Silence is Silver

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/9791615.

Rating: Mature
Archive Warning: Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Underage, Rape/Non-Con
Category: Multi, M/M
Fandom: Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationship: Harry Potter/Voldemort, Charlie Weasley/Zachary Nettles
Character: Harry Potter, Lily Evans Potter, James Potter, Voldemort, Sanguini (Harry Potter), Original Male Character(s), Severus Snape, Death Eater(s), Tom Riddle | Voldemort, Lawrence Carrow, Cassius Warrington
Additional Tags: Torture, Child Abuse, Murder, Slow Burn, Underage Relationship(s), Underage Sex, Slytherin Harry, Dark Harry, Powerful Harry, Mute Harry, Abuse, Power Dynamics, Emotional Manipulation, The Potters Live, Potter bashing, Edward Potter - Freeform, Blood and Gore, Violence, Rape/Non-con Elements, Dubious Consent, Non-Consensual Drug Use, Minor Character Death, Original Character Death(s)

Stats: Published: 2017-02-16 Updated: 2018-10-23 Chapters: 34/? Words: 148647

Silence is Silver

by Alphinss

Summary

Harry is abandoned by his parents at the tender age of one in favour of his brother, the boy who lived. Raised at the Dursley’s Harry has not spoken a word since his parents left him. What will happen when a mute and damaged Harry goes to Hogwarts?

HIATUS:trying to re-write/work out what the fuck I'm doing...
Chapter 1

The little boy stood in the doorway, slightly awkwardly as he opened the door; as the new sight met his eyes he froze in shock and the many other emotions that the boy could not possibly process. All these different thoughts and feelings bombarded him. The boy was eleven years old but he was small for his age. He had jet black hair and bright sparkling green eyes that glistened slightly at the sight that met his eyes from the doorway. The green was slightly hidden by his wire frame glasses, however the tears were still visible behind them. Even though the tears never fell, this uncharacteristic show of emotion demonstrated just how effected the boy was by the sight that met his eyes. These unshed tears made the green gems look even bigger.

After staring for a while the little boys eyes quickly darted away from the shocking sight, he pulled at his frayed sleeve, staring intently at it and trying to focus all of his attention on this menial task. He was trying to get his mind away from thinking about the sight before him. He did not want to think about it. Although he knew he would have to deal with it and that moment was looming closer and closer he would try to put it off for as long as possible. The rest of the boy’s clothes were scruffy and old as well as being slightly on the big size. The long sleeved t-shirt that he wore was an off white colour and the sleeves hung down covering his small hands. As one of these small hands pulled at the sleeve it was revealed to have many small red angry scratches on it, some looked in the process of healing whereas others were new and looked like they may have been bleeding as soon as an hour ago. The trousers that the boy had on were also large, not to a comical proportion, but to an extent that the bottoms trailed on the floor slightly and that they needed to be pulled up every few minutes to stop them falling down.

There was a sudden yell from down the corridor and the sound of foot steps.

“Boy!” Screeched a horse like woman with a long neck, she was too thin but the clothes that she wore hugged tightly to her frame making her look even thinner.

“Boy!” she repeated “What are you doing? Who’s at the…” She trailed off. Her eyes widening as she came close enough to see what the boy had seen. She may have been shocked, just as the boy had been, but the only other emotion that she felt was anger. A hot and vicious anger that wiped away any other emotions that may have been there at the back of her mind.

“What..What are you doing here!” She exclaimed disgustedly, as though addressing a tramp who had decided to spend a night on her door step to avoid the cold. It was a compassionless tone and one that promised pain if the thing offending her did not leave and leave soon. It made the boy flinch slightly, having heard that tone before and knowing what followed it. He tried to curl in on himself and backed away until his back met the wall. He kept his eyes down the entire time, not daring to look up and draw the wrath of his aunt towards himself.

In the door way there stood two people, a man and a woman. Both looking shocked at the horse woman’s reaction to them and the harsh tone with which they were addressed. The woman had bright, red, fiery hair and sparkling green eyes that were full of life and love. The man was taller then the woman and had black shaggy hair, black circular glasses and brown eyes. Eyes that seemed to glitter with a hint of mischief as though he was already planning how to get back at the woman. The boy happened to glance up and see the look in his eyes and knew that there would be trouble if that look was directed at him. It was a look that would not lead to a good conclusion for the man; he would not let it be. The boy was not one to fear mischief and knew how to deal with someone in such a way that he would never be caught.

“Hello to you too Petunia, lovely to see you” the man said sarcastically to the horse faced woman.
Petunia bristled slightly at the comment and seemed to be thinking of a response as acidic as the look in her eyes.

“James!” said the woman, hitting the shaggy haired man on the arm. She knew that Petunia would not react well and did not want to have a fight with her sister and cause a fight between the people that had looked after her son for ten years of his life.

“Sorry Lily” James mumbled, looking slightly embarrassed at being reprimanded by his wife. He knew that he should be more respectful to the woman in front of him as she had been the one to raise his son, however reluctantly. Being courteous may be the difference between having a good or bad relationship with his son and having this relationship was the reason he was here, after all. Due to this he steeled himself to stop fighting. He could still see the son out of the corner of his eye and knew that he needed to keep his temper.

“I suppose you two better come in then” Petunia muttered distastefully “I don’t want any of the neighbours seeing freaks on my door step.” She then ushered the two into the living room, indicating for them to sit down on the sofas.

“Well sit down then! Tea? Yes tea!” Petunia said quickly, she didn’t give either of them a chance to reply as she rushed out to the kitchen to make the tea.

Well in truth it was more that. She needed to get her temper under control. She knew that the two people in the room could cause some serious damage to her and her family. She should be glad. The little freak would be gone soon enough and for that she should be celebrating. At last the reign of silence would be over, the hundreds of questions left hanging in the air, the cold gaze as the only response to the yells and shouts directed at him. Finally the silent little blight on their family would be gone. She smiled. A smile that was filled with all the resentment and fear that had built up for ten years. It twisted up over her face like a vine growing up a wall and as it did tears began to leak out of the corners of her eyes. Tears that were both joyous and sorrowful, ecstatic and terrified. Petunia had been changed when that young boy had come into her life. She didn’t know why but he terrified her. His silent, cold demeanour. She was so glad, so glad that he would never return to her. She was finally free, finally. She knew this and yet the tears would not stop falling down her face.
In the living room the little boy had followed Lily and James into the living room. He still kept his face down, moving his eyes from his feet to his sleeve and back to his feet again. He shuffled behind them and watched as they sat down. He had to side step his aunt as she rushed out of the room to make tea. He glanced up and then immediately looked back at the floor when he saw James’ and Lily’s eyes on him. The boy tugged at his sleeve again as acted as though there was no one in the room with him at all. It was as though all that existed in the world for him was his sleeve and the floor as he kept simply looking between the two for several minutes until he was interrupted by someone calling his name.

“Harry” a soft voice said and as the voice reached the boy’s ears his head shot up and he saw that it was the voice of the man that had spoken. “Harry…do you know who I am? Who we are?” he questioned pointing at himself and then at Lily. Harry just stared at the wall behind the man. He didn’t want to look at the man directly and so decided that this was the next best thing to do. James felt a tad disparaged by the unresponsive nature of his son.

“Harry” he said, hoping that Harry would look over at him, but no such luck, so he continued as best he could

“Harry, I’m James Potter and this is Lily Potter. I’m your father and this is your mother. Harry. Harry do you understand?” James was trying to keep calm but the fact that Harry was simply staring at the wall, ignoring him, was not helping matters. He needed a response from the boy, to know that Harry understood what was going on. “Harry…Harry please!” James began to plead.

Lily gently placed a hand on James’ knee as both a sign of comfort and a warning that he needed to calm down. James sighed loudly in frustration and rubbed his eyes, pushing his glasses up his face holding them on his finger tips before letting them drop back down onto his face. He then pushed his glasses back up his nose. After another deep breath he brought his hands down from his face, putting them on his knees, one being put on the top of Lily’s. He looked over to his wife, their eyes met and James knew that this was not going to be easy. How would they explain to Harry what had happened? What could he possibly say so that the eleven year old would understand why they had had to leave him?

Lily decided that she had to take control of the situation. James was not handling this well at all, but that was to be expected. He never had been the best at dealing with serious situations. Lily knew she could not be put off by the unresponsiveness of the little boy in front of her; her little boy. She needed to get through to him, to get him to respond to her. She would fix this relationship with her son even if it killed her! She had done enough wrong to the poor boy already and she wasn’t about to make his life any harder then it already had to be. She readied herself for this difficult conversation but knew that it was better to just do it. There was no time like the present, her mother had always said and that maxim defiantly rang true in the situation that she found herself in now. She just had to get this over with.

“Harry” Lily said gently, as though talking to a wild animal that could bolt at any moment. She saw his eyes flick quickly from the wall to her face and then back to the wall again; he did it so rapidly that if she had blinked she would have missed it.

“Harry” she said again and even as she said it she realised that between James and herself they were saying Harry’s name as though it was going out of fashion “we need to explain to you about…well about why James, your dad, and I couldn’t keep you. We want to explain why we had to leave you here with your aunt and uncle. We need to tell you…well to tell you that…” Lily knew that she was
avoiding getting to the point, she was not doing this well and she knew it. She kept talking but she was saying nothing.

“Oh Harry…you see…you have an older brother and he’s the reason that we had to leave you here. There’s no easy way of saying this but…well….your brother is…well he’s…”

“Here’s the tea!” Lily was interrupted as Petunia burst into the room, a pained smile on her face and her eyes we’re still red from the tears that had streamed from them like a never ending waterfall while she had been in the kitchen. Yet she had somehow managed to get some semblance of control and had managed to stumble around the kitchen, fill the kettle and fill the pot, while nearly pouring the boiling water on her hand in her distracted state, her vision blinded by tears. She had staggered into the living room tray in hand; four teacups, a tea pot, milk and a plate of a random assortment of biscuits hurriedly grabbed from the tin. She placed the tray down on the coffee table with a slight bang and then began to pour herself a cup, adding a splash of milk and collapsing onto one of the chairs. She began to drink, not caring that it was scalding hot and was burning all the skin in her mouth and continued to burn down her throat as she swallowed. She barely noticed, her mind preoccupied with other things.

Lily had been slightly shocked by the sudden intrusion of Petunia, she had been so intent on explaining to Harry what had happened and why he was here, that she hadn’t even heard Petunia’s footsteps come along the corridor to the kitchen. She looked back to her son and noticed that Harry, in the kerfuffle, had gone back to looking at the floor and then flicking to his sleeve again. She sighed in exasperation; it seemed that no matter what she did it was just not getting through to her little boy. That though alone made her want to sob and scream in despair. She just wanted him to understand so that she could have her baby boy back. She tried to talk to him again

“Harry, your brother is...well...he’s an important person. The people in our world call him the boy who lived…it’s hard to explain what that means but he defeated a bad man…an evil man when he was a baby. He saved you too and...well…”

Lily was again interrupted by the loud screechy voice of her sister

“He won’t answer you” she said to Lily and James’ confusion. “He never says anything” Petunia continues “You can talk at him all you like but he’ll never reply” Petunia said laughing bitterly “He’ll just stare at the wall or the floor. There’s no point in even trying”

Petunia quickly swiped at her eyes with the back of her hand, almost violently, as a tear trickled from her eye and more threatened to fall. She refused to let them see her cry. There was no room for weakness in this situation and even a single tear could be seen as that by any of the freaks in the room.

Lily and James looked at each other in confusion and in fear. What did she mean, what could she possibly mean? They had no idea what to say next and several minutes ticked by with not a sound being made except for the occasional slurp as Petunia continued to scald her mouth with too hot tea. Lily and James could do nothing but stare at each other, their faces flicked between different emotions, going through confusion, contemplation, fear and finally realisation. Finally the silence was broken as James suddenly blurted out

“You mean…no you can’t mean.He doesn’t speak? He can’t speak? Why? What’s wrong with him? What did you do to him?!” James had began to yell, getting louder and louder the more he talked. Unnoticed by him this yelling had caused Harry to back up, getting further and further away from the person that called himself his father. He had backed up far enough so that his back was against the wall, just as it had been in the hallway earlier. For Harry this was a safer position then that of the centre of the room. He, personally, would have preferred his cupboard as nothing bad happened
there. It was dark, it was safe, it was small, he felt at home there. But forfeiting his cupboard the wall at his back would have to do.

“What did I do? I think you mean what did you do? You can’t blame me for the freak being damaged, it’s not our fault. He was like that when he got here! I have never heard him speak a single word or make a single sound. If anyone is to blame it’s you!” Petunia had yelled at James, she was angry at the accusation. How dare they accuse her of damaging the freak! It wasn’t her fault that the freak had issues, that he refused to speak a single word. Even after Vernon had beat the boy bloody he had not made a single sound and that had scared her. It had scared her and she could see in the boys eyes that he knew that. He may have done everything that she told him and had not resisted when they had reigned down abuse on him. Their yelling, screaming, hitting, punching and starving of him had been met with no resistance except for the slight movements that he made. The backing away or the tugging at his sleeve, the fiddling with is glasses or the movement of his eyes to a different location in the room. Anywhere but the faces of the people in the room. Never begging, never running.

Only the small, slow, silent movements that if told to stop would do so immediately and he knew. He knew that this scared them more then anything else ever could. Even though Petunia had abused and neglected the little boy to no end, he scared her. The silent shadow that lurks in her every waking moment. Even when he was at school or she was out and he was at home she always felt he was there. Out of the corner of her eye he would always be there and when she would turn he would be gone. She needed rid of him and she needed it now. With him gone her life could start again. With him gone her son would be safe.

“What did you call my son?” James yelled, louder then before. “How dare you? How dare you?! He is not a freak and he is not damaged! He is special and he is hurting and you, you should have been helping him” James got closer and closer to either crying or punching Petunia in the face. He had stood up his fists clenching at his sides. He stood there fuming, as though he was ready to explode. Lily was still sitting on the sofa, her head in her hands, sobbing quietly. Her breath hitches and the sound reaches James’ ears even through hie angry state. This small noise makes all the anger drain out of him and like a deflating ballon. He collapses backwards onto the sofa, drawing shaky breaths.

Time ticked by, no one really keeping track, all just contemplating what to do, what to say. After what felt like hours Lily spoke up quietly, not wanting them to descend into chaos again.

“I think…I think that we should go. It’s time to take Harry home. We need to get out of here James” Her eyes were red from the sobbing and her voice sounded strained as she spoke. Lily slowly stood up taking James’ hand as she did so, pulling him up off the sofa. She walked over to Harry who was still standing with his back against the wall and his head down. Lily let go of James’ hand and knelt down in front of Harry. She talked to him softly

“Harry, I know you can’t reply to me but I hope that you will listen and that you will understand” Lily had a new determination in her voice that she did not have before “We are leaving this place and we are leaving now. I need you to go and get your things, as quickly as possible and then we are going home” tears began to stream down Lily’s face again “We are going to go and see your brother and your uncles and you are going to go to Hogwarts and you will have such a good time Harry. I promise you. It’ll all be fine, you’ll be fine. I promise” It sounded like she was trying to convince herself more than Harry. She lurched forward and embraced him in an awkward hug as Harry just stayed looking down. His shoulders stiffened as she embraced him, tears dripping onto his dirty, too large shirt. James came back to himself when he saw the awkward embrace. He patted Lily on the back trying to sooth her.

“Your mum is right Harry, we should leave. Now if you just go and get your things then we can go.”
Petunia interrupted yet again and James began to think that she enjoyed doing it

“Wait!” she exclaimed “There’s nothing the freak has that’s worth taking and even if he did it’s not his to take. He doesn’t deserve to have it, he’s only ever been a burden on this family so why should we give him anything?” In truth Petunia did not want the two of them to see where they had made the freak sleep. A cupboard under the stairs, even for a freak, was not a suitable sleeping location. She knew that once they left that they would never be back and the sleeping quarters of the freak would never be revealed. After all the freak wouldn’t be telling anyone anything anytime soon.

Lily and James were too emotionally drained to argue. They had enough money to buy Harry a whole new wardrobe and new toys a hundred times over. Harry would need to have robes anyway and so all his muggle clothes would be useless as soon as they entered the wizarding world. James took Lily’s hand and Lily took Harry’s, even though she could tell he was intensely uncomfortable with the contact. They all walked out of the front door together letting it shut behind them with a slam. They walked down the path out of the Dursley’s front garden. Lily leaned down to whisper in Harry’s ear

“Hold on tight” and then they disappeared with a pop.

Petunia watched them leave out of the window and when she saw them disappear she turned her back to the window and walked into the kitchen. She started to get the ingredients to make dinner for her family. Her lovely family. Just the three of them. Three meant no more fear and no more danger for her little boy. She was free at last and now she could live without the shadow, without that silent darkness that followed her wherever she went. She continued to cook, her husband would be hungry when he got home and who was she to disappoint him.
Chapter 3

There was a pop as three people appeared in the entrance to a large house. Harry stumbled slightly as they landed, but tried to keep his composure. He tried to keep his face as stoic as possible even as he felt his stomach churning and threatening to empty its small contents all over the floor. He tried to ignore the pain in his stomach and focus on the situation that he had just found himself in. To start with he had no idea how he had ended up here. He had heard his mother telling him to hold on tight and then he felt a squeezing sensation as though his body was being forced through tube that was too small for it to fit through.

Harry was fighting hard to keep the emotions off his face. He was angry at himself for the way he had behaved earlier. How could he have been so stupid? He had almost cried in front of his parents. What was wrong with him? He couldn’t remember the last time that he had cried. He continued to berate himself in his head until he remembered where he was. He began to think about how he was free from the Dursley’s. True he would missing playing with Petunia, she was such a good toy. He would, however not miss Vernon. A break from the beatings would be a blessed relief. Harry mulled over the fact that he would, however, never get the chance to reach a level where he could control his Uncle’s mind. With his aunt, the weak willed horse, he could manipulate her into doing and seeing many things that she did not want to. Harry had found that he could push his wants onto other people if he thought about them doing it hard enough. He had discovered this when he was five and his aunt had been about to cut all his hair off. She did not like that it was so untameable. According to her it was unseemly to have him running around with the hair of a vagabond. The last time she had cut his hair it had been painful as she had yanked and pulled with extreme force. She had also ended up cutting his scalp in several places when her hand had slipped. She had very little care for his comfort. This had led to Harry wishing, in his head, over and over again for her not to do it. To his surprise she had put the scissors down with a slightly dazed look in her eyes and had turned around and walked away.

Harry’s skills had developed over the years. He had reached a stage where he could make his aunt see things that weren’t there, even when he wasn’t in the room with her. He could project the idea that he was in the room with her into her mind. He initially started doing from his cupboard when he was locked in, just for something to do. The first time he had done it he was seven and he had almost broken his silence just to laugh at the ridiculous noises that his aunt had made. When he first started she had shrieked and from the sound of it, had fallen to the floor in fright. Harry had then heard her footsteps racing towards the cupboard. The door had been flung open and his aunt’s angry face had met his. Harry had schooled his face to a blank mask and simply stared at the wall behind his aunt. Meanwhile inside his head Harry was cackling like a maniac. Harry eventually reached a stage where he could make his aunt see him in every waking moment that he wasn’t there with her in person. She would see him out of the corner of her eye and it terrified her. Even when he had to go to school, meaning he was a few streets away, he trained his mind so that he could project himself into his aunt’s mind and still be able to focus on his school work. Not that school mattered much anyway. Everyone just saw him as a freak and the teachers didn't even care if he did his work anymore.

