The Unspoken Ally

by bridgetlynn

Summary

In 1976 Tony DiNozzo's parents died leaving him to the care of his mother's elusive English family - the Paddington's. He was eight and the very world as he knew it was flipped on it's head.

In 1993 Anthony Paddington, an Unspeakable on loan to the ICW and Interpol's Magic Branch, is quietly re-called back to England from Rome due to a series of suspicious rumors surrounding incidents at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry since the enrollment of The-Boy-Who-Lived. The escape of Sirius Black from Azkaban and the request to Croaker for student use of a Time Turner within the same week are the final straw for his superiors at the Ministry of Magic.

As a former Auror and current Unspeakable (plus the only British Hit Wizard unquestionably not in Albus Dumbledore's pocket) he has the perfect skill set to balance a set of conflicting orders from Scrimgeour and Croaker and, hopefully, discover exactly what is being hidden at the Castle and how it will potentially effect the future of the Wizarding World.

Notes

This was my entry for the Rough Trade Nov. '16 challenge. Life kicked me in the teeth and I wasn't able to finish it - therefore, I'm posting it today (Evil Authors Day '17) in the hopes that it'll kick my ass into working on it. But since it is EAD - no promises.

If you don't know what Rough Trade or Evil Authors Day are - essentially in the shortest explanation possible - this is very unedited. That's the point. It's a writer's challenge. Enjoy
the story - don't complain about mistakes please and thank you.

The Challenge itself was to take a character(s) from one universe and insert them logically into another universe as though the original had never existed (ie: I transplanted Tony DiNozzo into the Potter'verse by using logic and a one episode canon mention of a rich British Noble relative).
Part One

Glossary of Terms

Cast Pictures

Monday August 2nd 1976

DiNozzo Estate
198A Kings Point Rd
Great Neck, New York

What flavor ice cream is in the freezer? Is my best friend from this week going to be my best friend next week? Should I convince my parents to let me stay up and watch Hawaii Five-O or M*A*S*H this week? Is it ‘there’, ‘their’ or ‘they’re’ for this sentence?

These are the normal type of questions that usually go through an eight year old mind. These are the types of questions that normally went through this specific eight year old’s mind even.

Eight year olds shouldn’t be asking themselves, “Where am I going to live?”, “Who’s going to take care of me?” and worse yet, “Is it my fault for not being there?”

And yet, those are the three questions that had been playing on repeat through the head of one eight year old Anthony Dominic DiNozzo, Jr. since he woke up Saturday morning, two days earlier, and found out from his family's butler that his parents had been killed in a car accident late Friday night on their way home from a party on the east end of the Island.

He had spent those two days either sitting in his father’s home office or sitting in his mother’s music room, drifting between the two rooms like a ghost, and watching as the house staff continued about their regular duties as if his parents were just on an extended vacation.

Earlier that morning Tony had been given a crumb of information; his Uncle Clive, the older brother of his mother Mary, would be arriving from London that evening to finalize any arrangements for the funeral, his father’s business and Tony himself.

That’s what lead to Tony sitting in the front room’s window seat, staring at out into the summer storm, in anticipation of finally having those questions answered.

If he hadn’t seen the car arriving himself due to his constant watch, Tony would have almost thought the scene to have been plucked right out of one of his mother’s old black and white movies. Dark isolated manor house, populated by the young heir and a small selection of staff, being blasted by a thunderstorm. The nearly silent interior of the house broken only by the ticking of a grandfather clock...and the near perfect simultaneous timing in the clap of thunder, the gong of the eight o’clock hour and the chime of the doorbell.

“What Anthony,” the quiet voice of his father’s long employed butler, William, broke the renewed silence of the room. “Come and meet your Uncle.”

Tony took a deep breath in an attempt to calm his nerves and climbed off the window seat before turning around and staring at the person that stood with William. The first thing the small boy noticed
was that the man in question was quite large - tall, not fat. He also noticed that his Uncle appeared to be barely older than Tony’s own mother had been; which was strange to the eight year old as one of the only things he actually did know of his Uncle was that the man was almost twenty years older than Mary.

“Hello,” Tony finally greeted the man after a few moments of silent observation. “It’s nice to finally meet you Uncle.”

“Well, at least you have manners,” his Uncle replied, sounding surprised, in a British accent that painfully reminded the boy of his mother. “I wasn’t certain that would be the case after having met your father.”

Tony almost took offence at the comment; but he couldn’t really. He we eight, not stupid. He knew exactly what kind of face his father let the world see.

“Elsa insists on etiquette training,” Tony explained and shrugged lightly. “She said that the younger it’s drilled in the easier it will stick.”

“And Elsa is?”

“My governess,” the boy explained again before gesturing at the couch. “Would you like to sit?”

“Thank you,” his uncle replied and took the offered seat, giving Tony a pointed look to join him. “Now that pleasantries, of a sort, are out of the way; I am your Uncle Clive Paddington. I’m very sorry for your loss young man and I do wish we were meeting under different circumstances.”

“Yes sir,” Tony responded quietly, nodding slightly and trying not to fidget.

“I’m certain you have more than a few questions as to what will happen now. Unfortunately, before all of those decisions can be made I need you to do something for me; best to just get it out of the way immediately so we don’t drag things out unnecessarily.”

“Do something?” Tony questioned, honestly confused at this point. He had been assuming his Uncle had come to sign a few papers and ship Tony off to boarding school. His mother had been very firm in her depiction of her own family and how it operated. She had been sent away to boarding school at eleven and had barely had any contact with them after that, usually only the week between school letting out and summer camp starting and the week between camp ending and the new school year beginning. “Aren’t you just going to tell me where you’re sending me for school?”

“I didn’t need to travel across the Atlantic to do that Anthony,” Clive pointed out and then handed Tony something that looked like a large unpolished blue gemstone. “Hold that in your hand and think very hard about it.”

“Think about the rock?” Tony asked, confusion coloring his words at the strange request. When his Uncle only nodded Tony shrugged and did as asked. He thought about the rock. And proceeded to drop it in shock when the rock began to do it’s best impersonation of a light bulb.

“Ahhh, well, that’s interesting,” Clive mumbled looking at Tony pensively.

“Interesting?” Tony squeaked, his own gaze focused on the rock. The rock that had no buttons. “How’d you do that?”

“I didn’t,” his uncle replied, this time sounding amused. “You did. And it certainly changes things.”

“Okay then, how’d I do it?”
“That is a much longer explanation then I’m prepared to give this evening. Suffice it to say - you’ll be coming back to London with me to stay.”

“And if I hadn’t, supposedly, made the rock go all sparkly?”

“Then you wouldn’t be going back to London with me and instead we’d spend tomorrow picking a school that would be the best fit for your academic and, if they interest you athletic, goals.”

“So sparkly rock and I get guardians - not sparkly rock and I get boarding school? Mom was right, you are a piece of work.”

“Perhaps,” his Uncle seemed to agree. “But that is neither here nor there. She understood at the time what the reasons behind our parent’s decisions were. Life was...harsh...in England at the time for people of her, let’s say, condition. You’ll understand better when we get back to London and I can explain more completely.”

“I don’t get to know about the sparkly rock until we’re back in London?” Tony, tired now, almost whined and immediately cut himself off from further complaints at the sharp look his Uncle threw him.

“No,” was the simple statement. “Your father’s manservant told me you’ve already eaten so off to bed with you. I have paperwork I have to get through tonight and meetings with your parent’s attorney’s tomorrow. The funerals will be held on Wednesday morning. We’ll be leaving on Thursday night.”

Tony held back any complaints he had at the tone his Uncle had adopted. He had been raised to know and recognize a dismissal when he heard one and without another word the boy simply got up and left the room with more questions then he had even before his uncle arrived.

The days that had followed Tony’s introduction to his Uncle Clive passed in a blur to the young boy. Tuesday had been spent watching Elsa organize the packing of his clothing and the few toys and mementos he wanted to take with him to England. When he had asked William about the rest of the house or his parents possessions all the man would tell him was, ‘Lord Paddington has made arrangements to close up the house until you’re old enough to make those decisions yourself Anthony.’

Wednesday’s funeral had left the eight year old nauseous and fighting back tears. Realistically he knew no one would fault him for crying but he couldn’t help hearing his father’s words in the back of his head, ‘Chin up son. DiNozzo’s don’t cry. Never let them see you’re hurting. It’ll just give someone else power over you. If you absolutely must cry; make sure it’s completely private.’

When he finally did get to lock himself in his room on Wednesday night; he let go and cried until he nearly made himself sick with it. It was the first time he truly processed the information that his parents were dead since he had received the news Saturday morning. He could no longer subconsciously pretend they were just away on a longer then usual business trip and he was simply waiting for them to burst through the front door calling for him to come and hear all about where they had been and how as soon as school was out they’d be going back - taking Tony with them this time - and show him all the sights.

He was never again going to sit with his father as the man went over business contracts - ‘You’ll learn by doing things Tony. Same as I did at my own father’s knee.’

He was never again going to play piano while his mother flitted around the room dancing and singing - ‘Beautiful Anthony. A waltz next. Play a waltz for Mama.’
He was never again going to sneak down the stairs long after he was supposed to be in bed, lured by the sounds of old jazz records and laughter, to peek into the living room and watch as they danced close together, smiling and talking and kissing, until he fell asleep in the doorway only to half-wake when his father picked him up and the three headed back upstairs; gentle admonishment falling from his parents lips about little boys needing sleep.

Because those were the parents Tony would miss for the rest of his life - the loud, loving and somewhat crazy couple who hated the necessary evil of leaving him during the school year but brought him everywhere with them come June. The rest of the world saw The DiNozzo’s - wealthy, entitled and admittedly somewhat snobbish; but the rest of the world didn’t understand the protection those masks presented his parents in the boardroom or at a charity gala. When everyone wants your money or your power the only way to keep it is to make sure the other side thinks you are better than they are.

It wasn’t until after a good, long, cry and a slew of memories passing through his head that Tony started to calm down and realize that as much as he would miss his parents there was a part of him that was glad they had died together. His mother always told him she and Tony’s father were soulmates and she didn’t think she could live in a world without him. He assumed it was similar for his father; who had always looked at his mother with the kind of sappy expression Tony only ever saw in movies.

The truth was, that his eight year old brain couldn’t even begin to imagine what life might have been with only one of his parents if the other had died. But somehow, he didn’t think it would in any way resemble the first eight years of his existence.

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**Thursday August 5th 1976**

*Davis, James & Locke LLP & Affiliates*

*Chrysler Building*

*45th Floor*

*405 Lexington Ave*

*New York City, New York*

Tony felt unexpectedly anxious as he stared up at the familiar skyscraper that housed the offices of his father’s attorney Thomas Davis. For the last year he had been accompanying his father here on the last Saturday of every month; he would sit in Mr. Davis’ office and listen while his father and the lawyer went over anything related to his father’s import, export and shipping business, DiNozzo Enterprises, and then he would accompany the two men to lunch at The Cloud Club on the 67th floor.

This wasn’t going to be that type of day.

Once he was in his seat, this time in an unfamiliar conference room filled mostly with people he didn’t know or only barely recognized, he glanced at his Uncle who seemed to be taking turns staring down two men across the table from them. Tony was almost certain he had never seen either before - though one of them looked a lot like his father.

He listened as Mr. Davis spoke in confusing language and managed to understand enough to realize that he now owned everything. The business, the houses, the money...everything. Well, almost everything. He also apparently had another Uncle, this one on his father’s side, and he was very unhappy about the fact that all he got was a trust fund. Though, Tony was also pretty certain that a million dollars was a whole lot of money so he wasn’t sure why his other Uncle was angry.
“I don’t think you understand Mr. DiNozzo,” Tony tuned back into the argument between his, apparent, Uncle Frederick and the attorney. “Your father left you a trust fund and gave the entire business to your younger brother Anthony. He has now left the family business to his son, your nephew. This is entirely legal. If you would like, I could tell this entire room why that is? Or you could accept the continuance of your trust that your brother has graciously bequeathed you.”

“Don’t bother Mr. Davis,” his Uncle Clive interrupted. “He’ll take the money Anthony Senior left him or he can use his trust to pay for lawyers and be kept tied up in court for however many years that money lasts him. Those are his options. As we discussed on the phone before I left London, I’ve been in touch with the Board of Directors for DiNozzo Enterprises and they are more then happy to continue the status quo with my minimal input and your continued oversight until Anthony is of an age where he can make further decisions on his own.”

“You don’t have the authority to make those decisions!” Frederick shouted back and only got an eyebrow raise as a response. “Maybe I will tie it up in court. See what will happen to the business then!”

“You blew through your entire trust fund, before your own father’s death, by the time you were nineteen,” Tony heard his Uncle Clive announce to the room. “You tried to sell shares in the company to make money, shares you did not truly own no less and almost sent a business started by your grandfather under as a result, your father and younger brother were the ones to fix that and return the company to good standing both financially and in public opinion. You wouldn’t have a leg to stand on in court. Take your money and forget your nephew’s existence. You will not win this fight.”

Tony blinked and stared up at the man sitting next to him, his voice had become freezing cold as he spoke and the only thing Tony could think to describe the tone as was ‘dangerous’. This wasn’t someone that you angered; and despite his expensive suit and cultured air, the young boy had a feeling the man could back up every single world physically as well.

“Now, Mr. Davis, I believe we are done here? Anthony and I have a flight this evening and I don’t like rushing.”

“Yes Lord Paddington, we’re done,” the lawyer agreed and then dismissed everyone else from the room. “Tony, it’s been good to see you again. I’ll miss having you around here. But I promise I’m going to take good care of the day to day business for you.”

“Umm, Thank you Mr. Davis,” Tony replied looking confused. “I’m, I mean, what if...what if I don’t want to run the company? Ever?”

“Then you’ll continue things as they stand now,” his Uncle Clive answered instead of the lawyer. “DiNozzo Enterprises thankfully is run mostly by a Board of Directors. Your father was CEO and was very hands on; but you wouldn’t necessarily need to be. I’ll make sure you stay abreast of developments as you get older so you at least understand the ins and outs of the company and when you’re twenty-one you’ll officially be CEO - but that doesn’t mean you’ll necessarily need to do what your father did in order to keep everything running correctly.”

“Right,” Tony muttered, still confused but at least understanding enough to realize he could probably do whatever he wanted when he grew up as long as he was willing to sign papers every once in awhile.

Friday August 6th 1976
Tony’s first thought upon seeing London, at least seeing more than Heathrow Airport as he had been there before with his parents for flight layovers, was that his mother had been exaggerating the city’s resemblance to ‘hell on earth’. Mostly he thought it looked like an older version of New York with funner looking busses.

His second thought, as they pulled up to what his Uncle had called, ‘the city house’, was voiced, “It’s very, umm, white?”

Uncle Clive laughed and nodded, “Nice diplomatic answer Anthony. I know the neighborhood isn’t much to look at right now...but it’s on it’s way up again. Thankfully, we don’t have to worry about the current riff raff neighbors much and my family has owned this home since it was built in the mid-1800s so we’re not going anywhere anytime soon. And yes, the house itself is very white.”

He scrambled out of the car once his Uncle’s driver, who hadn’t been introduced, opened the door and let his eyes wander around. His Uncle had said that he and his wife, Tony’s Aunt Lyra, lived in the Notting Hill area of London. He had made vague references on the way from the airport to the fact that the neighborhood had always been ‘artsy’ but that the late-60s and early-70s had seen the area decline into more of a ‘slum’ filled with low income immigrants and more of a criminal element rather than ‘starving artists’. Having walked down 42nd Street in Manhattan with his parents Tony didn’t think this looked all that bad.

The house was on the corner and quite large (and literally completely white) to Tony’s eye. Across the street from the house was what looked to be a fenced in, fairly overgrown, park of some type, though there was a decided lack of playground equipment at first glance.

“That’s Pembridge Square Garden,” his Uncle explained when he saw what caught Tony’s eye. “You’ll find spots like that throughout the city, especially in residential areas. They’re designed in such a way as to block out the city and make you feel like you’re actually in nature.”

“So, not a playground?”

“Not a playground. Though I do see children playing football in nice weather on occasion. Let’s head in, your Aunt should have a meal ready and then we’ll begin to get you settled. I want to keep you occupied for the rest of the day so you don’t fall asleep before this evening and get hit with jetlag.”

Tony nodded and followed his Uncle up the fairly tall stairs to the front door of the townhouse somewhat surprised that he had received as much of an explanation as he had been given since they arrived at the house. While they were still in New York Tony had come to the tentative conclusion that his Uncle was going to be the, ‘children are seen and not heard; do as you’re told’ type of man. Tony still didn’t have a clue about the blue rock and the last few days had been a whirlwind of packing and funerals and meetings. Maybe now that they were back where his Uncle knew the lay of the land he would be willing to open up more and explain what he meant when he talked instead of assuming that Tony understood or agreed with everything that came out of his mouth.

“Clive darling, you’re back!” a female voice interrupted Tony’s thoughts and general perusal of the, still very white, front hall. He looked up as a very beautiful, very pregnant woman around his mother’s age seemed to glide into the room.
“Lyra,” his Uncle greeted simply and then proceeded to kiss the back of, apparently, his Aunt’s hand. “You look lovely my dear.”

“Thank you My Lord,” his Aunt replied and curtseyed slightly, seeming to fall into some kind of formality once her initial excitement had passed. “And this must be Anthony,” she continued, again giving a slight curtsey, and looked him over. “You are a fine looking young man. I’m very sorry to be meeting you like this,” she continued. “I would have accompanied my husband however I’ve just started my confinement for the birth of your cousin.”

“That’s okay? I mean, it’s nice to meet you as well,” Tony responded feeling overwhelmed and on a whim, and a guess, bowed to her.

“Oh that is adorable. Though we’ll have to work on your form among other things,” she said with a laugh. “I’m your Aunt Lyra.”

“My form?” Tony almost squeaked. “You mean...you two weren’t just joking around with those greetings?”

“Joking?” his Aunt asked and Tony saw his Uncle covering a slight grin, which didn’t help his conclusion that this had been some long standing joke between the couple. “Of course not darling boy. Your Uncle is Lord Clive Paddington, The 25th Earl of Nottingham.”

“Oh,” Tony replied in surprise. He didn’t quite understand English peerage but he processed enough of that statement to figure out his Uncle was important. “So, bowing and stuff?”

“And stuff,” his Aunt agreed with a wink. “You’ll pick it up in no time. And luckily due to the circles we travel in you’ll find muggle customs and pureblood customs aren’t very different so you won’t have to learn two different rules of engagement so to speak.”

“Ahh, Lyra love? I hadn’t quite gotten that far,” Tony heard his Uncle whisper to his Aunt as he mouthed the words ‘muggle’ and ‘pureblood’ silently to himself.

“Well, whatever were you doing over there then?”

“I didn’t want to confuse the lad with everything else that was going on,” Clive replied and began walking into the house, gesturing for Tony to follow the couple down a hallway. He only caught a brief glimpse of a large formal dining room to his left and a very large living room area to his right as they passed.

“And you didn’t think perhaps stewing over a strange glowing rock for three days would be confusing enough without an explanation? Honestly Clive,” Lyra responded in exasperation leading the way down a set of stairs, placing them once more at street level, and into a much less formal sitting room that included a television, pool table and bar. “This is the den Anthony. It’s the only television we have I’m afraid. The room itself is shielded. The rest of the house is not. That’s why there are no windows. We’re in the center of the house. Kitchen is through that door,” she continued, speaking this time to Tony, and pointed to one of three steel doors set into an otherwise all brick walled room.

“Come along Anthony,” his Uncle prodded and the eight year old hurried up, not having realized that both the adults had continued across the room and slid the door aside and were waiting for him at the entrance to what he assumed was the kitchen.

Once they had entered Tony got a chance to look around as his Aunt guided him to a breakfast nook in the corner of long, but narrow, rectangular kitchen. It spanned the length of the house itself, from
the back to the front, but didn’t appear to be wider than eight feet. Three walls of the room were
entirely made up of windows, the longest wall included a set of french doors that opened up onto the
side yard and patio of the home. He glanced out the window behind him and had to look slightly up
to see the wall that surrounded the property at street level above them.

“That’s the front of the house. Pembridge Square,” his Uncle explained as his Aunt moved around,
gathering covered dishes and placing them on the table before sitting herself. “And that,” Clive
continued, pointing towards the wall with the door, “is the street we are on the corner of, Pembridge
Place.”

“You look overwhelmed Anthony,” his Aunt interjected before Tony could say anything. “Eat and
then we’ll take you on a real tour of the house and show you your room. I think you’re going to
enjoy it here even if the circumstances leave much to be desired. Also, relax a little dear. I knew your
mother when she was younger, there is no way she raised such a serious little boy.”

Tony looked at his Uncle’s serious but kind face and his Aunt’s nearly bubbly demeanor and
couldn’t help the slight smile he gave them both as they dug into a traditional English breakfast
together.

A few hours later Tony was sitting in his new room on what he had been told was the 2nd floor of
the house (even though he was almost certain it was the 3rd floor - which had resulted in an
confusing explanation as to how Americans didn’t use the term ‘ground floors’ and that the kitchen
was the ‘underground level’ and wasn’t considered in the layout of the other floors) frowning slightly
as he looked around. Everything was still white. In fact, most of the house was decorated in neutral
tones, glass and metals. It was a very modern decor which surprised the child as he was more used to
the more classical european style his parents preferred. It also didn’t scream very ‘kid friendly’ to the
young boy and while he had been raised in luxury he had never been afraid to break something or
leave fingerprints on things just by walking into a room.

