then they had before.

“Dad! It’s Harry Potter!”

“Colin Arthur you will behave! What did I tell you about manners and proper behaviour?”

“Sorry Dad.” Colin looked very ashamed of himself.

“Really, and to lead Dennis on like that. We had a long talk after you returned from school did we not?”

“Mr. Creevey I presume?” Severus asked with a raised eyebrow.

Andromeda snorted, “He most certainly is not. Glamour or not you know I know exactly who you are.”

The man winced, “Lovely to see you Andromeda. I see that your fall from grace hasn’t changed you one bit.”

Sirius looked from them, the unfamiliar to the familiar, “Should I know them?”

Andromeda snorted, “I doubt it, he was a Ravenclaw after all and older than I. he was considered
one of the probable Head Boys but lost in favour of Franciscus Longbottom. I heard you were
dead.”

“Reports of my death are clearly exaggerated. With the help of a good friend and my brother I was
able to hide in this world. We live in Wales but since I’m not quite ready to be see publicly we chose
to shop here.” Colin’s father replied dryly.

“That is our reasoning as well.” Andromeda ruefully admitted.

“I take it that you are accompanied by Order members because of Mr. Potter?”

“Of course, I am sure that you remember the names Severus, Remus and Sirius from your days
among its number?” Andromeda smirked.

Sirius hissed, “Annie!”

“Do be quiet; I think my old prefect rounds partner knows you’re innocent.”

“Innocent of what?” the unfamiliar man asked.

“He was framed probably in a conspiracy for the betrayal of James and Lily as well as joining the
Dark Lord.”

Colin’s father snorted, “Sirius? He’s too Black to subject himself to the authority of someone like
that. He doesn’t follow orders well, which is probably why he was never a Team Captain or a
Prefect. I was surprised he lasted at all in Auror Training. I would have thought he would have been
more suited to taking over Alphard’s business.”

“Who are you?” Sirius frowned.

Remus sniffed and then smirked, “A pleasure to see you again.”

“Then you know me as well?”

Remus snickered, “Let’s just say you’re hard to forget. A pity the way things turned out. Are you
returning because of the news of the Dark Lord’s return?”

“In part, I had already confided in my sons the truth of their origins and I was considering a return to
our World. Unfortunately, bad news of a disgraced member of my House came to me and my return
was made imperative.” The man gave Fred and George penetrating looks. “Has anyone told you that
you look a lot like your uncles?”

Fred and George looked at one another, “Huh? Which uncles?”

“Fabian and Gideon of course.” The man said stiffly, “I knew them, Fabian was a good man and he
was willing to help me even when he disapproved of what I had done. Despite everything he still
stood by me. If anything had been said then perhaps, I might not had left but I think leaving was
wise. Though perhaps, raising my sons as a widowed father hoping they wouldn’t end up gifted was
a mistake. I believe you remember delivering them…but perhaps, the glamour held then. Do twins
seem familiar Andromeda?”

Andromeda glanced from Colin to Dennis, “Merlin whatever did you do?”

Sirius glared, “Would someone tell me who he is?”

“Temperamental as always, he needs a woman to ground him.” Colin’s father snorted. “We still have
shopping to do…” he turned to Hermione, “What stores would you recommend for my sons?”

Hermione tilted her head, “I think Diesel or All Saints would suit you sir as well as here. Perhaps, even Dior. As for Colin and Dennis well…probably Boys Base. I believe it has been a leading designer retailer for more than 100 years. I’ve heard it has all the latest collections for youngsters aged 2-16 years from top designer brands such as Armani, Lacoste, Diesel, Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, Money, Levi’s, Voi Jeans, Calvin Klein and exclusive to Boys Base- UCLA. The store also stocks footwear and accessories from Kickers, Timberland, Converse, Vans and Birkenstock. Its something that they,” gesturing at the Muggles around them, “would call a one-stop shop.”

“Thank you Ms. Granger. Colin has told me that you are quite intelligent, I am pleased that his preceptions have not been found wanting. I apologize for sending him to school the way I did young Master Potter. I am afraid he has been quite the annoying child. My job in this world was the type where I was up early and I often wasn’t awake often when they were home in the mornings. I should have been less careless with their knowledge of that world.” The unfamiliar man bowed slightly, “I hope they will be less exhausting. Colin has been instructed to not chase you with his camera. I have threatened to keep it at home if he can’t behave.”

“It’s nice to meet you sir.” Hermione said curtseying.

“You’ll meet me again, especially if you keep company with those two.”

Then Colin and Dennis were ushered off.

“That was strange…” Harry said looking at George.

“You’re telling me. He looked at us quite oddly, don’t you think Gred?”

“You’re right Forge. It was as if he knew us…”

“Oh he does after a fashion…” Andromeda smirked, “If he’s coming back, there will be sparks flying. I will enjoy the show. I do wonder what made him decide to come back? If my suspicions are correct then I believe that Septimus and Cedrella will be both angry and estatic. That is once they get over the shock…as for their parentage…that will cause waves. However did he manage such a thing?”

Hermione went off to pay.

“Do we have to shop any more?” Fred whinged when Hermione returned with bags upon bags.

“Alright I suppose you can have a break. Remus upstairs is a store called HMV; I think Sirius, Fred and Dudley might.....”

Dudley gasped, “HMV? You’re going to let us go there? But we’re…you know…we might break them…”

“I have CDs myself and a computer Dudley.” Hermione scoffed, “I just need to replace it more often then the average person. I’m sure that they can allow you to play some of the demo games. We’ll come get you when we’re done. Andromeda can always take Sirius shopping another time. I’ll gladly lend her my card…”

Sirius fairly ran. The idea of shopping with his cousin was almost terrifying.

“I suggest you take the escalator!” Hermione called out before leading her half of the group to Jimmy Choo which was three doors down from Burberry.
Salvatore Ferragamo was too expensive and Hermione didn’t want to run out of money…

While at Jimmy Choo they found a pair of Black Cherry snake skin high tops, that George all but forced Harry to agree to have…

Andromeda picked out one pair of emerald green heels, a pair of silver watersnake pumps and a pair of black snake skin heels.

Hermione choose two pairs of wedges; one nude with an ankle strap and the other red. As well as a pair of red heels with a snake skin toe cap and pair of raspberry heels with a punched design.

All together they had eight shoes and the gents were quite happy to leave…

The shoe that Hermione had transfigured for Andromeda was actually a Jimmy Choo design as well and Andromeda was complimented by one of the clerks for being a repeat customer who had such amazing style.

Andromeda was rather pleased…

They popped into Dior and Dior Homme for some shoes and pants for Severus really, who was of course absolutely furious to be forced try on clothes again…

Then came bag and wallet shopping at Gucci…mostly for Harry and Andromeda.

Hermione was missing Fred so she decided to take pity on them and mostly call off shopping. If only to keep George and Harry from deciding to attempt shopping and leave her with a negative balance for the first time in her life…

They took the escalator to two floors above them and then made their way to pick up the ‘boys’ from the game store.

Seeing them together at the door pouting at here was not that pleasing…

“What took you so long?” Fred said with his arms crossed.

“Harry kept wanting to shop and George was encouraging him, I think we inadvertently created a monster. Anyway, I thought perhaps some food…”

“We want gameboys.” Sirius whinged, “Dudley has a plan to make them work on you know what. Sort of like Iris doesn’t run on petrol you know?”

“I want to see a film! Dudley was telling us all about movies.”

“We’ve been getting odd looks.” Remus scowled.

Sirius was bouncing on his toes, “I haven’t seen a movie since Lily took us! That was decades ago…”

Hermione groaned, “Food first then a movie. There just so happens to be a theatre here.”

To her annoyance six gameboys in a variety of colours were shoved into her arms with a dozen games that had about three copies of each.

Remus smirked, “Really, you shouldn’t have let Arthur’s children loose in a store like this…they’ll want to find out how things work.”
Hermione rolled her eyes and went to pay for it all.

“What sort of food would a place like this have?” Andromeda sniffed.

“A variety I believe from the smells.” Remus offered.

“so lunch and a movie then?” George frowned.

“Doesn’t quite have the ring of dinner and a movie does it Dud?” Harry asked snarkily.

Dudley chuckled, “True. Unlike you, Remus and Hermione; Andromeda, Sirius and I are on our own…”

“I’m sure once we get to Hogwarts Big D you’ll find the girls fainting at you feet.”

Dudley’s ears turned red, “You think so?”

Sirius snickered, “You don’t think I’m the only sexy bloke in the family do you? You must get your looks from Annie’s side of the family.”

“Sirius Orion you will desist in provoking my son into exemplifying your irascibly habits. I will not have another child who behaves in such an irresponsible manner.” Andromeda snarled.

Sirius stumbled back, his hands held up in surrender, “I’m sorry Annie. I didn’t mean anything bad…”

“Hmph.” The former Queen of Slytherin sniffed.

Hermione returned with a bag of games and handheld game consoles. “Really? I was surprised you didn’t throw in a Playstation or a computer in this pile Dudley.”

Dudley blushed, “Sorry…since mine exploded I wanted to find a way to keep them from doing it…”

“Food.”

“Where are we eating?” Fred asked throwing an arm around Hermione’s shoulders.

“The food court,” the brilliant witch smirked, “And because I’m in the mood for spicy I’ve decided to treat you all to Indian food. I’m hankering for Lamb Curry.”

Dudley was salivating, “Curry? Really?”

“No Dudley, I’m joking and I’m taking you to YO! Sushi to eat raw fish.”

Sirius blinked, “Raw fish?”

“Yes Sirius, it’s a delicacy.” Hermione rolled her eyes as she headed for Indi-Go. “I quite enjoy it, with the exception of salmon sashimi. I do not enjoy that one…squid however is tasty but extremely chewy.”

“Hmm…”

Lunch was an intriguing affair, Hermione actually managed to get the only private room the restaurant had.

When Hermione actually asked what movie they were going to see it wasn’t any wonder that it was
Dudley who replied.

“Batman…I really am not too fond of DC Comics. I’m a Marvel Fan. The movie is supposed to be good…not sure how fond I am of Jim Carrey as the Riddler. I’m withholding my opinion until I see it. its about the only movie I want to see right now.” The newest member of the Ancient House of Black replied.

“Do we have to see a Batman movie?” Hermione grumbled. “Can’t we see something more like The American President or Apollo 13?”

Remus patted her shoulder, “You sound like Lily…with this many boys? You’re bound to be overruled. You can always sleep through it or have Gilly take you back after you buy the tickets,”

Hermione snorted, “No way am I leaving them alone in a Muggle Theatre with only Snape, you and Andromeda.”

Shopping with the Black Family was definitely an experience…
Chapter Summary

Andromeda finally gets around to teaching Dudley, Harry, Hermione and the twins the Parentis Divinus potion. Finally Harry's link to the Prince family is about to be discovered as well as where Hermione's magic came from. Just what magical lines did Dudley come from before he was Andromeda's son?

Chapter Notes

Somehow this chapter and the next one were dropped when we began posting our story here. I just realised it and quickly fixed it. So my apologies for those who have this story/series subscribed to and this chapter number doesn't match your subscription notice.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 25- Parentus Divinus Revelations

After the discussion over the realities of the Potter Wills and Harry's unusual mental shields it really wasn’t any wonder that the day after shopping in Muggle London Andromeda decided to make Harry, Hermione and Dudley brew the Parentus Divinus potion…

Normally it would take an entire month to brew…

Fortunately, Andromeda and Severus were present to use their considerable skills to speed up time within a cauldron.

So it was done in a matter of hours…

Remus had been sent out to buy the specially treated parchment.

“Now I want you to take a ladle of the potion and pour it over the parchment. Then take your knife
and slice your palm so you can squeeze the blood over the potion.” Andromeda instructed.

“If either of you use that incantation I will see that you are Fitch’s slave until Winter Holidays.” Severus sneered.

George pouted, “But the spell is so cool!”

“You become a Potions Master, First Class and I won’t have to threaten because you’ll be capable and instructed enough to do so.” Severus tossed back.

Hermione scoffed, “As if I would attempt to use a spell I wasn’t confident in that could backfire so spectacularly. I maybe a decent brewer but Merlin knows that I would never make it a career like you two. I’d sooner go into History of Magic; Merlin knows we need someone to replace that horrid Binns. Professor or not, he’s dreadful. I learn more from my readings then from his lectures. I don’t know what Dumbledore keeps him on…”

“Probably because it’s easy to cast mind magic in the combination of factors that is that professor’s class.” Andromeda sniffed, “We will start with Hermione, after all she is the one we know the least about.”

Hermione had the parchment held to the worktable by sticking charms, a ladle of potion and a squeeze of blood were quite easy to procure for the curious witch.

She had often wondered about her magical ancestry…

Fred captured her hand and healed it with a gentle expression.

“Any Muggle names will be black, Squibs will be blue and magical will be silver.” Andromeda informed her assembled students.

It took about as long for her to impart the information as it did for the potion to begin working.

Hermione Fern Granger
b. 21 Sept 1979

Jean Rose King       Mercutio Granger
b. 28 Feb 1954       b. 1953
V

Hermione Fern Granger
b. 21 Sept 1979

Daisy Lea Stevens   Martin King
b. 1934       V       b. 1934
d. 1992       d.1986

Jean Rose King
b. 28 Feb 1954

Marina Moran   Dathan King
b. 1909       V       b.1889
d. 1973       d.1962

Martin King       David King
b. 1934               b. 1943
d.1986

David King   Malcolm McGonagall
b. 1943       V       b. 1943

Ross James Hamish King   Michael Gordon McGonagall Josephine Marina King
b. 10 Sep 1960       b. 10 Sep 1960       b.1963

Isobel Vesta Ross Robert McGonagall
b. 1916               b. 1909
d. 1985          d. 1981

V

Minerva McGonagall Malcolm McGonagall Robert McGonagall
b. 4 Oct 1935 b. 1943 b. 1953

Minerva McGonagall Elphinstone Leandros Urquhart
b. 4 Oct 1935 V b. 1891
d. 15 Aug 1978

Aodhan Wulfric Apollo Urquhart
b. 29 Oct 1978

Robert McGonagall Destiny Eastchurch
b. 1953 V b. 1954

Verity Diana Eastchurch Felicity Davina Eastchurch Alys Delight Eastchurch
b. 1975 b. 1978 b. 1984

Dahlia Helena Brown Devon Lewis Stevens
b. 1906 V b. 1904
d. 1966 d. 1978

Rose Stevens Daisy Lea Stevens
b. 1932 b. 1934
d. 1976 d. 1992

Rose Stevens Hugh Gallant Evans
b. 1932 V b. 1934
d. 1976 d. 1978

Petunia Evans
b. 11 May 1954
By the time the name Vernon was paired with a Petunia they all stood back with a gasp.

So Hermione and Dudley were second cousins before his blood adoption? Really? And where was Lily?

They were all surprised to see no sibling name appear beside Petunia…

Teresa Verina Burke   Lancelot Elder Brown
b.1886   V   b.1886
d. 1993   d. 1956

Dahlia Helena Brown
b.1906
d. 1966

Grace Felicity Goyle   Hubert Evans
b.1902   V   b.1899
d.1976   d. 1954

Hugh Gallant Evans
b. 1934
d. 1978
Hermione was related to the Browns, Burkes, McGonagalls, the Kings, the Urquharts and the Eastchurchs to name a few….

According to Hermione’s ancestral chart Dudley was related to nearly everyone Hermione was related to with the Goyles through his original blood.

Andromeda snorted, “Wouldn’t surprise me if that bloodline curse came from the Goyles. They are not known for their intelligence…”

Hermione gasped, “I’m related to the professor?”

Severus frowned, “I was unaware Minerva had a child…do either of you remember her mentioning a son?”

The two marauders shook their heads.

“I wonder why she hasn’t mentioned it…” Severus’ frown deepened, “Urquhart is a Slytherin prefect. Do you remember him Remus?”

Remus cocked his head, “Urquhart? Exceptional shields and extensive knowledge of Defence…he quite enjoyed quizzing me on my knowledge of Defence in his first class that I taught. He’s quite brilliant but rather anti-social and doesn’t mix with his classmates. He would refuse partners for assigned projects claiming they would slow him down. When I insisted he work with another he glared at me and demanded Miss Goyle.”

“Yes Miss Giselle Goyle is an exceptional student she and her sister Georgette seem exempt from the family’s inherited stupidity. Though since Mr. Goyle has taken to studying with the Squib’s daughter Miss Prewett he seems to have some intelligence.” Severus sneered.

“Miss Prewett? An exceptional witch quite bright, wasn’t she second for marks in her year? Between Lovegood and Creevey?”

That stunned the Hogwarts students.

“Yes, now I suggest you close your mouth Miss Granger unless you wish for it to become a doxy trap.” Severus snorted.

“We obviously do not need to test Dudley’s previous blood since Hermione’s was able it fill it in.” Sirius smirked, “Goyles, Burkes, Browns and Kings huh? That was unexpected.”

While no one was watching the King Line continued to trace itself back…

Finally ending on Dathan King’s grandparents…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Izar Emma Black</th>
<th>Robert Hitchens</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1851</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. 1903</td>
<td>b. 1849</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talitha Elisabeth Hitchens</th>
<th>Caelum Ebert Hitchens</th>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1869</td>
<td>b. 1879</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. 1894</td>
<td>d. 1950</td>
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Talitha had married a man named Mathias King while Caelum had bonded to Etruscus Rosier.

Caelum and Etruscus were Andromeda’s great-grandfathers…

Talk about unexpected…

“We’re twins so only one of us needs ta go.” Fred smirked.

“So,” Severus scowled, “Who gets the blade?”
Fred took on a long-suffering expression, “As the eldest it is my duty to shield George, therefore I shall take the pain.”

George groaned, “Prat…”

Fred pored the potion-filled ladle onto the specially treated parchment before slicing open his palm.

Arcturus Colan Weasley    Mary Lynette Prewett
b. 6 Feb 1954    V    30 Oct 1955

Fridericus Lancelot
1 Apr 1978

William Arcturus    Charles Erec    Percival Isdemus
b. 29 Nov 1971    b. 12 Dec 1972    b. 22 Aug 1975

“Geez, that’s just no fun…” Fred complained, “I hoped Percy was a foundling…arrogant prat.”

William Arcturus, Charles Erec, Percival Isdemus, Fridericus Lancelot, Georgius Cabal
b. 29 Nov 1971, b. 12 Dec 1972, b. 22 Aug 1975, b.1 Apr 1978, b.1 Apr 1978,

What semi-surprised them was that two names were missing: Ron and Ginny….

Also, two names were being adding to their parents…

Mary was being tied to someone named Aberforth Enoch Basil Wulfgang Dumbledore, and it seemed he was Albus’ younger brother by three years…

Sirius groaned, “That’s just sick.”

Andromeda, Sirius, Severus and Remus weren’t really surprised to see Arthur’s name joined to
Out of all of them only Andromeda and Remus weren’t surprised to see two names added as Arthur and Gideon’s children.

Colin Arthur and Dennis Caradoc ‘Creevey’
Born 8 Dec 1980

George scowled, “So they both cheated? Some example of bonded bliss Mum. Was the wench a Hufflepuff?”

Andromeda snorted, “A Gryffindor Prefect.”

“Were their standards low or something?” Fred snorted.

“Not low enough that they let Bella and Rabastan be prefects, thankfully they gave that to Sancus Malfoy and Aurora Greengrass.” Andromeda scoffed. “Then again they did make Potter Head Boy and that I think was a mistake. I can think of more deserving persons…”

“So we’ve four full blood siblings and four half-siblings…”

“The Creeveys aren’t so bad.” George sighed, “A little enthusiastic perhaps but very loyal to Harry, Colin never doubted he was innocent during the Chamber attacks.”

“Yeah, they tried to stand up to Ron for abandoning Harry after the Goblet named him Champion…” Fred mused.

“So it was Gideon with those two yesterday?” Severus mused, “Normally, I am not so unobservant.”

“Being mated to a Gryffindor has dulled you.” Andromeda tossed back.

Severus growled, “Never.”
“That git was Gideon? Weird…he’s coming back?” then Sirius gained a wicked expression, “Wonder if he’s come to save ‘Arthur’ from Molly. That would be interesting…especially in light of her infidelity. I suspect that there was a clause in their bonding contract that would allow for a disillusionment. If not then you know Septimus has always had a soft spot for the Prewett twins…”

“Well that’s very interesting but can we get on with this?” Severus snapped. “I would like to see what sort of blood Lily had if she wasn’t a bloody Evans.”

“Hold your pants Snape.” Harry drawled as he squeezed blood onto the ladle-ful of blood.

Herodotus James Potter
b. 31 Jul 1980

Lillias Anastasia Snape James Castor Potter
b. 9 Jan 1960 V b. 27 Mar 1960
d. 31 Oct 1981 d. 31 Oct 1981
b. 6 Nov 1981

Herodotus James Potter Coraline Selene Potter
b. 31 Jul 1980 b. 31 Oct 1981

Harry snarled, “That’s fucking impossible! She died! How pregnant was my mum?” he hissed at Andromeda.

Andromeda frowned, “Lily was four months…there should be no way that could happen. A four-month-old witch pregnancy can’t survive. Keeping an infant born at six months gestation is difficult enough…your sister was right on par with average development. I don’t understand.”

“I want to know where she is!” Harry hissed, “She’d be a third year right?”

Andromeda nodded, “With that birth date I suspect so. She wasn’t due until around your father’s birthday in March.”
“She’s obliviously born early and lived if that damn thing can be trusted.” Harry spat. “You were there weren’t you?” directing his anger at Sirius.

The canine animagus flinched, “All I saw was you…James was dead…Snape had Lily in his arms and you were screaming. What was I supposed to do?”

“Snape?” Harry snarled.

“I saw James dead from Dark Magic, Lily’s body was already cold and you were in your crib. All I was really coherent of was that Lily, my best friend was gone…”

Odoratia Rena Black             Charlus Rigel Potter  
b. 2 Feb 1920       V       b. 10 Dec 1919  
d. 30 Dec 1976       d. 26 Mar 1977

James Castor Potter  
b. 27 Mar 1960  
d. 31 Oct 1981

“Um I’m not sure I should ask this but why does Lily have two birth dates?” Hermione asked.

The adults’ eyes snapped to Lily’s name.

Oran Edward Nott     Eileen Marcia Prince   Tobias Hamnon Snape  
b.1925       V       b.1941       V       b. 1938  
Lillias Anastasia Snape   Severus Tobias Snape  
b. 9 Jan 1960       b. 9 Jan 1960  
d. 31 Oct 1981  
b. 6 Nov 1981
Harry collapsed, “No way in bloody hell! You’re not my uncle Snape! I won’t believe it!”

Severus Tobias Snape       Remus Lyall Lupin  
  b. 9 Jan 1960          V       b.10 Mar 1960

Sarah Hope Howell Marrok Harold Lupin  
  b. 1934     V       b.1929
  d.1976       d.1977

Remus Lyall Lupin  
  b.10 Mar 1960

George Potter Lyall Lupin  
  b.1883     V       b.1883
  d.1948       d.1917

Marrok Harold Lupin  
  b.1934
  d.1977

Mary Potter       Gerbold Laurel Ollivander  
  b.1861     V       b.1860
  d.1929       d.1920

Gervaise Philip Ollivander, George Edward, Richard Gerold, Guinevere Jane Potter  
  b.1880     b.1883     b. 1883     b.1885
  d.1955       d.1948     d. 1920     d.1972

Faolán Alys Lupin Julius Altair Flint  
  b.1865     V       b.1865
  d.1943       d.1962
Marcus Weylyn, Lyall Flavius, Cordelia Faoiltiama, Romulus Lucian, Dacia Lucinia

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Death Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Death Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Marcus Weylyn</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Lyall Flavius</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>1959</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cordelia Faoiltiama</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Romulus Lucian</td>
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<td>1974</td>
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Romulus Lucian Lupin Flavius Geoffery Weasley

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<tr>
<td>Septimus Remus Weasley</td>
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Cedrella Azaleh Black Septimus Remus Weasley

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<th>Death Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Death Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cedrella Azaleh Black Septimus Remus Weasley</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>1915</td>
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<td>d. 1981</td>
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“Now that’s not creepy…” Remus muttered, “Arthur’s my cousin?”

“The damn potion thinks you two are married and you’re freaked out because you’re second cousins to Weasleys?” Harry snapped.

“Do desist in this sort of hysteria Herodotus!” Andromeda sneered. “I think that there is more to be learned then just that Severus is your uncle and his lover is second cousin to the biggest coward to come out of Gryffindor.”

Oran Edward Nott     Eileen Marcia Prince Tobias Hamnon Snape

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Death Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Death Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oran Edward Nott</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eileen Marcia Prince Tobias Hamnon Snape</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>d. 15 May 1976</td>
<td></td>
<td>d. 15 May 1976</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillias Anastasia Snape</td>
<td>9 Jan 1960</td>
<td></td>
<td>Severus Tobias Snape</td>
<td>9 Jan 1960</td>
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</table>
“How can someone have two birthdays Andromeda?” Hermione asked.

“I don’t know yet Hermione…” Andromeda scowled, “I do not enjoy not knowing. Now what do it mean? That Lily was Old Nott’s kid? And that Severus belongs to Snape?”

“Mother why would they have two fathers and be born the same day?” Dudley asked still stunned that he and Harry were never blood cousins…

“I suspect that Severus was blood adopted by his Muggle father, most likely forced.” Andromeda mused. “Which means that Lily was given away, kidnapped or abandoned before she was blood adopted. Hard to know really with his parents obviously gone.”

Evelyn Lucia Prince Oran Edward Nott  Eileen Marcia Prince
b.1945   V  b.1925   V  b.1921
   d.1 Nov 1986   d.15 May 1976

“Now that’s just sick…” Sirius growled.

Evelyn Lucia Prince Oran Edward Nott
b.1945   V  b.1925
d.1 Nov 1986

Theodoros Augustus  Charis Valeria
b. 4 Nov 1979  d. 1 Nov 1986

“Who the hell is this Nott? First I have a missing sister and an uncle I can’t stand” Harry seethed, “Now I have a cousin?”

“Who is my half-brother, do not imagine Potter that I am at all pleased with this….” Severus growled.
“Nott’s not so bad,” Hermione started.

Fred burst out laughing.

Hermione glared at him. “He’s very bright, probably the second best at potions after Malfoy. Rumour has it he ties for marks with Dean. He excels at Ancient Runes and thinks Divination is a waste of time…”

“Whoever this sick bastard is,” Harry growled, “does anyone find it weird he has three birds’ names? Eileen Prince, Evelyn and some wench named Adelia Enite Malfoy?”

Andromeda frowned, “Adelia? Wasn’t that Lucius’ aunt? She died in childbirth I think. She perished with her twins who were stillborn. Then there was another child who died before them. Old Nott waited forever to bond again even though he was clearly looking to have an heir. I may have fallen but I remember hearing about how stunned people were when he was bonded to Spinster Evelyn Prince.”

“Evelyn? That was my mother’s sister…the goblins said she held the estate together after her father died and her sister ran away. They admitted she was quite intelligent for a female.” Severus sniffed.

“I can’t believe that I’m related to you.” Harry grumbled…

“Do we really need to do another damn potion?” Severus glared.

“I am surprised how interrelated we all are.” Hermione gasped.

“All purebloods are related. It is very difficult to find one you aren’t related to.” Andromeda shrugged.

“Can I please do it? I’d like to see who I’m related to now that I’m your son mother. I mean I know about Draco and Uncle Sirius as well as Seph.” Dudley winced.
His sister’s refusal to accept him actually hurt the young wizard.

“I suppose we have no reason not to…” Andromeda sighed.

Dudley then was rather excited as he made his way to replicate Harry, Hermione and Fred’s actions with the blood and potion.

Andromeda Penelope Black Edwin Chaim Tonks  
b. 27 Sep 1954 V b. 15 Dec 1954
Persephone Edwina Tonks Dudley Heracles Black-Tonks  
b. 9 Apr 1974 b. 27 Jun 1980

Andromeda Penelope Black Bellatrix Lachesis Black Narcissa Lætitia Malfoy  
b. 27 Sep 1954 b. 7 Oct 1957 b. 18 Nov 1959

Bellatrix Lachesis Black Rodolphus Marcys Lestrange  
b. 7 Oct 1957 V b. 1955
Rastaban Malik Salazar Lestrange Rasalas Asteria Dacia Lestrange  
b. 1 Nov 1975 b. 25 Nov 1980

Andromeda scowled, “I heard Bella had a child but I didn’t want to believe it. I know she had her little army of devoted pureblood henchmen in school but for all her flirtatious behaviour she adored Rodolphus. Not that I understood what she saw in him. I know she was registered with the birthing centre at St. Mungos in late November of 1980. They said that her second pregnancy was hysterical and locked her up in Janus Thickey.”

The former Queen of Slytherin snorted, “It was Ted who released her. She had given birth he’s a mind healer but he could tell. He even snuck me up to check. She’d been truly pregnant at some point. None of her files still existed and when I tried to investigate I was told that my interference with another healer’s case was not to be tolerated and Lady Lestrange was not welcome in our
division because she wasted healers time. They told me that she’s been so convincing about her pregnancy that it was infuriating that she delivered nothing and then dared to insist she’d been pregnant. Her bonded and his family were so embarrassed.”

“Bella with kids? Always thought she hated them. She had no use for us…” Sirius sneered.

“Because you had the audacity to be born on her birthday at her party prat!” Andromeda tossed back. “Regulus was a spineless child and Narcissa was a shy thing, pretty but shy. Unlike Bella and myself Cissa hadn’t one wit of skill with Dark Magic. She couldn’t cast an imperious to save her life and as for the Cruciatius? Hah! The girl couldn’t hate anyone…”

Harry snorted, “Malfoy’s mum is a failure at Dark Magic? How did she end up with a Malfoy then?”

“Lucius is more grey then Dark really. It’s the Veela thing, they can try but they are creatures of Light really. Never understood how he could stomach joining I mean he hated the Death Eaters and he loathed Abraxus. We were what one might consider friends before I eloped and technically jilted him.” Andromeda shrugged.

“Funny considering that he tried to hurt Ginny. I might not like her but she didn’t deserve what he did to her.” Harry snorted.

“Something is off about his magic and it’s not just that he’s Marked.” Andromeda mused. “I will have to look into that…”

“Um so if my Aunt Bellatrix and Rodolphus have kids why don’t you all know about? What she like anyway?”

“A bit odd, she never had something that Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs would call a conscience. She doesn’t really understand or countenance others’ emotions. I suppose it would make it hard to enjoy being the Dark Lord’s enforcer. I heard a rumour that when he was displeased he handed off his followers or prisoners to her. That was where the tales of her worship of him began. Considering that what loyalty she had was to Rodolphus. Though I am surprised that Rabastan’s bonded wasn’t included in The Culling…I suppose his daughter is considered the heir to the Lestrange Estate since clearly you’ve never heard of any Lestranges in school. I can just imagine how they would be treated in light of the Longbottom Affair. As fond as Bella is of the Cruciatius I find it strange that she would go so far…no matter. Sirius first and then perhaps, as the Voice of the Ancient House of Black I can look into my sister’s affairs. It would be a shame if she too was involved in a conspiracy…”
They turned to check the tapestry again.

Narcissa Lætitia Black  Lucius Abraxus Malfoy
b. 18 Nov 1959  V  b. 21 Dec 1954
Draconis Lucius Malfoy
b. 5 Jun 1980

Malcolm Saffron Bulstrode  Rabastan Augustus Lestrange
b. 1956  V  b. 1956
Millicent Reagan Bulstrode
b. 1 Sep 1979

“So…” Dudley began, “I’ve got two cousins with Aunt Bella, one with Aunt Cissa and one with Uncle Rabastan?”

“Seems like it…” Sirius drawled while still looking disturbed that Bella had kids.

“Well this was an informatively lesson.” Severus scowled, waving a hand and the lab was put back to rights.

“SEVERUS! I do not enjoy being done that in my lab!” Andromeda snapped.

“Except for you,” the potions master retorted, “you are not the only person who can use wandless magic while in a potions lab.”

“Get out. I want my lab back. George give Dudley a Herbology lesson. Remus do something about your mate.” Andromeda sniffed, “He obviously needs to get laid. It would do wonders for his temperament. Hermione you should go over Harry’s homework. Don’t do it for him. Offer suggestions for his History of Magic summer homework since he’s about run out of time. Sirius I suggest you go study and review the lessons your parents imparted before you ran off. Fred…figure out how you’re going to deal with your sibling situation.”

“What are you going to do Andromeda?” Hermione asked quietly.
“I? I’m going to deal with that Dark Artefact and see if my research has helped any. I’ve let it turn over in my mind. I am curious what happens when the container is destroyed. Two to my knowledge have been…” Andromeda glared, “I said out!”

Chapter End Notes


The genealogy might be a bit of an overload but don't worry if you didn't get it all yet, we'll be referring to the relationships and expounding upon them later on. I promise that Harry and his band of merry persons didn't get it all either. They won't remember it completely but the parchments were kept I assure you.
Chapter Notes

Somehow this chapter and the previous one were dropped. I just realised it and quickly fixed it. So my apologies for those who have this story/series subscribed to and this chapter number doesn't match your subscription notice.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 26

Harry had been reading George’s book on sex for bent wizards.

Having finished all of his summer homework finally, Harry had sprawled on the bed with the book.

George came back all sweaty and dirty, well there was a pop of Apparation and it came from his bathroom.

No one but George would be so presumptuous…

Harry smirked, tossing the book on the desk and using magic to strip before slipping into the bathroom to find a very naked, yummy George in the shower.

George was washing his hair and didn’t see him.

Harry cast a silencing charm on the shower door before slipping inside; he picked up the body wash and squeezed it onto a flannel. Smirking he started to wash his friend’s back, sure they were lovers but like he told Remus it was just fun and experimenting.

Though he had more interest in ‘experimenting’ right now…just fucking was a bit boring. He worried for his friend, letting people bed him and always being left. First by that Grant Page and then Diggory the cheater…
He didn’t want George think he was just a willing arse to him, they were friends and he’d like to remain that way…

He smirked as George leaned back a little, but not putting his full weight on him…

“Fuck…I didn’t think you’d do this.”

“Just because we’re friends with benefits doesn’t mean I don’t have any feelings for you.” Harry mumbled. “So what if I started off oblivious because that fat ox tried to fuck with my head? Thanks to you I know it’s perfectly fine to fuck and be fucked by other wizards. Though I do hope you find someone much better then you know that stupid Hufflepuff.”

“You’re better.” George groaned, “You at least…care to pleasure us both.”

Harry’s hands stilled, “He didn’t bother helping you get off?”

“Wasn’t high on his list of priorities, Diggory was a selfish bastard.” George moaned.

Harry finished washing George and then smirked, “Come to bed.”

They reached the bed and Harry pushed George to the bed. “Let me see…what should I do with you?”

“Fuck me?” George asked hopefully.

Harry smirked, “Thought you’d never ask. Should we experiment?”

George snickered, “Thought you’d never ask…”

So George proceeded to show Harry just how those lovely sex positions in George’s book worked and how pleasurable positions besides the Missionary and Doggy style could be.
Chapter End Notes

Dudley’s Second Year Exams

Chapter Summary

LET THE AVALANCHE BEGIN!!! (yes i know, it's late. i simply had 0 time at work to post any of the following chapters. i think even my computer hates me now. it looked all lonely and depressed sitting there on my desk while i was knee deep in my sketch pads.... :()

Remus woke Dudley up early the same as before.

They flooed to Hogwarts together, arriving through the floo in McGonagall’s office again.

Immediately Dudley was made to take his Transfiguration exam.

He had to transfigure a rat to a goblet and a goblet to a rat, rabbit to slippers, beetle to buttons and finally a badger to a book.

He was of course given high marks for how decorative the slippers were, the buttons were mother-of-pearl, the goblet was a fancy monstrosity that was identical to the one he used for practice at Grimmauld and the stunned badger became a thick book he had used as a reference work while writing some of his Transfiguration essays.

Professor McGonagall held out her hand for the essays, “Without the essays you’re sitting on a Outstanding. If they are less then Exceeds Expectations I will take points from your final marks.”

Dudley winced, “Well for all his prankster nature Fred is a hard taskmaster…”

“While his skills at Transfiguration are above average I would have thought that George would prove the more reliable one.”

Dudley groaned, “George’s lessons revolve around replanting the garden and making sense of the greenhouses, they were left to rot and were not tended by the house elf at Grimmauld. It’s messy exhausting work…”

“Well he was my first choice for Prefect if he would buckle down.” McGonagall grumbled. “That would have made it a family thing: Gideon, Mary, Bill and Percy were prefects prior. George certainly has the marks to be a prefect; it is only his behavior outside of classes that has kept him from becoming a prefect. Fred has decent marks as well but George is more of a respectable figure and I've noticed he tends to watch out for the younger years a bit like Bill used to before he graduated.”

“Where to next?” Dudley asked, he had barely scarfed down toast and an apple before coming.

“Charms.”

“Same classroom as before correct?” Remus asked.

“Yes, same as before only with different tests.” McGonagall sniffed.
“Thank you for giving me a chance to at least test this far.” Dudley said politely.

“I see that Andromeda’s manners have rubbed off some. I do hope that you take after her and are organized.”

Dudley blushed, “I have been trying to learn to stay organized. I was messy at home but we have dormitory inspections at my last school. The only things I think that might cross over would probably be the emphasis on exams, outside readings, lectures and essays.”

“My father sent me to our parish school, as the vicar it was expected that I attend there even though mother would have preferred I attended Hecate’s. She tended to our magical education since she was a housewife but she had to learn how to clean the Muggle way.” The Deputy Headmistress shrugged.

Remus and Dudley took their leave and headed to Flitwick’s classroom.

“Come in come in. are you feeling confident young man? I do hope you pass. A pity I won’t be your instructor.” Professor Flitwick said in greeting.

Remus frowned, “Why would you not be teaching him?”

“I have two apprentices, a Miss Clearwater who will be teaching my third years and a Miss Ollivander who will be assisting me with the First Years and grading their essays. Miss Clearwater was our former Head Girl two years back, I am sure you remember her Remus. Miss Ollivander was one of the Beauxbatons’ hopefuls who were our guests during the Triwizard Tournament.”

“Beauxbatons? Would she be related to Louis Ollivander?” Remus asked.

“Her grandfather I believe, she grew up learning wandlore but she wanted become a Charms Mistress before she officially apprenticed to her grandfather. She is his expected heir to his Paris shop.” Flitwick grinned, “So do you have more of those marvelous essays? I was not surprised, after all your tutor was one of my best students.”

“What would you like first?”

“Normally I test a student’s skill with Aresto Momentum…but I would like to see how you fair with more spells.”

Dudley grinned, “Bring it!”

Flitwick laughed, throwing a dozen objects in the air and return them to their original size. “Wingardium Leviosa mejora.”

The dozen objects proceeded float around the room.

Dudley took aim at each object, barking, “Aresto Momentum!” until each had frozen in place.

“Well done! There are a few large objects over there. Why don’t you try levitating them?”

Dudley smirked, “No problem.” Remus made him levitate furniture and conjured objects…

“Excellent! How is your control of the Incendio?”

“Perfect.” Dudley said smugly as he lit a piece of paper on fire but didn’t burn the desk it was lying on.
“I am impressed to have come so far in such a short period of time. I am just dying to read those essays.”

Dudley produced them with flourish, “And I look forward to your comments.”

“Run along then, Aurora is waiting for you in the Great Hall. Had me charm the ceiling again…”

Dudley made his way with Remus at his heels to the Great Hall, at least when he started school he would know where most of the classes were. With the exception of Astronomy but if he made a friend in his dormitory then it would be easier yes?

“Come in Mr. Tonks. I’ll take those essays if you please.”

Dudley handed them over.

“Your exam is set on the Gryffindor table again.” Professor Sinistra said kindly.

Dudley thanked her politely and took out his quill and a pot of black ink.

Correctly identity constellations by season and hemisphere. Bonus points for listing names of familiar constellations in various cultures

Dudley smirked, and set out to record them. Starting of course with Heracles and Andromeda…

There were quite a large number of constellations and some have different names in other cultures, he was very intimately familiar with Arabic and Greco-roman constellations and star names because of how many Blacks were named for the constellations and their stars.

It took him forty minutes to list every constellation he knew and the other names for the star formations.

Dudley handed his exam to Professor Sinistra after casting the charms to make his writing legible. “Thank you Professor. I am ever so grateful. I do hope that I haven’t upset your summer too badly.”

“My bonded and I are both professors here, so Septima understands. My daughter Aslesha is studying for her NEWTS and she’s a Ravenclaw like us so she’s been buried in books.” Sinistra laughed.

“I wish her luck then.” Dudley said politely.

“She won’t need it but I will pass it on. I was a few years behind Andromeda; Septima was Head Girl between Andromeda and Demeter Lovegood. I was a Prefect myself but I served with the three of them. Andromeda was a fine witch and a fair prefect for a Slytherin. I am happy she’s done well for herself. If only our healer was as competent as she was…a shame that Gideon passed. He would have been just as adept…” the Astronomy professor shrugged.

“It’s off to Herbology I suppose…” Dudley muttered. He hoped that Professor Sprout wasn't as hard as George…

The two made their way out of the castle and out to the greenhouses where they were met but Professor Sprout who had the usual amount of earth on her clothes as she had the first time he met her.

“Hello Mr. Tonks are you ready for your exam?”

Dudley grinned, “George is a bit of a slave driver.”
“He had one of the highest OWL scores since I took over for Professor Beery.” Professor Sprout chuckled, “Of course some of the best Herbologists are keen brewers. Some prefer to raise their own ingredients…though that doesn't seem to be the case with Mr. Longbottom.”

“George taught me a lot but some I only know the theory of. We found Mandrakes in the greenhouses where I’m visiting but they were too old so George told me not to touch them that even with ear protection they would be far too dangerous.” Dudley shrugged as he took his Hebridean Black Dragon Hide gloves out of his back pocket.

“How old are they?”

“The last keen herbologist was mother’s cousin Regulus so George said the greenhouse and herb garden has been untended since before his death probably.”

“They are still alive?” Professor Sprout gasped, hand over her heart

“The raining and sunshine charms were still working but the plants had grown out of control. You should see the charms George cast on some of the more dangerous plants. Overgrown devil’s snare is a fiend I’ll tell you.”

“With your knowledge of re-potting mandrakes only theory, are you confident you can do so?” Professor Sprout frowned.

Dudley smirked, “George taught me a nifty hex that temporarily takes away my hearing. He says its more reliable then the ear mufflers. I think he and Andromeda plan to harvest the mandrakes anyway. Something about them having some worth in obscure potions at their maturation...”

“If you think you can re-pot it safely you are welcome to try. I don’t teach that hex but I know it and when I work with mandrakes solo I tend to use it because it is more reliable then the mufflers.” Sprout acquiesced.

Dudley pointed his wand at his face and muttered the hearing hexing charm before giving the Herbology teacher a thumbs up. Then he checked the pot of fresh soil to be sure that it would do, and then he grabbed the leafy top of the mandrake in his big fist and yanked. The ugly thing wailed soundlessly and Dudley slammed it into the pot but not before casting a strengthening charm to keep from destroying the pot with the force of his plunging the mandrake into it.

Once the plant was safely in the pot, Professor Sprout tapped Dudley on the shoulder.

Dudley immediately removed the hex and returned his hearing, “Yes?”