His uncle, however was a different matter. He seemed to have very strong determination to hurt Harry. If he decided that he was going to beat Harry that day then there was no way of stopping him. Harry had tried many things to stop him but it never worked. He had at first tried to project the idea of stopping into his uncle’s mind but that had not worked. This led Harry to try other things he tried projecting different ideas into his uncle’s mind such as: a bloodied and beaten Dudley instead of Harry, the police turning up at the door and arresting him or social services asking questions about how Harry got the bruises. None of these ever worked and in fact just seemed to anger his uncle
more, making the beating more vicious. This made Harry reluctant to try again until he was ready. He didn’t want any more injuries then was strictly necessary. It wasn’t that he minded the pain, no, it was that when he was severely injured he wasn’t allowed to go to school. This meant that he couldn’t practice his projection on the children in his class. Making them get into trouble was very amusing and he could see the results directly rather then only hearing them from his cupboard. Harry had also used his skills on Dudley. Every time the young whale had come to play Harry Hunting he had made him think better of it. This meant that by the time Harry was eight Harry Hunting became nothing but a memory.

Harry brought himself out of his reminiscing and looked around. The corridor that he was standing in was brightly lit and tasteful decorated; pictures lined the walls of what appeared to be a happy family. There were three people in many of the pictures. In others, the three were joined by another two. Harry looked at the photos in disgust; the smiling, happy faces made him want to sneer but he managed to restrain himself, maintaining the blank facade. There were three people in the photos that Harry didn't recognise. The first was a boy with black shaggy hair, almost identical to both Harry’s and James’. The boy had dark brown eyes that seemed to sparkle with joy and a love of life. He looked very much like a smaller version of James apart from the fact that there were no glasses adorning his face. The second person was a man with long black hair that reached his shoulders, he grinned wolfishly in all the photos, but his piercing grey eyes seemed to have a depth to them that threatened the onlooker, as though telling them that if they hurt the group of people that he was depicted with then they would not live to see another day. The final person was another man, this one however looked ragged. He had floppy brown hair and sad blue eyes. He looked as though life had been hard. The scars on his face, a pair of them, that ran from his forehead, down the side of his face, over his eye, down his neck and then finally diapered below his clothing, showed a physical representation of this hardship. The scars were jagged and rough and an angry red. They looked to have been made with a knife or a similar sharp object. He also had other smaller, but none the less violent, scars on his face that appeared to have been made with the same weapon. Harry found himself wondering what other scars the man’s clothes hid. Scars that violent could not have been a one off attack. The hatred practically oozed from them.

Harry was snapped out of his assessment of the people in the photos as he felt a tug on his wrist from the hand still holding it. He had to restrain a shudder at the feeling of someone touching him. He could handle punches and slaps but this kind of friendly touch disgusted him and if he was honest with himself it also scared him a little. The hand gently pulled him down the corridor and to a door. The door was pushed open and inside the sight of the three people from the corridor met his eyes. He maintained his vacant expression as he was pulled into the room. Hands were placed on his shoulders and he was gently pushed down so that he was sitting on a sofa. All the faces in the room were now focused on him and Harry felt the urge to slap the dumbfounded looks off their faces. He really did not feel comfortable with their stares. His body tensed slightly and this did not go unnoticed by the occupants of the room.

“Harry” came the voice of his mother. She and James were sitting on a sofa opposite the one Harry was on and the other occupants were on various chairs around the room. Harry didn’t even bother to look at her. He was bored of her. Her voice was too gentle and she treated him as though he was made of glass. She was not put off though.

“These three people are very excited to meet you. They’ve been waiting for a long time”. Harry wanted to roll his eyes. If they wanted to meet him why the fuck hadn’t they just popped over to the Dursley’s for a nice cup of tea. They could talk about what a freak he was and then they could watch Vernon beat the shit out of him. Harry tried to calm himself down, it would not do to loose his temper at a time like this. He may accidentally end up projecting his jumble of thoughts and feelings onto one of the people in the room. He had done that once in school and, well, let’s just say that it had not ended well. The child that Harry’s emotions had been aimed at had had to spend the next six
weeks in hospital.

“This is Edward Charlus Potter, he’s your older brother.” She pointed to the shaggy haired boy, the mini James from the pictures. At that statement all of Harry’s attention became focused on what the woman was saying. It may not have shown on his face, but he was now listening intently. “Edward, or Ed as he gets called at home is thirteen and so will be at Hogwarts with you in September. He’ll be in third year and you’ll be in first year” Harry had no idea what Hogwarts was. He did remember that Lily had mentioned it to Petunia before and so decided that it must be important. From what she had just said it sounded as though it might be a school of some sort but he’d never heard the name before.

Lily must have realised that Harry may not know what Hogwarts was and so she said:

“Hogwarts is a school of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It’s for young witches and wizards like yourself. They go there to learn all there is to know about magic and in September you will be going there with Ed” She smiled as she said this. However Harry’s mind was going a mile a minute. Witchcraft and Wizardry, it was something that he had only ever fantasised about. He was going to learn to do magic? How was that possible? Was this a joke? Was that what his projection was, had he done magic? All these questions and more whirred around in his head.

Some of this conflict of emotions in Harry’s mind must have shown on his face as he suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder trying to comfort him. James had managed to move from next to his wife and sit down next to Harry without Harry noticing. Harry scolded himself, telling himself that he needed to be more vigilant from now on. He should not have let someone get so close unnoticed. Lily continued her explanation

“The other two people here are Sirius Black” she said pointing to the man with grey eyes and black hair “and Remus Lupin” she pointed at the scarred man. “Sirius and Remus are our friends and have been since we were at Hogwarts ourselves. Sirius is Edward’s godfather and Remus is yours.” Lily looked as though she wanted to say more but then thought better of it. She decided that it was getting late and that to explain any more to Harry now would only be bombarding him with too much information at once.

“Well, it’s getting late and I think we should have some dinner and then all go to bed” Lily said. The awkwardness in the room was palatable as no one had any idea what to say. How were you meant to deal with an eleven year old boy that had been uprooted from all that he knew and tossed into a new world? Even Lily as a muggleborn could hardly relate to Harry’s situation. At least she had had Snape to explain to her what her accidental magic was. A few seconds passed and then James stood up and exclaimed:

“To the kitchen we go” trying to make everyone relax. After that everyone made their way to the directed room. Harry waited for the others to walk out in front of him, before following after them. He had decided that for now he would go along with what they told him to do. He would act like the damaged and scared little boy that they assumed him to be, until he knew more about them.

Dinner was an awkward affair. Several questions were directed at Harry and he simply ignored them, deciding instead to play with his food. He pushed the food around and took the occasional bite. After a while the questions stopped and the people at the table talked amongst themselves. He tried to follow the conversation but the words made no sense to him. Words like Auror, Unspeakable and Death Eaters. The words only did more to confuse him. Eventually everyone was finished and the awkward meal was at an end. Even though Harry had eaten less than half of the meal presented to him he was more full then he could remember being in a long time.

Lily led Harry up to a room that she claimed was his. She lay down a pair of pyjamas on the bed
claiming that they were Edward’s and that they may be too big but that they would go shopping for some more suitable clothes tomorrow. She showed him that there was an ensuite bathroom, telling him how the shower worked and giving him a toothbrush and toothpaste. She embraced him in an awkward hug, placing a kiss on his messy hair and then left closing the door behind her, telling him that she would explain more tomorrow and that everything would be ok. He didn’t believe her.
Arthur had just returned home from work and was greeted at the door by a mass of small red headed boys. Fred and George had immediately clung, one to each leg, as soon as he entered and Percy ran up to him embracing him around the waist and nearly knocking him over as his balance was already compromised with two little rascals attached to his legs. Ron was also walking as fast as his unsteady little legs would carry him towards his daddy. Arthur could see over Percy that Charlie was sitting on the sofa with a bemused look on his face. Charlie being the oldest in the house, with Bill being at school, was content to sit and watch the mischief that his younger siblings were causing. Arthur hugged Percy and then after some convincing managed to get Fred and George to let go of his legs, no matter how reluctant they were. He then walked into the room and picked up little Ron who had managed to fall over and was sitting on his bum with a little pout on his face, annoyed at having not been able to stay upright.

Molly was in the kitchen and had heard the commotion in the living room and knew that her husband must have returned from work. With her timing as perfect as ever the dinner was ready and as she began to put it on the table she called through to her boys, telling them to come through to the kitchen. She heard them all begin to run through like a small heard of elephants. Fred and George were first through the door with Percy and then Charlie coming behind them.

“Get the plates out Charlie. Percy, the glasses. Fred, George, the cutlery please and this time don’t give Ron a serving spoon instead of his normal one. You’ll make him cry again.” Molly barked out in a commanding tone. The boys rushed around the kitchen to obey her orders and soon enough the table was set and four little boys sat at their seats eager to be served their food. Arthur then walked in with Ron on his hip and sat him down on his chair, strapping him into the booster seat that prevented him falling out and made it so that he could see over the table. Molly and Arthur then proceeded to put the food out for the boys and then they all dug in. Ron managing to spread the food all over himself and needing help from Arthur who was sitting next to him.

About halfway through their meal the cry of a baby broke the air. The boys ignored it too engrossed in their meal to even notice. Molly however stood up, looked up at Arthur and said:

“I’ll get her. I bet she’s hungry. I put her down for nap about an hour ago so she’ll probably be wanting some more food around about now” She smiled as she spoke and then turned to make her way up the stairs. Arthur heard her footfall up the stairs and then the door to Ginny’s room open as she went to feed her.

Suddenly there was a bang and the door flew off its hinges. Arthur jumped out of his seat knocking his chair to the floor in the process. The boys had frozen in their seats all looking at their father with wide eyes. Even Ron was not making a sound. Arthur then heard something that made his blood freeze. A voice that he had never wanted to hear in his house.


“Where are you?” She called out again, this time slightly higher in pitch. “Where are the filthy little blood traitors?” She asked to herself, giggling as she did so. The sound of footsteps made their way through the silent house as the insane woman entered through the blown off door. Thuds of heavy footsteps followed her into the house as two men followed the cackling woman who was partially vibrating with glee at the prospect of killing and torturing some blood traitors.
Arthur snapped out of his stupor as he heard the footsteps. He knew that he had to get out of the house and quickly. If he did not then this mad woman, her husband and her brother in law would make his children suffer in a way that no one ever should. He snatched up Ron from his booster seat, unclipping him as quickly and quietly as he could. With his free arm he reached into his shirt and violently yanked at a cord tied around his neck. He tugged it up over his head and thrust it into the centre of the table keeping hold of one end.

“Take hold of this” he whispered to his children urgently “and don’t you dare let go” he said in a tone that he rarely used and it showed to his children just how serious he was. Arthur heard the footsteps coming closer and knew that soon it would be too late to save them. He heard Bellatrix’s voice behind him but the blood rushing through his ears was too loud for him to hear what she was saying. He would have to come back for Molly and Ginny later. He was determined to protect his family and at the moment the ones in imminent danger were his boys. He was sure Molly could protect herself and Ginny until he returned with backup. Once he sure that all of his children had hold of the cord he managed to force out the word “Haven”.

As he said the word he felt the pulling sensation from his naval of a portkey. However he also felt a searing sensation through his back. The pain was intense and he barley managed to keep hold of Ron and the cord. He felt ground beneath his feet but there was no way that he could stay standing. He dropped to his knees, setting Ron to the floor, as the weight of the little boy became too heavy in his arms. He could feel something sticky running down his back in copious amounts and then even the task of kneeling became too much and he fell forward onto the stone floor. As he slipped into unconsciousness he manage to choke out the word “Molly” and then he knew no more.

Wednesday 4th of November 1981

Arthur woke to the sound of hushed whispers near the bed that he found himself him. The room was dark except for a light in one corner where several people were sitting. They seemed to be the source of the whispers. Arthur strained his eyes and could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

The sudden noise caused the people in the corner of the room to suddenly whip their heads around simultaneously. Arthur recognised them as James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, MadEye Moody and Emmeline Vance. As Arthur looked at them he could see that Madam Pomfrey was standing by them flitting from one to the as she tended to the wounds that Arthur assumed they must have. Arthur tried to sit up and he felt a searing pain through his back. He let out a small gasp that he was unable to contain.

“Where” he tried to force out, but his voice cracked and it only came out as a pained croak. “Where” he tried again, this time his voice coming out stronger “is Molly? Where is Ginny?” he asked in a voice full of anguish. By the look in the eyes of the occupants of the room and the silence that met his question he knew what the answer was but he needed to be sure. He needed to know where his wife and his precious baby girl were. “Where are they? Where are they?! WHERE ARE THEY?!” he shouted. Tears were running down his face and as he shouted pain ripped through his back as though someone were stabbing him. But he needed to know.

Remus stood up and walked over to the foot of Arthur’s bed. Once he got there he looked at Arthur and in a voice so quiet that it was barley audible he managed to say “Arthur…Arthur I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry. They’re dead Arthur” A tear leaked from the corner of his eye and he continued “We
didn’t get there in time. When we arrived…well…we were too late.”

Arthur felt like he was going to be sick. The world froze and he didn’t know what to do. How could this happen? How was it possible? His beautiful, amazing, loving wife was gone and so was his baby girl. The little girl he and Molly had longed for. They had been overjoyed when she was born and now she was gone. Gone forever. An inhuman scream ripped itself from his throat and tears began to run faster down his face. He didn’t know how he could go on without them.
Harry looked around the room that he had been left in. It was very neutral in it’s decorations, as though trying not to offend in anyway and yet through its simplicity it became slightly offensive. Harry found that the bright but boring colours of the rooms made his eyes ache slightly. He rubbed at them and then sat down gently on the bed which was behind him. As he sat down he tugged off his t-shirt, pulling it over is head. As he did so an angry hiss was heard through the room. Harry rolled his eyes in exasperation. Pulling off his t-shirt had revealed a snake wrapped around the the top of his arm. The snake has hissing abuse at Harry for the sudden disturbance of his sleep. Harry simply stroked the irritated snake’s scales, attempting to soothe his fiery temper. He knew that the snake would not hurt him but also knew that the snake could hold a grudge like no other. Although the snake was still a big softy, a stroke of its scales and all anger faded away.

Harry had found the snake while he was gardening, trimming aunt Petunia’s roses to be precise. At the thought of roses Harry looked down at his small hands and rubbed at a few of the scratches and cuts that adorned them. Harry hated roses. The snake had been hiding in the roses and was very small, so small that Harry initially had trouble seeing it. The snake couldn’t have been longer than Harry’s hand. Harry heard it muttering angrily about worthless and disgusting humans and so he had decided that the best thing to do would be to pick up the little snake before his aunt heard the commotion and told his uncle about his freakish behaviour. As Harry picked up the small snake it began violently hissing at Harry. No real words came out and to Harry it just sounded like the snake was having a temper tantrum; crying, screaming and shouting at him. Harry cautiously brought his hand up to the little snake and ran his finger along the scales. The snake immediately calmed. The angry sounds ceased and the snake lay still in Harry’s hand focusing only on the pleasure that Harry was giving it. The snake began to murmur things that Harry struggled to hear but he strained his ears and heard that the little snake was giving his commands.

“Up a bit. To the left. Just a bit more. Oh perfect.” Harry found himself unconsciously following the commands of the snake for several minutes. Just moving his fingers to rub the scales where the snake told him. Suddenly Harry felt the snake stiffen under his hand and its little head whipped around so quickly that he was shocked that the little thing didn’t hurt itself. Harry thought that the snake may mean to strike him, but he was wrong. Instead the snake glared at him with red eyes that somehow managed to look menacing on such a small creature.

“You can understand me?” The snake spat out at Harry. The snake was trying to sound threatening but Harry could hear the fear in its voice. It was the same voice that aunt Petunia used when she was threatening him with a beating. The attempt at a threat but an underlying fear that couldn’t be hidden, no matter how hard she tried. Harry was confused at this. What reason did the snake have to fear him? Harry raised his eyebrow and then slowly nodded at the snake. Looking into its red eyes as he did so. Harry himself didn’t consider it strange that he could understand the snake. After all he had never met one before and the six year old just assumed everyone else could understand them as well.

Harry wasn’t sure that a snake would understand the human action of a nod but that was all he was willing to give. This was the most attention he could ever remember giving to another living being, but the snake interested him. To relieve his boredom, Harry was willing to attempt some kind of communication with this snake. The snake did seem to understand the nod as its red eyes filled with awe and seemed to glitter with something akin to worship. The little snake then began to writhe in Harry’s hand in excitement. Moving his little body in intricate patterns. Harry was unsure of how to react to this and so just held his hand as still as possible and let the insane snake continue his weird dance. The snake then began talking in a rapid and excited tone while still continuing his erratic movements.
“Oh, a speaker. It’s an honour, an honour I tell you. I can’t believe it” The snake stopped his movement and looked at Harry. The snake adopted a more serious demeanour and spoke again, eyes meeting Harry’s as it did so.

“My name is Balthazar” the snake said proudly “and I’m a european adder. That means that I’m venomous my speaker” Harry didn’t miss the term of ownership. The newly dubbed Balthazar had now claimed Harry as his own.

“This means that I can protect you my speaker. You shall be my master and I shall protect you!” Balthazar decided. He didn’t seem to feel the need to confirm with Harry that this was the case, Balthazar said it and so it was. The little snake then wrapped himself around Harry’s wrist, becoming covered by Harry’s overly long sleeves as he did so.

From that moment onwards Balthazar had never left Harry’s side. Well, except to go hunting, but he was never gone for more than a few hours. Balthazar was the only living being that Harry ever really paid attention to in a way that would not be to inflict pain or was not simply for self-preservation. Harry never spoke a word to the snake but Balthazar spoke enough for both of them. At first the incessant talking had annoyed Harry as Balthazar would always be talking, no matter what the situation or the time of the day. Balthazar would always have something to say. In the first few months of Balthazar adopting Harry as his master Harry must have heard the same story a dozen times about this one time Balthazar had managed to catch and eat a frog all by himself. For such a small snake this was an understandably big achievement but after having heard the story over ten times Harry lost interest. However over the years Harry grew to accept Balthazar the way that he was. Even if he annoyed Harry to no end, the snake was the one thing that Harry was thankful for. Without the company of Balthazar Harry was sure that his aunt and uncle would have driven him to further depths of insanity then he had already reached. Balthazar was also no longer the tiny little hatchling that Harry had met, he was now much larger, at a length of about 45cm. This meant that that he had also moved from wrapping around Harry’s wrist to wrapping around his upper arm. Balthazar enjoyed this position as it meant that he could occasionally pop his head out of the neckline of Harry’s t-shirt if he felt that there was anything worth seeing or telling Harry about. Of course he never did this when other people were present as he knew that that could end badly.

To accompany the red eyes Balthazar had grey scales and black markings on those scales. As Harry calmed down Balthazar by running his hands across those scales he began to realise that he was lucky Balthazar was with him when his parents had arrived. If Balthazar had been out hunting and had been left behind Harry did not know what he would have done. As loath as he was to admit it to himself, Harry had grown fond of the annoying snake and he didn’t know what he would have done without the company of the incessant chatter box. He would never tell this to the snake though. He’d never hear the end of it if he did.