“Don’t worry dear,” his Aunt told him, sitting next to him on the small couch in the large bedroom.
“Once your Uncle and I explain everything I’ll be able to redecorate in here for you so quickly your
head will spin. Why, it’ll be like magic,” she added with a bright laugh that reminded him painfully
of his mother.

“Why can’t you explain now?” Tony finally asked the question that had been burning inside of him
since they began the tour of the house after breakfast.

“Your Uncle had a call to make from his office,” she explained. “We’re going to double check that
your things have been unpacked to your liking and then we’ll go downstairs and tell you everything.
I promise.”

At that Tony blinked and looked around, “Wait...who unpacked?”

“Kip,” his Aunt replied without any further explanation. “He’s yours...sort of. You’ll understand
later.” Tony almost rolled his eyes at that but he had a feeling that would go over with his Aunt about
as well as it would have with his mother. “So go ahead dear, look around, check the closets and
drawers and let me know if you want something moved.”

Tony finally heaved himself off the bed and began poking around in the various drawers and closets,
surprised to see a lot more clothes then what he had brought with him and had to ask, “Where did all
the extra stuff come from?”

“I had a few things purchased for you. It was easier than moving everything from New York. We’ll
“Okay,” Tony mumbled but couldn’t find anything wrong with the arrangement of his things. He wasn’t exactly used to making that type of decision on his own anyway. He had the same room since he was born and everything had just been put where it was placed for as long as he could remember.

“Now, major rule for this house as you are a small, easily injured person,” his Aunt said, extremely seriously, once Tony had come out of the attached bathroom. “And if you break this rule you will not be able to sit for a week as far as I’m concerned. Do not under any circumstances step foot on any of the balconies off the bedrooms,” she continued, pointing towards the french doors that overlooked the backyard of the house. “I don’t care if there is a fence on it. As far as you are concerned those doors do not even exist until you are twelve. Do you understand?”

“Yes ma’am,” Tony replied quickly, nodding enthusiastically. “I promise.”

“Good, because if you’re dead set on breaking yourself I am more then willing to do it for you. My maiden name is Black, you haven’t met a spanking until you’ve been given one by a Black.”

“Umm, any other rules Aunt Lyra?” Tony asked, because it seemed like a good idea.

“Just a few,” Lyra conceded. “You will apply yourself fully to any type of school work you are given or lessons that I conduct with you. Despite how relaxed we are in private, your Uncle has a very important position in our world and how you perform publically reflects back on him. You will therefore have to conduct yourself befitting a gentleman at all times and it is through those lessons that I give you that you will learn how to do that both properly and effectively. Your room is to be maintained in a neat and orderly fashion. That does not mean you can not play and have fun; it just means you will clean up your own space. Kip will do the actual cleaning, but it is not his job to put things in hampers or put books and toys away. With me so far?”

“Yes ma’am,” Tony responded. “Those were the same at home. Elsa and William would have my hide if I left an unnecessary mess for them to clean.”

“Good. I know you are only eight...but...well, things will be slightly different to what you’re used to now. I know it doesn’t entirely make sense yet, but you’re going to be entering a different type of society soon. And anything will be perceived as a weakness that can be used against you.”

“Dad used to say that in public we wear our masks so the world can’t get in,” Tony almost whispered the response he gave her and glanced up to see a sympathetic expression on her face.

“That’s very good advice,” she responded softly. “Now, breakfast is at seven in the kitchen on weekdays before your uncle leaves for work. We usually just have a light brunch on the weekends around ten, also in the kitchen if we don’t have guests. Lunch, if you’re not at school, can be whenever you feel like it. And I expect you home, and dressed, properly for dinner at seven in the formal dining hall every evening. That one is important as on occasion your Uncle Clive will bring business associates home with him without warning. We must always be ready for public scrutiny. For now, I want you to relax a little, try not to fall asleep as you’ll throw off your internal clock and come downstairs in about a half hour. He should be done with business by then.”

“Yes Aunt Lyra,” Tony replied to the woman as she walked out of the bedroom. Releasing a sigh he flopped onto the couch and stifled a yawn wondering not for the first time just how amazing this explanation was going to be and hoping it lived up to the expectations.

“Tony? Tony sweetheart? Are you okay?”
Tony blinked and stared back at his Aunt and Uncle who were looking truly worried for the first time since he had met either one of them. Worried to the point that they had used his nickname no less.

He then turned his attention back to large pig in the center of the room. The pig that had until five minutes ago been a coffee table.

“I fell asleep upstairs right?” Tony asked, looking back up at them and actually let out a loud laugh when they merely traded concerned glances before shaking their heads in the negative. “Oh. So, magic’s real?”

“Yes,” his Uncle responded and then turned the pig back into a table. “Do you know if you ever did anything strange when you were younger?”

Tony simply shrugged and replied, “Depends on what you mean by strange. I’m pretty sure I never turned anything into a pig!”

“How about a duck?” his Aunt asked with a laugh and then instead of an ottoman next to Tony, there was a duck.

“Nope. Never did that either,” Tony shot back and poked the duck, pulling his hand back quickly when the bird snapped at him. “Can I do that?”

“Not yet,” his Aunt told him. “After a few years at Hogwarts? Absolutely.”

“Hogwarts?”

“Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry,” his uncle expanded. “It’s a boarding school for young wizards and witches here in the United Kingdom. Your Aunt and I attended. I graduated in 1948 and she graduated in 1949.”

That caused Tony to pause in his frantic scrambling of questions about magic that had flown into his head upon the appearance of the pig and instead he asked, “You’re that old?! But Aunt Lyra’s pregnant.”

“I’ll have you know I’m only 45 young man,” his Aunt responded indignantly. “That’s not even close to middle age for a witch.”

“To answer your real question Anthony,” his Uncle interjected, seeming to understand what Tony meant. “Wizards and Witches age more slowly than muggles. That’s why I look so close to your mother’s age despite being eighteen years her senior.”

“And Mom? She was a muggle?”

“Technically, your mother was a squib,” his Uncle explained. “The Ancient and Noble House of Paddington is an old Pureblood family. Now, we’re not quite Sacred Twenty-Eight; but we are old and titled. So, when your mother never showed any accidental magic my parents held out hope until after her eleventh birthday passed. At that point, well, it is what it is.”

“So they kicked her out?” he almost squeaked his reply thinking what could happen if the glowing rock was wrong.

“Not hardly Anthony,” his Uncle immediately disagreed. “Despite being Pureblood our family has always had business in the muggle world, part of the reason we were never considered for that Sacred Twenty-Eight rot. So I, and your mother after me, attended muggle school from the age of
five. When I turned eleven I went to Hogwarts in Scotland. When your mother turned eleven she instead went to Cheltenham Ladies College in Gloucestershire. She was given all the same opportunities as I was, only in the muggle world. And yes, I was also sent away to various types of summer camps as much as possible. Our parents cared for us very much; they just had no idea how to be actual parents without throwing money at something. I believe your mother assumed her lack of magic was the reason more than anything else as she was only just born as I was graduating Hogwarts so she missed seeing that my childhood was the equivalent of hers.”

Tony frowned and picked through the explanation before deciding his Uncle was probably not lying, he hoped.

“When you get older I’ll get more into the ins and outs of it with you Anthony,” his Uncle continued. “But I believe eight to be a little too young to expect you to understand the motivations your mother might have had for leaving us so completely when she did.”

“Alright,” Tony conceded. “So...magic?”

“Yes,” his Aunt agreed. “Magic.”

“So cool. Was that the only thing?”

“No actually,” Clive responded. “That was the fun part. The rest has to do with the words we’ve been throwing around. Pureblood, Sacred Twenty-Eight and even my titles. It’s a long and confusing explanation for an eight year old - even if you grew up in this world. So I’m just going to boil it down to this - there is a war going on right now in the magical world Anthony and while you are technically a half-blood...there are some that will consider you to be muggleborn due to your mother’s status as a squib. For the political climate of the time, that’s not a safe position to be in.”

Tony listened as his Uncle outlined a war over blood - really more a war over a person’s upbringing. His Uncle explained that he couldn’t care less where someone came from and the only color he really cared about was green, as in money. You either came from it and had the brains to keep it and make more of it or you came from nothing and had the brains to make your own money. He respected either. He found out in that conversation that his Uncle did not tolerate people who just lived off the wealth accumulated by their ancestors hard work or skated by on their pedigree.

Even at eight Tony could understand and respect that stance. Mostly because it made more sense than the other things about the magical world his Uncle was pouring on top of the boy. It wasn’t until a few minutes later that something else registered with Tony and he quickly questioned it, “Wait, you want to adopt me?”

“Yes,” his Aunt was the one to reply this time. “Your Uncle’s family has always lived in the Wizarding World, but at the same time somewhat apart from it. He doesn’t stand with the ‘old guard’ on either side of the line. We’re in a strange position politically - we’re not neutral remotely, we disagree strongly with the Blood Pureists...but the magic we practice is ‘too dark’ for the vaunted ‘Light Side.’

“Albus Dumbledore is a hypocritical, manipulative, power hungry asshole,” his Uncle snapped causing Tony’s eyes to widen at the surprising swear from a man that so far had only shown a mostly buttoned up ‘upper-class’ type persona.

“That’s another part of the problem,” his Aunt continued as if his Uncle hadn’t spoke. “You either believe that Albus Dumbledore is the be all and end all of decision makers...or you don’t. Those that don’t follow Tom Riddle, who has been ridiculously calling himself Lord Voldemort since he was in school, by choice or circumstance. And then there’s us...and a few other families. Though we’re by
far the most prominent.”

“And what do we think?” Tony asked.

“That both of them are wrong,” Clive replied. “Riddle was a few years ahead of us at school. I was a Ravenclaw so I didn’t know him but your Aunt was a Slytherin and a Black, even if she was a mildly disgraced one. So she saw his insanity in real-time.”

“I was. And Tom Riddle is a jumped up half-blood who was raised in an orphanage and instead of attempting to make something of himself with the impressive brain he was given...he instead recruited sycophants who like to hurt people they disagree with. But that’s more detail than an eight year old really needs.”

“Quite,” Clive murmured. “The point to this Anthony is simple.”

“It is?”

“At its core, yes. Because I don’t spend much time socializing with Wizarding nobility they don’t know us very well. I do more business in muggle Society. While, your Aunt has very little contact with her family for a lot of reasons but mostly because of two reasons - the first is that her father Marius was a disowned Squib and the second is that her cousins think Riddle is the answer to all the World’s problems. All that boils down to our answer being a blood adoption - you will in essence be our son. The very Old families, of which we qualify, don’t even register births with the Ministry until a child has been accepted to Hogwarts anyway. So no one will even think to question it.”

“Easier to dispose of squibs without questions that way,” his Aunt muttered sounding disgusted.

“So, I’ll be your son? What about the baby?”

“You’ll be our son Anthony,” his Uncle agreed. “As will the baby. But you’ll be the eldest and my heir. As far as anyone, your Aunt and I included, is concerned you’ll be our first born, Lord Anthony Dominic Paddington, future 26th Earl of Nottingham.”

The next three years passed by in an insane blur of pureblood etiquette lessons, family history lessons, ritual magic instruction, politics and estate planning - both for the magical world and the muggle world and muggle school and athletics.

He took his Aunt’s words in his bedroom that day to heart immediately following the blood adoption and threw himself into being a proper Paddington (while still honoring his parents memory and never truly forgetting he was also a DiNozzo). He tried his hardest to excel at everything he did - whether it be something as unimportant as playing football (soccer to his American brain) with the local boys or as important as being a good big brother to Crispian (who was born three months after his arrival in London).

By the time his eleventh birthday, July 19th 1979, was punctuated by the arrival of his Hogwart’s letter, no one except his Aunt and Uncle - Mum and Father - would have any clue that Tony hadn’t been born to Clive and Lyra Paddington. Physically the blood adoption had helped - darkening his hair from a golden blonde to more of a dark chestnut brown that was a near perfect match to Clive Paddington’s and Tony’s grandfather before him. It had helped that he had already physically favored his mother, Mary’s, side of the family but the icing on it all was his eyes - they had changed from the DiNozzo green to the famous silver-grey of the Ancient and Noble House of Black.
“Well, here we are. Last stop of the day,” Lyra Paddington informed her eldest son, Anthony, as the two walked into Ollivander’s mid-day on a lovely Thursday afternoon. “We’ll get your wand and then head home. Your Father should be ready to leave for the coast by now.”

“Yes Mum,” Tony replied, following his mother into one of the only shops in the Alley he had never had need to enter before.

“Ahhh, Lyra Black, lovely to see you my dear. Rowan wood with a Unicorn hair core, 12 inches. I was ever so surprised to sell a wood that is normally so pure and true to a Black.”

“Yes, well. It’s Paddington now isn’t it,” his Mum seemed slightly annoyed at the older man and Tony recalled his lessons where she had instructed him to avoid letting the entire world know what his wand was made of. There were too many assumptions people would make of him due to that information.

“Well, the Paddington’s aren’t the lightest either are they?” the older man continued, either missing or choosing to ignore typical social cues. “Who’s this then?”

“My eldest son, Anthony,” Lyra introduced him to the wandmaker in a cool tone. “He begins Hogwarts this September.”

“Ahhh, hmm, well, put up your wand arm boy,” Mr. Ollivander instructed and Tony immediately raised his right hand, assuming that’s what the older Wizard meant. A measuring tape immediately shot out of the back of the shop and proceeded to fly around Tony’s body, seemingly randomly measuring parts of him, yet going no where near his arm itself. “Interesting, let’s see what we have here,” the wandmaker mumbled and started randomly grabbing boxes and throwing them on the counter.

Fifteen minutes later, after his fourth attempt had caused a rather dangerous explosion of glass in the shop his Mum finally interjected quietly but sternly, “Mr. Ollivander. There are no muggleborns to impress or shock in the Shop at the moment. I specifically brought Anthony on a Thursday, in the morning, to avoid the usual pre-Hogwarts crowds. Could you please, without the over dramatic flair, help my son select his wand?”

The older man seemed to deflate and slightly rolled his eyes, “Well, I guess, if you want to take all the fun away from the process.”

“I don’t call watching my son drop to the floor to dodge flying glass remotely fun,” she ground out between clenched teeth. “If necessary, I will pay for a custom wand. We have more than a month
until school starts.”

Mr. Ollivander nodded his head and seemed to stare Tony down, looking quite serious for the first time all morning, “It might be a better idea anyway. His magic is quite strong. But then, the Black Family Magic embraced him. Blood Adoption doesn’t normally do that. And when it does, it’s a rare thing. The last record of it happening was over a century ago. And for the Black Family Magic to accept someone less than pureblood, well…”

His Mum paled at the comment and started to speak but the wandmaker waved her comment away and continued, “Don’t worry. I won’t tell anyone. It’s just strange, normally he’d be considered your son - legally on paper. But not magically. As far as I can see, he’s steeped in the legacy of the Black’s and the Paddington’s. It’ll be interesting to see what he does. It will also help because no one will even think to question his heritage if he can command the Family Magics.”

Tony glanced between the two adults in confusion; he had learned about family magic in his lessons. Had been told when he reached his maturation he’d have access to the Paddington Family Magic as was his right by birth through his birth mother’s bloodline. But the only time the Black Family Magic was mentioned was in reference to Crispian, the son his Mum had physically birthed. The surprise on her face told her she hadn’t realized the truth of what Ollivander had said until just now herself.

“Does this mean more lessons while we’re at Paddington Manor?” Tony asked, referring to the family’s historic manor home and farm in Devon, now where they normally just spent summers.

“Just a few,” his Mum assured. “You just need to be brought up to speed on a few extra things. Now go with Mr. Ollivander to the back. I’ll wait here.”

Tony followed the older man past the counter and into the back, surprised to suddenly come out into a brightly lit and quite organized room. His surprise must have shown on his face because Ollivander laughed and commented, “Now, don’t tell anyone what you saw back here. I have an image to maintain.”

Tony smirked and asked, “So...what do I do?”

“That shelf has drawers of wood,” the wandmaker started, pointing at a cabinet in the corner. “The smaller one next to it has the cores I use,” he continued his explanation. “Have your parents instructed you on feeling your magic?”

“Yes,” Tony replied simply, knowing the man meant the tug at his core when he was meditating.

“Good. Go to the wood first, close your eyes and run your hands along the drawer. Stop when you feel that tug. Tell me which drawer number your hand was on. You’ll then continue along, stopping if you feel a second tug; if you do, once again tell me what the number is. We’ll continue this until you reach the end of the wood selections. Then we’ll repeat the process with the cores.”

“Will I have more then one of each?” Tony questioned, surprised.

“Probably not more then one of each,” Ollivander explained. “You have access to two different magical family lines; two sets of magics that have their similarities, but also stark differences. It’s more likely to be two cores and one wood, but it could be the other way around as well.”

When all was said and done Tony left Ollivander’s Wand Shop with his Mum an hour later, with the words, “Well, that is interesting isn’t it?” ringing in his ears and the knowledge that his Walnut and Poplar wand with it’s core of Dragon Heart-string would be ready three days before the Express left for school.
The next day he looked through the Manor’s library and found a book on wand lore and couldn’t help but agree that it was interesting. According to what Tony read a walnut wand seeks intelligence and should the wielder be brilliant enough, the wand will perform any task it’s owner wishes. Meanwhile, a poplar wand would seek a wielder with ‘integrity and clear moral vision’. The core of dragon heart-string seemed to only mean one thing - sheer power.

When he asked his Father whether he should be worried about the absolute deadly weapon he was apparently being gifted with the man just laughed until he realized that Tony was genuinely worried. That’s when he explained it in simple terms, “This is why your Mum doesn’t want you telling anyone what your wand is made of. Regardless of what some people think, it’s actually difficult to guess based on just looking at a wand.”

“But the book says, a walnut wand will do anything the wielder wants!”

“The Walnut worries you? Then consider the fact that the Poplar will balance it out. Afterall, I doubt you’re planning on going on a mass murdering spree anytime soon? Right? Same with the core, power is power. It isn’t good and it isn’t bad. The truth of it Anthony is that the wand might chose the wizard; but the wizard chooses what to do with the wand. You have a wand with the potential to help you do amazing magic; but it’s still just a tool. I don’t buy into the mysticism of it all. Muggle guns, even well made muggle guns, don’t shoot people on their own. A wand will only do as much damage as the caster wishes it to.”

“It’s just worrying...I can’t help it. I’m going to Hogwarts with a wand that’s going to scream, “potential dark lord” at people,” Tony grumbled and slouched in the chair across from his Father’s desk.

“I doubt anyone is going to look at you and think you are a potential dark lord; they’re too busy worrying about the one we’ve got running around the country at the moment,” Clive replied distractedly having gone back to his papers; which should have told Tony that his Father considered the previous conversation finished.

“I know,” Tony admitted very quietly and drawing a tired sigh from his Father who looked up from his papers again.

“What’s wrong? None of this bothered you before you got your wand.”

“Am I going to be treated differently at Hogwarts once people realize I’m, apparently, actually a Black?”

“This is about the Family Magic then is it?” Clive questioned and sat back in his seat, carefully considering his words. “Everyone who has found out about you thought you were both a Black and a Paddington anyway. Now you’ve just got a smidgen of the power to back it up. Your mother is far enough removed from the main line both by birth and circumstance that it shouldn’t be an issue either magically or socially; despite Bellatrix running around in public and making a mockery of her supposed good breeding.”
“But, Sirius said he was disowned...and Regulus and Orion are both dead now,” Tony continued, the worries that had been building since Orion’s funeral two months earlier spilling over. “I’m technically the oldest male heir - everyone else is dead, disowned or a Potter.”

Clive outright laughed at that final comment and Tony found himself scowling, not appreciating the dismissal of what he felt were completely valid concerns.

“Pax son,” Clive said upon spotting the expression on Tony’s face. “You aren’t the oldest male heir. Sirius is. And while James and Charlus might stubbornly like to forget that Dorea was ever a Black because it might tarnish their shining example of a light Dumbledore worshiping family; especially now that she’s passed on and isn’t there to both remind them of it and slap them with some common sense self-preservation every once in awhile, it doesn’t mean the young man doesn’t understand familial duty. If Arcturus, that stubborn goat, doesn’t outlive us all and it really came down to it James would take up the mantle of Lord Black even if he hated every second of it. His magic would compel him to do so,” Clive explained to his son, leaving out the fact that at Orion’s funeral Arcturus had quietly informed him that Anthony was now second in line behind Sirius following Regulus’ mysterious death, not James. Arcturus had adored his cousin Dorea, but was not quite as fond of her former Auror husband or their painfully short-sighted and dangerously apolitical son who thought anything even slightly leaning towards ‘grey’ was a travesty to magic itself. He certainly wasn’t going to tell his son, all of eleven, that the Black Patriarch had felt Anthony hook onto the magic three years earlier; therefore, the current Lord of Blackmorland knew the boy had been magically adopted and the reason Anthony was in line following Sirius was the sheer natural power required to be fully magically embraced with that ritual. Arcturus had been covetously impressed. Even if Arcturus did pass on before Sirius had an heir himself; Clive doubted anything would happen to Sirius himself - he had proven himself more than capable with a wand prior to and since his graduation from Hogwarts.

“But Sirius said he was disowned,” Tony responded looking confused. “He said his Mother blasted him off the family tree.”