“I would like you to locate the Abyssinian Shrivelfigs, correctly tend one and harvest one successfully so that it will be suitable for potions. I believe that Professor Snape still teaches the Shrinking Solution to his Third Years, so it is entirely possible that the ingredients that you harvest might be used in your Potions class this year.”

Dudley located a pair of clippers and then searched the aisles of the Greenhouse for the shivelfigs. There were shelves of at least forty on the far wall, he took two and carried them to a worktable. He began to prune the withered bits the way that George hammered into his head. Then he snipped some of the good leaves from both shivelfigs and gently harvested the fruits so that he didn't bruise them. Once he was satisfied he’d done well he set done the shears, “Professor?”

Sprout was at his side in an instant and congratulated him for doing a superb job and raving about how good of a teacher that George was. “Now lastly, I’d like you to successfully tend and harvest Leaping Toadstools.”
Dudley nodded and walked through a warded section of the greenhouse that had some of those things. They were all around the greenhouse at Grimmauld; somehow they weren't vanished when Harry cleared the yard after losing his temper with idiot Weasels.

Dudley thank god had fast hands due to his boxing experience so he snatched the toadstools that bounced off the wards and flew through the air. He tossed them into a bucket with the others that had stuck to it and filled it to the brim by throwing them into it. Then he proceeded to spread dragon dung fertilizer over the area and used the water charm to water it. Dudley smirked as he left the warded area with the bucket of toadstools, "Complete."

"Perfect," Professor Sprout said clapping her hands.

Dudley grinned handing over his essays, "I’ll be glad to be finished being George’s student…"

"George is quite interested in the care and use of many of my plants. He’s helped out a few times in exchange for some of my spare cuttings."

"Typical, those two always benefit when they help. I heard that they helped clean the drawing room and received a silver box of something called Wartcap powder. As well as new wardrobes, I’m not interested in blokes but I have to say their appearance has improved…"

"I suspect you’ll all surprise us. Well off to potions with you now Mr. Tonks."

"Thank you Professor." Dudley bowed.

Dudley and Remus left the greenhouses to head back up to the castle and down to the dungeons.

Unlike before Remus was whistling.

While Dudley couldn’t understand the attraction, he hoped that Remus and Professor Snape getting back together did wonders for the man’s temper.

"You’re late!" Snape barked.

So much for that…

Dudley bowed, "My apologies professor. Catching leaping toadstools took longer then I expected." He held out his essays.

Snape snatched them. "I want a Hair-Raising Potion and a Swelling Solution."

Dudley nodded

"Get to work."

Remus grinned, "Are we still meeting for dinner?"

"As long as the Dark Lord doesn’t summon me yes." His professor grumbled.

Dudley started to tune them out as he began to brew. While he wasn’t fond of the subject he was decent at it, but he would most likely not be apprenticing to a Potions master. Nor was he overly fond of Herbology, he would continue it as long as he had to but he planned on dropping it if he could…

Dudley sighed reading the recipe.
The ingredients were one cup of pure spring water, two scoops of dried nettles, three dried puffer-fish eyes and one bat spleen. The nettles were itchy but the last two were disgusting...

Dudley reviewed the directions before beginning.

· Add two scoops of dried nettles to the mortar
· Add three dried puffer-fish eyes to the mortar
· Crush into a medium-fine powder
· Add two measures of the crushed mix to your cauldron to one cup of pure spring water
· Heat on a medium temperature for twenty seconds
· Leave to brew and return in 60 minutes
· Add one bat spleen to the cauldron
· Stir four times, anti-clockwise
· Heat to low for thirty seconds

Dudley began by adding the nettles and puffer-fish eyes to his mortar and ground them to the proper consistency using light pressure. Then he added the two proscribed scoops with a steady hand to the cauldron before lighting the fire and checking as the cauldron slowly warmed. He cast temperature charms until it reached medium temperature and then timed it for twenty seconds before turning it down to simmer for an hour.

While he waited for the swelling solution to simmer properly, Dudley cast an alarm charm to remind him in time while he turned to the Hair-Raising Potion.

The timer went off about the time he finished the second potion…

With deft fingers Dudley added the bat spleen and then stirred the potion with a wooden stirring rod the proscribed four times counter-clockwise in a gentle even motion before letting it heat a little for thirty seconds. Then he turned the heat off and bottle both potions before clearing his throat.

Snape snapped, “Finished?”

Dudley nodded.


Dudley grinned, “Hopefully I do well enough to start the year as a Third Year.”

“We shall see.” Snape said sharply. “Now get off with you both. I have to grade your exam and essays.”

“Thank you Professor Snape. I am sure as a Potions Master you have many demands on your time in the summer. I am most grateful that you’ve taken the time to let me take these exams.” Dudley said with a bow before cleaning his station and leaving.

“Hard to believe that was Petunia’s son.” Snape grumbled.

Remus chuckled, “He’s not anymore…that’s Andromeda’s boy now.”

Dudley felt proud in spite of himself as he made his way up to the classroom Remus would test him in to see if Sirius did a good job…

“Well I’m supposed to test you on the Verdimillious spell against duel targets, Expelliarmus, Tongue-Tying Curse, Tickling Charm and ask for an essay on Fire Crabs. You know where to find them, how to care for them and how to defend yourself from them.” Remus said as they made their
way down the corridor to his old classroom.

“Sirius was very good with the spell work but Dark Creatures well I had to learn that from the text.” Dudley shrugged as Remus opened the door.

“What would you like to start with?”

“Expelliarmus!” Dudley said smugly and Remus’ wand flew into his hand.

“Ten points to your future House for that.” Remus said summoning his wand back wandlessly.

Dudley grinned, “Dummies or you for the Tongue-Tying Curse and Tickling Charm?”

“Well obviously, those two wouldn’t affect a conjured dummy.”

“Very well.” Dudley then cast the spells simultaneously on Remus.

Remus was surprised but then again with Sirius as a teacher he shouldn’t be surprised. Sirius liked to attack when his opponent or target was off-guard…

Dudley waited two minutes before casting finite to end the spells.”

“Well then,” Remus conjured to dummies as targets.

Dudley immediately cast the Verdimillious spell on them.

“Smart arse go write that essay and let me have Sirius’ assigned ones.”

Dudley handed them off and went to write the essay on fire crabs. Since he’d reviewed after shopping it wasn’t hard to write it quickly and cast the spells to make it readable and correct his spelling errors.

Remus was a speed reader and had perused Dudley’s essays already, “well done. Probably the most through essays I’ve read, they show excellent insight and understanding of topics. Without the Fire crab essay you’re sitting on an Outstanding, you, Ted and Andromeda should be proud.”

Dudley shifted nervously, “Just one exam to go…History of magic. It’s back to Professor McGonagall. I really hope she isn’t my Head of House…I don’t like her much.”

“She’s strict but she’s usually fair…unless you’re a Slytherin which I doubt even if it would please Andromeda. You’re not the sort to end up there and you’re not a Hufflepuff either. Unless you’re the brainy sort you’re probably a Gryffindor…you wouldn’t be the first Black to be Sorted there. Sirius was so you’re in good company; all of the others are Gryffindors so it would be fine. Fred and Hermione will look after you.” Remus chuckled.

Dudley sighed, “I’ll end up where I end up I guess…”

They returned to McGonagall’s office and Dudley was handed his History of Magic essay exam. It was on International Warlock Convention of 1289 and Medieval Assembly of European Wizards. Which Hermione had made sure to cover in her ‘lectures’.

Once Dudley was convinced he’d covered most everything she’d drilled into his head he cast the spelling and handwriting correction charms before handing it in. Politely thanking the Deputy Headmistress for helping him, wishing her a good summer (what was left of it anyway) and that he’d see her at Sorting.
Then Dudley and Remus flooed back to Grimmauld…
The long-awaited Quidditch lesson

Dudley’s exams had taken too long so the match was postponed for the next day.

Every five minutes one of them had been running to the open window of the ladies parlor.

The last time one of them asked if Charlie, Bill or Oliver were there they were hit with a jinx.

A nasty one that Sirius had to take off…

Hermione called out the window, “Bill was just in the Dining room. He asked Andromeda to bring Charlie and Oliver through the floo.”

“Yes!” Fred and George gave each other a high five.

Sirius was instructing Dudley the different types of swings against a Bludger and how a back handed one was the most difficult.

In a seemingly planned orchestrated move Fred, George and Harry were in headlocks; Bill had George, Charlie had Fred and Oliver had Harry which sent Dudley, Sirius and Remus into gales of laughter.

“How have you been?” Bill grinned.

“Well.” George laughed.

“Is that Harry?” Charlie asked, “The fearless Forth Year who took on our mad Horntail?”

Harry glared, “I’m not a Forth Year anymore…”

Charlie laughed, “Of course you aren’t. I won’t ask if Dumbledore made you a prefect because Mum wrote me to tell me Ron was. That’s a mistake…”

“Who is this strapping young man?” Oliver asked giving Dudley an admiring look, “He looks like your son sir.” Addressing himself to Sirius, “Oliver Wood, Reserve Keeper for Puddlemere United.”

“Sirius Black, the unjustly accused. This is Dudley Black-Tonks, my cousin Andromeda’s son. He’s transferring to Hogwarts.” Sirius said clapping Dudley on the back.

“Please tell me you’re a Beater, with mine graduating this year Gryffindor will need some.”

Fred smirked, “Already on it Ollie. We’re going to make a first-rate Beater out of Big D.”

“If he’s anything close to you then Gryffindor still has a chance of beating Slytherin. Who is captain now?” Bill put in his two Knuts worth.

“Pucey or Montague probably.” George shrugged, “Though with Diggory dead, Head Boy should be either Pucey or Davies. I hope it’s Pucey, Davies is an arrogant cuss. Angelina gets along better with him I think. If Pucey’s Head Boy then Montague might be a prefect in his stead…”

“So we’ve got two Keepers, two Seekers, four Beaters and a chaser?” Fred frowned, “That would make this very uneven…”

“Make that four Chasers young man.”
They turned to find Minerva McGonagall standing there with a broom and three envelopes.

“Professor…” the group turned to stare at her jaw dropped.

“I used to fly as a Chaser when I was in school. My nephews Micheal McGonagall and Ross King. You remember them don’t you Remus? Sirius? They were on the team with you.”

Remus and Sirius nodded gobsmacked.

“I came to deliver your letters and Andromeda told me about this. I haven’t played Quidditch in ages. We’re out of practice but my nephews won an award for playing…” Professor McGonagall said.

“What letters would that be?” Bill asked politely.

“An acceptance of a temporary post of Professor of Care of Magical Creatures to one Charlus Weasley, a prefectship to Georgius Weasley and acceptance of attendance as a Third Year to Dudley Black-Tonks.”

“That was quick…” Dudley stammered.

“We the professors were so astounded that we have accepted you after meeting to discuss your marks this morning. We are counting on you to continue to do well.” The deputy Headmistress said with a shrug.

“I don’t understand. Towler is prefect…he shouldn’t have been considered for Head Boy…” George frowned.

“Towler transferred to Tahquamenon. His family moved there and since he wasn’t in the running for Head Boy he chose to resign.”

“Since when were you the professor type?” Fred glared at Charlie.

“Albus asked me to fill in for Hagrid. I talked things over with Dragomir who is the Head of the Preserve and he agreed to let me go on leave.” Charlie shrugged.

“I wish I hadn’t dropped the class now.” George moaned. “Dropped it to take alchemy…”

“Well why don’t you help me with say the Third Years,” Charlie offered, “then you can study for your NEWT in your spare time.”

“That could be arranged.” McGonagall concurred.

“You’re the best.” George grinned.

Dudley groaned, George teaching again?

“We’re only two players short but I think we can make the best of it. We’re got three former captains, we should let Bill and Oliver captain I think.” McGonagall advised.

“Sure.” Bill said smirking, “I’ll take Charlie, the twins, Micheal and Ross.”

Oliver shrugged, “I’ll take Black, Tonks, Lupin, Harry and the Professor.”

The captains took their choices aside to brief them.

“We don’t have a referee.” Charlie frowned once they were ready to play..
“Andromeda forced me to come.” Severus grumbled having appeared out of nowhere.

“Brilliant!” Harry smirked.

Severus groaned, “Mount your brooms.”

The twelve prospective players did so.

Severus blew his whistle, “Begin.” With a wave of his hand all of the balls were released and they all pushed off.

Harry and Charlie took off after the snitch immediately.

Remus beat the other Chasers to Quaffle and took off.

George whacked a bludger at his former professor.

Remus dodged it.

Sirius intercepted and sent it at Ross.

Fred did a reckless maneuver and whacked it towards Remus again.

This time Dudley got it and sent it at Ross again who was the closest to Remus.

Only to have Ross saved again by Fred.

Remus took aim at one of the hoops and hurled it.

Oliver caught it and threw it to Ross. “Better luck next time Professor.”

Dudley set the Bludger at Ross again who yelped and dropped it.

His Aunt snatched it up and tore up the sky on a single-minded quest to score.

Fred and George scrambled for bludgers.

Bill did his best to block but McGonagall scored.

Oliver’s team: Sirius, Remus and Dudley cheered.

Of course that just put Bill’s more on their mettle.

The Seekers were absorbed in their own match and didn’t really pay attention.

Once Bill’s team had taken Oliver’s measure they played harder.

Being all Gryffindors cheating wasn’t really in their nature with the exceptions of their Beaters’ aiming- three had no qualms about aiming for your head.

Scoring went back and forth really but each point was hard to gain and they relished it all the more.

Harry’s shout of ‘I’ve got it! I beat Charlie to the Snitch!’ brought them all to a stop.

Severus squinted; sure enough the intrepid Gryffindor was waving a clenched fist.

“Two hundred to fifty then. Oliver’s team wins.”
The match had lasted two hours.

On the ground was the Black Head Elf Gilly.

“Mistress asked Gilly to tell family and guests that luncheon be on the table.”

The tired Quidditch players and referee cast refresher charms on themselves gratefully making their way to the house.

Dudley turned to the Deputy Headmistress as they headed inside, “I’d like to be added to be enrolled in Muggle Studies and Care of Magical Creatures.”

“Why would you want Muggle Studies?” the Scottish witch frowned.

“I’d like to see what wizards think of them. Maybe put in my two penny’s worth. I did spend four years at a Muggle boarding school for students the same age as your students. I think I’d an interesting addition.” Dudley shrugged.

“Very well I will inform Professor Burbage and you can tell Charlie to add you to his list of students.” The Deputy Headmistress nodded sharply as she handed him his acceptance letter.

Dudley was looking forward to going Hogwarts. It felt like he’d been waiting his whole life to the letter she handed him.
Something new on the Hogwarts’ Express

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The train left at eleven.

So at a twenty-five till they all assembled.

Andromeda handed Hermione a shrunken picnic basket to place in her backpack purse.

They all had their trunks shrunken.

Hermione’s was in her purse.

Dudley, Harry, George and Fred had theirs in their pocket; they had chosen to wear their leather jackets with cooling charms. Even though Harry was told his didn’t quite suit him, he stubbornly insisted on wearing it anyway.

Thankfully, Ginny had returned to The Burrow last night.

All but Sirius were portkeying to Platform Nine and Three-Quarters.

Sirius gave Harry a hug and shook the other boys’ hands while he gave Hermione a brotherly, “Take care of yourselves. Summon one of the elves if you need to get a message to me. Hedwig is too distinctive and I’m not that far away if you need me. Remus will visit often so he can sneak letters or messages.”

Harry nodded, “Understood. Hedwig already left for Hogwarts. It’s just Skylla and I.” despite her size, his rainbow serpent wrapped around his neck like a scarf.

“Off with you now.” Sirius said turning to head back to his study.

“You heard Sirius.” Andromeda said sharply. “Grab on. Making a dramatic entrance is one thing but missing the train is not acceptable.”

They were all subjected the hook in naval sensation of a portkey, with Harry sagging against George once they arrived.

Ted hugged Dudley and Harry, kissed Hermione’s hand and shook hands with the twins. “Be good, study hard and make us all proud.”

“Being a prefect is a great honour and a responsibility,” Andromeda gave George and Hermione a look that meant ‘don’t embarrass us.’ “Study hard, I expect you to do well. Blacks always have a core of steel in them and I expect you to as well.”

“Yes mother.” Dudley said spontaneously stepping forward to kiss her cheek and then he turned pink.

Andromeda’s eyes glistened. “I’ll be proud of you no matter what House you’re in but please don’t be a Hufflepuff.”

Dudley frowned, “I don’t want to be anything like Seph.”
As the five made their way to the train, there were whispers and remarks.

Where had they gotten clothes like that? No one had seen the like before…

Since when did Harry Potter look that good? Were those new glasses?

Who was that beauty holding hands with… was that Fred or George? That couldn’t be Hermione…

Wait, didn’t she look amazing at the Yule Ball last December?

As they passed Ginny, Ron, Arthur and Molly; the twin’s mother turned back to her normal colouring.

“Molly?” a slightly older version of the twins stepped up to her.

Arthur paled, “Gideon?”

“Yes. I’ll talk to you later. Molly, you and I are going to have a nice chat. I’ve see the tapestries, I know what you did.”

The witch stiffened, “What would that be?”

“You broke your contract with the House of Weasley. It has been suspended.”

“You can’t do that…”

“I can and I have with Septimus’ consent.”

The group left Arthur to his astonishment, Molly to her embarrassment, Ron to his mortification and Ginny the mouse to her bewilderment.

They entered the train and at the fourth compartment Skylla moved her head from Harry’s neck and hissed, “Snake master.”

Harry paused, “What’s?”

“Snake and a speaker.” Skylla replied in Parseltongue. “Let me speak to him. I’ve wished for snake company. He’s male and virile…”

Harry sighed, “Alright.” He turned to his friends, “Skylla wants to speak to the snake in this compartment.”

He heard hissing from inside the compartment.

“Aodhan! Please? Let me speak to her. I haven’t spoken to another snake in years. Not since you took me from that horrible place.”

Harry opened the compartment and saw a tall dark haired boy dressed all in black.

“Harry Potter?”

“I have the misfortune to bear that name.” Harry sighed.

“Aodhan Urquhart. I’m the Sixth Year Slytherin prefect.” The boy said in thick Scottish accent.

“This is Skylla.” Harry said in Parseltongue.
“This is Abaddon.” Aodhan replied likewise.

Harry whistled, replying in English for his friends, “Sweet Merlin that’s the biggest snake I’ve seen aside from Salazar’s basilisk.”

“Of course that was what was in the fabled Chamber of Secrets. You killed it didn’t you to rescue the Weasley mouse.” Aodhan sighed, moving out of the way. “I think our snakes want to get acquainted. I’m not very social but come in.”

“All of us?” Hermione asked from behind Harry.

“I guess we’ll have to make room.” Aodhan took out his wand and cast a bunch of spells non-verbally to enlarge the space.

Skylla slithered down Harry and went to curl up beside the giant snake.

“What is that? A baby basilisk?” Fred gasped.

Aodhan snorted, “No, Abaddon is an albino Burmese Python. Biggest on record if I had him examined. He’s larger then most females, he’s spoilt and perhaps a bit overfed. A great sight better then that lousy toad my godfather gave me. He must have had a senile moment. I told him I wanted a snake or an owl but not a cat.”

Dudley’s cat hissed at him from his place on Dudley’s shoulder.

Crookshanks was happy to stay in his basket seemingly because he wasn’t hissing to get out.

“You’re the Weasley twins.” Aodhan said gruffly. “You must be Granger but you don’t look like her really.” He glanced at Dudley, “You’re not the Weasel that Malfoy is always complaining over.”

Dudley grinned, “Dudley Black-Tonks. I’m Harry’s distant but newly adopted cousin. My education was sporadic at best and I only qualified to start as a Third Year but I hope next summer I can catch up and join my cousin in sixth year courses next year.”

“How’d you get to be prefect? What happened to Towler?”

“Transferred to Tahquamenon.” George shrugged.

“He was a bore. Glad to see that he’s gone. Not surprised Granger was the new girls’ prefect; do you know who your partner is?”

The five newcomers looked at one another and collectively groaned, “Ron.”

“I see, senile moment again.” Aodhan spat, “I really, really dislike him. He’s trying to talk me into joining his precious Order when I turn seventeen in October and I told him to go look for his brain. That Giant Squid must had eaten it because I wouldn’t join that useless group if he paid me.”

“Your godfather is Albus Dumbledore?” Harry asked dumbfound.

“Your horror and eternal dismay, I don’t know what my mother was thinking.”

“Who is your mother?” Hermione asked.
“A woman who doesn’t know I exist thank you very much. I spent eleven years thinking I was an orphan. I’ve met her, I dislike her and she doesn’t seem to notice me. We’ll no doubt continue to avoid one another. Only two more years of that place and I can turn my back on it, you should have seen Snape’s face when I told him my career plan. He thought I was joking at first and then he turned green.” Aodhan chortled.

“What do you want to do?”

“Breed snakes. I want to find a healthy Burmese and breed her to Abaddon.”

Harry grinned, “I want to do that also. I bet that McGonagall will react the same way…”

“I’ve never spoken with another speaker.” Aodhan said wistfully. “My dormmates ignore me. I don’t think they’ve forgiven me for showing up with a snake that kept growing. They were glad to see the back of me last year when I became prefect. I told Uncle Albus that I didn’t want it and to give it to someone else. He insisted. I do the bare minimum and try to get out of work. The Heads just assigned me to library duty and I did my homework. I annoyed them; I saw Johnson and Pucey with badges. Johnson’s still wearing her Quidditch Captain badge but I saw Montague with a Prefect and Captain Badge, he must have replaced Pucey and Flint.”

“Anyone’s better then Flint.” George snickered.

“Isn’t Montague the bloke who grabbed Katie’s head and said he thought it was a Quaffle?” Fred frowned.

“Quidditch move. Flint’s idea. Montague yelled at him that it was stupid and just because he was big didn’t me he was unintelligent unlike some people.” Aodhan shrugged.

“So you’re the lazy prefect…I hope we get put on rounds together. I don’t really want to work with Montague.” George muttered. “I hate Davies.”

“I don’t think anyone outside his own house likes him. I know his cousin Tracey doesn’t think much of him.” Aodhan said reaching down to touch Abaddon’s scales.

The large snake turned to him and rubbed his head against Aodhan’s hand before returning to his conversation with Skylla who seemed to glow more vibrantly in his presence.

The twins and Dudley’s stomachs growled.

Hermione took out the lunch basket from her purse and tapped it with her new wand. It returned to its original size. She conjured plates, napkins and silver and divided the food between the six of them.

Harry snapped his fingers and a Black House elf arrived with Skylla, Crookshanks and Tama’s dishes filled with food.

Aodhan copied him and a glaring elf arrived with a dish for Abaddon.

“Simi no need Master Aodhan to call her like a crup. Simi say that snake no need to eat when young Master does.”

Harry blinked. “House elves can tell their masters off? I didn’t know that.”

“Simi Head Elf. Master Aodhan is still a boy. Simi no need pay him any mind unless Simi want to. Simi going now. Master be good!”
Aodhan glared at the spot she had been in, “Stupid elf.”

“Why don’t you free her?” Hermione frowned, “If she displeases you, then shouldn’t you let her go?”

Aodhan gaped at her, “WHAT? Why would I do that? She’s my only link to my father, she was his elf. Besides, who would I banter with? She practically raised me…I don’t know what we’d do without her. I don’t like her but she keeps the estate running for me. She keeps Uncle Albus from poking his crooked nose where it doesn’t belong.”

“Oh.” Hermione said softly.

The subject ended and they all settled back to eat quietly.

After all, Hermione’s friends weren’t very good at conversing while eating.

Chapter End Notes

the name "Aodhan", btw, is the Gaelic version of the name Aiden. It is pronounced aodhan = ode-han.
skylla is a terribly evil sea monster from greek mythology for those who don't know.
skylla = skii-lya
“Master Aodhan be waking up right now! Simi shouldn’t have to remind Master about duties. Up now!”

Hermione rubbed her ears. “Ouch.”

“Prefect meeting starting soon. Miss Granger and Master Weasley be going to?”

George groaned stretching, “I’m up.”

Harry hit him and turned to curl up against Fred’s side to go back to sleep.

“Don’t go fancying my boyfriend.” Hermione teased.

“’s not my type.” Harry mumbled.

“Same.” Fred yawned, “Harry’s a brother…and a boy. I like pretty birds…”

Hermione threw her purse at him and sauntered off.

Dudley of course slept right through it.

Aodhan having attended prefect meetings before led them to the Heads carriage at the front of the train.

They were greeted at the door.

“Hello Urquhart.” Angelina said politely but a little cold. “Granger.”

“Angelina.” George grinned. “So you are Head Girl and you kept Quidditch captain.”

Angelina glared at him, “I want to play for the Harpies. They’ll pay more attention if I’m a captain. You know…oh you’re George. Then you don’t because I didn’t tell you that. I heard Towler resigned and transferred so you’re his replacement.”

“Don’t make it sound like he’s better then I am. I was told Third Year I could be a prefect, I told McGonagall I didn’t want it. She won.” George grumbled.

“Johnson, you’re blocking the door.” came a bear-like voice.

“Pucey tell your musclehead to put a Quaffle in it.” Angelina said tossing her head.

“Brecc be nice.” Adrian Pucey from the Slytherin team chided.

“It’s true Adrian.” A tall good-looking familiar Slytherin muttered.

“Once the new Gryffindor boys prefect shows up…” Angelina began.

“Trust Ron to be late.” George grumbled.

“I would be on time if you lot weren’t blocking the door.” Ron spat. “It’s bad enough I had to share
a carriage with Hufflepuffs and Ginny.”

“If we’re all here Johnson, we should start the meeting.” Pucey said politely.

“Quite right.” Angelina said briskly.

“For those who don’t know me my name is Adrian Pucey. I am this year’s Head Boy.”

“Only ‘cause Diggory got himself offed.” Ron muttered from his place in the corner.

George and the Hufflepuff Beater now captain and Prefect Rickett snorted, “No great loss.”

Angelina and a blonde witch in Hufflepuff robes kicked them.

“Cho’s just beside herself.” A Ravenclaw girl said quietly. “He proposed before the Third Task.”

George sniffed, “She’s better off without that two-timing git. Hopefully she has better taste this time around.”

“If she goes with Davies, she wouldn’t be much better off. He’s just as big of a player but he usually doesn’t date members of his team.” Rickett shrugged.

Davies glared, “Hey!”

“That is enough!” Adrian barked. “I plan on being a little more lax. Those of us who served under the Headship of Percy Weasley and Clearwater as well as Desdemona Melflua and Gerald Vaisley will be happy to know that since both your Heads play Quidditch, prefect assignments will be arranged around practices. I plan on being fair. Who plans to audition for the team this year besides the captains?”

George, a vaguely familiar Hufflepuff boy, Pucey, Malfoy, one of the Corner twins, Alicia, Katie and Ron raised their hands.

“That leaves four Ravenclaw prefects free, two Gryffindors, four Hufflepuffs and three Slytherins who won’t need to have their schedules rearranged. I expect the captains to turn in a proposed list of practices within the week after meeting with their Head of House and a finished team list with prefects highlighted. Perfects you’ll receive your schedules at breakfast tomorrow; you have twenty-four hours after that to hand your schedule either to the Head Girl or to myself.” Pucey said politely. “We’ll give the students a day or two before we start prefect rounds officially.”

“Rather than Fifth Years escorting the First Years to the Houses,” Angelina said sternly, “the Seventh Years will undertaking that duty. The password to gain the attention of my door guard is Gwenog. Any girls with questions are welcome to visit, it is behind the nuns’ tapestry on the seventh floor for non-Gryffindors but behind the portrait of the Seeker for those coming from the Common Room.”

“The Slytherin Head Boy’s chamber is accessible from outside the Slytherin Dungeons via the portrait of Vindictus Veridian, for those who don’t know him he was a former Head of Slytherin and his photograph is in A History of Hogwarts. For those who don’t love books, many of the portraits in that corridor will be glad to assist you. From the common room, it is behind the statue of Salazar Slytherin.”

“Since we don’t know all of you,” Angelina began, “Please introduce yourself starting with Gryffindor.”
Montague glared at her.

“Alicia Spinnet, 7th Year girls prefect and I’m a Gryffindor Chaser.”

“George Weasley, I’m one of Gryffindor's Human Bludgers.” George shrugged.

“Katerina Belby but I go by Katie Bell, I’m the 6th Year girls prefect and I fly as a Chaser for Gryffindor.”

“Edward Stewart, I’m the Sixth Year boys prefect and I’m Susan Bones’ cousin.”

“Hermione Granger, I’m the Fifth Year girls prefect.”

“Ron Weasley, 5th year boys.”

“Hufflepuff.” Adrian gestured at the tall blonde girl.

“Deborah Smith, 7th Year girls prefect.”

“Anthony Rickett, better known as Tony, I’m our House’s Quidditch Captain and 7th Year prefect, and I play Beater.”

“Michael MacManus, reserve Beater and 6th Year boys prefect.”

“Lina Tandel, 6th Year girls.”

“Susan Bones, 5th Year girls.”

“Eron Macmillan, I go by Ernie and I’m 5th Year boys.”

“Slytherin.” Adrian gestured at his own House who were congregated at his left.

“Brecc Montague, I’m the new 7th Year boys prefect.”

“Gemma Farley, 7th Year girls.”

“Giselle Goyle, 6th Year girls.”

“Aodhan Urquhart. The lazy prefect and I’m a Sixth Year.” Aodhan drawled.

“Draco Malfoy, I’m Slytherin’s Seeker, the youngest since Regulus Black and I’m a Fifth Year.”

“Pansy Parkinson, Draco’s counterpart.” Pansy said frowning.

“Ravenclaws if you please.” Adrian gestured carelessly at them.

“Rodger Davies, I am the Seventh Year boys prefect and House captain.”

“Talitha Vector; Professors Vector and Sinistra’s daughter; I serve as our Seventh Year girls prefect.”

“Grieg Ollivander, 6th Year boys.”

“Marietta Edgecombe, 6th Year girls.”

An equally shy girl who looked as much like Pavarti as George did Fred spoke up, “Padma…Patil… I’m a Fifth Year…”
“Michael Corner, Fifth Year boys.”

“We’ll be assigning partners and you will most likely be working with someone who isn’t in your House.” Pucey announced. “I suggest you get to know at least those in your year. We’ll be pairing you up based on schedule compatibility. So Quidditch players will most likely be paired together; something like Rickett and Brecc or Davies and Spinnett. I think prefects should set an example by spending time with those from other Houses. The only mixed House partners shouldn’t be the Heads.”

“There are refreshments so feel free to stick around and partake.” Angelina shrugged. “By the way Gryffindor’s password is Mimbulus mimbletonia- use it wisely, Ravenclaw’s will be the usual brainteaser, Hufflepuff’s is Abyssian Shrivelfig and Slytherin’s is Lilium auratum; apparently Professor Sprout picked the first passwords this year.”

Immediately she was cornered by George, Alicia and Katie no doubt to talk about Quidditch.

Aodhan tried to escape only to be trapped by the bubbly blonde who introduced herself as Giselle—was she the Goyle in Hermione’s year’s sister or cousin? They looked nothing alike…

Hermione headed over to the punch bowl to get a drink when a familiar Slytherin stepped into her path.

“Granger.” Parkinson said coolly polite.

Hermione sighed when she noticed that the normally unpleasant girl cast a privacy charm, “Parkinson.” Usually anytime she got too close to this wench she ended up with getting a spell tossed at her. Though the beaver teeth she gave her had finally given her an excuse to fix her teeth.

“Somehow I don’t find myself surprised about you’re being a prefect but just where did you get those clothes? Since when did you of all people have style?” Pansy Parkinson mused.

Hermione sighed, “I dressed quite a few people thank you very much. I bought half my wardrobe when I got back from school and half when we went shopping last week. I didn’t bring my nice clothes before and wasted money. I grew between September and July so nothing fit usually. I thought I didn’t want to wear such unattractive clothes anymore so I packed my expensive ones.”

“I’ve never see clothes like that…” the Slytherin girl mused.

Hermione glanced down at her outfit: she was wearing an animal print crepon silk dress with her long check gold and grey cotton trench coat from Burberry, paired with nude coloured Jimmy Choo wedge sandals. “This dress? It’s just in this season, I picked out George’s jacket and his outfit…you think he’s fine you should see my boyfriend and Harry. I was surprised, George and Harry are born shoppers and they have excellent taste.” She wrinkled her nose, “With the exception of Harry’s jacket. I told him it didn’t suit but he insisted on buying it.”

“Potter went shopping finally? With the vaults that boy has, it was unsettling to see him dress like a house elf.”

Hermione smirked, “Well he isn’t dressing that way anymore, since he now has a new wardrobe just like George and Fred. I believe he made a comment that those ‘clothes’ were only fit for a house elf to find a use for.”

“Of course those hideous things were only good for a house elf belonging to a poor house.” Pansy sniffed. “Just who is your boyfriend? Not that Weasel…”
Hermione choked, “Ron? No way. I wouldn’t date him if he were the last wizard on earth. I’d sooner marry a Muggle and that is impossible because I’m a witch. The whole secrecy thing…”

“I am glad to hear that. Neither would be worthy of your talents.” Parkinson said stiffly.

“It just feels strange there…” Hermione shrugged, unnerved at the compliment that seemed so unlike Parkinson, then again did she really know the girl long enough to judge if it were? “I look like them but I can do things they can’t imagine and don’t want to for the most part.”

“So who is your ‘boyfriend’?” Parkinson asked with a raised eyebrow.


“He’s bent?” Hermione gasped.

Parkinson hissed, “Don’t spread it around; he isn’t ready for it to be known. You know I’m a Slytherin and I’m a keen spell caster…”

Hermione shrugged, “It’s not like its bad to be bent. Harry is.”

Pansy smirked, “Really? That’s wonderful news…just wait until his prickliness learns that. I swear it always Potter this and Potter that, he still hasn’t let it drop that Potter refused his hand First Year.”

“The only one I know who hates Slytherins is Ron and we’re not exactly on speaking terms with him.” Hermione snipped.

“What happened to the ‘Golden Trio’?” Pansy asked, seeming more curious then catty.

“Harry came back and decided he was sick of being dragged around by the nose. Ron didn’t like that he grew a backbone. Harry doesn’t enjoy it when he’s treated a particular way and he went off on Ron. The twins and I are still in his good graces, his cousin is a student now and well he owes Harry a life debt for saving him from Dementors.”

Pansy stiffened, “Dementors? Why would he need to do that?”

“Someone sent Dementors to where he lives during the summers and they tried to attack him. Andromeda and I have suspicions…” Hermione said smugly.

“I hate Dementors.” Pansy spat, “Nasty things…”

“I got Sirius to teach me the Patronus charm, I figured if Harry could learn it, I could.” Hermione shrugged.

“I wish I could learn…it’s supposedly a Sixth Year spell though. Not that we’ve had any decent professors who would teach it. Lupin lectured on Dark Creatures and the fake Moody showcased Dark and Illegal Curses but Quirrell and Lockhart were jokes. I read the proscribed text, I can’t imagine how it would help us against You-Know-Who.”

Hermione scoffed, “The Ministry doesn’t want to believe that he’s back, have you read the Daily Prophet?”

“All the backhanded insults at Potter? Yes, nothing really newsworthy.” Pansy shrugged. “I would have thought that Skeeter would be interested in the Tournament but she didn’t have anything in print…”
“Oh Skeeter? She’s on vacation…” Hermione said tossing her carelessly.

“How do you know?” Pansy frowned.

“A magical beetle told me so…” Hermione smirked.

“Granger you continue to surprise me. Were you a Slytherin we might be friends…” Pansy chuckled.

Hermione blinked, “Us? Friends?”

“It was only a hypothetical point.” Pansy scowled.

“You have a much nicer face when you aren’t being cruel.”

“Ever heard the phrase cruel to be kind?” Pansy retorted.

“You mean you purposely bully people to teach them?”

“If you think I’m terrible you should visit the adult world Granger. All those in authority are the old families, we all have seats in the Wizengamot and most of us head the Ministry departments. Nearly all of the major businesses are owned by them as well, unless one is exceptional you will start at the bottom and you may be treated harsher then those who aren’t pureblood on at least one side. Halfbloods who join blood with a pureblood are treated better then those who choose to join blood with Muggles or Muggleborns. New ideas aren’t accepted easily. I really wish Hogwarts still offered a class that explained our society to Muggle-raised persons.” Pansy shrugged.

Hermione’s brow furrowed slightly, “They used to offer that class?”

“Dumbledore has phased out a lot of classes since he began teaching. They used to offer a sexual education class to Second Year students at the same time as our Flying classes were. It was thought that proper education prior to the beginning of true sexual maturing would be beneficial. Dumbledore according to my father claimed that such education should be done by the parents. However my mother died when I was young in childbirth, thanks to a second-rate healer who has since been banned from the profession, so my father sent me to a healer who treated witches specifically and instructed her to inform me of such things.”

“I know that it is required to be taught in all health classes at certain years of study in Muggle schools.” Hermione offered, “I was surprised it wasn’t at Hogwarts, especially with the given opinion that magical persons are superior to Muggles. They have a person called a counselor who often have degrees in psychology that advise students or helps them if they are having emotional problems to a degree.”

“Academic Advising is done Fifth Year with your Head of House.” Pansy sniffed, “Mental healing is preformed by Mind Healers, a large percentage are attached to the Janus Thickey ward at St. Mungos’.”

By this time the prefects had begun to disappear.

Aodhan was looking cruelly used and George was shifting nervously.

Hermione sighed, “I think my companions want to leave. I’ll see you around then.”

Pansy inclined her head regally as she brought down the privacy spells, “Likewise.”
Hermione nodded and turned on her heel to leave.

George and Aodhan made polite excuses and left at her heels.

‘That was a very strange encounter’, Hermione thought…

Chapter End Notes

Outing anyone is not acceptable behaviour but in Pansy’s case, it really was an accident. Hermione only mentioned Harry because one, he never said not to and two, to appear to be giving Pansy equal 'gossip' about one of Hogwarts' richest wizards.
A return to Hogwarts and a Re-evaluation.

They’d dozed off with Simi waking Aodhan shrilly for the prefect meeting which a groggy Hermione and George joined him for leaving Harry and Fred to go back to sleep.

Dudley hadn’t woken; he didn’t until Tama scratched him.

“Come on, we’ve got to put on our robes but I’m leaving mine open.” Fred smirked summoning his from his pocket.

The other six put their robes on but neither of them closed them.

Tama and Crookshanks took off like they were being chased by a dog.

Skylla slithered back up Harry to entwine around his neck like a scarf.

Aodhan whistled, “Been a long time since Abaddon could do that…”

They waited until the train was mostly empty before leaving and climbed into one of the last carriages.

Hermione sat sedately on Fred’s lap and a glowering Harry sat on George’s.

Dudley and Aodhan shared a seat and Abaddon took the floor.

They regally entered the castle and the masses parted at the strange group.

Harry had George’s arm around his shoulder, while Fred had an arm around Hermione’s waist.

Dudley walked a step behind Harry, staying in his shadow until he knew where he was to go. He wasn’t fond of the idea of standing with First Years…

Aodhan wasn’t used to the sort of attention he was getting but didn’t shy from it; Abaddon went to make his way to his private bed chamber in the Dungeons. He held out his hand to Harry, “It was a pleasure to make your acquaintance.”

“Likewise.” Harry said shaking it.

Aodhan smugly made his way to the Slytherin table ignoring the familiar glare of disapproval he felt from his godfather.

Harry was almost at the table when something unusual happened.

A four-fold voice came from the Sorting Hat.

“We are Hogwarts. We will speak.”

The entire Great Hall fell silent.

“We have watched. We have hoped. We will right wrongs. Will Herodotus Potter, Hermione Granger, Dudley Black-Tonks, Georgius Weasley, Fridericus Weasley, Dean Dearborn known as Thomas, Susan Bones, Colin Prewett known as Creevey, Leslie Moody, Grieg Ollivander, Ronald and Ginerva Dumbledore known as Weasley come.”

The very confused group left their respective tables.
“Herodotus Potter you were asked before if you would reconsider this hat’s decision. We ask you if you would have the same answer.”

Harry smirked, “I do not.”

Harry’s robe patch changed from red and gold to silver and green.

“Hermione Granger, you were a hat stall. This hat was forced to make you a Gryffindor but your true place is in Ravenclaw. Do you want to remain where you are or take your place among the daughters of Rowena?

Hermione swallowed, “If I change houses will I no longer be a prefect?”

“Padma of Ravenclaw do you wish to remain a prefect.”

Pavarti’s twin stammered, “No?”

Hermione’s robe patch became the bronze eagle over blue.

“Georgius Weasley you also are not of Gryffindor. We offer you the choice of Ravenclaw or Slytherin.”

George chewed on his lip, “I guess I choose Slytherin…”

“We already have a Seventh Year Prefect.” Pucey called out.

“Thank you Adrian but I resign in favour of George Weasley.” A deep voice boomed over him. “I will remain Quidditch captain and be satisfied.”.

“Wait! I didn’t want to be a prefect to begin with.” George protested.

“The Slytherin Prefect has resigned. We have decided. Georgius will be Slytherin’s Prefect. Based on marks Tahquamenon Transfer Student Blake Hawthorn will serve for Gryffindor. Fridericus Weasley, you were destined for Slytherin but took a detour do you wish to remain misSorted or join your twin and Herodotus in Slytherin?”

“We’ve never really been separated…” Fred frowned.

“Slytherin then.” Hogwarts decided.

Fred and George’s robes took on Slytherin’s colours.

“Dudley Black-Tonks you are late. I suspect meddling on someone’s part. We have taken your measure. You are a true Gryffindor, not of his blood but you are the truest Gryffindor to walk these halls in a generation.”

Dudley winced, “Are you sure? Can’t I be Sorted like everyone else?”

“You may put the hat on but We know as the Founders did who belongs in our House. Their blood and magic flows in us.”

Dudley shuffled forward and put the ratty hat on his head.

‘No driving ambition, knife sharp intelligence but you do possess a certain disregard for rules and conventions. You are loyal yet the kindness of a Hufflepuff isn’t in you. You don’t have a strict regard for rules or a strong intellect so Ravenclaw is not the place for you. You are brave and
reckless but your loyalty is of the Black variety,
it must be earned not granted recklessly.’

Dudley groaned, “I accept.”

“Gryffindor then.” Hogwarts announced.
Dudley’s robes acquired the Gryffindor patch.

“Dean Dearborn.”

Dean nervously stepped forward, “Yes…Hogwarts?”

“You too were erroneously sent to Gryffindor. You belong in Ravenclaw. Do you wish to remain as
you are or join Miss Granger in your true House?”

Dean glanced back at two persons at Gryffindor, “I’ll stay…I have people I don’t wish to leave
behind…”

“Susan Bones, heiress of the House of Bones you belong in Gryffindor. Do you wish to go there and
take up the open position of Prefect?”

“I wanted to be there…” Susan began thoughtfully, “but Aunt AEmelia was a Hufflepuff.”

“Emelia Bones would be proud of you for taking your rightful place. Your brother was sorted into
Ravenclaw, was he not?”

Susan nodded, “I accept.”
Her patch changed from a black badger on a butter yellow shield to a gold lion on a red one.

Hermione grinned, “I’m sure you’ll be an excellent lioness.”