Harry ended his soothing of the irritate snake to pull off his shoes, socks, trousers and pants. He then gently unwrapped Balthazar’s body from his arm and placed him on the bed. His small feet padded into the bathroom and he caught sight of himself in the mirror. The lack of clothes made him look even more thin as each rib was visible. Numerous small scars and cuts covered his front. These however looked insignificant in comparison to the large collage of bruises ranging from the black of the previous night’s beating through to the sickly green of the weeks old damage that refused to fully heal. There were also handprint bruises and angry red marks where the nails of the hand had broken the skin. Harry poked at a few of the bruises to judge the severity of them. He checked his ribs to see if any were broken and found that none were. This was a definite positive as it meant he didn't have to jerk them painfully into the right place and then wish, repeatedly, for them to heal, which hurt like a bitch as well as taking an age. Harry then realised that this wishing must actually be magic. He had always had a feeling that it was not normal but now he had certainly of it. This, he found interesting and began to wonder what else he could do with this magic. What were the limits? Could he wish for
things to appear rather than for things just to happen?

Harry continued this train of thought as got into the shower and turned it on. He kept his chest turned towards the water trying to avoid the water touching his back until he had full prepared himself for it. The cuts on his chest did sting as the water touched them but the pain from them was negligible compared to the pain that he would soon be feeling from his back. Harry poured shampoo into his hair with the shampoo having conveniently been left there for him. As he washed it out he pulled his head as close to his chest as possible to avoid the shampoo running down his back. Once all the shampoo was washed out he brought his head back up and felt a several stinging sensations run through his back as several water droplets landed on it. He braced himself and turned his back towards the hot, streaming water. His back was a mess. Welts and lacerations marred the majority of it as well as many scars that were covered by the new belt marks. The pain from the water rushing over Harry’s back was intense but he knew that he had to make sure that his back was clean. He was pretty sure that the belt that his uncle had used to inflict these wounds was not sterile in anyway and Harry did not want to get an infection again. The times in the past when his wounds had been infected were not pretty.

Harry got out of the shower and wrapped one towel around his waist and then the other he wrapped his hair in. He brushed his teeth quickly and with little care and then walked through to the bedroom. Balthazar was still on the bed and as he entered the room the snake started hissing angrily about Harry’s uncle and how it was so unfair that he hadn’t been allowed to bite him when he was hurting his precious master. Harry ignored the snake and pulled on the pyjamas dropping the towel around his waist to the floor in the process. He then picked it up, folded it and placed it in the bathroom doing the same with the on his head. Neatness had been drilled into him from a young age and it was more of a reflex action then anything else. He collapsed on the bed and pulled the covers up around him. He lay on his side to avoid the pain that lying on his wounds would cause. Balthazar curled up next to him and both fell into a fitful sleep.
Harry woke up slowly. He found himself in an unfamiliar location and took it took a few minutes for the sleep induced haze to leave his mind. He finally found himself awake enough to remember where he was. The sun was just beginning to peak over the horizon and Harry guessed, from this, that it was about six in the morning. Harry was a habitually early riser. Not out of choice but through force. From a young age Harry had been woken by a banging on the door of his cupboard, being told to get his useless, freaky, good for nothing self up. He was then given a list of chores to do before school. Harry felt Balthazar curled up in front of him and could tell, simply by the fact he was not talking, that he must still be asleep. Harry slowly shifted away from the snake and managed to slide out of the bed without disturbing him.

Harry padded to the bathroom and relieved himself. He washed his hands and then thought about what to do next. He knew that at this time most people would be asleep and from the lack of noise throughout the house he assumed that the same rang true with these people. Harry made the decision to go and investigate, he wanted to know what the people in this house were like and what made them tick. He needed to know how they would respond to the things that he did and the way that he acted. Most of all though, Harry was exited. He wanted to learn as much as he could about magic. Magic was new and different and something that Harry needed to learn more about. Harry wandered back to the bedroom and headed towards the bed. Harry pushed up the pyjama sleeve of his left arm and then picked up Balthazar. Harry began to wrap the sleepy snake around his arm. Balthazar hissed in annoyance at having his sleep disturbed. He automatically tightened his coils around Harry’s arm as he was placed there, even though he was still half asleep. Once he was secure he gave into the desire to go back to sleep, feeling comfortable with the heat that Harry’s arm was providing.

Harry then began to make his way out of the room. He opened the door quietly and slipped through it. Little did Harry know that Lily Potter had placed wards on the door of the room. These wards alerted both her and James to the fact that he left the room. Harry continued his way down the corridor, unaware of this fact. He made his way to the stairs and tiptoed down them, trying to avoid the creaking of the old wooden floorboards. He let out a breath that he hadn’t realised he had been holding as he reached the bottom of the stairs. He spent the next few minutes wondering around the downstairs rooms. A large kitchen, two living rooms, a dining room and what appeared to be an office. Harry also found a door that led down to a basement. Harry, however, could not find a light switch and with no light to guide him down the stairs he decided to save his exploring for later. He did not want to injure himself unnecessarily even if he was curious. All the rooms that Harry looked in had been covered in more pictures as well as ornaments, flowers and had a general air of comfort. The rooms showed the picture of a happy family that the Potters were trying to portray. Harry sneered at this.

As Harry had another look around he saw a door that he had not noticed before. It was situated down a small hallway and was hidden from anyone’s view who was’t actively looking for it. Harry’s observational skills had been pushed to the limit trying to see it. What Harry didn’t know was that the room had a powerful notice me not charm on it and to look through it demonstrated Harry’s own power. Harry walked through the door and a grin crept its way onto his face without his permission. The room, if it could be described as a single room, was a library. It was the biggest library that Harry had ever seen. There were three floor and each one was packed with thousands of books. There were small seating areas situated all around the library. It was a beautiful sight and what was more was that it contained all the knowledge that Harry could ever want. So, for the next few hours Harry lost himself in the knowledge that surrounded him. The joy of learning new information was something that Harry felt for every second that he was in that room.
Meanwhile upstairs the other Potters were beginning to panic slightly. After the wards had been triggered both Lily’s and James’ wands had started to buzz on the bedside table alerting them to the fact that Harry had left the room. They were set to buzz for thirty seconds at intervals of five minutes until they were picked up. Lily and James were, however, were both in a deep sleep and due to the early hour of the morning were reluctant to awake. After about twenty minutes Lily eventually realised that something was going on and that she needed to get up. After having been fading in and out of sleep she sat up. She grabbed the wands, ceasing the buzzing sound, and realised what was going on. She shook James’ shoulder trying to wake him up. He grunted and so she shook him again.

“James. James” She said as she continued to shake him “James. Harry has left his room. James, we need to go and find him.” She was also tired but knew that they needed to make sure that Harry was alright. The fact that he was in a new place with new people and that there were magical items that surrounded the house that could be harmful to Harry made her sure that they needed to find him.

James grunted again but sat up, rubbing his eyes as he did so. Lily handed James his wand and he tumbled out of the bed. With a crash to the floor and giggle from Lily at James’ antics. The two then set about looking for Harry. They searched the house from top to bottom, searching all three floors with no success. After an hour or so of searching they had enlisted the help of Edward to try and cover more ground. After two hours they floo called Sirius and Remus to come and help search the grounds knowing it was possible for Harry to have tried to run away. After three hours of searching the five of them were beginning to panic. They had all returned to the main entrance of the house and stood there, trying to think of what to do next. Harry could not have left the grounds due the wards in place and they had looked everywhere they could think of.

“Mum” Edward said, drawing the attention of the group towards him. “What about the library?” He said in a way that suggested he was even questioning himself. “Edward dear” Lily replied “That’s not possible. There’s no way that Harry could have found it without someone showing him it was there. After your father cast the notice me not on the door even I couldn’t find it without him showing me where it was.” The idea that an eleven year old boy could see through magic that was so strong she herself could not was a ludicrous idea for Lily.

Sirius then piped up “I know that Prongs is one badass wizard Lily. I mean look at him, who wouldn’t love that face” Sirius continued, pinching James’ cheeks as he did so. “I’m not questioning that, but we are fresh out of options. There are not many other places that little harrykins could be so we might as well give it a shot.”

For once, Sirius had come up with a logical argument. It was a bit of a surprise for all of them and so, slightly stunned, they made their way to the library. The reason for the notice me not charm on the library was that there were many books contained within its shelves that were extremely dangerous. The Potters had a large collection of both light and dark books and if someone were to break into the library the evil things that they could do with the information there was too horrible to imagine. The idea that Harry could have been in the library and have access to these books terrified Lily. She did not want Harry’s first experience of the wizarding world to be so dangerous and dark.

James went first, he dispelled the notice me not charm with a wave of his wand and mutter of the incantation and then led the group inside. They decided that they should split up into groups to search due to the vast size of the library. Remus and Edward, Lily and Sirius and then James by himself. Each group went to search a floor. Remus and Edward took the middle floor and went in search of Harry. They made their way around the numerous twists and turns.

They reached the end of a row of book shelves and saw the boy that they were looking for. He had his back to them, sitting at a desk, facing the wall. There were books piled high around him and
strewn all over the floor. Many were open on specific pages that Harry had found interesting. Harry was currently engrossed in a book on thestrals and other creatures that were considered dark. He had many different books strewn around him ranging from basic charms to dark and complex curses with everything in-between. Balthazar was still tightly coiled around his arm. He had woken about an hour ago and was currently muttering about how bored he was and that he wanted to go and hunt. Harry had of course forbade him due to their unfamiliar surroundings. When Balthazar had suggested it Harry had simply shook his head and Balthazar had got the message.

Remus and Edward had approached the boy, walking further along the row of books. As they were getting closer Harry suddenly whipped his head around to stare at them, Balthazar having told him that he smelt someone near by. His eyes pierced them like a dagger, angry at being disturbed. Remus was shocked at the anger that he saw in Harry’s eyes, but as soon as it had arrived it left again as Harry reigned control of his emotions. His eyes adopted the blank look that they had become so used to showing to the outside world. Remus edged towards Harry, whereas Edward stayed where he was, watching the scene between his Uncle and his brother. As Remus got closer Harry stood up for the chair he was in and turned around to face him. His eyes were still blank but his posture was less so. It suggested that Harry was willing to either run or fight at a moments notice. He was tense and his fists were clenched. Remus, as a werewolf and experienced fighter, knew the signs of someone who was agitated even if it didn’t show on their face. He approached Harry slowly, careful not to make any sudden movements. He felt and looked like he was approaching a wild animal. The closer that he got to Harry the stiffer Harry’s posture became. Remus finally got within a few feet of Harry and decided that he needed to speak to the boy.

“Harry” Remus said softly, as not to frighten the boy. “Harry, it’s me Remus, can you come with me? I think that we should go and find your parents. They’re really worried about you.” Remus said, trying to explain to Harry in the simplest terms why he needed to go with him. “Harry” he said again, this time moving closer and reaching for one of the boys clenched fists. The boy flinched slightly as Remus’ hand moved towards him but as the hand gently curled around the clenched fist the boy did not pull away. Remus gently tugged on Harry’s wrist guiding him back down the row of books, down the stairs and out of the library, with Edward trailing behind him. Remus led them to the living room and stood Harry in front of the couch before slowly pushing his shoulders down so that he was sitting. His eyes still looked blank but his posture seemed to have relaxed slightly as Remus finally released him from his hold. Edward was standing in the doorway awkwardly and looked to Remus for guidance in what to do next.

“Ed” Remus said, finally noticing the young man’s uncertainty. “I want you to stay here with Harry and make sure that he dose’t wander off again. I’m going to find your parents and Sirius to tell them that we have found Harry. Is that ok Ed? Ed? Ed is that ok?” Remus said getting slightly frustrated at Edward’s unresponsiveness.

At the last Ed, however, the young man nodded his accent and Remus quickly vacated the room in an effort to find Lily, James and Sirius as quickly as possible. This left Harry and Edward alone in the room together. Edward sat on one of the chairs that faced the couch that Harry was sitting on. The boy was staring at the floor and was tugging at the sleeve of the too big pyjamas that he still had on. They awkwardly sat there for a few moments until Edward gathered his Gryffindor courage and addressed Harry. He would not be intimidated by a child that two years his junior.

“Hi Harry” he said in a voice that portrayed his nervousness. When the boy in front of him didn’t respond he cleared his throat and continued. This time in a stronger sounding voice. “Harry, I’m Ed and I’m your older brother. We’ll both be going to the same school next week, on the 1st of September. I know mum said a bit about it last night but I thought you might like to know some more details.” Harry made no sign that he was listening but inside his head he was cursing the prick that called himself his brother. Why did the young man have to assume Harry was going to reply to him.
He wanted to know more about this school he would be going to but he would not give the older boy any sort of satisfaction in getting a response from him. He’d already been too emotional today when Remus had approached him. Remus’ unexpected arrival had put Harry on edge and after that man had touched him he couldn’t seem to calm down. Edward started to talk again and Harry turned his attention back to him.

“Well” the young man said “there are four main houses. Gryffindor is the best, it’s for all the brave people and I bet you’ll be there with me next week. Ravenclaw is for the brainiacs, you wouldn’t want to be in that house. All they do is read. I know, boring right. Then there’s Hufflepuff, they’re losers really. They’re all about loyalty and hard work but who really cares about that? Finally there’s Slytherin” Edward paused and shuddered at the mere name of the house and a disgusted look adorned his face. “There is no way that you want to be that house, they’re all evil. They all follow Voldemort. They’re disgusting!” The strong reaction that Edward had peaked Harry’s interest.

Maybe this Slytherin house was worth looking into if it gained such a vicious reaction from the young man. Edward seemed to think for a moment before a look adorned his face. The look of a sudden realisation.

“Wait” he said in a much louder voice then before. It almost made Harry jump, but he managed to control himself. “You don’t even know who Voldemort is do you?” Edward questioned. He continued his train of thought as there was no response from his younger brother.

“Well Voldemort is the reason that you got sent away I suppose.” The boy said in a blasé tone as though he was talking about something of no importance. “You see, when I was three and you were one, Voldemort broke into the house and tried to kill us both.” At this he adopted a bit of a more serious tone. “Mum and Dad were out at the time and so they couldn’t protect us. Voldemort tried to kill me using a curse called the killing curse. It didn’t work of course” Edward said sounding a tad smug at this point. He lifted up his fringe and leaned forward in his seat.

“You see this scar?” He asked Harry. Pointing to the lightning bolt that adorned his head. “Well this is where the curse hit and then it reflected back and hit Voldemort. Killed with his own killing curse, what a joke.” Edward said snickering as he did so. “Anyway, Voldemort was this big dark Lord that was planning on taking over the wizarding world. He had this army of people he called Death Eaters that he was trying to do it with. He wanted to kill all the muggles. Oh wait muggle are non-magical people.” Edward said getting a little annoyed at the fact he had to explain all the terms that he was using.

“He also wanted to kill all the people that have non-magical parents. They’re called muggleborns. The fact that I manage to deflect the killing curse made me famous” Edward bragged.”Everyone calls me the Boy Who Lived and all the wizarding world loves me” Edward proclaimed smugly. Without his parents there to scald him Edward felt that he could brag to Harry as much as he wanted. He wanted to impress the younger boy. He was a big deal after all.

“So after Voldemort attacked us Mum and Dad thought it was too dangerous to have you stay here. Also after the Weasley’s and the Longbottom’s got attacked and then what happened to Remus…” Edward trailed off and looked as though he was in pain at the mere mention of the event. Edward then shook himself and continued on.

“Mum and Dad decided that you need to be protected. They knew that Death Eaters would come after me so that’s why I was trained from when I was little. But they may have used the brother of the Boy Who Lived to get to me and so they sent you to live with the muggles” Edward had said all this as though he was merely talking about the weather, apart from the look of pain he had gained when talking about Remus, the rest of the talk about abandoning Harry seemed nothing more than arbitrary. It seemed to Harry that Edward considered him as nothing more than a pet which could be
given from one owner to the other as the mood takes them. Or a liability which may do damage to the precious Boy Who Lived and his family. Harry was seething. How dare this person talk about him in this way? He was not a toy that these people could throw away when he became broken.

He was not a piece of rubbish. He was a fucking person. He had thoughts and feelings just like everyone else did. Just because he didn’t voice them didn’t make them any less real. In that moment the hatred for his parents grew. They may have wanted to protect him but that didn’t mean that they couldn’t have visited him, or have made a phone call. Even a letter, no matter how short, would have got him through some of his hardest times. To know there was a family out there that would come and get him. Even the idea of them would have saved him a hundred times over.

Harry stood up and walked out of the room. He ignored the shocked noise that Edward made at Harry’s sudden movement and continued to ignore the hurried footsteps that followed him as he ascended the stairs. He also ignored Edward’s calls for him to stop and slow down. He instead walked faster and continued along the corridor to the room that he had been placed in. Edward continued to follow him.

Harry reached the door and pushed it open. Edward tried to follow him into the room but was met with a door to the face. Harry slammed the door with all his might, causing the door frame to rattle as he did so. He locked the door ignored the banging of Edward’s fists on it as well as his demands for him to open it. He collapsed onto the bed and sighed, trying to hold back the tears that were threatening to spill down his face. The pounding on the door stopped after a few minutes. Harry simply remained laying on the bed and eventually he fell into an uneasy sleep.
Severus Snape’s Story

Sunday 1st of November 1981

Severus had no idea what to do. The last twenty-four hours had been some of the worst of his life and with the life that he had lived that was saying something. Severus was in a small dingy inn, located in Knockturn alley. The walls were damp and the wallpaper was peeling from them. The carpet was also stained with a variety of different colours. To the extent that the original colour of the carpet was a long forgotten memory. The room was sparsely furnished with only a small, scruffy bed, a beaten up chest of draws and a battered bedside table. The room was not one of the nicest that Severus had ever stayed in. In fact it was one of the worst, but at the moment he had no other options. He needed somewhere safe to stay and with his limited funds and this was all he could afford. He would not go back to the place that he had once inhabited, the place that he had grown up in. It did not deserve to be called a home.

Severus had left his home as soon as his seventh year had ended. Which, for him, had still not been soon enough. Severus had an atrocious relationship with his father and the relationship seemed to worsen with each summer that he spent at home. The abuse Severus received seemed to escalate as his age increased and his father became less and less reluctant to hurt his own son. The excuse for the pain, however, was always the same. Severus’ father told him that it was for his own good. He didn’t want Severus thinking that he was better than everyone else. He told Severus that the magic would go to his head and that he had a duty as his father to prevent that.

Severus had joined the Death Eaters when he was still in school. By the time he was sixteen he had been dragged into the dark and enticing world of the dark arts. The magic was so different from anything else that he had ever experienced. The rush of power that had entered him when he had used this type of magic for the first time was life changing and changed his life it had. The magic had drawn him to the darker sides of the wizarding world, filled with secrets and mystery. His place as a Slytherin had only led him deeper into this side of the world. Lucius Malfoy had approached him about a group that was for the elite of the wizarding world and that had offered him the chance to become a member. The ideas of the group were in line with the ideals that Slytherin members held dear and so by the age of seventeen Severus was a marked Death Eater. His only possible hope of saviour had rejected him when he had begged the love of his life, Lily Evans, to forgive him. He had called her a mud blood and yet he had instantly regretted it. She had rejected him. Rejected him in front of the entire school. Worse so, she had called him that vile name that had taunted him for years. The name that the marauders used to humiliate him. Snivellus. The name still caused him to shudder. So the deal was made and there was no turning back. To avoid Dumbledore’s suspicion Severus still had to go back to his father over the summer at the end of sixth year. He hadn’t wanted to, but spending an entire year in a castle ruled by someone who suspected him of betrayal of the entire wizarding world was unsavoury. However after his final year was over he had the freedom that he had longed for.