“And what makes you think that putting a burn mark on a tacky tapestry is the legal process to disowning a child of a middle-class muggle let alone the heir of the current Earl of Blackmorland?”

“Cause Sirius said so?”

“Oh boy,” Clive muttered and shook his head. “This crush has just as of this moment become unamusing.”

“I do not have a crush on Sirius,” Tony sputtered, forcing down a blush.

“Right. Of course you don’t,” Clive teased his son back. “Where were we? Right. Even if that was the process, and let me assure you it is not, even Orion couldn’t have done it. Arcturus selected Sirius as his heir when he was eleven years old and was sorted into Gryffindor. He removed Orion as his heir because and I quote, ‘finally a Black that remembers what it is like to think for himself’. Do you really see him disowning the boy for refusing to be branded like cattle?”

“No?”

“Exactly. Now, get to bed. It’s late. Think on what I said earlier about choices. If you’re still blasting this around your brain in a few days we’ll talk about it again then.”

Saturday September 1st 1979
The Great Hall of Hogwarts was even more amazing to see in person than anyone had been able to describe to him with words. Tony couldn’t help but let his eyes wander around the room and take in everything around him as his fellow first years names were called up to wear a raggedy hat. He was so lost in his visual exploration, in fact, that he missed his name being called the first two times.

“Anthony Paddington!” a sharp, aggravated, voice finally broke through his daydreaming and he quickly spun to face the front where the teacher who had introduced herself earlier as Professor McGonagall was staring him down and doing a credible impersonation of a dragon.

Tony forcefully ignored the snickers of the surrounding students, especially that of the older ones sitting at the tables, and drew himself up to his full height. He straightened his shoulders, tilted his chin and strolled up to the stool - giving for all the world the impression that they were to wait on him, not the other way around. He gracefully took a seat on the stool and frowned when the hat was unceremoniously plopped on his head, covering his eyes and blocking his view of the room.

“Ahhhh, Mr. DiNozzo...nice of you to join us,” a scratchy voice suddenly filled Tony’s ears and he only just managed to not jump in surprise. Before he could open his mouth to reply, the voice continued, “No need to answer aloud lad.”

“Okay...but it’s Paddington,” he, instead, thought his answer.

“Yes. But it’s also DiNozzo. After all, you still think of yourself as one,” the voice of the hat continued. “And you should, from what I can see your birth parents are the reason you are who you are; your Aunt and Uncle just polished it.”

“Yea, well...Paddington is safer.”

“Very sadly true,” the hat admitted. “Now, let’s see what you have in here,” the voice continued and this time Tony did jump as the occlumency shields his Uncle had drilled him into learning were peeled back like flimsy paper and he felt his mind being rifled through. “Oh ho! You will be fun won’t you,” the hat’s voice nearly cackled in his head. “Cunning and intelligence at the forefront...and stupidly brave for those you are loyal to. Huh. Well, that eliminates the lions and badgers.”

“It does?” he asked the hat, mostly because his Uncle had jokingly told him he was the quintessential Gryffindor only a week earlier after he nearly gave his Mum a heart attack using his broom.

“Indeed young man,” the hat continued. “Hufflepuffs of late are only loyal to other Hufflepuffs...and have been teaching that to each subsequent class. Gryffindors like to think they are brave and chivalrous...and maybe they were at one point. Maybe they still are deep down. But it’s become more recklessness, and a kind of mirrored prejudice, that defines them as of late. You don’t have a reckless or prejudiced bone in your body. And you have the potential for loyalty the likes I haven’t seen since Helga herself. You treat everyone you meet with respect until they prove themselves one way or the other. That’s almost unheard of in these halls anymore. Your strength is your mind. It’s your intelligence and cunning that drives your decisions. It’s those traits that will keep your bravery from becoming reckless and your loyalty from being abused. You read people like they’re made of glass.”

“Okay? So, uhh...Slytherin is probably a bad idea?” Tony decided to interject before the hat made a decision, as he mentally chewed on the words that he had been given. As much as he adored his
Aunt, his Mum for the last three years, he couldn’t see himself socializing with Slytherins regularly in the current political climate. Without the war he could have cared less; because, despite what the hat said about his lack of immediate prejudice - there were some facts that were hard to refute.

“Probably,” the hat agreed, though it seemed disappointed by that. “So, better be,” the voice continued in his head before cutting out completely.

“RAVENCLAW!”

Tony jumped as the hat was removed from his head and the name of the house of Eagles was shouted into the dead silent room. He glanced around and took in the stunned faces of the students and, even, teachers before a table to the right of room began clapping and cheering. Tony hopped off the stool and walked down in the direction of the table, accepting handshakes and greetings from the other Ravenclaw first-years, strangely all girls, that had been placed before him.

As the next student was called forward Tony couldn’t help but quietly ask the dark-haired girl sitting next to him why everyone was so quiet when he was sorted and was more than a little shocked when she replied, “You were under there for over seven minutes. One of the older kids said it was one of the longest hat stalls on ever.”

Tony’s first two years at Hogwarts were tension filled as students quietly fought their own battles in the halls - mimicking the state of the Wizarding World outside of the school. Lines were drawn inside the castle; house against house and all against Slytherin, teachers included.

Even at a such a young age Tony found it ridiculous. He had seen, on more than one occasion, muggleborn students being harassed by students of every house. Though, the one time in his first year that he attempted to quietly report a 6th year pureblood Gryffindor to Professor McGonagall for hexing a 2nd year muggleborn Hufflepuff he, and the ‘Puff, had wound up with detentions for falsely accusing one of her Lions. Because, of course, a Gryffindor wouldn’t support “he who must not be named” stance.

If nothing else ever had, the Headmaster backing her decision had proven his Father’s opinion of the man to Tony. Tony understood loyalty to your family, or in this case to your House, but he didn’t understand willful blindness. Also, the situation made all those stories the older students told about the pranks the infamous Gryffindor Marauders had gotten away with before their graduation in ’78; pranks that students in other houses would see themselves expelled over, ring a bit more truthful.

Despite having only ever actually met Sirius, his Mum’s younger cousin, out of that quartet - Tony had been convinced the stories were exaggerated simply from knowing him. That opinion had been reinforced because he hadn’t ever met James, his mother’s other younger cousin, who avoided anyone connected to the Black family, other than Sirius, because of his supposed hatred of anything even slightly leaning towards the ‘dark’. If sheer family loyalty wasn’t enough to get James around blood relatives; then how could he possibly condone any type of bullying violence against others?

In fact, the first time he had met Sirius, only two weeks after arriving in London for Tony and just about to enter his 6th year at Hogwarts for Sirius, the teen had been nothing but kind and respectful to Tony’s new parents. He had seemed to adore both of them; though he apparently didn’t get to see them as often anymore. His Mum had told him after the older teen left that Sirius was getting ‘too old’ and it just wasn’t ‘cool’ to make time for family members. His Father had instead made a passing comment about Charlus and judgemental fools.

For the next three years up until two weeks prior to Tony picking his wand, Sirius had stopped by the London townhouse every few months for at the very least a few hours, if not a whole day, and
told Tony stories about Hogwarts and secret passages and Hogsmeade trips that made the young boy more and more eager to head to the school and make his own best friends.

He was given a much different impression of things upon arriving at the school and hearing about the Marauders’ from older, non-Gryffindor, students who found out about his familial connection to two of the pranksters.

He really hadn’t been sure what to think after that detention.

And he hadn’t been able to ask either. Since his graduation Sirius had only visited Paddington House on a few occasions and always while Tony was away at school. Between the war, the Auror Academy and something his Father referred to as The Order of the Flaming Turkey the older male was far too busy to come around socially anymore just to entertain a child. Tony had been able to read between the lines enough, if a visit was even mentioned, to realize that Sirius was only coming by to keep Tony’s Father apprised of whatever was going on with Dumbledore’s organization.

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**Sunday November 1st 1981**

_Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry_  
_Gryffindor Castle_  
_Hogsmeade, Scotland_

Sunday’s since Tony entered Hogwarts had become a depressing ritual of eating breakfast, watching black envelopes be delivered to devastated students and then reading the Prophet in order to suss out the names in those envelopes and the why, how and where the Death Eaters had gotten their weekend entertainment.

This Sunday was very different for the third year Ravenclaw.

At about ten-thirty the night before Tony had found himself becoming violently ill in his room, beyond grateful not for the first time that he was somehow the only male Eagle in his year and therefore on that technicality had his own room (though, he figured it also it didn’t hurt his eventual dating prospects that he was regularly surrounded by the nine girls who had been sorted into Ravenclaw house his year). It wasn’t until he called Kip, his house-elf, in hopes of avoiding the infirmary that he realized something strange was going on.

Normally, his Mum wouldn’t mind sending the elf with simple potions for a cold or flu - she was a licensed potions mistress, even if she didn’t technically work, and trusted her own brewing over any school medical supplies - to be administered under the Elf’s care. This time all Kip would say, as he fretted over the boy, was that Young Master Tony had to just ‘get it out’. When his magic started blowing things around his room and visibly sparking on his body at eleven o’clock Tony knew something was seriously wrong beyond a general illness. His magic finally stopped reacting at eleven thirty, but he continued to get sick long into the rest of the night.

He finally dragged himself out of bed around nine, still feeling ill but no longer physically demonstrating it and headed to the Great Hall for breakfast. He was more than surprised to walk in and see half the people cheering and laughing and the other half in tears. A glance around the room showed what looked like the entire school in the Hall - though Tony couldn’t help notice quite a few students, from all houses, quietly glaring at the newspaper rather than celebrating.

He silently took his seat at the Ravenclaw table and slid a copy of the Prophet over to him reading the headline in shock. **“He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named Killed! Potter Heir Only Survivor! Harry Potter is Boy-Who-Lived!”**
“Tony?” a soft voice broke into the fog his brain had become as he read the article detailing the deaths of Lord James and Lady Lily Potter, the Earl and Countess of Strathearn, in their Godric’s Hollow vacation home. There weren’t many details in the article; the whole thing read more like wild speculation instead of fact. But one thing was clear - the cousin he had never met was dead and his son had, supposedly, managed to stop the darkest wizard ever known. “Tony? Are you okay?”

He finally turned and looked at Kate Byrne; the same dark haired girl who had first spoken to him the night of his sorting, a muggleborn witch from Dublin who sometime in the last two years had decided to be his shadow.

He actually couldn’t speak.

“Tony?” she tried again and he swallowed compulsively as he realized just what his illness the night before had probably been.

“I’ll be fine,” he finally managed to choke out. “It’s just, James Potter was my cousin. I wasn’t expecting this.”

“Oh! I’m so sorry,” she began rambling and he didn’t have the energy to stop what he could guess, knowing Kate, would most likely be a socially awkward, probably inappropriate and definitely culturally insulting comment that he would be expected to ignore since she was a muggleborn and ‘didn’t know better’ according to Professor Flitwick. “I always forget how all these ridiculous Pureblood families are interconnected and how much stock they put into it. But I mean, your name is Paddington...so you weren’t closely related right?”

“Actually,” he mumbled, still staring at the paper and the picture of the exploded house. “James’ mother was my Mum’s Aunt. My grandfather’s older sister.”

“Oh...Oh! So, like actually closely related,” Kate mumbled, her eyes filling with tears. “Then I really, truly am sorry and you shouldn’t have had to find out like this.”

“Yea,” he agreed, nodding. “I’m gonna go...I have to write...or maybe see if I can firecall home. Anyway, I’m going to go talk to Flitwick,” he finished talking and stood up and began walking out of the Great Hall in the opposite direction of the teacher’s table. He’d approach the professor later - after the initial uproar had begun to die down. For now he had things to think about before he’d be fit to talk to anyone else.

His Mum and Father had spent part of his education before Hogwarts catching him up on the theories behind ritual magic and family magic - things he normally would have started learning as soon as he could speak if he hadn’t been brought into the Paddington family so late. His illness, the thing he had to ‘get out’ the night before, hadn’t been a flu...it had in fact had all the symptoms of his own hook of the Black Family Magic being ripped at and forcefully used to power a ritual. He had gotten sick because he had been an unknowing participant in a ritual conducted by someone who both didn’t have the authority to call upon it in whole, so not Arcturus or Sirius, and someone who had obviously never even meditated on said Magic. If they had, they would have been able to anticipate the level of violent power contained within it. They would have known, and hopefully cared, about what they were doing to their other family members.

Tony was trying very hard not to think about what shape his baby brother, all of five years old as of the day before, was potentially in. The only reason he wasn’t in a fully blind panic was that no matter what their own Family Magic wouldn’t kill them outright.

The paper said his youngest cousin Harold had, somehow, destroyed Lord Voldemort; but Tony’s very core said James had somehow used the entirety of the Black Family Magic, and presumably the
Potter Family Magic as well since he’d have access to that first and foremost, to power a ritual to eradicate the Dark Wizard.

When Tony was called home later that afternoon and arrived in his Father’s home office via the Headmaster’s fireplace he was pulled into a tight hug, reassured immediately that Crispian was fine and seconds later felt himself burst into tears of grief for someone he had never met but could physically feel the loss of as keenly as that of his birth parents.

**Sunday November 8th 1981**

*Paddington Townhouse*
*27 Pembridge Square*
*Notting Hill*
*London, England*

What followed was a surprisingly calm, if grief stricken, week. All three members of the household with Black blood were slowly putting themselves back together and learning to cope with having a member of their family, literally, ritually ripped from their magic.

His Mum instructed him not to tell anyone what he had felt that night. If the ‘Light-side’ wanted to speculate that a fifteen-month old baby had destroyed Voldemort, let them. If muggleborns wanted to talk about how it had to have been the ‘greatly powerful Lily Evans-Potter’ since she died after James based on the DMLE forensic report, let them. There were no more Potter’s old enough to have noticed anything with their magic; James had been the Patriarch for six months and as a result the only one to have any command over the Potter Family Magic. And not one Black was talking. But anyone who had at least a Black great-grandparent would have felt something that night - felt it stronger the closer their claim on the Family Magic was. And if they had felt it at all and had been properly educated they would have known what it was; even if they chose to pretend they didn’t and would rather believe Dumbledore’s explanation of a mere babe being able to deal the killing blow due to his mother’s sacrifice.

And if Arcturus was now in a coma, possibly for the rest of his life according to Healers, no one was going to allow that news to leak either.

“As if a mother has never thrown herself in front of a killing curse, or any curse, for their child before,” his Mum had snapped as she read the paper the day after the funeral. “If that was all that was needed then Voldemort would have been killed years ago! James called the family magic, both magics he had even an ounce of claim to and ritually smited the bastard. He had to have had it planned for months to get the calculations right. He just had to wait for the right circumstance. But Merlin forbid we give any credit to Pureblood history and ritual. We might make the ‘Dark Side’ look like they had a leg to stand on,” she continued ranting throughout breakfast while Tony, Crispian and their Father looked on indulgently. “And do not get me started on this bull-shit with Sirius!”

“Yes dear,” Clive responded. “I’ve already gotten a barrister looking into Sirius’ case. Unfortunately, I’m being stonewalled on all sides. Crouch and his ilk are running with the ‘popular opinion’ that Sirius was disowned and therefore doesn’t have the protection of his House. Without Arcturus to throw his weight around as well, I’m not certain what I’m going to be able to do.”

“Are we going to get a new baby Mum?” Crispian suddenly asked with the innocent curiosity of a five year old. “The one whose Mummy and Daddy died?”

“No Cris, we aren’t getting a new baby. Harry has closer relatives than us,” Clive answered his
younger son. “Perhaps we should continue this conversation in private,” he added to Lyra, gesturing at the two boys sitting next to them.

“Right,” she mumbled and shook her head. “Anthony, you’ll be heading back to school today so go make sure you’re all packed. And please take your brother upstairs with you,” she added, obviously dismissing the two children.

The next few years followed as textbook an example of a Hogwarts education as possible for Anthony Paddington. He played Chaser for Ravenclaw’s Quidditch team starting that same third year after an injury over the winter holiday grounded a 7th year for the rest of the year.

He became Prefect in his 5th year and Head-boy in his 7th; graduating with the highest grades in both his entire year. He never did get those ‘best friends’ that Sirius once had him aspiring to find - sticking mostly to Kate’s somewhat forced companionship. And even that fell by the wayside after their OWLs with a combination of Tony receiving an internship he couldn’t talk about and her finally realizing he wasn’t interested in dating.

He never forgot what his Mum told him that first day at Paddington House; they had a role in society. They had responsibilities that went beyond just being Witches and Wizards. And by the time he graduated he had taken those to heart leading him to enter the Auror Academy in September of 1986 following his graduation from Hogwarts with a career plan that had been begun being outlined for him two years prior.
Chapter Notes

Well - had some free time. Edited some stuff I wasn't happy with in the original draft of this part. Posted. Voila.

Tuesday August 3rd 1993

International Confederation of Wizards European Headquarters
Interpol Magic Branch - European Regional Unit #4
Vicovaro Castle
Rome, Italy

When Tony arrived at work he was expecting a normal Tuesday. He was not expecting to pull into a parking spot and immediately see the most junior member of his team laying in wait. And yet, there he stood, frantically scanning the area looking for something; Tony assumed it was him.

Groaning to himself, because it was far too early to have to deal with nervous twenty-one year old children from Ohio, Tony got out of the car and begrudgingly waved in the other agent’s direction as he grabbed his bag and morning coffee out of the vehicle. The borderline frantic flight across the lot that was made to Tony’s side quickly turned Tony’s annoyance into concern that perhaps something serious had happened.

“Everything alright Jeff?”

“Uhh, yes? No. Maybe? I’m not sure. I just know Chief Mason wanted to see you as soon as you came in,” came the nervously stammered reply.

Tony just stared at the ‘kid’, taking in his nervous twitching, and wondered not for the first time how he had passed the U.S. Magical Federal Investigation Academy and not only gotten a badge with them, but a posting to the IMB before he had two full years on the job. There were bets around the Castle that he was either related to someone high up in either the States or the ICW...or had pissed someone off that was also pissed at someone in the office here. It had taken Tony two and a half years to get an assignment with IMB and even that was considered ridiculously early in his career; the last person to do so from the U.K. was Amelia Bones in the late ‘60s.

Just over two years later and Tony was still marginally surprised he hadn’t been assigned to Unit #2 in Stockholm which was typically where new agents went to learn the ropes. It was too cold for anyone to request, but was a stable enough region both magically and muggle that it didn’t tend to cause problems for law enforcement. He was certain the prime assignment had to do with Croaker’s influence and the fact that he was working on his ICW Mastery in ‘Defense & Law’. He theoretically could have floo’d or portkey’d into the Castle for any classroom work he needed to complete, but this arrangement made his life about ten times easier.

“Did Mason seem angry? Is that why you’re down here trying to give me plenty of warning?”

“He didn’t seem thrilled,” Jeff admitted as the two began heading into the Castle, waving badges at the security desk as they passed.
“Okay,” Tony responded and stopped in the middle of the stairway leading to their third floor bullpen area. “As far as I know I haven’t done anything to piss anyone off. There’s no movement on any cases right now either; just the usual surveillance. So exactly what aren’t you telling me?”

He watched as a flicker of desperation and nerves came over the kid’s face and raised an eyebrow staring him down until Thompson finally answered, “Sirius Black escaped from Azkaban last night. The news was released an hour ago to all departments and ten minutes after that is when Mason stormed into the bullpen and loudly requested you be sent up to him when you got in.”

“And you made the connection between the two because?” Tony questioned carefully, continuing his walk and glancing around the faces in the office once they entered. Thankfully, no one was paying him any more attention than usual.

“You’re the only person from the UK with O.C.,” Jeff replied as they stopped at Tony’s desk.

“But I’m not the only person from the UK assigned to Unit 4,” Tony reminded the younger Agent. “Mason got promoted to Unit Chief last month. This doesn’t necessarily mean anything. Hell, we don’t even operate in the UK,” he continued, at this point reaching for straws because he figured Thompson was correct in why their boss wanted to see him right away. “I know! Maybe I’m the new Lead Agent for the Task Force.”

“You’re not the new Lead Agent Tony,” Jeff replied sarcastically. “You haven’t even finished your ICW Mastery.”

“Hey, it could happen,” Tony shot back, even if he knew he was deluding himself on that point. “Alright, let me get settled and I’ll go see what the bossman wants,” he added, prompted by Jeff’s look. “Now...go find something productive to do,” he added and pointed at the younger man’s desk across the room before dropping down into his own seat.

Once the other agent left his desk Tony glared at the stack of new surveillance reports he had planned on going through this morning and tried to find anything remotely time sensitive that could delay him from going to see Unit Chief Martin Mason on the fifth, and top, floor of the Castle where all the administrative offices were located. It wasn’t until he had skimmed the first six that he realized, unfortunately, there had been zero developments with any of the agents they had undercover in the various crime rings or Mafia families - muggle and magical - for the region of Europe Unit 4 covered.

Tony’s job, as one of the youngest, and therefore inexperienced, operatives on the task force was to catalogue surveillance reports the undercover agents and CI’s submitted bi-weekly and look for patterns and connections between them so no surprises cropped up. It wasn’t exciting and it was far different then what he had been doing in the UK; but he also knew it was important work. Having been undercover himself when he was still working in the UK he had relied on whomever was doing there what he was doing here to keep his cover airtight.

That it gave him time to work on his ICW Mastery research, as the job utilized typical office hours, was a bonus.