Susan blushed. “Thank you Miss Granger.”

“Hermione.” The not-so bushy-haired witch replied.

“Susan.” The strawberry-blond witch smiled.

“Susan Bones is now prefect of Gryffindor, Hufflepuff needs a prefect. Hannah of the House of
Abbott will you undertake?”

The blonde witch gasped, “Of course.” A prefect badge appeared on her robes.

“Colin Prewett. You should have been placed in Ravenclaw like your bearer. Will you go?”

Colin glanced towards the Ravenclaw table and then at his brother. “What should I do?”

Harry resisted the urge to roll his eyes, “You should go.”

Colin swallowed, “I’ll be an Eagle then…”
At once his robes changed.

“Leslie Moody.”
A shy bookish girl with mousy brown hair stepped forward, “Yes?”

“Unluckily you were raised by Alastor Moody. Cowed into Hufflepuff because he’s insane. Would you like to spread your wings and take your place in Ravenclaw young lady?”

Hermione smiled at her, “I’m sure we’d be glad to have you…”

The shy girl blushed, “Okay.”

Meanwhile Albus Dumbledore was fuming and a toadish woman in pink was smiling but it was a malicious one.

“Grieg Ollivander.”

McGonagall stiffened.

The tall boy inclined his head, “Hogwarts.”

“You ought to have been Sorted to Slytherin, will you accept our declaration?”

The boy was thoughtful…and then said stiffly. “I believe that my aims would be best suited in Slytherin.”

“Yes!” Aodhan smirked, “Then I’m resign,”

“Unacceptable.” Hogwarts via the Sorting Hat snapped. “A son of Slytherin’s blood, an heir, a King of Slytherin shall not do so.”

Dumbledore was sputtering.

Slytherin broke out into whispers.

Harry glanced over at Draco Malfoy, who had gone white.

Zabini the last to be Sorted in his First Year and Goyle were fussing over him along with Pansy Parkinson.

“Slytherin is fortunate, not since the 1940s has it had a complete Council.” Hogwarts said almost brightly in its odd four-fold voice.

Parkinson frowned, “Who is Queen?”

“Matilda Prewett of course.” there was a lit of laughter in the voice.

Parkinson turned to look at a girl sitting alone at the end of the table, “Prewett?”

“Her grandmother was a Black.” Hogwarts chided.

Parkinson nodded sharply, “I see.” Her voice was surprisingly not yipping or insulting.

Aodhan was clearly fuming because he wasn’t allowed to resign his prefect status because of a resorted prefect.

“Slytherin should keep at least one of it’s prefects.” Ollivander shrugged.

“Ravenclaw’s replacement prefect is Marcus Belby.”
Katie groaned.

“Twin prefects?” the chubby Ravenclaw grinned. “When was that last time that happened?

“The Lovegood-Greengrass twins and before that the Dearborn twins.” Hogwarts answered.

Ron glared at the hat, “Why are we here? I don’t want any House but Gryffindor.”

“Ronald and Ginevra Dumbledore, Hufflepuff like your sire was and your bearer ought to have been. For Hufflepuff accepts those who don’t have the qualities they all cherish and nurtures them all the same.”

Ginny seemed to have shrunk in size at the declaration.

Ron glared, “I refuse.”

“Bat spleens and rat tails, we don’t care. You’re a Hufflepuff because only Helga would take you. Hogwarts has spoken.”

The walls glowed like the moon on a cloudless night.

“I refuse to surrender my post.” Ernie Macmillan said shortly.

“Acceptable.” Hogwarts said through the Sorting Hat, “Dean Dearborn of Gryffindor will you serve as prefect?”

Dean nodded, “I would be honored.”

Ron’s badge flew through the air, with him lunging for it and falling on his face when he tripped over his large feet to affix itself on Dean’s robes.

Seamus clapped his hands excitedly and Neville shook his hand.

Dean saluted Harry, Hermione and the twins before they made their way to their new House Tables.

“Now we can commence when normal Sorting. We are watching.”

The hat sang as it always did but this time it’s song was different…

In times of old when I was new
And Hogwarts barely started
The Founders of our noble school
Thought never to be parted:
united by a common goal,
They had the selfsame yearning
To make the world’s best magic school
And pass along their learning.
"Together we will build and teach!"
The Four good friends decided
And never did they dream that they
Might someday be divided,
For were there such friends anywhere
As Slytherin and Gryffindor?
Unless it was the second pair
Of Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw?
So how could it have gone so wrong?
How could such friendships fail?
Why, I was there and so can tell
The whole sad, sorry tale.
Said Slytherin, "We'll teach just those
Whose ancestry is purest."
Said Ravenclaw, "We'll teach those whose
Intelligence is surest."
Said Gryffindor, "We'll teach all those
With brave deeds to their name,"
Said Hufflepuff, "I'll teach the lot,
And treat them just the same."
These differences caused little strife
When first they came to light,
For each of the four founders had
A House in which they might
Take only those they wanted, so,
For instance, Slytherin
Took only pure-blood wizards
Of great cunning, just like him,
And only those of sharpest mind
Were taught by Ravenclaw
While the bravest and the boldest
Went to daring Gryffindor,
Good Hufflepuff, she took the rest,
And taught them all she knew,
Thus the Houses and their founders
Retained friendships firm and true.
So Hogwarts worked in harmony
For several happy years,
But the discord crept among us
Feeding on our faults and fears.
The Houses that, like pillars four,
Had once held up our school,
Now have turned upon each other and,
Divided, sought to rule.
For now it seems the school
 Might meet an early end,
What with dueling and with fighting
And the clash of friend on friend
In the past there came a morning
When Ravenclaw this life departed
And though the fighting had by then died out
She left us quite downhearted.
And never since the founders four
Were whittled down to three
Have the Houses been united
And they once were meant to be.
And now the Sorting Hat is here
And you all know the score:
I sort you into Houses
Because that is what I'm for,
But this year I'll go further,
Listen closely to my song:
Though condemned I am to split you
Still I worry that it's wrong,
Though I must fulfill my duty
And must quarter every year
Still I wonder whether sorting
May not bring the end I fear.
Oh, know the perils, read the signs,
The warning history shows,
For our Hogwarts is in danger
From external and internal deadly foes
And we must unite inside her
Or we'll crumble from within
I have told you, I have warned you..
Let the sorting now begin

The warning fell on willing ears for students who knew and believed that Voldemort had returned
were more than willing to work together. Those who weren’t sure still loved Hogwarts and wanted it
to endure.

Once the Sorting had Finished, Dumbledore made his usual speech reminding everyone that the
forest was forbidden. Then he started to introduce the new staff members.

“Hagrid has extended his vacation and won’t be joining us until later in the year. Former student and
a staff member of last year’s tournament Charlie Weasley has agreed to teach Care of Magical
Creatures and see that the groundskeeper duties are fulfilled. It seems that his brother Prefect George
Weasley has been accepted as a teaching assistant for the Third Years. Apprenticing Charms
Mistress-in Training former Head Girl Penelope Clearwater has been assigned the Third Year
Charms Class. As per usual, we have a new Defense instructor. Her name is Dolores Umbridge,
former undersecretary for the Minister for Magic who is looking for a career change. Please welcome
them. Now with no farther,”

Umbridge cleared her throat loudly.

Dumbledore frowned, “Yes Dolores?”

“I would like to say a few words.” The toadish woman said.

Snape looked like he’d swallowed a lemon, McGonagall’s lips were a thin line, Sprout’s eyebrows
had disappeared into her hair and Flitwick looked horrified.

The students were shocked and annoyed, they’d already been waiting longer than usual for their
supper.

“Thank you, Headmaster for those kind words of welcome.” Professor Umbridge simpered.

Already having suspicions of her involvement with Harry’s encounter with Dementors this summer
Hermione, Harry and Dudley looked at her with extreme dislike.

Harry hated everything about her from high-pitched, girlish unnatural voice to her pink outfit.

“Well, it is lovely to be back at Hogwarts, I must say!” Umbridge smiled, revealing very pointed
teeth. “And to see such happy little faces looking up at me!”
‘Did she sharpen them or was she a vampire with teeth like those?’ George wondered.

Slytherin wasn’t happy at all rather they were scowling at the witch, deeply insulted at her tone and implication that they were small children rather then young men and women. Some were muttering darkly under their breath.

Hufflepuff was whispering beside Slytherin’s table, mostly in shock.

Hermione’s fellow Ravenclaws sniffed and turned their noses up at her.

Gryffindor was indignant.

“I am very much looking forward to getting to know you all and I’m sure we’ll be very good friends!” Umbridge said clapping her hands.

The other professors were even more astonished.

The whispering apparently had grown loud enough to be heard on the dias where the Head table sat.

Professor Umbridge cleared her throat again, “Ahem, ahem,” but when she continued, some of the previous tone had vanished from her voice. She sounded much more businesslike and now her words had a dull learned-by-heart sound to them.

“The Ministry of Magic has always considered the education of young witches and wizards to be of vital importance. The rare gifts with which you were born may come to nothing if not nurtured and honed by careful instruction. The ancient skills unique to the Wizarding community must be passed down the generations lest we lose them forever. The treasure trove of magical knowledge amassed by our ancestors must be guarded, replenished and polished by those who have been called to the noble profession of teaching.”

Professor Umbridge paused here and made a little bow to her fellow staff members, none of whom bowed back to her.

The four heads of the houses exchanged glances of one part wonder and one part indignation.

Umbridge’s spine stiffened at their lack of acknowledgement of her ‘praise’ and she continued regardless. “Every headmaster and headmistress of Hogwarts has brought something new to the weighty task of governing this historic school, and that is as it should be, for without progress there will be stagnation and decay. There again, progress for progress’s sake must be discouraged, for our tried and tested traditions often require no tinkering. A balance, then, between old and new, between permanence and change, between tradition and innovation…”

Harry found something quite odd about her voice, some were listening intently and nodding but they were people like Ginny and Ron Weasley who were easily led.

Those who clearly could think for themselves were getting discouraged with her speech.

“Stuff and nonsense.” Aodhan spat, “She sounds like my godfather in one of his mind-numbing rambles.”

Professor Umbridge did not seem to notice the restlessness of her audience, since so few were actually interested could they truly be called an audience?

Harry had the distinct impression that a full-scale insurrection could break out under her nose and she would have continued on with her speech.
If his growing suspicions were correct, that might not be a bad idea. A little rebellion might be fun…

What was the fun of being a Slytherin if one didn’t bend the rules to suit one every once in a while?

The teachers, however, were still listening very attentively, and prefects like Hermione and the Slytherins seemed to be drinking in every word Umbridge spoke, though, judging by their expression, they were not at all to their taste.

“…because some changes will be for the better, while others will come, in the fullness of time, to be recognized as errors of judgment. Meanwhile, some old habits will be retained, and rightly so, whereas others, outmoded and outworn, must be abandoned. Let us move forward, then, into a new era of openness, effectiveness and accountability, intent on preserving what ought to be preserved, perfecting what needs to be perfected, and pruning wherever we find practices that ought to be prohibited.” She sat down.

Dumbledore clapped but the Headteachers like Snape and McGonagall did not. Other staff members clapped only once or twice to be polite.

Students who did were glared to stop by their Housemates.

“Thank you very much, Professor Umbridge, that was most illuminating,” Dumbledore said, bowing to her. “Now, as I was saying, Quidditch tryouts will be held…”

“Yes, it certainly was illuminating,” Aodhan said in a low voice.

“Really?” Harry said dryly.

Aodhan sniffed, “It shows what sort of plan the Ministry has for the lot of us. I’m glad my father retired before that lot was in power. I wish my mother would curse her silent.”

“Just who is your mother?” Fred frowned.

“Never you mind.” Aodhan said sharply.

“Back to the speech, what do you think of phrases like ‘progress for progress’s sake must be discouraged’ or ‘pruning wherever we find practices that ought to be prohibited’?” George asked.

“I’ll tell you what it means,” Harry said through gritted teeth. “It means the Ministry’s interfering at Hogwarts.”

Dinner was served and they were momentarily distracted.

They fed well like one always was at Hogwarts, Beginning of Term Feasts always made one sleepy.

Dumbledore dismissed them.

Aodhan turned to them, “You’ll need me to show you the entrance right?”

Harry snickered, “Oh no, I know where it is. I just don’t know the password.”

The twins blinked.

“You know where it is? Its not on the map…”

Aodhan frowned, “What map?”
“Tell you later.” Harry promised. “What’s the password?”

“Lilium auratum.” George and Aodhan intoned together.

“Apparently, Professor Sprout picked it. I dropped Herbolology and Care of Magical Creatures right after my OWLS exams. Too much of a walk in the case of Herbolology and Hagrid was terrible, a pity now that we have a possibly decent instructor. I’ll ask Professor Snape to add me to the class tomorrow…” Aodhan shrugged as they made their way down to the dungeons down a side stair.

It was the same path that Malfoy led Harry and Ron down Second Year when they infiltrated Slytherin to see if Malfoy was the Heir of Slytherin. They were pretty far off if Aodhan of all people was of Slytherin’s blood and outranked Malfoy…

“Charlie’s great, he had the best score since Scamander helped re-write the OWL and NEWT exams.” George mused.

“Yeah he got extra credit on it, don’t remember how. I know he told Percy about it…” Fred shrugged.

Aodhan led George to the Seventh Year Prefect’s quarters telling him that Prefects and heads always had private chambers in Slytherin but it was a House secret.

Then he went to led Harry and Fred to their new dorms.

“Wrong dorm Urquhart.” Malfoy called out when they opened the door. “Nott and Potter were moved to the second Fifth dorm. Blaise, Greg and Vince are sharing that one.”

Aodhan shrugged, “No matter,” as he quickly changed directions…

“Why did Hogwarts re-Sort you Potter?”

“It wanted me here First Year but I told it not to because you were a self-righteous prig. Though now that I am older and wiser I will admit that choosing Ron Weasley was a mistake, whether refusing you was one as well I have yet to re-examine.” Harry retorted without looking at the blonde.

He could hear Malfoy sputtering at his back.

“What was that about?” George asked, leaning in.

“Oh, on the train First Year Malfoy offered me his hand and told me I’d regret choosing Ron after I refused. I told him could choose for myself who best suited me as a friend.” Harry shrugged.

When the were finally at the right dormitory for Harry George leaned in to whisper, “You’re welcome to visit anytime…”

Harry nodded, “I’ll think about but maybe you should look for something more permanent.”

George flinched, “I’ll consider it…well I did enjoy this summer it was more enjoyable then the previous ones.”

“Likewise. I’ll see you in the morning.” Harry said carelessly.

“Wake up early, Slytherin marches as one to breakfast. Its tradition as Slytherin’s blood I march at the front of the House. I’ve decided that you’ll march as my second, while Fred and George march as our Guardians.” Aodhan said sharply.
“Is that even acceptable?” George frowned.

“I mean we just were resorted here…” Fred blinked.

“You’re about the only Housemates I like.” Aodhan shrugged. “It’s my decision and I choose you. Malfoy will stick with Zabini as his second, while Crabbe and Goyle stay his guardians as usual. I don’t know about Prewett, she’s tolerated because of her grades but her blood is against her. Remind me tomorrow after dinner to show you where the Slytherin Bathes are as my entourage you are granted first dibs at them especially if you are in my company.”

Harry nodded, as he prepared for bed for the first time in the Slytherin dungeons he contemplated just how much his life had changed.
“Master Harry be waking up now.”

Harry blinked at the unfamiliar squeaky voice. He turned his head to find the curtains of his bed were green velvet. “What’s?”

“Master Harry be a Slytherin now. Mistress assigned Mimi as Master Harry’s person elf. Mimi be a Potter elf and proud to serve Lord Potter. Master needs be hurrying if he going to make the March.”

“March?” Harry yawned.

“Yes Potter,” an unfamiliar male voice came from the other side of the room.

Then it all came back to him, he was a Slytherin now and sharing a room with a bloke named Nott whose name was vaguely familiar to him from roll calls.

“Oh right, Aodhan wants me to march as his second. I don’t know what that means.”

“Seriously? This is what happens when uninformed persons accede to the highest ranks in Slytherin. A second speaks for the King, the Queen or the Prince of Slytherin. Were Draco a girl he’d be the Princess of Slytherin. You march one step behind Urquhart to breakfast at his left. You’d better hurry, we can’t leave until everyone is present and it would embarrass Urquhart if you’re late.”

“Understood.” Harry muttered, casting a refresher charm on himself to find that his personal elf had pressed a grey cotton shirt, pairing it with a forest green cashmere v-neck jumper and pair of Regulus’ linen trousers. He nodded at the choices dressing at once, pausing to toss his texts, parchment and ink into his Gucci black python duffle. He let his elf style his hair and thought it looked a bit more presentable. His new ebony wand at his side in the wand holster, he put on both his short cotton gabardine trench coat and his robes but left them both open. On his feet were the raspberry snake skin hightops...

He met the others in the common room only vaguely aware no one else had school bags…

George was wearing his oxblood leather jacket over a dark camel micro-check cotton shirt, a camel v-neck jumper the same style as his own, grey trousers and dress boots with a buckle, his Slytherin prefect badge gleaming on his chest.

Fred was his jacket and boots from yesterday, black jeans and with a charcoal grey geometric print shirt.

Aodhan looked half-dead, “I need strong tea.”

Harry took his place where Nott and Aodhan said a step behind Aodhan to his left with George and Fred falling in behind him.

A shy brunette, Prewett obviously lined up behind Aodhan but six steps back.

Parkinson took Harry’s position beside her, a blonde witch and Bulstrode lining up with George and Fred.

Then came a disgruntled Malfoy, Zabini took his place as second with Crabbe and Goyle taking their positions as guardians.
Behind them was Pucey, this Year’s Head Boy.

Then came the girls Seventh Year Prefect, the Seventh Years, the Sixth Years and so on because the other prefects were taking positions in the Slytherin Court they marched farther in line then their external positions allowed.

Aodhan moved and the wall shimmered away, Slytherin was on the move.

They encountered Hufflepuffs near the kitchens who let them pass mostly because they were stunned at the new configuration.

Aodhan was stiff but his gait was sure and steady.

They entered the Great Hall and it fell silent.

Harry sneaked a glance to his uncle; he still wasn’t used to thinking of Snape as his uncle.

Snape nodded at him but it was probably directed at his House, no doubt he was pleased at how timely they were and how they were in proper formation.

They all filed around the table staying in their current order.

Harry sat next to Aodhan who was on the end of the table at the farthest corner facing the other tables.

Once Slytherin was seated, the silence in the Great Hall turned to whispers.

Within five minutes of Slytherin being seated breakfast appeared and Aodhan immediately poured himself a steaming cup of tea. After the third cup he seemed more awake…

They all piled their plates with their choices of the breakfast items offered.

Harry wasn’t aware of how late it was getting until Aodhan drawled, “Hello Professor.”

“Mr. Urquhart.”

“I wanted to change my opinions a bit; I’d like to be re-added to the Care of Magical Creatures class since we now have a more competent instructor.” Aodhan said politely.

“I’ll inform Professor Weasley.” Severus said sharply as he tapped the top schedule with his wand.

“I’d like to change mine as well.” Harry smirked, “I’d like to self-study Ancient Runes and drop Divination since I haven’t actually started this year by attending classes I can’t cause trouble with my OWLS will I?”

“Done. About time you dropped that useless course.” Snape muttered darkly, “Never understood what your mother saw in it…” he turned to Fred and George, “Any changes to your courses besides assisting Charlie?”

The twins shook their heads.

Severus handed them their schedules as well before moving to Prewett and her entourage of girls and on down the table.

Harry was surprised to be tapped on the shoulder while he was sipping pumpkin juice. He looked up to see Neville, Dean and Seamus standing there.
“We talked,” Dean grinned, “and we decided we’re still your friends even if you’re in Slytherin.”

Angelina, Alicia and Lee appeared behind them.

“We too.” Lee smirked.

“Though it’s quite a blow to lose a Seeker and our Beaters when we’re already down a Keeper…” Angelina grumbled.

“Then I don’t think Slytherin needs try outs for Beaters or Seekers.” The tall deep-voice bloke George replaced as prefect intoned, “Potter will fly as our primary Seeker, while the Weasley twins fly as our Beaters. Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle will be demoted to Reserve.” He smirked, “Hogwarts just handed us the Cup this year.”

“I really don’t like you Montague.” Angelina sniffed.

“The feeling is mutual.” Montague sneered, “We’ll still wipe the pitch with you.”

“Who says that they’ll even play for you?” Alicia piped up.

“The shadow speaks.”

“Reign in your dog Pucey.” Angelina said tossing her hair back.

“Brecc is his own man. You shouldn’t bait him Angelina.”

“Hmph.”

“Problem?” Severus said with a touch of asperity.

“No,” Lee stammered grabbing the girls by their robes and tugged them away.

“Nice to see you again Professor,” Harry snickered.

“Sarcasm is not something you’ve excelled at before Potter.”

“Want me to give Remus a message for you?” Harry teased.

Severus glared at him, “I’ll be meeting him for lunch tomorrow so no.”

“Too bad, it would have been fun.” George grinned.

“Remind me to make comments at his expense when he’s in a relationship that lasts beyond three months.” Severus snapped.

George flinched.

“I expect more of you this year Potter. I’m not going to be less strict even if circumstances have changed.”

“I plan to do better. Aunt Annie helped me with my potions this summer.”

“Your guardians asked me to give you private instructions. Every night at seven that you don’t have Quidditch practice I expect you in my office. I expect all of my new snakelings to be on time to every class, to complete all homework assignments and obey curfews. Lucky for you all classes don’t start until Monday. Slytherin has the Quidditch Pitch at one this afternoon, I expect you to do
exceptional this year. I would recommend that you all review your textbooks and summer homework. Remember that those assignments are due first thing Monday regardless of whether you have that class that day or not. Potter I suggest you speak with Professor Vector about your self study of the subject. Parkinson, Nott and Malfey as well as Miss Granger are in that class as well as Mr. Urquhart they will be excellent resources.”

“Having fun slumming with the Slytherins?” Ron sneered from the next table.

“Weasley! Detention with Flitch.” Ernie Macmillan said sharply.

“Five points to Hufflepuff.” Severus said before leaving.

Aodhan immediately copied his schedule handing it to Harry, “Take mine and George’s Adrian. Then take copies of the three of yours to Montague. They should still be next to one another.”

‘It must be a duty ascribed to a second…’ Harry thought accepting the schedule copies and making his way past the Queen and Prince Malfoy.

Ahead of him was the dark-skinned boy from before, who turned and held his hand out, “Blaise Zabini, Second of the Prince of Slytherin.”

“Harry Potter, Second to the King.”

Pucey held out his hand, “Adrian Pucey, Head Boy. I’m pleased to make your acquaintance. Welcome to Slytherin.”

Harry inclined his head, “I think I’m going to like it here.” He handed Adrian copies of George and Aodhan’s schedules.

A large beefy hand was thrust in his face, “Brecc Montague. Welcome to the team. With the exception of Malfoy perhaps, we’re glad to have you.”

“Likewise, so we both don’t get rusty would it be alright to fly against Malfoy during practices? I’ve gotten bored with flying in circles during Gryffindor practices.”

Montague looked thoughtful, “That’s a great idea. With two Seekers and four Beaters if I take two Keepers and have six Chasers then we can practice with actual matches and formations.”

Adrian grinned, “I love it!”

“One of Marcus’ less intelligent ideas was to toss you off because you wouldn’t play dirty.” Montague grumbled.

“I believe in treating everyone respectfully, it is the duty of a Pucey not to lord over all but to lead by example. Our motto is roughly translated first among equals, we see ourselves as servants of the people. My father is works for the Department of Magical Law and tracks down dangerous wizards.” Pucey said with a shrug.

“Auror, Hit Wizard or Magnus Brutus?” Harry asked.

“The later.” Adrian frowned.

“Interesting. I hadn’t heard of it before this summer.” Harry mused before turning to the twins. I’m heading up to the Astronomy tower. “If you three or even the Gryffindor three want to come you may. I want to think.”
Fred was thoughtful, “Think like we did in the Gentleman’s parlor?”

Harry nodded, “I think it would be useful.”

“Why don’t you two fetch Dudley?” George turned to Dean.

“I’m going to get Hermione.” Fred smirked.

“Do not be late to Quidditch tryouts.” Montague warned.

Harry nodded, “Of course.” He rose and turned to Aodhan, “You coming?”

Aodhan shrugged, “I don’t have anything better to do.”

“Then you can join us.” Harry smirked.

Harry and Aodhan made their way from Slytherin table out of the Great Hall, with four Gryffindors, two more Slytherins and a Ravenclaw at their heels.

Once they all filled in, Fred conjured chairs and Hermione began casting privacy spells.

“What do you want to do up here?” Dean frowned.

Harry, Hermione, Fred, George and Dudley took out pipes.

Harry lit his, “So…” he began as he took a drag off his dragon pipe, “What is the temperature of Ravenclaw my dear eagle?”

“Some have bought into the Ministry and the Prophet’s nonsense, but Chang believes you about how Diggory died which means all of her friends do too. Lovegood and Colin do as well. They’re already seemingly best friends; they’re reminding everyone about how they all treated you last time when the Chamber was opened and how you weren’t the Heir. Besides even if the fake Moody showed us the Unforgivables it’s unlikely that a fourth Year could cast them. I told them that the Ministry can trace spells to see who cast what on someone; if you had then they would have arrested you rather than the Prophet for character assassination.” Hermione shrugged.

“Thank you, so are the students using their heads?” Harry drawled.

“Most of them are, only I think Davies is just being a git about it and as for Belby he’s just too lazy to think for himself.” Hermione sniffed.

“Well Gryffindor’s behind you,” Dean grinned. “My parents don’t know anything and I won’t tell them. The less they know about our world the safer it is. They couldn’t take me to Diagon Alley the first time so Professor Flitwick offered and since Second Year I’ve tagged along with Seamus.”

“Máthair almost bought it until grandfather and I reminded her that Fudge is an incompetent twat. Something about a Ministry official sneaking his son out of Azkaban and how they hushed it up last year by having the prisoner Kissed rather than investigating…”

“How did you grandfather hear about that mess?” Harry scowled.

“He went to school with Hawk Dawlish; old Hawk is one of the Minister’s personal Aurors. Hawk hates Fudge and thinks he’s an incompetent fool. Umbridge is a wily cat with claws. She thinks the sun shines out of Fudge’s arse while she leads him around by the nose. Fudge couldn’t lead his way out of a bag according to Hawk.” Seamus shrugged. “She’s been ingratiating herself to Fudge for years, Weasley was on the fast track to being the youngest Head of Department ever because he was
running Crouch’s for him while he was gone. She made Fudge reassign him before Weasley was officially appointed. Weasley could have been Minister by the next election. After all, the people vote but the Minister is chosen by the Wizengamot. Sometimes they listen and sometimes they don’t. Fudge was the best of bad choices the first time. People got comfortable with him and he’s one of our own, one of the old families. No one’s got the sort of pedigree and achievements to match him.”

“Dad said before Percy went all crazy that Percy managed to clean up the mess politically between the Ministries that oversee Durmstrang and Beauxbatons. He was really proud of him, dunno what’s up with Percy. He was acting so unlike himself…” Fred frowned

“Isn’t ending up in the Minister’s office is like political suicide?” Hermione asked wrinkling her nose.

“Well just about, you’re accomplishments don’t really exist there because it’s all to support the Minister, you’re better off making a name for yourself elsewhere.” Seamus snipped.

“So Gryffindors’ using their brains and so is Ravenclaw mostly. Not sure about Slytherin…” Harry muttered puffing on his pipe, “I don’t know enough about them to know what they think. Those with Death Eater parents like Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle I know, know that He’s back. They may have already seen him…”

“I’m close to Professor Sprout,” Neville offered, “I can ask what Hufflepuff thinks…”

“I don’t like those useless duffers.” George spat, “Diggory was two-timing, useless git. If he was the best Hogwarts could offer the tournament it wasn’t any wonder that he got himself killed. Who is kidnapped by portkey and doesn’t draw their wand or take up a defensive stance?”

“He had to be handfed the challenges. I told him about the dragons.” Harry snorted, “Fake Moody told him about the egg. I don’t know who he got to help him with the maze, probably his Ravenclaw girlfriend…”

“I wonder if Fake Moody flummoxed the Goblet to choose a fool so that you would be the winner, I mean didn’t he take out your only real competition?” Fred mused.

“By Imperioing Krum to Crucio Diggory and freezing Delacour.” Harry snorted.

“There is a Mikhail Krum in my year; he’s friends with a Gaheris Pucey.” Dudley, “Seems decent, talk with a strong accent.”

“Gaheris is Adrian’s younger brother.” Aodhan tossed in his two knuts.

“I’d like to meet this Krum,” Harry said thoughtfully, “I wonder if he’s Viktor’s brother. On another note, does anyone else think the toad wench’s presence here is a sign of the Ministry interfering at Hogwarts?”

“Of course.” Hermione sniffed. “Have you read that textbook? Not one spell in it.”

“How in the world does one fight an enemy if they can’t even think to draw their wand? When I go or arrive somewhere I pull my wand…” Harry grumbled, “usually. I hurt my ankle helping Diggory and instead of splinting it for me or supporting me he just let me limp on it. I maybe used to pain but walking on sprained limbs is bad for you.”

“Then Fake Moody dragged you off before you had any medical attention and Dumbledore just let him.” Hermione snipped. “Some protector he is…”

“I think Hogwarts needs a new headmaster.” Harry admitted dryly. “Look what he’s allowed to
happen since we started? Voldemort infiltrated the school every year with an operative. I mean my parents’ betrayer managed to be here for years, Quirrell was possessed, Ginny was used to open the Chamber and last year Voldy sent Crouch Jr. Polyjuiced as Moody. If Dumbledore and Moody are such friends shouldn’t he have realized something was wrong and confront him? I mean we’d do that for each other right?”

The twins, Hermione and Neville nodded.

“If Dean was acting strange I’d talk to him about it.” Seamus offered.

“Same. I mean we’re not as close to you as they are really, so we’d have to be sure they thought you were acting all weird before we’d do anything.” Dean shrugged.

Aodhan nodded, “I’d have to agree with Thomas.”

“How would we get everyone ones attention that Dumbledore sucks at his job?”

“What about protests, strikes and other non-violent methods of civil unrest?” Dudley offered. “We learned about people like Ghandi in social studies, if Umbridge is that dreadful why don’t we find ways to teach ourselves? Fred, George and Hermione are really good teachers. They helped me pass two years worth of exams in a month or so. I wouldn’t be a third year if it weren’t for them.”

“I asked Sirius to teach me the patronus charm; I think that is one spell every one should know. Parkinson said she hates Dementors. I’m sure most would want to know how to use it, book knowledge is only so useful.”

“The Order of Burnt Chicken Sycophants uses them for communication. Did Sirius teach you that?” Dudley asked.

Hermione smirked, “Of course. Burnt Chicken? You may have a point, as if a creature as regal as a phoenix would be associated willing to a group of persons as weak-willed and easily led as that lot.”

“Uncle Albus likes to surround himself with sheep; he likes the feeling of being superior and worshiped. It annoys him that I won’t, as if his attending to his supposed duties as a godfather were all that laudable. He’s only doing it to ease his conscience if he has one.” Aodhan sneered.

“Well if no one wants to teach us Defense in a classroom, we’ll have to teach ourselves. We can adapt lessons plans from Sirius and Remus,” Harry mused, “whether they believe me or not, they should be as prepared as possible for OWLS and NEWTS. Especially with some of the joke professors we’ve have.’

“You know that Umbridge won’t let us do it, what with her promises to prune everything.” Hermione warned.

“Well if Uncle Albus can have his precious Order to fight Voldemort, why don’t we make something similar to fight against the Ministry and Uncle Albus?” Aodhan offered.

“I want to be a thorn in their side; they’ve both grievously insulted the House of Black…” Harry said thoughtfully chewing on the stem of his pip.

“Then why don’t you call it Blackthorn?” Fred snickered.

“That’s stupid,” Seamus began.

“No, it’s brilliant.” Harry grinned, “I like it. We’ll plan out classes, a location and meeting times.”
“I think that aptitude and knowledge will vary from person to person.” Aodhan mused. “I’m mostly self-taught but Uncle Albus was my tutor when I was young until I exasperated him. Plus my father was the Head of the Magnus Brutus so we have a huge amount of books on combating the Dark Arts and recognizing them, as well as how Dark Lords rise to power and how to recognize them. Maybe that will come in handy…”

“Why don’t you and Hermione get together and plan the lessons as well as a criteria of what spells one should be able to use to determine what level we should place them.” Harry ordered. “For now we’ll plan and we’ll wait until we have final proof of how unreliable a teacher the toadish woman is. When we’re ready a word in the right ears and we should have plenty of interested students. If you know of any mark conscientious Hufflepuffs Neville, perhaps they’ll come.”

“Can I get a look at those books?” Hermione pleaded.

Aodhan shrugged, “Sure. I’ve ready them all a dozen times at least.”

“Never stand between my girl and books. She tried to inhale the Black family library.” Fred teased.

“I thought that the House of Black was mostly gone?” Aodhan frowned.

“Our grandmother Cedrella was a Black.” George smirked.

“So was my great-grandmother Callidora.” Neville offered tentatively.

“My grandmother Dorea and great-grandmother Elektra were on my father’s side. I believe my mother’s great-grandfather was one as well.” Harry shrugged.

“Those were mostly secondary lines; the main one is sort of extinct. They were females who didn’t stay Blacks mostly.” Aodhan scowled.

“Our bearer’s grandmother was Lucida Black before her bonding.” Fred offered. “Not that we’re talking to her. Lucida is apparently Prewett’s grandmother. She’s the daughter of a lateborn it seems…”

“Well being the granddaughter of a Black and the only female of close Black blood that would explain her elevation in status from least.” Aodhan noted.

“There is status in Slytherin?” Neville asked wrinkling his nose.

Aodhan sighed, “It’s not commonly discussed but in a show of community building and an attempt to increase communication I’ll talk about it. Three bloodlines are revered in Slytherin House; Slytherin’s close companions in his youth beyond Gryffindor were a Black and a Malfoy. When their children were young the Founders were discussing opening the first magic school to ensure that all magical children received the best education. He approached his friends to ask what sort of a place he would have to help create to ensure that their progeny at least their firstborns and all of their daughter would attend.”

“I see…” Hermione mused.

“History of the six bloodlines that release that are considered Black and the closest relations to them in the past.”

“Mostly specular the Black and the Malfoy as they were in his youth. Welcome to the Black bloodline.”

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“I see…” Hermione mused.

“It was unheard of to educate witches, especially those among the titled beyond simple magic. They could use cleaning magic but those with servants to tend to such things rarely they learned beyond reading and simple math to keep their own personal accounts if needed. Much was overseen by their fathers, brothers or spouses. It wasn’t until titles were granted to witches such as the Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, Smith and Clearwater lines for a variety of reasons that reforms to witches rights were given. Many of the powerful who were close to a Founder, friends you might say were granted seats
on the Board of Governors that belonged to them and their offspring. Slytherin appointed Black, Prince and Malfoy to his seats. Princes have often served as advisers or even rivals in potions pushing them to greater feats. I believe that the Bloody Baron was a Prince in life. If my readings were accurate he was born Romulus Lestrange, Baron Strange of Blackmere. His father was Remus, the Lestranges have often been known for their tempers.” Aodhan shrugged.

“Why don’t we learn this stuff in History of Magic?” Harry scowled, “It would be so much more interesting then those stupid goblin wars.”

“Goblin wars aren’t stupid!” Hermione protested. “Those who don’t learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” she turned to Dudley, “Please explain to Harry what caused the last one?”

“The seizure of the Dumbledore assets following the arrest of Lord Percival Dumbledore which the goblins protested and shut their doors creating a recession. No money could be taken from the London branch Gringotts, no documents filed and no new money was minted. It wasn’t until the Minister for Magic at the time sat down with the Goblin King and the Head Goblin of Gringotts London sat down and hammered out a new charter that granted more rights to the goblins that hostilities ceased.” Dudley recited.

“Why can’t Binns put it in simple terms like that?” Harry groused. “I understood that.”

“I have an idea.” Dean spoke up, he was usually quiet and thoughtful rather than boisterous like his best mate.

Everyone turned to him.

“What idea is that?” Harry asked raising an eyebrow in unconscious imitation of his uncle.

“There just isn’t enough culture explanation in our classes. I’d like to learn more about Wizarding society as a whole, where the major cities are or at least where their centres of commerce and government are located, how power is distributed, how elections work and the like. My sisters would learn that in school…” Dean shrugged.

“Something like sociology or political science?” Dudley hazarded a guess.

“Exactly.” Dean nodded, “What is the history of our interaction with other ministries? Why didn’t we know about the Triwizard before last year if we didn’t read the History of Hogwarts? How many different magical schools are there? Where are they in general? Most people know Hogwarts is in Scotland at least. Why don’t we learn foreign languages as an elective? I know there are spells to help comprehend them but why aren’t they offered? Muggle schools offer Spanish, French, Chinese, Japanese, sign language and even Hmong. Between the chamber incident and Diggory’s murder why don’t we have some sort of counselor? Someone for the students to talk to about their fears? If You-Know-Who is back like Harry says and I’m not disputing it, then fear will run rampant. They’ll need to feel like they are accomplishing something. With all the things that have happened since we started I wouldn’t exactly agree that Hogwarts is the safest place.”

“Me either. Who did you say was on the Board of Governors Aodhan?” Harry mused.

“Slytherin’s is vacant but as soon as I turn seventeen I can take it, the board wouldn’t dare argue with Hogwarts herself. Under Slytherin is Prince- which I believe is held by Professor Snape, Malfoy which is Draco’s father, and Black which is silent since the last one to hold the seat died in what 1992? I believe that was Cassiopeia Black, former consort of Hera Lovegood.”

“I will write to Andromeda and ask her to start attending meetings on behalf of the House of Black.
Who else?

"Ravenclaw is held by Madam Aurora Greengrass’ mother Daria due to the heiress being underage, and that would be Luna I believe. Her mother passed when she was young and her grandmother Lady Lovegood died of shock. Apparently while her Greengrass relations trust him with his daughter they don’t trust her father to manage her estate. Then there are the Prewetts which is vacant I believe,"

"Gideon Prewett is alive and well, he’s taken our bearer to task for some indiscretions.” George interrupted. “If he’s back for that reason, then he’ll no doubt take further action.”

"Then the Crouch and the Clearwater are the rest of the Ravenclaw faction. The Smiths hold Hufflepuff; I believe the current head is Madam Abigail. Then there is Madam Bones, Madam Burbage, Professor Burbage’s sister Faith who is Pucey’s mother and the Diggory seat.”

“Bartimus Crouch is dead according to the Black Family Tapestry.” Harry said relighting his pipe. “With Crouch Jr. Kissed, that leaves the seat open, who is closest kin?”

“According to my studies of genealogy with mother, Charis Black had three children with Castor Crouch: Clorinda who bonded to Gawain Dearborn and they had three children Alys Longbottom, Caradoc Dearborn and Galiene Dunbar; Bartimus whose line has ended and Charlene Johnson.” Dudley recited dutifully.

“Gryffindor loyal seats are Peverell which is unclaimed, Potter’s only heir is you but you’re too young, Septimus Weasley holds the Weasley seat, Gryffindor;”

"Is held by the Longbottoms,” Neville blushed, “Gran’s holding it until I’m of age. Grandfather died when I was seven and she’s been Head of our House since then. With my parents indisposed, she’s my legal guardian.”

“True.” Aodhan grumbled.

“So let’s see, I’ll ask my father’s cousin to sit for Potter since his grandfather was a Potter. Andromeda sits for the Blacks, Remus for the Potters, Severus for the Princes, Septimus for the Weasleys, Gideon for the Prewetts, Lucius for the Malfoys, Augusta for the Longbottoms, Amelia for the Bones, Daria for the Lovegoods, Faith for the Burbages, You for Slytherin, Abigail for the Smiths, who for the Clearwaters?”

“I believe it is former Head Girl Penelope who is teaching Third Year Charms’ mother Patience.” Aodhan shrugged.

“Patience for the Clearwaters, Amos for the Diggorys and Gideon for the Prewetts; Crouch and Peverell stand empty.”

“Peverell ought to be Aodhan’s too.” Hermione offered.

Aodhan frowned, “Why?”

“Because Slytherin was descended from a Peverell that’s why.” Hermione said exasperated.

“Andromeda said I was related to Slytherin because I have Gaunt blood through my great grandmother Electra. Why didn’t that come up when we were looking up stuff Second Year?” Harry frowned.

“I don’t know! Maybe because we didn’t know that Gaunt had anything to do with Slytherin? It
wasn’t in any book I found!” Hermione glared.

“Because the Gaunts are descended from a female line just like the Longbottoms, that’s why the name changed. Smith changed when the title passed to a son who took their bond’s name, same with the Lovegoods. Grimaldi was the original name of the House of Black.”

Harry grinned, “Then we’ll change it back, there has been too much shame heaped on the name recently. That leaves only the Crouch seat empty…”

“Since the Crouch line is entailed upon the Male Line, it passes to the nearest male heir preferably a son of Caradoc but in absent of that I believe it would be this Longbottom’s inheritance. Wasn’t your mother’s birthname Dearborn?” Aodhan asked.

Neville nodded.

“The castle kept calling me Dearborn…” Dean frowned.

“Young man, that is what you are.” Came the same four-fold voice.

They turned to see Fawkes on the window sill.

“You can talk?” Harry frowned.

“Only to his current Master, since Dumbledore has been foolish the bond between them broke. Fawkes is free of his bonding to the Headteacher of Hogwarts, we are Hogwarts and you have gotten our attention. Of course our friendship with Lady Amaryllis has helped us to learn more about you.”

“Who is that?”

“In the fullness of time the lady will reveal herself to you. Fawkes has offered as one last duty to the castle to serve as our voice for the year from time to time. His time of service is drawing to a close and he will bond himself to the line of his former Mistress once more.”

“Former Mistress?” Hermione asked eagerly.

“Fawkes was the familiar of Lady Rowena, former Queen of the Veela. Normally they are taken by the Court and raised but this one was lost. The Veela are searching for her, all they have to go on is vague hint left by the Lady. Lady Rowena was the first Head of Hogwarts as well as guardian of her chosen students.” The Castle spoke through the phoenix.

“So I am a Dearborn?”

“The legal son of Caradoc Dearborn, Muggle adoption is not recognized because your blood is still that of a Dearborn.” Hogwarts replied.

“Who can I ask to speak for me?”

“You would be wise to request that Lady Augusta assume magical guardianship. As the mother-in-law of your Aunt Alys she would be honored. That makes you and young Master Longbottom close cousins. Were you to refuse the title it would pass to Neville, it would be wise to refrain from that. As the Head of an old and revered line you would gain much.” Was the four-fold voice’s reply.

“Now that the names of all of Governors is know now what?” Seamus grinned.

“We begin our list of grievances, something perhaps we could discuss with our Head Boy and Girl.
It would mean more coming from them I suspect and if the prefects signed it as well. At some point I’ll have to give an interview to set the story straight about Diggory’s death.” Harry shrugged.

“Who are you and what have you done with Harry?” Neville whistled.