Severus had taken full advantage of this freedom to do all that he could for his Lord. Within a month of graduating Severus had managed to gain a potions mastery at the extremely young age of eighteen, becoming the youngest potions master since records began. This may have been helped by the state of the arts potions lab that had been provided for him, with endless supplies. His Lord had provided him with the lab as well as having accommodation and a weekly allowance given to him. The reason for this was that Severus was the only person in his ranks who had the capability to experiment with all the different ways to ensure immortality. Severus was getting closer and closer to
getting the results that he wanted, that his Lord wanted.

Severus was on the verge of a break through with a new potion that if made correctly could be the solution that he was looking for when his plans had been interrupted. Severus had been on a walk to clear his head. Hogsmead had seemed like the perfect place. However as he walked down the row of shops, he saw Dumbledore walking into the Hogshead. This did not seem like something that the old coot would normally do and so he followed him. This led him to overhearing a prophesy that would change everything. Severus had only heard part of the prophesy before Abeforth

Dumbledore spotted him and threw him out, but that was enough. The part that he heard went as so ‘The one with the power to vanquish the dark lord approaches…Born to one who has thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies’. Severus had informed his Lord of this and this had convinced him that the Potters were the one to go after. The Potters had two sons, Edward and Harry. From the prophesy it seemed that Edward was the only one that could be his Lords equal. The boy was born on the 31st of July 1978 whereas Harry’s was 1st of August 1980. The Potters had also managed to defy his Lord on three separate occasions and so the decision was made. The decision to eliminate them.

Severus, as much as he loathed to admit it, still had feelings for Lily. Over ten years of friendship was hard to just forget about. This had led Severus to the scariest moment of his life, his father’s rage couldn’t compare to the fear that he had felt at that moment. After he had been informed of his Lord’s decision at a Death Eater meeting he had requested a private audience with him. He had got what he requested and after the meeting was over he was taken to what appeared to be his Lord’s private office. A smart mahogany desk piled high with parchment, expensive quills and various books. The walls were lined with bookcases that were so crammed with books they looked fit to burst. As they entered the room, and the door clicked shut behind him, Severus fell to his knees. He kissed his Lord’s robes, keeping his head down and then addressed him.

“My Lord” he said with a shaky voice. “I would like to request something of you” His Lord’s eyebrows rose in slight indignation but he let his servant continue. “My Lord, I have heard of your plans to attack the Potters. You see…I would like to ask for you to spare one of them”

“No my Lord…well you see…Lily Evans, well Lily Potter now….She’s a childhood friend and I have feelings for her that…that I can’t control and….and…” Severus stuttered out. He felt sick and had to physically stop himself from vomiting all over his Lord’s shoes. There was a silence that seemed to stretch for an eternity and Severus was sure that he would be dead by the time it ended.

His Lord finally broke the silence “I see” he said, his voice full of authority. “Well Severus, I’m sure these feelings must be strong if you were willing to ask this of me” Severus felt a wand at his neck and his breath caught in his throat.

“Look at me Severus” The command was clear in his Lord’s voice and he could not disobey. He looked up and the fear was visible in both his posture and in his eyes.

“You have served me well in the short time that you have been my servant Severus. You even brought me the prophesy that may save me. For your loyalty and dedication I believe that your request may be something that I am willing to grant.” The absolute shock of his Lord’s answer must have shown on his face as his Lord continued “This is not an offer made lightly Severus. If I do this you must understand that there will be costs. The amount of work I expect from you will be increased and if there is any faltering in loyalty you will not live to see another day. Is that clear?”
"Yes my Lord. Yes, yes, of course. You have my loyalty, always. Always my Lord. Thank you my Lord. Thank you." Severus thanked his Lord profusely. He was so grateful that his Lord had accepted his proposal and that there was now a chance that Lily would not become another victim of the war. Change may be necessary but Severus found it hard to accept that old friends and old classmates were killed at his Lord’s bidding. He knew it was needed but that did not make it any easier to cope with. He knew that if his Lord kept his promise then he would be forever in his debt.

The night of October 31st came and went. Severus’s Lord had kept his promise as Lily and James had been at a ministry event when the attack had happened. This meant that the victims of the attack had been Dorcas Medowes, a member of a group know as the Order of the Phoenix, who had been on both babysitting and guard duty. She had fought valiantly but the strength of the great Lord Voldemort had been too much for her. She had died following an Avada Kedavra curse straight from the wand of the great Lord himself. Voldemort had ascended the stairs of the house, finding the room that belonged to Edward Potter. The three year old had been sleeping soundly, unaware of the imminent danger that he was in. Voldemort raised his wand ready to cast the killing curse when he heard the cries of a baby. Voldemort decided that he would go and investigate the source of the noise. He knew that the Potters had another child, a son if he remembered correctly. He followed the noise and found a room with a crib and a small boy in the crib. As soon as he walked into the room the boy stopped crying. The boy stared at him with big green eyes. His raven black hair was a tousled mess on his head. He walked up to the boy and the boy began to giggle and extend his eyes out towards him. The universal sign that he wanted to be picked up. On a whim Voldemort did so and the little boy began cooing at him.

Voldemort walked, with the small boy in his arms, back to the other Potter boy’s room. The boy rested on his hip while his wand was held in his other hand.

“Well” he said to the little boy in a mock happy voice “Shall we go and kill your big brother. It is after all the only way.” The little boy looked up at the man that was holding him and began to giggle again. As he entered the room he placed the little boy down on the small sofa that faced the bed. He then began to address the boy, who’s name he remembered was Harry.

“Now little Harry, this is a wand” he said holding the wand to Harry’s eye level. “but I’m sure you know that. Now here’s the fun part. The death of a family member is always an exciting event” Voldemort said with a grin filled with insanity and excitement adorning his face. “Avada Kedavra” he yelled for the second time that night.

A green light hit the boy on the bed, hitting his forehead. The light, however, did not seem to enter the boy. Instead it was reflected back at the sender and the light hit Voldemort in the chest. His body fell to the floor with a thud. His body then began to dissolve and like smoke on the wind it blew out of the open window. Harry began to cry loudly, not at the fact that his brother’s head was dripping blood, but rather the fact that he had just lost his new friend. He had liked the man with the red eyes that had taken him from his crib and had talked to him. Just as Harry cries had reached a near deafening level the door had burst open with Lily and James bursting in, having been alerted at the ministry that the wards had been breached.

Severus of course did not know all of these details. All that he knew was that his Lord was no more. His mark had faded from a strong black to a light grey and that had made him panic. He had fled from the protection of his lab fearing that the aurors would invade the place at any time and that he would be thrown into Azkaban. Leaving all his potions notes and supplies, he had fled. That was how he had ended up at the sleazy inn he currently inhabited. Severus was immensely saddened and scared by the fact that something had happened to his Lord. He knew, of course, that he was not dead. His Lord was too clever not to have taken precautions. But he was still at a loss as to what his Lord would want him to do. He surely owed his Lord a great debt. Greater than he had before. Lily
had been spared and so his Lord had kept his word to not harm her.

Severus spent a long while thinking of what actions he should take next. He knew his Lord would want Severus to do something useful in the time that he was absent, but how? Severus had found himself at a loss as to how he could do so. Then a thought struck him. Albus Dumbledore knew of Severus’ feelings for Lily and even with all the precautions he took he knew that Albus at least suspected that Severus was a death eater. He would go to Dumbledore and tell him that his Lord’s attack on the Potter’s had made him realise the error of his ways. He would claim that he thought attacking children was horrible and could not be justified. As well as claiming that the fact Lily had been an almost victim of the attack had scared him.

Severus spent the next few hours thinking over this plan and seeing what loopholes Dumbledore would try to exploit. He finally decided how to bring his plan to fruition. He scribbled out a letter grabbing parchment and a quill from his bag. Sealing the letter and addressing it to Dumbledore he gave it to his owl, Mara, who was sitting on the window ledge. Severus stroked Mara’s feathers and told her where to go. She flew off out of the open window and Severus watched her black wings as she flew off into the distance.

**Tuesday 10th of November 1981**

Severus had waited over a week with no reply from Dumbledore. He was beginning to give up and think that the old fool had in fact seen through his deception. He was still in the same inn in Diagon Alley hoping, against his better judgement, that he may get a reply. Severus was also running extremely low on money and had no more than three days rent left. He would, within the next day or so, have to make the decision to leave and find a way to get some more money or to wait until all the money was gone. If he let all of the money run out then he would have to resort to pleading someone, such as Lucius Malfoy, for money. Severus, however, did not know if he could take the indignity of that. The pity of the Malfoy Lord would be insufferable. Even if Lucius would happily help Severus, Severus was too proud to stoop to this level unless he had no other options.

Just as Severus was considering this, admitting to himself that he may have to swallow his pride and ask Lucius for help, Mara flew in through the window. He looked up at her from his position on the bed in hope. She landed on his shoulder and stuck out her leg to him. In anticipation Severus untied the letter from her leg and ripped it open. His eyes scanned the contents off the letter quickly. Devouring it as though his life was depended on it, which it very well might be. As he finished the letter his face twisted into a smile. One which reflected the success he felt at deceiving the great Albus Dumbledore.

In his letter, Albus had said that Severus’ letter showed his heart felt remorse and that everyone deserved a second chance. The headmaster had taken the letter at face value. After tragedy had struck with the Weasleys loosing two family members, the Longbottoms loosing their sanity and the Potters loosing the chance at their sons having a normal childhood he clutched at this grain of hope like a mother clutching her baby. The old fool had even offered Severus a job at the school as a potions teacher due to his amazing feat of achieving his mastery as well as Horace Slughorn’s ever increasing years. So the deal was made. Severus made a quick reply, the two met in Diagon Alley two hours later and an hour after that Severus was officially on the staff of Hogwarts.

Severus knew that the old fool was not stupid enough to have no surveillance on Severus to ensure that he was telling the truth. This led to Severus cutting all ties with the death eater. He even had to abandon attempts at communication with Lucius, Narcissa and their son Draco of who he had been made godfather. This was the most difficult thing for him but the thought of pleasing his Lord when
he returned would win out. He knew that all would be forgiven and explained when his Lord returned.
Harry found himself standing on platform 9 and 3/4 amidst a crowd of people, all of them rushing around. The Potters, as well as Sirius and Remus, were standing with a group of red heads who in Harry’s opinion were too loud and obnoxious. There were seven of them. All males and all looking panicked and flustered. The oldest man, whom Harry assumed was their father, constantly shouting at them, asking them if they had this or that and making sure that all of them were present. He must have counted them at least a dozen times in the ten minutes that they were standing there. The two eldest boys, well, Harry concluded that they looked more like men, were also keeping the rest of the red headed gang in control. The two identical boys were staring with Edward and talking, rather loudly, about all the pranks that they were going to pull in the coming year. Harry was not impressed at the way that James and Sirius enthusiastically joined in the conversation, giving the three more ideas and thoughts on the coming years mischief.

The past week had been a both nightmare and a dream for Harry. He had spent as much time as possible in the room he had been given, keeping the door locked and avoiding his so called family as much as possible. However there were always ways that they could get in, even with the door locked. A spell that Harry had heard spoken on numerous occasions, Alohamora, seemed to unlock the door with absolutely no resistance. Harry had been harassed by one of the four adults at least once a day, asking him to come down for a meal or asking him if he wanted to talk or on one occasion telling him that they were going shopping for school supplies. That day had been one of Harry’s best in the wizarding world and arguably in his life, so far; even with the copious amounts of people and the suffocating crowds. The amount of knowledge that Harry had gained in that short space of time was life changing. The small study session that he had had in the library was nothing compared to learning the way in which the hierarchy of the wizarding world worked.

Seeing the high and mighty of the wizarding world strut around as though they owned the place. Dressed up in their finery wearing robes that looked so expensive that they may cost a person their whole years wages. The bank was also another piece of insight. The goblins appeared to respect, not the rich, but the people who respected them. The Potters had strolled in, with arrogance radiating from them and had waited in line for the Goblins to take them to their vault. James had addressed the goblin at the counter with disdain and treated him as lesser that himself. While at the counter Harry had observed another person enter the bank. The man was average height and average build with average clothing. There was nothing out of the ordinary about him and yet when he entered the bank the goblins seemed to become very excited. One of the tellers got down from their desk and walked over to greet the man, ignoring the queue of people waiting to be served. The man bowed to the goblin and then the goblin did so in return. The teller then took the man to one of the backrooms. As they walked past Harry he overheard some of the conversation. However he could not understand a word of it; he assumed, therefore, that it was the language of the goblins. The fact the man spoke their language must have been the reason that the goblins showed the man such respect. At that moment Harry knew that learning to speak the language of the goblins would be highly advantageous in any future dealings with them. They did, after all, hold the fortunes of the majority of the British wizarding world.

The rest of the day had been spent going from shop to shop along a street called Diagon Alley. The street contained everything a young, eager to learn, wizard like Harry could ask for. The book shop had wetted Harry’s thirst for knowledge, even if only for a short while. Harry had simply placed books on the counter as the Potters shopped for his and Edward’s school books. When they came back to find a pile of books on the counter they looked slightly dumbfounded. The cashier told them that Harry had put the books there and after they had looked through them to check if any were dangerous they simply bought them. They handed the bag that contained them to Harry and said no
more about it. Harry knew that the unexpected show of any sort of reaction or independent thought had shocked the Potters. The fact that Harry had willingly chosen books that he wanted made the Potters think that he was opening up to them, making improvements. That couldn’t be further from the truth. The more time that Harry spent with the Potters the more he grew to hate them. The only reason he had put the books on the counter was that he knew they would buy them for him. He had wanted the information in those books enough to interact with the Potters. No matter how small the interaction, it was worth it for the knowledge that he had gained.

Gaining his wand was also an interesting experience. Harry had entered Olivander’s shop, trailing behind the Potters as he did so. The old man had appeared from what seemed like no where and had beckoned Harry forward, somehow knowing his full name. A magic tape measure had wrapped its way around Harry, it had measured every part of him, from the circumference of his wrist to the length of his ear and everything in-between. Harry was slightly agitated at the tape touching him and yet he was glad that it wasn’t someone’s hands instead. At least it was only an inanimate object. He was also relieved, that other than a raised eyebrow from the old man, nothing was said about the fact that Balthazar was curled up around his left arm. The old man, who had introduced himself as Mr Olivander, simply took down the measurements the tape measure gave him and made the occasional noise that indicated his excitement.

The man never asked Harry any questions and when the measurements were done he simply handed the boy a wand and told him to give it a wave. He muttered about the properties of the wand before giving it to Harry. Harry waved the wand and managed to shatter the glass of the light sitting on the counter. The old man acted as though nothing had happened and simply fixed the shattered glass with a wave of his wand and a mumble of Reparo. This process continued: a new wand, something breaking and then Mr Olivander fixing it after snatching the wand from Harry’s grip. After they had been through about a dozen wands the Potters were starting to get restless.

Harry was handed another wand and heard Olivander mumble that the wand was Pine wood with a core of thestral tail hair. As soon as the wand entered Harry’s hand he knew that this was the one. He felt as though power was filling him and felt as though he was greeting an old friend, or a new enemy. Either way the feeling was exhilarating. The feeling continued until white light burst from the end of the wand lighting the whole shop.

“Interesting” muttered Mr Olivander. Mostly to himself rather than to anybody else. “Very interesting indeed” the man continued.

“What’s so interesting?” Edward barked out, the scorn was audible in his tone of voice. In all honesty he was jealous of his brother getting all the attention. Why should Harry’s wand be interesting? There wasn’t anything special about him. He was just ordinary and boring like the rest of the kids at Hogwarts were. This, in Edward’s mind, meant that Harry’s wand should be the same.

“Well” Olivander replied to Edward’s rude outburst. His fingers twitching and his face displaying his excitement. “the wand itself is very unique, the only one of its kind actually. You see Pine may be a very common wood but only a very small amount of the trees give up their wood for use in a wand.” Olivander continued, his movements becoming more excitable the further he got in his explanation.

“This makes it a difficult wood to come by. The core of this wand is even more so.” Olivander sped up as he became even more exited. “Thestral hair is so rare as you have to have seen death to even see a thestral and to get a hair you must accept the death you have seen. There is no other way that the thestral will let you take a hair. My great grandfather made this wand after he saw the death of his wife. It was the last wand that he ever made.” Olivander seemed to loose the majority of his excitement at this and instead adopted a more somber expression
“He died soon after he finished this wand. I think he just wanted to be with his wife again. Anyway” the man said, gaining back some of his enthusiasm. “This wand is perfect for the independent and creative wizard as well as being perfectly suited for non-verbal magic use. It will suit you well Mr Potter.” Olivander said, sounding satisfied at the fact he had found a wand that suited Harry. The Potters then paid for the wand and left, still in a bit of a daze over the information that Olivander he'd provided them with.

The rest of the week, the few days that were left, Harry had spent sorting through his school supplies and reading all of his books numerous times. All his school supplies had been placed in the room he stayed in after the shopping expedition had been completed. He had not, however, been allowed to keep his wand. That had been taken away as soon as they entered the Potters’ house. This frustrated Harry as it made him feel like it was apart of himself that was missing.

Balthazar was also getting frustrated, but for different reasons. He was getting restless. He wanted to go out and hunt, to and explore the grounds of the Potters’ house. Balthazar didn’t need to go and hunt, in fact the snake could do for several months without eating. In reality Balthazar just wanted to stave off boredom. Harry was however reluctant to let Balthazar out of his sight for more than a few minutes. He did not know how the Potters would react to a venomous snake lurking around the house and as reluctant as he was to admit it he did not want Balthazar to get hurt.

When the day came for them to make their way to Hogwarts they went the same way that Harry had arrived at the Potters’ house. Again it felt as though Harry was being squeezed through a tube that was too small for him to fit through as James took his hand and Lily took Edward’s. It may have been uncomfortable but this time Harry knew that what was happening was called apparition; a method of transport in the wizarding world. They popped into a large open area that was full of people, so many people. As they arrived they heard a voice blasting from the speaker saying:

“To avoid the possibility of collisions please move away from the apparition entrance area giving others the space to apparate into the station. To avoid the…” The voice continued on the speaker on a loop. Blasting the same phrase in a monotonous tone, over and over again. James, still grasping Harry’s wrist, dragged him away from where they were standing, with the rest of the group following behind them. This was where they met with the red headed family and was how Harry found himself on the crowded platform of people.

“Harry, Edward, it's time to get on the train now” James said. Lily handed Harry his wand telling him to take care of it and the group made their way towards the train. Remus and Sirius each had a trunk which they had apperated with them. As the group got to the entrance of the train Edward received a hug and kiss from Lily and a pat on the back from James. Sirius handed him his trunk and he got on the train with Fred and George hot on his heels, off to cause some sort of mischief before they even got to Hogwarts.

Lily then moved forward to hug Harry but the stiffening of his shoulders made her draw back. Instead she patted him lightly on the shoulder and Remus handed Harry his trunk and Harry walked onto the train. As lily watched her youngest son walk away she thought about her relationship with him. The relationship that Lily had with Harry was, well, nonexistent. She had tried to talk with the boy. Tried to get him involved in the day to day life of the Potter family but he never said or did anything to indicate that he had any interest in what she was saying. The only time she had seen any sort of interaction with the family that had not been forced was when Harry had placed the books on the counter in Flourish and Blotts. All other interactions that they had had with Harry were forced. Meals were tense and awkward with Harry staying silent, eating almost nothing and avoiding eye contact with any of the members at the table. The fact that she had made so little progress with Harry was deeply upsetting to both her and James. She and James had stayed up most nights in the past
week talking about how they could break down Harry’s walls.