With a final, resigned, sigh Tony stood up from his desk and headed out of the office area the Task Force was assigned.

Once he reached the fifth floor and the Chief’s office Tony glanced around for the man’s secretary, surprised to find the harpy wasn’t at her desk and instead Mason’s door stood wide open giving the older man an easy view of the hallway. A mere five seconds later he heard the normally good
natured man near bellow, “Paddington! Get the fuck in here now!”

“Boss?” Tony asked, after hurrying into the room and closing the door behind him. “Everything alright?”

Martin Mason was not a man to be fucked with; and that was exactly how he had introduced himself to Tony in June of 1991 the day Anthony Paddington, newly transferred to Unit 4 from the Department of Mysteries, began his job under the then Lead Agent of the Organized Crime Task Force out of Unit 4. He might be a good three inches shorter and and carry at least twenty pounds less muscle than Tony; but he had also been an active field agent since 1968 - first with the United States’ Magical Federal Investigation Bureau before transferring to Interpol’s Magic Branch. That he held degrees in both magical and muggle law only helped the man know every loophole there was to catch criminals and throw the book at them.

And he’d been in a lousy mood since he got his promotion a month ago. In fact, when the Regional Director for Europe had arrived and gave Mason his promotion the man cursed a blue streak and threw a glass vase across the room at said Director because, “I shouldn’t have done my god damned job so well. I’m only 45 fucking years old and you’re putting me out to pasture. What the fuck?!”

Tony saw each and every bit of that man at the current moment.

“Sit down Tony,” his boss finally replied after a moment of silence, gesturing towards a seat in front of his desk. “I’ve only been here a little over an hour and already I’ve got a headache.”

“Sorry?”

“It’s not entirely your fault,” the older dark haired man admitted, lighting one of his constant cigarettes and leaning back in his chair. “I got a phone call this morning. An actual, honest to Merlin, phone call. It was from Amelia Bones.”

Tony visibly winced at that information. It hadn’t ever been totally confirmed for Tony, but one of the first rumors he had been told upon arriving at the Unit was of the failed engagement between two up and comers in the IMB. Apparently as a “Brit” he should be warned; Martin Mason and Amelia Bones had been hot, heavy and engaged...then Voldemort had become more than just a run of the mill dark wizard in ‘72 and started really tearing up the UK so Amelia had left the United States IMB Unit she was assigned to and headed back to the British Auror Office. The fact that she had left while Mason was deep undercover with the Bonanno and Massino Families in Brooklyn and hadn’t left any information except her engagement ring was all anyone really needed to know as to how that relationship had ended.

“So anyway, here’s me having a nice cup of coffee in my office. I’m getting ready to go over the reams of parchment work this fucking desk job generates and low and behold the phone rings. The phone that only ever rings for the really big emergencies Tony. That phone.”

“Yes Sir,” Tony responded respectfully, staring the man, one he genuinely did respect and like, straight in the eyes.

“And to my eternal surprise it’s Milly. Now, the last time I spoke to her was...oh, I’d say, about twenty years ago. Two days after I finally got out from a two year undercover gig and realized my fiance was no longer in our house. A year and a half after she had left no less. So, my morning has been shit.”

“Yes Sir,” Tony replied again, half wishing he had made a bet on whether or not the rumor about his boss and the head of the British DMLE was true and half wishing the floor would swallow him up.
“So, Milly proceeds to tell me that Sirius Black escaped from Azkaban...and then wanted to know if you knew where he was.”

Tony waited for him to keep speaking and when he realized that instead his boss appeared to be waiting for him to answer he couldn’t help his reply, “I’m sorry sir. But was there as a question in there?”

“If I wasn’t so pissed I’d almost be proud that I finally dragged a smartass out of your stuffy upper-class British brain. But I am pissed so, do you know where Sirius Black is?”

“Sir, I didn’t even know Sirius had escaped until I got here this morning,” Tony replied honestly. “I’m not even sure why anyone would be asking me about him. I haven’t even seen the man since I was eleven.”

“Amelia’s asking, through me, because of the 2nd Heir ring you’re wearing,” the older man responded and pointed at the middle finger of Tony’s wand hand. “Apparently, you didn’t hide it well enough in the week between receiving it and heading out here so she knew exactly who you were.”

“Fuck,” Tony hissed under his breath reflexively and then winced. “Sorry Sir.”

“Don’t apologize to me,” Martin said with a shrug. “I’d probably be cursing if I was in your position too. I was surprised as hell when I saw it on your finger to begin with - all my sources in England still tell me that the Malfoy heir is also the Black heir. I just don’t know now if they meant magically or socially. You Brits are damned confusing. In the US we’ve got our Patriarchs or Matriarchs and our Heirs; but that’s only ‘cause of the Family Wells. We don’t have any of that Ancient and Noble House ‘I’m more special then you’ bull shit.”

“Yes, but in the States even magicals think it’s barbaric to marry your cousin sooo,” Tony replied and trailed off with a shrug. “Honestly, you can ask about it since you can see the Heir ring but I can’t answer; the details are under a Secrecy clause that our former Patriarch invoked on his Will through the Family Magic. The clause will only break under two conditions; neither has been met yet.”

“And Sirius?”

“Like I said, I honestly have no idea,” Tony replied again. “No secrecy clause on that. And, no secrecy clause on the fact that the Black Family is currently without a sworn Patriarch...so no one is forcing me to lie about knowing either,” he added, wondering if the older Agent would pick up on the stressed word.

“Yes, but you’re also the Heir. No one could force you to lie,” Mason pointed out with a raised eyebrow.

“Sir, can I be blunt?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, are you muggleborn?”

“We don’t refer to it as such in the U.S. but, no I’m not. I’m second gen. My father is first gen and my mother is mundane. Why?”

“Okay, that’s early enough that you might not realize the significance of Family Magic, or Family Wells in the U.S., since as a second generation Wizard you’ve only got your Patriarch and you, as
the Heir. A Patriarch has control over the Family Magic - full control. The Heir can access the Family Magic when necessary. Blood connected kin can access the Magic with permission from the Patriarch for rituals or ceremonies. With each subsequent generation of blood family the Well grows deeper and richer as each blood family member’s magic feeds it and it subsequently strengthens the cores of those same family members. It’s cyclical in a way. A Patriarch’s job is to protect and nurture his family - thereby strengthening bonds and keeping the Well healthy. A Patriarch could, theoretically seal something as a secret among his family using the Family Magic, but anything that was completely morally repugnant to a family member could be overcome because of that vow to protect and nurture.”

“Cyclical,” Mason murmured and seemed to be thinking of what Tony said. “So, while a Patriarch could secure a secrecy oath about the location of, let’s say for arguments sake, himself, if his cop cousin found the idea of hiding a mass murder deplorable he could break the secrecy oath in order to turn the mass murderer in?”

“Actually yes,” Tony replied and nodded. “But in my case, because of a many things I can’t get into due to the secrecy oaths from Arcturus, we don’t have a sworn Patriarch. That’s common knowledge.”

“You don’t have a Patriarch...but you’re the heir?”

“I said we don’t have a sworn Patriarch...there’s a difference.”

“This is why I never got married or had kids,” Mason responded, shaking his head. “Too many generations and this shit gets confusing.”

“Of course sir. That’s why,” Tony replied to his boss with a serious expression.

“I take back what I said about being proud of the smartass I dragged out of you,” Mason shot back. “Okay, Tony, I believe you about Sirius,” he added a few seconds later. “But that wasn’t the only reason I’ve got a headache or why I called you up here.”

Now Tony was concerned, because for as pissed off as his boss had looked when he walked into the office was exactly how tired he looked now, “Sir?”

“You’ve been ‘requested’ back to England.”

Tony froze and his mind began spinning different scenarios as to why that would be; Amelia Bones had left her tour with the IMB early, because of a war, and had never been invited back. Though thinking back on it Tony wondered how much that had to do with her leaving and how much of it had to do with Martin Mason being a rockstar with IMB and hurt feelings. In case it was the first though, Tony liked working with the international organization and while he had no plans to extend past his initial four year tour he also didn’t want to burn any bridges.

“Requested?”

“More like ordered,” the Unit Chief admitted with a frown. “Amelia had requests of both her Head Auror Scrimgeour and the Lead Unspeakable Croaker to get you back in country ASAP.”

“Really Sir?” Tony asked, frowning severely. “I told you, I haven’t seen Sirius since I was eleven and while I liked my cousin; it wasn’t as though we spent much time socializing outside of my house.”

“I wasn’t given all the particulars. However, Milly gave me the impression that there might be
something else going on. She seemed particularly peeved about something with the Black situation. All I do know is that her first call was to the Lyon HQ and you’ve been cleared by Interpol’s Director to take nine months away from the Unit to handle whatever you’re needed for in England.”

“Nine months? That’s incredibly specific.”

“Amelia said something about Hogwarts, a magical artifact and Department oversight. Even she didn’t know everything - apparently Croaker literally only told her enough to stress the seriousness of his request. Does that mean anything to you?”

Tony froze and swallowed before nodding without saying anything. There was literally only one reason Croaker would mention Hogwarts and Oversight specifically to ‘explain’ to Tony why he needed to come back to England. The Department of Mysteries had found a new potential and Tony was being sent in as a recruiter.

It was the mention of a ‘magical artifact’ that was confusing the young agent.

That’s when something else registered with him and he asked, “Wait, you said the requests were from Croaker and Scrimgeour?”

“Yes, why?”

“Well, I’m not technically an Auror anymore. I transferred to the D.O.M. in ’89 once I finished my Defense Mastery and was qualified to be an Unspeakable. The DMLE and the D.O.M. are as different as your mundane FBI and CIA. I thought Madam Bones was just combining the questions about Sirius with Croaker’s request to save time and avoid internationally ruffled feathers. The man is brilliant, but he’s not exactly a people person.”

“She...didn’t get into details,” Mason admitted. “And I didn’t realize the divisions were so separate or I would have questioned that myself. I’ve pretty much stayed away from anything to do with England for a while,” he added. “And once I realized that she had done an end run around me up to Lyon and my protests weren’t going to be heard I really, really just wanted to get off the phone.”

“Right,” Tony muttered. “So, I guess I’m heading back to England. When?”

“Like I said, ASAP. Spend the rest of today going through your files and pass them out among the other analysts depending on who you think would be the best fit for your assets. Then pack up your desk and get yourself sorted for the move back.”

“What about my Mastery work?”

Mason exhaled loudly and cursed, “I forgot about that. Damnit. Okay. Let me see what I can do and I’ll get back to you by the end of the day. I promise. How many more classroom hours do you need?”

“I was supposed to start Contracts 3 and take another legal writing and research course this semester. After that, I have Criminal 3, International Politics, Political Ethics.”

“Political Ethics is a thing?!”

“No, I think that’s why there’s a course on it.”

“That has to be it. Because, I did not have to take anything resembling that in the 80s. Anyway, jokes aside, you were spreading the Mastery out over four years correct?”
“Yes,” Tony agreed. “Why?”

“Would you hate using the year you’re back in England and do all your research and writing work for your dissertation - I’ll see if the Professors will stay in correspondence during the year and allow that to count for your legal writing course. And then when you come back next year, you can finish the four actual classes you need.”

“I guess that will work,” Tony responded quietly. “Thank you sir.”

“No, thank you Tony. I’ll be sure to see you before you leave. I haven’t given up on convincing you to stay on with us after your tour is done.”

“We’ll see Sir,” the younger replied cheekily to the older in what had become an almost daily exchange since Tony’s arrival two years earlier when Mason had apparently decided that he saw something in Tony and took him under his wing; handing the younger agent intelligence reports to analyze rather than sticking him in a corner doing busy work or filing parchment.

As Tony drove the half-hour back into the city of Rome, and his apartment, that night he couldn’t help but think of everything he had pushed aside during the day as he only worried about clearing his desk properly so the Agents he had been overseeing were given into the best possible hands.

Sirius had escaped Azkaban. And for the life of him Tony couldn’t think of a single reason why after thirteen years the man had finally decided enough was enough; because, Tony assumed knowing Sirius, if he could escape now he could have escaped any time before that as well.

The thought sent Tony back to being thirteen years old and hearing that the cousin, he could admit now, he had been half in hero worship puppy love with had been imprisoned for the mass murder of thirteen muggles and one of his best friends.

The thought that he had betrayed James Potter had never once crossed Tony’s mind even then - that part had to be a case of misinformation.

It was the street explosion that he wasn’t entirely certain of. Tony didn’t think it had been on purpose; if it happened the way it had been reported in the Prophet. Sirius had always been quick to anger and act when he was younger according to all sources; but by the time the incident had happened Sirius had been an Auror and a licensed Hit Wizard set on the same path Tony himself had eventually taken. If the war hadn’t been on, by that point Sirius would have been an Unspeakable himself. They didn’t just hand those qualifications to anyone. You had to be intelligent yes...but more than that you had to be wise. You had to have the capabilities to look at an entire situation and see all potential outcomes.

Something had driven Sirius onto that street and he had missed something vital in the process. That’s why those people had died.

After Tony graduated from the Auror Academy in December of ‘87 one of the first things he did was attempt to access Sirius’ case file and trial transcript. All he had found was that it was Classified Level 10; literally only the Chief Warlock and the Minister could access the files. Two days later he found himself being questioned by Minister Bagnold about why he was interested in Sirius Black’s case file and he quickly realized the woman didn’t know about their familial connection. He verbally tap danced around the subject; playing it off as being the only new Auror who had qualified as a Hit Wizard in his class he was interested in Sirius Black’s case file and he quickly realized the woman didn’t know about their familial connection. He verbally tap danced around the subject; playing it off as being the only new Auror who had qualified as a Hit Wizard in his class he was interested in Sirius as he had also been the only one from his class to qualify for Hit Wizard status. Bagnold had been quickly convinced that Tony was just another empty headed jock with a wand and let him leave.
Even after he finished his first year with the Aurors, and completed his Defense Mastery, which finally allowed him to transfer to the Department of Mysteries in June of 1989 Tony still couldn’t find out any information as to exactly what had happened that Halloween weekend in ‘81.

It wasn’t until Arcturus Black finally passed away at the end of May in 1991 and his will was read that anything even began making a bit of sense. It was in Gringotts, under a Family Secrecy Seal that the Goblins activated with the reading of Arcturus’ Will that Tony learned what his Father had known for years.

It was there, sitting with his mother Lyra, Narcissa Malfoy, Andromeda Tonks and Nymphadora Tonks - the only blood family close enough or old enough to be invited - that they learned who the new Patriarch and Heir of the Black Family were. The problem lay in the fact that Sirius couldn’t swear allegiance to the Family from Azkaban. He couldn’t take the ring and corral the Family Magic. The stipulations set by Arcturus, apparently through a final ritual that had resulted in his death, were that Sirius was the presumptive Lord Black until his death or his 35th birthday; whichever came first. After that Anthony was to take up the mantle and bring the Family to heel.

The secrecy seal was in effect until either Sirius or Tony took up the ring. Arcturus was apparently certain his grandson was innocent and was adamant that a Malfoy would never hold the title of Lord Black. If something were to happen to both Sirius and Tony before either could claim the ring Arcturus had, again in ritual, arranged so that the Family Well would dissipate completely.

Watching Narcissa throw a fit over that information, especially when she learned that she couldn’t inform her husband or son of the facts, in front of the Goblins was almost amusing for the twenty-three year old Unspeakable. It was amusing right up until everything caught up with Tony.

A Family Magic Well without a Patriarch to corral it and filter it among the family was essentially a Well of wild magic being bounced around throughout the cores of those who hold a blood connection to it. Sirius’ death or his 35th birthday potentially meant anywhere from one to five years of wild magic that would need to be brought under control. Or, worse case scenario hundreds, upon hundreds, of years of Magic of their forefathers sent back to into the ether.

He hadn’t been able to stop himself from cursing James Potter in his head after that meeting. The man might have, potentially (as they still didn’t know exactly what had happened), defeated Voldemort using the Family Magic; but he had also deprived Arcturus of at least another generation as Patriarch. The man was only 90 when he passed; their Well could have potentially kept him alive for 75, if not 100, more years.

And now Tony was the one being forced to hold the bag if he couldn’t prove his cousin’s innocence and free him legally. Something Tony’s Father, who had much more political currency, had quietly spent the last thirteen years attempting to do and still hadn’t been able to get anyone to publically admit Sirius had never even had a trial.

“Well,” he whispered, staring out the window of his apartment. “England here I come.”
Part Four

Friday August 6th 1993

British Ministry of Magic
Department of Mysteries - Level 9
Whitehall
London, England

Tony had wasted almost no time in the twelve hours since he arrived from Rome; he had only taken enough time to unpack and sleep in his own home the night before and was now once again covered head to toe in his Unspeakable robes. The fact that Croaker had been part of ordering his return - after the man had been the one to set up his assignment in Rome in the first place - told him to report in right away and if he hadn’t arrived back into the UK until after ten at night he would have come straight here.

Standing in the elevator surrounded by the morning rush he couldn’t help but glance around him and roll his eyes at the sight of the wary looks that were being thrown his way by the other Ministry employees. It always amused him how scared Magicals seemed to be when they saw a set of D.O.M. robes; if they knew that even the secretaries in the department wore the damned things outside of the D.O.M. they probably wouldn’t be quite so nervous every time they saw them. The same could be said for the actual term ‘Unspeakable’ as well; everyone who worked for the D.O.M. from the lowest file clerk to Croaker himself was referred to as that outside of Level 9.

It was simple plausible deniability.

The lift announced ‘Level 9 - Department of Mysteries’ and Tony breathed a sigh of relief to be off the creaky, crowded magical elevator. He stepped through the doors and waited as one other person, robed as he was, stepped off behind him.

Once the doors had closed on the anteroom, blocking him from sight of any Ministry workers, Tony quickly pulled the hood off of his head allowing the obscuring spell to cancel and leaving him standing in what was actually just a plain set of black over robes - the equivalent of an overcoat. The only thing that gave them any further distinction, without the obscuring spell being active, was a small crest over the left breast - also in all black - of the Department of Mysteries. The biggest irony to the robes, also something that most Ministry employees didn’t know, was that no one who worked for the D.O.M. actually wore them for anything other than moving through the Ministry outside of Level 9.

The robes were designed for the protection of Department of Mysteries employees as they didn’t actually work for the Ministry, despite being housed there. A fact that seemed to have been conveniently forgotten or deliberately ignored over the years; Croaker still received orders from the Minister on a regular basis as though the Lead Unspeakable was someone that could be directed to do anything by anyone other than the Queen herself. Tony was convinced the only reason Fudge had never followed up on why those orders were ignored since his election three years earlier was sheer cowardice; apparently, Bagnold had pushed the issue on more than one occasion and had been shut down hard. There may have been memory modifications involved according to rumor.

Annoyance at having to to wear the ridiculous robes aside; they had their uses as the easiest way to keep an eye on what the Ministry was doing for the PM’s office was to exist in the belly of the beast, so to speak. So the Unspeakables perpetuated an air of unstable danger and spread rumors about “the locked room” and let the sheep of Magical Britain believe what they wanted about the Department.
“Hello Anthony,” a soft female voice, the person who had followed him off the lift, greeted him with a smile. “I didn’t expect to see you for a few more days.”

“Mrs. Portree,” Tony greeted Croaker’s long time secretary with a deep bow. The woman had run the Department’s highest Agent and office with an iron fist for at least sixty years resulting in most employees deferring to her as though she was Croaker himself. As far as Tony was concerned she was; she had married the man afterall. “Sir Portree said ASAP. Plus, Scrimgeour requested me too.”

She paused where she had been tapping out the code so they could enter the D.O.M. employee entrance, which allowed them to bypass the dangerous trap rooms set up off the anteroom in case someone broke in or just simply tried to go past the anteroom without an escort to the Public Entrance, and looked back at him, “Scrimgeour? He can’t do that.”

“Yes, well,” Tony replied shrugging, because he too didn’t understand how that had happened. “I figured if the big boss didn’t shut him down then maybe he wants me to have an ear to the ground.”

“Possibly,” she agreed, finishing the code and walking through the archway with Tony following into the Department.

“Now, go settle in at your desk, it’s in the same place as your squad refused to replace you, and check in with Agent Dunkirk - I’m not sure if Elias let him know he was calling you back. I’ll let him know you’re here and send you a notice when he’s ready to meet with you.”

Tony nodded and watched for a moment as she headed up the stairs to the second level before turning his gaze to the room he hadn’t stepped into for over two years now.

The employee entrance always reminded Tony of a smaller, circular, version of the lobby of Grand Central Station - if you placed the ceiling of Hogwarts great hall on top of it. The area they walked into acted as a staff lounge and dining hall with archways and stairwells (up and down) branching off of it, leading to the actual working areas of the Department.

Upstairs was the most straight forward portion of the Department. There were offices for Administration, conference rooms and the ‘Public Entrance’ for whomever had clearance to be escorted into the Department. It was also the only floor that anyone who was not an Unspeakable could access.

The researchers, or mad scientists depending on what they were working on at the time, were a floor below in a strictly regulated, highly secure, laboratory setting. The first time he saw the labs he was admittedly surprised, having seen the trap rooms first. When he expressed that surprise to another Unspeakable they had laughed and replied, “Do you think we’re actually insane? As if anyone could get a single thing done in a dark, dusty, cluttered work space. Besides, nothing in there is long lasting or fatal; even those time turners don’t go further than five minutes. It would take a lot of magical discharge to have those rooms be more than a annoying deterrent to thieves until our field agents could snap them up.”