“I’m still me but a lot more mature. Having someone cut down in front of you will do that. If Diggory is the sort of adult that Hogwarts is currently molding then we have to change that. Diggory was our Champion, the face of Hogwarts. His failures are our failures, we must be better then that. Voldemort must be dealt with, the Triwizard must return. I think despite the meddling that the exposure to other cultures was good for us.”

“What about an exchange program?” Hermione offered, “I think that would great. A handful of students from each school attends another for a year and then returns. I think if the delegates lived at Hogwarts instead of the ship and the carriage things would have been different. We would have mixed better. I know there are empty dormitories in Gryffindor and I heard there as some in Ravenclaw Tower as well. Were there some in Slytherin that we could have housed the Durmstrangers in?”

Aodhan snorted, “There are two Fifth Year Boys dormitories this year what do you think?”

“Then why weren’t they asked to stay at the castle?” Hermione retorted, “We have lots of empty classrooms, we have plenty of room. We have at least what forty students per year? So that’s 280, I think given its size that Hogwarts can accommodate over a thousand. It has had more in the past I believe and it was constructed to adjust to the needs of the inhabitants was it not?” directing her question to the castle’s instrument...

Fawkes let out a silvery laugh, “Well done Miss Granger you are a credit to your House. There was no reason indeed that the visiting schools were not granted accommodations. It was the choice of the Governors and the Ministry to reinstate the Triwizard. Dumbledore was against it and in a last attempt to derail the arrangements claimed that we were undergoing construction and renovations. Because it was Britain and our governors’ idea to reinstate it that we were allowed to host it, the previous host was Beauxbatons. We were of the opinion that they should be allowed to redeem themselves but no one questioned us.”

“Then we’ll reopen negotiations, we will request that the tournament return. When were the tournaments again?” Harry frowned.

“Every four years.”

“Drat! We’ll be graduated.” Harry grumbled.

“The rule about being of age is a good one. Hogwarts would have testified that you were innocent and we couldn’t lie. We were created without that ability, however good has come from it has it not?”

Harry smirked, “It got me off the hook for using magic underage because the Ministry and Dumbledore accidentally declared me of age. So yes, thank you for not speaking up that time. Do we have your approval for our actions?”

Fawkes laughed again, “Of course. We’ll even tell you the best places to meet. For your lessons you may use the Room of Requirement, be sure to pace the hall on seventh floor and explain your needs. In case you run late it is best to have it create secret passages to the common rooms. Ask and we’ll provide it’s our function for we adjust to best serve our students. If you would like a more secure place to meet if you locate the four Heirs you can open their quarters, the Founders’ Hall and the
former Great Hall. Perhaps, you will find them where they aren’t expected.”

“Where will they be?”

“Two of them are among you already.” Hogwarts informed them sweetly before Fawkes flew away.

“That would be Rowena’s influence no doubt.” Hermione chuckled, “After all, to gain entrance to our Common Room you must answer a riddle or a question that involves logic.”

“Probably.” Harry said darkly.

They continued to discuss their plans awhile before their stomachs reminded them that it must be Lunch.
The current Slytherin team rose as one and followed after Montague with a large portion of the house joining them.

Aodhan for the first time ever chose to follow them.

Once they reached the Quidditch pitch Montague turned to face them, “Crabbe, Goyle go fetch the box of equipment. All current team members now would be a good time to time to use switching charms to put on your uniforms. Malfoy please take our new Seeker and Beaters to pick out uniforms. I don’t want them to use their Gryffindor ones.”

Malfoy grumbled under his breath but did as he was told, “Follow me.”

Behind them they could heard Montague talking.

“I want two full teams. I can’t guarantee that a reserve will get match time but it might happen. If I see good work during practice I may alternate, then again I might not. We’ve gained three new members; it would be unintelligent not to take advantage of them. There maybe hurt feelings because some of our best players like Malfoy might be sidelined. But unlike Gryffindor we have a very good, probably the second best Seeker as our reserve who would be more than willing to step in at a moment’s notice.”

They grabbed uniforms that would fit and returned just behind Crabbe and Goyle who were carrying the chest of the four balls used in Quidditch.

“If you’re here as a Beater or a Seeker you can just watch because I’m only looking for four Chasers and two Keepers.” Montague glared. “Malfoy and Potter can take the snitch and practice. I want the twins up in the air; if prospective Chasers can fight through them to score without acting like a Hufflepuff I’ll consider you.”

“Why don’t you start with your names?” Adrian asked politely.

“Thank you Adrian, as a Seventh Year I haven’t had the opportunity to know most of you.” Montague shrugged.

“Kevyn Bletchley, I’m a Sixth Year. My brother Miles graduated last year and he was House Keeper.” A nimble witch said smirking as she caressed her broom.

“Matilda Prewett but I prefer to be called Mal.” The Queen of Slytherin said stubbornly. “I’m trying out for Chaser.”

“Millicent Bulstrode.” A large girl in trousers and a button-up shirt grimaced, “But I prefer Millie. I’m interested in the open Keeper position.”

Harry recognized her from the bookshop as the surly girl.

“Amy Puglia, I’m trying out for Keeper as well.”

Blaise Zabini called out, “I’ll try out for Chaser.”

Draco grinned, “About time.”

Aodhan stepped forward with a slight scowl, “I’ll try out. My grandmother was a House Captain and
my mother played Chaser. I can fly, I bought a Nimbus but it’s only a 2000 not a Firebolt or a 2001 but I saw what Harry can do with one.”

“Good on you.” Fred called out.

“Hanging out with you Quidditch maniacs can make one almost appreciate the game. I’d be bored out of my wits and if I’m playing then I get out of some of that mind-numbing patrol shit. At least practices seem interesting, I’m not against Quidditch…” Aodhan grumbled.

“Good.” Harry smirked.

“Come on I need four Chaser recruits.” Montague scowled, “Seriously don’t I have some more options? I’ve only heard two names! Don’t be a bunch of Hufflepuff duffers!”

“Cassius Warrington. Chaser.”

“Off the team.” Montague said shortly. “I don’t need anyone who can’t think for themselves. You’re aptly named because you’re empty-headed.”

“Don’t complain if you’re short.” Warrington retorted. “I offered.”

“Adrian has his rightful place as Chaser. Flint was an idiot to replace Adrian with you.” Montague tossed back.

“You’re just saying that because you’re the one sucking on his cock.” Warrington sneered.

Montague took two steps towards Warrington and towered over him by two inches. “If anything he sucks mine. If we both liked blokes and I’m not saying we do, because it’s none of your business, we have far too different tastes. I prefer mine to look vastly different. Someone perhaps with the build of a Beater and a Keeper personality…”

George shivered slightly.

Harry frowned at him.

George flushed and muttered. “I’m fine.”

“Vaisley. Chaser.”

“Royal Harper, Chaser.”

“Rueben Davis, Tracey’s brother and Rodger’s my cousin. I’m a Chaser.” A more pleasant boy who did resemble Davies of Ravenclaw offered.

“IF you’re as pompous as he is don’t bother.” Montague grumbled.

“Rodger’s just compensating.” Tracey Davis smirked.

“Compensating for what?” Fred sneered. “A small prick?”

Tracey sniffed, “What the size of that is I wouldn’t know. When a second heir is born to the House of Davis they are given the name Davies and bound as a vassal of the Main House. My father was named the heir and his was deemed a spare, thus Rodger can never inherit even if something happened to myself or Rueben.”

Montague snorted, “A vassal? No wonder…anyone else?”
“Maurcius Flint, I’m Marcus and Jacobious Flint’s brother. I’m a decent Chaser.” A boy who marched with Fourth Years piped up.

“I’ll try out.” The Sixth Year girls’ prefect sung out.

Harry finally recognized her; it was Lady Giselle from the bookshop Alexandria’s Inferno.

“The hell you will.” Millie snapped.

“Millie’s right.” Goyle echoed, “Father would shake you.”

The blond pouted, “I want to play…”

“Father’s already threatened to have a bonding contract drawn up Giselle.” Goyle warned her.

The female Goyle tossed her blonde hair, “I’ll elope first. If I can get my choice to agree…”

“With my bearer only producing a female child and no male heir on the other side of the family you haven’t a chance.” Millie snapped. “Besides you know my father would refuse. I’m not going to make him force me into a bonding contract with Nott.”

“As if I’d agree.” Harry’s roommate grumbled. “I won’t you know. He can be torn apart by Thestrals before I’d let him have anything to do with my future. We wouldn’t suit; you’d sooner cast a Killing Curse on me then let me in your bed chamber.”

Millie sniffed.

“Sebastian Boyle, I’m Derrick’s brother but I’m more interested in flying as a Chaser.”

“Petrus Fenwick, my Uncle Merwyn is a professional Quidditch Player and I’d like a shot at Chaser.” A boy who marched with the Second Years spoke up.

“Then I think we’ve got enough to try out.” Montague grumbled. “Grab a school broom or use your own. Adrian can lead one team; Prewett and Fenwick you’re with Adrian. I’ll take Zabini and Urquhart. Bulstrode and Bletchley you’re playing Keeper. Potter, Malfoy what are you doing on the ground? Get your arses in the bloody air and Seek the damn Snitch. I want a damn count of captures from each of you and your counts better match!”

Malfoy pushed off on his Nimbus 2001 and Harry did the same on his Firebolt.

“The rest of you pull up a patch of grass. Bletchley, Crabbe and Goyle, you’re with Adrian. Bulstrode and Weasleys you’re with me. Potter’s on my team and Adrian gets Draco. Push off.” Montague snapped.

XoooooX

Harry had already pushed off, soaring with the wind tossing his wild black hair and laughed.

“What’s so funny Potter?” Malfoy called out.

Harry grinned, “I haven’t played Quidditch but once this summer and I was against Charlie Weasley who played Seeker for Gryffindor before I did. He was offered a place on four teams when he was
in school and I beat him.”

“Braggart.” Malfoy glared.

“I don’t fly because I love Quidditch.” Harry frowned. “I fly because it’s exhilarating and I feel free. When I’m up here I’m not Harry Potter, The Boy Who Lived; I’m just another Seeker…I like that. I don’t need a snitch to chase; I just need me, my broom and the sky.”

“Less talking, more Seeking Potter.” Malfoy grumbled.

XooooooX

Fred and George smirked at one another before they pushed off, summoning Beater bats into their hand having already cast switching charms to exchange their chosen outfits for the day with their new Slytherin Quidditch uniforms. With their flawless teamwork, they started tormenting the Chasers on Adrian’s team.

Prewett glared at them dodging the Bludger George sent at her.

Goyle intercepted the Bludger headed for Adrian and hit it at Aodhan which forced Fred to intercept.

Fred and George exchanged a wordless look across the pitch.

Their closest competition had always been Rickett and O’Flaherty of Hufflepuff, since Tonks had graduated with Charlie. That girl was obnoxious still…

They’d never seen Crabbe and Goyle play really and had been surprised to hear that they were Slytherin’s Beaters when they hadn’t played Quidditch because of the Tournament last year.

It became a battle of skill and was that intelligence or strategy Goyle was displaying? Rumors of Crabbe and Goyle’s marks being the worst of their year couldn’t possibly be true…

They really could think for themselves unlike Slytherin’s previous Beaters…

Playing opposite these two during practices would really boost their skills…

The first point was scored by Aodhan surprisingly against Miles Bletchley’s sister.

Scoring against Millie Bulstrode seemed to be impossible…

Blaise Zabini and Aodhan were naturals dodging Bludgers and syncing flawlessly with Montague.

Then Prewett slipped into Millie’s blindspot…

Adrian hurled the Quaffle at her.

Prewett scored.

It was Adrian’s team’s first point.

Millie was more observant and quicker after that.

It was 30 points to 10…
Then came Malfoy cursing loudly.
Along with Harry’s shout of triumph.
It was now 180 to 10…

XoooooX

Harry was always grateful that Malfoy was still not a tailer, having apparently learned his lesson somehow after Harry's first match with the Firebolt.

They flew side-by-side with mostly their eyes pealed for flash of gold…

To Harry’s annoyance, Malfoy’s white blonde hair was proving to be a distraction.

It was no longer slicked back but was seemingly just as wind-tossed as his own.

They were so far removed from the practice match beneath them that they were only aware of each other and their mutual quest for the Snitch.

Malfoy seemed to be sneaking peeks at him as well. He too looked like he’d grown up over the summer physically speaking…

Harry tried to focus on their objective; the Snitch.

It had to be George’s fault! Damn him, if he hadn’t seduced him then he wouldn’t be noticing every hot bloke nearby…

Perhaps, he was foolish to brush off George’s open invitation to visit his rooms and spend the night.

His musing was interrupted by the flash of warm gold beneath them.

As a pair he and Malfoy both dove in tandem…

Harry’s tongue peeked out of the side of his lips as he concentrated on the Snitch and his dive.

He and Malfoy were neck and neck…

At the last minute, Harry leaned closer to his broom and put on another burst of speed pushing his Firebolt harder. His reward was his fingers closing around the snitch capturing it and he let out a shout of triumph.

Malfoy pulled up beside him, hovering. “Just once. Is that too much to ask? Salazar’s Cauldron! I just want to beat Potter once…”

Harry snickered, “Better luck next time Malfoy.”

“Far be it from me to argue with Hogwarts,” Malfoy grumbled, “but to be benched because you were resorted is a bitter potion to swallow.”

Harry shrugged, “You’re the best Seeker in school and a worthy adversary; you actually make me work for it. Diggory only beat me because of a combined fluke.”
“Wonder what sort of duffer Rickett will choose to succeed Diggory.” Malfoy snorted.

“Who knows?” Harry laughed, “Maybe I’ll take the game off and let you pull a Krum on them. Merlin knows most of them haven’t our reflexes so they’d probably crash just like Lynch.”

“Maybe you really are a Slytherin if you can laugh at the misfortune of others.” Malfoy sniffed.

“Oh I am.” Harry snickered, “Would have been one sooner if you’d been nicer.”

Malfoy turned white.

Their private conversation was interrupted by Montague bellowing.

XooooooX

“Land now.” Montague shouted.

All fourteen players did so.

“I’m satisfied with what we have.” Montague glared at the others. “Disappoint me and remember you have these people who would be willing to take your place in a Plumpton Pass.”

Harry vaguely remembered reading in ‘Quidditch Through the Ages’ about Roderick Plumpton, a former Tuthill Tornadoes seeker, who was famous for his Plumpton Pass having ended a match in a record 3.43 seconds.

The new players; excluding Harry, Fred, George, Vince and Greg swallowed.

Malfoy shrugged and smirked.

They had obviously taken up their two hours, because Head Girl and Gryffindor captain Angelina had arrived with cadre of Gryffindors behind her.

“Dismissed.” Montague barked.

“We want to stay and check out the possible competition.” Harry smirked.

Montague shrugged, “If you like.”

Angelina sniffed, “It seems thanks to Hogwarts we’ve lost not only our Keeper but our Beaters and Seeker. So we’ll need nearly an entire roster to play against Slytherin in November.”

Montague conjured a comfortable chair and lazily relaxed to keep an eye on the competition.

Aodhan had already retrieved a Slytherin uniform and joined Harry, Fred and George on a blanket where an elf had appeared with refreshments.

“Organize by position please. Keepers over by the left goal, Chasers on the right, Beaters on the centre line and Seekers on the grass.” Angelina snapped.

Gryffindor arranged themselves with interested Gryffindors joining Harry and the twins on the grass. Dudley saluted Harry rakishly.
Seamus, Dean and was that Neville?

Neville and Dean were standing with the Keepers, Seamus with the Chasers and Dudley was with the Beater hopefuls.

“Longbottom really?” Angelina sniffed.

Neville scowled, “My cousin Oliver trained me over the summer. Gran was busy with Wizengamot duties as well as Board of Governors so I finally got lessons. He even bought me a Nimbus for my birthday.”

“Very well.” Angelina asked. “What about you Thomas?”

“Seamus taught me how to play and I played Keeper on a football team at my stepfather’s whim because he thought I spent too much time studying. Technically it’s the same concept even if it’s in the air rather than on the ground.” Dean shrugged.

“I see.” Angelina turned the Seeker hopefuls. “Name.”

“Terentius Malfoy, I’m Draco Malfoy’s second cousin.”

“Dennis Prewett, previously known as Creevey, Colin’s brother.”

“Beaters?”

“Dudley Black-Tonks, I was trained this summer by the Weasley twins.”

“Faye Dunbar, I’m Neville’s cousin on our mothers’ side and I’m a huge Harpies fan.”

“Which one?” Angelina asked sharply.

“Gwenog Jones. I’m also an admirer of Amelia Bones…” Faye said shifting nervously.

“You any good?” Angelina sniffed.

A girl from Harry’s year with reddish-brown hair in braids called out, “She sleeps with a Beater’s bat rather then a teddy.”

Fay blushed, “Damn it Alice!”

“Well you do.” The girl called out cheekily.

Dudley winked at Fay, “Looking forward to seeing what you can do.”

“Jimmy Peaks.”

“Ritchie Bott, I’m Brecc and Rueben’s cousin. Mum was a Captain of Slytherin and my dad had a Quidditch award when they were in school.”

“Four? That’s decent.” Angelina shrugged.

“That’s how many I have; do you think you can beat mine?” Montague called out.

“Pucey shut up your dog.” Angelina snapped.

“Adrian isn’t here now, Johnson. Maybe you should try fighting your own battles.” Montague sneered.
Angelina sniffed and stomped before turning to talk to her chasers.

“Oh, someone should tell her that tantrums just aren’t attractive.” Montague drawled.

Fred smirked, “Tried, that’s why we’re no longer together and besides my Hermione is a better catch.”

Angelina flinched but continued her examination of her team’s prospects, “I’m not going to be taking many chasers, probably just one but maybe two if I’m astonished.”

“Me name is Seamus Finnigan. I’m a Kenmare Kestrels fan.” Seamus drawled. “Bin flying since before I could walk me máthair says.”

“Demelza Robbins.”

Then came a few names Harry didn’t catch…

“Very well, Alicia can take up Finnigan and Katie can take Robbins. Longbottom you’ll guard against Alicia and Finnigan. Thomas, you’ll guard again Katie and Robbins. Dudley you’re with Alicia, I’ll take Dunbar. I’ll referee and let the Snitch go. Whoever catches it first is our Seeker.”

“What if I tell my Beaters to follow the first rule of the Beaters’ Bible?” Montague called out, “I hope you plan on having a decent reserve.”

“Best two out of three is our Seeker, with the other remaining on the team as a reserve unless you show more skill during practice.” Angelina scowled.

Gryffindor’s tryouts were more boring then Slytherin’s…

They did switch with Chaser-hopefuls on the ground at some point…

“I’ll post the team in the common room.” Angelina sniffed.

“Keeping them in suspense Johnson? What’s the point? The choices should be glaringly obvious.” Montague said with a drawl as he stood and banished his chair.

“When I want your opinion Montague,” Angelina said tossing her braids, “I’ll ask for it.”

“You don’t have to ask.” Montague said with a smirk, “I’ve already given it. If you choose poorly well that’s in my favor. I’ve already benefited by the addition of your best players.”

Aodhan yawned, “Let’s go. A spitting match between them is boring.”

“Are you going to let him talk to me like that George?” Angelina pouted.

George snorted, “You failed to capture Fred, so now you’re turning your attentions to me? I’d be better off with Diggory; at least he knew who he was pursuing. We may look identical but our tastes couldn’t be more different. I wouldn’t touch you with a ten-foot broomstick. If I were going to be interested in a Quidditch captain I think that Montague is more my taste. If your gender wasn’t already against you, your temperament would be. Clearly, authority doesn’t bring out the best in you Angelina. I thought at least six years of friendship would have helped you know me at least a little. You went after Fred, while you let Lee pant after you. Now that Fred’s moved on, you’re going after me? No thank you, I don’t do Fred’s leftovers.”

“Deten—"
“Oh please Johnson. I didn’t know telling the truth was an offence that deserved detention. As King of Slytherin I refuse to acknowledge your authority over my subject.” Aodhan sniffed. “Come along boys, I think we can find more entertaining things to do then deal with this harpy.”

“I’m your Head Girl.” Angelina pouted.

“Yes and that was probably just as much of a mistake as Ron being made prefect.” Fred said with a frown.

“Vector, Smith or Farley would have been better choices.” Montague tossed back as he sauntered off.

Harry frowned at Angelina, “To think I once respected you and thought you were a nice person. Was that just a front or are you behaving this way for a reason? Because Fred dropped you or because we’re Slytherins now?”

“I can’t believe he dropped me for that mousy bookworm.” Angelina snipped before stalking off.

Harry rose and stretched, “A pity, she has a nice face but a dreadful character. Remind you of anyone?” then he walked off with a sort of swagger that had two of his housemates staring at him with barely disguised lust.
Harry had Herbology as their first class of term and their Fifth Year which he felt extremely lucky to still have with Hermione because Herbology was with Ravenclaw.

Luckily it was just lecture rather then practical; they were lectured about how they had to work hard because it was their OWL year and they were also lectured about different types of shrubs, particularly a shrub that was ‘self-fertilizing’.

He sat with Neville in Potions next, which was a double class that was half lecture where Uncle Sev-god that was weird, reminded them about their OWL exam in June and half practical. They managed to do nominally well brewing a passing Draught of Peace, a first for Neville since Hermione ‘helped’ him fix his Shrinking Solution Third Year. Dean and Seamus’ cauldron was beside his and Neville’s, which wasn’t that dreadful.

True to his belief, he did better without Hermione’s constant correction and Ron’s babbling in his ears.

The looks he got from his fellow Slytherins were rather astonished or irritated that he would dare sit with a Gryffindor. While he hadn’t been as close to Neville, Dean or Seamus as he had seemed to be with Hermione and Ron before, he didn’t want to upset them when they had declared they still liked him and even considered him a friend after his ReSort.

They separated at lunch to sit at their respective tables but exchanged schedules and planned future study sessions.

Fourth period was Ancient Runes which neither he, Neville or Seamus took so they had a study session for Potions but Hermione and apparently Dean took Ancient Runes so they weren't able to study with them. It was also Divination which they had dropped due to lack of real interest- if Hermione could drop with no backlash that they’d heard of, then it had stood to reason that they could do so as well and they had. They also exchanged notes on Gryffindor’s History of Magic with Hufflepuff and Slytherin’s Herbology with Ravenclaw. It helped Harry get a head start on his History of Magic Homework while Seamus and Neville got a sneak peak at Herbology.

Harry then headed to Defense Against the Dark Arts with Seamus and Neville meeting Dean along the way.

His day had been quite normal thank you until the four ended up sprawled in the doorway of the classroom. They were a right mess of books, ink, quills, parchment and boys…

Unfortunately, they didn’t untangle or pick up their things before the bell for fifth period rang.

“Names.” Umbridge asked sweetly.

Harry scowled, “Harry Potter.”
“Neville Longbottom.”

“Seamus Finnigan.”

“Dean Thomas.”

“Potter, Longbottom, Finnigan and Thomas detention. Potter you have two nights with me starting tonight at dinner. Longbottom you’ll serve yours with Snape. Thomas with Professor Weasley and Finnigan with Filch. Please be seated. Next time be more careful and on time.” Umbridge said in her fake sweet voice that grated on Harry’s ears.

Harry was almost sure they had hit a ward when they tried to enter the classroom which was something even his Uncle Severus hadn’t done.

Having previously been an unknown it was clear that the pink toad was a strict disciplinarian.

So Gryffindor and Slytherin remained quiet.

Harry and his three Gryffindor companions took the only open seats.

Professor Umbridge was still seated at the teacher’s desk, wearing a fluffy pink cardigan not unlike the night before but the shade was different Harry noticed and there was a black velvet bow on top of her head. She still looked like a pink-painted toad but now it seemed as if she had a giant fly on the top of her head.

“Well, good afternoon!” Umbridge said brightly.

The class muttered a repetition of her greeting.

“No, I’m afraid that won’t do. One must always clearly respond to a greeting, especially one given by a superior. It is a sign of respect, it seems only persons like Malfoy- five points to Slytherin were properly brought up.”

Scowls spread like wildfire through the class.

“When I greet you I expect a polite but properly enunciated reply. Let’s try that once more: good afternoon class.”

The class heaved a sigh as one and then chorused, “Good afternoon Professor Umbridge.”

“Now see? That wasn’t difficult.” Umbridge smiled at them before calling roll.

After roll call she smiled at them again, but it wasn’t a ‘real smile’…

“Now that that business is concluded, we’ll begin but wands away and quills out.”

Harry had his wand in his wand holster so he didn’t need to really put it away because he hadn’t taken it out yet. Harry sighed, first day and he already had detention…

Starting a double period with lecture was usual but the professor’s manner wasn’t.

Umbridge opened her garish pink purse, and extracted the shortest wand Harry’d ever seen…

Dean mouthed, ‘short wands reflect a defect in one’s character- Garrick Ollivander’.

Harry snorted soundlessly, living with Andromeda and Sirius as well as Snape their Slytherin-like
mannerisms rubbed off. It wasn’t proper to show his displeasure publicly, one had to be sure of one’s companions before exposing one’s true thoughts. Those who’d joined his conference after breakfast on Saturday he trusted implicitly.

Umbridge tapped the blackboard and words appeared on it written in pink letters:

**Defence Against the Dark Arts**

**A return to basic principles**

“Well now, your teaching in this subject has been rather disrupted and fragmented, hasn’t it?” Professor Umbridge stated, turning to face the class with her hands clasped neatly in front of her. “The constant changing of teachers, many of whom do not seem to have followed any Ministry approved curriculum, has unfortunately resulted in your being far below the standard we would expect to see in your OWL year. You will be pleased to know, however, that these problems are now to be rectified. We will be following a carefully structured, theory-centered, Ministry-approved course of defensive magic this year. Copy down the following, please.”

Harry’s internal scowl threatened to manifest itself on his face at the words: carefully structured, theory-centered and Ministry-approved.

Translation: Ministry meddling and an obvious lack of belief in Voldemort’s return. Morons at the Ministry…

Somehow Harry doubted that Madam Bones would ever succeed in getting a trial for Sirius and that infuriated him…

Umbridge tapped the blackboard again; the first message vanished and was replaced by:

**Course Aims:**

1. **Understanding the principles underlying defensive magic.**
2. **Learning to recognize situations in which defensive magic can legally be used.**
3. **Placing the use of defensive magic in a context for practical use.**

The class of Gryffindors and Slytherins were all scratching away at their parchments.

Once their quills stopped scratching, Umbridge asked them sweetly, “Does everybody have a copy of *Defensive Magical Theory* by Wilbert Slinkhard?”

A murmur of assent rolled across the classroom.

Umbridge’s eyes flashed, “Let’s try that again,” she said that nasty voice of her’s, “when I ask a question or another authority figures asks a question you ought to reply, ‘Yes, Professor Umbridge’, or ‘No, Professor Umbridge’. So: does everybody have a copy of *Defensive Magical Theory* by Wilbert Slinkhard?”

A very sharp, “Yes Professor Umbridge,” rang through the room.

“Good,” Professor Umbridge said with her fake smile. “I should like you to turn to page five and read ‘Chapter One, Basics for Beginners’. There will be no need to talk.” Professor Umbridge left the blackboard and settled herself in the chair behind the teacher’s desk, observing them all closely with those pouchy toad’s eyes.
Harry stood up.

“What Mr. Potter do you need? Surely my instructions were not too difficult for you to understand.” Umbridge frowned at him.

“I already read the entire book.” Harry drawled. “I always read all my textbooks. I don’t see what good reading that trash will do especially in these dangerous times. Your Ministry approved course aims are missing something important.”

“What dangerous times Mr. Potter? Whatever could my course aims be missing? Trash? Why would Professor Slinkhard’s words be ‘trash’?” Umbridge replied in a voice of determined sweetness.

Harry turned to Nott who was as book mad as Dean and Hermione, “Theo if you please tell me where exactly practical use of defensive spells are mentioned.”

“Nowhere second.” Nott grumbled.

“Dean?” Harry asked.

“I see nothing on that topic.” Dean said firmly.

Harry looked at Malfoy, “You’re a keen duelist, surely a lack of teaching of defensive spells would bother you.”

Malfoy stretched lazily, “Perhaps that is why there is a dueling club and extensive reading of defence texts Potter.”

“Enough of this calculated distribution Mr. Potter. I’m extending your detention another two nights.” Umbridge lifted her wand and brought it down sharply, “Sit down Mr. Potter.”

Harry glared at her, losing his composure. “Forcing my compliance using magic? That’s never worked. I asked a logical question and I’ll rephrase it for you Professor. When are we going to actually have practical lessons? When this year will you let us cast even one defensive spell?”

Umbridge’s face pinched and her toadish eyes narrowed. “I can’t imagine any situation arising in my classroom that would require you to use a defensive spell, Mr. Potter. You surely aren’t expecting to be attacked during class?”

Harry snorted, “Three out of four of my Defence Professors have tried to kill me since I started at this place. Pardon me if I think that you’re among the former rather then the latter.”

“Which of my predecessors do you believe tried to kill you?” Umbridge sniffed shaking her head.

“Quirrell admitted to jinxing my broom my first Quidditch match, bringing a troll intro the school he had a ‘gift’ with them you see and he tried to use a non-verbal strangling hex on me.”

“A man who is dead and can’t defend himself. Didn’t anyone teach you it is wrong to speak ill of the dead?” Umbridge shook her head sadly.

“No. It’s stupid; you don’t hear that many people talking about the glories of Voldemort back when you thought he was dead. You talk about him in whispers; you talk about the deaths, the missing, the fear and the relief when he was supposedly defeated in Godric’s Hallow.” Harry snorted.

“He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is dead Mr. Potter. You are wasting valuable class time.” Umbridge sniffed.
“Losing your composure?” Harry sneered, “Wasting class time? Who hasn’t read the text or at least this chapter before class?”

Not one student raised their hand.

“See? What is the point of reading it again?” Harry smirked.

“Detention for the rest of the week Mr. Potter.” Umbridge snipped.

“Why? Because I exposed your class for the fraud that it is? You’ll teach us nothing. You want to fill in the gaps in our spell knowledge? By all means do so: teach us more about dark creatures and defences against them, teach us shields against certain types of spells. We already had to deal with a practical lesson on the Unforgivables. Our last Professor was an escaped Death Eater who cast the Imperious on all of us. We know there aren’t defences against those spells but there are related spells that one can learn.”

“Is it your habit to interrupt classes on the first day Mr. Potter? Do you like attention that much? Is that why Hogwarts removed you from Gryffindor so you couldn’t poison the minds of the students there? We already know how much Slytherin detests you. How many times have you beaten them at Quidditch?”

“Quidditch is a game Professor.” Harry retorted, “It has little to do with anything of substance outside of matches.”

“Why would Hogwarts believe that their Golden Boy wasn’t a Gryffindor?”

“Let’s see…” Harry drawled lazily, “I’m intelligent, the entire school knows I speak Parseltongue, I have a slight disregard for the rules and I think I’m ambitious. Yet I have no designs on education or politics for my future. In my opinion the Ministry is too fucked up to be of any use to anyone.”

“Excuse my professor; I believe we were discussing practical defence lessons.” Dean intoned sharply, “Not why Hogwarts decided that Harry had been improperly sorted.”

“Of course.” Umbridge said sitting up straight in her chair. “It is my understanding that my predecessor not only performed illegal curses in front of you, he actually performed them on you.” Umbridge continued.

Seamus snickered, “Harry just said that professor. Moody was a fake and he was a nutter wasn’t he? We still learned a lot from him.”

“Mr. Finnigan your behavior is so uncouth. Surely your pureblood mother tried to raise you properly despite your father’s blood. How much could you learn from someone insane about Defence?”

Seamus glared, “Don’t talk about my father like he’s an animal. He’s a person, he thinks magic is neat now but it was a bit of a shock to find he’d married a witch.”

“I think it is a mistake to mingle blood with Muggles when there are so few of us.” Umbridge sniffed.

“Again,” Dean retorted, “What does that have to do with practical defence?”

“Now, it is the view of the Ministry that a theoretical knowledge will be more than sufficient to get you through your examination, which, after all, is what school is all about. And your name is?” Umbridge asked Parkinson.
Pansy stood and curtseyed, “Prefect Pansy Parkinson, daughter of Edmund Parkinson and Azalea Brown. Unless my cousins Marcus and Jacobius Flint were telling stories, isn’t there a portion of our Defence Against the Dark Arts OWL examination that is practical? Jacobius was a prefect so I’d be more apt to believe what he said, he mentioned that we are expected to properly perform certain counter-curses, anti-jinxes, counter hexes, perform a series of shields and perhaps, a few other spells that the proctor requests.”

“As long as you have studied the theory hard enough, there is no reason why you should not be able to perform the spells under carefully controlled examination conditions,” said Professor Umbridge dismissively.

“Without ever practicing them beforehand?” Pansy’s hand was over her heart as she asked incredulously. “Are you telling us that the first time we’ll get to do the spells will be during our exam?”

“I repeat, as long as you have studied the theory hard enough -”

“Pardon the interruption,” Harry said sarcastically, “but what good’s theory going to be in the real world?”

Umbridge turned her attention to Harry once more, “This is school, Mr. Potter, not the real world,” she said softly.

“So we’re not supposed to be prepared for what’s waiting for us out there?” Harry snorted.

“There is nothing waiting out there, Mr. Potter.” Umbridge said in that sickly sweet tone of hers.

“Really? Then speak to us oh great professor Umbridge and enlighten us as to who killed Cedric? Surely you know? You were Fudge’s assistant. Wait, you weren’t there. I gave names what did Fudge to with them? Throw them away like he did his only leads in to the Murder of Cedric Diggory?”

“Cedric Diggory died tragically as a result of the tournament. When one enters the Triwizard, the schools and the Ministry are absolved of all guilt or responsibility if someone dies; which is why we tried to prevent underage persons from entering.”

“Diggory was murdered.” Harry sharply, “I watched it happen. It was too fast for me to prevent and honestly, I shouldn’t have had to. Diggory was an adult as you have so eloquently stated, he ought to have know what to do in any situation. That is what school ought to teach us. What good would your theoretical Defence Against the Dark Arts have done him then? The Fake Moody’s insistence of constant vigilance didn’t save him. If an adult couldn’t think logically how to proceed when a situation changed from its expected result and one was kidnapped via portkey to a strange place what does one do? Malfoy I know you paid attention to Fake Moody’s lecture, if that had happened to you what would you have done?”

Malfoy sniffed, “Me? I would have cast a notice-me-not charm immediately and hid. Then I would have cast a silencing charm around me, summoned a house elf and ask for my father to bring help.”

“You wouldn’t have tried to escape?” Seamus asked incredulously.

Malfoy frowned, “I could learn something by staying that would help my father find and have my attackers prosecuted. My father would be highly disappointed if I were to run away.”

“What about you Nott?” Harry asked.
“Me? I wouldn’t send for my father. I’d try to gain information on my captors for my own benefit and then I would escape. I would be more vigilant about my own safety while I plotted a completely theoretical vengeance as well as collected enough information to turn over to the Aurors to have them prosecuted.” Nott retorted.

“I fail to see what use your theoretical defence would have in real life situations.” Harry smirked, “I’ll ask again, what can it teach us that we can use in real life?”

“Are you a Ministry-trained educational expert, Mr. Potter.” Umbridge asked with a tight smile.

“No and I don’t have to be.” Harry retorted sharply. “I’ve sat through classes taught by cowardly Voldemort pawns, outright frauds, mad Azkaban escapees and one decent professor who tried to catch us up as well as my uncle who would have been a far more wise choice to teach.”

“Uncle? I was under the impression that your family was dead.” Umbridge said with a wicked glint in her eye.

“A false representation that will be remedied shortly.” Harry said in a politely tone. “I have a paternal cousin and maternal uncle that still live. It was a shock to be sure. Since I’ve been in danger by a Voldemort loyal operative every year who successfully infiltrated this fine educational institution, I believe that danger is something we must learn to protect ourselves from.”

“Just who do you think is out there Mr. Potter? Who do you imagine wants to attack children like yourselves?” inquired Professor Umbridge in a horribly honeyed voice.

“Like I said Lord Voldemort, who has infiltrated this school one way or another every year for four years.” Harry retorted.

Umbridge, however, did not flinch. She was staring at Harry with a grimly satisfied expression on her face. “Ten points from Slytherin, Mr. Potter.”

The classroom was silent and still. Everyone was staring at either Umbridge or Harry.

“Now, let me make a few things quite plain.” Professor Umbridge stood up and leaned towards them, her stubby-fingered hands splayed on her desk. “You have been told that a certain Dark wizard has returned from the dead -”

“He wasn’t dead, you Ministry pawn.” Harry snapped. “Show me the body from Godric’s Hallow and then maybe I’d believe you. Oh wait I saw him return,” he tugged up his jumper sleeve, unbuttoned his dress shirt’s sleeve and revealed the scar from the knife Wormtail used. “This didn’t heal even with ditany, my guardian said because it was made with a Dark Weapon. This is the scar I had when I came back from a graveyard and a Dark Ritual that gave Voldemort a new body.”

“Mr-Potter-you-have-already-lost-your-house-ten-points-and-received-a-week-of-detention-do-not-make-matters-worse-for-yourself,” said Professor Umbridge in one breath without looking at him. “As I was saying, you have been informed that a certain Dark wizard is at large once again. This is a lie.”

“Bullshit.” Harry sneered, “I saw him and I’ve fought him. My hero parents did that three times, four if you count the time they tried to defend me. I’ve fought him and emerged alive but not unscathed four times. I think I’d know if I’ve fought him.”

“I repeat, this is a lie. The Ministry of Magic guarantees that you are not in danger from any Dark wizard. If you are still worried, by all means come and see me outside class hours. If someone is alarming you with fibs about reborn Dark wizards, I would like to hear about it. I am here to help. I
am your friend. And now, you will kindly continue your reading. Page five, ‘Basics for Beginners’.”

Professor Umbridge sat down behind her desk.

“What good is a Ministry that have proven five times that it can’t control Azkaban or its guardians?”
Harry spat. “Or one that deliberately lies to the populace to maintain a fair sense of safety?”

“Sit down Mr. Potter. From now on I will not listen to anyone who doesn’t raise their hand.”

“This is bullshit.” Harry pulled out his wand, “Acio Defensive Magical Theory by Wilbert Slinkhard.”

All the books in the classroom, twenty-one flew to hover in front of Harry.

Then more flung themselves through the walls and the door.

Once they stopped coming, Harry twirled his wand, “This is what I think of your precious Ministry’s carefully structured, theory-centred, Ministry-approved course of defensive magic. Incendio.”

Umbridge stood so suddenly that her chair fell backwards onto the floor. “MR. POTTER!”

Harry sneered, crossing his arms, “Feel free to write my Aunt Andromeda. She may be displeased in how I expressed my displeasure but all your precious textbook is worth is fuel for a fire. I really hope that you’ll choose a more worthy tome to teach us and perhaps, some instruction worth listening to that will actually help us. Since I’ve already lost ten House points and a week’s worth of detention for telling the truth I don’t see what else I can get out of this useless class. Without books I think that class ought to be cancelled. I think I’ll take a page out of Malfoy’s book and go read. Anyone want to join me or do you want to spend what is left of a double period staring at the walls?” Harry said sneering as he packed up his supplies.

“I did not dismiss you.” Umbridge said tightly.

“Your precious text is gone. If you were going to use it to prevent having to actually teach, then I think that you should. Perhaps, you should assign reading of another ‘Ministry approved’ text or an essay? Otherwise I’ll just write one on a topic assigned by an actually competent professor to a fifth grade class.” Harry shrugged as he made his way to the door.

“Fine Dismissed to the library. I expect a five foot essay on the history of the elementary shield charm, its usage, what it defends against how and when it should be cast.”

Harry snorted, “Third Year essay but its better then reading that worthless book.” Then he sauntered off, his arse swaying as he tossed his head.

Leaving the girls whispering as they packed up, Parkinson staring at him, some of the boys frowning but at least four salivating…

It would be a very interesting self-study period…

Perhaps, Harry’s arguments would help open their minds more…

XooooooX
dictation quill.

So she had activated the quill to record the History of Magic lecture and turned her attention to Harry’s request to create a testing program for prospective Blackthorn students and lesson plans.

Aodhan had his elf Simi deliver a box of Defence books to her plus she had copies of Sirius and Remus’ lesson plans.

Thank Merlin for undetectable extending charms.

She had been surprised to be slipped a note by her seatmate Parkinson during their Herbology class earlier that morning, requesting a meeting after dinner. It referenced Patronuses and their being partnered for prefect rounds.

Sure they’d all managed to learn the Patronus charm this summer and well she knew she could teach because she’d helped tutor Dudley who wasn’t exactly unintelligent but could someone like Pansy Parkinson actually lower herself to be taught by a Mudblood?

The thought plagued her as she reviewed her work that Harry had assigned her and Aodhan.

They-Ravenclaw shared History of Magic with Hufflepuff now…

Which was odd because Hermione had thought that Gryffindor had shared it with Ravenclaw…

Then she remembered that they had sometimes shared it with both Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw, it wasn’t like Potions or Herbology that was always with the same House…

“Psst…Granger…” the Ravenclaw boys’ prefect Michael Corner hissed at her.

Hermione turned towards him, “Yes Corner?”

“My name is Michael.” He frowned, “There are too many Corners at Hogwarts.”

“Very well,” Hermione sighed, “Michael then. What do you want?”

“Aren’t you usually scribbling furiously?”

Hermione pointed at the quill, “I am. I can do two things at once.”

“What are you doing?”

Hermione inwardly smirked, a perfect opportunity to truly gauge Michael Corner’s loyalties. “Research for Harry, he was suspicious earlier that we would be stuck with a useless professor again. I mean really, have you read that pathetic excuse for a textbook?”

Michael sniffed, “Of course, I am a Ravenclaw.”

“Do you not agree it isn’t worth the parchment and ink it’s printed with?”

Michael coughed, “Did you fail to notice it was printed by Obscuous Books rather than Whiz-Hard? My family owns Whiz-Hard Publishing, we wouldn’t print it. Father was incensed that I was required to purchase it, having to purchase seven copies made him even more outraged.”

Now Hermione was intrigued, “Your father owns Whiz-Hard Books?”

“Yes and I’m the heir-apparent, I am after all an hour older than Stephan.” Michael bragged.
“So how does your father determine what to print?” Hermione asked curiously.

“He has experts in all fields that are on retainer; he skims manuscripts and then sends them for review. He didn’t even bother to send that book.” Michael sniffed. “He threw it in Slinkhard’s face and told him not to bother Whiz-Hard again with his worthless ramblings. He didn’t think it would sell and it failed to have any worthwhile information.”

“Does your father own anything else?” Hermione asked boredly.

“He owns a share of the Prophet but he’s considering selling with the nonsense they are printing. He calls Skeeter a gossip hound like that missing Ministry person last year, Jorkins I think it was.” Michael shrugged. “He’s contemplating selling.”

Hermione grinned to herself, perhaps something to pass onto Andromeda? “I see.”

“What are you working on? What research did Potter ask you to do?” Michael leaned closer to see the stack of defence books in her Gucci backpack.

“Defence research. I helped tutor his cousin so he could test out of two years worth of instruction. I tutored him in History of Magic.” Hermione shrugged carelessly. “He wants to start a sort of club to thumb his nose at the ministry by teaching interested students practical defence. Whether you believe him about You-Know-Who or not, surely you see the benefit of that.”

“What would you teach?”