They knew that Harry had not been treated well in Lily’s sister’s house but they had no idea about the extent of the abuse that Harry had experienced. This was their fatal flaw in dealing with Harry. They did not treat him like a child that needed help, guidance and protection from the ten years of abuse he had experienced. They did not explain to him why they had sent him away and not reassure him that it would not happen again. They treated him like they would have treated Edward when he was eleven or like they would have treated any other normal eleven year old boy and then got frustrated when Harry did not act in the way they wanted him to. The fact that both Lily and James chose to live in ignorance rather than face the truth would be the thing that made their redemption in Harry’s eyes no more than a fallacy.

Harry, meanwhile was walking down the train trying to find an empty compartment. With his wand in his pocket, his right hand firmly gripping it, his trunk being pulled with his left hand and Balthazar wrapped tightly around his left arm he felt ready to face the wizarding world. After a few minutes he finally found what he was looking for and sat down in a compartment that was vacant of any other occupants. He hauled his trunk up onto the rack, not before removing a few of his books, and sat down with the books placed next to him on the seat.

Harry took his wand from his pocket and got his first chance to examine it since it had been taken from him by the Potters. The feel of it back in his hands made him determined never to let it be taken from him again. It belonged in his hand for good or for evil, it was his! The wand was a very light brown, almost white and was adorned with intricately carved black runes running down its length. Harry grabbed one of the books from the pile next to him, flicking to the right page and started to compare the runes in the book to the ones on his wand.

The chapter he was looking at was about basic runes. The book, one that he had placed on the counter last week and manipulated his parents into buying, was an overview of the wizarding world for muggleborns. Harry had seen the book and thought it may be useful in helping him appear less ignorant about the new world around him. The chapter on basic runes, was just that, basic. This meant that Harry could only read the simpler runes on the wand and any sort of combination of runes was a mystery to Harry. The runes he managed to recognise were those for protection, inspiration, death, mystery and power. The rest of the runes, however, were either not in the book or were too complex for Harry to decipher.

While Harry had been engaged in his book the train had left the station and started its journey towards Hogwarts. After a couple of hours trying to decipher the runes on his wand Harry decided that he was not getting anywhere and that to work out what the rest of the runes meant he would need more information. Information that he would hopefully be able to attain once he got to Hogwarts.

Harry decided that he needed to do something. After he had finished assessing his wand he had tried to read some of his other books but the fact he had already read them all several times meant that boredom set in rather quickly. Even after Balthazar had popped his head out from under Harry’s collar and started chatting about inane things Harry was still feeling the need to occupy his mind with something. Just as Harry was deciding what to do next the door of the compartment was roughly pulled open to reveal a bucktoothed curly haired girl. As soon as the door opened Balthazar slithered back under Harry’s collar not wanting to be seen.

“Have you seen a toad?” the girl questioned “A boy named Neville’s lost one.” Her tone suggested that she thought herself superior to Harry and that she demanded answers. Harry simply adopted a blank mask on his face and acted as though she had not said a thing. He stared out of the window and ignored her existence.
“Excuse me” she said, sounding slightly agitated. “Excuse me” she said again, sounding angry this time. “Will you answer me. Well, I’m not leaving until you at least grace me with an answer. It’s just common curtesy you know.” The girl sat down opposite Harry and simply stared at him for a couple of minutes until she started talking again.

“Well, seeing as we’re going to be spending the rest of the journey together as you seem to refuse to speak to me then I might as well introduce myself. My name is Hermione Granger” she said and so the conversation went on, well the one sided conversation. Hermione talked about all the things that she had learned from the books her parents had bought her and how it had been such a surprise when she had found out she was a witch. She then moved onto the topic of what house she wanted to be in.

“I really want to be in Gryffindor” She exclaimed excitedly. “I mean they’re all so brave and courageous. Also that’s the house that the Boy Who Lived is in. Why would anyone want to be anywhere else?” At this Harry couldn’t take it anymore. He looked at the girl with a disgusted look on his face.

“What?” she questioned. The look Harry gave her shocked her as it was the only sort of response the boy had give the entire time she’d been talking. “What’s wrong with Gryffindor? Do you not like it?” she asked. She sounded surprised at the mere notion that someone could dislike such a noble house. Harry decided that he needed to set the girl straight. There was no way she would survive the cruelty of the world if she thought bravery was the best attribute that someone could have. Harry shook his head such a minute amount that if Hermione had blinked then she would have missed it.

“But why?” She questioned “Gryffindors are amazing.” Again Harry shook his head, making the smallest movement possible. “But what about the Boy Who Lived? He’s in Gryffindor so it must surely be the best house. He saved the wizarding world after all!” Hermione exclaimed. Another small shake of the head was all she got in response. Hermione huffed and refused to talk to Harry anymore. She did not leave the compartment but she no longer talked and that, for Harry, was a considerable improvement. Hermione was meanwhile thinking over all her opinions on Gryffindor. Why was it that this eleven year old boy was so against Gryffindor and so against the Boy Who Lived? She just didn't understand.

“We are now approaching Hogwarts. Can all students please change into their uniforms. All luggage is to be left in the compartment. When the train stops please make your way off it.” Hermione leapt up from her seat and started to make her way out of the compartment.

“Oh” she said in a slightly panicked voice “I have to go back to my compartment to get into my uniform. I better go. Well…I suppose I'll see you later.” Hermione said before rushing out of Harry’s compartment as though the hounds of hell were on her heels. Harry rolled his eyes at her antics and hoped she realised that Gryffindor and the Boy Who Lived were not all that they were made out to be.

Harry stood up and standing on the carriage seat removed his uniform and replaced his books in his trunk without having to remove the trunk from the rack. He then gracefully jumped down from the seat and dressed in his uniform. The train stopped and Harry readied himself to enter a world unknown to him.
Severus watched with disdain as the group of new first years made their way into the Great Hall. The way they entered, with joy in their steps and wonder in their eyes, made him have to restrain himself from sneering in disgust. They would learn soon enough that the world was a cruel and dark place and there was nothing they could do about it. Severus knew this all too well. There was no point in letting anyone, no matter how young, indulge in the fantasy that everything would be alright in the end. It wouldn’t be. Student after student had their names called but Severus could not care less about them unless they were placed in Slytherin. As head of Slytherin he knew that these bundles of joy were going to be his for the next seven years. He wanted to know what would await him. One of the members of the crowd, however, drew his eye. He ignored the shouts of names and instead focused on the boy. The boy was small, even among the crowd of eleven year olds and was skinny, maybe too skinny. His black hair fell over his face and down to his shoulders. These features, however, were not what drew Severus to the boy, the standout feature of the boy were his eyes. Even with them hidden behind wire frame glasses the piercing green eyes were not filled with the same joy that the other children’s were. Instead they told Severus nothing. Nothing at all. This was unusual for Severus, his skill in legilimency meant that he was unusually good at reading peoples emotions, even without entering their minds. The fact he could read no emotion in the boys eyes was surprising. The only other people had ever seen who were able to display no emotion were his Lord’s inner circle Death Eaters and his Lord himself. How had this boy, this eleven year old boy, managed to gain the skills to create such a seamless mask that only very advanced Legimancists were able to do?

Severus’ attention was drawn back to the current child being sorted as he heard the hat shout out Slytherin. He looked at the child who was walking to the Slytherin table. She was standing tall, her posture filled with pride at the honour of becoming a Slytherin. If Severus remembered correctly the girls name was Daphne Greengrass. She was the eldest of the children of Lord and Lady Greengrass. Mostly know as a neutral family but they were sympathetic to the Dark Lord’s cause even though they had never publicly announced it during the last war. A few more names were called, a few insignificant wastes of space that Severus had no time for. That was until a name was called, Draco Malfoy, his godson. After the war Severus had been forced to cut all ties with the Malfoys due to the suspicions that Dumbledore might have if he continued his contact with his godson and his godson’s parents. This was the one thing that he had regrets about, the fact his godson though him a traitor and yet it was worth it to continue to serve his Lord in the best way he could. He knew that when the time came, the Malfoys would know the truth and that kept him strong.

Hermione Granger was watching the rest of the sorting from her seat at the Ravenclaw table. After her talk with the black haired boy on the train she had spent the rest of her time on the way to the Great Hall thinking about what had been said, or, well, suggested with his nods. Was Gryffindor not all that she thought it to be? Was there something that the boy knew that the books could not tell her? What was it that made the boy hate Gryffindor so much? She had barely paid attention as the enchanted boat had taken her across the lake or as her name was called to be sorted. Even as she sat on the stool she could not stop the questions from swirling around her head. As soon as the sorting hat had been placed on her head an amused voice echoed through the recesses of her mind.

“With this many questions in your mind there is only one place for you my dear. Better be RAVENCLAW.” The voice proclaimed. The hat was removed from her head and she made her way towards her new house table. She finally managed to snap herself out of the daze she had been in since the train and realised that it no longer mattered if Gryffindor was the best house or not. She was in Ravenclaw and it was the best place for her. The hat had told her so.
She turned her attention back to the sorting hoping that the boy she met on the train hadn't already been sorted. She wanted to know his name. The name Potter, Harry was called a moment later and the boy Hermione had been with on the train stepped forward. It took her a moment to realise the significance of the surname. Potter. The same surname as of that of the Boy Who Lived. As Hermione watched the boy walk up to the stool and thought about the significance of his name. Was the boy related to Edward Potter? Was that the reason that he was against Gryffindor house? Did being related to the Boy Who Lived make him see the boy differently from that of the media portrayal? Why had she never heard of the boy before if the two were related?

Severus Snape almost let his jaw drop when the name ‘Potter, Harry’ was called out. Almost being the key word. He hadn’t let his standards drop to such a level that he let his inner emotions show on his face. Although with the current revelation it was proving challenging. The fact that it was a Potter that had show so little emotion on his face that he could pass for a trained Death Eater was worrying and yet delightful at the same time. The Potters had obviously gone wrong somehow in raising the boy. There was no way that with a face like that that the boy had had a happy childhood. If he remembered correctly the boy was the youngest son of Lily and James Potter and he’d been sent away when he was just over a year old. He didn't remember all the details due to the fact that when Dumbledore had informed the Order of the Phoenix of the boy’s situation he had not cared to listen. Even though he had still had some feelings for Lily at the time these feelings did not extend to her children. Any thought of those brats had simply been a reminder of the betrayal that he had felt. The betrayal of their friendship and the possibility of something more. Severus had since overcome those feelings. He knew that he never had a chance with Lily and had realised that this Lily was no longer the girl that he had fallen in love with. She had grown up into a woman that Severus had no interest in. Simply the fact that she had married the man that had spent seven years tormenting Severus and then had made the accomplices to this torment the godfathers of her children was enough. The sort of woman to do that was someone, Severus had eventually decided, that he didn't want to know.

When Severus turned his attention back to the boy, he was sitting on the stool and the hat was placed on his head. The entire hall was filled with whispers. Whispers about who the boy was and whether he was related to the boy who lived or not. However as the minutes ticked by the whispered turned to murmurs and the murmurs turned to silence. The boy still remained on the seat as the five minute mark ticked by, then five and half and then six. The entire hall was silent. This was the longest that any of the students had ever seen a sorting take and the same applied to most of the staff members as well. Severus bet that many of the people in the hall would have given their right arm to know what was being said between the hat and the Potter boy. As the time finally reached the seven minute mark the hat shouted out:

“SLYTHERIN” and the hall descended into chaos. The Gryffindor table looked scandalised and many were shouting obscenities at the tops of their voices. Severus overheard several comments about there being no way that a Potter would ever be a Slytherin and that there must have been some sort of mistake. Meanwhile most of the Slytherin table seemed to be neutral on the matter, although the younger years seemed to be finding it hard to control their internal disgust from making its way onto their faces. Some were even whispering amongst themselves about the scandal of it all. Severus scowled at their lack of self-control. He would need to talk to them later this evening about the unified front that Slytherin needed to display. Severus was just relieved that the third years and above seemed to be controlling themselves well enough.

The boy didn't seem to notice any of the commotion that his sorting had caused and simply walked towards the sea of silver and green uniforms that now matched his own. He sat down next to the newly sorted Draco Malfoy and then simply stared into space. Any emotions that the boy felt remained internal and a mystery to the outside world.
Severus chanced a look over at the Gryffindor table, specifically at Edward Potter. The young man seemed to be in a daze of sorts. He looked as though he hoped the whole thing was nothing but a dream. Severus wanted to laugh out loud at the shock that must be running through the elder Potter’s head. The idea that he had a Slytherin for a brother when he had mocked, bullied and pranked the entirety of Slytherin house for the past two years filled Severus with glee. He couldn't wait to see what the younger Potter was made of. This year was sure to be an exciting one.

Harry was sitting at the Slytherin table as chaos raged around him. He knew that the result of the sorting were to blame for this but he couldn’t bring himself to care. As soon as the hat went on his head Harry had felt something intrude into his mind and had pushed it out as hard as he could. He didn't like the feeling of this thing trying to intrude into his head. He then felt the emotion of shock that was not his own and a voice asked him if he would please lower his shields. Harry didn't respond as he had no idea what the voice was talking about. The voice asked again and Harry wished that the voice would just fuck off.

“Well that’s not very nice” the voice said again. Harry felt shock again but this time it was his own. It was almost as though the voice was “Reading your thoughts” the voice finished for him and Harry felt angry and tried to push the voice out of his head again. He then began to feel amusement which was, again, not his. “That’s not going to work you know. Granted, your mental shields are amazingly advanced for someone of your age. Yet I’m not so weak that you can stop me from reading your current thoughts.” The voice said “Now if you’ll just let those shields down then I can see some of your memories and decide where to put you.” Harry again felt anger at the voice. He wasn't letting anyone see his memories. They were his and his alone.

“Now I know how you feel but I need to see some of those memories or there is no way that I can sort you. Come now, be reasonable.” The voice said. Harry simply thought the word no repeatedly. He hoped the voice would get the message. “Ok” the voice said “If getting into those memories of yours is a no go how about I ask you a few questions and you think the answers. Does that sound ok?” The hat questioned. Harry thought that that sounded reasonable. At least it sounded better than having the voice poking around in his memories. So for the next few minutes the hat asked Harry questions and he thought the answers. He didn't go into as much detail as he could have done but he answered truthfully as he had a feeling the voice would know if he were to tell any lies. Eventually the hat said:

“Well from what you've told me there seems to be only one viable choice. It may be the case that you love to learn but you only want knowledge with the intention of power and not for the sheer pleasure of learning. Well…Better be SLYTHERIN!” The voice proclaimed and so Harry made his way to the table of Silver and Green with all eyes on him.

“Silence!” An old man at the head table proclaimed. Harry assumed that it must be the Headmaster due to the overly indulgent, gold, throne like chair that he had just stood up from. “Let us have the sorting continue without any further interruption if you please.” The man said calmly and with those words everyone fell silent and the sorting continued. Food was served, speeches were made and finally the students were told to make their way to their dorms.
Harry awoke the next morning. The rest of his dorm mates were still asleep and for once Harry was
glad that his body clock was set to wake him up earlier than a normal eleven year old. Harry decided
to test out one of the spells that he had read in one of the books he had bought to see what the time
was. Now that he had his wand, there was no way he was going to give-up the chance to try out a
new spell. Harry took his wand from under his pillow, he made the wand movements the book had
said and thought the word tempus as he did so. Nothing happened and so Harry tried again. He put
all his energy into wishing for the time to be displayed in front of him. He made the wand
movements again and this time in bright white lights appeared in front of him writing out the time
‘5.30 am’. Harry gave a small smile at his achievement. He was immensely pleased with the small
feat of magic.

Harry then got out of the bed that he had been given last night. When he had entered the dorm room
he had found his trunk situated at the end of the bed and therefore, logically assumed that the bed
was his. Harry entered the bathroom but not before grabbing his toiletries and his uniform from his
trunk. Harry entered the showers and stripped his pyjamas off as he did so. The cuts and bruises that
had adorned Harry’s body not a week before were slowly beginning to heal. Scabs from whip marks
covered his back and his chest was turning a yellow colour as the bruises faded. Harry entered the
shower and the water rushed over him, hot and relaxing. He spent around half an hour in the shower
with Balthazar still wrapped around his arm. The snake was enjoying the heat and relaxation of the
shower as much as Harry was. Harry finally decided that he had spent enough time in the shower
and even with Balthazar’s protests he dried off and put on his uniform.

Harry made his way back into the dorms. All the members there were still sleeping by the looks of
their closed curtains. Last night Harry had been led to the Slytherin dormitories by a Prefect by the
name of Marcus Flint. The boy had been gruff and ridiculously tall at around 6’5, which, for the first
years, had made him seem like a giant. He had seemed nice enough though, leading the group of
newly sorted Slytherins to their new home for the year.

There had then been a talk from their head of house, a man by the name of Severus Snape, he was
tall and wore all black. His demeanour spoke of power and authority. Harry could tell that the man
was not one to be crossed, at least not directly. If he ever wanted to get one up on the man then it
would have to be done in a way that ensured the man had no way to prove that it was him. Any
evidence and the man would destroy him, Harry was sure of it. He would have to be careful.

Harry made his way down from his dorm room. Last night he had noticed several book cases that
lined the walls of the common room. Harry made his way towards one of the book cases and
browsed the numerous books that filled it. The titles he read were things such as ‘Pure-Blood
‘Mudbloods and How to Spot Them’ and many such similar titles. Harry continued to scan the
shelves for a few more minutes until he noticed a book titled ‘Rune Dictionary’, he picked it up and
retreated to one of the high-backed chairs in the corner of the room.

Harry spent the next hour or so reading through the dictionary, his wand on his lap and trying to
decipher the runes carved into it. In that time Harry managed to translate several more of the runes on
his wand. He also found out more details about the runes that he had already translated. The rune
Harry had initially translated as Death was in fact much more complex. It symbolised the
unavoidable end of all things, for without life there is no death. A newly translated rune was one for
strength, it represented the channeling of the power and of the the growth of strength from small
beginnings to powerful endings. Another rune Harry managed to discover was that of Knowledge. It
represented insight, learning, knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment but also symbolised the thin border between madness and genius.

As time ran on and more and more people made their way into the common room. Some stopping and sitting for a chat with their friends, others simply passing through on their way to breakfast. As the numbers increased Harry found himself becoming more and more agitated at the number of people surrounding him. He could not study the intricacies of all the runes with all these people and all their noise. Harry sighed internally and stood up. He placed the book back on its shelf and then made his way out of the Slytherin Common room.

Balthazar was currently sleeping, the lazy snake that he was, but Harry knew that if the snake wake and if he was still cooped up in the cold dungeons then there would be hell to pay for the rest of the day as there was no way that the snake would shut up about the unfairness of it all. Harry decided the best thing to do would be to take the snake outside and let him hunt. He would take him out before he ate and then pick him up when he was done. Balthazar’s hunting skills were good enough that he would get a sufficient meal by the time that Harry returned. Harry exited the castle and shook Balthazar awake. The snake hissed in annoyance, but after he poked his head out from Harry’s collar to ascertain as to why he had been so rudely awakened the hisses of annoyance turned to ones of delight. The snake slithered down Harry’s body and into the grass. Before he went to hunt he turned to Harry hissing

“You’ll be back soon?” Harry nodded in response. “Before you have to go to those, what did you call them, oh, lessons?” Another nod from Harry in response. “OK, see you soon Master” the snake hissed and slithered off in the hope of finding some prey.