Researchers in the D.O.M. fell into any category possible - it was pure R&D into various magical disciplines with the sole intent of advancement ‘for the good of the realm’ - be that magical or muggle. Tony knew, in fact, that there was an entire sub-division of the Medical Unit devoted entirely towards developing a working treatment, or cure, for various muggle diseases using magical treatment and that most of their failure came from finding a way for the medicine to work without the presence of a magical core.

Tony belonged to the Investigation Branch of the Department which was on the same level as the lounge. The investigative branch of the D.O.M. was where recruits that qualified for field operations
were assigned. They handled investigations into magical crimes that either heavily influenced the muggle world or threatened the security of the United Kingdom. They also operated as spies and assassins when necessary. The squads, usually made up of 5 to 7 members, were assigned to a maze of bullpens and offices that branched off the circular room in multiple directions - interspersed with conference rooms, file rooms and evidence lockers. It had taken Tony almost an hour to find his squad room and desk assignment his first day of work - and now he knew he could get there in two minutes by taking the first hallway and then the first two lefts off that same hallway.

The thing you learned if you managed to earn a place in the Department of Mysteries - or Mi7 to the British Government - was that you will never hold another job in Magical Britain. You were changed too fundamentally by the time you were an Unspeakable. You might have a ‘cover’ but you were always an Unspeakable. You could move around the Department; but you could never be truly employed elsewhere. It was for that reason that gaining a place in the D.O.M. was so difficult - you not only had to be highly qualified in your field of choice, but you had to place your allegiance to Crown, Country and Magic itself above the idea of a separate ‘Magical Britain’.

As far as an Unspeakable was concerned, there was no ‘Magical Britain’ - the statute of secrecy was one thing, but an entirely separate government that only cared about other magicals was quite another. To an Unspeakable there was only the realm of Great Britain. There was only the kingdom of the once and future king and the promise of Avalon. To an Unspeakable the safety and welfare of all her citizens was the only concern.

The one thing that could even attempt to take equal importance, or override an Unspeakable’s vows, was Family.

And unfortunately most Magicals these days, even those that don’t believe in the idea of blood purity, have the tendency to look at Muggles as though they are curious backwards creatures. And they usually include the Queen in that assessment if they even remember that they have a Queen.

It was difficult to become an Unspeakable; but it eventually became the easiest choice you had ever made as a citizen of the Crown if you had the strength of character to get that far.

Recruitment for the D.O.M. began while a student was still school age; usually following the results of their OWLs. The Department recruited from all over the United Kingdom including home-schooled students, Hogwarts and the three public magic day schools in Belfast, Edinburgh and London. That was how Tony’s path had started.

What made the Department unique in Magical Britain was their stance on squibs and muggles; because, the D.O.M. didn’t only recruit active witches and wizards. They also tracked GCSE and A-Level exams and tracked the high scores back to find squibs and even the siblings of muggleborns. If you knew about magic and you hit the correct criteria you were considered for a spot as a Potential.

Two weeks after completing his OWLs Croaker himself showed up at Paddington House, fully robed, completely obscured and looking dangerously intimidating, in London and told Tony simply, “You’ve got Potential young man. How would you like an internship?” The fact that his Uncle was standing behind the Unspeakable nodding almost frantically had Tony agreeing to the offer without asking for any details.

It turned out to be the best decision of his life.

After he took the secrecy vow that made him physically unable to speak of anything regarding the Department, to anyone who wasn’t an Unspeakable themselves, he learned that the reason his Uncle’s only ‘job’ now is politics and estate management, despite his hatred of anyone who just sits around doing nothing but play with their money, is because he was actually an Unspeakable himself.
Lord Clive Paddington was in fact ‘Blackthorn’, one of the D.O.M.’s most active Ministry spies for Her Majesty’s government. He later learned that Croaker was Sir Elias Portree; his Uncle’s best friend, and someone he had known for years at that point.

Over Tony’s final two years at Hogwarts his duties included reporting back on the school’s stagnating curriculum, any intelligence he could learn about the families of certain students who had prior ties to Voldemort and literally anything he could find out about Dumbledore’s movements. It was the only time that Tony was actually happy he had more acquaintances then friends; there was no one he was close enough to that would notice his snooping. During the summers before graduation he spent a few hours a day on the public level of the Department and was assigned research papers and smaller experiments that were designed to increase his overall knowledge, teach him strategic thinking and, in some cases, test his patience levels.

A Potential is also physically trained and Tony had been incredibly glad that he had always been athletic, even after starting Hogwarts. The seven other Potentials in his ‘class’ had fallen into the magical mindset towards physical activity - even the two muggleborns. Three had chosen to drop out of the program before the end of the summer following OWLs simply because of the physical requirements.

By the time he had completed his NEWTs his class of seven had been whittled down to three - two Magicals and a Squib, with Tony being the only Hogwarts student. It was then that they were asked what they wanted to do with their lives. The squib, David, wanted to be a doctor. The witch, Elizabeth, wanted to be a spell crafter. And Tony wanted to be in law enforcement.

The D.O.M. would make that happen for them - and from that point on their paths back to the department to take up their roles as Unspeakables were laid out to them - from the Auror Academy and a Mastery in Defense Against the Dark Arts for Tony to Oxford University and Johns Hopkins Medical School for David.

That Tony also qualified as a Hit Wizard after the Academy and had been furthering his education by pursuing an ICW mastery in ‘Defense & Law’ (the equivalent of muggle law school) only helped broaden his bankable traits within the D.O.M. itself.

When he entered his squad room a few minutes after having left Mrs. Portree’s company he wasn’t entirely surprised to find it empty. The seven desks were in their usual formation around the room, his being the only one with a clean surface, when he entered the small room; the team he belonged to specialized in smuggling operations - from potions to people - and that had led to them being out of the office or even the country more often than not for the two years he had been an active member of the team before he left for Rome in the summer of ‘91.

A glance at the team calendar hanging on the wall by the board displaying any active investigations told Tony that three of the team, including his team leader Agent Kelly Greengrass - Unspeakable ‘Ransom’ - was in France chasing down what looked like a lead on the exporter of a new designer drug that was combining cocaine with powdered pepper-up and selling it on the muggle blackmarket resulting in almost instant overdose for muggles no matter the dosage. The other three were testifying at the Parliament building.

That was Tony’s favorite difference to working in the D.O.M. over the Auror Corps; he didn’t have to deal with the Wizengamot. The researchers usually testified there, when called to explain some type of magical event, as the Wizengamot only cared about things that affected other magicals and Magical Britain specifically. The Investigative Agents testified to a special tribunal, pre-scheduled once a month for hearings with trial dates set as needed, made up of three Justices of the High Court that the Queen herself had cleared to be told the truth of Magic.
Tony immediately pulled off his outer robes and hung them up on the wall hook nearby, leaving him in a pair of dark jeans, white button down shirt, grey waistcoat and tie. More comfortable without the heavy robes he unslung his messenger bag from across his chest, dropped it next to his desk and set about the office to handle some ‘house-keeping’ duties until he received notice that he should head to Croaker’s office upstairs.

An hour later he had sent a note to the Agent in Charge of the Investigative Branch, Agent Robert ‘Shard’ Dunkirk, letting him know Tony was back in England, completed the list of floo calls left on the desk of Josh ‘Lionclaw’ Cross, the team second-in-command and was about to head to the phone bank in the shielded room to get a start on the phone call list when a letter appeared in his in-box. The letter was sealed with Croaker’s sigil so he immediately dropped the list back to Josh’s desk and grabbed his own letter, almost laughing at the contents.

*Canis Star,*
I’m waiting on you now.
Croaker

“Really old man,” Tony ranted as soon as he entered Croaker’s office not even ten minutes later; having been waived in without a comment by the Lead Unspeakable’s wife. “Do you have to address everything to Canis Star? I hate that stupid code name. If it isn't pronounced properly it sounds like I’m supposed to be stuck in a fridge somewhere. How would you like it if I ran around calling you Sir Portree all the time?” he added, carefully not thinking of the real reason he hated the name and the weight it carried with it. Weight unknown to his boss.

“You do,” was the dry response he got from the older man sitting behind the huge wooden desk in the center of the room.

“In public yes,” Tony agreed. “But in private I always call you Croaker, your preferred form of address. You know our code name are only necessary when we’re robed in public. Most of us can’t stand to use the damned things,” he added, with a distinct tinge of annoyance in his voice.

“The Avalon Spring granted you the name of Canis Star and I’ll use it as I see fit,” Croaker responded, echoing the argument the two had been having since Tony’s full induction as an Unspeakable.

The Avalon Spring being the *true* secret of the ‘Ever Locked Room’. The room contained a natural spring said to be fed from the Lake in Avalon; and therefore, imbued with the spirit of Nimue herself. For a Potential to finally be sworn in as a full Unspeakable they entered the room, disrobed and submerged fully in the spring carrying nothing with them and let magic do the rest.

The experience was different for everyone - sometimes minutes passed, sometimes hours. No one ever spoke of what they experienced in the Spring - except to state for the record the name they had heard while under the water. That became their code name. Their secrecy vows became forever magically binding with the announcement of their new name as by that point, after sometimes more then a decade of training, it was a foregone conclusion that they were loyal to the Crown. And to date, going back hundreds of years, only four people hadn’t passed through to full status. One *requested* to be Obliviated and three left the room with no memories of anything to do with the Department - just blank holes where anything involving it had been.

Tony had, supposedly, been under for twenty-four hours - but if anyone *had* asked he would have said he was gone for a month. For Tony it seemed as though he passed through the water to simultaneously emerge in the middle of a foggy lake at dawn in the middle of a forest.
He swam to the shore, quite in shock, and found himself soaking wet and dressed in an outfit straight out of medieval times. He proceeded to spend the next month living in the forest and living off what the forest provided for him. He danced with fairy colonies, learned to fight and hunt from the High Elves, talked philosophy with a dragon named Beevil and interacted with countless other magical creatures. Then one morning at dawn he was awakened by a beautiful woman with long white hair who led him to the top of a hill where a large stone with a sword sticking out of it was placed.

She had sweepingly gestured around them with her arm and Tony followed her with his eyes, seeing much to his continued surprise, a large Castle with a sprawling village covering the countryside around it in the distance. He could even hear the sounds of daily life - farm animals, horse hooves, a blacksmith pounding away, vendors calling to shoppers and the clang of knights practicing with swords - from where he stood.

“Camelot?” he, only partially, squeaked out. “This isn’t a hallucination brought on by lack of oxygen is it?” he tried joking to dispel the sudden urge to vomit that had come over him.

The only response he got to his question was bell like laughter before she pointed at the stone; the look on her face exceedingly hopeful.

“I probably shouldn’t do that My Lady,” he informed her seriously with a reverent tone; somehow only just realizing that this had to be Nimue herself. “I’m only twenty-one and while I was raised well and brought up with the idea of being the Lord of an Ancient and Noble House; I am definitely not the rebirth of King Arthur. And if I, somehow, am...I’d probably be very bad at it. So maybe we’ll just skip this part?”

This time she pointed raised an eyebrow and jabbed her finger harshly in the direction of the stone.

“Okay, I didn’t think that would work. But I had to try,” he mumbled and with a deep breath reached out to grab the pommel and pulled. The sword glowed bright blue in his hand and he could feel the power flowing through it straight up from the earth itself; but it also didn’t so much as twitch in movement. Gratefully Tony pulled his hand away and looked back at Nimue and said, “I told you so.”

“Cheeky,” her high, yet pleasant, voice responded. “I have felt you in my soul since your birth and have watched you grow over these years and truly believed you to be of Arthur. You have come home to Avalon this moon cycle and now that you have touched Excalibur I know your truth even more Sir Knight. You are of Galahad who was the greatest of Arthur’s Knights. He was loyal, strong and true to the Realm for all his days. You too have that strength of loyalty - that strength of Magic in your soul. That is why I name you Canis-Star - a wolf is the embodiment of loyalty and family and a star is your very soul. Make with that what you will Anthony Paddington.”

“Please tell me you’re kidding,” Tony choked out, forgetting for a moment who he was speaking to. “I am not handling this well at all,” he added, staring at her in shock and questioning his decision to become an Unspeakable. He wanted to put bad guys behind bars; not swing a sword around and ride a horse.

“Fear not Sir Knight,” she responded with a soft smile. “I can feel him even now across the lands. The time is soon for our people to rise again once more and Arthur to walk amongst us. You will have a place at the table for you have proven yourself worthy time and time again in thought and deed.”

“That’s not what I was worried about,” Tony snapped back, running a hand through his hair. “So Arthur huh...as in the living embodiment of Arthur or actually back from the dead Arthur-Arthur?”
“Yes. The time is near,” Nimue replied and Tony nearly rolled his eyes at the non-answer. “But not quite yet,” she continued. “Our King still has trials to face. And you will need to guide him...without interfering directly. He will not learn unless he does for himself.”

“That’s horrifically vague,” Tony pointed out. “So question, do all Potentials get this treatment? Or am I special?”

“I can not speak of what others have encountered in their journey - but, you are one of only six to be taken here to this place of honor.”

“So that means there are six other Unspeakables who are apparently Knights of the damned Round Table out there?”

“Perhaps.”

“Perhaps? Thanks for clearing that up,” he hissed out. “Anything else?”

“One thing,” she replied, her tone becoming more serious than it had been even to that point. “Arthur’s maiden, his Queen, his very soul will be at his side throughout it all. That is how you will guide him and teach him. I know not who they are - but I know he trusts few more then she. You must protect and guide her - give her the knowledge and wisdom to help him become what he has the potential to be.”

“And you don’t know who this embodiment of Guinevere is?”

“Magic provides,” was her plain answer. “And also, Guinevere was a construct of two great women created by male bards for the sake of proving that women were a temptation and the embodiment of evil. Arthur and Lancelot’s wives were sisters but they didn’t share.”

Tony’s mouth quirked as he stifled a laugh, thinking she reminded him of his Aunt for a moment there. Almost immediately after he found himself stifling a yawn.

“You tire,” Nimue stated simply. “Come. You have accomplished all you have come here to do Canis-Star. It is time to return.”

She had led him back to the lake and into the water itself; supporting him as he grew weaker with every step. With a great pull she sank them both beneath the water and in a reverse of when he entered the Spring Tony found himself instantly emerging out of the water once again in the ever locked room and once again naked. The difference was this time he was clutching a small crystal pendant in the shape of a sword, around three inches long, in his hand.

He had pulled himself from the water and laid on the floor with next to no energy left and immediately fell asleep. When he awoke he was dry again and had to force himself up to dress. He left the room to find Croaker and the other Department heads still waiting for him in their robes. All he managed to do was look at them and croak out, ‘Canis-Star’, before once again passing out.

“Yes, yes, so you’ve said,” Tony responded to Croaker, continuing the long held argument. “I still think it makes me sound like a receptacle of some sort. Onto other things then, why am I back in England?”

Croaker frowned severely before replying, “Let’s go with the the easy answer first. Sirius Black has escaped Azkaban and Scrimgeour wants you to be available and around Hogwarts.”

"Why me? I've got zero authority in the United Kingdom in this instance; unless the Unspeakable's have picked up Sirius’ case? I may have once been an Auror, and am currently an ICW licensed Hit
Wizard, but almost the whole DMLE considers me a traitor for "looking to better pastures."

“Scrimgeour trusts you not to curse first and ask questions later,” Croaker informed Tony bluntly. “Fudge has set Dementors on the borders of Hogwarts; supposedly for the protection of Scion Potter and the rest of the students.”

“But you don’t believe that.”

“No, I don’t. Neither does Rufus. He and Madam Bones have a few questions regarding the Black case - questions I know you also have - and they do not like the fact that they can’t get a straight answer for a single one of them.”

“Considering the run around my Father has been getting for thirteen years I highly doubt they have too many questions now,” Tony shot back at his boss.

“Keep in mind Anthony that thirteen years ago neither one of them were in the positions they hold now. And unfortunately, until Sirius escaped there was literally no reason for either of them to question a single piece of information. Your Father was the only person asking any questions. It was absolutely accepted that Sirius was guilty of every single thing he was accused of essentially on Albus' word alone and Sirius' supposed confession.”

“And now that he’s escaped? I’d think that would make him look worse to them.”

“Now that he’s escaped, well, let’s just say that Amelia got a bit of a surprise when she attempted to pull his case file so she could start a new investigation into his escape and was informed she didn’t need to know anything in the first to do the second.”

“Oh I bet that went over like a lead balloon with Madam Bones,” Tony replied looking mildly amused. “She’s a nice lady...when she isn’t pissed off at you and doing her best impression to reinforce stereotypes about red hair.”

“You're lucky you were in Rome. Rufus and I had to listen to her for almost an hour about it.”

“Does this all mean you’ve talked them around to my family’s point of view?”

“It means that they are willing to consider all the options available. Amelia said that since she doesn’t have access to a case file...or a trial transcript for that matter...that she’s just going to have to re-interview Sirius herself. She’s somewhat afraid that the kiss on sight order is a way to cover something up.”

“Well that’s something,” Tony muttered and dropped into the chair in front of the desk finally. “So, I’m what? Supposed to hang out in my house in Hogsmeade and make sure the Dementors don’t suck Sirius soul out if he’s stupid enough to come to the one place they’re expecting him to be?”

“Well, that’s what Rufus and Amelia think you’re going to be doing,” Croaker clarified. “If he actually is that stupid then by all means, keep him alive as well.”

“That still doesn’t tell me why you’ve dragged me back to England two years earlier specifically. The Head Auror could have easily point blank ordered anyone who works for him to look for Sirius and not engage in deadly force.”

"We picked you because Sirius Black is you," Croaker finally explained their reasoning. "He was career tracked the same way you were straight out of OWLs. He was my pick from his year, same as you were in yours. He was always meant to be an Unspeakable and if the war hadn't been going on he would have been somewhere with the ICW working on his own masteries instead of hunting
down death eaters before being thrown into prison for something he didn’t do!”

"So you do believe he’s innocent? You’ve never actually said; I wasn’t sure if you were paying lip service to my Father."

"If Sirius Black were guilty of what he was accused of they never would have caught him. Hell, if he was guilty of what he was accused of he never would have been suspected in the first place."

"And the reason you left him in prison?"

"Not by choice," Croaker admitted. "I was shut down every single time I tried to bring the subject up. Remember, we might be in the Ministry building...but the movers and shakers in Fudge’s office like to forget that we work for the Crown and our loyalty lies with Her before it ever lies with the Ministry of Magic...right up until they need to rub our noses into our total lack of authority in DMLE matters."

Tony laughed darkly at that and finally asked, “So what am I actually going to be doing. Chief Mason mentioned something about an artifact.”

Croaker paused and seemed to be considering his words, “And, that’s where things get really complicated. Rufus and Amelia only know about part of this; so, if and when you meet with them try and keep their attention on the Black issue.”

“Okay?”

“Albus requested a time-turner for a student,” Croaker finally just stated it, after visibly stopping to consider his words.

“I’m sorry...he what?!?”

“You heard me. He requested a time-turner for a student. Specifically for a third year.”

“Well, you didn’t give it to him did you? Who in their right mind would give a time-turner to a third year? Sworn Unspeakables have to have separate masteries in Runes, Arithmancy and Charms at minimum to even get considered for a spot in the Space & Time Research Lab.”

“I did give it to him,” Croaker admitted with an expression that told Tony the man realized exactly how ridiculous that action was. “I had a reason.”

“I hope it’s a really good one,” he replied to his mentor. “I don’t want to hear about some kid blowing themselves, and possibly everyone else in the Castle up, because they completely overworked their very under developed magical core with a mostly unstable magical tool.”

“Can you attempt to remember I’m your boss Anthony?”

“I remember you’re my boss all the time in public; but this is one of those instances where someone needs to give you a strong and firm ‘No’ because otherwise you’re going to keep doing crazy things like giving a third year a time-turner.”

“Janet already told me no,” he responded, pointing towards his office door. "I’ve been sleeping in my study for a week! But I told you; things are complicated.”

“Then uncomplicate them,” Tony pointed out. “Because, the level of complication involved in agreeing to give a time-turner to a thirteen year old is kind of ridiculous to contemplate. What does a third year even need a time-turner for?”
“Technically, she will be fourteen in the middle of September. But I understand your point. She needs it to take all the available electives.”

Tony blinked, opened his mouth and then blinked again before finally speaking in an absolutely incredulous voice, “She needs it to take extra classes? I’m sorry, is independent study under the supervision of a professor not good enough for people anymore? It’s what I did. It’s what most of Ravenclaw does.”

“I asked Albus that myself. He had the audacity to point out that Ms. Granger is a Gyrffindor and then to tell me that the girl in question is Harry Potter’s best friend; as if those were reasons she should be exempt from going about her education the same as every other student in the school.”

“Something about that caught your attention. Beyond the obvious stupidity.”

“It did,” Croaker admitted. “I told him I’d need to think about it. That was two weeks ago. I asked Amelia if her niece, Susan, had mentioned anything about a Hermione Granger over the last two years and let’s just say what Amelia told me was interesting to say the least. Something is going on in that school Anthony and I need an in. Giving Ms. Granger the time-turner gets me that.”

“It does?”

“Yes; I told Albus that the only way he could have the time-turner was under strict conditions. Ms. Granger is to meet with an Unspeakable twice a month to make sure her physical and mental condition remain stable.”