“I’m adapting Professor Lupin’s lessons from two years ago. I thought we should test everyone’s level and sort them according to their knowledge. Reviewing disarming charm, a basic shield because some of the younger years might know less then we do. Dudley, Harry, Fred, George and I all know the patronus charm. I think that in light of Dementors storming Hogwarts twice Third Year and attacking students on the train that it would be a useful spell to learn.”

“That’s a sixth year spell.” Michael whispered in awe.

“Yes it is,” Hermione shrugged, “I am sure that some of the various anti-jinxes, countercurses, varying shield spells and hex counters I’m finding will be useful too. Even if You-Know-Who is out there, his Death Eaters maybe as well. Who knows who has been biding their time believing he will return?”

“Could we really learn all that?” Michael asked, leaning over eagerly.

“It would help us all pass our Defence OWL with high marks wouldn’t it?” Hermione grinned.

“Terry, Stephan and Anthony would definitely come.” Michael said breathlessly, “I think Mandy, Su and Padma would be interested. If Stephan and I go then our sisters will as well.”

“You think Cho and her friends would?” Hermione asked boredly.

“Cho wants revenge for her fiancé so probably.” Michael shrugged. “Where Cho goes Marietta does too. Her brother Henli might go as well…”

“Are all your siblings Ravenclaws?” Hermione asked.

Michael snorted, “Hardly, they are in Gryffindor and Ravenclaw. No Slytherins in my family but our cousin Grieg is one now. Rachel is a Second Year Gryffindor; Leah is a Second Year Ravenclaw while Dinah and Rena are Third Year Ravenclaws.”
“Interesting…” Hermione mused, “You do realize you’re missing part of the lecture.”

“I’ll get it from Stephan, he likes History. Please can I help?” Michael begged her.

Hermione let out a sigh that made her seem as if he were asking too much of her, Andromeda’s lessons had rubbed off. “How could you help me?”

“I could write notes and have them passed around the room, so it’s warded to be legible to only those interested. If they aren’t, they’ll pass it on. If they are, they’ll initial it so we get a survey of who’d be interested. I can have it recorded to a master parchment.” Michael bragged.

Hermione was intrigued by the proposed magic. “Where did you learn that?”

“It’s Corner family magic. Its how our father keeps track of who reads the memos and who doesn’t. Stephan and I spend a lot of time delivering messages during the holidays.” Michael shrugged. "Father wants us to work our way up so we understand the business and are respected rather that just assume a leadership position right out of school."

“I want to see you use it and I’d like to see the final result.” Hermione gave off an air of barely interested.

“I’ll do it.” immediately Michael went quiet and got to work.

Hermione paid a quarter of her attention to him as she returned to her research, vaguely aware of her enchanted quill taking notes for her.

The first to get the enchanted note was Terry Boot. He glanced at them both and scribbled his name before passing it to Anthony Goldstein which required a bit of a shake because Goldstein was dozing.

Goldstein frowned at the note and then wrote on it before handing it to a mirror of Michael.

‘That must be Stephan…” Hermione thought as she turned the page and added a spell to the list.

Michael was now engaged in a whispered conference with his friends while his more studious brother continued to take notes with an exasperated air but he did add his name to the note which duplicated as it fluttered to opposite ends of the row behind them…

Hermione was almost smug, taking the temperature of Ravenclaw indeed

She would be very interested to see who in Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff would be interested.

The whispers grew louder when her Defence Text rose out of her bag and threw itself through the wall and it vanished.

XooooooX

A few hours ago…

Well second period…

Aodhan had Ancient Runes first thing after breakfast, then he had Defence…
He already had a poor opinion of Umbridge or as he thought of her Umbitch or the Toad Queen.

She greeted them and when faced with less than politely audible greetings she lectured them on respect and etiquette.

Aodhan gave a loud yawn.

“Mr. Urquhart I presume?” Umbridge sniffed at him.

“Yes what of it?”

“Is that anyway for a prefect to behave? It sets a poor example for the other students.”

Aodhan gave her a sardonic smile, “I take pride in setting a ‘poor example’. I am a prefect against my will and despite all effort to resign or to have the authority transferred to another, I am stuck with a title I neither respect or asked for.”

“Perhaps, I should write to your parents.” Umbridge sniffed at him.

“Good luck.” Aodhan sneered, “My father is dead and my mother doesn’t even know I exist. Thank you so much for bringing up a painful topic.”

“Surely you have a magical guardian, a relative.” Umbridge frowned.

Aodhan grinned at her, “You are welcome to speak to my godfather about my behavior but if he hasn’t managed to reform me by now I doubt his augustness can.”

“Oh and just who would that be?”

“Our inept Headmaster whom you were sent to gain information on that might result in his dismissal. If the Board of Governors hasn’t managed to get him to resign or retire, what makes you think that your precious Fudge can?” Aodhan tossed back.

Umbridge reeled as if he’d thrown a physical blow at her, “How dare you disrespect Cornelius!”

“How dare I?” Aodhan sneered, “He’s not my Minister. I didn’t vote for him and I doubt my father would either. I’m sure you’ve heard the name Elphinestone Urquhart.”

Umbridge hissed, “You can’t be his child.”

“I am professor, or should I say Ministry spy?” Aodhan smirked.

“I’m not…” the toady woman protested.

“You’re doing a pretty poor job of convincing us.” Aodhan intoned boredly. “It that worthless book you assigned is any indication of your skills as a professor then we’d be better of with the Fake Moody or even Lupin. At least they had decent textbooks. I’m starting to think that you’re as useless as cowardly Quirrell or that fraud Lockhart. Do you know what I did to them?”

His classmates twittered.

Umbridge coughed, “What dastardly acts did you visit upon your previous instructors?”

“Acts? Oh all I did was quiz them in front of the class, when they were exposed as pathetic I spent the year sleeping in this room.” Aodhan shrugged. “Also I burnt Lockhart’s books; they were as useless as your assigned text. You’re lucky I haven’t burnt it yet.”
“Ten points from Slytherin Mr. Urquhart. If you won’t act with the decorum a prefect ought to possess I shall not treat you as one.” Umbridge said sternly.

“I’m glad for that.” Aodhan said sarcastically. “So are you going to teach us or are you going to let that blathering text of drawling nonsense speak for you?”

Umbridge stiffened as she tapped the blackboard and words appeared on it written in pink letters:

Defence Against the Dark Arts

A return to basic principles

“Well now, your teaching in this subject has been rather disrupted and fragmented, hasn’t it?” Professor Umbridge stated as she turned to face the class with her hands clasped neatly in front of her. “The constant changing of teachers, many of whom do not seem to have followed any Ministry approved curriculum, has unfortunately resulted in your being far below the standard we would expect to see in your OWL year. You will be pleased to know, however, that these problems are now to be rectified. We will be following a carefully structured, theory-centered, Ministry-approved course of defensive magic this year. Copy down the following, please.”

“Ministry…Ministry…Ministry.” Aodhan sniffed, “You sound like a busted Wizarding radio that is stuck repeating the last thing it caught before it malfunctioned.”

“Detention Mr. Urquhart. I am sure your parents would be disturbed by your lack of respect for your superiors.”

“In exactly what sense are you implying that you are my ‘superior’? Is it because you are a ‘professor’? Because you worked for an incompetent Minister for Magic? Obviously he was displeased with you if he sent you to deal with us ‘children’. You’ll find we have no respect for adults; we’re teenagers in case you have forgotten. We’re rebellious; we believe we know everything and adults merely exist to ruin our enjoyment of life with their ridiculous rules. We act one way with adults and another with our peers. We take umbrage at the slightest mistake or insult. We’re usually so elitist that we think we’re indestructible- which was proven quite wrong with the death of that cad Diggory. What other things have you come to ruin? I actually like Defence despite three pathetic instructors. I had some interesting discussions with Lupin and Fake Moody on ethics and the use of regulated spells. What can you teach me?”

Umbridge ignored him, “I expect you all to take notes. Detention Mr. Urquhart.”

“For what? Using my mind and asking what your course is expected to teach?” Aodhan sniffed disdainfully.

Umbridge tapped the blackboard with her insanely tiny wand changing the notes written in pink.

Course Aims:

1. Understanding the principles underlying defensive magic.
2. Learning to recognize situations in which defensive magic can legally be used.
3. Placing the use of defensive magic in a context for practical use.

“Principles underlying defensive magic? What sort of nonsense is that? The concept is so simple my house elf understands it.” Aodhan sneered, “You are in a situation and you’re getting attacked defend yourself with all the spells in your arsenal.”

Giselle Goyle took up his argument, “About the second bullet point, ‘recognizing situations where
defensive magic can be legally used’? Is that like knowing that if a member of another House hexes you that you can’t curse them back?’

“Miss Goyle? I am surprised someone of your Bloodline can string together a sentence that is actually intelligent.” Umbridge smiled tightly.

Giselle tossed her blonde hair indignantly, “I take after my Beauxbatons mother thank you. You’re avoiding my question, what sort of situations where you need to defend yourself would be illegal?”

“IF you would actually wish to pay attention instead of interrupting you might learn something.” Umbridge said with false sweetness.

Prefect Katie Belby of Gryffindor spoke up as well, “What exactly do you mean by: ‘Placing the use of defensive magic in a context for practical use’?”

“There will be no unnecessary wand usage in my classroom. In fact there will non wand usage at all.”

The class broke out into murmurs of outrage.

“You’re kidding.” Aodhan glared, “We’ve got our Defence NEWT in two Springs, we’re already glaringly behind as you put it because of our ‘spotty’ education and you dare to tell us we won’t be using our wands in a Defence class? Are you insane?”

“Two more nights of detention Mr. Urquhart.” Umbridge said with a malicious smile. “You really should learn to watch your tongue and respect authority.”

“Respect should be earned.” Aodhan sniggered.

“It should be expected that students respect their professors.”

“We respect persons like Snape and McGonagall or even Flitwick because we know they know their subject backwards and forwards professor, which I highly doubt you do.” Aodhan retorted.

“I satisfy Minister for Magic Fudge’s criteria to teach this course.” Umbridge

“Why should that satisfy me? It is against the Charter of Hogwarts that the Ministry have any control over Hogwarts, I am surprised your appointment got past the Board of Governors.” Aodhan sneered.

“An archaic institution that ought to be abolished.” Umbridge sniffed.

“Careful now professor, you sound a lot like my godfather.” Aodhan smirked.

“I am nothing like Albus Dumbledore.” The toady woman protested.

“I fail to see a difference. Since you clearly have nothing to teach me, I will bid you good morning and sleep.”

“You can’t sleep in my class Mr. Urquhart.” Umbridge snipped.

Aodhan snickered, “Watch me.” And he proceeded to lay his head on his arms and promptly fell asleep.
Detention with Um-Bitch

Since his detention was over dinner, Harry left the library early and made his way to the kitchens.
He ran into Aodhan exiting Potions with Slytherin and Gryffindor.
“Hey. You heading up to dinner?” Harry asked.
Aodhan snarled, “No. I’m heading to detention with the toad queen.”
“Had a run in with that bitch so quickly?” Harry snickered, “Join the club. I earned detention for a
week.”
“Just two nights that I know of, I don’t know if she assigned more after I fell asleep.” Aodhan
shrugged.
“I think she was a bit pissed when I incinerated all the textbooks and made her assignment to read it
moot.” Harry smirked. “I was just headed to the kitchens to pick something up before going to
detention.”
“What’s the worst thing she can do to us if we skip?” Aodhan hissed.
“Who knows? We could look on it as gathering more information. That is a Slytherin trait isn’t it?”
Aodhan sniggered, “True. Then again, baiting that hag is almost more fun then annoying my mother
or pissing off Uncle Albus.”
“Who is your mother anyway?” Harry asked as he steered Aodhan towards the kitchens.
“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.” Aodhan grumbled. “Not that it matters she has no idea who
I am and telling her wouldn’t do any good. I know I’ve got cousins I haven’t met but getting to know
them is pretty stupid if my mother doesn’t acknowledge me.”
Harry tickled the pear in the portrait of fruit and it became a doorknob. He opened it and called out,
“Dobby?”
The wacky dressed house elf appeared at once, “How might Dobby be serving Master Harry Potter
sir?”
Aodhan sniggered at the address the weird house elf gave his ‘friend’.
“We need sandwiches and butterbeers. That crazy new defense professor assigned us detention and it
starts at dinner.” Harry groaned, “We’re starving.”
Dobby popped away and then popped back with a tray of roast beef sandwiches and Butterbeer.
“Dobby happy to serve Master Harry Potter sir any time.”

Harry took a sandwich and an open bottle of Butterbeer for himself and let Aodhan take one of each as well. “We’d have more time to eat if you could escort us to the third floor.”

“Dobby do it gladly. Dobby be back quick.” Dobby announced proudly

The other house elves ignored him.

Dobby took an arm in each of his long fingered hands and they were popped away.

Harry thanked Dobby before lazily leaning against a wall to finish his dinner.

“Where did you meet an elf like that?” Aodhan asked between bites.

“He used to be a Malfoy elf until I tricked them into freeing him. He’s still free because he wants to be paid. He’s an odd elf but apparently quite loyal.” Harry shrugged.

They finished eating brushing away the crumbs and banishing the empty bottles before stonily making their way to detention.

“Good evening boys.” Umbridge greeted them sweetly.

“Can it.” Harry grumbled, “Your fake girlish charms are lost on us. I like sexy Quidditch players like Aodhan here.” He said playfully as he leaned against the older Slytherin.

Aodhan stiffened beside him.

“Well…please use the quills on your desks to write the lines assigned.” Umbridge sniffed turning her attention to her meal.

“What is the use of lines?” Harry asked quoting Hagrid. “Ought we to be doing something useful?”

“Be careful Mr. Potter, you don’t want to be attempt to be awarded more detention do you?” Umbridge asked with a raised eyebrow.

Harry sneered at the assigned lines, “I will not tell lies and I will respect authority? Really? How unimaginative can you be? At least when my uncle gives me detention scrubbing cauldrons actually has a point.”

“Now I know you’re a liar, you are most definitely not Severus Snape’s nephew.” Umbridge twittered.

“Ask him. My blood says I am.” Harry drawled, but still didn’t move away from Aodhan.

“Please desist from such a display of affection. It is most unseemly in detention.” Umbridge glared. “You have lines.”

“What if I don’t wish to write them?” Harry said petulantly.

“Then you will continue to come to detention until you finish them.”

“What if we refuse to attend detentions?” Aodhan drawled lazily.

“Such delinquency…” Umbridge shook her head sadly.
“What do you expect I was raised by house elves and Albus Dumbledore.” Aodhan sniffed.

“I was raised by Muggles so what would I know of proper behavior?” Harry said sadly.

“I would have thought that Andromeda would have taught you something.” Umbridge said as she cut her meat into tiny pieces.

Because it would clearly upset Umbridge, Aodhan pulled out Harry’s chair for him and then moved the desk closer.

“No. I separated you two miscreants on purpose.”

“We’ll start our lines if you leave us alone.” Harry pouted.

“Brats.” Umbridge sniffed and then let them be.

With an exaggerated sigh, as if he were much aggrieved Harry took up the odd quill and began to write, ‘I will respect authority.’

Immediately his hand began to burn and at the fifth line it started to bleed.

Aodhan’s nose twitched at the scent of blood, “Harry?”

Harry turned and stared at his hand in shock. “What? Why am I bleeding?”

“You bitch!” Aodhan snarled.

He seemed to increase in height, towering over Harry more than usual. The air crackling around him like air sparked during a storm.

“How fucking dare you use a blood quill on one of my snakes!” Aodhan pulled Harry into his arms storming to his feet. “That’s Class C illegal torture device! You dare to use it one of your students? You’ll pay for this!”

“How do you know what a blood quill is?” Umbridge yelped.

“My father was Head of the Magnus Brutus; he had a book on illegal torture devices in his library.” Aodhan’s magic leapt from him in his rage and incinerated the quills, the parchment and the desks with white lighting.

“Aiiiee!” Umbridge shrieked.

“Do not attempt to hurt Harry again bitch. You don’t want to know what legal spells I could use on you in retribution.” Aodhan hissed in Parseltongue unintentionally.

He turned on his heel, holding Harry in his arms and carried him to the door.

“You can’t leave! I haven’t dismissed you!” Umbridge protested.

“We’re leaving toad queen. Harry must have that tended to before it becomes permanent as you intended it to be.” Aodhan snarled.

“You’ve destroyed valuable heirlooms!”

“I don’t care. You shouldn’t have tried to use them on us. I will be informing his family and the headmaster- though I doubt Uncle Albus will lift a finger. I doubt Professor Snape will take this
well.” Aodhan said storming out a door that opened for them.

Leaning against a wall was a black-eyed snake, “Welcome to Hogwarts young masters. My name is Nadira. I was once Salazar’s familiar. Come we have much to discuss and that must be tended to.”

“How is Salazar’s familiar still alive?” Harry hissed.

“I was bonded to Salazar, he bonded to the castle and so my life span was extended. Most basilisks don’t live as long as his did do they? It was born in the castle and protected. Hogwarts provides.” Nadira hissed at them.

“What sort of snake are you?” Aodhan asked in Parseltongue as they followed her.

“A Leucistic Dwarf Burmese.” Nadira hissed but didn’t stop.

Aodhan gasped, “You’re beautiful. Abaddon won’t stop talking about Skylla but if he saw you…”

“I’ve smelt snakes in recent times but the passage to the Slytherin dormitory is blocked. It caved in and has not been repaired.” Nadira snipped in Parseltongue, “The castle suffers from the darkness that is destroying the Headmaster.”

“Fred and George mentioned a passage had collapsed but it led to Hogsmeade.” Harry said quietly.

“My master and Lady Rowena were far-sighted. They designed many passages into the castle.”

They stopped at a wall and Nadira hissed at it but her Parseltongue was too quiet to hear.

It opened for them in a manner similar to the entrance to Diagon Alley from the Leaky Cauldron.

Nadira slithered through with Aodhan still carrying Harry in her wake.

The passage was clear of dust surprisingly and lumos-lit torches flickered to life as they travelled through it. The first humans in probably centuries to pass through…

They encountered a stair in the passage and continued down it, following the snake as it slithered down the steps.

The stairs ended at another corridor whose lumos-lit lights sprang to life as they neared them.

They were led to a wall which transformed into a door that was covered by a tapestry.

Nadira turned to look at them, “I would take you to my master’s old quarters but they are occupied. His mate failed to seal them away unlike his fellow founders. Master had a private study that he had designed into the castle as well as three laboratories. Sometimes even if one loves one’s mate, one needs space…that’s what Master said.”

She led them to another wall a few doors down and then hissed at it, the wall became a door decorated with a silver snake. “Master called this the backdoor. A pity, he took ill before he finished. His drawn plans were scintillating…”

They found another staircase behind the wall, it was long and spiraled seemingly made out of silver for it sparkled like it but was untarnished. The railings were made of silver snakes that seemed to be biting each other’s tails and their eyes were sparkling emeralds.

“Where are we going? Can Harry really wait that long?”
“I wouldn’t put Master’s heirs in danger.” Nadira hissed vehemently.

Finally, the staircase ended on a marble floor.

There was a small corridor with two doors.

“We’ll go to master’s laboratory. He’ll have potions and advice.” Nadira hissed before slithering to a door and it opened at her approach.

“Nadira my sweet who had you brought to our domain?”

“Heirs master. One is injured and I told you that the healer up there is a fool.” The snake said curling up beneath a portrait on a green velvet bed.

“Come closer boys. I am pleased my heirs would be boys. Haven’t much use for females other then Rowena and Helga. Though Aurelia wasn’t bad…”

A tall thin man with a shoulder length black hair and blue eyes looked at them from beside a silver cauldron.

Aodhan awkwardly tried to bow but Harry squeaked and clung to him.

“Careful!” Harry yelped.

“Sorry.” Aodhan grumbled.

“What’s the injury?” Salazar asked.

Aodhan growled, “That bitch of a toad queen tried to make us write lines with a blood quill. Harry used it before we knew what it was.”

“How was I supposed to know what it was?” Harry scowled. “I’d never heard of a blood quill before you were throwing a tantrum about it.”

Aodhan sniffed, “No more you should, they are a Class C illegal torture device. Their purpose was to brand the skin with the words written.”

“Nadira be a good girl and fetch them that potion for dark wounds.”

The white Burmese slithered off her velvet bed and disappeared for a while.

“Sit down. It’s been too long since I’ve talked to living persons. That idiot Headmaster flummoxed Hogwarts into accepting him as Headmaster. She’s getting on in years the old girl, first Dippet and now Dumbledore. While he hated students, old Phineas was a better administrator.” Salazar muttered darkly.

“Why has it been so long?” Harry asked curious but a bit woozy.

“Dumbledore bound our portraits to our frames. He found our main portraits and cursed them the rat.” Salazar spat. “Nadira is my only source of news. She is getting in years, as much as she hates to admit it her age is starting to show. She’s probably the oldest snake in the world.”

“I’m still spry master.” Nadira hissed indignantly as she lifted her tail up to Aodhan with a glittering potion bottle.

“Would it still be good?” Aodhan frowned.
“I always cast strong preservation charms on my potions I wouldn’t offer one of my heirs a spoilt potion. Drink it.” Salazar snapped.

Harry took the potion bottle and drank the contents. Quickly the pain in his arm disappeared, the blood flowed back into his skin and the wound sealed. It turned red, then white before turning a bit pink.

Aodhan gasped, “That’s amazing…”

Salazar preened, “Wasn’t it? one of my own creations of course. I miss talking potions, Nadira sleeps through my lectures.”

“Maybe one day I’ll bring my Aunt Annie down, she’s a potions mistress and a healer.” Harry offered, “or my Uncle Severus, he’s supposedly the youngest potions master so I’ve heard.”

Salazar leaned closer to the frame, “Really? I would love to talk a fellow brewer…I even miss Godric…”

Aodhan frowned, “Didn’t you two fight?”

Salazar stiffened, “What do they teach these days? Godric and I always fought…we loved to argue but it’s not like I could really leave. He wouldn’t have let me, I went home and he came to talk it out after he calmed down.”

Harry was interested, “Why couldn’t you leave?”

Salazar grumbled, “Because I was his submissive.”

The two Slytherins gaped at him.

“You’re joking.” Aodhan stammered.

“You two were a couple?” Harry asked.

“Yes, Helga had her Augustus, I was with Godric and well Rowena had her lovely, so I’ve heard, Aurelia.” Salazar sniffed.

“Well considering we’re both bent…” Aodhan muttered, “I guess it makes sense.”

“You are?” Salazar seemed more interested then but tried not to look it.

“Yeah well we are.” Harry blushed.

“Are you together?” Nadira hissed at them.

Aodhan sniffed at her, “Why?”

“You smell like you want to mate with each other.” Nadira laughed at them.

Harry blushed a brighter red, “We’re not…”

“Pity.” Salazar smirked.

“Sure Aodhan’s hot…” Harry muttered.

Aodhan stiffened, “Well you’re not bad looking.”
Harry glared and leapt out of Aodhan’s arms, “Not bad looking? Really? That’s the best you can come up with? Jerk.”

“You try knowing how to accept compliments with Simi and Uncle Albus as your guardians.” Aodhan snarked, “I told Diggory to take his smarmy arse back to Hufflepuff to find his brain.”

“Well at least you didn’t tell me that…” Harry glared, “I suppose I should be grateful to the King of Slytherin for that.”

“Well obviously the potion is working.” Salazar snickered.

“You brewed it and weren’t you Hogwart’s first Potion Master?” Harry snorted.

“Of course.” Salazar preened, “I also had some of the best and brightest in my House.”

“Who?” Aodhan asked hoping to change the subject.

“Merlin, Morganna and Vivian, Vivian was the worst always in competition with Morganna. I disliked her but she was clearly someone who would belong in my house.” Salazar grumbled.

Aodhan asked him to tell them about the days when Salazar was a professor and they listened until Harry dozed off.

A quick tempus charm let him know that it was nearly curfew, Aodhan cursed, “Salazar’s Cauldron! We’ll never be in the common room in time.”

Nadira slithered off the bed, “We can go back.”

Aodhan picked Harry up and was surprised to see how good-looking and innocent his snarky housemate was. Aodhan was silent as he followed Nadira back to the dungeons. He bide Salazar’s familiar good night and slipped into the common room, it was mostly empty so his entrance might go unremarked.

“Mr. Urquhart! What is this I heard about you both leaving detention early?”

Aodhan grimaced, “Good evening professor. I am sorry if we caused you any trouble but did the toad queen mention why we left? That bitch used a blood quill on your nephew.”

His Head of House stiffened, “She did what?”

“You heard me. We left her in a snit as you imagine and who was waiting for us but Salazar’s own familiar. We’ve spent hours with his portrait, it was quite enlightening. Now I am quite tired. I know we’re late and you’ll no doubt give us detention but I’d rather discuss it in the morning.”

“Salazar’s familiar?” Snape frowned.

“A very nice looking dwarf Burmese about the size of Harry’s Skylla.”

“Tomorrow then. We’ll talk in my office over breakfast. Do not be late.” Snape sniffed before leaving with his robes flaring out like wings.

Aodhan carried Harry up to the younger Slytherin’s dormitory and put him to bed, using a switching charm to change him before heading to bed himself…
HEY GUYS! Donnethan here! i just thought i’d let you know, my partner in crime has been working really hard on one of the side fics to this one. its called "From Tauren Warrior to Wizard" . for those of you who haven't started it yet its the series from Dudely's P.O.V. , and, as an extra kind of easter egg type thing, we've decided to add in.... DREAM SEQUENCES that show harry's past outbursts of magic pre-sorcerers stone. these will give more insight into the mind of our harry starting at a young age and show him to you from a third person perspective. the first one is hot off the press as it were and i have to say, i defenately want more, but that's just my oppinon for now, we'd like to know what you, the readers think about them, so if you would be so kind as to read and review that story we would be ever so loving you for it.
this one too! dont forget, this is a growing story and needs its meals of reviews to grow big and strong!
thank you, and love always!
donnethan.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 36- Meeting Pansy

[This takes place while Harry and Aodhan are talking with Salazar.]

Harry hadn’t shown up to dinner and neither had Aodhan…

Knowing Harry had Defence that afternoon, Hermione was a bit worried...

She hurried through her dinner, planning to spend time in the library doing her homework.

That is until Parkinson rose from Slytherin table and passed Ravenclaw’s giving her a slight nod.

Then Hermione remembered she had an appointment with the Slytherin girl’s prefect. Adrian had mentioned that while assignments and partners would be announced early, they would be given a week of grace before duties would officially begin.

She excused herself and left her table, following in Parkinson’s wake.

Pansy, who had never been nice to her before the prefect’s meeting aboard the Hogwarts’ Express, made her uneasy.

She glanced down at her outfit; she was wearing a deep claret silk shirt with warming charms, camel tailored flared trousers and a Peplum Detail Lambskin Biker Jacket from Burberry paired with nude coloured Jimmy Choo sandals. It should pass muster, she’d left her Black Gucci messenger bag in her dormitory taking her Burberry bag with only the books and assignments she needed to dinner.

Unobtrusively she followed Parkinson down to the dungeons and then into a disused classroom near the Potions Master’s storeroom.
Once she was in the room, Hermione paused just outside the doorway and cast detections spells.

Pansy sniffed, “Really Granger? If I were going to curse, jinx or hex you, you would have already encountered it. I laid off a bit after the antler’s incident. I told you if you were a Slytherin I would have left you alone already. You proved your worth by having acquired a sense of fashion and having learned the Patronus charm you have my respect.”

Hermione had found no harmful spells, nay any spell really so she entered the deserted classroom.

Immediately Parkinson had her wand out.

Hermione cast a shield.

Pansy snorted, “Relax, I’m just transfiguring the dusty furniture into something comfortable. So suspicious.”

In a few heartbeats, they had a roaring fire, two armchairs and a short table.

An elf appeared with a tray of tea.

“That will be all Jilly.” Pansy nodded sharply.

The elf bowed and disappeared.

Pansy sat, “I have to admire your resilience and your loyalty. Slytherins are only loyal as long as it benefits them. You’ve remained loyal and reliable to Potter since First Year. I heard you helped them figure out the monster in the Chamber of Secrets and saved my cousin Penelope. I don’t know if Penny mentioned it but she owes you a life debt. She’s teaching here, Third Year Charms I believe.”

Hermione sat gingerly after smoothing out her trousers and setting her bag in her lap. “No she hasn’t. They gave her the draught first and she was already gone when I was revived after being petrified. She seemed to avoid me the next year, then again our paths rarely crossed due to her being Head Girl the following year. I wasn’t even aware that she was apprenticed to Professor Flitwick until it was announced at the Welcome Feast.”
“So have you thought about it?” Pansy asked eagerly, “Will you teach me the Patronus charm?”

“Can’t you learn it on your own?” Hermione frowned.

Pansy shook her head glumly, “I wish I could, I do a lot of reading but I’m a kinaesthetic/visual learner when it comes to spells. I have to physically do something to learn it and I have to see it. That’s why I do better in classes where I can see the professor do the spell or in Herbology perform the expected task. I usually copy Draco in Potions because he’s like a genius and Professor Snape just lectures but never shows us how to brew. My potions are never quite as perfect as Draco’s.”

Hermione snorted.

Pansy glared, “I know you don’t think much of Draco but he really is the best in our year and rightly so, Professor Snape was his tutor before Hogwarts and he spends much of the summer at Merrivale. He’ll likely pass his Potions Mastery at the same time as his NEWTS, Lord Malfoy wants Draco to go into Politics but he compromised by agreeing to an unofficial apprenticeship for Draco. Draco already sat his OWL Potions last year, while he attends classes with us his brewing is so far above us that it’s a wonder he hasn’t dropped the class in favour of his private lessons.”

Hermione frowned, “I thought you couldn’t drop a core class until you were a Sixth Year.”

Pansy nodded, “Typically, Penny has been uncommonly gifted with charms and had private tutoring with Professor Flitwick when she was a student. So she’s at least a year ahead of most Charms Apprentices, normally one can’t teach until one is in their fourth or fifth year of training. Penny has only been Flitwick’s official Apprentice since last year.”

“What do you want to do after Hogwarts?” Hermione asked.

Pansy scowled, “I will be expected to be bonded within three years of graduation. Unlike Penny, my sire is not as accommodating as Aunt Patience. I will be expected to be a mother and if I want a career that would be something my spouse would have to approve. Father wants me to bound to Draco; however given Draco’s sexual preference well I wouldn’t count on it. Draco’s father would want to secure their line as Pure for another generation, preferably to a Dark Family who supports their Lord.”

“I didn’t ask what you were expected to do.” Hermione frowned.
Pansy sighed, “I’d like to go into fashion, start out as a consultant and maybe start my own line. Nothing too outrageous, I’d still find time to properly nurse our child. It is wiser to nurse for the full three years but even among the purebloods that’s going out of style.”

Hermione yelped, losing her composure. “Nursing for three years?”

Pansy nodded, “I know that Muggleborns and presumably Muggles don’t. The longer you nurse the stronger the child is. That’s why my brother is practically three years behind me.”

Hermione frowned, “I didn’t realise you had a brother…”

Pansy shrugged, “Laurel’s in Ravenclaw and he’s different from me. To my father’s horror, unlike me, he has no real skill with Dark Magic and he blames our mother’s Brown blood for that. I’m decent at it but I’m no Millie. Then again, she’s half Lestrange.”

Hermione flinched, “Half Lestrange?”

Pansy nodded sipping at her tea, “It’s common knowledge among Death Eater families and well Slytherins in general that her sire was Rabastan. She’s Draco’s cousin by bonding through his Aunt Bellatrix. Millie’s bearer Malcolm wants her to bond to a wizard so that she has a son since she can’t really inherit either the shop or the Lestrange estate. Bellatrix never had any children it seems so Millie has to bear a son. While he would prefer it to be a firstborn, Mr. Bulstrode would accept less then that as long as they were a pureblood, my cousins the Flints have three sons; Marcus, Jacobius and Mauritius. A pity really that Marcus lacks his brothers’ intelligence; he doesn’t have any Goyle blood that I know of to excuse his stupidity unless it’s a defect from the Dumbledores. Everyone knows that the Headmaster’s brother is an idiot…”

Hermione tilted her head, “Why?”

“Because Giselle has her heart set on her. Greg’s father keeps trying to get Lord Pucey to agree to a betrothal contract between Adrian and Giselle. Failing that he’s been trying to court a contract with Theo’s father.” Pansy said quietly.

“Purebloods are more complicated then I thought, I assumed that since being bent wasn’t illegal or distasteful that it wouldn’t be a problem.”
Pansy sighed, “It isn’t unless you’re a witch and the only offspring born in a male entailed line.”

Hermione blinked, “Why are you telling me this?”

“Knowledge is power, especially to purebloods. I want your confidence and well I don’t really have anyone I can confide in. Elaine is like Aodhan; she goes her own way. Millie is Giselle’s friend probably because they are only a few weeks apart in age, while Tracey and Daphne are close. Greg has Vince because they are cousins, to an extent he has Prewett but she keeps a degree of distance due to her blood. She’s very skilled despite being the offspring of a Squib and a Muggle. Only Witch in her family despite having a younger sister and brother.” Pansy twisted her hands in her skirt, “Draco might be jealous of you’re being friends with Potter, but I’m a bit jealous of Potter. I wish I had a friend like you…”

At first Hermione didn’t know what to say…

Then she nervously pulled out her rose pipe, “Mind if I smoke?”

Pansy exhaled, “Thank Morganna. Tracy, Elaine and Daphne don’t. Millie only does in Giselle’s private rooms. I spend so much time with Draco’s crowd that I’ve acquired an unseemly reputation much to my father’s dismay though I ‘m under the Chastity Curse.” She quickly pulled out a vaguely similar pipe to Hermione’s only it was white stone like Remus and Dudley’s rather then Hermione’s wood.

Nervously Hermione mumbled, “I’m partial to Cherry myself…”

“You’re secretly very keen at fashion and you smoke, what other secrets are you hiding?” Pansy asked with a smirk.

Hermione shrugged, “Nothing really, I’m the same bookish Muggleborn I’ve always been.”

“So will you teach me the Patronus charm?” Pansy asked shyly.

Hermione sighed, “If I learned one thing from Andromeda it’s that Slytherins don’t do anything for the sake of doing it. They have to get something for it, what do I get from you if I do?”
Pansy frowned, “You’re right, it would have to be something of equal worth. I don’t know what I could teach you in return, you’re neck and neck with Draco except in potions. I maybe a Death Eater’s daughter but unlike Bellatrix I wouldn’t be trusted in their ranks.”

“How did Bellatrix get to be a Death Eater?”

Pansy sighed, “According to Millie’s bearer she was always anti-Muggle, even more so after Andromeda’s betrayal that shamed her family. If the contract wasn’t unbreakable and Rodolphus determined to have her the Lestranges would have had it nullified. Mostly her detractors made up the stories of Bellatrix’s obsession with the Dark Lord. She had to prove herself before she a mere woman was marked. The Dark Lord wasn’t bent but he had little respect or use for women, Bellatrix proved her worth by bringing persons like her cousin and Barty Crouch to the ranks. She also encouraged other pureblood witches to nudge their spouses to join. In the beginning you see the only supporters were schoolmates of the Dark Lords.”

“So she was marked but she earned it?”

Pansy nodded, “Some say that Bellatrix was never sane, those who have great skill with the Dark Arts usually aren’t. That’s mostly because spells like the Unforgivables leave a mark, Dark families teach their children them. It’s only illegal to cast on humans, you can practice on house elves or animals. While the Fake Moody used spiders, its more common to use pigs. They say that pigs are the closest to humans aside from magical creatures like Veela. Then again Veela are shape changers really.”

“What did you mean, the chastity curse?” Hermione asked.

Pansy flushed, “Well when a pureblood witch spends as much time with wizards as I do, their fathers usually cast that spell. It ensures they come to their bonding virginal, I call it a curse but it’s really a charm. Even if I wanted to I can only hold hands or peck them on the cheek. I’m under a complete chastity charm, even if I liked girls well I couldn’t do anything. Giselle and Millie are freer theirs only applies to wizards and well they don’t like them.”

“Can it be removed?” Hermione frowned.

Pansy shook her head, “No, only signing a Gringotts bonding contract cancels the charm.”

Hermione swallowed, “Is it so bad to be sexually active?”
Pansy shrugged, “It depends on the family, Slytherins prefer to have their daughters virginal until a Gringotts contract is signed. It keeps the bloodline pure. I mean no offence but no one would want to bond a witch who slept with someone with Muggle blood. Even if they had pure blood, some families would see their womb as defiled.”

Hermione sighed, “I see.’

“Is it true you’re with Fred Weasley?” Pansy asked taking a drag on her pipe.

Hermione nodded as she exhaled. “Yes why?”

“You’d be smart to keep him. Lily Evans was a Muggleborn whose magic was powerful enough to merit not only bonding to a pureblood but into a house like Potter. If you have a chance to do the same you should. Weasley maybe a tarnished name due to the Weasleys’ father; they are still a pureblood House to be reckoned with.” Pansy advised.

“Lily wasn’t a Muggleborn.” Hermione said sharply.

Pansy gaped at her, “Everyone knows she was.”

“Everyone says that Voldemort is dead but we both know that’s a untruthy.” Hermione retorted.

Pansy frowned, “If she wasn’t a Muggleborn, what was she?”

Hermione snorted, “A lost pureblood heiress, which means that Harry isn’t a dirty little Halfblood but a pureblood.”

Pansy flinched. “My apologies for speaking without knowledge, Draco and I speak as we have been taught to distain anyone with less money, rank or blood then ours. What family lost her?”

Hermione smirked, deciding to reward Pansy’s lack of previous reticence, “Prince, she was Professor Snape’s twin.”
Pansy blinked, “You’re joking…”

Hermione shook her head, “Dead serious, so if the Potters approved of Lily, what right did you have to distain it? It wasn’t like Andromeda’s elopement.”

Pansy sighed, “Like Cedric I have a great-grandmother who was born a Potter.”

“All my magic is on my mother’s side, my mother was born a King. I know that makes me related to Professor McGonagall by marriage. I’m the also the descendent of Elnath Black, Tessie Burke and Lancelot Brown to name a few.” Hermione shrugged.

“Lancelot was my ancestor Cypress Brown’s grand nephew.” Pansy smirked, “We’re cousins.”

Hermione snorted, “Just how are you really related to the Browns and the Flints?”

Pansy relit her pipe after adding fresh tobacco, “Lavender’s father is my uncle due to my mother being his sister. Despite female offspring being technically rare our grandfather Ashton was quite fertile and had four children: Marcus’ father Caius, my uncle Linden who is Lavender, Sage and Sorrel’s father, my mother Azalea and our aunt Heliotrope.


Pansy shrugged, “I’m sure you figured out that with the exception of Lady Narcissa that Blacks have celestial names? Flints have Latinate names like Weasleys, Malfoys and Princes, technically so do the Puceys but their names are taken from Roman Emperors just as Potters and Parkinsons use British kings and queens. Neville’s family usually uses Cornish names while Dearborns and Prewetts use Arthurian. Browns have their own naming tradition; flowers for witches and nature names for males.”

“What sort of nature names?”

“Plants and trees mostly.”
Despite Prewett’s status as ‘Queen’, Pansy still had some amount of status and a sort of respect in her House…

“So ‘Brown’ as in earth?” Hermione drawled.

Pansy shrugged, “I suppose, never asked. Personally, I think they are a blessing. Browns are mostly Gryffindors and Ravenclaws; they are more tolerated rather than courted. Father had little use for mother; I think she really was just meant to bear children. I don’t remember her very well but I don’t think she was happy. Anyway does your family have anything like that? Naming traditions?”

Hermione nodded, “My maternal grandmother’s family is descended from the Browns as well so I suppose that’s where our nature names came from. Mother is Jean Rose and I’m Hermione Fern. My father’s family has always been Shakespeare fans so they have Shakespearian names. My father is Mercutio but everyone calls him ‘Merc’.

Pansy chuckled, “I’m pretty sure that Hermione was a name in Draco’s family tree, but I believe they were born to the House of Yaxley. Yaxleys and Notts are partial to Greek names. Theo isn’t short for Theodore but Theodorus but it means the same.”

“Isn’t Theo Dean’s rival for marks?”

Pansy nodded, “Like your rival is Draco. They are tied just behind you much to their mutual annoyance. I’m pretty sure I’m tied with Draco’s cousin Susan, or is she tied with Fay Dunbar? I’ve never really cared, I’ve always felt that my only true rival is myself. In the end it’s my perception of myself and my own worth that matters. Sure having other’s good opinion is nice but you have to be satisfied with who you are before external perceptions should merit consideration.”

Hermione stared at her, “Who are you and what have you done with Pansy?”

Pansy laughed, “There is a reason all Slytherins and many Ravenclaws have masks; while Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs are usually too open with their emotions, feelings and the like.” Then she sobered and turned pensive, “Really, I do want to learn the patronus charm. I can’t approach Potter; Draco would kill me. Your Fred would probably laugh at me and as for George; well he’s only got eyes for one Slytherin. I don’t know Tonks, he’s new and I respect you.”

Hermione sighed, “It will take time you know and patience. I’m usually pretty good at spells; often doing them right the first time but even this one took time and effort. Would you believe me if I told
you that Dudley produced a corporeal patronus before me? Fred and I, well ours was at the same
time we were practicing…”

Pansy leaned forward her eyes wide with enthusiasm. “Show me? Please? I haven’t seen a real
patronus since the teachers chased off the Dementors. I know all of theirs! Snape’s is a fox,
Dumbledore’s is a phoenix, McGonagall’s is a cat and Flitwick is an eagle. I think that Lupin’s was a
wolf but it lost cohesion and looked more like a lethifold. Sprout’s resembled a pig…”

Hermione closed her eyes and thought about the first time her crush Fred had kissed her, then she
said in a dreamy voice, with a pink face, “Expecto Patronum.”

Exploding out of her wand was a shimmering silver cat, whose appearance put on in mind of a
Persian but the subtle difference meant it was a Burmese. Fred was a fountain of Transfiguration
knowledge and well he insisted on reading everything on Patroni and Animagi once Remus
mentioned the link.

They’d both felt drawn to felines…

Her patronus appeared to scan and then sat down with a pout-like mannerism.

Hermione flushed, “No Fred’s lynx isn’t here.”

Pansy whispered in awe, “That’s so cool! How do you understand your patronus? Fred Weasley is a
lynx?”

Hermione swallowed, “We practiced so much together you see, that my patronus seems to have
bonded to Fred’s. Something like we have perhaps. A patronus is usually a reflection of one’s
probable animagus form if it’s corporeal. They claim that like a wand, an animagus form chooses the
wizard. Fred thinks that it’s more of a reflection of the witch or wizard’s personality or a
personification of their soul.”

Pansy said quietly, “I’d like to see what mine is…” her body vibrating with excitement.

Hermione smiled, “Fred said there is a book called the Encyclopaedia of Animagi forms in the
library. If you’re serious about learning the patronus charm I want you to check it out, read it and
then write a three-foot essay on what form speaks to you and why the form is likely your animagus
form. If your perception of the professors’ Animagi forms are correct, then you might understand them more if you looked them up.”

Pansy frowned, “You’re really giving me homework?”

Hermione laughed, rising, “Think of it as a test of your determination. You may be a fairly talented witch but you likely won’t achieve a corporeal patronus nay any results for a while. In the words of Peter Pan all you’ll need is ‘one happy thought’.”