Harry rolled his eyes at the snake’s antics. He only ever called Harry Master when he wanted something or he was happy with him. Harry was never sure which was a more worrying state of affairs. In both cases the snake would end up talking incessantly either begging or thanking. Either way the snake would not shut up unless there were people around. The snake was surprisingly shy around other people and this suited Harry just fine as he didn’t want people knowing about Balthazar just yet. Harry was just relived he would be surrounded by people for most of the day and so Balthazar’s talking time would be severely reduced.

Harry made his way to the great hall and walked down to the end of the Slytherin table before sitting. The great hall was mostly empty with the greatest number of people at the Ravenclaw table. The Slytherin table had around the same number as that of the Hufflepuff but the Gryffindor table had no more than ten people at it. Harry picked up two pieces of toast and spread them with butter and then jam before cutting them into halves and then eating them one after another. He also poured himself a cup of tea and took sips of it between bites.

As Harry was about half way through his breakfast his head of house made his way towards him. The man had been talking to some of the other Slytherins at the other end of the table since Harry had arrived, third years by the look of it. The man stalked down the table, his cloak billowing out behind him as he did so.

“Potter” the man snapped. Harry’s eyes turned towards him. The man thrust a sheet of paper into Harry’s hands and said “This is your timetable for the year. Classes start at nine. Do not be late.” he sneered, enunciating each syllable and then he made his way back down the table to the group of first year Slytherins who had just entered the Hall.

Harry finished his breakfast and then made his way back outside to pick up Balthazar, stuffing his timetable in his pocket. As he stood in front of the school waiting for the snake to come back he cast another tempus. The bright numbers read ‘8.00 am’ in front of him. Just after he finished the spell
and put his wand back in his pocket Balthazar slithered up to Harry. He was hissing the praises of his ‘master’ at giving him such a good place to hunt. He told Harry about how he had caught two fat frogs and that they had been delicious. Harry rolled his eyes again at Balthazar’s antics. He knelt down in the grass and stuck out his left arm for Balthazar to slither up. Balthazar did so, still hissing the praises of his Master. Harry stood for a while longer, looking out over the grounds and then he heard a voice call out from behind him.

“Hey you there.” The voice called out, but Harry just pretended he couldn’t hear it. “Don’t ignore me” the voice said again and yet Harry did just that. That was until Harry felt a hand on his shoulder and he whipped around to face the perceived attacker. Ginger hair greeted him and for a moment he thought that it was one of the twins he had seen his brother with on the platform.

“What are you doing out here?” the ginger boy questioned. Harry just stared blankly at the space behind the head of the young man. “I am a prefect and you will tell me why you are outside and such an hour and on the first day of school no less.”

Harry shrugged his shoulders deciding that it wasn't worth the trouble that ignoring the boy would cause. This boy seemed to have some sort of authority that could be used against him and so Harry decided the best option was to play it safe and respond.

“Well that’s not a very good answer” the boy said and Harry shrugged his shoulders again. “Are you a first year?” the boy said, Harry nodded. Harry still didn't look at the boy directly, just at the space behind his head. “Well I was on my way to Breakfast when I saw you come out here. I saw you cast a tempus and then you knelt down in the grass. What on earth were you doing?” Harry’s only response was to shrug his shoulders again, relieved at the fact the boy hadn't seen Balthazar. He could tell that the other boy was getting frustrated with his unresponsiveness. The ginger boy sighed and said

“Come now, what were you doing out here?” Again a shrug of the shoulders. “Well you obviously are not going to tell me and seeing as I cant prove that you have broken any school rules I suppose you better go and get ready for your lessons.” The boy said sounding dejected at the prospect at not discovering what Harry had been doing. The boy made to walk away and then seemed to realise something.

“Oh, I didn't catch your name” he said. Harry began to panic slightly at that. He had no idea how to respond to that, he wanted the ginger boy to leave and that would most likely not happen without giving him his name. The ginger was staring at Harry waiting for an answer and so Harry did the only thing that he could think of, he wasn't sure it would work but he had to give it a go.

He took his wand from his pocket and held it in the air. The boy looked mildly shocked and Harry saw him put his hand in his pocket to grasp his own wand. He didn't remove it though, waiting to see what Harry would do. Harry concentrated, willing his magic to make viable the patterns in the air that followed the movements of his wand. He had read that intention had a lot to do with the magic that people could cast and so hoped that by having the strong intent to spell his name out it would happen. He moved his wand and it spelled out his name in the air in front of him.

“Ha…rr…y…P…ot…te…r” The boy read out, trying to decipher the words written in front of him. “Harry Potter” he said with clarity this time. “Well, nice to meet you Harry” the boy said, he was impressed at the display of magic that Harry had just done. Although he wasn't sure why the boy hadn't just told him his name. But he was in too much of a rush to probe any deeper.

“I’m Percy, Percy Weasley” the newly dubbed Percy said. “Anyway, I better go and get my breakfast before lessons start. Try not to do anything else suspicious looking for the rest of the day.” Percy said in exasperation and then made his way back into the school, leaving Harry standing in the
Harry made his way back inside and to the dorms. He decided he needed a more reliable way to speak to people. He was pretty sure that the people in charge here would not be pleased if they received no answers to the questions that they would inevitably ask him. He did not want to be prevented from learning simply because he was unable to respond. Harry decided that the best way would be to take a quill and a piece of parchment with him wherever he went. That way he could respond to questions by writing until he came up with a better system.

Harry had arrived at the classroom fifteen minutes earlier than need be but he felt that it was worth it. He did not want to have to deal with all the inevitable questions that he would be bombarded with about being a Potter and what the Boy Who Lived was really like. He entered the classroom and took a seat at the back of the room. He took out his parchment, quill and charms text book, ready for the lesson to start. Balthazar emerged from his collar and started to praise Harry’s glory again. Harry stroked the Snake’s scales knowing that this would shut him up. So for a time Harry flicked through his charms book while stroking Balthazar’s scales. After about five minutes a short man with a long beard entered the room. He walked up to his desk at the front of the class and began to sort through his papers. After about a minute he looked up at the classroom and a look of shock adorned his face.

“Oh…” the man stammered in a squeaky voice. “I didn't see you there. Mr Potter is it?” the man questioned. Harry just nodded. “Oh well then nice to meet you Mr Potter. I’m Professor Flitwick and I’ll be teaching you charms this year. Well not until the other students arrive of course, but soon enough.” he said laughing a little as he did so.

As the minutes passed by people began to enter the room, more coming the more time passed by. Harry ignored them all until he noticed that someone was standing in front of him.

“you’re Harry right” the girl questioned. Harry recognised her as the girl from the train, the annoying one who just wouldn't shut up, Harry looked up at her. Harry was, however, glad that at least she hadn't ended up in Gryffindor that would be even worse.

“Hey do you remember me?” the girl questioned “I'm Hermione, we met on the train. Anyway do you mind if I sit with you?” Harry only shrugged but Hermione took that as her cue to sit down. She sat next to Harry and took out all of her stuff from her bag.

“You know that charms is all about personal creativity, we'll be learning about ten charms this year and from what I've read they're all essential to the future of the wizarding world. It’s all so exciting.”

Harry guessed that the girl would’ve continued her speech on the joy of charms had she not been interrupted by Professor Flitwick starting the class. The next hour was spent being taught a charm that could levitate objects. Flitwick said that the words were Wingardium Leviosa for the charm to be preformed.

After the hour had passed they were told to practice preforming the spells. Hermione started straight away trying to get the spell right and her feather was already happily floating in the air after a few attempts, giving her 10 points for Ravenclaw. Harry, meanwhile, spent a few minutes just thinking about the spell. He thought about the intention he needed and said the words of the spell over and over in his head. Harry made the wand movement while keeping the chant in his head.

The feather rose slightly from the desk, about an inch or so. Harry was not satisfied so he tried again. He got the intention clear in his head. He wanted the feather to rise higher. After a few minutes of thinking about it he ended up forgoing the chanting of the charm for solely focused all of his attention on simply wishing the feather to rise to the ceiling. While wishing this he made the wand
movements and the feather shot upwards. It rose up faster than Harry was expecting and the rapid movement caught the eye of the Professor and Hermione. Hermione gaped at him and the Professor made his way across the room proclaiming

“Well done Mr Potter. Well done indeed. Your spell is overpowered but other than that the execution was perfect. Keep practicing your control Mr Potter”

The practice of the spells continued for the rest of the class and by the time the lesson ended most of them had managed the spell. Everyone except the two thugs that the kid with the bright blonde hair, Harry thinks he remembers him being called Malfoy, lugged around with him for some sort of protection. He learned their names at the end of the class when Flitwick commented that Mr Crabbe and Mr Goyle should continue to work on their spells in their own time. The bell rang and then they all made their way to their next class. In Harry’s case it was Transfiguration.
Harry found himself in a corridor, sitting on the floor, but he wasn't at all sure how he had got there. Harry cast a tempus charm and the time ‘3.00 am’. Harry was slightly perturbed by this as the last memory that he seemed to have was making his way towards the Great Hall at around 6.30 pm for dinner. He had left Balthazar on his bed, asleep as usual. He knew Balthazar could take care of himself. He remembered in vivid detail the sound of his feet as they made the way down the stone stairs, the way his robes blew out behind him and the flickering of the torches that lined the walls. But now the hallways were dark and the stone was cold beneath Harry’s body as he sat there. Harry pushed himself up from the floor and winced. He ached all over from the pounding headache to the aching ribs. He felt like he had been beaten and for all he knew he had been. He managed to prop himself against the wall of the corridor and then stopped to catch his breath. As he moved new pains showed themselves: a stabbing in his ankle, the fire through his back and the dull ache in his arm. Somehow Harry managed to limp back to the Slytherin dorms. He reached the portrait to the dorms and sighed at the realisation he would not be able to enter the common room without the use of the password. The portrait was of a serious man in formal robes by the name of Horatio and as Harry approached the man looked up at boy. Harry must have looked as bad as he felt as the man’s eyes widened and he exclaimed

“Good Merlin boy, get yourself in here. You are that Potter child, if I’m correct? Well, you look like you’ve been run over by a heard of Hippogriffs. Go and get yourself to bed boy.” The portrait swung open and Harry managed to stagger into the common room, the portrait slamming behind him as he did so. The common room was silent and all that could be heard were Harry’s footsteps as he made his way up the stairs to his room. He got to his bed and opened the curtains only to see Balthazar curled up in the sheets just where he had left him. The snake was fast asleep and Harry, too tired to do anything else, collapsed on the bed and joined Balthazar in the world of Morpheus.

Harry awoke the next morning to Balthazar hissing in his ear.

“Master, Master are you alright? Master you need to get up. All the other hatchlings have already gone to eat, you need to as well Master. Master!” The snake sounded worried and Harry cracked open his eyes and sat up. Pulling the curtains open he looked around the room and saw that it was empty and that the sun was shining in through the windows. Harry cast a tempus and ‘8.30 am’ shone out. Harry cursed in his head. Lessons may not start until 9.30 but Professor Snape had told them that as Slytherins they were expected to be ready and at least in the common room by 8.00 am and at breakfast by 8.30 at the latest. Harry did not want to get in trouble on his second day.

Harry manage to throw off the uniform that he had fallen asleep in, noticing now that they had been ripped by the events that had occurred last night. He quickly wrapped Balthazar around his arm, chucked his now wrecked uniform in his trunk and grabbed a new set from his wardrobe. Harry was used to getting ready quickly and so by the time it reached 8.35 he was dressed and was in the process of brushing his teeth. He didn't have time to try and tame his hair but he did glance in the mirror and was annoyed at what he saw. He did not want to draw attention to himself and the current state of his face would eliminate any chance of that. His right eye was a deep purple colour. His lip was cracked and dried blood coated it as well as coating his nose from the cut running across the bridge of his nose. Harry sighed and quickly rinsed his face off in the sink, scrubbing off as much of the blood as possible. He looked at himself again. He looked slightly better but still like he had been through hell. He sighed and resigned himself to the fact that he was not going to look any better than this and would probably on the receiving end of many stares until the bruises faded. He just hoped he
managed to avoid the girl from the train, Hermione. She would be full of questions about his face if she saw him.

Grabbing his bag off the bed, Harry stuffed his Defence Against the Dark Arts text book into it and made his way downstairs. He went through the empty common room and out to the Great Hall. As Harry made his way inside many a head turned to face him and as they saw who it was and what he looked like their jaws dropped. The Hall was almost as crammed as it had been in the welcoming feast and Harry could feel all of their eyes on him. He kept his head down and limped towards the nearest seat on the Slytherin table that he could find. He could hear the whispers all around him and people moving in their seats attempting to get a better look at his face. All but the Slytherins that was. They were silent, none of them said a word as the whispers broke out. They all just stared, even the staff. Harry could feel the dark eyes of Professor Snape glaring at his face.

Harry assumed that the Slytherin’s silence was due to their embarrassment at his weakness. Their head of house had said that to show weakness was something that a Slytherin must avoid at all costs and surely this was the greatest possible sign of weakness. Harry was ashamed he had let himself be hurt in such a way and that he could not even get back at the people who did it as he could not remember them. He assumed that the rest of the Slytherins felt the same, ashamed of him.

This was not, however, the mentality that the other Slytherins took. Instead they were angry. Angry that one of their youngest and newest members had been injured in such a violent way. His face and his limp told a story of pain that all of them were horrified by. As a house Slytherin may value strength but more than that they valued unity more. They were already looked down on and mocked by the other hoses as they were seen as ‘evil’. They always prided themselves on protecting one another and yet they had somehow let this little boy fall through the net. They had let him get hurt and that made them angry. Angry at themselves, angry at each other and angry at whoever had done this to their new Slytherin. They seemed unanimously decide, at the moment Harry walked through the door, that they needed to do better, that they needed to protect each and every one of their members, especially Harry Potter. He was one of them now.

Harry sat for several minutes trying to calm himself. He may try to fool himself, and everyone else, into thinking that he did not care what people thought but it hurt him to think that the whole of his new house may now hate him. He slowed his breathing and tried to block off the unwanted emotion that had bloomed in his head. He did not want it there. His thoughts were interrupted as a voice called out to him.

“Hey kid” the voice said and Harry looked around to who was speaking. Sitting next to him was a young man of about fourteen. He has short brown, scruffy hair and light blue eyes. “Are you alright?” Without giving Harry time to respond he said “Well of course you’re not alright but don’t you think you should go to the infirmary or something? Your face looks pretty messed up,” The boy ended, sounding unsure as to whether he should have said anything at all.

A number of Slytherins were looking at the two curious as to how the young boy would respond. Harry turned his head and looked at the other boy, curiosity was twinkling in his eyes. He was curious as to why the boy had talked to him, surely that all hated him now. Harry tilted his head to the side, an outward sign of his confusion.

“The name is Cassius Warrington by the way. Pleasure to meet you.” The boy said, sticking out his hand for Harry to shake as he did so. Harry spent several seconds debating whether or not to take the hand. It was more than just a handshake, Harry knew that. This was a sign that he was accepting this Cassius person. That he was willing to let him be a part of his life and to show that Harry was willing to be a part of the Slytherin family. Harry decided. He took Cassius’ hand in his showing to all those
watching that he was accepting Slytherin as his true house. Harry turned back in his seat and grabbed
a slice of toast, welcoming the distraction of eating.

“So, you're Harry Potter right?” Cassius questioned, knowing full well what the answer would be. Harry nodded. “Well, a pleasure to make your acquaintance Harry. Is it alright if I call you Harry?” Again Harry nodded and so the conversation went on. Cassius would ask questions and Harry would either nod or shake his head for several minutes while eating his breakfast. That was until Cassius finally asked the question he had had since his first sentence had been spoken.

“So Harry, do you ever actually say anything? Anything at all?” Harry looked over at the young man mulling over what he'd just said. The seconds seemed to last an eternity until finally Harry shook his head minutely and Cassius’ eyes widened. That was not what he had expected. The boy couldn't speak. Cassius did not know if it was physical or psychological but that didn't matter. Why was it that no one had been told? Had the boys parents not thought it worth while to inform the staff and the students that the boy was unable to say a word? Did Professor Snape know about this? How did the boy communicate?

“Oh ok then Harry,” Cassius said, his voice sounding strained. “How do you manage to tell people things then? Do you have some sort of way to communicate?” Harry grabbed his bag from the floor and Cassius looked at him confused. Harry the pulled out a piece of parchment, a quill and a bottle of ink and shook then in Cassius’ direction. A look of understanding crossed Cassius’ face, then he had a sudden thought.

“Wait Harry. How do you get into the common room then?” Cassius questioned. Harry looked up at Cassius and then back at the paper. He decided to make the leap to trust this boy and so he wrote two words on the paper.

‘I wait’

A look of understanding crossed Cassius’ face as he realised what Harry meant. The boy had no way to get into the common room, other than by waiting for another member of the house to open the door for him. Cassius leaned closer to Harry and put his mouth close to his ear. Harry flinched slightly at the sudden movement but did not move away from Cassius. He did however grip his wand in his pocket. Ready to draw it at a moments notice. Cassius then said:

“Well you know, there is another way into the common room. It’s secret, but I can show you if you'd like?” Harry looked at Cassius suspiciously and wrote

‘Why?’ on his paper. Cassius looked slightly sad at the boys reaction. Such a cynical mind from one so young. The boy obviously thought that Cassius wanted something in return for his help. At least Cassius understood how the boy had got into Slytherin now.

“No reason Harry. I don't want anything.” Cassius whispered again. “I just want to help you out. Slytherin is our family after all and we are nothing if not Slytherins.” Cassius said with a small smile on his face.

“Anyway we should probably get going to lessons. What have you got first?” Cassius questioned. Harry took out his timetable and handed it to Cassius. “Oh, you've got defence. Professor Quirrell is teaching that this year, he's not the best.” Cassius said pulling a face at the mention of his name. “He's got a stutter so his lessons are a bit tedious, although the practical part should be fun. Do you
want me to show you where the class room is? I’ve got potions so its on the way.” Harry shrugged in response. He didn't want to rely on Cassius but making an ally was always something that Harry valued. Taking that as a yes Cassius stood up.

“Alright then, lets go.” Cassius said grabbing his bag. Harry walked along with Cassius, listening to the boy talk about his own first year at Hogwarts as well as giving Harry a description of all the teachers and how best to deal with them.

Cassius dropped Harry off at his Defence classroom. However not before telling Harry that he would see him at lunch and that he should go to the infirmary after defence finished. Cassius then made his way down to the dungeons. He needed to speak to Professor Snape about Harry and see if he could do something.

Harry was not a normal eleven year old and he wanted to make sure Professor Snape helped him in some way. The boy needed to go to the infirmary to get his wounds tended to. Cassius hadn't pushed the matter as he could tell that Harry was reluctant to go. Instead he had decided to tell Professor Snape, as that was the only way he knew for certain that the boy would get treated. He would make sure that Harry was cared for.
Chapter 10

Harry made his way into the Defence classroom and sat down at the back of the room. There were a few others in the classroom, Hufflepuff by the look of them. As Harry placed his books, parchment, ink and quill on his desk, a man, that he assumed was Professor Quirrell, walked into the classroom. The man was pale and radiated an air of nervousness. A purple turban was wrapped around the man’s head and his robes were a dark brown. The man introduced himself and Harry thought that if he did not already know the man’s name then he wouldn’t have been able to decipher the stuttering. The lesson continued on in this same way, with the class becoming more and more restless as they failed to understand most of what was being said.