“I bet the old manipulative coot had a response to that,” Tony replied with a sarcastic laugh.

“Oh he did. He assured me Madam Pomfrey was quite capable of seeing to Ms. Granger’s health and that none of our valuable employees needed to take time out of their busy schedules to visit his student.”

“A dangerous and regularly unstable magical artefacts effects on a teenager can be overseen by the school nurse? Madam Pomfrey had to send students to St. Mungo’s for anything more complicated then a Quidditch injury or a cold when I was in school. Hell, she’s supposed to send them there - she’s a mediwitch, not a Healer.”

“I pointed that out. Albus didn’t like it. I was actually expecting him to back out of his request but for some reason he didn’t. He finally realized I was absolutely not changing my mind on my requirements and he agreed.”

“So I’m going to be living in Hogsmeade at my house, keeping Sirius alive if he shows up and making sure this Granger kid doesn’t blow up herself or the space time continuum? Wouldn’t an actual Researcher who deals with time-turners be better for that last one?”

“If that’s all that was going on then yes. But as I said, something is going on at that school. Amelia said Susan and her friend Hannah were talking about a missing professor at the end of their first year and then there was a mess up at the school with petrified students last year. The issue lies in the fact that when questioned about these things by Amelia Susan and Hannah only seemed to remember the vaguest of details.”

“Petrified students?” Tony questioned, looking shocked. “What the hell did I miss in Rome?”

“In Rome? What did we miss here?! I want to know what’s going on at that school Anthony. I want to know how it’s related to Potter - and it has to be, Dumbledore was far too quick to use the fact that this girl is his best friend as an excuse - and I want to know exactly what chess game Albus is
playing at the moment.”

“Yes sir,” Tony responded, finally looking completely serious. “When am I supposed to meet with her? And, it has to be asked, is she a Potential? Am I doing her initial swearing?”

“Let’s call her a potential Potential. From what I’ve managed to suss out she would probably be one, but it’s still a little too early to tell. Amelia’s niece paints Granger as quite rigid in her thinking which we both know does not translate well here. She’ll have to be mildly secrecy bonded to meet with you; you’ll never get her to trust you with any information if you’re shrouded in your robes and it’ll be safer for her in the long run that way anyhow if she can’t tell anyone even the mildest details of your meetings. Act as counselor and teacher; but not quite friend. At least not at first. Supposedly she respects authority to an almost dangerous level so ironically, unlike most teenagers, she’s more likely to trust you if you are ‘above’ her.”

“And if that doesn’t work?”

“Find her weak spot and exploit it,” Croaker told him. “I need confirmation about something I’ve suspected since even before the incident in ’81; and she could very well have the information or know how to get it. Even if she doesn’t quite realize it herself. And if we get a true Potential out of this mess then so much the better.”

“Right,” Tony muttered, not feeling too good about essentially being sent in to manipulate a child but understanding the reasoning of it all. “Alright, well, I better go prepare. How soon do you want me to meet with Ms. Granger?”

“She’ll get the time-turner from her Head of House the night of September 1st. That is a Wednesday this year. Minerva actually knows how to use a time-turner for reasons I can not get into so she’ll instruct Ms. Granger on how she may use hers. I would like you to meet with her no later then the fourth of the month.”

“So Saturday then. Alright. And check-in’s with you or my squad?”

“Monthly with me unless something comes up. I’m going to tell Ransom that you’re available to do research if she needs the extra eyes - but they’ve been alright without you since you left for Rome. They don’t want to replace you and as long as their closure rate stays as it does they don’t have to.”

“Sounds good,” Tony responded and stood. “I’ll head down and pack up then. I am going to stop into R&D and get someone to run me over anything I need to know about the time-turners though. I might be going in there to get information; but I would like to keep this kid from blowing herself and the Castle to kingdom come as well.”

“Do that,” Croaker agreed distractedly; almost as though the thought hadn’t quite completely occurred to him as an actual possibility despite knowing the danger of the devices.

It wasn’t until an hour later when Tony had sat back down at his desk in his squad room, with an initial packet of information to study about the time-turners, that Nimue’s words from two years earlier echoed once more through his mind.

“Arthur’s Queen...You must protect and guide her - give her the knowledge and wisdom to help him become what he has the potential to be.”

“Well shit,” Tony hissed and dropped his head back as his hands came up to clutch the crystal sword hanging around his neck.
A Month! A whole month back in England and you didn’t even think to come and see me…or at least just tell me you’re back home. But I mean, why would you think to do that? Afterall, I’m only your mother!”

Tony, sitting on an armchair in the sitting room, kept his face blank as his mother, pacing the room, continued the rant that she had started almost a full twenty minutes earlier; a rant that had begun as happy surprise that Tony had come from Rome for a visit and quickly devolved when he let it slip that he had actually been staying in the family’s Hogsmeade cottage, the home he had been using as his own since he graduated Hogwarts, since the first week of August.

“Mum!” he finally interrupted her, sending a glare at his younger brother who was on the other couch barely covering his own amusement. “I had research to do and I couldn’t have it getting out that I was back in England,” he added, not for the first time since she had started in on him.

“And I make it a habit of going around and advertising family business then do I? I don’t know what it’s like to be married to someone who has access to severely confidential information?”

“No,” Tony admitted. “It was just easier if you didn’t have to lie about it,” he continued verbally. Privately, he had decided it would be easier if she didn’t know that he back since she wouldn’t have reacted well when he told her he couldn’t spend any time with the family since he was too busy splitting his time between spying on a 13 year old girl and a 112 year old man. She already hated that he was always putting himself in danger working in law enforcement; he didn’t need her worried he was going to get arrested for potentially being considered a pervert or for whatever Dumbledore could cook up.

“Well now that I know you’re back does this mean I’ll get to see my son more often?”

“Probably,” Tony admitted; with the school year active both of his targets would be mostly stationary at the potential scene of the crime. “I’ll try and make it to monthly dinners at the very least. But hey, if I was in Rome you wouldn’t ever see me. So there’s that.”

“But you aren’t in Rome Anthony. You’re home.”

“Yes Mother,” Tony finally agreed, shooting Crispian a two-fingered salute when Lyra had turned her back on the two.

“I saw that Anthony,” she snapped. “Now then, go unpack. Dinner is in a two hours and your father will be home soon.”

Tony barely refrained from rolling his eyes as he got up off the couch, taking the escape that was offered despite knowing that Kip would have already unpacked the small bag he had brought for the weekend, taking note of his younger brother following him out of the room.

“You’re an asshole,” he hissed at the sixteen year old once he was certain they were far enough away from their mother so as not to be overheard.
“Yes, I am,” Crispian agreed with a smirk. “But she’s not wrong you know. It would have been nice to see you this summer now that I know you were around.”

Tony sighed, entering his bedroom with his brother following behind him, “I know Cris. I really did have things to do that were time sensitive.”

Tony removed the suit jacket he was wearing, not daring to arrive to the expected verbal execution without looking properly dressed, and laid it on the bed before dropping down next to his brother on the small couch near the bedroom’s fireplace. He reached over and hauled the younger boy into his side and ruffled his hair, holding on for a moment before asking, “So… how’s life?”

Crispian scowled, pushing himself away and simultaneously attempting to straighten his light brown hair, “Berk. But since you asked so nicely; life’s fine. Dad’s been busy this summer; especially now that Sirius Black escaped. I think he’s trying to use that as an excuse to ask some hard questions without, maybe, getting a run around this time.”

Tony nodded in agreement; not letting his brother know that he had actually spoken to their father about that very subject two weeks ago. He figured it would probably be a good idea not to let their mother know that Clive had known of their son’s return to the U.K. the day after he arrived.

“Ready for sixth year?” Tony continued his questioning, trying to think of a subtle way to get the information he wanted to know without being obvious about it. The problem was that even in Rome he hadn’t lost touch with his younger sibling – the relationship was too used to being relegated to letters while Tony, and then Crispian, was away at school. They wrote at minimum every two weeks so it wasn’t as though he didn’t know what was going on with the younger male.

“Yes,” Crispian replied, nodding and looking at Tony with a strange expression. “What’s up Tony? If you want to know something just ask.”

“Why do you think I’m looking to ask something. Maybe I just want to know what my little brother is ready for the beginning of his NEWTs program?”

Crispian visibly rolled his eyes at that and straightened up further on the couch before speaking in a near monotone, “Let’s see – I got full O’s on my OWLs. I’m taking NEWTs in everything except Divination and Muggle Studies. I took my GCSEs last month and am fairly certain I did well. Mum will continue to send me my correspondence work for my A-level’s. Yes, I’m still leaning towards medicine over business for after Hogwarts. Slytherin lost the cup again last year. Oh wait! You know all this.”

“Stop being a twit,” Tony shot back. “So you really are thinking of doing that medical program in the States after graduation?”

Crispian nodded and replied, smiling more brightly than a pureblood Slytherin would normally dare, “Yes. Thank you for finding it for me. I was having a bitch of a time doing it while at school. A third of my house would curse me in the back if I openly asked about muggle schooling; it’s hard enough keeping my correspondence work from them as it is.”

“Yea; I remember that stupidity from when I was in school. I still have no idea how you wound up in Slytherin anyway.”

“You don’t think it’s ambitious to want to become both a muggle doctor and a magical healer?”

“I think it’s very ambitious,” Tony responded. “I just remember what that house was like when I was in Hogwarts and, unfortunately, at the time they only cared about how pure your blood is and how
big your Gringott’s vault is.”

“Oh, well, that’s still what most of them care about. But there’s a few people who aren’t complete wastes of space,” Crispian replied, shrugging. “Not many mind you, but enough where I’m not completely friendless inside my own house.”

“And you’re sure you want to put yourself through this kind of work during your NEWT years? Even I stopped after my GCSEs. A-levels on top of NEWTs will be a bitch.”

“I’m certain,” the younger boy insisted. “I need to do this if I want to turn ‘Paddington Farms’ into what I think it can be,” he added, referring to the system of Farms through the U.K. (with a few in Western and Southern Europe), growing plants and raising animals for sale as potions ingredients, the family had owned for generations and the sole reason they had their fortune.

‘Paddington Farms’ had in all technicality started in the seventeen-hundreds on the very estate the family was currently occupying. However, the estate itself had belonged to the Paddington family, according to the histories, for hundreds upon hundreds of years before that. The oldest record anyone in the family was aware of dated to the 7th century, a record of land acquisition for 500 acres, when Devon was still considered part of the Kingdom of Dumnonia; long before it had ever become part of Great Britain. At that point their name had been recorded as Paddatun; which linguistic enthusiasts in the family had eventually traced the origins of to pre-7th century Olde English; specifically to large region between a triangle of modern Southampton, Surrey and Brighton.

In fact, as far as Tony knew, the Paddington family, was one of the few (if not only) pureblood family that purposefully traced their line back further than they had possessed magic. The first Paddington’s to even have magic had been a quintet of siblings – technically all muggleborn – and they hadn’t been born until the 10th century themselves. Judging by the timing of the family birth records, references to a Mistress Ravenclaw and the known dates of Hogwarts operation it was generally accepted among the family that the Paddatun children had probably been amongst the first Hogwarts students.

Tony knew the records his family kept galled the real hard-line blood-purists because they proved that in all probability every magical family had begun with a muggleborn witch or wizard. He knew it bothered them even more that a family line as “old” as the Paddington’s had zero problem marrying muggles or magical’s without a pure lineage – and yet, that very same age of their family line meant that the purists couldn’t call the Paddington’s anything other than pureblood.

He had very carefully not considered what family records that old meant in conjunction with what he had learned from Nimue about supposedly being descended from Galahad. As a Wizard he knew Camelot, Arthur and the Knights were more than just fables. That didn’t mean that even magicals knew where Camelot had actually been located; those records had been long since lost, destroyed or hidden. And he wasn’t about to be the person to show off his family’s origins and perhaps imply that he knew where his line had emigrated from a mere three hundred years after Arthur supposedly died. Other families knew the Paddington records existed; that didn’t mean they knew what they contained.

The estate had obviously evolved, and shrunk from 500 to 50 acres, over the years; but the location of the ‘family seat’ had remained the same. Hundreds of variations of homes had been built upon the land their sprawling three floor farmhouse now stood going back to the time a grand castle had stood upon the cliffs they overlooked. What hadn’t changed was the deep vault located under the home. Even back before the family had magic, they had built a large secure, reinforced (and always first to be repaired and maintained) room that held records, artwork and jewelry belonging to the family. Tony had always known it as a magical vault and assumed that upon the development of their
Family Magic that a Patriarch had at some point chosen to rebuild the vault to preserve the items within the best way possible. Unfortunately, before it had been magically remodeled there was only so much protection it had been able to offer to the actual written documents. Tony really didn’t want to think about how that vault, and the idea that the family should need one, only reinforced the knowledge that Nimue had given him.

“Tony are you listening to me?” his younger brother’s voice broke through his slightly frazzled thoughts and Tony quickly looked up apologetically.

“Yes, I was. I promise,” he responded and thanked Merlin for a proficiency in occulmency that allowed him to ‘listen’ without fully paying attention. “You were telling me about how you wanted to study muggle medicine and become a healer so that you could turn ‘Paddington Farms’ into more then just a potions ingredient production. You want to branch out into actual potions development for retail sale and medical research for better magical pharmaceuticals.”

“Okay, so you were listening. I never know when you get that look.”

“What look?”

“The look that says you’ve bitten off more then you can chew and you would very much like the world to swallow you up whole. I’m really grateful to be the younger brother when you look like that.”

Tony winced at the comment and glanced at his brother, “Cris…you know.”

“Nope,” his brother interrupted before he could continue. “I know you’re adopted, on a technicality. Fuck that. You’re my older brother and the heir; and let’s be honest, I have zero interest in anything Dad does. I’m much happier in Mum’s lab brewing something then I am sitting around the dinner table talking policy.”

“But you’re good at it when you have to be,” Tony insisted, never wanting his brother to feel remotely diminished.

“Yes, when I have to be. You’re good at it all the time; even if you don’t particularly like it. I might be a Slytherin; but I have zero political ambitions. I’m going to drag magical medicine into the next century by driving myself crazy doing an insanely intensive eight year program through Johns Hopkins and then I’m going to come back here and make a big splash and piss off all the purebloods who think muggles are either dumb animals or adorable curiosities.”

“And you’re going to be awesome at it,” Tony agreed, smiling at the teenager. And while he had always been proud of his brother’s compassion and lack of guile – something that had surprisingly survived the House of Snakes fully intact – he was more than thrilled with his goals than ever before. Because if the rumors circulating around Hogwarts that he had heard about, and was currently busy trying to confirm, were true then he wanted his baby brother as far away from England as he could get as soon as possible. And if Tony was forced to knock him out, tie him up and ship him to Baltimore after graduation then that was what he would do.

His Crispian; the little boy that had followed him around since the day he could walk, the little boy who had told Tony at six years old “I wanna be you when I grow up”, the now teenager who even at sixteen only thought about others before himself was not going to know the kind of pain he had seen in the eyes of his peers during his first three years at Hogwarts.

Later that night, after an awkward dinner that saw his mother continue to snipe at Tony for not telling
her of his return to England earlier, Tony found himself sitting in his Patriarch’s study with the older
man and his younger brother.

“So, Mum’s pissed,” Tony stated blandly to the other two Paddington men.

“You know she wasn’t thrilled with the idea of you going to Rome in the first place Anthony,” his
father answered.

“She didn’t have a problem with it at first,” Tony reminded his father and trade a glance with his
younger brother, whom he knew had not informed their mother yet about his plans to go to the
United States after graduation.

“She didn’t have a problem with it at first because she focused on the fact that you were going to get
a ‘Defense & Law’ mastery. She initially assumed that meant your plans also involved leaving the
field and moving into either prosecution or even just research in the Department. When she realized
you weren’t only going to Rome to study; but were in fact going to be working with Interpol she
grew concerned.”

“Father, you have an ability to understate like no one else I’ve ever met,” Crispian interjected with a
raised eyebrow. “Mum didn’t grow concerned…she lost the damned plot.”

“Don’t harass your Mother on this issue; either of you. She’s a strong woman; but she’s still your
Mother. She’s always going to worry. There were too many close calls during the War. The fact that
our family escaped relatively unscathed is a miracle in and of itself.”

“Yes Father,” both of the younger men replied promptly upon hearing their Father’s stern tone.

“Now, Anthony; I don’t know all the details of why you are back. I haven’t been told and if you
haven’t told me I’m sure you have a reason. That being said, have you thought of a logical reason to
tell people that you’re back?”

“I haven’t quite gotten that far yet,” Tony admitted. “Until tonight only Madam Bones and Auror
Scrimgeour, outside of the Department, knew I was back.”

“Luckily, I have. I spread it around the Wizengamot today that with Sirius Black’s escape I called
you back as your Patriarch. That overrules everything else and no one would think to question it. It’s
also gotten around to a few key people over the last two years that you wear the Black Heir ring. I’ll
let the general citizenry make of those two facts and how they connect what they will.”

“So, you called me back because Sirius Black could potentially claim his Lordship. A Lordship that I
was…what…waiting for the time to run out on him claiming it? So I could claim it myself?”

“Knowing the sheep that run the Wizengamot that’s exactly what they will think.”

“Well alright then. That works nicely. I’m a little annoyed I didn’t think of it myself,” Tony
responded, frowning slightly.

“You’ve been a little busy,” his father pointed out with a straight faced expression but highly amused
eyes. “I hope you made yourself scarce during more, private, moments son.”

“Oh yes, very funny Father,” Tony shot back, sounding disgusted. “I wasn’t anywhere near that
close thank you very much.”

His father’s only response was to laugh at his put out expression and Crispian’s confused one.
“This is why I’m going into medicine. I don’t know what you two are talking about and I do not want to know either,” Tony’s younger brother interjected over their father’s chuckles.

“You really don’t,” Tony replied, shaking his head. “Oh! As annoying as that comment was; Dad inadvertently reminded me of something I meant to ask you earlier;” he continued in a more serious tone. “Do you know Hermione Granger? She’d be going into her third year at Hogwarts.”

Tony watched his brother carefully as he asked and found it both amusing and interesting when the young man blushed and averted his eyes but also seemed to be gathering his thoughts before speaking. “I don’t know her. But I know of her. She’s a Gryffindor and three class years behind me. Why?”

“Well, now I want to know for an entirely different reason Cris. You blushed!”

“I did not,” his brother snapped back, blushing darker and making Tony glad that his skin had maintained the more olive hued, easier to tan, Paddington skin while his brother had gotten their mother’s much paler ‘Black’ complexion to go with their father’s hair color.

“You absolutely did. Don’t tell me you have a crush on a thirteen year old.”

“She’s going to be fourteen soon,” Crispian immediately answered him and then groaned. “Merlin. You’re going to torture me aren’t you?”

Tony glanced their father’s way and saw that he had moved to his desk to do paperwork, but was still paying his son’s attention and throwing amused glances his youngest’s way.

“I’m not going to torture you. But if you could tell me whatever you know, without asking why I want to know, I’ll love you forever.”

The expression on Crispian’s face, and their father’s almost inaudible snort of laughter, told all Tony he needed to know about how that statement had gone over.

“That expression hasn’t worked on me since I was seven and you used it to convince me to go steal Christmas cookies from the kitchen elves since you were too big to sneak in anymore,” the youngest male responded, rolling his eyes as he spoke.

“I’m sorry?” Tony replied, smiling innocently and pushing down a smirk. “But seriously, what do you know about this girl?”

Crispian sighed, containing the blush and responded, “Not much actually. She’s cute and she’s really, crazily, smart. But she has just finished her second year, half of which she spent in the infirmary, so I don’t really know much more.”

“Infirmary?” Tony questioned and saw his own father’s head look up curiously at that.

“Yes, infirmary,” Crispian replied and then frowned. “Something happened? A few students were hurt…I don’t think it was that big of a deal.”

“Several students were hurt and you don’t think it was a big deal?” Tony asked his brother incredulously. This was his brother who had wanted to be a doctor since he was eight. “What happened to them?”

“I…don’t know? I mean, I do know. They were petrified,” Crispian answered and rubbed his forehead. “They were petrified and then they got better. But it took awhile. My head hurts.”
“That’s enough Anthony,” Clive Paddington interrupted Tony, who had been about to ask his brother another question, and moved swiftly across the room towards his younger son. Tony watched their father wave his wand a few times in the general direction of his brother and seconds later Crispian was sleeping on the couch.

“Dad?” Tony choked out, nervously glancing at the younger boy.

“He’s alright,” Clive responded, squeezing Tony’s shoulder. “There’s a minor block; more like a screen really. The memories are still there, but they’ve been dulled to the point where they have no importance. He wouldn’t feel the need to ever bring them up or talk about them.”

“The pain?”

“Your brother is powerful. Very powerful in fact,” Clive explained. “His magic was trying to give him what he wanted.”

“The complete memory,” Tony guessed and saw his father nod. “But the pain?”

“Whoever placed the screen was very powerful. It would take more then what essentially boiled down to accidental magic to break that.”

“Can it be broken?” Tony asked his father, leaving unsaid the only logical conclusion as to who could have done the magic itself. “Cause, what he just did fits at least two other students.”

“It can be. I’ll have to do it in ritual if I want to harvest the entire screen and still be able to identify the caster. If I want to just use blunt force to break it I could do that here and now.”