“Who is this Peter Pan?” Pansy scowled,

Hermione smirked, “A character in a Muggle book who flew on fairy dust and vowed to never grow up. It was interesting meeting you Parkinson.”

Pansy called after her, ”It’s Pansy! Pansy!”

Hermione shrugged making her way up to the library, absently casting the Tempus charm to check the time.

Dinner was from five to seven or thereabouts. She and Pansy had left about five thirty and had been talking for over an hour. Dinner had ended recently and she had three hours to be back in Ravenclaw Tower.

Hopefully she would still have time to work on her projects…

But the memories of the interview with Pansy Parkinson would distract her…

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 37- The morning after detention

*Harry was having a marvellous dream…*

*He was sandwiched between George and Aodhan…*

*George was pinned to the bed practically, though his legs were wrapped around the both of them.*

*Aodhan’s cock was thrusting roughly into his body and he felt so overwhelmed by the feeling of being between two smexy specimens of wizard that he felt he could die a happy bloke…*

*One more thrust into his prostate and he was coming hard inside George who was shouting obscenities as well as pleas of more.*

A hand on his shoulder and a hiss of Parseltongue interrupted his dream.

“Wake up! We have to see Professor Snape. He expects us before breakfast. We still have to lead the march as well.”

Harry woke at once, stiffening as he smelt cum and felt the touch of wet sheets and clothing.

Damn!

Aodhan snickered, “Had a nice dream?”

Harry snatched up his wand, casting a scorgify on the sheets and his clothing as well as a refresher charm on himself. “Maybe…” he grumbled, “What do you want?”
“Snape wants to meet us.”

Harry’s eyes widened, “Oh hell! We had no practice last night. Snape expected me for a lesson after dinner.”

Aodhan yawned, “Had to beg a tea off Simi. She really is peeved with me for getting detention and leaving before it was over. Had to explain things to her. She disagrees with my methods but admitted that Umbridge was a bad sort.”

Harry sighed, “I’m so going to hear about it…” he used a switching charm to dress barely caring what outfit he was stuck with. He glanced down to find a pink sapphire shirt, and pink tight jeans. He adjusted the colour so they matched, pairing it with one of Regulus’ silk vests, a black double-faced cashmere blend zipped cardigan and a pair of Hebredian Black dragon hide dress shoes.

He would change his shoes after Transfiguration; seeing as how their last periods of the day were Care of Magical Creatures and Herbology.

Hermione had told him her schedule yesterday, so he’d have her most of the day because they had the same schedule mostly.

He actually looked forward to it; after all he’d get to be paired with her most likely. She wasn’t as… bossy in other classes as she was during potions.

Once he was dressed, Harry followed Aodhan out of his own dormitory that he shared with Nott.

Harry’d never really considering letting someone have him the way he’d had George over the summer but really Aodhan was quite sexy…he hadn’t been lying when he told Umbridge that.

They exited the common room and made their way yawning all the way to Snape’s office.

They knocked on the door.
“Come in.” came Severus’ familiar voice.

However he wasn’t alone much to Harry’s dismay.

Andromeda and Remus were there as well.

Remus rose and met them halfway across the office; he pulled Harry’s hands into his own.

Harry shivered slightly when Remus’ left thumb touched the scar. “Remus!”

“You alright pup? I heard that woman used a blood quill on you.” Remus growled low in his throat.

Harry glanced at Severus.

The man looked exhausted, as if he hadn’t slept all night. When looking at Andromeda and Remus, they didn’t look rested either…

Harry scowled, “We had it all settled! You didn’t need to stay up all night.”

“We’re your family.” Andromeda said sharply, “We’re also adults. If we decide to stay up all night discussing how to deal with that wench we will.”

“I’ll be around more often.” Remus nodded, “I’m always a floo-call away. Severus promised to give you the password to his office or you can send your elf to find me. I’ve got my own now. After Andromeda visited the Potter properties and spoke to the elves they’ve offered to look after the both of us.”

Harry grinned, “About the Potters, I was informed that I have a Governor’s seat. I was wondering even though Andromeda is taking care of our Wizengamot votes if you could take up the Governor’s seat on my behalf, Andromeda should sit for the Blacks of course. Oh and see about getting the Crouch seat passed to our friend Dean. Dean is apparently Neville’s cousin through his uncle Caradoc who was his mother Alys’ twin. Hogwarts said that Lady Augusta would be the right person to assume magical guardianship.”
Andromeda blinked, “Caradoc had a son?”

Harry nodded, “That’s why Hogwarts called him Dean Dearborn.”

Severus snorted, “Of course it was.”

Andromeda nodded, “I have a meeting with Augusta later this morning and I will inform her of her daughter-in-law’s nephew. I am sure that she would gladly take responsibility on behalf of Alys and Frank.”

“If you have the time Uncle Sev, perhaps you should try attending meetings? There are changes at Hogwarts that the Ministry wants, I am sure that the Governors wouldn’t like to have their authority taken illegally.” Harry smirked.

“You are becoming a fine Slytherin.” Andromeda grinned.

“Why did the Blacks change their name from Grimaldi?” Harry frowned.

Andromeda blinked, “I know not but I suppose I could find out.”

Harry snickered, “Do. With the bad publicity we’ve gotten in recent years between your sister and Sirius’ illegal imprisonment and escape we should consider finding ways to make ourselves less Dark publicly. Meeting with Daria Greengrass who holds the Ravenclaw seat for her granddaughter as well as Septimus Weasley and Gideon Prewett would also be wise. Then there is Madam Patience Clearwater, Madam Abigail Smith, Madam Faith Burbage, Madam Amelia Bones and Amos Diggory.”

“Wow…” Remus whistled, “You have been busy…”

Harry smirked, “Hogwarts had a talk with us Saturday. I meant to owl you but didn’t get around to it. After sitting through a pathetic excuse for a defence course we decided we would definitely be starting an unsanctioned club to teach Defence. I was sort of hoping for some assistance?”
“So that’s why Hermione owled us for mine and Siri’s old lesson plans.” Remus grinned.

Harry nodded, “Yeah. We thought we’d test them all I mean we’ve had some pretty lame instructors aside from you. Despite being a fraud we did learn from Crouch, I’m not sure what the younger or older years know. Not all of them have the benefit of having the library belonging to a former head of the Magnus Brutus.”

Andromeda blinked, “Who would have that? I thought that Magus Urquhart died childless.”

Aodhan sneered, “That’s what Uncle Albus wants everyone to believe.”

Andromeda frowned at him, “You have the look of Magus Urquhart…”

Aodhan sniffed, “That would be because I happen to be his son.”

“I knew he was bonded, because when I met with him before he was retired I was surprised to see pictures in his office. I had never known he was bonded prior, yet there were pictures of him with persons I knew from Hogwarts.” Andromeda mused.

Aodhan scowled, “Then I suppose you know who my bearer is, I would prefer you to keep it to yourself since she has no idea of who I am. I have no real desire to know her, as far I know she threw me away and I’ll do the same.”

Andromeda frowned, “I doubt that, he mentioned once that he’d often wanted a family but that he’d waited until he met the right person. He hadn’t expected it to be her having known her for her entire life. They were trying you see, I remember seeing them visiting a fertility specialist. The healers would gossip that a man his age trying to have a child was a Thestral of a dream and they would be better off adopting. Yet here you are, you feel very strong magically. Not surprising with parents like yours…”

Aodhan grumbled, “If they were so intelligent and wanted me so much why did my father die of something as stupid as a venomous tentacula? Why does my mother act as if she never lost a bonded in the war?”

Harry blinked, “She seems close enough to her nephews to drag them along for a Quidditch match so family must be important to her…” then he remembered that his former Head of House had
shown up on Hermione’s family tree, with a son.

An Aodhan Urquhart…

How had he forgotten?

“I don’t remember her ever being pregnant.” Andromeda frowned, “Of course I had fertility troubles myself after Persephone. Her birth was traumatic for my body…”

Severus cleared his throat, “As enlightening as this is, we’re running short on time. I would feel much better if Harry was examined to see if his exposure as brief as it was thanks to Aodhan, has had no lingering affects.”

Andromeda stepped forward and waved her hand, her lips moving silently. Finally she spoke aloud, “It seems that he’s fine. The scaring is minimal.”

Aodhan drawled, “Really? Salazar said he’d be fine, got us a potion and everything.”

Andromeda gasped, “Salazar’s potions? There are some here still? They’re still viable?”

“He said something about strong preservation charms. If his potions are good, just imagine what he could have stored away.” Harry said boredly.

Severus whispered, “Some ingredients he would have used have gone extinct…”

“We mentioned possibly introducing you both. He said he was quite bored and missed talking brewing.” Aodhan offered.

Harry cast a tempus charm, “Sorry to run but we have a march to lead and it would be a poor example if we were late.”

“We’ll discuss this later. I expect you to be here tonight. As you still have a few detentions to serve. I offered to take over your detentions to save Umbridge the trouble.” Severus frowned, “I asked
Charlie to take over yours Aodhan. I figured that a physically taxing detention would seem a fitting punishment for a lazy individual.”

Aodhan glared, “Are you trying to kiss up to the toad queen?”

Severus snorted, “Of course not, my attempts to ingrate myself with her are only to see what she is up to. The same reason I’m still a Death Eater, though if I had my mouth I would bite. I would rather be a canker than a rose in his grace.”

Harry smirked, “Good. We’ll go join our House for the march then. We’ll see you at breakfast Uncle. I would like to hear what the Governors have to say. Let us know if you need anything from us even if it is letters about what having Dumbledore as Headmaster the last few years has really been like.”

Andromeda nodded, “I will let you know.”

The two Slytherin students left to meet their House in the Common room for the March.

XoooooX

Bookless Fred, George, Angelina, Alicia, Montague, Adrian Pucey and Lee headed into Defence for the first half of a double period that stretched before and after lunch.

They’d heard over breakfast about Umbridge using a blood quill on Harry…

And Aodhan but being that the formerly all-Gryffindor group was closer to Harry it was understandable that they were furious about Umbridge’s ‘detention’.

Neither Fred or Lee knew what a blood quill was, so after breakfast while George was in Ancient Runes with Angie, Alicia, Montague and Pucey; Fred and Lee had spent the double period looking up blood quills.

Fred had related what he found to a very furious Head Boy and Girl on their way to Defence; Adrian was sputtering while Angelina’s eyes were flashing and she tossed her braids.
Even if they’d turned into Slytherins while Angelina was being bitchy and being Head Girl had clearly gone to her head; she still liked Harry well enough to be upset about it.

As for Pucey well he’d never been a cheating type and with a father who worked for the Magnus Brutus he really was peeved about the use of an illegal torture device on a student by a professor even if she was an agent of the Ministry.

Fred smirked, “Why don’t we show her what a practical lesson ought to be? I can’t imagine the toad queen has revised her curriculum quite yet what with her precious textbooks being torched yesterday and her failed detentions.”

“What do you have in mind?” Pucey frowned.

“A few duels? It would be excellent practice for our NEWTS.” George offered.

“Who should participate?” Montague asked.

“Who would duel you?” Angelina asked spitefully, “Pucey?”

“Adrian’s no fun to duel.” Montague shrugged, “We’ve duelled too many times we know each other too well.”

“I’ll uh…duel Montague?” George offered nervously.

Fred frowned at him, “Fine. What about you Pucey? You fancy a battle of wits and magic?”

“We haven’t had a proper duel during Defence since the Fake Moody last year.” Pucey shrugged.

Fred smirked, “It’s settled.”

7th Year Slytherins and Gryffindors marched into Defence with sardonic smiles on their faces.
“Good morning students.” Umbridge said in her high girlish voice. Her outfit had been sexed up; the toadish woman’s skirt was shorter, her pink cardigan was unbuttoned to reveal a low-cut v-neck shirt that showed off more cleavage then Fred had any desire to see.

Fred scowled, “Hey Prof.”

The woman flinched, “Yes Mr. Weasley isn’t it?”

Fred grinned, “One of the many, so without textbooks what exactly are we to learn? Would you like a demonstration of what we already know so you can best judge what to teach us? After all, our last two professors didn’t exactly keep records of everything they taught us. Sometimes they changed their lessons on a whim or we ended up with Snape who was a real hard arse but very informative. We did far more practical then lecture, we got a lot out of that.”

The class began clamouring for a lesson like one of Snape’s…

While no one really liked him as potions instructor they’d learned to appreciate his knowledge when it came to Defence even if it were begrudgingly…

“Really a demonstration isn’t necessary,” Umbridge protested.

“I think it is.” Pucey said stiffly, “You can’t judge what we need to learn if you don’t know what we already are familiar with.”

“Pucey isn’t it?” Umbridge asked, “Are you planning on following in your father’s footsteps?”

Pucey glared, “Is that a warning? If I were, your opinion wouldn’t be important. It would be Magus Prince’s; he seems to think a lot of me. Whatever my plans are, they are between my Head of House, my parents and myself. We would like to show you what we know, and then you can best judge where we are lacking. Since your ludicrous textbook is conspicuously missing. Rumour has it that Potter burnt them?”

Umbridge’s lips pursed. “Really? Telling a professor what the class should be doing? Oughtn’t you be asking me about the curriculum?”
“I had hoped that you would have revised it by now,” Pucey said dryly, “if you have not then this exhibition would no doubt help you do so.”

“Who wish to participate in your ‘Exhibition’?” Umbridge asked stiffly.

“Brecc, myself and the Weasley twins.” Pucey said pleasantly. “Brecc and I agreed that we know each other too well to be satisfactory duelling opponents. Instead we’ve each paired to duel a twin.”

“Really, the manners you children have…” Umbridge shook her head sadly.

Fred shrugged, “Really how properly brought up can we be? Our father worked all hours imaginable, our mother had too many children and we got benched compared to her favourites. Malfoy would gladly tell you we grew up in a shack no doubt.”

Pucey snorted, “Not anymore he wouldn’t, publicly insulting fellow Slytherins wouldn’t be proper. Besides, you’re with the King of Slytherin these days and he’s only a mere prince. My cousin may be a bit of a brat at times but he normally follows proprietary.”

Snape had begun their work with nonverbal spellwork when he filled in for Lupin and they’d gotten quite good at it because Fake Moody had hammered into them about nonverbal spell casting being the difference between life and death in a duel.

They’d also been present when Snape slaughtered Lockhart during their fourth year so they were quite familiar with proper etiquette.

Fred transfigured the desks into a platform and the chairs into risers that were not unlike the ones in the Quidditch stadiums just shorter and closer to the ground.

Because charms were more George’s thing, George cast fairy lights to give them more light to watch by.

“We’re both spell encyclopaedias,” Pucey smirked, “You want Brecc and I to take turns being commentators.”
“I’d like to commentate as well.” George stammered.

Fred punched him playfully in the shoulder, “I’d like to see what you think you see.”

“I do all the reading and research usually,” George snorted, “You’re the idea man and salesman.”

Fred glared, “I did research!”

George snickered, “Only because you didn’t know what a blood quill was.”

Fred growled, “And you did?”

George smirked, “Of course.”

“So why didn’t you tell me?” Fred growled.

George shrugged, “Of course there were books like that in the Place’s library. It was quite interesting; I was looking up magical artefacts and creation of them, how and why they were deemed illegal and seized by the Ministry. There was a very detailed list, so I was suspicious of a Black was a Magnus Brutus or even an Unspeakable. Some of the seized objects were because it made the individual too powerful not because they were truly Dark. Blood quills were a way of marking criminals. The makers of Blood Quills charmed them to write into the flesh of criminal, some into the hand, while others were on the forehead. They were permanent, unglamourable marks of one’s crime; anything from Oathbreaker or bloodtraitor to murderer was permanently carved into one’s skin. One mistake could ruin your life, hard to get a job if you have thief branded on your hand or forehead.”

Fred continued to scowl, “Sorry I’m not as academically inclined as you are.”

George shrugged, “Be weird if you were…”

“We going to do this, Weas…I mean Fred?” Pucey asked.
Fred smirked, “Sure. You think you can handle it?”

“We’ve watched each other duel for two years; I think we can handle it.” Pucey shrugged.

Fred mouthed his first spell.

Adrian threw up a shield and it shuddered when the spell crashed into it.

Immediately a noxious swamp came to life just before Adrian’s shield.

George groaned, “Show off. Starting a match with the Swamp of the Underworld is an unusual move.”

“Good show by Adrian using a shield like that, that wouldn’t have been my choice but it seems to be working. Creative use of a sand shield…I would have expected the sand to absorb rather than reflect.” Montague commented.

Fred kept casting spells at Adrian’s shield.

“Wind Pressure, Lighting Strike, Cosmic Tornado and Electric Petals from Fred, rather interesting choices when facing a sand shield.” George frowned.

Then Adrian cast a spell through his own shield.

“Ho! Adrian’s on the offensive now.” Brecc crowed, “That looks like Winds of Chaos, for those who don’t know it’s also called a great cutting whirlwind.”

Fred threw up a shield in response.

“Wall of water? For anyone who has forgotten, water is in opposition to air.” Brecc sneered.
The spells began flying so fast that lights were flickering as they crashed into shields.

They were so fast and sparked so much that the commentators had a hard time seeing to call out spells.

Then a spell slipped through Fred’s water shield spell and sliced his cheek.

George watched as Fred wiped the blood away and he scowled, his spells came faster and with a more vindictive bent.

The Head Boy Adrian seemed to be more on his mettle with Fred’s renewed attack.

Fred got in a lucky shot with a stunner that dropped Adrian but in return he was hit by Adrian’s spell because his shield collapsed.

George darted up to his twin, he cried out, “Aguamenti!”

Adrian’s lighting spell had lit Fred’s shirt on fire.

Brecc snorted, casting the counterspell instead, “You’ll need a healer still.”

Fred flashed him a roguish grin, “I’ll be fine. Don’t you two have a duel?”

Umbridge started to protest.

George scowled at him with an arched eyebrow: his perception of Fred’s health was that it was dubious at best as he cast a wandless, nonverbal silencing charm on the ‘Toad Queen’.

“Oh posh, you know I’ve been hurt worse when I muck up your potions.” Fred snorted, “I’ll be fine.”
George sighed, “Fine.” George banished Fred’s swamp with a grimace of distaste. Why had he let Fred talk him into a product that duplicated that spell again? Then he glanced at Montague, “You ready?”

Brecc had conjured a safe resting place for Adrian and carried him over to it before reascending the platform while they squabbled. He leered, “I was born ready.” He licked his lips, “You don’t know how long I’ve waited for this.”

George swallowed, “Waited for what?”

Montague took his hand running his thumb over the back of it, “To see behind that mask of yours. Show me what you really can do…”

George shivered and then he smirked, “Remember you asked for it.”

Fred was sprawled in George’s abandoned chair, there was more being said then just words. Didn’t George usually gun fo Montague during matches and snort when he said that comment about mistaking Katie’s head for a Quaffle?

The two would-be-duellists bowed and then the spells came after they paced out twenty steps.

They were arcing, crashing into one another and into the shields that shimmered into sight only when the spells hit.

At one point Montague’s Mist Blaze spell hit George’s sand shield

George retaliated only to hit a flame shield dissolved his spell with an arc of flame. The shield then sent what appeared to be arrows of flame at George.

George’s shield transformed into something like diamond just before the flame projectiles hit it.

All the flame missiles did was burnish it to a more gleaming appearance.
Montague sent a spell that impacted the platform just in front of George’s shield with an earth-shaking roar that shattered it.

George cast a protego but a few shards of his diamond shield hit him anyway.

Montague winced.

‘Now wasn’t that an unusual reaction during a duel, just what was between them?’ Fred wondered.

George retaliated with another spell, one Fred had never seen before. It tore through Montague’s flame shield but the shockwave left George tottering on his feet and Brecc Montague on the floor unconscious.

Once George was declared the winner, he too crumbled with his eyes rolling back in his head.

Fred took charge, “Hope that was enough food for thought professor, Lee get Pucey, Warrington you’ll get Montague because he’s a huge git and you’re the only one close to his size. Ang you’ll have to give me a hand with George.”

Warrington sneered, “Why should I listen to you? Montague threw me off the team, I don’t owe him a Knut.”

Fred stumbled over to Warrington, “Be careful, we’re not Gryffindors anymore; we’re Slytherins. You will pick up our house captain before I speak to those who outrank us,” He leaned in menacingly, “or else.”

Warrington scowled as he knelt, throwing Montague’s arm around his shoulder and hauled the bulky Slytherin up.

“You weren’t dismissed.” Umbridge sputtered, George's silencing spell having lost its strength when he fell unconscious.
Fred shrugged, “We duelled for the lesson and we should be checked out by a healer. Even if we didn’t use any illegal spells; three of us are knocked out and well I’m none to steady on my feet.” Fred cast a spell on Angelina, “You should have sufficient strength to get George to the infirmary even I falter to carry George. Maybe Alicia should stick behind us in case I need help.”

A worried Gryffindor and a stunned Slytherin Seventh Year class left a still sputtering Umbridge.

Slytherin prefect Gemma Farley sped off hopefully to let Pomfrey know they were coming.

They limped their way slowly from the third floor classroom to the first where the hospital wing was.

Fred’s first impression once they entered the infirmary was that Pomfrey was unsteady on her feet.

When she got close enough to help Angelina with George, Fred choked. She smelt of stale and fresh cheap whiskey. He frowned.

Warrington the clod dumped Montague on a bed and stormed off.

“What happened?” Pomfrey slurred looking overwhelmed by three unconscious Seventh Years.

Fred groaned as he wearily helped Angelina set George on one of the beds, “Dobby?”

The friendly wackily dressed house elf that was Harry’s friend that they’d met though one of his and George’s many trips to the Kitchens since the Chamber incidents appeared. “What Master Fred Weezy be needing from Dobby?”

”Can you find Andromeda and ask her to come check us out? We may have been a bit too exuberant.” Fred said collapsing on a nearby bed.

Dobby sighed, “Okay Dobby will because Master Fred Wheezy is Master Harry Potter sir’s friend.”

Then the elf was gone…
Fred closed his eyes; Hermione was so going to kill him.

Angelina started fussing over him.

“That’s enough. I’ll be fine.” Fred opened one eye and glared.

“But Fred,” Angelina pouted.

Fred scowled, “You’re not my girl, so don’t act like you are. You’re just a friend.”

Angelina stormed off at the declaration.

Alicia glared at him, “You shouldn’t be so mean.”

Fred rolled his eyes, “I was always up front with Angie. We were never a couple, sure I asked her to the Yule Ball but I know Lee likes her. So I’ve never made a serious play for her. I’ve got a girl, a steady girl and I’m not mucking that up for Angie.”

Alicia shook her head and went after Angelina.

XoooooX

Andromeda was in an interview with Augusta Longbottom who was the current Head of the Board of Governors following Lucius’ involvement with the Chamber of Secrets’ Debacle.

Since the Malfoys had a hereditary seat granted to them by Salazar Slytherin himself so they couldn’t be removed from the counsel only voted out of leadership. Only death in the male line could have it change names like in the Crouch family, were it to become completely extinct the Founders’ Council who settled all tied votes in a unanimous vote could install another family in its place. despite the Peverell and Slytherin seats being empty, such an event had yet to occur. They would accept anyone ratified by the Goblins as being eligible. They’d made do with holes in the ranks for years with the Potter, Prewett and Black seats empty…
“You’re absolutely sure of this?” Augusta frowned.

Andromeda nodded, “I’m sure of my source, you are welcome to verify it with the parentis divinus potion or you could take a picture of Caradoc and ask his mother if that is the boy’s sire. Like Severus, Dean was likely born under a Muggle contract but he is still the legal heir to the House of Dearborn and a first cousin of your Neville. They are dormmates in Gryffindor but I believe Hogwarts said his proper place was in Ravenclaw and I know that Dean is now a prefect.”

“A pity my Neville isn’t at that level of academic prowess.” Augusta muttered darkly.

“As a mother I would say that one ought to be proud of the child they have rather then bemoan their failures.” Andromeda frowned, “While I don’t approve of some aspects of my daughter’s choices, I am proud of her skills and how she uses them. Persephone is a skilled mimic and a much-lauded Auror trained by Mad-Eye Moody, one of his last trainees. My son is rising above his mistakes and limits to be stronger in a proper manner. You saw how well he cast a patronus, I would recommend helping Neville better himself, I heard that his skills are in Charms, Herbology and Defence. He tends to get overwrought easily so perhaps he needs praise rather then chastisement.”

There was a pop.

“You be Miss Annie?” A slightly familiar elf asked.

Andromeda blinked, “Dobby?”

The elf nodded, beaming at her, “Yes Miss Annie. Master Fred Wheezy be asking for you.”

“Is he still at Hogwarts?” Andromeda queried.

“Master Fred Wheezy be in infirmary with Master Adrian, Master George Wheezy and Master Brecc.”

Dobby nodded his head, “Defence duel Master Fred Wheezy said.”

Andromeda snarked, “Defence duel? I can hardly imagine what spells those two know. If George wasn’t sequestered in the Greenhouse or with Harry, he was in the library like Hermione reading a large tome of spells. Tell them I will be there promptly. How are they?”

Dobby’s face scrunched up, “Master George Wheezy, Master Adrian and Master Brecc no be awake. Master Fred Wheezy be falling down.”

Andromeda rose, “Magical exhaustion perhaps. I’m afraid duty calls Lady Augusta.”

Augusta nodded, “I wonder what sort of class that Umbridge is running…”

“I have heard a few things but I will be questioning these four, my ward and my son to be a full picture. This month’s Board meeting is here is it not?”

“Yes, on Thursday the fourteenth at 11 o’clock.”

Andromeda bowed following a Longbottom elf from the parlour to the receiving room where she flooed to Nurse Pomfrey’s office.

Considering that the Longbottom heir seemed to be injured every year it wasn’t surprising that that office was open to Longbottom Hall.

The office smelt of cheap stale whiskey, the cap of a bottle peeked out of a hastily shut drawer.

Andromeda sniffed, ‘How unprofessional.’ She stalked out of the office.

She found Fred with his head in his hands, Pomfrey wringing her hands and the other three lying prone in beds.

Andromeda ignored Poppy Pomfrey as she made her way to Fred’s bedside. “Just what did you think you were doing?”
Fred smirked wanly, “Giving the toad queen a practical demonstration of what we already know since Harry torched her precious textbooks. Can you believe it? She hadn’t given any thought to how she would teach us without them. Her plan was probably to let us read the stupid things and not let us cast or practice a single spell. It’s our NEWT year for Merlin’s sake.”

“You’re a Slytherin now,” Andromeda chided, “You ought to be saying Morganna or Salazar. Most Slytherins don’t invoke his name despite his power and accomplishments.”

“I’ll take that under advisement. Anyway I might have had a little too much fun taking on the Head Boy. pity he never plays dirty. But you should have seen George and Montague damn was that a show…”

Andromeda resisted the urge to roll her eyes only through years of experience in self-control, “Just what did you hit the Pucey heir with?”

Fred shrugged, “Just a normal stunner.”

Andromeda waved her hand wandlessly and nonverbally casting diagnostic spells on the smug teenager. Finally she made her pronouncement, “Primarily magical exhaustion indeed, that must have been quite a show you put on.” She more closely examined Fred’s cheek before healing the gash and tending to the burns from the lighting spell, “Interesting spell choices on the Pucey heir’s part.”

“His father is in the Magnus Brutus.” Fred said in an undertone.

Andromeda chortled, “A meal, a nap, a pepper-up and you’ll be fine. Until Hermione gets a hold of you…”

Fred flinched, “She’ll tell me off for exhausting myself at least.”

Andromeda smirked as she made her way to George’s bed.

He too was suffering from magical exhaustion; too many powerful spells cast too close together as well as the drain of casting that last spell. She was surprised he knew it much less could cast it, it was considered Black Family magic something only Blacks could use. Then again he was Black on both
sides but the blood was closer on Arthur’s side. Clearly he learned it from the library at Grimmauld Place…

“Magical exhaustion. Best to let him sleep it off. He’ll be hungry and probably would appreciate a pepper-up when he wakes. I’ll excuse him from classes.” Andromeda sniffed before examining Pucey, “The same with the exception of your stunner. I’ll send for Healer Smythe since I am not sanctioned to treat the Pucey heir.”

She satisfied herself that George’s spell hadn’t done any permanent damage to the Montague heir, only bothering to reverse the affects of George’s spell before she brushed past Pomfrey and went to floo Smythe.

While Pureblood Houses preferred to have their family members looked after by a private healer, in emergency situations it was permissible unless the individual in question had a writ filed with St. Mungos or even a school that only a particular healer was allowed to treat them.

Aurors could only see Ministry approved Mind Healers and they could specify who was to be called in an emergency. Due to Persephone being a Metamorphmagus there was only one healer well beside herself who treated them: Smythe. He’d treated her Uncle Alphard as well but he’d passed on. While technically one wasn’t supposed to treat family, but Smythe was not certified to treat Witch ailments, so when it came to such things an exception was made for her to oversee her daughter’s care but her primary healer was Smythe.

Since she’d delivered both the Pucey and Montague heirs as well as treated their mothers Faith Burbage and Mairsile Montague formerly of the House of O’Flaherty, she knew who treated their sons.

XooooooX

Hermione had a bad feeling that began during Transfiguration, which Harry soon picked up on.

Harry nudged her and pointed with his quill at a scribble in the corner of his parchment.

*What’s wrong?*

Hermione frowned, writing on the side of hers, *bad feeling*...
Harry scribbled, *about anyone in particular?*

Hermione shook her head.

*You’re clearly fine…*

Harry smirked, *well obviously.*

Hermione sighed.

*I don’t think it’s Dudley…*

Harry frowned, *Fred and George then?*

Hermione’s heart skipped a beat, and she stiffened before writing.

*Fred…definitely Fred…*

Harry scowled, *they had Defence this lesson and after lunch.*

Hermione flinched.

*What do you think Umbridge might have done? You told me about the blood quill on our way here.*

Harry bit his lip; *she acted like they were the only ones she had when Aodhan hit them with lighting. Anyway what can the lazy bitch do? I burnt her precious books.*

Hermione sighed.
I was thinking more what could Fred do...after all the twins are rather protective of you. Look what we did to Ron.

Harry scowled; I have yet to devise appropriate punishments for him. After all, I was too busy being mad and playing the perfect little Gryffindor to punish him to turning his back on me last year. He’s not getting another chance after he tried to attack me. I really am sorry about the whole Scabbers’ incident; I ought have sided with you.

Hermione was already contemplating ways to make the boy pay. Betraying Harry, their purported best friend not once but twice if not three times was unforgivable. She’d memorized the prefect’s handbook of all the rules. If Ron thought Percy was bad, having herself and probably George gunning for him. He’d rue the day he’d revealed that he was only friends with Harry because of his fame and that he’d turn on his ‘friend’ in a heartbeat.

Well Scabbers was Pettigrew and if Crookshanks had eaten him good for him. I told him if he ever found another animagus stalking you to eat them. He helped me catch that nosy beetle.

Harry’s shoulders shook with a silent snicker, how is the nosy beetle?

Hermione snorted under her breath.

Taking a much deserved forced vacation. I charmed the jar to provide her with sufficient air, food and water but it was inescapable. I also cast the spell that trapped her in her beetle form.

Hermione wandlessly had switched her quill a while ago so that she wouldn’t miss any of Professor McGonagall’s lecture.

While Michael, Stephan, Terry and Anthony weren’t that bad; they weren’t Harry...

She wasn’t that close to Padma, Su, Morag, Iyzebel, Mandy, Leslie or Lisa. With eight Ravenclaw witches in their year they were four to a room rather than five like it had been in Gryffindor. There was slightly more room...

Padma was close to Su, Morag to Mandy and Lisa to Iyzebel; Leslie was a quiet sort who kept to
herself. Moody, was she really related to Mad-Eye?

She and Leslie shared with Padma and Su, while Morag, Mandy, Lisa and Iyzebel shared the second Fifth Year Girls Ravenclaw dormitory.

Harry nudged her with his knee to get her attention.

_How’s the research coming?_

Hermione blinked and then scribbled.

_Michael Corner got a list of interested Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs for us._

Harry arched an eyebrow, a habit he picked up from Andromeda. Scratching out _oh really? Who is interested?_

_All the Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs in our year minus of course Ron._ Hermione scribbled back.

Harry sniffed. _Of course not Ron, he doesn’t give a damn about his marks the lazy arse._

After a moments thought Hermione added, _Michael said that his four sisters would come if he and Stephan did. He thought Cho Chang would and if she did, then her brother and Marietta Edgcombe would as well. Padma noted that her sister Pavarti might be interested. Where Pavarti goes, Lavender isn’t far behind. I know that Dunbar wants to be an Auror, so she might come. I know Dean and Seamus will come, so will Neville._

She was suspicious that Pansy would…

Despite the information exchanged during their conference last night how well did she know the witch? Then again how well did anyone know a Slytherin? They all hid behind those masks of theirs…

Thinking about her ‘student’ made her muddled thoughts all the more confused.
Why was she uneasy? What exactly was Fred up to? Was he in danger? Was he hurt? She was tempted to send her patronus but didn’t want to disrupt his class.

You would think that sleeping with a prankster who wanted to join the opposition to Dumbledore, the Ministry and Voldemort that she’d be okay with the probability of feeling uneasy.

Then again, wasn’t it George who did all the dangerous invention stuff?

Fred was flash and fire, while George was calm and cool like water or steady like earth.

They might share the same face but they were not the same at their core with different interests and talents.

Harry had told her about Angelina’s foolish attempt to flirt with George and how George had told her that they weren’t interchangeable.

She had always been able to sense a difference in them, hence her secret crush on Fred and her willingness to spend summers with the Weasleys if only for glimpses of Fred.

Damn him for worrying her, she was going to shake him when she saw him!

Harry watched her inner turmoil in her face and wondered just what George and Fred had in store for the toad queen.

Really they could be rather vindictive just look what they’d done to Ron for turning on him and he was blood.

Harry doubted very much that they were quite finished with him…

XooooooX
It was always interesting having to use one’s timeturner…

Aodhan normally tried to avoid it but when classes he took and enjoyed were on top of one another well it was alright.

This year he had History of Magic in conflict with his Care of Magical Creatures class.

So he went into History of Magic took a nap and then rewound time to make his way outside for Care of Magical Creatures.

To his surprise he found George waiting for him…

Aodhan frowned, “I thought you were only assisting in the Third Year class.”

George shrugged, “I was, until I realised what a joke that Defence would be. So I asked Snape if he’d let me join your class since I dropped out and didn’t take Sixth Year Care of Magical Creatures.”

“Any idea what he’ll be teaching us?” Aodhan asked as they made their way towards Hagrid’s abode.

George smirked, “I might have peeked at his lesson plans.”

Aodhan grinned wickedly, “Give a bloke a hint?”

George snickered, “Not a chance.”

Aodhan snorted, “I am the King of Slytherin you know.”

“He’s my boss and my favourite brother, I wouldn’t tell you.”
They shared a laugh before joining the few students left in the Sixth Year class.

George and Aodhan found Charlie lazily leaning up against the fence of the Hippogriff paddock.

Charlie raised an eyebrow at them and then nodded, “Now that you’re all here,” he drawled, “I’ll call roll. Katrina Belby?”

“Here and its Bell!” the younger Gryffindor Chaser muttered darkly.

“Marcus Belby?”

“Present.”

“Carmichael?”

“Here.”

“Chang?”

“Here.”

“Edgcomb?”

“Yes.” Was the timid reply.

“Goyle?”

The blonde girl from Quidditch tryouts sang out, “Most definitely here.”
“Fleet?”

“Yeah.”

“Holmes?”

“Present.”

“Hopkirk?”

“Present.”

“McLaggen?”

“Peakes?”

“Here.”

“Yeah.”

“Stewart?”

“Here.”

“Urquhart?”

“Of course.” Aodhan smirked.

“Vector?”
“Here sir.” Was the Ravenclaw girls’ prefect’s reply.

“Carson Weasley?”

“Present.”

Aodhan nudged George, “Any relation?”

George nodded, muttering, “Uncle Cador’s youngest.”

“Hm…” Aodhan murmured.

“George Weasley?”

“Like I’d miss.” George snickered, “You’re teaching.”

Charlie snorted and then went on, “Wilkins?”

“Here.”

Then he stood up straight and brushed himself off, “Despite Hagrid’s preoccupation with large potentially dangerous creatures not all magical creatures are dangerous. Take crups, flobberworms and Kneazels for example. Some like Veela, true Elves, harpies, centaurs, Chuvash and others have near or greater than human intelligence. You may have learned about vampires and werewolves in your Defence class. They too are magical creatures; many persons with magical creature status due to our current laws are unfairly treated. Despite technical magical creature status one can’t own a Veela or a centaur. Some creatures like a neko-mata are said to be lucky and if a true bond forms between the master or mistress and the creature, then they claim that they can talk.”

“What are we going to learn?” Aodhan smirked.
“Well since much of your lessons were hands-on we may have lecture classes, the double periods will be for practical lessons. I had a classroom arranged for us as well and I will inform you ahead of time of such. I know what’s on the NEWT exam; took it myself four years ago. I’ve come a long way in four years, longer than I was expected to. Most still are in training rather than working as a senior dragon handler. Not all who score well on this NEWT will go into this field. Some travel from preserve to preserve learning elementary healing and set themselves up as a healer. I’ve met some; I don’t recommend that route. I would recommend that you select two or three creatures to train to treat, or one is best. It is far better to be well-educated in one rather than vaguely knowledgably in many.”

Giselle asked eyes shining, “What are we going to do today?”

Charlie thrust his thumb in the direction of the hippogriffs. “You’re going to go out there I you dare. There are just enough hippogriffs out there for all of you. You’re going to go quietly into their enclosure, pick one without fighting and see if they will accept you. If you succeed, I expect you to ride one and you will be responsible for tending to it for the rest of the week. At this point in your studies you should be able to properly care for one. You will learn its habits, its favourite meals and I want you to see what caring for such a magnificent creature is like.”

“Then what?” George asked eagerly.

“You’ll tell me which one is yours and I’ll give you their name. At the end of the week you owe me a paper detailing your experience and how it did or did not differ from your previous knowledge of hippogriffs and their habits.” Charlie said with a smirk.

Edgcombe put up her hand, “What if we can’t do it? We all heard about Malfoy…”

Aodhan snorted, “Malfoy was a foolish prideful git who assumed that Hippogriffs aren’t intelligent and disregarded the oaf’s lecture about them.”

Charlie nodded, “Professor Snape warned me about having hippogriffs as a first lesson. Let me stress that insulting a hippogriff is not only unwise but dangerous. For those who do not wish to do this assignment I suggest you return to the castle and speak with your Head of House as soon as possible. However I will be giving you a Troll for the day because you walked out of the lesson.”

George, Aodhan and Giselle were the first to enter the paddock.
Aodhan seemed to creep over the grass eying the possible options.

George pranced, his eyes sweeping the creatures.

Giselle skipped along stopping in front of a pure white ‘mare’ with a curly tail, as she bowed the dark bird-like eyes gazed at her and then the majestic creature bowed back. Then it seemed that the bird chose to preen her…

Aodhan had selected, well was drawn to the hippogriff that most resembled an Appaloosa, a Muggle horse that was said to be purple. He circled it with his eyes averted as he had Abaddon all those years ago. When he’d taken Abaddon the snake had been sickly but was wary of him and showed his fangs sparkling with venom.

The hippogriff eyed him just as warily, but both were hyperaware of one another.

Aodhan flowed from standing to sitting, his head inclined in a sort of bow.

Three heartbeats later, the hippogriff had bowed back and had joined him on the ground. Then surprisingly it plucked a blue-black feather and dropped it in his lap.

Aodhan who had never received a present that wasn’t an obligation felt the weight of his grief that his parents had never been in his life and given him praise much less a present. With his head bowed he refused to cry, crying was a weakness…

George who was more comfortable among his cauldrons then people had never had an animal nor had he really felt the hunger for one. Sure like anyone he supposed, he craved love, affection and respect things Molly had never been capable of giving him. Yet he was game to try anything except girls once. He was drawn to the tallest, most intimidating hippogriff: the stallion, the king of the air…

It regarded him with intensity that made him shiver, putting a face so fine it seemed carved in his head that was attached to the more impressive body he’d ever seen.

His bow turned more into a sign of submission rather then respect…
The stallion half of the chimera was black as night, instead of bowing it knelt and cocked its head.

George peeked up. “Yes?”

The magnificent creature pointed at its back with his knife-like beak.

George whispered, “You want me to ride?”

The bird nodded.

George slowly stood and kept the submissive posture, making his way to the hippogriff and fumbled a bit. He’d never ridden any horse-related creature before and a hippogriff was not a broom.

Once he was seated and gripping the hippogriff’s sides with his thighs, the powerful creature launched into the sky.

George swallowed a scream, and just focused on staying on at first and then he looked down. Having never been afraid of heights, he soon gloried in the experience.

The experience was as daunting as good sex…

Once he’d landed, well he was starry-eyed.

Charlie hugged him; “You flew! What was it like? Do you know which one that was?”

George blushed wiggling away, “The lead stallion?”

“Never in my life did I think my brother would be drawn to him and be the only one given a ride so far! Outstanding. Yours is Hurricane, Hagrid’s notes say it’s the untameable king of the herd. Urquhart’s is Stormswift and he’s Hurricane’s partner. Goyle’s is Witherwing, apparently she used to be mated to a Buckbeak.”
Giselle’s hippogriff let out a keening wail at the name.

Hurricane and Stormswift let out sharp cries that must have been a reprimand because her wail was quickly stifled.

Charlie talked to each of his students in turn before addressing them as a whole. “Those of you who haven’t gained a hippogriff’s attention or trust are behind in the assignment. You’re NEWT students now and I would have expected a bit more studiousness on your parts. Sharing hippogriff duties is not acceptable. I suggest if this assignment was beyond your perceived capabilities that you drop the class. This was a test and who successfully passed will most likely be able to successfully complete this course. Dismissed.”

Many of the class had at least tried to approach a hippogriff but only George was given a ride.

Chapter End Notes

The luncheon bell rang, halfway through their double period of Transfiguration.

Hermione was still quite disturbed about her feeling of Fred in trouble…

Needless to say she wasn’t attending when a professor called her name.

“Miss Granger? Miss Granger?”

Harry tugged on her hand, “Mione? A professor is calling after you.”

Hermione turned so her back was flat to the corridor wall so not to block the flood of hungry students. She turned in the direction of the voice, “Oh it’s Professor Burbage.”

Harry frowned, “The Muggle Studies proff?”

Hermione nodded, “The same.”

“What’s she want?” Harry scowled.

“I won’t know until I ask. Why don’t you go eat with your House? I’ll find you later…”

By then the professor had joined them, and she looked upset.

Harry inclined his head politely, “I’ll talk to you later then ‘Mione.”

“I am so glad I caught you, I wanted to try to catch you before you reached the Great Hall. I wanted to ask you to join me.” her former professor and now advisor/confidant said quietly.

“Join you where?” Hermione frowned.

“Walking to the infirmary?” Charity’s brow furrowed, “Oh you haven’t heard? Dear me…I only know because Gaheris is in my Tuesday Third Period.”

“Know what?”

“The Gryffindor/Slytherin Seventh Year Defence class had a bit of excitement.” Charity said quietly.

Hermione’s heartbeat quickened, “What sort of excitement?”