About twenty minutes into the lesson the class were snapped out of their boredom as the door was pushed open. The open door revealed, one, Severus Snape on the other side. This caused the entire class to sit up straighter then before and for some of the Hufflepuffs’ eyes to fill with fear.

“Professor Quirrell” Severus sneered “I require Mr Potter to come with me.” Harry turned to face the man at the mention of his name. He didn't know why the man would want to talk to him, he hadn't done anything wrong had he? The only thing that Harry could think of was that he had been late for breakfast this morning. He cursed in his head, he had not wanted to get in trouble as this may stop his learning. Yet here he was, being taken out of a lesson and even though it wasn't the most engaging of lessons Cassius had said that the practical would be better. Harry was longing to test out some of the spells he had read about.

“P-P-P-Professor S-S-S-Snape, of c-c-c-c-cOURSE you c-c-can t-t-t-take Mr P-P-P-Pot-t-t-ter, b-b-but why d-d-d-do you n-n-need d-d-d-d him?” Professor Quirrell managed to stutter out.

“That is none of your concern Professor. As he is a member of my house I have a right to take Mr Potter out of class if I see fit.” Professor Snape snapped.

“B-B-But of c-c-c-c-cOURSE. Mr P-P-P-Pot-t-t-ter g-g-g-gat-t-ther your t-t-t-things and g-g-g-go w-w-w-w-w-with P-P-P-Prof-f-fessor S-S-S-Snape-p-p-pe.”

Harry stuffed his books and notes into his bag and stood up from his seat. He walked over to Professor Snape, keeping his eyes on the floor.

“Follow me Potter” Severus said and then turned and with billowing robes he left the classroom. Harry followed behind, eyes glued to the man’s feet as they made their way through the corridors. The Professor stopped in front of a door and pushed it open before turning to Harry.

“This is my office Mr Potter. Come in.” Professor Snape then lead Harry into the room and sat down behind the desk that stood in the middle of it.

“Sit, Mr Potter” the man said, indicating towards the chair at the other side of the desk. “Oh and do take out paper and a quill, I want to be able to communicate with you.”

Harry was shocked. How did the professor know that he used paper and a quill to talk to people? The only person that knew that was…Cassius. Cassius had told Professor Snape about his way of communication. Harry knew that he shouldn't have trusted the young man with anything, the boy had told Professor Snape and now he was going to get in serious trouble. He may even get kicked out of school for not talking. He was angry at Cassius.

“Now Mr Potter, Mr Warrington came to talk to me before his class this morning to tell me that he
had some concerns surrounding you. I see now that these concerns may not have been as unfounded as I initially assumed.” Professor Snape said, his voice stating he meant business and yet it seemed to hold emotion that Harry could not understand. It seemed as though the Professor felt guilty, but why? He had no reason to be, did he? Harry couldn’t seem to think of one.

“I left my lesson in the hands of my Slytherins to assess Mr Warrington’s claims about you. I do so hope that you cooperate and don’t waste my time. I will ask you questions, Mr Potter and you write down your answer on the parchment in front of you. Is that understood Mr Potter?” Harry nodded.

“What did I just say Mr Potter?”

‘yes’ Harry wrote on his parchment.

“Good. So how long has it been since you last spoke?”

‘I don’t know’ Harry wrote before turning the paper and showing it to Professor Snape.

“Your penmanship could definitely do with some improvement Mr Potter.” Severus sneered “Well if you don't know can you ever remember a time that you could speak?’

‘No’ Harry wrote

“Do your parents know about the fact you cannot speak?”

‘I don’t know’ Harry wrote. Professor Snape raised an eyebrow at this.

“What do you mean you don't know. That is not an answer. How do you not know?” Severus said seriously worried for the boy at this point.

‘I only met them a week ago.’ Severus was shocked to the core. What the fuck could the boy mean? What did he mean by a week? Even the notion was ridiculous.

“So where did you live before?” Severus managed to force out.

‘My Aunt and Uncle’ That did nothing to reassure Severus. From what he remembered of Lily’s sister she was vile woman who hated anything to do with magic.

“You mean Petunia? You lived with muggles?”

‘Yes’ Harry wrote.

Severus was going to continue his questioning when there was a knock at the door of his office and then a young man rushed into the room.

“Sir, I’m sorry to disturb you” he said, glancing at Harry “but Hilliard blew up his cauldron and it went all over Wynch. Bole and Derrik have taken him to see Madame Pomfrey but I thought I should come and tell you what happened.” The young man seemed stressed at what had happened and his breathing rate was faster than it should have been.

“Mr Potter, stay here.” Professor Snape said looking at Harry as he did so. “Mr Cram, lets go and see what mess Mr Hillard has managed to make this time.” With that Severus made his way out of the office, leaving Harry alone. Well alone except for Balthazar. Harry sat on and looked around the office. Just as with the rest of the wizarding world, it seemed that books were a central feature of the room. There were book shelves stuffed with books surrounding the room. Harry decided that he wanted to investigate this new possible sources of information and so stood from his chair and looked at the books. Most of them seemed to be potions focused with a few on the dark arts dotted
around the shelves. Harry picked one up named ‘Moste Potente Potions’ and Harry flicked through it. The book contained gruesome illustrations of the effects of the numerous potions contained in the book. Harry was halfway through reading about something called the Polyjuice Potion when a voice drew him from his study.

“You should really be careful with that” the voice of the Snarky Professor called out. Harry dropped the book in surprise and turned around to see his Professor in the doorway.

“You never know what you'll find in a book like that” the Professor said. “Why don’t you sit down Mr Potter” the Professor said walking towards Harry as he did so. Harry moved back towards the chair he had previously occupied and sat back down, while the Professor picked up the book Harry had dropped and placed it back on the shelf.

“I think, Mr Potter, that we have had enough questioning for now. Instead we shall go to the infirmary and get your face and leg looked at. As well as any other injuries you may be hiding. However once Madame Pomfrey tells me that you are well you will be telling me where those injuries came from Mr Potter. Even if I have to force it out of you.” Before he gave Harry a chance to respond the potions master beckoned Harry towards him. Harry stood up form the chair but made no move forward.

“Come on boy, I don't have all day” Severus said aggravated at the boys lack of movement. “Mr Potter, move!” Harry shook his head. The thoughts running through his head were those of self-preservation. He did not want anyone seeing the wounds or scars littering his body. He knew that if they saw them they would ask questions and they were not questions that he wanted to answer. He also needed to protect Balthazar; with the snake wrapped around his arm he would inevitably be seen and Balthazar was not someone he could loose.

“Mr Potter, I am your head of house, you are under my care and you will do as I say” Harry again shook his head. The fear must have been clear as the next thing Severus said was in a much softer voice than before.

“Mr Potter, you are hurt and you need treatment. I cannot in good conscious let you go without it” his voice adopted a more serious tone again. “Now come on. We must go.” Again Harry shook his head. “Fine, it appears that we are doing this the hard way.” Before Harry could even register what the Professor could possibly mean a blue light shot from Severus’ wand and Harry became frozen to the spot. He could not move a muscle. Harry hadn't even seen the man get his wand. Severus Snape then walked towards Harry and cast another spell on the boy, one that Harry knew all too well from his charms lesson yesterday and so he found his feet being lifted off the ground. His body also moved to become parallel to the floor. Severus walked around Harry’s prone form and then with a flick of his wand Harry was floating in front of the man, out of the door and down the corridors. Presumably to the infirmary, wherever that may be.

A few minutes later and Harry’s body floated in front of a set of double doors. They banged open, violently and Harry was floated through them. In front of him, a white room, with about a dozen beds all covered in white sheets. Harry was set on one of the beds by his Professor. The levitation charm was cancelled but the one that froze his limbs stayed in place. Harry heard the footsteps of someone coming into the room and Harry saw a woman out of the corner of his eye, she was the source of the footsteps.

“Severus, what on earth is going on?” the woman exclaimed.

“Well Poppy, this here” he said indicating to Harry “is Harry Potter, a member of Slytherin and seeing as he refused to come to the infirmary, the only way was to use force.” Severus explained. The woman, who Harry assumed was Madame Pomfrey, tutted.
“Well I suppose we better take a look at him then.” Madame Pomfrey said. “Unfreeze him will you Severus.” Severus flicked his wand and Harry felt the ability to move his limbs return to him. As soon as he felt the return Harry sat up and jumped off the bed trying to make a run for the door. However as soon as his legs hit the floor they folded under him. Harry cursed internally and instead tried to crawl his way out of the room.

He didn't get far before he felt two strong arms reach under his own arms and plop him back on the bed. His whole body felt weak and he struggled even to sit up.

“Now Mr Potter,” Madame Pomfrey said “that was not a wise idea. You see, after the spell that Professor Snape put you under it takes a while for the strength in your limbs to be regained. I'm going to have to check you over Harry and so I'm going to spell your robes and your shirt off. It wont take a second.” Harry began to panic. He did not want Balthazar to be discovered, especially when he was so weak that he could not defend him.

Harry began to squirm, trying to throw himself off the bed but he was too weak, his body would not obey his commands. Harry continued to shuffle his way to the edge of the bed and suddenly felt cool air against his chest and he froze. Balthazar was going to be discovered. But no matter the consequences Harry would protect him.

Professor Snape pulled Harry up from the huddle that his squirming had reduced him to. However as soon as the Professor saw the snake wrapped around Harry’s arm he quickly recoiled. Balthazar, who had been rudely awakened at the removal of Harry’s shirt, hissed and lunged at him. Harry, not knowing what else to do, managed to gain temporary, if clumsy, control of his limbs to stroke Balthazar’s scales. This soothed the snake and he backed away from Severus Snape however that did not stop him from hissing insults at the man. Harry continued to stroke the snakes scales while the other two people in the room just stared. They stared for several minutes until Severus realised that something needed to be said.

“Mr Potter, that snake. That snake is yours, yes?” Harry nodded his head, but kept his eyes fixed on Balthazar not looking at the man in front of him.

“Is he your familiar?” the Professor questioned. Harry tilted his head, showing that he was not sure what the professor was talking about. “Ok, better question. How long have you had the snake?” Harry put the hand up, the one not stroking Balthazar, showing five fingers.

“Five? Five years?” Harry nodded. “and it’s stayed with you for all that time?” Another nod. Severus sighed. “It sounds like a familiar bond to me. Otherwise there would be no reason for the beast to stay with you all this time.” At the word beast Harry glared at the Professor. He would not just ignore an insult to Balthazar. Even if he didn't have the words to express his anger a death glare would do just as well.

“Mr Potter can you please take the snake off your arm so that I can examine your injuries.” Madame Pomfrey said in an authoritative tone. Harry did just that. He took Balthazar’s tail and unwrapped the snake from his arm and then set him down on the bed next to him. The snake continued to hiss at Harry about the horrible people around him and how he would bite them if they hurt his Master. Harry just continued to stroke the snakes scales soothingly. Madame Pomfrey then grasped Harry’s chin in her hands and examined his face, before examining the of rest him.

“Well Mr Potter. It appears that you have severe bruising on your ribs and back. You have also fractured your ankle and you have broken nose. It’s nothing a few potions cant fix” the nurse said in a surprisingly optimistic tone.

“Here drink these” she said handing Harry three potions vials, one after the other. Harry drank them.
He guessed, correctly, that if he refused he would only be forced to drink them and that could be infinitely more painful.

“Well done Mr Potter. Even some of the Seventh years won’t take potions with as little protest as you just did. Now there is another potion that you need to take but it will knock you out until tomorrow morning. It will help heal the bones in your nose and ankle. So I’m going to put you into some healing robes and then give you the potion.” Harry looked from Balthazar to Madame Pomfrey with a meaningful look in his eyes.

“Yes Mr Potter, your snake can stay here. We will not try to take him from you. You have my word.” Madame Pomfrey responded to Harry’s unspoken question seriously. Harry knew that even if protested it would only end in him being frozen again, or maybe knocked out this time. Resistance was likely to only be met with pain. Madame Pomfrey waved her wand and new robes clothed Harry. He then was handed a potion. He swallowed it and within a minute he was dead to the world.
Chapter 11

As Harry’s eyes closed and his breathing slowed two concerned adults watched over the now sleeping boy.

“Severus, will you accompany me to my office. I feel there are some things that are better discussed in private.” With a nod from Severus the two of them made their way into Madame Pomfrey’s office. There was an air of solemnness between the two. Severus also felt somewhat apprehensive about what Poppy was going to tell him. The bruises he had seen on the boy, were severe, yes, but Severus was pretty sure there was more to it than that. As Severus had picked the boy up from the floor, he had noticed how light the boy was, even for an eleven year old of his height. He also thought that beneath the bruises on the boy’s back he may have seen some scars. He could not be sure though, there could be no certainty when he only had a glance, seeing the boy’s back for only a few seconds.

“I think that we should sit, Severus. This is not a pleasant conversation to be having.” The two of them took a seat at Madame Pomfrey’s desk, one either side and Severus found himself feeling like a student again. He was reminded of his numerous trips to the infirmary after yet another run in with the Marauders. He remembered his numerous talks with Poppy. Mostly with the Matron trying to find out who had hurt him and Severus refusing to tell her a thing. Sometimes he regretted not telling her. She may have been able to help him and yet he knew that if he were to do it over he still would tell her nothing. Severus valued his pride above everything; everything but his Lord that is.

“Well Severus, there seems to be more to be more to Mr Potter’s injuries then first meets the eye. The boy has severe scarring covering his back, they appear to be whip marks and by the layers of the scarring it seems that these scars date back years. Some being as recent as a week ago. He also appears to be malnourished and this has caused a stunt in his growth. His eyesight is atrocious and the prescription in his glasses is most definitely wrong.”

Snape was not really sure how to respond to this revelation. This had not been what he wanted to hear. A spawn of Potter was not someone who Severus would think to be abused. He assumed the lack of talking was the typical Potter attention seeking. He knew that the bruises were something that needed to be addressed but again thought that the reason for the boys reluctance to go to the hospital wing was simply that he did not want the attention to be removed from his person. Severus was also sure that the fact the boy got into Slytherin was yet another play for attention, now he realised his mistake. It seemed that there may be a legitimate reason for the boy’s placement in the house of the snakes. Those who were sneaky and manipulative often developed these skills in childhood if they were from an abusive home. It became necessary for their survival. That had defiantly been the case for Severus. His father’s abuse had moulded him into the perfect Slytherin.

Severus was unsure how to proceed in this situation. He assumed that it was Lily’s muggle relatives were the reason for the signs of abuse in young Mr Potter but he could not be sure. As much as Severus didn’t think it possible it was not beyond all reason that it could have been the Potters to inflict this damage to Harry, or at least the most recent abuse. He could not inform the Potters of anything concerning Mr Potter’s health until he could question Mr Potter about what they had found. Now all that had to do was wait until the boy woke up.

Harry awoke and found himself lying on his back with a heavy weight on his chest. He looked around and saw light streaming in through the widows of the Room he was in. He recalled the previous day and the discovery of Balthazar. Harry threw off the covers and saw that the weight on his chest was in fact the snake in question. Even though he had expected that that was the case Harry
felt a great sense of relief at the conformation that it was and that Balthazar was safe. As Harry shifted into a sitting position he noticed something. He noticed that he no longer felt any pain. It was the first time in a long time that Harry didn't feel twinges from his back as he sat up and his ribs did not ache as he breathed. He didn't know that it would be so nice to feel this way. Harry set his arms on either side of him and pushed himself into a sitting position, causing Balthazar to shift slightly as he did so. He heard a hiss of annoyance from Balthazar. The snake looked at Harry and grumbled about being woken up before slithering up the bed and then up Harry’s arm and curling around it.

Harry looked around the room and assumed that he was still in the hospital wing. Yesterday seemed to be a bit of a blur and the only thing that Harry remembered clearly was the swirl of emotion that he had felt. He had a vague recollection of a woman giving him what he assumed were potions as well as forcing him to remove his shirt. He could not remember it clearly, but he did remember the fear and self-disgust that he felt. Harry sighed as he realised that emotion had totally clouded his judgement. He could not remember the last time he had let himself be so compromised. Even when he had been reunited with his so called parents the shock had not caused him to react so despicably. He had allowed both that woman and Professor Snape to see him when he was weak and that was something he had never wanted to do. Weakness was never an advantage.

After a few minutes of contemplating his own failures the woman Harry remembered giving him potions walked over to him. She seemed overly cheery and happy to be treating him. Harry prepared himself for the annoyance he was bound to feel as soon as she started talking.

“Hello Mr Potter. Good to see you awake.” The woman’s cheery demeanour was overshadowed by the seriousness in the her voice. It seemed that even though she tried to calm her patients by the cheery demeanour, she took her job very seriously. This reassured Harry more than the cheeriness did.

“I’m Madame Pompfrey. I treated you yesterday and the potions that I gave you may have caused some mild disorientation so your memories may be a little fuzzy. You came here with Professor Snape yesterday and we took a look at the injuries that you had. Now Harry, there were some quite serious injuries, some of which were not sustained while you were at Hogwarts.” Harry was getting anxious about the implications of what the Healer was saying. There was no way that the truth could be revealed. The more he worried about it the further Harry took himself away from reality. Deeper and deeper into his mind and the more he thought about the abuse the harder it was to restrain his anger. As Harry thought about the Dursley’s this anger increased and increased, spiralling out of control. Harry was no longer listing to what Madame Pompfrey had to say, but was instead locking himself in his mind and focusing on all of the anger he had. Deeper and deeper he took himself as his anger raged like a fire.

Harry opened his eyes and felt himself fill with glee. He knew that he was inside his own mind and the fantasies he had always had about the Dursley’s were coming to fruition, even if they were only in his imagination. At least after having experienced his fantasy Harry would be able to have an aim of what he wanted to do in reality. Harry’s green eyes sparkled with insanity.

He looked around a room that once had been the living room of the Dursley’s although the state that it was in left it unrecognisable. Blood covered the walls and the floors and all the furniture was in pieces, having been flung around the room. Three beings occupied the room, all of them in such horrible states that they were no longer something anyone would call a human being. The first thing that Harry turned his attention to was what had once been a woman. Each of its hands had been nailed to the wall and so had the feet, creating a cross. The nails were rusted and blood dribbled from the holes that the nails had made. It trickled its way down the walls and to the floor as she struggled against the restraints. The thing had no eyes, but instead there were dark pits in their place with a thick crust of blood surrounding the empty sockets. A gurgle pushed its way from the things throat
and a rush of blood followed it and dripped down its chin. The tongue that should have been in her mouth, instead, lay on the floor next to the eyes that had perviously occupied here empty sockets. This meant that the only sound she made were gurgles but Harry still revered in the sounds as he knew that they were the replacement for her screams.

The next thing in the room was smaller that the first and it looked like a small, mangled, baby whale. The most noticeable thing was that there was a bloody pile of intestines on the floor by the thing that had once been a boy. The intestines were still attached to him. By the intestines, in a neat line were two hands and two feet that had been violently removed from the thing. The cuts were rough and messy as though the doer had relished in the pain that they had caused. Harry took a step closer to the bloody pile of flesh and peered at the things chest. It appeared that the skin had been pealed back and through the ribs the things heart could be seen beating. However even in the few seconds that Harry looked at it the beating became slower and slower. More blood continued to trickle from the stumps where the things hands and feet had once been at a rate which promised an imminent death.