“Do it in ritual. Even if you have to wait until Christmas,” Tony instructed, making an executive decision as he thought about what he had heard about Susan Bones and Hannah Abott only being able to recall the barest of details of certain events of their first and second years at Hogwarts. “I don’t think he knows anything I really need to know. I was mostly just feeling him out about Granger.”

“Don’t tease your brother,” their father chided. “From everything I’ve heard Lucius bitch about the girl she’d make an excellent daughter-in-law.”

“I don’t know,” Tony replied quietly. “Fate might have other plans for her,” he added.

“Don’t tease him either way,” Clive continued, giving Tony a stern look. “Your brother hasn’t had the easiest time of it these last two years you’ve been gone. It’s hard for him; I honestly expected you to be the Slytherin and him the Ravenclaw…or even Hufflepuff. He’s softer…no that’s the wrong word…he’s kinder than most people I know. He cares about others before himself in a way that I have never seen before. His only goal is to heal people and make medicine, wizarding and muggle, more accessible. And as he’s gotten older and that’s been more obvious the other Slytherin’s have been bordering on eating him alive.”

Tony considered his father’s words as he eyed his younger brother and had to ask, “Is he a Potential? Did he get selected this summer?”

“Of course,” Clive replied looking at Tony as though he had two heads. “Why would you ask such a ridiculous question. You know that doesn’t mean you can discuss things with him of course.”

“I know the rules,” Tony responded but kept his gaze on his brother. “Are you sure he’s right for it. He’s strong and smart; but, he doesn’t do secrets well.”
“He’ll learn,” the boy’s father answered firmly. “Our family, with very few exceptions, have been Unspeakables for as long as there has been a Department of Mysteries. It is our honor to serve the Crown and England.”

Tony nodded, having had this argument with his father on more than one occasion since Crispian started Hogwarts and never having won it. At least he could be comforted by the fact that Crispian wouldn’t even be eligible to be fully sworn for at least a decade at minimum. He’d need to be finished with his medical training first. Hopefully, whatever was getting ready to rear it’s head would be well over and done by then.

“I’ll take him to bed,” Tony spoke to the now silent room, his father settling himself at the desk once more. “I’ll see you and Mum in the morning.”

“Goodnight Anthony,” was the only response he got as Tony levitated his brother and headed out of the office.
re: certain characters in this chapter – I don’t do dialects or accents in my writing. It’s fanfiction so you know what they sound like. Rule 17 and all that.

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Wednesday September 1st 1993

British Ministry of Magic
Department of Magical Law Enforcement – Level 3
Whitehall
London, England

The stares and whispers had been annoying for the first twenty minutes; but now, after an hour of standing at attention in the waiting area outside of Amelia Bones’, the Head of the DMLE, office they had surpassed annoying and gone on into obnoxiously rude. This was one of the few situations where his robes were a blessing rather than a curse; no one knew exactly who had pissed Madam Bones off to the extent that she had left them outside her office for over an hour.

Amelia Bones was not a petty woman; she was a famously patient straight-shooter who accepted that mistakes happened and would protect her Aurors like a mama bear so long as evidence backed up the mistake as being honest and not a result of negligence. So for her to keep someone who had an appointment waiting, as that was the only way anyone, even an Unspeakable, would have gotten that close to her office, was a sign that the robed figure had somehow found the end of Bones’ infamous tolerance.

Tony saw a rune light up on Bones’ secretary’s desk, watched as the younger witch placed a finger on the gold filigree ear piece she wore and waited with only mildly baited breath; this was the third time in an hour he had seen this process and he had yet to be sent through the door.

“Unspeakable Canister,” the witch finally spoke in a haughty, overly important, tone, drawing an unseen eye roll from Tony behind his robes, “Madam Bones and Head Auror Scrimgeour will see you now.”

“It’s Canis Star,” he enunciated slowly in a biting tone, almost snickering at the spells that made his voice sound echoing and ominous and relishing how she seemed to draw back and shrink in on herself.

Without another comment he brushed past her desk, smirking at the squeak it drew from the girl, and in a pique of annoyance sent a wandless blast of magic at the door; just enough to open it without damaging the entrance. He paused in the office, just clear at the doorway and glared at the two occupants – knowing all they would see was an empty black hole where his face should be – and blasted the door more strongly to make it slam behind him.

Silently Tony reached up and pulled his hood off his head, letting his glare settle further onto his face.
as they could now see him and drawled out one single word that let his annoyance come through clearer than any look possibly could, “Well?”

“Well what?” the red headed woman sitting at the large desk reflected back at him, looking incredibly disinterested.

“Well… I don’t know, how about – you called me back to England, I don’t actually work for you anymore, what the hell was that song and dance about leaving me standing out there like an asshole for an hour… I could go on if you’d wish? Was that a power-play over Croaker – see how long you can make his flunky wait around for a by your leave? Or was it cause you know I’ve been working with Martin Mason for two years and you haven’t stuck it to him enough?”

Tony knew he’d scored a direct hit when she flinched at the last question, though Scrimgeour sent him a confused look; he was fairly certain Chief Mason had zero to do with him waiting outside the office, and maybe bringing him up had been unfair, but he was extremely aggravated and borderline exhausted. Croaker had given him his orders, including what Bones and Scrimgeour wanted him to do, he didn’t expect to be summoned up to the DMLE on a whim three days before he was first supposed to meet with Hermione Granger in person.

“You’d do well to remember that you’re not that important Unspeakable,” Amelia snapped at him between gritted teeth. “You might be a hot shot right now, but you’re still young – that kind of fire burns bright…and fast. There’s plenty of time for you to screw up.”

“I feel threatened,” Tony responded with a heavy dose of sarcasm. He liked and, mostly, respected Madam Bones. Had in fact enjoyed working under her – for all the minimal interaction he had with the Head of the DMLE as a newly minted Auror – and he felt like she was one of the few Ministry officials whose policies he could honestly support. All that aside, he very much resented the implication that she could have a single effect on his career; that influence had evaporated the day he left the DMLE and officially joined the DOM. When he considered the fact that the Paddington’s were also older and more widely politically aligned then the Bones’ Tony couldn’t help if a little bit of superiority crept into him.

“Don’t try that hoity toity pureblooded bull-shit with me Paddington,” Amelia snapped. “I know, just as well as Rufus, that you wear that shit like a well designed set of robes. The pureblood poncey prince, who’s just intelligent and athletic enough to pass muster and get an Auror slot. No one looked twice at you while you were here… despite graduating top of your Auror class and qualifying as a Hit Wizard. They even forgot you were Head Boy and a bloody Ravenclaw.”

Tony merely raised an eyebrow at her commentary and asked, silently, with his expression why she was stating the obvious.

“Alright,” Rufus Scrimgeour, the Head Auror, interrupted before Amelia could keep going, obviously spurned on by something that had aggravated her. “Anthony, we asked you here because, we need to know why you’ve been tailing Albus Dumbledore and accessing records from the war.”

Tony froze and his mind scrambled, mostly in an attempt to figure out how they even knew he had been doing those things, and then it clicked, “You flagged my magical signature!!?”

“No,” Amelia answered, almost hesitantly. “We did.”

Tony smirked, internally grateful that Granger had spent the summer in France and had therefore been outside of the Ministry’s detection range so they didn’t seem to know about her, and allowed his channels to pull some more from the Paddington Well and flare his magic over the office and power his voice in a near compulsion, “I’m guessing by your expression that you realize exactly how
fucking illegal that was. You want to flag what your Aurors are doing – fine, whatever, that’s your right. But you can’t even blink in the direction of my magic. I’m an Unspeakable. I work for the blood Queen; just because you and all your fellow lemmings have forgotten that Queen Elizabeth is the final authority in this country – especially to Magicals – doesn’t mean we have. Tracking what I do magically, under the protection of my job, could be considered treasonous in the right circumstances. So you better explain yourself right now.”

Madam Bones pursed her lips and Tony could feel her fighting; which was fine because Scrimgeour cracked immediately.

“You’re making waves and investigating Dumbledore could destabilize Magical Britain. He’s too respected and looked up to.”

“You mean he’s too revered, has too much power and knows where all the bodies are buried,” Tony broke it down in more clear terms. “I thought half the reason I was requested to do an, independent, investigation into Sirius Black was because I wasn’t in Dumbledore’s pocket.”

Scrimgeour spluttered in indignation and shook his head negatively, “You weren’t supposed to investigate anything! Just keep an eye around Hogsmeade and make sure he wasn’t killed if he showed up before we could decide what to do about the problem.”

At that comment, and Amelia’s incredulous look at Rufus, Tony let up on his magical assault – mildly impressed that Madam Bones hadn’t cracked.

“Ahhh, I see,” Tony spoke quietly and nodded. “So you could decide what to do about the problem. Now, since neither one of you are the types to be bought, with gold at least, that means that you have to decide who will be embarrassed if the Black situation was a screw-up…or worse, who will be, potentially, found guilty if the Black situation was a set up. Then you have to figure out how that affects your own political capital.”

“How dare you!” Amelia snapped. “I have never taken a bribe or considered anything other then the law in my life.”

“Oh yea, then what’s with the big stink about me poking around the Death Eater files? And keeping an eye on Dumbledore. He was and is the Chief Warlock…maybe you trust him, to an extent, but I don’t trust him at all. And I want to know exactly why the probable Heir of an Ancient and Noble House got thrown into prison without a trial, on his say-so, when Bellatrix fucking Lestrange was given that courtesy.”

“Dumbledore didn’t have anything to do with that. Crouch did,” Amelia insisted and Tony rolled his eyes.

“I’ll repeat myself since Magicals outside the DOM aren’t known for their application of logic – he was the Chief Warlock. It was his testimony that said Sirius was the Potter secret keeper; not that he’d say why they were under a Fidelius Charm or even offer proof that they actually were.”

“Why would he lie about that?” Rufus asked, looking honestly confused.

“Oh I don’t know,” Tony replied snidely. “Maybe because he had a hand in practically every fucking thing that went on during that war? Hell, they never found Voldemort’s body and I found the bare minimum of forensic reports from that night…for all anyone knows Dumbledore strolled up and killed everyone himself.”

“You do not honestly think that,” Amelia stated, rather then asked, looking at Tony in disbelief.
“No,” he admitted. “I don’t actually think that. But I do think that a lot more went on then we know about. There were questions that were never asked. Hell, I even believe they were under a fidelius that Dumbledore cast making Sirius Black the secret keeper. But no one ever asked under what circumstances did Sirius supposedly give up the Secret? He might have been a highly trained Auror and Hit Wizard; but he was still only twenty-one and everyone has their breaking point under the right torture.”

He watched their expressions stricken at that point and continued with his tirade, “And the cottage that everyone keeps calling the Potter Cottage? Sales records show it was purchased by Albus Dumbledore in April of 1978. No one ever asked about that. Potter House’s wards date back to the 15th century; they’re still standing. Why the hell didn’t James and Lily just stay there and apply a fidelius to that property? Even if someone gave up the secret it wouldn’t drop the wards on Potter House.”

“The deed on the cottage says a L.J. Evans was the owner,” Amelia immediately replied, inadvertently telling Tony that she had apparently had the same avenue of thought he had been following.

“Isn’t that interesting in and of itself,” Tony responded with a raised eyebrow. “I saw that too. Couldn’t figure out why it, technically, belonged to Lily Potter, Lily Evans before her marriage; but the sales filing is right there in Godric’s Hollow town hall for anyone to see if they actually looked. So you have to wonder why the Headmaster of a school would purchase a cottage in a magical village and then very quietly gift it to a muggleborn student – something he had never done before – sometime after her graduation and before May of 1980. The month he said he cast the fidelius.”

“Maybe the name on the deed was extra security,” Rufus pointed out. “Death Eaters weren’t going to care about her maiden name…or even think she’d use it for anything once she had a so-called proper pureblood name.”

“Maybe,” Tony conceded. “But these are all things we’ll never know until a proper investigation is conducted. So perhaps you should stop worrying about who this investigation could effect…unless that person’s name is Sirius Black. If he’s maliciously guilty then by all means throw the book at him and kiss the son of a bitch. But if it turns out he broke under torture…or, here’s an idea, wasn’t the actual fucking secret keeper or a bloody death eater at all, get him declared innocent so his family can see to his return to something resembling good health!”

“And what of Peter Pettigrew and the muggles?” Amelia questioned him looking serious.

“Well that was just a fuck up of epic proportions,” Tony declared. “Anyone who thinks Sirius Black, death eater or not, would be so stupid as to perform that level of magic in the middle of a busy muggle street raise their hands.”

When neither Rufus nor Amelia moved, except to look sheepish, Tony nodded and added, “That’s what I thought. Are we done here? Are you finished with trying to ham-string me before I actually get started?”

“Yes,” Amelia agreed, nodding slowly and looking disturbed. “You know Kingsley Shacklebolt technically has the lead right?”

“Yes,” Tony nodded. “It’s not hard to miss. He’s doing a bang up job so far too,” he added, a little sarcasm seeping into his voice once again.

“What’s your problem now? Kingsley is an exceptional Auror,” Amelia almost growled out looking annoyed once more.
“I know he is. But Kingsley also thinks Dumbledore hung the moon and the sun and the stars. When I was still an Auror if I even implied I didn’t like a decision he made in the Wizengamot I found myself reorganizing the file rooms. If Albus hints to Kingsley the direction he wants the investigation into Sirius to go then your oh so trusted Auror will find a way to make it happen. He was the same way in school; he might have been five years ahead of me in the Eagles Nest but he had no problem harassing me, even as a first year, because of my families known stance of not being aligned with the Dumbledore bloc. It made the first two years at school interesting.”

“I’ll keep an eye on things,” Rufus interjected, giving Amelia a quelling look. “But all this aside, you really are making waves Anthony. Ignoring what you think about us; if you make too many waves you risk the Minister pushing for Black to be eliminated.”

“He has a kiss on sight order,” Tony pointed out. “That’s pretty well eliminated. Look, I’ll be a little more circumspect. But I’m not going to stop looking into things; my Father has been getting waylaid since Arcturus died. And Arcturus wasn’t getting any answers before that. So there has to be a lot of people’s secrets riding on Sirius being in Azkaban; which means there’s much more going on than just what went down on Halloween in ‘81.”

“And you think Black’s the key?”

“Not necessarily; he might just be a side effect to a bigger picture,” Tony replied to Madam Bones’ question. “Personally, I think it very interesting that not only as Harry Potter’s godfather was Sirius Black the first person who would have been given custody of the vaunted boy-who-lived…but he was also Lord Potter’s Executor. So, Sirius in jail means James’ Will was sealed automatically. Yet, Dumbledore was Lily’s Executor…and somehow the custody list for Harry got whittled down until Albus was the only person left? And now the kid’s hidden away? Seriously – not one red flag for either of you? I was only thirteen when this shit went down and I knew something went seriously wrong almost immediately. And it only took me this last month to find out these key details.”

When both Department Heads only stared at him, looking more shocked then they had during the entirety of the rest of the meeting, Tony had to contain his laughter and could only wonder how a single thing got done in this building if he at twenty-six had managed to start to piece together that there was a major conspiracy going on.

He just didn’t know what the conspiracy pointed to or why it had been enacted.

“You’re dismissed,” Amelia almost whispered. “Do what you have to do. Just try not to get caught.”

Tony nodded and without another word, though he again wanted to point out that he didn’t actually work for her, letting his final rant sink into their brains left the office after pulling his hood over his head once more.

**Saturday September 4th 1993**

*Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry*

*Gryffindor Castle*

*Hogsmeade, Scotland*

Tony stared past the imposing gate of Gyrffindor Castle and shuddered as he saw who had been sent to collect him and bring him up to the school.

“Hello Hagrid,” Tony spoke, allowing the spells concealing him to work their magic on the half-Giant.
“Err, Hello Unspeakable,” the large man stammered. “Professor McGonagall sent me down to collect you.”

Tony simply nodded and gestured towards the school; trying not to laugh as the groundskeeper jumped out of the way of his hand and started walking towards the Castle. The duo walked silently for a few moments, the large man continuously casting nervous glances towards Tony.

“Can I help you with something Hagrid?” Tony finally asked; he might be enjoying making Hagrid nervous since the half-Giant had made sure to let him know through actions, if not words, that he wasn’t worthy of being in ‘The Great Albus Dumbledore’s school’ all through his seven years, but it didn’t mean he wanted to be stared at like a bug either. Sometimes the Paddington public stance on Dumbledore’s power conglomerate was trying on the patience.

“Uhh…no?”

Tony nodded and continued walking, laughing under his breath as the nervous stares got worse the closer they got to the school. When they finally reached the main entrance of the school Hagrid seemed to straighten up, as though he was more protected from Tony inside the school and seemed to gather his vaunted Gryffindor courage and almost growled out, “Dumbeldore won’t let you dark magic users mess with his school. Just so you know.”

Tony nodded seriously and answered in an exceptionally cold tone, “Well…if I see any dark magic users I’ll be sure to let them know. After all, as someone who wasn’t expelled in their third year I would be a better judge of who exactly is a practitioner of the dark arts then a groundskeeper.”

“I’m a Professor. Thank you very kindly,” Hagrid replied to him, sending Tony’s eyes wide behind his hood in shock.

“A Professor? Of what exactly? And how did that get approved?”

“Care of Magical Creatures. Dumbledore approved it. Great man he is.”

Tony gritted his teeth and inclined his head, giving the implication of agreement and simply stated, “I can take it from here. Thank you for the escort.”

He immediately spun on his heel and stalked off in the direction of McGonagall’s office, his robes billowing around him, past students who were watching him in confusion or horror. His subconscious picked out the children raised in Wizarding Britain versus those of muggle upbringing based on their reaction to his presence and the sight of Unspeakable robes.

And he couldn’t bring himself to really care if he was scaring children at the moment.

He had purposefully made arrangements with the Head of Gryffindor to floo through to her office, from his own in the DOM, to avoid this kind of spectacle; and the aggravation that had been building since this morning when he received word from McGonagall that he would have to enter through the main gates was now a boiling rage with the knowledge that an unlicensed teacher – someone who didn’t even have OWLs – was instructing one of the most dangerous classes in the curriculum. He had expected power plays; Albus was still plenty annoyed that he had lost his gambit with Croaker over Tony’s presence in his school to meet with Miss Granger. What he hadn’t expected was this level of incompetence to be uncovered in the first five minutes Tony was in the school.

When he reached the painting of a dark forest on the 3rd floor, the door to a hidden room set aside for his meetings with Miss Granger, indicated in the letter he spoke the password authoritatively and entered finding Professor McGonagall standing with the teenager he had been tasked with observing.
“Interesting choice of password Professor,” Tony began his verbal onslaught before either party could speak. “Was Unscrupulous your choice or the Headmasters?”

“It was mine,” Minerva McGonagall admitted, eyeing Tony with such distrust that he was almost afraid to guess what she had told Hermione Granger about the Unspeakables before this meeting. “Croaker insisted that Albus not know where or when you were meeting. It was one of his…conditions.”

“Good,” he stated firmly. “You can go,” he added, dismissing her without a second thought and absolutely enjoying the enraged expression that crossed her features.

“If you think I’m leaving a child alone with one of you then you’ve got another thing coming,” the Professor snapped in a high handed scolding tone Tony had heard plenty over his years at Hogwarts.

“That’s fine,” Tony responded, shocking the older woman into silence. “Miss Granger I’m afraid I am going to need to collect the device you have been entrusted with,” he added, removing a wooden box from his robes, opening it and holding it out in front of him. The space inside perfectly fitted to a time-turner displayed for both females to see.

“What?” the younger girl gasped, looking horrified. “But…I was told I needed it to take extra classes. Professor Dumbledore said so.”

“Did he also tell you that he doesn’t own the device? Or that the Lead Unspeakable had regulations set up for your use of the device? Did he even mention that most of the Ravenclaw’s are probably also taking extra classes under independent study?”

Tony watched the younger girl take in his words and could practically see the wheels turning behind her eyes; mentally he urged her on with the hint he had given her that Dumbledore wanted her to have the time-turner.

He had been surprised this past month as he observed the girl. She was much more open-minded then he had been led to expect. He wasn’t sure if that was a by-product of what she had experienced during her first two years at the school or if she had entered the school with a firm mask in place herself. Because, the girl he had seen this summer was not the blindly trusting schoolmarm he had been told about; the girl he had seen this summer in Paris had been researching Albus Dumbledore herself, using sources outside of Britain, and hadn’t seemed all that impressed with what she found if what he had found written in her journal was to be believed.

He could work with open-minded. But now it had to be her move.

After a longer pause then Tony expected, leaving him a little nervous that this wasn’t going to go the way he had hoped, the girl spoke, “With respect Professor…I think I would like to keep the time-turner. And I should obviously therefore follow the rules set forth by the actual owner of the device.”

“Miss Granger…Hermione…I don’t think you understand what you are agreeing to. Unspeakable’s have a reputation. They are ruthless…they don’t mind using dark magic if it suits their goals,” the Professor began explaining in a hushed tone as though Tony wasn’t standing two feet away from them. “He will most assuredly make you swear things so as not to report back on what he does to you in here.”

Tony bristled at those words and interrupted icily, “Madam, I am not certain I like the implication of what you just said.”

“I implied what I implied,” McGonagall answered him, sneering. “Albus said you would be doing
some ritual called the, ‘bakire söylem’. The best he was able to translate it was Virgin Discord. To disagree with virginity. Do try and remember she’s only thirteen…sex magic is illegal prior to the age of 16.”