“Four Slytherins got the idea in their heads to have a duel to show off their skills to Umbridge. A more unpleasant witch I’ve never met aside from perhaps Skeeter and Mary Prewett. Prewett was a Gryffindor, Skeeter was a Slytherin, and so was Umbridge. They were years ahead of me. I was
behind Lily, Severus and Remus you know.”

“Fred duelled in class?”

“It is quite common to have practical lessons during the NEWTS Years to either be professor versus student or student versus student. Since Adrian is my nephew and I knew that gossip mentioned you were dating Fred Weasley that you’d want to be there.”

“Why are they in the hospital wing anyway?”

“Supposedly Magical exhaustion, Faith sent for Gary via their House Elf. He tore out at the bell, but I went looking for you. I think Mr. Black-Tonks went along with Gary.”

“Exhaustion?” Hermione scowled, “He put that much effort into a class duel? That idiot.”

“I’m sure with the likes of Healer Smythe around he’ll be fine.”

“Our Healer is Andromeda though…” Hermione frowned.

Charity turned pink, “Andromeda? Really? For you I can understand, she takes exceptional care of her witch patients though she has some wizards but only for the length of their pregnancies.”

“A bit odd thinking about guys having babies but was anything truly impossible with Magic?” Hermione shrugged.

They’d reached the infirmary by now.

A tall primly dressed blonde was listening intently to an older wizard in green robes with a Gryffindor at her side who seemed somewhat familiar, probably Gaheris Pucey Charity’s nephew. Montague was joined by a rather annoyed looking witch with bronze hair probably his mother.

Dudley seemed to be standing over Fred and George looking upset.

Fred had looked up when the doors opened and when he saw her he turned pale.

Hermione was tempted to run over to him but her lessons with Andromeda clung tightly. Instead she took measured steps, crossing the infirmary floor and joined Andromeda and Dudley thus parting ways with Charity.

“What is this I hear about a duel gone awry in Umbridge’s class?” Hermione glared.

Fred flinched, “I won, it didn’t go awry.”

“Whose idea was this?” Andromeda scowled.

“Mine?” Fred said stiffly, “We were annoyed with her for hurting Harry.”

Charity turned towards them, “How was Harry hurt?”

“A Blood quill Charity.” Andromeda snapped. “I already examined the boy. He had quick treatment last night by an unlikely source and he will likely not scar.”
Montague’s mother gasped in horror, while Adrian Pucey’s own mother seemed infuriated.

“A blood quill on a student? That’s heinous!” the later snapped.

“She attempted to use it on Urquhart’s son as well. In a fit of temper he destroyed them and walked out of detention to seek healing for my ward.” Andromeda replied.

“Why would she be using a blood quill on Harry Potter?” Adrian’ mother frowned.

“He disrupted her class and questioned her ability to teach the class when we weren’t going to be allowed to use wands until our OWLS in May. She also assigned a textbook that Whiz-Hard books wouldn’t even publish; I’ve heard that the chief editor threw Slinkhard out of his office. Rumour has it that Harry burnt her books when she called him a liar and told them that they were grossly behind while refusing to let them use wands in class.” Hermione added.

“She hadn’t revised the curriculum so we gave her a practical demonstration of our skills. Granted the four of us probably are amoung the top of our year; Pucey and Montague tie for first and George is just behind with the second highest marks I’m tied with Angie about fifth or sixth. I believe the highest marks are all wizards, Vector is right behind us tied with Farley I think.” Fred offered.

“Who duelled whom?” Lady Pucey asked.

“I duelled George Madam Burbage,” Montague offered, “while Adrian took on Fred. You know Adrian and I duel together so much we’re each predictable to the other.”

“With skills like yours I know father has offered you both a place among his recruits following graduation.” Pucey’s mother said stiffly.

“Was this a sanctioned duel?” Montague’s mother asked.

“Well she wasn’t in favour of it, rather she was upset with our manners. Even tried to tell Adrian that he should be wary of crossing her if he hoped to follow in his father’s footsteps. Adrian said that his future career was between you, Lord Pucey, himself and Professor Snape.” Montague said wearily.

“That woman has no say in my son’s future.” Madam Burbage grumbled.

“She could make trouble…” Andromeda frowned.

“Burbages and Puceys have been loyal to the true Ministry for time out of mind. We are known for our loyalty and honour,” Madam Burbage sniffed.

“Indeed I had the honour of attending with you, after all I doubt that the Flitwicks would have consented to a match between a Burbage if you were not.” Andromeda said politely. “If I had an unbonded wizard of the proper age in my family, I would be discussing a possible bonding contract betwixt them and your youngest sister.”

Hermione remembered Charity off-handily mentioning having an elder sister who was bonded to the grandson of Professor Flitwick last year.

Charity flinched, almost imperceptively.
“Charity is of age of course but were a serious offer to be made, I would take it under advisement since there would be settlements if she consented and the interested party was worthy of her.” Madam Burbage said smugly.

“I’m sure that you’d hardly consider anyone worthy of her.” Andromeda said politely.

“I have no plan to bond, I’ve got responsibilities as a professor and I am quite happy to continue as I am.” Charity sniffed, “I will need to order a sandwich if I have any hope of continuing my day.”

Then Hermione watched as Charity flounced out.

“I would hope she would find someone.” Madam Burbage said with a sigh, “she flat out refuses any attempts at matchmaking. No offence but I think being your cousin’s former lover has damaged her pride. She doesn’t wish to admit to bestowing her heart on someone unworthy of her. Her prettiness was late born, she didn’t recognize or cultivate it until she was out of Hogwarts, she felt quite in Constance and my shadow I’m afraid.”

“A pity while she lacked quite the sort of beauty that made Narcissa stand out from an early age, she was quite a pretty thing. She was in Regulus and George Goyle’s year I believe. Shy if I remember properly, however it has been many years and I might have mixed her up with other Hufflepuffs.”

“She was a shy thing, came out of her shell like a butterfly at the Ministry. Constance had the family shop and I was balancing motherhood with my status as mother’s assistant.”

“You’ve quite taken over her duties I’ve noticed.”

“Mother passed on the title, while father hasn’t quite retired she wanted to step out of politics when he rose to his current position. Gradually she gave me more responsibility, a pity I haven’t a daughter to pass the title to. It will likely pass to Constance’s eldest Lysippe “ Madam Burbage shrugged.

“You will be attending the board meeting at Lady Longbottom’s?” Andromeda said smugly.

“Indeed. You?”

“I’ve taken over the Black interests in recent months, just as Remus has taken over the Potter interests.” Andromeda admitted.

“Then I will see you both there.” Madam Burbage nodded, she glared at Brecc Montague, “You will follow Healer Smythe’s orders to the letter and see to it that Hadrian does as well and I don’t wish to be summoned again for a similar situation. You will also send me a note as soon as Hadrian regains consciousness.”

Montague flinched, “Yes Madam Burbage.”

“Will Adrian be alright Brecc?” the young Gryffindor asked nervously.

Montague nodded, “He’s just sleeping, he tried very hard to win but Fred over here was a much improved dueller compared to what we last saw.”

Speaking of her Fred, Hermione glared at him arms crossed, “Just what were you thinking? I would have to be a fool not to realise that this whole thing was your idea, it reeks of Fred Weasley’s idea of vengeance. To make matters worse, you drew the Head Boy, your House Captain and the Seventh
Year prefect, your own brother into this.”

“It was meant to give her an idea of what we knew since she clearly hadn’t revised her curriculum.” Fred pouted.

“I would have thought such flouting of authority would be beneath you.” Hermione sniffed.

“No one got hurt.” Montague offered.

Andromeda and Dudley exchanged smug knowing looks.

“Not hurt? You call magical exhaustion not hurt?” Hermione snapped.

Montague recoiled, “Not really.” He admitted sheepishly.

“Then you are a fool.” Hermione muttered.

His mother chuckled at her, “I think young Master Weasley is quite lucky to have you. I do hope he treats you with the respect you deserve.”

Hermione turned pink.

“Oh I do ma’am.” Fred smirked, “She knows it.”

How Hermione had felt that something was the matter with Fred was still something she hadn’t quite figured out yet. Had a bond grown between them despite a lack of vows or other binding magic?

“What I know is that your folly had left three other persons in the infirmary. I do hope that you reflect on your actions.” Hermione said stiffly, “Now I’m hungry and unlike you, I still have Transfiguration, Care of Magical Creatures and Herbology classes to attend.”

With that she flounced away.

XoooooX

“An admirable girl indeed.” Andromeda smirked. “Lady Montague is quite right about how lucky you are. As detestable as that Umbridge is I do hope that you restrain yourself from publicly disobeying her.

Fred shrugged but said nothing.

Their plans for Blackthorn were well underway and nothing Andromeda said was going to dissuade them from putting the plan into place especially with Hermione working on lesson plans and testing.

“Since Smythe and I have verified that they are not in dire need of attention I will take my leave. Do behave yourself Fred.” Andromeda said just before she herself left.

Fred glared at Dudley, “What do you want?”

Dudley sniffed at him, “Was it worth it?”
Fred blinked at him, “What?”

“Was your little duel worth upsetting Hermione?” Dudley scowled.

“Didn’t think she’d react like that. I only thought about it afterwards, had to have Angie and Alicia help George and I here. When Angie started fussing I thought Hermione would be angry if I let her so I told her to leave off.” Fred admitted ruefully.

“Next time remember that you have a girl who cares about you so putting yourself in danger hurts and worries her.” Dudley admonished. “So try to stay out of trouble.”

Then he left a morose Fred who didn’t feel any more pride in his win thanks to all the lectures.

Chapter End Notes

A very annoyed Harry made his way after dinner the day after Umbridge’s first Defence lesson with Fifth Year Slytherins and Gryffindors to Snape’s office for his ‘detention’.

He half hoped that he would have those Occlumency lessons…

He would be rather irritated if his newly discovered uncle made him actually organize the student potions ingredients cupboard or scrubbing cauldrons without magic..

Harry knocked on the door and then waited.

“Come in.” Snape barked.

Harry scowled and opened the door, “So lessons or Detention?”

Snape smirked, “I could give you a detention if you prefer but given the reasons for said detention, I’m quite sure that you would prefer the lessons.”

“Honestly, I would prefer neither.” Harry said mulishly.

“Unfortunately, I would be incapable of agreeing to that. I will have a Prince elf see to the cauldrons so we will not have to deal with them. However you will need to claim that you scrubbed them while we would be focusing on your mental shields instead. Since forcing my way in doesn’t work, you will need to learn to consciously raise or lower them. Now if we had the time I would like to train you like I have Draco.”

“How did you train Malfoy?” Harry scowled.

“I started when he was quite young, actually Blaise started at the same time. We began with meditation exercises so they could centre themselves and control their magic consciously. After that they did image training to create shields since neither of them were born with them like you or I. The sooner you can control your shields, the sooner Ted or I can see if our suspicions of a memory retarding spell can be proven or disproven. Now the best beginning would be for you to relax. So what location do you deem to be the most comfortable? My office or my apartment’s parlour?”

Harry frowned, “If this is really a lesson rather then a detention, probably the later?”

“Very well,” Snape grumbled, moving to open the door opposite the one that presumably led to the usual classroom.

They entered a surprisingly calming room that was decorated in a variety of blues, greens and earth tones that reminded Harry of the Forbidden Forest.
He smirked, “Not quite what I expected.”

Snape glared, “Contrary to the mistaken communal view I don’t live surrounded by green and silver. Now pick which furniture you deem the most relaxing.”

Harry plopped into an armchair that looked the most comfortable.

Snape took its mate and they were separated by roughly three feet.

“Now,” Snape began, “I want you to close your eyes and take deep calming breaths. Think of some place you feel perfectly safe and in control. An empty Quidditch pitch perhaps? I want you to relax.”

Harry did as he was told, closing his eyes and taking a few decent deep breaths.

Snape was right; flying above an empty Quidditch pitch was relaxing…

Snape’s voice was surprisingly soothing.

“Now I want you to tell me when you feel relaxed.”

After a few minutes of ‘flying’, Harry spoke without opening his eyes, “I think I’m relaxed.”

“Alright. I want you to land; can you do that? Now I want you to tell me what you imagine your Occlumency shields to be. Castle walls? Muggle Concrete?”

“Titanium.” Harry droned.

“How thick?” Snape asked.

“At least six inches?” Harry frowned, his eyes still closed. “And they surround me like the shell of a Planet’s mantle.

“I see. Now I want you to imagine a door in that wall. Make it as strong as you think it should be.”

Harry made his ‘door’ six inches thick the same as the wall, riveted with steel bolts and locked with every sort of lock he knew. Guarded of course by a spell that resisted Alohomora.

“Do you have a door?” Snape asked in that strange soothing, gentle voice.

“Yes.” Harry said in a blissful soft voice rather than his usual

“Alright. I want you to imagine me outside your wall. Can you do that for me?”

Harry remained inside the walls of his mind and behind the ‘door’ he envisioned. “You’re outside.”

“Remember I’m here to help you. I’m giving you complete control of your mind, do you understand that?” Snape asked.

“I got that.” Harry grumbled.

“Now the locks are all on your side aren’t they?” Snape’s voice drifted through Harry’s mind.
“Yes?” Harry mumbled.

“I want you to undo one lock. Let me know when you have done that.”

Inside his mind, Harry ‘looked’ at his ‘door’ and then at his hand in it were metaphorical keys on a ring. He selected the proper key and put it in the lock turning it. It gave a loud protesting click as it disengaged.

“Done.”

“How many locks are there Harry?”

“Uh seven?”

“A powerful number and a wise choice. Now I want you to unlock the next one.”

“Why?”

“I want you to have total control of this encounter. It would violate your own protection to hand me those keys wouldn’t it?”

“Yeah.” Harry muttered as he selected another ‘key’ by instinct and unlocked the next lock. “Second lock undone.”

“Good. I want you to unlock them one by one can you do that?”

“I guess…” Harry grumbled.

“You’re doing quite well.” Snape reluctantly praised.

“Of course he is, he is my son.” Came a light-hearted voice.

The mood broken, Harry’s eyes sprang open.

Upon his entry into Snape’s apartment he had noticed an empty portrait of a willow tree. Standing beside the tree was a younger version of his mother, the pictures from his photo album were mostly post Hogwarts but she looked about sixteen.

Harry gaped at her. “Mother?”

“Open mouths make excellent doxie traps.” Snape snipped.

“Do be quiet Severus. Hello Harry.”

“You actually had a portrait of my mother commissioned and didn’t tell me?” Harry sputtered.

“We weren’t exactly on polite speaking terms prior to this summer if you remember.” Snape retorted.

“How are you Harry?” portrait Lily asked.

“Just swell, Andromeda’s my guardian, Sirius is still a fugitive, the Ministry tried to have me thrown
out of Hogwarts, Dumbledore’s up to no good and we’ve got a Ministry plant at Hogwarts.” Harry scowled.

“Well Dumbledore’s always had a manipulative streak.” Portrait Lily sighed as she sat in the relative shade of her tree and set her book in her lap.

“We were in the middle of something important Lily.” Severus scowled.

“Always so serious, you need to learn to lighten up old friend.” Portrait Lily laughed.

“Have you forgotten that the Dark Lord has returned and Harry needs to be made as strong as possible? We have suspicions that Dumbledore cast a spell to make learning difficult for your son. Since you were born a Prince, Harry inherited very strong natural shields, stronger then my own in fact.” Severus grumbled. “We are attempting to gain conscious control of them so that our suspicions can be proven or disproven.”

“That’s quite laudable Sev but too much too soon can be dreadful. Give the boy a break will you? He’s far too Potter I think to be as obsessed with mental magic as you are.”

“He maybe more Prince then you realise since he is now a member of my House.”

“I thought he was in Andromeda’s custody.” Portrait Lily frowned.

“What he means is mum, that I’m a Slytherin.” Harry said smugly.

Now it was his mother’s portrait’s turn to be stunned.


“I told you on the train ride First Year that you should be in Slytherin with me or in Ravenclaw. I still have yet to figure out for certain that the Headmaster interfered with your Sorting.” Snape snorted.

“You always believe the worst of people.” Portrait Lily said shaking her head sadly.

“He’s a bully.” Harry grumbled, “He wants me to stay with the Dursleys even though they mistreat me. He didn’t seem to want Dudley to be magical and he was going to let them throw me out of Hogwarts for using magic to defend Dudley and myself from a Dementor. So pardon me mother if I don’t believe that Headmaster Dumbledore is the Guardian of the Wizarding world and the hero headmaster he wants us to believe he is. He’s managed to anger Hogwarts and I bet that’s difficult.”

“It was his idea to move into Ivy Cottage…I wonder what his purpose was…” Portrait Lily mused.

Severus and Harry exchanged surprised glances; neither of them had known that.

Severus checked his watch. “I had intended to keep you longer but you do have homework and it is after nine. Curfew is at ten and I do not approve of my snakes to be tardy. Remember, nights with no Quidditch practice are to be spent in ‘detentions’ working on strengthening your control of your shields.”

Harry scowled. “Fine. I’ll come if only to talk to mum.”

Severus sighed, “I would prefer you were not in my rooms without my presence.”
Harry treated his uncle to a mocking salute and then walked stiffly out of the apartment.

“Now Severus couldn’t you be more polite? He is my son…” Portrait Lily chided.

“For me Lily, that was polite.” Severus drawled.

XoooooX

“As Lily Anne Evans, born Lillias Anastasia Prince on January 9th, 1960 sired by Oran Nott and born to Eileen Prince.”

The Portrait of Lily Potter yawned, “How do you know this?”

Out of the shadows came a bird painted with dark shades of blues, purples and blacks.

“You could say I know more then most. I am a friend of Hogwarts and Fawkes for they knew me before I ever revealed myself. You may call me Lady Amaryllis. We have someone in common; your son Harry.”

“What are you?” Portrait Lily frowned

“I am myself and I am a dark phoenix. You might call me a magical core personified if you like.”

“I didn’t know there were dark phoenixes…”

“We are created not born and only a small number of persons will ever discover the means. Even fewer would dare to cast it for it requires payment that few could make. I am lucky for in becoming I made fewer sacrifices then I had intended and was rewarded with more then I had conditioned myself to accept but it took me sometime before I was strong enough to see how the world had changed. Now, we were discussing Harry.” Lady Amaryllis sniffed, “Were you aware he was attacked night before last?”

Portrait Lily gasped, “Attacked? How?”

“That loathsome Lady Umbridge, I believe you knew her as Dolores Selwyn?” Lady Amaryllis sneered. “She did not take kindly to Harry’s insistence that the Dark Lord had returned and killed the Diggory heir. Not that the boy was much of a loss, he hurt many with his inability to remain faithful. Diggory got pleasure from letting his partners think that he was only seeing them and then further enjoyed their pained reactions to the lie.

Portrait Lily’s voice grew cold, “What did that woman do to my son?”

“I knew you have a core of Slytherin steel beneath that Gryffindor veneer,” Lady Amaryllis snickered, “Umbridge dared to use a Blood quill on him. Thankfully, he was in detention with Aodhan Urquhart. Urquhart is definitely McGonagall’s son but he is a true Slytherin as well. Urquhart incinerated the blood quills with conjured lightening and got Harry help from the portrait of Salazar himself. Both boys had gotten his attention, that might be all to the good. However, there is much to be said for a mother’s fury. Tell me Lily, what sort of punishment Umbridge deserves for harming your son?”
“How does Harry concern you?” Portrait Lily frowned.

“I have been his guardian though he does not know it. I know more about his life then anyone. Trust me, I know what heinous crimes Albus inflicted on both Harry and Dudley. I have been biding my time for revenge; while I have this form I still have all my memories and skills from before I was a dark phoenix. They say two heads are better then one, I don’t think the world has yet to see what two heads such as ours can dream up. So tell me Lily, Daughter of the House of Prince how far would you go to revenge your son?”

Portrait Lily snapped, “Far enough that the person who injured or attacked my son would be incapable of forgetting the vengeance I wrought.”

“Then I think we shall make excellent partners…” the dark phoenix chuckled darkly.

The two then progressed to plan out a series of plots designed to make life very unpleasant for Umbridge.

After all, as interesting as causing her death might be it would limit their revenge for death was final…

Well final enough that the part of the soul that was Delores Selwyn Umbridge would cease to be and that would be unacceptable…

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 40

Hermione had only been slightly surprised to find that Pansy was her prefect rounds partner. Then again they were among the few who weren’t prospective Quidditch players so it made sense really. That they were assigned the library shift after dinner was also a surprise.

They claimed a centre table and chose opposite sides.

“So how do you want to go about this?”

“How about every half hour one of us makes a trek through the library?” Pansy offered.

“That works.” Hermione shrugged.

“About that Homework…” Pansy swallowed.

Hermione raised an eyebrow, “Oh Really? What about it?”

“I finished it…” Pansy said looking away.

“Already?”

“Well I really want to get to the practical. So I was rather motivated. Since I had the weekend off from prefect duties, I was not trying out for Quidditch and my summer homework was finish I had time. No one else had the recommended text so I had two days to complete it. I took a break for lunch and to watch the tryouts but then I worked through dinner.” Pansy said softly as she dug through her bag for the assigned essay.

Hermione accepted Pansy’s essay on her suspected Patronus/animagus form and her reasoning while raising a one-way privacy shield.

“So a black panther? You think it’s because your innate skill to see the secrets in others? That is an interesting supposition.” Hermione mused.

“That is how I figured out about Draco, Blaise and Potter had that in common.” Pansy sniffed.

Hermione chuckled, “I see.”

“You don’t have to sound so amused.” Pansy muttered darkly.

Hermione giggled, “You should have heard Fred’s reasoning why he was a lynx.”

*Flashback*
Sirius glared at them across the desk in his study, “So you three really think you need to learn the Patronus charm? Why are you bothering me then? Why aren’t you asking Remus? He taught Harry.”

George swallowed, “Well we figured with you stuck here at Grimmauld you might like to have more to occupy your time then just teaching Dudley Defence. Given that Harry was attacked by Dementors three times and neither of us could help the two times we were present, well we’d like to be capable of standing beside him rather then cowering behind.”

Sirius chuckled, “So where are those essays I told you to do then?”

Immediately, they handed them over and to their horror Sirius tore them up.

“Why did you assign them if you weren’t going to read them?” Fred snapped.

“Simple, I figured if you took the time to look up the information and write them then you were serious about learning the charm. Unfortunately your Boggarts are probably not Dementors and Annie vanquished the only Boggart we found. So you’ll have to learn without a fake Dementor. The spell is Expecto Patronum. You will have to focus harder to succeed without a fake or real Dementor. You must choose your happiest memory and use it to fuel your patronus.” Sirius smirked.

The three of them winced.

Since Hermione had never found a spell she couldn’t accomplish the first time she tried it so she wasn’t as worried as the twins.

Then again during their research they had heard and read that it was difficult…

“How did Dudley manage to deal with having him for a teacher?

*Flashback ends*
“Where did you go?” Pansy frowned.

“I was just remembering what my lesson was like.” Hermione said with a shiver.

“Were you actually facing a Dementor?” Pansy asked in a hushed voice.

“No…our teacher tore the essays without reading them…” Hermione said with a strangled laugh. “He was rather unique…I heard that Dudley’s Defence lessons were rather eclectic and bounced from year to year…any dark magical creature was left for outside reading. I doubt Sirius actually previewed an assigned essay before it was turned into Remus for the exams.”

“Sirius?” Pansy gasped, “Sirius Black?”

Hermione winced, “Don’t tell. He neither betrayed the Potters nor was he a Death Eater. We did spend the summer at the Ancient House of Black with Lady Andromeda and Sirius. Andromeda gave me some lessons in pureblood etiquette as well as took us all shopping. Surprisingly George and Harry enjoyed it as well as were quite talented at picking out things that suited them and each other. Fred and Dudley did not take, they could put together decent outfits but they do not enjoy shopping.”

“Well someday we should take Blaise, Harry, Draco and your George shopping. They’d clean out the place while we sit back and drink tea.” Pansy snickered.

“That might be fun. Provided that they bring enough funds.” Hermione smirked.

“Funds? Who needs funds when they can directly charge a Gringotts account.” Pansy said dismissively.

“I suppose that’s true but I have no vault just a sack of galleons every year to cover my school expenses because I’m a scholarship student due to being a Muggleborn.”

“How did you get those clothes then?”

“Sirius paid for them, the Ancestral home had been vacant long enough that it started to decay. After Harry arrived, we began properly fixing up the House, that was when Fred and I started working together. George and Harry paired off with the cleaning while Fred and I transfigured the previous objects into fancy replacements.” Hermione shrugged. “Sirius bought us new clothes to repay us. Not Dudley and Andromeda though, he gave them a new wardrobe because they are part of his House. He claimed that Andromeda was his favourite cousin and she’s become the Lady of the House after a fashion. It started running a lot smoother after she came. Mrs. Weasley was running it into ground, really how much of a dent can you make in a decaying House cleaning the Muggle way?”

“I always thought that particular Weasley was insane.” Pansy said shaking her head.

Hermione smirked, “You’d be correct, well it’s my turn to make a round so I’ll be back with some books on Patroni. I haven’t read any of the ones here surprisingly. Take a look at my half of the Ancient Runes project while I’m gone.”

Pansy nodded and pulled the papers laid out with Ancient Runes resources towards her.
Fred woke up at prankster o’clock, which was two am.

He was irritated that Pomfrey dared to be drinking when he, George and the other two Seventh Year Slytherins were brought in.

Even though they had family healers, Pomfrey should have been sober enough to give them a preliminary exam before sending for a more experienced witch like Andromeda or a wizard like Smythe but no, clearly she had been the worse for wear when they arrived.

Fred had decided to get rid of her…

Killing her wasn’t an option of course, so he would just have to settle for making her ill.

Fred made his way out of the infirmary hiding under charms that hid him sight, smell and sound.

Silently, he crept along to raid their private lab.

He was going to have some fun…

Fred knew from product testing that mixing the Skivving sweets had no real complications. So he scanned the potions that were added to the sweets pocketing the ones for Fainting Fudges, Puking Pastilles, Nosebleed Nougats and for extra laughs he included the canary one.

Potions in hand, Fred made his way stealthily back to the infirmary where he cast a silencing charm as well as an unlocking one on the door to Pomfrey’s office.

Tiptoeing inside, Fred was pleased to hear loud snoring from the adjoining bedroom.

Smirking, Fred began opening drawers looking for her bottle or bottles of liquor. Finally, he found what appeared to be an open bottle of cheap Muggle whiskey.

Fred unscrewed the cap and one by one he added the potions to Pomfrey’s whiskey. He shook it up to thoroughly mix the liquor with the potions.

Then like any good prankster, Fred wiped the bottle clean of prints and dusted everything he had touched before he made his way back to his bed in the infirmary and enjoyed the sleep of the vindicated.

Chapter End Notes

Severus was just emerging from the bathroom to join Remus for breakfast in his kitchenette when a Hogwarts’ elf appeared.

“Professor, Mediwitch Pomfrey be ill.”

Severus raised an eyebrow. “Really ill or drunk?”

“Ill, ill. Puking, fever, feathers and nosebleed?”

Severus nodded, “Has Filius been informed?”

“Yes professor.”

“Did he send for a healer?”

“Lika believe Headmaster be sending for Healer Smythe.”

“I’ll ask another healer to look after the infirmary for the day.” Severus nodded, dismissing the elf before heading downstairs.

Severus had a sinking feeling that Fred Weasley had a hand in this…
Andromeda was sitting down to breakfast when an unfamiliar elf appeared.

“Yes?”

“Master Prince be asking for Mistress. They be down a healer at Hogwarts. The mediwitch be ill.”

“Drunk?” Andromeda scoffed.

“Ill. Feathers, nosebleed, fever and vomiting mistress.”

Sirius snickered, “Sounds like Pomfrey fell afoul of Fred.”

“She was too drunk to treat them.” Andromeda sniffed.

“You did take a leave of absence from St. Mungos why not go take over the healing wing? You’ll be able to keep an eye on that loathsome Umbridge.” Sirius offered.

“I’d go, I trust her not and if Fred gets up to another trick like that duel they’ll need a decent healer.” Ted said nonchalantly as he poured himself more coffee.

Andromeda called her elf and ordered her to pack her healing potions as well as bringing her breakfast later.

She immediately flooed to Severus’ office and then made her way to the infirmary on the floor above.

Her first order of business was to give Pomfrey a curistry exam to determine what was wrong with her. When she didn’t recognise the cause of her symptoms she porkeyed Pomfrey to the emergency ward.

Luckily Andromeda was able to clear Fred, George, Pucey and Montague to return to classes after
breakfast.

Only Fred was slightly sleepy so Andromeda was suspicious that he was responsible for Pomfrey’s illness.

She snorted at him while shoving a pepper-up potion from her own potions kit into his hand.

The cheeky devil winked at her and then chugged it before following his twin, the Head Boy and his Quidditch Captain out of the infirmary.

With the place now emptied of students, Andromeda transfigured a few boxes from scrap parchment and packed up Pomfrey’s personal items.

Both she and Smythe had filed complaints against Pomfrey being drunk on the job to the Medi-witch and Medi-wizards, so she was likely to be suspended by them pending an investigation due to her negligence and incompetence by that board as well as the Hogwarts Board of Governors despite any nattering by Dumbledore about Pomfrey deserving another chance or some such nonsense.

Having examined Pomfrey herself and deemed her to need someone more skilled at deciphering what might be the cause of her sudden and strange illness, Andromeda knew Pomfrey’s magical signature and keyed a locking charm to it on the boxes of Pomfrey’s personal possessions.

Then she decided to audit Pomfrey’s student medical files, to her horror there were not enough files to show that the drunken excuse of a medi-witch had examined the members of the four House Quidditch teams for decades.

Nor had Pomfrey arranged to have any yearly health screenings for the students…

Granted many of the old families had personal healers like Smythe for serious issues, many of her patients had made her their personal healer because she was a witch and was better suited to treat medical conditions that affected witches mostly because that was her primary certification.

While she was technically on leave from St. Mungos’ she had a few patients that were stubborn about seeing another healer so she still had to make time to see them.
She had only one today and she set her elf with an owl to inform them that she had to reschedule due to an unforeseen emergency but since it was Lady Mairsile Montague she was sure that her former fellow prefect would understand.

After all Lady Montague had witnessed Pomfrey’s incompetence yesterday…

She also sent a note to her division’s secretary to inform her patients that she was currently filling in as Hogwarts’ healer and if they wanted to be seen by her that they would be expected to present themselves at the appointed time in Hogwarts’ infirmary.

Appalled by Pomfrey’s mismanagement of the students’ care, Andromeda mentally drew up a complaint to file on top of the one she had already had delivered to the medi-witch and medi-wizards certification board.

Medi-witches and medi-wizards were the lowest paid, least respected and least skilled members of the healing community. They had enough skill to triage patients and keep them as stable as possible until a healer could examine them.

Andromeda would petition both the Board of Governors and Dumbledore to arrange for healer screens for all students especially the Muggleborns and members of the Quidditch teams.

For such an endeavour there should be at least one certified healer, a medi-witch and some apprentice healers; not a single under-skilled medi-witch to look after approximately two hundred and fifty students.

Not a single medi-witch whose only claim to the title of ‘Madam’ was due to her being the head of a registered female-entailed line. A real Matron was a certified healer who worked in the paediatric ward in St. Mungos’ or the small magical orphanage overseen by the Department of Magical Children. It had been expanded after the war because sometimes there were children who were at Hogwarts when they were orphaned and no family was found. And a Nurse was a Muggle term but from Andromeda’s experience being bonded to Ted that Pomfrey was closer to a Nurse’s Aide or a medical technician then a nurse.

In any case, whoever heard of a Quidditch player only having to be seen by a healer when they were injured and how did Pomfrey manage to miss Harry’s malnourishment?

Another thing to add to her complaint regarding Pomfrey’s pathetic excuse for treatment of the
students of Hogwarts to send to the medi-witch/medi-wizards accreditation board…

She should have questioned Persephone about her care here when she was a student, an oversight on her part.

Shoved in the back of a closet was a box stuffed with files containing mind healer reports having to deal with students traumatised by the Opening of the Chamber of Secrets and subsequent attacks, the World Cup Riot and the murder of Cedric Diggory. Clearly they had not been added to the students’ Hogwarts medical files even though many of them had been prescribed potions to treat nightmares, anxiety, depression and in some cases panic attacks.

Andromeda fumed, having a mind healer for a spouse and having lived through a war while treating the physical side of trauma during said war, she was irritated to see that there was such a clear lack of care for such issues on the part anyone in the healing profession.

For that matter, why didn’t Hogwarts have a staff mind healer?

Andromeda finished her inventory of Hogwarts’ infirmary and sat down to write two scathing report on its current mess and Pomfrey’s mismanagement one of which included a request for the Board of Governors to hire a permanent fully qualified healer as well as one or two competent medi-witches to over see the students’ care. As well as temporary staff to handle yearly health examinations…

Students whose personal healers had examined them over the summer would be exempt if a copy of their current health was sent to be added to Hogwarts’ file.

The first who should be examined would the House Quidditch teams starting of course with her own former House.

Once her reports were finished, Andromeda set about putting the files into some semblance of order and creating proper files for those who didn’t have them.

She added to Harry’s current file and filled in his current health status and her recommended treatment. Copying her son Dudley’s file was quite easy; then again she examined him before he was her son.

Updating Hermione and Ronald’s files by adding her reports over the summer was little trouble.
Then twenty minutes into third period she was interrupted by a Slytherin student whom she sensed had used a lot of Dark Arts, so many in fact that she was surprised that he was at Hogwarts. However she didn’t recognise him or any of his features at first…

Hovering at his side was Umbridge in a very unfamiliar ward-like bubble…

She was clearly unconscious…

Andromeda frowned, “What is this?”

The boy sneered, “She may have had no books but I challenged her pathetic excuse for curriculum. I told her if theory was all one needed to succeed in Defence against the Dark Arts exams then she should be able to prove it and defend herself. Her students are even more pathetically behind then she knows. I gave her fair warning and she clearly failed to prove her case, she’s lucky that she’s a professor here. We would have eaten her alive at Tartarus. If this is an example of how pathetic your education is here, no wonder you were cowed by a Dark Lord, I don’t care what that rag the Daily Prophet says: he’s back.”

Andromeda barely kept herself from gaping, what in Salazar’s Name was a wizard from Tartarus doing at Hogwarts? Much less the one she’d help treat back in June...

The boy smirked at her, “Well, aren’t you going to examine her? That is why you’re employed here.”

“I am the temporary healer, lucky for you I have two specialties.” Andromeda sniffed.

“What would those be pregnancy and childbirth?” the boy snickered.

“I am primarily a healer for witches and I have delivered many children but I was raised by a Dark Arts inclined family so I have a great interest and an knowledge of healing or at least treating the results of one being subjected to a variety of Dark Arts. I recently became the guardian and healer of an individual who survived being bitten by a basilisk.” Andromeda retorted coolly as she wandlessly and nonverbally began her exam.
She was surprised the bubble that imprisoned Umbridge was very accepting of her spells but she was annoyed to find that Umbridge had been subjected to a spell she had no knowledge of. She scowled at the young Slytherin, “Just what did you hit her with?”

Physically, there was nothing the matter with Umbridge. Mentally was another matter, her mind was clearly being influenced by two distinctly separate spells; one seemed to cause her mind to lose control of her body and the other was equally unfamiliar but it appeared to be a type of pain curse.

“Well?” the boy drawled.

Andromeda finally took a good look at him, he was relatively short for his age like Harry, heavily tattooed and his attire was very unusual. He wore entirely greys and blacks with the exception of a blood red belt decorated with finger bones. Only a healer would realise they weren’t fake. At his side was a strange cane-like object carved from a femur that seemed to function in part like a sheath but was also a conduit for darker spells.

As Dark as her family was only one was ever sent to Tartarus; her great great great grand uncle Sirius Black, who was the elder brother of the former Headmaster of Hogwarts Ophiuchus ‘Phineas’ Nigellus Black, who just happened to be her great great great grandfather so she knew of it of course…

If Bella had been born a boy, she might have been sent there. Salazar knew she certainly was talented enough with Dark Magic. Andromeda would have refused even if she had been born male, she knew herself well enough to know that she would never have left Narcissa like that.

She grumbled, “While I can determine the nature of these spells, I am not familiar with them.”

“What do you think they can do?” the boy sneered.

“Both affect the mind, of that much I am certain. The first is separating her mind from the control of her body and the other is a type of pain curse.” Andromeda retorted coolly.

The boy smirked at her, “I see you are somewhat skilled with dark magicks to learn that much from a simple and short exam.”

Andromeda snorted, “The diagnostic spells I used are not officially taught in healing colleges. I have
found more advanced spells elsewhere.”

The boy actually seemed amused, “I see. I’ve only met one healer with that much insight into dark magic. He was born with healing talent but he wasn’t suited to the school he was forced to. I on the other hand was far too suited to mine, and there-in lie the problem. Can you reverse my spells or do I have to do it myself?”

Andromeda sniffed, “While I have no affection in regards to this witch, it would take far too long to analyse your spells properly and remove them. While her suffering pleases me personally, as a healer I am bound to ease suffering not to allow it to continue. I would not cause trouble for you with the professors if you removed the spells.” She wanted to see his magic at work to prove or disprove her suspicions.

The boy snorted, “Oh very well.” Then he muttered in Latin before speaking out loud the Latin phrase meaning release. Immediately, Umbridge was dropped on the floor in an undignified sprawl.

The boy glared at the Ministry spy, “Pity, I would have preferred to exterminate rather then release.”

Andromeda blinked, “Exterminate?”

“Nemo is my name, that is one of my creations. Either I release them or tell it to exterminate so it collapses until it crushes the thing inside it to powder.” Nemo shrugged.

Andromeda chuckled, “How creative…how often have you used that spell?”

“Usually only when I discover persons being tortured and experimented on by dark wizards.” Nemo shrugged. “I use it to hold them until healers arrive to tell me if they are healable or not. That’s how I met Cris.”

Andromeda remembered a file tossed into the box of mind healer files that bore the name Cristina Satsuki Sasashima. “You mean Cristina?” Cris, that was Emelia’s transgendered nephew who was interested in healing. It was more appropriate to to consider them Ted’s patient rather than her own.

Nemo glared at her, “His name is Cristiano Sakuya but he’s called Cris.”
Andromeda nodded, “I see…” so she, or rather he was one of the rare witch or wizards that were born the wrong gender due to an accident of magic. Her family must be extremely old-fashioned…

“He’s been here a year already and this is my first year as a Hogwarts student. Your unimpressive Headmaster refused to have us tested and threw us into courses according to age and not knowledge. I could probably duel just about any student in this school and they’d likely only live because I took it easy on them.” Nemo sneered.

“If my suspicions that you are a former student at Tartarus are correct that is very plausible.”

“You’ve heard of my former school?” Nemo smirked.

Andromeda snorted, “A former Headmaster of Hogwarts’ elder brother attended there last century. That Headmaster was my Great-Great-Great grandfather.”

“Oh.” Nemo said dismissively.

“Perhaps he made some records? I know my family was extremely proud of him at the time, Sirius Lucius Black?”

“Oh him, you don’t think he’s dead do you?”

Andromeda frowned, “What do you mean?”

“If you don’t know I shan’t tell you. Now since I’ve removed my spells and you have this pathetic excuse for an instructor I’ll take my leave.” Nemo kicked the unconscious Umbridge.

As the boy strode out of the infirmary wing, Andromeda sent for Ted to examine the Ministry pawn to see if she was fit to return to the classroom.

That boy was quite interesting; in a strange way his iciness and spell creation reminded her of Severus Snape…
Chapter End Notes

Chapter Notes

Happy Birthday Fred and George! In your dubious honour Ron and Ginny receive a Howler...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 43- The Howler

September 8, 1995

Harry was still half asleep when they arrived in the Great Hall that morning…

It was their OWL year and the professors weren’t going easy on them.

Then again Umbridge was in St. Mungos due to a duel with a fourth year student if the rumours could be believed. They didn’t really have anything for that class; aside from the essay that they had gotten assigned themselves after Harry burn the textbooks.

They had all been up late even Aodhan, Fred and George who were NEWT students.

It was Harry and Aodhan’s second late night in a row, Aodhan and Harry had been late back to the Common Room after being introduced to Salazar’s portrait by his extremely long-lived familiar.

They were gulping down their caffeine of choice when the mail arrived.

No one really noticed the arrival of the dreaded red envelope until Molly Weasley’s loud shrieking voice filled the Great Hall.

“Ronald Bilius and Ginevra Mary Weasley how in Godric’s Name were you resorted into
**HUFFLEPUFF** of all Houses? Weasleys and Prewetts have been in Gryffindor forever! What is this about you losing your prefect’s badge your first night at Hogwarts? What did you do? I am beyond disappointed! No one in our family has ever been removed as a prefect! You can just forget about joining the Quidditch team Ronald. You have to work on your grades in order to get a job anywhere after this academic setback. How can you hope to get hired anywhere after losing your badge and being resorted into Hufflepuff? As for you Ginny, your marks are nothing to brag about so how can you expect to have a good job or a bonding after Hogwarts now that you’re in that House?"

The tirade did not continue because a jet of light came from Slytherin table and it prematurely exploded in a flash of sparks raining down papery ash.

Hufflepuff was the table nearest Slytherin and they were enraged.

However the most notable first reaction was from Slytherin not Hufflepuff…

One of the Fourth Years, only Aodhan knew vaguely by face as Nemo, had leapt over the House table away from the Howler and was holding his wand in an offensive potion.

“What the fuck was that shit!”

The Japanese-American exchange student snorted, “That was a Howler. I told you that they were loud. My exact words were; like using a sonorous to scream in your ear. I am so glad my susoubo would deem them beneath her dignity to use and Muggles can’t get them. I can just imagine my bearer loving them and sending them to me often.”

The Fourth Year returned to his seat muttering, “I thought you were exaggerating.”

Pansy sniffed, “You can’t really describe a Howler; it must be experienced to be understood. Once your hearing returns it’s always fun to tease the recipient. Mother Weasel is always good for a laugh. After such an anti-Hufflepuff Howler, it will be nearly impossible for those failures to make friends.”

Ron was embarrassed and indignant, which would not endear him to his dormmates.

Ginny’s bottom lip trembled but her housemates immediately shunned her as well …
Fred snorted, “I do wonder how that wandless bint managed to get a Howler. I was under the impression that they needed a wand to activate the recording charm and to end it.”

Montague spoke up from across the table, “There are wandless ones that are activated with a special password unique to the Howler but they are more expensive. I believe that they are primarily sold to squibs.”

Aodhan mused, “I am surprised to see Kudo and Sasashima at breakfast, I believe they usually ate in Sasashima’s apartment. They aren’t very social, considering that Nemo and Sasashima are from America they must have met before. Kudo and Sasashima got together because I didn’t want to be bothering by having a shadow last year. Worked out well, I’m pretty sure they are a couple since they supposedly attended the Yule Ball last year together and wouldn’t dance with anyone else.”

Harry leaned over to whispered, “What’s Nemo’s story.”