“Oh for Merlin’s sake,” Tony snapped. “Get your conspiracy theory waving wand out of this room Professor. You might have a Mastery in Transfiguration but the lowest ranked Unspeakable has forgotten more about ritual magic then Albus Dumbledore has ever known. Bakire Söylem is a Turkish ritual. It’s direct translation is Virgin Discourse; not discord. The full name is, in English for your isolationist mentality, The Pure Discussion. It’s a truth ritual. Everyone participating in it must speak the truth as they know it to be while the circle is open. I will not be, nor have I ever, participated in a sexual act with an underage witch or wizard. Get. Out.”

Tony waited for the Scottish woman to storm out of the room before flipping his wand out and sending a visual wave of magic at the door, sealing the room with Family Magic for extra security. He took a few deep breaths to calm himself, still staring at the sealed door, and then turned to take in the expression on the face of Hermione Granger.

What surprised him most was the fact that she didn’t look indignant that he had insulted her professor; instead she looked intrigued as she stared back at him unblinkingly. It was the first time he had ever stood around another Magical, even one who knew his identity, in these robes and hadn’t inspired some degree of fear or suspicion.

“So Miss Granger…how would you like to do some magic?”

Her answering grin was all he needed to tell him that this assignment might be more fun then he had expected.
Part Seven

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Saturday September 4th 1993

_Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry_
_Gryffindor Castle_
_Hogsmeade, Scotland_

“Now, just to be clear – you’re absolutely certain you want to keep the time-turner? And you understand that by accepting the device you also accept any oversight the Department of Mysteries deems necessary?”

“Yes,” the young brunette stated clearly and decisively.

“Okay then,” Tony replied. “Then, proper introductions, my name is Unspeakable Canis Star. Before we continue there is the ritual to consider. I can’t put you under a typical wand-bound vow due to your age; so I’ve dug up a fairly benign truth ritual. Regardless of what conclusions Professor McGonagall or Headmaster Dumbledore jumped to, this ritual does not have anything to do with your virginity or even sex in general. It’s not even required to be performed sky-clad."

“Oh good,” Hermione mumbled and Tony had to stop himself from laughing at the relieved expression that crossed her face.

“So, before I start – what exactly do you know about ritual magic? Since it isn’t taught at Hogwarts anymore I’d like to know what you’ve been told…and possibly what you’ve researched on your own.”

“Well,” Hermione began seeming to think of her words carefully. “It’s honestly not often discussed; unless the older years do. I didn’t even really know that it was a real thing until this summer. I ran across a few books in France that I bought; but my friend’s mother saw them and she took them from me. She told me that ritual magic is one of the darkest practices possible.”

Tony blinked behind his hood and asked, incredulously, “Exactly who told you that?”

“Uhh…Molly Weasley,” Hermione stammered. “Is she going to be in trouble?”

“No,” Tony responded honestly. “Though I do fear for her children’s education,” he added. “Then again, Molly Weasley was Molly Prewett, and well…now that I think about she might have cause to not look so highly upon ritual.”

“Why’s that?” the girl asked him and Tony considered for a second letting her know about the rumors of Molly Prewett being magically banished from her family for using a love potion on Arthur Weasley, resulting in a pregnancy, when she was betrothed to someone else. She had been lucky the Weasley’s were more interested in the Prewett’s vault then they were in suing for line-theft; though, apparently the joke had been on them – Molly Prewett’s dowery quite famously went to pay back the bride-price of her original betrothed.

Of course, the Prewett’s were too ‘light’ to disown their child leaving them destitute so she didn’t lose everything; instead, they just cut her and her children off from the Family Magic. The irony being the so-called dark families took the money but let the child keep the magic – if only to keep
feeding their own. Which in the long run certainly explained why the so-called ‘darker’ families were always so much more powerful, minus certain exceptions.

“Oh, just rumors,” Tony finally decided that letting her know that little nugget of information was probably not the best idea he had ever had. If only because the Weasley family was so far into Dumbledore’s pocket that he didn’t want to risk turning his potential protege away from them so obviously. He needed her to think for herself; but he also needed her to still be connected in order to get him information.

“So ritual magic is not dark?”

“Not by definition,” Tony replied. “But then again, neither is a levitation spell…but you could still levitate someone off a cliff…or levitate a piano over someone and drop it.”

“And who says you can’t learn anything from cartoons,” Hermione replied and then slapped her hand over her mouth just as Tony burst out laughing at her comment. “Sorry sir. I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“No. No,” he responded, still laughing. “Interrupt away if you’ve got zingers like that. And considering that’s where I got that example I’d say you were more than accurate. More importantly, did you take anything away from what I said?”

“Intent,” Hermione said decisively.

“Exactly,” Tony responded. “Now, that’s not to say there aren’t spells and rituals that are by definition dark,” he continued explaining while also herding her to the corner of the room. “Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. Regardless of what you might have heard the Killing Curse is just that. You actually have to mean it in order to use it,” he added to his explanation and simultaneously unfolded a large silk cloth that had lines and runes marked onto it.

“But doesn’t that still go back to intent?” she questioned him. “After all, if your intent is to kill someone; then you’ve achieved your goal. But at the same time, if you’re defending yourself and the only option you have is to use the killing curse? Then is that murder…or self-defense?”

Tony smoothed out the cloth and set a large white candle on each corner with his hands, not wanting his magic to interfere with the ritual circle he had brought for them to use, “Is it considered self-defense if you shoot someone who is threatening you with a knife from across the room? No. Self-defense is legally considered when you are in imminent danger and the participants are of equal standing. Essentially, it gets really technical in the legal jargon and it tends to be an iffy defense unless the person who claims self-defense had a lesser weapon on hand. It gets harder in magical courts considering they’ll basically just ask you why you didn’t stun the person threatening you.”

“And there is no real defense to a killing curse,” Hermione extrapolated where he was going with his statement. “That’s entirely too convoluted.”

“That’s the magical court system for you. It’s half the reason people get away with throwing their gold at a problem to get it to go away. Now, let’s get you in here and we’ll get started.”

Hermione took his direction quickly and easily; in this case Tony was thrilled she was as smart as advertised, since he didn’t need to explain more then once what she had to do. Once he was certain she had her one very simple line, to be repeated multiple times, memorized he asked her if she had any questions before entering the circle.

“Why is it in English? I thought this was a Turkish ritual?”
“Hold your wand and say light,” was the only answer Tony gave her and then gestured for her to do just that.

“Light,” the younger witch whispered, looking uncertain and causing Tony to roll his eyes when her face fell as nothing happened.

“Now try it with some meaning,” he explained. “Feel your magic and say light,” he added, frowning at her once again uncertain expression as he had no idea what was confusing about what he had said.

“Light,” she stated, this time with a firmer tone and once again her wand did nothing.

“Okay…I think part of these sessions are going to be remedial magical theory. Why do you look so confused?”

“Well, you said to feel my magic.”

“Yes?”

“I don’t know what you mean,” the girl mumbled looking upset at admitting that.

“That’s…how…I only graduated in 1986. We learned that in my first year! Hell, I was taught that by the time I was eight.”

“Then they don’t teach it anymore,” Hermione told him seriously.

“Wonderful,” Tony groaned. “Alright…nevermind that. Straight answer then – not only is what defines magic intent. Magic itself is intent. It’s how silent magic works – do you think adult magicals wave their wands in super complicated patterns just to move a stack of books? Same idea with spells. Latin is used here in England, because Old English is no longer the common tongue and Latin is the easiest language to translate any of the romance languages into. But you can be certain they don’t use Latin in Japan or China. And they still have levitation spells.”

“So, if I intend to light my wand I can say lumos, light or just think at it really hard?”

“Sort of,” Tony admitted. “That last one is a little…off. But we’ll work on it.”

“Why’s it off?”

“Because, I guarantee when you find your magic, you aren’t going to find it in your brain.”

She didn’t look entirely convinced and Tony only shook his head, logic wins the day…for now.

“Now, as I’ve just established that you apparently have a very minimal education in theory. I made some assumptions; which we all know what happens when you assume. So that was my fault. Once we activate this ritual everything you learn from me is secrecy sealed. You can attempt to discuss it…and you’ll find yourself embarrassingly tongue tied. Subsequent meetings will have a, let’s say, shorter initiation, but they’ll also be secrecy sealed. This is to protect both of us. All you’ll be able to do is let anyone who already knew about our meetings – Dumbledore and McGonagall – that they went fine and nothing untoward happened. Do you understand? Last chance.”

Hermione nodded and took the place Tony had instructed her to stand in as he took his own on the opposite side. Her wand was held carefully in front of her chest and slightly aloft, exactly as Tony had described, ‘as though you are a knight of old holding their sword up to their king’.

Tony took one moment to reconsider what he was about to do; but everything he had learned of her
by following her this summer, plus the annoyingly persistent voice of Nimue in the back of his mind, told him he was correct in this present actions, “Alright, let’s get this ritual out of the way.”

Tony held out his own wand and with four swift flicks ignited each of the candles on the corners of the cloth before stating in a loud voice, “Welcome child of magic. Welcome to a place where hearts live and lies are disavowed. A place of purity and truth. Do you swear child of magic to honor these ideals?”

“I so swear,” Hermione’s voice answered him, her eyes not leaving the blank place where his own face would be without his robe.

“Welcome child of magic. Welcome to a place where ideas can be exchanged without repercussions. A place of learning. Do you swear child of magic to honor these ideals?”

“I so swear.”

“Welcome child of magic. Welcome to a place where masks are stripped bare in safety without fear of being revealed. A place of secrets. Do you swear to honor these ideals?”

“I so swear.”

“Welcome child of magic. Welcome to a place where those who belong will forever find safety inside its borders and by the wands of its fellows. A place of sanctuary. Do you swear to honor these ideals?

“I so swear.”

“Welcome child of magic. Welcome to a place where anxiety and fear become fuel for body and mind. A place of logic and action. Do you swear to honor these ideals?

“I so swear,” with Hermione’s final vow a rush of magic swept the circle in a visual display of gold and silver that left the teen gaping in shock.

“Well, now that the housekeeping is out of the way,” Tony interrupted the silence with a snarky tone and pulled his hood down. “I am Lord Anthony Dominic Paddington, Heir of the Most Noble and Most Ancient House of Paddington. Welcome to the Tiger Eye Coven.”

Hermione stood gaping at him for a second before she exclaimed, “You lied to McGonagall!”

“With a straight face,” he responded nodding. “The woman barely tolerated me as a student, especially in my later years. You think she was going to let me induct you, even nominally, into my coven?”

“Your coven?” Hermione squeaked. “I thought you were supposed to be making sure I don’t misuse the time-turner?”

“Actually,” Tony corrected. “I’m supposed to make sure you don’t burn out your still fragile magical core by using the time-turner or even worse, blow up the school by combining said fragile magical core with a completely unstable magical device. And while I’ll definitely be doing that; I thought this was a good plan too.”

“Why?” she asked quietly, looking overwhelmed and frightened and sending a pang of regret through Tony. Not regret that he had done it; regret that it was necessary.

“Because all signs point to a war coming again. A war that due to a certain friendship of yours you
appear to be on the front lines of. A war that a certain Headmaster appears to want to keep those who could fight it, those who should fight it, uninformed. A war that will lead to death and destruction and probably annihilation of Britain if it’s allowed to happen for a second time.”

“So, what? I’m a source of information?”

“Yes,” Tony admitted unabashedly. “But unlike your Headmaster, I won’t leave you unprepared for what’s coming. I just can’t prepare you if I don’t know what I’m preparing you for. You like logic Hermione. Tell me does anything that has happened during your first two years here make any sense to you? Or am I making more sense right now?”

Hermione was silent, considering his words Tony hoped. He silently stood in front of her and let her think. It barely took five minutes before she spoke quietly, “I think I have some things you need to know about Lord Paddington.”

“Good girl,” he whispered and smiled softly at her. “You’re making the right choice.”

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**Wednesday September 15th 1993**

*Paddington Glade*

*7 Gillyweed Lane*

*Hogsmeade, Scotland*

It was the first night in two weeks that Tony hadn’t had Hermione’s soft, tearful, voice playing on repeated loop throughout his head as she recounted stories of Voldemort possessing teachers, Harry Potter being a parslemouth, a first year possessed by a diary that talked back, a (fucking) basilisk roaming the school…and that was just the ‘special events’. Then there was the bullying she was subjected to – both blatant from other students (and some teachers) and inadvertent from her very best friends. She had been slightly shocked when he had almost yelled at her to stop doing Harry and Ron’s homework or she would ruin their chances at thriving as adults. That being a good friend sometimes meant not ‘being a good friend’.

He had explained to her about the coven. The Tiger Eye Coven; the name taken from the meaning of the stone – balance and strength in difficult times – and the series of animal figurines his birth mother had given him for each birthday all made out of tiger eye. He had explained how it was a very small coven; six, now seven with Hermione (and let her know that Crispian was a member so she would have someone to talk to at school about everything), magicals tied to the D.O.M. who had similar goals for Britain – justice, equality and peace. He had explained his research into her and how he had felt Hermione’s magic when he first saw her in August. That he had immediately known she would be a good fit; even if for now, due to her age, she was only nominally a member.

He had explained about the Unspeakables – with his personal circle activated she literally wouldn’t ever be able to tell anyone unless he released her from the vow and by that point he fully expected her to be well on her way for a trip to the Springs herself anyway.

He had reassured her that though he had been directed her way as a point of information, that he took care of those he considered his. That she and her parents were now fully protected – to the point that on her birthday she was going to receive a letter from Gringott’s explaining the wards that had been placed on her parents home and Dental Surgery.

So with all those thoughts cycling through, he had been thrilled to finally be able to push them aside and get some of his coursework done. Needless to say the constant scratching at the backdoor of his home was not helping the near constant sour mood he had been in.
After another ten minutes of hearing the scratching and whining he finally screamed and tossed his textbook onto the table in front of him. Jumping up off the couch he stomped across the cottage and flung open the back door to stare down at the skinny animal that had been disturbing him for almost forty-five minutes.

The cottage itself was located on the furthest street you could get from the Village Square, a twenty minute walk from High Street and in the opposite direction of the Castle, while still being considered ‘in town’. There were farms located further out from the small residential village but it was another fifteen minutes by broom from Tony’s street to reach the closest of them.

Tony’s cottage was small but comfortable; the main floor was a mostly open design with a kitchen, dining area, living room in the front. There was a bathroom and small study in the back. Upstairs was two bedrooms and another small bathroom. While the basement held a potions laboratory. The yard itself was the crowning glory of the property, a five foot stone wall surrounded the cottage and between that and the nearly overgrown landscaping you could barely see the house from the road. As it was on the end of the street the lot up into forested land, earning the property it’s name of ‘Paddington Glade’. As the cottage had originally been purchased by his Father’s great-great-grandfather to live in with his wife as a newlywed when the man was the Potion’s professor at Hogwarts if you looked closer at the landscaping you quickly realized that while it looked unkempt it was actually a well ordered garden filled with potions ingredients. After his graduation, when he moved into the cottage, Tony had been surprised to find that before Dumbledore took post of Headmaster the only professors who lived full-time in the Castle were the Heads of House, and even they were usually married with families. His Father had commented on the topic a simple statement, “Apparently, if the old goat can’t be happy and loved up then no one can.”

The thought of his former Headmaster ‘loved up’ with anyone had ended and further inquiry on Tony’s part.

“What do you want? I left you food already,” he snapped, pointing at the empty bowl that had sometime in the last hour been emptied of the leftover chicken and vegetables from his dinner. “Well?” he added, before shaking his head and laughing at himself. “Damnit Tony…it’s a fucking dog. It isn’t going to answer.”

The dog in question, a large black stray, tilted its head and barked once before trying to dart past, the now distracted, Tony and into the house. It was only due to years of reflexes honed from playing Quidditch and being an Auror that allowed him to get an arm around the dog and get it back out on the stoop.

“No. We had this discussion last week,” he stated forcefully, shaking his finger in the animal’s face. “You won’t even let me hose you down. No way are you coming in my house.”

Tony’s only answer was a pitiful whine, followed by the dog rolling over onto it’s back and presenting it’s belly.

“No…don’t do that,” Tony muttered. “Please?” he added, groaning when the dog only whimpered louder. He closed his eyes and waited only opening them when he heard silence…which immediately sent the whimpers into a louder and higher pitch. “Damnit. Fine!” he grumbled and stepped aside, rolling his eyes when the dog dashed into the cottage.

Tony shook his head at himself, thinking he had been too isolated since he left Rome if he was so easily caving to the idea of company. Even company in the form of a dog.

“Oh no,” he shouted across the room and almost laughed when the dog fully paused in the process of climbing onto the couch. “You want to lay anywhere other then in front of the fireplace then you’re
getting a bath,” he added, pointing in the direction of the bathroom.

He did laugh when the dog proceeded to shuffle, rather than walk, across the small cottage and right into the bathroom with Tony following. When he entered the bathroom he smirked at the sight of the dog sitting patiently in the empty tub with the canine equivalent of a put-out expression.

“So, you’re humoring me are you?” he questioned, raising an eyebrow and starting the shower; immediately drawing a indignant bark from the animal as it scrambled back out of the way of the cold spray. “Hey, don’t take that tone with me…you haven’t been bothering any of my neighbors; I asked. You’ll take what you get.”

Tony fell silent as he shampooed the surprisingly well behaved dog, twice, with the muggle pet shampoo he had purchased a few days earlier. He rinsed the product out and grabbed his other purchase, this one from Hogsmeade’s apothecary, a flea potion that was guaranteed to kill off fleas and any magical parasites that might have latched on while the dog was in the wild.

Tony had considered just going with a muggle flea bath; but the dog’s intelligence had caught his attention and he couldn’t help but think that despite the large dog looking like a cross between a Wolfhound and a Setter (he refused to believe it was a ‘Grimm’) there was quite possibly some magical creature mixed in. Those two dog breeds themselves were intelligent; but his dog, specifically, seemed to know exactly what he was saying at all times. And occasionally answered appropriately.

Upon the potion finishing it’s recommended ten minute set time, and stopping the dog from licking at it at least five times, Tony quickly turned the water of the shower on full blast to rinse the green foul smelling concoction off the animal.

“Good; now don’t move;” he warned aloud and lifted his wand twisting it sharply and watching as all the water seemed to float right off the dog, leaving him dry. The fact that the dog looked startled as his head kept darting around staring at the hovering water, water that was slowly coming together to form an ominous looking large ball of water above it. “You like that? It’s a family spell I picked up from my Mum. She said Black’s invented it because their only imperfection is the tendency for their curls to become balls of frizz when dried. Personally, I think their imperfection is their tendency to be insane…but hey, to each their own. Your fur seems like it might have the same reaction to a drying spell.”

He couldn’t help but wonder what he had said to make the dog drop onto his belly and cover his eyes with his paws. Luckily Tony had mostly gotten used to the odd behavior from the dog over the past few weeks.

The dog, that Tony still hadn’t brought himself to name, had shown up a week after he moved back into his Hogsmeade cottage and hadn’t really left his yard since. It would disappear for a few hours at a time, though to where was still a mystery, but like clockwork the animal would return right after Tony finished his dinner and would wait patiently on the back porch for whatever leftovers Tony put outside in a bowl.

Their first meeting had shocked Tony completely because in the five years he had lived in the cottage following his graduation and before moving to Rome he had never seen the dog once. Nor had he ever been bothered by any stray animals. Then a week after moving in he had been sitting in his back garden, reading one of his texts, when a loud excited barking had filled the air and the next thing he knew Tony was being bowled over and licked by a large black dog that looked like it hadn’t eaten properly in years. It was the enthusiasm that had shocked Tony more then anything; stray’s aren’t known for their kindness or excitement for strangers. Yet, the dog had acted since that day as though Tony was his favorite person in the world and like he had belonged to Tony for years.
“Alright. Get out,” he ordered, once he had evaporated the water into the air. “Go. Get comfortable. I gave in, no more nonsense.”

He watched as the dog, with a happy bark, jumped out of the tub and dashed down the short hall into the main area of the cottage. The following crash drew a loud groan from his throat and immediately caused him to regret not sticking to his initial decision of letting the dog hang out in the yard without caving and bringing it inside.

“That better not have been any of my work!” he shouted out loud in the empty bathroom, glancing around and groaning again at the sight of dog hair coating the tub and water covering the floor. “I’ll do it tomorrow,” he muttered and left the bathroom, firmly closing the door behind him.

Upon re-entering the main room of the cottage, with the intention of sitting back down and finishing his reading, that he received the biggest shock of the evening. The dog, whom Tony had now internally dubbed ‘Parasito’ – Spanish for pest, had knocked over the cork board he had set up to display the limited information he had revolving around the weeks leading up to the end of Voldemort’s reign of terror.

“How is this my life?” he whispered covering his face with his hands in exasperation as he watched the dog pause in where he was throwing papers around, stare at one in particular before urinating on it with a large self-satisfied doggie-grin. “You are so very lucky those are all copies!”

Had Tony not surpassed aggravated and moved on to furious at that point; he would have noticed, before he banished the entire pile of papers, that the subject of that particular photo was Peter Pettigrew.

The dog seemed shocked to find itself once again outside that evening.

Chapter End Notes

So...this is all that I had already written - updates were on the quicker side as I really just had to go through and edit and re-write a few things. Will hopefully be able to churn out some new text soon. Lemme know whatcha think.

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