Aodhan shrugged, “I don’t know, my weird godfather told me that he’s in the year below you and from America. I believe he was raised in the Battle Wizard Academy there, as a ward of their equivalent of a Headmaster. My godfather tried to assign me to be his babysitter; I told him if Snape couldn’t get me to babysit Sasashima, why in Salazar’s Name would I do the same for this transfer? It worked out well, Nemo didn’t want a babysitter anymore then I was willing to do it. I wonder when the old goat will realize that I don’t follow like a good little sheep? I loathe him almost as much as I detest people in general.”

“What about Sasashima? I’ve never really noticed anyone in your Year aside from People like Katie or Cho but only because they ply Quidditch likely.” Harry muttered.

Aodhan smirked, “He hates witches and detests his Gryffindor cousins. I think he was grateful when the girl cousin graduated last year. I heard a rumour that Marcus Flint and Warrington along with McLaggen and his cousin Edward Stewart who are in my year tried to ‘teach’ him a lesson of some sort. They got their arses handed to them and were in serious trouble for using magic in the corridor with the intent to do harm. Yet they were the ones who came out the worst from conflict, Sasashima didn’t have a single scratch.”

A vaguely familiar Slytherin appeared between them, “Rae Lindsay at your service.”

Aodhan scowled, “Giselle!”
The blonde Sixth Year prefect turned confused, “Yes Aodhan?”

“You’re charge is bothering us.” Aodhan snapped.

“I’m not a girl you misogynistic twit, I’m a meta.” Lindsay snorted, “I happen to know more about Sasashima then anyone else here.”

Harry blinked, “Meta?”

Fred rolled his eyes, “Lindsay must mean a Metamorphamagus like Seph, I’ve hear its slang used among those blessed with that talent.”

“Oh.” Harry nodded, “What did you want Lindsay?”

“My mother was a professor at Sasashima’s last school so I’ve heard a lot about them. My family has long been associated with the instruction there, for generations since it’s founding I’m told. Our education there is quite different; we have three campuses altogether in the same locale. The associated primary school is a day campus where the students are flood in and out by their parents or guardians. The school itself has a similar age attendance but if the defence textbook is any indication you are extremely behind us. After you graduate the junior school, if you pass the graduation exam then you are accepted to the college. That’s why they are called the Salem Witches Institute and the Tahquamenon Institute of Magic because its connected education system.” Lindsay smirked. “We even have education tracks for those who know exactly what they want to do with their lives.”

“Which school did Sasashima attend?” Harry prodded.

“What school do you think they attended?” Lindsay winked at them in response.

“Probably Tahquamenon Institute of Magic,” Aodhan shrugged, “I can’t imagine him going to a place called Salem Witches Institute. That is a girls academy isn’t it?”

“Yes but we have social events like teas or dances with the Tahquamenon Institute of Magic, which is somewhere in Michigan and the Tartarus Battle Wizard Academy that lies off the coast of California. There is a co-ed school in some swamp in Louisiana that most of the South attends; I believe the lingua franca for that school is French. The Spanish speakers attend the school in Brazil,
Escola de Amazon da mágica, likely because only the Amazon is large enough to hide it.” Lindsay smirked.

“How informative, now go away. You’re irritating me witch.” Aodhan snarled.

Effortlessly, the ‘meta’ appearance flowed and shifted, then they were taller with a build a bit more like Bill Weasley tall and lanky rather then the dragon wrestling macho-ness of Charlie.

“I can be any gender I want or need-to-be to be taken seriously, I don’t believe in gender biases or limitations. My grandmother raises pythons and teaches Magical Creatures for the Goddess’ sake! I can shoot just as well as a man if not better because I’ve got eagle eyes.” Lindsay’s eyes sparked.

“Yet you’re in the Snake House.” Aodhan deadpanned.

Lindsay smirked, “What I can I say? My terror program at my last school to get transferred was ingenious. You see, they don’t believe in expulsion but transferring happens occasionally. With much of your family teaching; it’s usually about three generations, then you are held to a higher standard then most. It took Sasashima four years of so-called bad behaviour to get a request to transfer but I got out in a year. I had enough of the rules and expectations to I said I’m going elsewhere. One of my old professors used to teach here; it was back in the Seventies I think. There was a family emergency and they had to leave before the exams.”

“So the bad luck on the defence post was even active back then?” Aodhan said boredly, “Huh, no wonder we’ve only had two good teachers since I was here. My second year we had a coward, my third was the fraud, my fifth was the mad impostor and now we have a ministry plant who couldn’t teach her way out of a plastic bag.”

“Which is why Potter burnt our textbooks. I still can’t believe you got my copy from my warded bag and the spare from my trunk.”

Harry shrugged, “I wanted every book and I got them.”

“Intriguing…” then Lindsay vanished as quickly as they appeared.

“ Weird individual.” Aodhan muttered.
“That would explain the change in appearance day-by-day…” Harry mused.

“Probably. We better get going, class will begin in like thirty minutes…” George spoke up, giving them all a pointed reminder.

They hurried to eat before the food vanished or they had to run to class…

%MCEPASTEBIN%

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Summary

Umbridge returns to Hogwarts and hell breaks loose?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 44- The birth of Blackthorn

September 9, 1995

Defence had been cancelled for the last two days until Ted cleared Umbridge to return to teaching.

Severus in conjunction with the other three Heads of Hogwarts Houses had assigned essays based on level of instruction- borrowed from Remus’ lessons two years ago to make up the time.

It would be bad for the OWL and NEWT students to miss anything especially with their exams looming.

Umbridge was not happy when she appeared at breakfast Friday morning.

She had no sooner ascended the dais that she cleared her throat, “Ahem ahem.”

“Yes Dolores?” Albus asked appearing curious.

“I have been appointed High Inquisitor by the Minister for Magic. I am hereby suspending all clubs and I will be attending lessons to determine whether any professors are unfit to instruct our future.”

XooooooX
Aodhan grumbled in Parseltongue beside Harry and the twins, “You better put a stop to this Uncle Albus!”

“Yess prove that you really are all-powerful headmaster…” Harry snorted.

Head Boy Adrian Pucey frowned rising, “Excuse me Professor?”

“Yes Mr. Pucey?” Umbridge asked in her irritating sickeningly sweet voice.

“You’re suspending all clubs? Why?”

“Are you asking as a student or as Head Boy?” Umbridge asked in her husky voice.

Adrian stiffened as if struck, “Head Boy.”

“Frivolous activities ought to be curtailed so that a student’s time can be more appropriately spent studying.” The pink-painted toad queen beamed at him.

“Studying is important,” Adrian mused, “however studying too much can be hazardous to one’s health. It can cause one to over-stress, clubs are important for socialising and de-stressing. Wizarding chess club and the duelling club are important because they hone essential skills that can come in handy with planning Quidditch strategies or even personal defence if one is going into Auror, Hit Wizard or Magnus training.”

“Are you claiming to know more then the Minister young man?” Umbridge purred, her eyes glinting dangerously.

Adrian shook his head, “Of course not but I do know my students because I’ve watched my yearmates and younger students over the years professor, I know what they need to succeed. Sure we’d like some better teachers in some subjects but over all professor we’re doing quite well especially now that Professor Weasley has taken over Magical Creatures.”

“That remains to be see young man.” Umbridge smiled icily at him. “I will be attending classes as an observer some will be pre-announced and others will be surprises to keep you on your toes. That will
be all but please remember as long as the Quidditch teams are suspended there will be no, I repeat no one allowed to practice on the Quidditch pitch. Anyone caught on the pitch or with a broom regardless of their former membership on the Quidditch team will be responsible for deducting points and subjected to detentions.”

Harry was not surprised when Angelina, Rodger Davies of Ravenclaw and a vaguely familiar Hufflepuff Beater Rickett strode over to Adrian.

Harry called out, “Angelina maybe the kitchens would be a good place to talk?”

His former teammate nodded, “Thank you Harry.”

“First classes this morning will be cancelled for an emergency staff meeting. Please read the next chapter in your textbooks and work on your homework.” McGonagall announced.

“Minerva,” Dumbledore said through clenched teeth.

“This must be discussed immediately and without the students Albus.” Minerva snapped.

Since they were exempt from classes and had read ahead already; Harry sent Fred and George to fetch their Gryffindor friends and Hermione.

Aodhan and Harry led the way up the Astronomy Tower.

“Hermione how far have you gotten with that report to the Board of Governors?”

“Nearly finished, just waiting for the right moment to spring it on Angelina and Pucey.” Hermione said smugly.

“Good! If she’s suspended the clubs and the Quidditch teams we’re going to have to move faster.” Harry observed darkly.

“Should we send those we know are interested to meet on the Seventh Floor Harry?” George asked warily.
Harry shook his head, “A little more time to see if she’ll let us have the Quidditch Team back.”

“I disagree.” Aodhan snorted, “It’s the perfect time. They’ll be in the staff room or the Headmaster’s Tower for a while. We should take advantage of the adult-free moment to discuss the idea more thorough. Knowing Hermione, she’s thought of ways to keep our possible trainee members from turning nark.”

“A standard seeming non-disclosure agreement.” Hermione smirked, “It has a tongue-tying curse, an Occlumency resisting spell and a nifty little creation of my own that you inadvertently agree to by signing. Also Fred and I came up with something…”

Fred winked, “We transfigured pebbles into fake galleons that we can use to summon our students for lessons. Hermione cast the Protean Charm on them.”

That got both Dean and Aodhan’s reactions.

Dean merely fish-mouthed at him while Aodhan blinked.

“The Protean Charm?” Aodhan asked. “That is a very high level spell…N.E.W.T. Level…”

Hermione blushed, “I thought we could colour-code them after we sort them by skill level. So we can call certain level students in after different times. If we tied them to a single master coin or even several like the lead instructor for each level might have one, then we could do it that way.”

“You really did think this out…” Harry mused.

“So Harry, Aodhan a point.” Fred smirked. “Now really would be the perfect time to invite the first trainees. Shall we? Hermione and I considered all the angles and we’ve protected our skins the best we can magically. So shall we?”

Harry pouted, “Of fine. If you all insist then I suppose we have no choice.”
Fred snickered, “Of course you have a choice my dear heir to the snake throne. It is the perfect time but if you want to wait…”

Harry growled, “You made your point and I agree so go!”

Hermione pulled out her list and copied the names of the interested Hufflepuffs, “If Neville can fetch these persons…I’ll find Micheal and between the two of us we can bring the Ravenclaws and his siblings to the Seventh floor. Dean and Seamus can get the Gryffindors in our year. I’m sure that Susan and Fay would be interested. Not sure about Lavender, Pavarti or Alice…”

“We’ll give them a chance anyway…” Dean shrugged.

Dudley frowned, “Should I get my third year friends and Greg?”

“Goyle? Why would he come?” Aodhan groused.

Hermione snorted, “Likely the same reason that Pansy would…”

“I’ll fetch the Quidditch captains from the kitchens.” Fred offered.

“I’ll get Lee and Alicia…” George shrugged.

“I’ll fetch Nott…” Aodhan said darkly. “I have a feeling he’d be interested.”

Dean’s eyes grew hard, “Academically I’m sure he would be but he’s not much a joiner.”

Aodhan rolled his eyes, “Neither am I but I’m here aren’t I?”

“What about me?” Harry sniffed.

“You?” Aodhan snorted, “You’ll go arrange for the Castle to give us a room to safely meet in.”
“Oh joy…” Harry said darkly.

Then they all split up on student retrieval missions with the exception of Harry…

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Notes

So here is the rest of the chapter...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Hermione was the first to slip away to fetch her fellow Ravenclaws.

The best place to find them during a free period was undoubtedly the library…

However she was surprised when Pansy popped out of an alcove after she exited the Astronomy Tower.

Pansy joined her and Hermione felt the familiar wash of Pansy’s privacy charm.

“What did the King and Harry have to say?” Pansy asked in a subdued voice.

Hermione raised an eyebrow, “What makes you think they had anything to say?”

Pansy snorted, “I’m not a fool that’s why. Montague was cursing in Wiltshire dialect at Umbridge while Urquhart and Potter were speaking in Parseltongue after the toad queen’s announcement. So what’s the plan? Come on Hermione we’re friends and I want to know!”

“We’re going to start a secret group to teach defence and offence magic to the students since Umbridge is so useless.”

“Urquhart’s in on it?” Pansy frowned.

Hermione nodded.
“Then it shan’t come to too much grief. Off to fetch the Ravenclaws I take it?”

“Pansy you are far too perceptive.” Hermione laughed.

“Pansy the panther at your service.” Pansy said stepping into and out of a mocking curtsey without losing her stride. “I’ll accompany you. I’d like to come as myself but I think I’ll stick to the shadows and I’ll send Laurel instead, being a friend of Gaheris Pucey and a Ravenclaw he’d want to come.”

The two prefects made their way to the library still trading quips.

Fred was grateful for the memorized Marauder’s Map for getting him to the kitchens so quickly.

He swaggered in.

Angelina looked up at once and simpered.

Fred held his ire in check, “We’re having a bit of a meeting on the Seventh Floor. Aodhan thought maybe given how you trounced the toad queen that you’d be interested. I know you’re not one for cheating Pucey, but how do you feel about skirting the rules?”

“It depends on the rules?” Pucey frowned.

“Hypothetically speaking if it were an illegal organization meant to teach proper defensive and offensive magic?” Fred asked rakishly.

Pucey was quiet a moment before speaking, “Between teachers like Magus Prince, Lupin and the fake Moody we’ve done alright. Then again, father is a member of the Magnus Brutus and my grandfather is the Magnus. My godfather, Brecc’s father is a Hit Wizard so we’re quite well versed in it.”

“Yes but your brother’s only had two good professors…” Montague frowned. “He’s going to need
all the help he can get if he’s going to do as well on his O.W.L. as we did…”

“I’ll have to have a look at your hypothetical organization before I decide…” Pucey said warily.

“I’ll come and take a look if I might…” Rickett said with a thoughtful look.

“If you’re part of it I have to come…” Angelina said with a purr.

Fred wanted to slap her but he wasn’t one who believed in hitting a woman. Angie was starting to grate on his nerves like his own mother. “I told you Angie, I’m a one-woman man. No one could top our Hermione…”

“Except with blood…” the wench said with a toss of her braided hair.

Fred glared, “Keep talking like that and you won’t even have my friendship. I’m quite happy with Hermione and I don’t approve of this selfish behaviour of yours. I see now that I shouldn’t have invited you to the Ball last year. Alicia would have understood if I told her it was just as friends. Besides, how could I have feelings for you when I know my best friend is in love with you?”

Angelina reacted as if he’d struck her.

“Well we’d better come and see this group of yours…” Pucey said trying to put them at ease.

Fred gave a sharp nod, “Come along then.”

XooooooX

George knew where to find Lee Jordan…

The teen usually spent free periods sulking in an alcove just off a back staircase on the fifth floor…
As usual, Alicia was with him…

Unlike Angelina, Alicia was perceptive enough to know that George was bent so she didn’t bother having a crush on him. In fact, the Gryffindor Chaser thought it great fun to exchange opinions on boys.

She thought it was just marvellous when George was seeing Cedric Diggory until she learned he was cheating scum.

Alicia wasn’t as outgoing as Angie; if Fred hadn’t taken Angelina to the Ball then Lee would never have taken Alicia. If Lee had a not-so-secret yen for Angie, then Alicia had one for Lee. Not that Alicia would pursue Lee, Lee was both of their friend and well, only a fool wouldn’t know that Lee liked Angelina who liked Fred.

Talk about a cruel and vicious love circle…well pentacle now that Fred was with Hermione.

George found them just about where he expected, with Alicia looking grave but sad and Lee complaining.

“You going whinge all day Lee? Come on, we’ve got somewhere to be.” George drawled.

“Will Angel be there?” Lee begged.

George sighed, “Fred went to bring her.”

“Fred really is serious about Granger isn’t he?”

“Serious enough to bring her into the business.” George admitted with a shrug.

Lee gave him a weary smile, “Then maybe I have a chance?”

George resisted the desire to shake him, “Your chances are no different then ever because Fred never wanted Angie…”
Lee followed like the irritating puppy he could be and George was exasperated on Alicia’s behalf…

XooooooX

Harry had made his way up to the seventh floor and was mid pacing to acquire the room they needed when Colin Creevey showed up with a strange blonde witch.

“Make sure to ask to have the room shielded against Nargles and Humdingers.” The witch said airily.

Harry raised a questioning eyebrow at Colin who just shrugged at him.

Harry resumed his pacing until a door appeared in the wall and he held it open for Colin and the witch to enter.

The door would appear for those who had indicated an interest or were invited by someone who had so Harry followed them inside.

It was full of comfortable seating in neutral colours with a raised dueling platform in the from of the room.

The first to arrive aside from Colin and his witch were George, Lee Jordan and Alicia Spinnet.

The rest trickled in.

He was surprised to see a Ravenclaw who looked an awful lot like the pictures of Sirius at his parents wedding led in by that strange Meta named Lindsey as well as Sasashima, his Japanese shadow and Nemo.

Hermione was accompanied by a handful of Ravenclaws and younger Gryffindor witches.
Once all of his messengers were present and Fred had firmly shut the door, Harry nodded.

Hermione stepped onto the duelling platform and whistled shrilly getting everyone’s attention.

“I’m sure I’m not the only one who realises that we’re not going to be learning real Defence. Now I don’t care if you believe Harry or not about You-Know-Who but with Defence OWL and NEWT exams looming earlier for some rather then others, I’m sure you’d like to actually be able to pass.”

There was a murmur of agreement from everyone present.

“While we likely won’t agree about You-Know-Who we will agree that some of our previous professors were useless like Quirrell and Lockhart. I know that Lupin and fake Moody did help a bit but we’re all sorely behind. In the words of a former Auror ‘if you want to know about Dark Creatures go read a book’. We know that all legitimate clubs have been disbanded so we’re going to be at loose ends after homework is finished. We’ve decided to offer ourselves in getting you all up to par if you want. With the likes of Umbridge around for your own peace of mind those who are interested will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement in exchange for training.”

“Who died and made you in charge Granger?” Rodger Davies snorted.

“The Founders…” the airy blonde from before preened, “The castle has consented to her idea by giving us this wonderful room. If you don’t believe me I’m sure that the King of Slytherin will agree with me. As the Daughter of Rowena I believe that this is a good idea.”

“Why should we listen to you Lovegood? Everyone knows you’re half-mad Loony just like your father.”

“Pipe down Davies.” Pucey snapped. “Continue Miss Granger.”

Hermione sniffed, “As I was saying this is entirely voluntary, by attending this meeting you are not required to sign. However if you want to pass your OWL and NEWT Defence exam you should consider it…”

“How is this going to work?” Micheal Corner drawled.
“Well to begin with we’re going to have to test your defence skills based on where you are and where you should be. We’ll divide you into levels, if You-Know-Who is back we’ll need to have our skills sharp.” Hermione shrugged.

“How will you teach us?” Nott asked gruffly.

Aodhan stepped onto the stage, “The plan is that after you’re tested Hermione will pass out fake Galleons created between her and Fred Weasley. They will be connected to a master coin by the Protean charm and we’ll arrange lessons around your class schedules. I believe that Dudley will suit to teach the younger students since the first two years are firmly in his head. He will also join in as a student with those at his level in regards to Defence. Whoever is the more skilled at Defence at the NEWT Level will be instructing those students.”

“If you’re planning on teaching them to protect themselves, maybe you should consider better defence and detections spells.” A vaguely familiar voice drawled as they appeared out of thin air.

It was Nemo…

“Detection spells would definitely be a wise choice. Were I less benevolent you would all be dead.”

Harry snorted, “I did ask Hogwarts to only allow those interested in learning about the group in and those who wouldn’t be interested in running to the Toad Queen to tell her about us.”

“A lot of good that would do.” Nemo snorted, “Did you know that Metamorphmagi can walk right through your pathetic wards? One did, that’s how we learned about your little illegal club. I only came out of curiosity and boredom…”

“You attended the battle wizard academy…” George mused.

Nemo rolled his eyes, “Bravo for knowing that. What of it?”

“Then you are probably the best person to teach those really at NEWT Level…”

Rae Lindsay the Meta snorted after she appeared out of a wall, “Considering how behind you seem
to be that’s more then likely. I think that Sasashima, Morgan and I would be the best to teach your OWL students.”

“Oy Lindsay don’t go volunteering me. If I’m going to be a part of this I’m probably the best person to be the target. Amaterasu knows that my shield jutsu is nearly impenetrable by their magic.” Sasashima snapped. “Of course I might have clean up the mess and heal those who are injured.”

Harry was thoughtful, “You’re a healer?”

Sasashima snorted, “Raised by one, I spend the holidays training with my great-grandmother and I’m supposed to apprentice to Healer Andromeda Tonks after Hogwarts.”

Dudley blurted out, “That’s my mother…”

Sasashima scowled, “She never mentioned a son just some irritating Hufflepuff daughter who decided to be an Auror of all things…”

Dudley grumbled, “You mean Seph…she’s a pistol that one…dunno what’s going through that purple head of hers…”

“Maybe nothing…” Sasashima shrugged.

“Is anyone interested?” Hermione asked.

There were a lot of shouts of yes and very few if any nos…

So Hermione pulled out a quill and called everyone forward to sign her seemingly normal non-disclosure agreement…

Not many bothered to actually read it…

Nemo scowled at the contract as did Sasashima, a Sixth Year Ravenclaw Hermione thought was Morgan and Rae Lindsay but even they signed it…
The meeting hall changed to include five cavernous rooms…

“Those in First and Second are to enter the blue room with Dudley to get quizzed on spells. Anyone Third and Fourth are to be tested by Dean Thomas. If you are a Fifth Year, then Lindsay who volunteered will test your spell knowledge and NEWT students can be tested by Nemo if he thinks it won’t be too boring for him.” Aodhan drawled. “it is possible that those who are keen at Defence may test into a higher group just as it is possible test into a lower group with the pathetic instructors we’ve had. No one is allowed to tease or bully anyone for what group they are in or you will be dropped from the ranks of Blackthorn.”

“Blackthorn?” Morgan frowned.

Harry smirked, “I am the Black heir and I plan to be a thorn in the Ministry’s side as long as they are meddling in Hogwarts which is illegal by the way. Anyone who wants to learn real defence shouldn’t have a problem with it. As long as Dumbledore refuses to stand up for us as he should being Headmaster, then I’m going to be a thorn for him as well.”

Harry did not mention exactly why he really disliked Dumbledore but that wasn’t really important right now…

After everyone had signed the non-disclosure agreement, then the testing began in earnest.

Other members of Harry’s trusted circle assisted the four examiners but they would all have to discuss who would be placed in what group…

They would have to colour code Hermione’s charmed coins and link them to a master coin to be held by each instructor…

Knowing the spells that Nemo used on Umbridge made them a bit wary of what sort of teaching he might offer the NEWT students…
Despite not being all previously acquainted, the American Transfer students separated themselves from the presumed Blackthorn leadership to discuss the proper placement.

Meanwhile Harry announced that the prospective members who were handed those charmed fake Galleons by Hermione and Fred minus the handful that Hermione repocketed which were presumably master coins could leave.

Michael frowned, “How will we know what our results will be?”

Hermione pulled out one of her master coins and tapped it with her wand, “The coin will warm to warn you of the impending message. The numbers that usually are the serial number of the coin casted by its created will rearrange to show the time and date. The location will always be here. In our next meeting I will sync your coins with both your instructors as well as Harry’s coin so both can summon you to a lesson. If you are still interested please see to it that Dean, myself or Fred receive a copy of your schedules so we can arrange meeting times.”

With that the assembled students left in similar groups to the ones they had arrived in.

No sooner had they left than the proctors emerged.

Sasashima held out a roll of parchment, “Our determination. You’re on average far behind however some of you; Pucey, Montague, the Weasley twins, Granger, Dearborn and Nott are far more advanced than we expected. Even Potter surprised us. Black-Tonks’ skills are rather haphazard after what we consider First Year level.”

Hermione perused the list and was overwhelmed at the thoroughness of their exams, even Dudley had given fair appraisal in the examinee’s strength and weaknesses.

Hermione swallowed, “This is far more detailed than I expected...”

“I do hope that is a compliment Granger.” Nemo muttered darkly.
Hermione flinched, “Of course…”

“We pushed those who showed knowledge such as yourself harder to see what your limits and familiarity with the harder spells were. Your expectations of five possible classes were alright, I would have chosen six but its your little defence club.” Nemo shrugged, his eyes flickered with a strange emotion. “I might agree to teach the NEWT students as long as you all promised not to complain about my methods or spell choices. After all, those Death Eaters I know for a fact don’t fight fair. They use brutal spells and fight to kill. If you got into battle with any other goal other than their death, they’ll be the one standing over your corpse.”

This time it was Pucey who flinched.

Montague scowled, “Sadly, he has a point and we know it. We both know that your grandfather Aurelius, Uncle Tiberius and my father don’t only use light and neutral magic while duelling.”

Adrian sighed, “I know, I just don’t relish the idea of wielding Dark Curses and the like as one’s only option.”

Aodhan shrugged, “Sometimes to catch a Dark Wizard one has to use Dark Spells, I’m sure my father did and he was greatly respected.”

Harry shrugged, “Anyone who throws around the Cruciatius, the Imperious or the Killing Curse easily certainly don’t deserve to be treated decently in a duel. It was only luck that my old wand let me escape from Voldemort while only casting the Disarming Charm.”

Nemo snorted, “You cast a Disarming charm against the likes of a Dark Lord and lived? Either you’re foolish or crazy…”

“A lucky fool, I won’t be relying on luck in our next encounter.” Harry said darkly, “I still owe that snake-faced bastard a few painful crucios for murdering my parents.”

Hermione flinched slightly at his murderous tone but no one else seemed to care really especially the Slytherins.

“Well if you don’t need us,” Sasashima began.
Fred slipped his hand into Hermione’s pocket and pulled out the master coins handing one to each prospective student instructor as well as a regular coin to Dudley. “We’ll show you how to work them if you haven’t figured it out by our next meeting.”

The strange Slytherins Nemo, Sasashima, Kudo and Lindsey the Meta as well as that Ravenclaw Morgan stalked out of the Room of Requirement leaving Harry, Dean, Neville, Seamus, Dudley, Fred, George and Aodhan behind.

“Well that worked out to not be a waste of time.” Harry drawled.

Dudley snorted, “Not bad for a start. I’m looking forward to this.”

Hermione nodded, “Me too. Do you need those lesson plans Dudley?”

Dudley shrugged, “Sure, might not used them but they’d be a starting point. I’ll see if Greg will help me plot out something. He might not be able to read but the boy sure knows a lot. Probably because his sister’s best friend practically owns a Dark bookstore.”

Harry snickered, “Oh you mean Millie Bulstrode, she or rather her family owns Alexandria’s Inferno. Great place, I can’t wait to visit it again…”

With this beginning, a tempus charm showed that it was nearly time for second period to begin which meant that they had to hurry so they wouldn’t be late…
Upon Hermione's next prefect round with Pansy; first, she described the testing and then Chamber of Secrets.

The Slytherin witch was quite intrigued by her tales and was then surprised when Hermione turned to question her as to the Slytherin Transfers.

"Lindsay is in class with us of course, being in our year; however, they don't room with either us witches or the wizards. Like Sasashima, Lindsay has their own apartment. Apparently they both transferred from the same school, I believe they have some sort of history but it has not been revealed as of yet. Lindsay changes gender and hair style at a whim. When they are in a temper it seems their eyes flash orange and their ombre hair gains orange streaks. Their best marks as potions and transfiguration, Draco despises having yet another rival in that class."

"Oh?" Hermione said absently.

"Not you of course, you apparently brew by route and possess no feeling or sense of art. It's Theo he despises for coming near to him in skill." Pansy shrugged.

Hermione shrugged, "Potions is a class I do well enough in but it doesn't interest me. I am unsure whether continuing it next year is wise..."

"NEWTs in Potions, History, Ancient Runes and Arithmancy are the most difficult and respected in world outside Hogwarts." Pansy shrugged.

Hermione nodded, "In that case, I think I will consider continuing."

“Thought you might.” Pansy snickered.
“What about the other transfer, the one from Tartarus? He hangs out with Sasashima, I think.”

“A Fourth year, but terribly advanced and thus, he merely attends class. He takes no notes, is apparently rivalling Lovegood for Marks. I have heard that he spends more time drawing than paying attention but his papers are always top marks, a bit dark for the professors but along with his lack of needing actual practical lessons in any topic. He could teach any course here I believe being so advanced.”

“No wonder he was recommended to teach the N.E.W.T. students.” Hermione mused.

“Indeed.” Pansy nodded.

Then the two witches and unlikely friends fell silent.

XooooooX

Messages passed summoning only the students who signed the Blackthorn secrecy contact to the Room of Requirement.

Once they were all together, Hermione and Fred synced up each student coin to that of their prospective teacher.

The instructors all informed them when their class was to be and then with the exception of Nemo, they were dismissed.

“If you are to be instructors, I do hope you are going to be studying as well. I won’t waste my time on teaching lazy students and the only person allowed to tell me my teaching methods are out of line is Sasashima.” Nemo grumbled. “If you’re here, I’m going to act as if you intend to have a lesson.”

“The others already headed for their common rooms…” Hermione frowned. “Filch and Umbridge are always poking about…”
“Well then, we can follow later.” Nemo barked. “Since we won’t be seen out of them by staff it won’t matter. You lot have time turners anyway.”

The Blackthorn leadership submitted to Nemo’s leadership.

Lindsay and Morgan dragged off the Fifth Years, leaving the sixth and seven years to Cris and Nemo.

Things were heating up…

"Shields up kiddies! I will only tell you once. Defend yourselves." Nemo barked.

Lindsay yawned, "Okay, your shields for one are weak. Shields like the Patronus charm and transfiguration require concentration and intent. Magical power is secondary, concentration is key. Granted shields aren’t perfect and can break; but the stronger the intent, the stronger the shield. We’d fail defense if we had shields this weak at Salem."

Hermione pouted, "I've never heard that..."

"It makes sense..." Dean mused.

Harry agreed but he wasn't too keen on theory, he was more interested in practical defense.

"If your shields are so strong, Granger; let me test you."

Hermione nodded. "Sure."

Harry boredly watched as Hermione cast a regular shield charm and Lindsay proceeded to hammer her shield with spells he didn’t even recognise at first sight!

XooooooX
Meanwhile, under Nemo’s verbal whip…

Fred, George and Aodhan were being trained to keep their shields up while Nemo hammered at them.

When it shattered, they were hit with non-lethal cutting jinxes as ‘incentive’ to concentrate.

Unlike the barely audible lesson Hermione was getting, Nemo was determined to teach them by magically beating them with the spell equivalent of a Beater’s bat or was it the Bludger? Fred wasn’t really sure, but he didn’t intend to ask.

George’s shield always faltered first; it wasn’t until he realised that Urquhart was McGonagall’s son and Fred was one of her best students.

Intent and concentration were key in Transfiguration; of course, those two would excel at that! Once George realised why his shields were weaker, he was able to put that knowledge together with his spellwork and his shield started to last a lot longer.

“Break!” Nemo barked. “Someone’s learned something. Pucey, Johnson, Montague; you’re next. I have ears everywhere. Talk about your ‘lesson’ with anyone outside your training trio and next time I won’t be so nice.”

George shoved Fred and Aodhan to a corner, “Might be smart to ask the ‘Room’ to allow a parseltongue cast silencing ward to keep our conversation from being overhead and getting us in trouble.”

Urquhart rolled his eyes but did as ‘asked’.

Once a privacy ward shimmered around them, Fred scowled.

“Clearly, you’re the one who learned something. What did you figure out?”

“You two had something in common. Something I didn’t.” George snorted.
Fred and Aodhan glanced at one another and then back to George with a shrug.

George rolled his eyes, “Do I have to spell it out for you?”

“Clearly.” Aodhan hissed.

“It took us a while to figure out that you were the McGonagall kid in Mione’s family tree through her distant King relatives. You take after her and are naturally skilled at Transfiguration, which is one of Fred’s best subjects. Your shields last longer because you are already skilled at concentration and intent.” George snorted.

Aodhan flinched when his mother was brought up, but seemed to mull over George’s explanation. “I would far prefer that my strong shield charm came through my Magnus Brutus father.”

“That maybe part of it,” George shrugged, “but when I tried using both concentration and intent when I cast my shield after it shattered, it lasted longer. That was just my first attempt and Transfiguration isn’t even my best subject. I did get an Outstanding, but I don’t have Fred’s gift for it…”

“Interesting, I never figured that my gift for Transfiguration would have anything to do with shields.” Fred mused.

“Well, it did.”

The one-way parseltongue cast privacy ward let through the sound of a clearing throat, “Ano…”

At least, it was less grating than the bitch’s ‘ahem ahem’…

Aodhan hissed to release the privacy ward, “What Sasashima?”

“You want to bleed all night or will you allow me to clean up after Ku-san?” Sasashima snapped.
“Fine!” Aodhan grumbled.

Fred and George were more polite with the Sixth Year Japanese-American transfer student but slightly curious when they used their hands in strange shapes while ‘casting’ healing magic.

“Wow, what sort of magic is that?” George asked excitedly.

“Jutsu, we use hand signs like you use runes.” Sasashima said absently as they finished healing Aodhan.

“Can I use it?” George blurted out.

“Doubt it. We use wands as anchors rather than conductors in Asian Magic. Think of it like learning to fly standing on your head; dangerous and ill-advised.” Sasashima snorted as they turned to treat the gashes that Nemo’s slicing jinx caused.

“Is that how Tartarus students learn to strength their shields?” Fred frowned.

Sasashima shrugged, “I don’t know. I’ve never been to Tartarus and Ku-san is the only student from that school that I might claim to know. We were more penpals then friends last year. I kept him entertained with tales about the tournament. Now hold still. I’ll have to treat the next lot soon. Well, it depends on if they learn whatever it is George did.”

George blinked, “How did you know it was me?”

Sasashima rolled their eyes, “Simple, your aura is different. I am a Slytherin and we sit at the same table. I’ve noticed both your different aura and who responds to which name. Besides, you’re the only one Potter flirts with and your magic left subtle impressions on one another. Not the same as bonded pairs though… did you realise that your auras vibrate in sync when you do your twin thing and talk to one another?”

“Is it possible that twinspeak is a sort of natural Legilimency?” George asked excitedly.

“Don’t know…”
“Next!” Nemo barked.

“As expected, Montague and Pucey figured out what you two did. Better go patch them up. Nemo wasn’t kidding. Breathe a word of your realization with anyone, anywhere and you’ll be in a world of pain next time he has a chance to put you under his wand. Duelled a Death Eater and won. Don’t let the age fool you even for a second.” They left them with that disquieting thought as he headed over to offer Pucey, Montague and Angelina healing.

XooooooX

“Clearly, Granger isn’t as inept as some of you.” Lindsay drawled. “Now that she’s proved her ‘worth’, she gets to hammer shields with Jason and I.”

Quite a few of the OWL students groaned.

They were then called up in groups of three and ordered to cast shield charms.

Hermione must have been challenging her ‘inner Andromeda’ because she was epically terrifying in her intensity with her casting and her spell choice. While not casting truly Dark spells, they most certainly weren’t light only.

When a shield shattered, Hermione countered her own spell and cast what appeared to be a stinging hex before allowing her ‘victim’ to recast their shield.

Whatever spells Morgan and Lindsay chose as their ‘you’re dead’ jinx, Harry didn’t recognise but it seemed about as uncomfortable as Hermione’s hex…

XooooooX

The OWL and NEWT students were drilled in groups of three by their student teachers, the only difference being how many the instructors cast at in a given set and whether or not their pupils needed patching up.
Needless to say, they were quite drained by the time they finished.

Unfortunately, Aodhan and Harry were forced to swallow pepper-up potions before using the former’s timeturner and heading to their respective detentions.

Harry wondered if his indirect lesson on concentration and intent would have any effect on his Occlumency lesson…
The duel

Chapter Summary

Millie, heir to the Dark Bookshop Alexandria's Inferno challenges Nemo, formerly of Tartarus Battle Wizard Academy and the current tutor of Blackthorn's NEWT students. Harry learns a bit more as to what sort of person Nemo is...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter 47- The duel

September 10, 1995

Harry had heard a rumour that Millie Bulstrode was going to call out Nemo.

From what little Harry knew of Nemo, he was almost certain this a mistake on Bulstrode’s part.

Dudley had disappeared with Fred, George, Vince and Greg partway through dinner.

If the stories that Fred and George told them about how intense and vicious Nemo was during testing and lessons, Harry worried a bit.

Duels weren’t common in Gryffindor, in fact the only ‘duel’ Harry knew of was the one that didn’t happen between him and Malfoy First Year.

Curious Harry and Aodhan decided to stake out the Common Room.

Unlike themselves, Nemo like Sasashima and apparently Lindsay as well didn’t reside in Slytherin proper but rather in apartments within the dungeons.

The duel was expected to begin around eight although it had not been officially announced.
Harry did wonder if he ought to tell Snape but decided to see just how much Snape knew about Slytherin but choosing to keep his mouth shut.

Aodhan must have guessed his thoughts, he hissed, “Snape always knows when there is a duel. Pucey usually keeps things within the rules.”

Harry nodded, thankful for the information.

At five to eight, Nemo walked into the common room with Sasashima and Kudo.

Actually, Nemo swaggered.

Millie Bulstrode was waiting with her arms crossed over her small chest and her right foot tapping impatiently.

Nemo drawled, “Challenging me to a duel and not sending me an invitation? How tawdry…”

Millie’s eyes flashed and she gripped her wand tighter so her knuckles whitened.

Aodhan drawled, “Slytherin House Rules. No death. Countered Dark Arts only. Officially declared seconds may cast one spell on their partner and have the option to resign the duel if they are in mortal danger.”

“Agreed.”

“Whatever.”

“Seconds?”

“Fifth Year Prefect Giselle Goyle, someone has to keep her in line and from getting in over her head.” Giselle said glowering at Millie.
“And you Nemo?” Aodhan asked, he was clearly annoyed about his having to proctor the duel due to his status as King of Slytherin.

“Me.” Sasashima grumbled. “I’m the one who patches him up after ill-advised duels.”

“Alright, you two shake hands. NEWT students cast your strongest shields. No causing injury to other students.”

“He should cast the one that foiled Warrington last year.” someone pipped up.

“It’s not that type of shield.” Sasashima snorted, “It’s a personal shield not a ward.”

“Oh in that case, everyone just hide behind Sasashima.” Urquhart grumbled.

Harry was pretty sure that Aodhan wasn’t serious.

“I am not a ward.” Sasashima growled.

Sasashima ignored the majority of Slytherin as he watched Nemo begrudging shake Bulstrode’s hand.

The black leather sofas vanished along with the fine furnishings that normally decorated the common room with a lazy wave of Aodhan’s hand.

All that was left were some tapestries and plain stone floors.

The two combatants paced off seven steps given the tight confines of the common room with Giselle and Sasashima taking positions off to their rights.

“Begin.” Urquhart drawled.

Attack spells were cast first before any shields on Bulstrode or Nemo’s part.
In fact, Nemo didn’t actually cast a shield.

Sasashima cursed in what was probably Japanese when he realized that.

A bone breaking hex was Bulstrode’s first spell, Aodhan recognized it from a book in the Craig’s library and Nemo conjured a stone that shattered even as it absorbed it.

Nemo threw cutting hexes and slicing jinxes but Bulstrode also conjured non-living objects, wood to be exact to deflect and absorb the spells’ effects.

Furniture was summoned and directed at one another but each used banishing spells to be rid of the object aimed at them.

Nemo cast a conjuring spell that sent spikes flying at Bulstrode just as Andromeda and Severus slipped into the common room.

Nemo was hit with a drowning hex while Bulstrode was transfigured into a pill bug almost simultaneously.

The seconds used their one intervention to undo the spells rather than have the duel called as a drawl.

Nemo retaliated with the Flesh to ash hex only he aimed so it hit Bulstrode’s robe instead.

Making Bulstrode realize that Nemo was toying with her and her fury had her casting wild slicing jinxes that managed to catch Nemo on cheek.

Sasashima hissed.

Nemo stopped dueling to reach up to touch the blood and looked at it.

Bulstrode paused, probably thinking Nemo would surrender because she drew first blood but Harry
Sasashima cursed as Nemo reached up to wipe the blood from his cheek with a dangerous look and aura filling the room.

Nemo looked at the blood, smirking wickedly as he drew his wand finally and then attacked brutally.

Spells slamming Bulstrode’s current shield until it shattered magnificently.

Then Nemo cast an unfamiliar spell that caused Bulstrode to collapse and be unable to move because her body seemed magnetized to the stone floor.

Immediately all metal in common room started flying in Bulstrode’s direction including a ring that Giselle lunged for with a shriek.

Sasashima yelled Nemo, “Ku-san yamete! Mou takusan!”

(Ku stop it. That’s enough- Japanese)

Harry emerged from the crowd and cast a copper shield to protect Bulstrode from the flying metal.

After Harry’s intervention Aodhan hurriedly called the duel, “That’s it! Nemo is the victor.”

Nemo grumbled even as Sasashima used his weird to conjure a clone inside the copper shield and muttering darkly as he examined Bulstrode using the clone. After failing to reverse the magnetism spell through his clone, Sasashima turned to yell at Nemo.

“I told you, that’s enough. You have to remove the spell the spell, you’re killing her.”

Sasashima’ opposite, Bulstrode’s second clutched the ring and begged, “Please Nemo, don’t kill her. She’s, ”
“Giselle don’t!” Bulstrode gasped.

Both Sasashima and his clone were equally stunned that the witch seemingly collapsed due to her own weight as well as making her completely magnetized, could move her lips to speak.

“But Millie,” Giselle wept, embarrassing her birth House and prefect badge.

“Nemo undo the spell now!” both Sasashima and clone-Sasashima snapped in English.

“Or what?” Nemo drawled.

“The duel is over, you won. You’ve shamed her and her second before Slytherin. I’m a healer; I can’t watch her die anymore that I could watch you die. You owe me a life debt.” The original Sasashima reminded Nemo.

“You’re cashing it in over her?” Nemo blinked.

“I can’t reverse your spell and I have to live with that but I won’t let her die. If that is the only way I can make you save her then I will.”

“Fine.” Nemo released the spell.

Sasashima’ clone checked Bulstrode over and then called out, “Potter you may release your shield.

The copper dome-like shield vanished and Giselle hurried to throw her arms around Bulstrode still weeping.

Sasashima disapated his clone and after glaring at Nemo, he left dragging Kudo with him.

Nemo was too advanced magically to attend Hogwarts…
Severus had only been slightly surprised when Hogwarts alerted him to a duel in Slytherin.

Millie dueling wasn’t a surprise but her prospective opponent…

Severus invited Andromeda to observe given her interest in the former Tartarus student.

They arrived just as Nemo cast a conjuring spell that sent spikes flying at Bulstrode.

Soon after Nemo was affected with a drowning spell while Bulstrode was transfigured into a pillbug but their seconds removed the spells.

Andromeda stiffened when Bulstrode drew first blood, Nemo’s reaction was more like Bella’s then she cared to consider.

Like Bella, Nemo’s relation was swift and deadly. Her apprentice Sasashima and Harry’s intervention, while dangerous was likely all that saved Bulstrode. This transfer student was dangerous, but not out of control. His being classified with agemates was a disservice to his skill level and his magical prowess.

No wonder, he was apparently running the NEWT lessons for Blackthorn.

Hopefully, the others would take stock and realize that leaving Nemo alone was the sanest and safest choice.

Chapter End Notes

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