The final thing was the most recognisable as a human with all four arms and all four legs still in place, however one of its other appendages was not where it should have been. The things penis had been removed and then neatly, with the utmost of care, had been sewn onto its forehead. The body was also covered in several large whip marks. The splintering wood of broken table legs were thrust through its hands and feet, pinning it to the floor. Harry made his way towards the thing with menace in his movements. A belt lay by the things feet and Harry picked it up, lifted it above his head ready to strike the thing. Its eyes widened and a squeal of fear passed through its dried and cracked lips.

Just as Harry was about to bring the belt down on the terrified thing in front of him he felt a presence enter his mind. He tried to push it out but it overpowered him. He increased the force but he was unprepared for the intrusion as he'd been distracted by the physical representation of his fantasy. His lack of attention meant that the presence could force its way through his barriers and locate him. Harry felt the presence behind him and turned, dropping his arm down as he did so. The belt clunked to the floor as Harry's eyes met a pair of dark pits.

In front of Harry stood the figure of his head of House and renowned potions master, Professor Severus Snape. The man was unreadable as he stood, his eyes looking into Harry’s soul. Harry was starting to panic at the teacher’s stare and his blank look. Harry remained frozen to the spot, while the thing pinned to the floor continued to squeal and struggle behind Harry. The Professor made his way towards the boy in front of him with small and precise steps. The intense eye contact remained as the steps were made. The closer the man got the more worried Harry became. The man could see Harry’s deepest and darkest desires. His desire to torture the people, that some may call family, in the most painful way possible. This desire was laid bare for the Professor to see. The reaction the man may have could lead to Harry’s destruction.

As Professor Snape got to about a metre in front of Harry he finally broke the eye contact and looked at the room behind the boy and the things that Harry had created. He did not seem horrified or disgusted but rather curious. After several minutes of observing the handiwork of Harry’s imagination the man turned his eyes back to the green orbs and finally spoke.

“Well Mr Potter it appears you have quite the imagination.” The tone was almost gleeful and there was a twinkle in the man’s eyes that made Harry very nervous.

“How about we overlook this…darker side of your mind. I won’t inform the headmaster of your little indiscretion, however this will not come without a price Mr Potter. You owe me a favour.” he said pronouncing each and ever syllable with precision. “As a Slytherin I expect you to know what that entails.” The look in the man’s eyes was positively predatory and a small smirk crept its way onto his face.
“Moving on Mr Potter.” the man said adapting a more business like tone. “Madame Pomfrey appears to be concerned for you. To avoid any further interruptions to my busy schedule I believe that we need to put her worries to rest, don’t you? If you’d be so kind as to go to back to the infirmary then that would be much appreciated.”

With that the man abruptly left Harry’s mind. Harry knew the consequences would not be pleasant if he were to disobey Professor Snape. He therefore pushed his conciseness to the forefront of his mind and forced himself to feel the world around him. The warm sheets over him, the cool breeze from the open widow and the smell of cleanliness. He forced his eyes to flicker open and was met with the faces of Madame Pomfrey and Professor Snape staring at him from where he was sitting in the hospital bed.
It had been just over a week since Harry had woken up in the hospital wing and there had been many changes in that time. Harry had been kept in the hospital wing for the rest of the day and that night as Madame Pomfrey had wanted to keep him under supervision to assess his health, both mental and physical. The next morning had however lead to a talk that Harry had wished to avoid. There were many questions asked about the scars, cuts and bruises that had marred Harry's body. Between Professor Snape, Madame Pomfrey and Harry they had established that the abuse had been solely from his Uncle, one Vernon Dursley. Severus had had to make one hundred percent sure that the Potters were not involved in any way at all, therefore after Harry had written this fact numerous times, the conversation had finally moved on. The extent of the abuse was also revealed; the starvation, the beatings and the numerous chores that could be compared to slave labour. After seeing the inside of Harry's mind Severus had, however, not been surprised at the extent of the abuse. To want to hurt people as much as Harry did there had to be a reason. Madame Pomfrey was obviously more shocked then Severus, although she hid it well. She knew that Harry had suffered at the hands of the muggles but to see it written down by the boy himself was hard for her to handle.

Three days after the talk with the two members of staff found Harry sitting at the Slytherin table, picking at his dinner. Cassius sat to his left, talking to Harry, seemingly unperturbed by the boy's unresponsiveness and the stares of the other Slytherins around him. To Harry's right sat another fourth year by the name of Lucian Bole. The boy was a friend, of sorts, of Cassius' and so had ended up sitting with the two of them, making the occasional comment in response to Cassius' endless chatter. As Harry poked at the chicken on his plate Cassius' voice suddenly stopped. The air become tense, so much so it felt as though you could cut it with a knife. Harry turned around to see what had caused the sudden change in atmosphere and was met with the face of Percy Weasley. The same person that had questioned him so insistently when he had been outside.

"What do you want Weasley?" Cassius sneered at the Prefect. It was the most unfriendly Harry had ever heard the young man. The fact that a Gryffindor was standing so close to the Slytherin table set many of the occupants on edge and Cassius was not one to stand by and leave his house undefended.

"Well Warrington, I have a message for Mr Potter from Professor Dumbledore." As Percy said this he extended his hand towards Harry, a letter held in it. "The Headmaster told me to give this to you, Mr Potter" Percy said, addressing Harry. Harry gave no sign that he had even heard the Prefect's words.

"Rude again I see" Percy sneered. Cassius gave a growl at Percy's comment and snatched the letter out of the other boy's hands.

"Leave Weasley" Cassius spat out and then turned his back to the older boy. His tone leaving no room for argument. He then handed the letter to Harry, ignoring the existence of the ginger prefect standing behind him. Percy huffed and then stormed off, back to his own table, knowing when a fight was not worth starting.

It turned out the letter was to inform Harry that his presence was required in the Headmaster's office as quickly as possible. Harry sighed and resigned himself for another tedious talk about his time at the Dursleys'. Harry had know that this was coming, but he had hoped to put it off for as long as possible. Harry handed the letter to Cassius for him to read. The older boy's eyes ran across the page and then he looked up at Harry with concern showing through the usual carefree mask that the older boy adopted when around Harry. Cassius knew that any meeting with the Headmaster and a member of the Slytherin house, almost always ended badly. The extreme bias from the old coot towards the
The house of the lions always ended in disaster. The new first years had, mostly, not experienced this bias yet, although every other year had. The way that Slytherins were always the ones to blame, the bad guys, the evil ones. How Slytherins always had more house points taken away for the same or lesser offences than that of the other houses and how no matter how hard a Slytherin worked, their results were almost always under question. The thoughts of cheating always seemed to flicker through the minds of the Professors, all but Professor Snape that is. Cassius wanted to support his new, young friend but his power was limited in matters that were external to Slytherin house. In the past few days he had become attached to the young Slytherin and he didn't want the boy to come to harm.

Harry reminded Cassius of his younger brother, Gabriel. Gabriel had been killed during the war. The little boy had only been four at the time and Cassius had been but five. The Warrington family had been on a day out in Diagon Alley when there had been a death eater attack. Both the order of the Phoenix and the Aurors had apperated in and in the cross fire Gabriel had been hit with a stunner. The force of the spell colliding with the boy's tiny body had flung him into a wall. His head had snapped back and violently smashed into the wall. Gabriel was dead before either of the boys parents had time to realise the boy was missing. Meanwhile Cassius had seen the whole thing. He had seen the stunner leave the wand of one, Alastor Moody and seen the body of his younger brother crumple against the wall of the alley. The quite and calm nature of Harry reminded him of Gabriel. The way his little brother would think about every little thing that he said and that each word that came out of his mouth had been precise and to the point. The air of intelligence that had surrounded Gabriel seemed to also surround Harry. Harry's similarities to Gabriel made Cassius want to protect the delicate looking first year, even more.

"Do you want me to show you the way to the headmasters office, Harry?" Cassius queried. Harry titled his head slightly, contemplating the offer. He had no idea of the way himself, but relying on Cassius too much would make the other members of Slytherin even more suspicious of him; Harry decided it was worth it. Cassius was a strong ally to have, no matter what others thought of their new found friendship. He gave one, sharp, swift nod, to signify his assent to the offer.

"Let's go then." Cassius said grinning at Harry as he did so, the carefree mask back in place. The two of them bid farewell to Lucian and a few other of the Slytherins sitting near them. They then made their way out of the great hall. As they made their way through the corridors Cassius continued to chatter and Harry marvelled at his never ending topics of conversation that he had.

"We're here Harry" Cassius said, adopting a more solemn tone, his worry for the boy audible in his tone. In front of the two of them stood a gargoyle statue guarding a staircase. Its face was twisted into a scary smile, one which Harry thought was a tad inappropriate for its location. It may scare some of the younger students.

"It's up the stairs to the old fool's office." As Cassius said this the gargoyle moved to the side and the staircase was revealed.

"Good luck Harry. I'll see you back in the common room later." Harry nodded and then made his way up the staircase, leaving Cassius behind him. Harry's footfall echoed through the staircase and when he reached the top he was met by an ornate wooden door. It was carved with patterns, some of them even appeared to be runes that Harry recognised from the studies on his own wand. Harry raised his hand, making it into a fist and knocked on the door. As he was about to knock again the door swung open to reveal the room behind it. A large mahogany desk sat in the centre of the room with Professor Dumbledore behind it. Three other people sat on the other side. They were three people that Harry really did not want to see, the Potters.

"Come in my boy, take a seat" Dumbledore said in a jolly tone, a twinkle in his eyes. Harry was reluctant to enter the room but knew that by not doing so he was simply delaying the inevitable.
There was no way out of the conversation that was about to take place and so, reluctantly, Harry did as he was bid. There was a free chair set down by Lily Potter and Harry took it. He made no eye contact with any of the people in the room and tried to act as though they simply did not exist. The old man began speaking and although Harry did not actively acknowledge anything that he said, he was in fact listening intently. The man explained how Madame Pomfrey and Professor Snape had told him of all the events that had transpired in the infirmary and all the things that had been revealed.

Although the contents of Harry's fantasies had not been mentioned, it seemed that Professor Snape had kept his word about not informing the Headmaster. Dumbledore went on to explain that he felt that there needed to be a conversation between his parents, his brother and himself about the abuse that he had suffered. He made out that he was concerned for Harry's wellbeing and relationship with his parents.

Harry was having none of it. He did not believe a word that the headmaster was saying. Harry thought it obvious to anyone with half a brain that the Headmaster's only concern was the precious Boy Who Lived. He did not care a whit about Harry's wellbeing but was rather concerned that an abused and Slytherin brother may lead Edward down a path that was not planned for him. Harry could become a bad influence, or so Dumbledore believed and so he was trying to nip the problem in the bud. Dumbledore's talk of care and concern went on for at least ten minutes. However the fact that he got no response from Harry seemed to annoy the old coot to no end. He managed to hide his frustration well but Harry, observant as ever, noticed that the twinkle in the man's eyes seemed to dim the more that he talked. Harry was snapped out of his assessment of the old man and his Slytherin tendencies, when a voice beside him spoke.

"Harry we are so concerned for you" the voice of Lily Potter spoke. "I know that you don't know us very well, but why didn't you tell us about any of this? You could have written it down on a piece of paper, or you could have written to us as a reply to one of the letters that we sent you." Lily's voice sounded desperate but at the mention of letters Harry's head whipped towards the woman, an angry look in his eyes. He grabbed a quill and a piece of parchment form Dumbledore's desk and for the first time in ten years he responded to one of his parent's questions. He wrote in quick, flowing script, two words that read;

'What letters?'

He pushed the paper over to Lily. She looked at the piece of paper and tears began to fill her eyes almost immediately. She realised for the first time how utterly abandoned her little boy must have felt. Lily and James had written a letter to Harry at least once a month, as well as sending a present on his Birthday and Christmas. They had made sure not to mention anything about magic in their letters as they were not sure how well the boy would cope with the knowledge that he had magic.

They thought it may lead to him resenting his muggle relatives for not having the same gift. They had, however, told him that they were sorry about leaving him and explained that it was only till he was eleven. They had also told him how much they loved him and missed him. The letters contained stories about all the people that they knew in the wizarding word, they had been altered not to contain magic, but they had still shown the people's personality. Stories about Edward, Sirius, Remus, order members and many more. For Harry not to have had these letters was truly heartbreaking to Lily.

James took the paper from Lily's hands and read the words written there. He read it about a dozen times before it finally sunk in; before he finally understood the significance of the words before him. This realisation struck him like a physical blow and he dropped the paper onto the desk before putting his head into his hands. It was no wonder Harry never acknowledged their existence. It was no wonder he never treated them as his parents. If he knew nothing about them and thought that they
had just forgotten about him then Harry was justified in all of his actions, no matter how hurtful James had found them. He realised that he needed to start over with his youngest son. He would have to show his son that he was worthy to be his father and that he was someone that the boy needed in his life. With a new resolve to help his son he sat up straight and turned to his youngest, determination twinkling in his eyes.

"Harry" he said, his voice quivering with all the emotion that he felt. "the letters were from your mother and I, we sent them every month, as well as sending Christmas and Birthday presents. Petunia and Vernon must not have given them to you." Then James did something he had not done for a long time. He apologised, utterly and sincerely.

"I'm so sorry Harry. I can't being to imagine how you felt. The pain, the fear, the loneliness. I don't ever expect you to be able to forgive me, but I hope that maybe, someday, we can talk about it and I can explain everything to you and you might be able to understand." By this point Edward had read the words on the paper but he had not really understood their significance. So what if his brother hadn't got a few crummy letters? He was also shocked at the way his dad was speaking. He had never heard him sound so serious and sincere. It also shocked him to hear his dad apologise as James alway managed to blame his actions on someone or something else. Never had he heard his dad so utterly sorry for what he had done. Edward could only sit and stare as his dad revealed his heart for all in the office to see.

Harry did not know what to think. Were James and Lily telling the truth? Even if they were why should that change anything? They had still left him with filthy muggles, what had they expected? Had they really expected the magic hating muggles would ever give him letters from his magical parents? The idea was ludicrous. Harry was beginning to think that the Potters were just plain stupid. James may sound genuine, but a genuine idiot was still not someone that Harry wanted to know. He did not see any point in reconnecting with his parents. They were totally different from Harry and they would never accept Harry for the way that he truly was. This entire conversation seemed pointless to Harry and so he simply ignored them all. He just stared at the floor and pulled at his sleeve, pretending that they didn't exist. After a few minutes of silence Edward decided to add his own opinion, in a traditional Gryffindor fashion; loud and boisterous. He really had no tact at all.

"I don't see what the problem is? Why should some crummy letter matter? Also why should his feelings matter at all? I mean he's brother to the Boy Who Lived and I almost got killed as a baby so how can his experiences be worse than mine? He's just pathetic and a crybaby. He doesn't even deserve to be my brother."

With that Edward finished and was met with complete silence. He felt that he had got his point across and that once his parents realised what he was saying that they would agree with him. They would realise what a waste of space his slimy Slytherin brother was. There was no point in even having him in the family and he knew that once he explained this to them they would see the truth behind it. He did not however get the reaction that he had been expecting.

"EDWARD POTTER" his mother yelled "How dare you speak about your brother in that way! There is..." She was about to continue her rant when Dumbledore interrupted her.

"Lily" he said calmly "I think it may be best if we send young Harry here back to his dormitory. I don't think that he needs to hear this." Lily, still too mad to respond without yelling, simply nodded her consent. James did the same and Dumbledore stood up and made his way over to Harry.

"Come on my boy, I think it's time that you left. I'm sure we'll arrange another meeting with you and your family soon enough" the old man said, twinkle back in his eyes.

He opened the door for Harry who made his way out of the room and down the stairs from the
office. As the door closed behind him he heard the shouting and yelling of the Potters' from behind it. He felt a sense of satisfaction that the great 'Boy Who Lived' was being knocked down a few pegs. As he walked back to the common room he wondered if Madame Pomfrey had informed Dumbledore and the Potters of Balthazar's existence. Harry thought forward to the next meeting that was soon to take place with the Headmaster and his so called family and wondered what the results of it would be. He knew that due to their own stupidity and their lack of care for him that they would be willing to do anything he asked of them. He looked forward to the manipulation that would take place in the following weeks, months and maybe even years, to get anything and everything that he waned. He knew that they were not used to dealing with Slytherins on a day to day basis and that he could literally get away with murder right under their noses. He would have to watch out for Dumbledore though; the man's sweet grandfatherly persona had not fooled him at all. He would have to be careful and he knew it.

On the Monday morning that marked Harry's second week in the castle an announcement had been made. An announcement to all the staff and all the pupils about Harry. They had all been told that Harry did not speak and that all communication had to be done using parchment and a quill. The staff had, of course, already been informed of this in the staff meeting on the previous Friday but for many of the pupils this came as quite a surprise.

One Percy Wesley felt absolutely wretched for the way that he treated the boy. He had thought that the boy was simply being a normal Gryffindor hating Slytherin. He usually assumed that any Slytherin he talked with would be bigoted and judgemental but he realised that he had himself been that. He had bullied a first year who was unable to defend himself. He promised himself that he would apologise to the boy, he would redeem himself. His sense of moral duty would not let him do anything less.

It was four days after the announcement and Harry was doing very well in his lessons, to such an extent that all his teachers had taken note of him. Once Harry had worked out that with all spells, he need not put all his force into the spell but only all of his intention he had got every spell he attempted, first time. Potions had been a challenge, but all the extra reading that Harry had done in the library had helped exponentially. Tips from Cassius had also been gratefully received and had helped to improve his first attempt at a potion, significantly so. His potion had been nowhere near perfect but he had been head and shoulders above the rest of the Gryffindors and on par with the brewing of Malfoy. Professor Snape had seemed impressed and that made Harry feel that the long hours in the library and the lectures from Cassius had paid off.

Harry was making his way towards potions for the second time since he had arrived in the school. He was alone as Cassius had been in the library that morning, skipping breakfast, in favour of finishing a Defence essay that he had put off the previous weekend. Instead he had gone out to Hogsmead with some of his friends. He had brought Harry some sweets back from Honeydukes, which Harry had enjoyed a great deal. The trips consequences were now, however, becoming apparent with the amount of work that Cassius had to catch up on.

As Harry made his way down to the dungeons he heard a voice call out his name. At first he ignored it, not recognising it as one of the professors and so considering it inconsequential. The voice called again and Harry also heard fast paced footfall as the owner of the voice ran to catch up with him. Harry felt a hand oh his shoulder and he turned around to be met with the face of one Percy Weasley. Harry wanted to sigh, roll his eyes and walk away but the boy was a Prefect and so had some authority over Harry. Harry did not want any unnecessary trouble.

"Hello Harry. Is it okay if I call you Harry?" the boy mumbled. He seemed more nervous then Harry had ever seen him before. Harry only shrugged in response. The older boy seemed to take that as a
yes and continued talking to Harry. "I would like to apologise for how I treated you. It was judgemental and I assumed that just because you were a Slytherin that your silence was an indication of your contempt for Gryffindors. Will you forgive me?" the boy sounded a tad pathetic. Harry guessed that the boy, as a Gryffindor, had a strong moral compass and sense of duty to stick to. This meant that the boy would get no rest until he had redeemed himself and would give Harry no rest either. Harry decided that the easiest way to get the boy off his back was to agree to forgive him and so Harry nodded and began to walk off.

"Wait" Percy called out to Harry. "You have potions with the Gryffindors next, right?" again Harry gave a single swift nod. "I have a free period now, so i'll walk you there?" It sounded more of a question then a command. Harry gave another shrug and then continued on his way. So the two of them made their way down to the dungeons.

Percy made small talk, but seemed to find it difficult to know what to say when there were no responses given. Percy ended up talking about his family after a few awkward minutes. That was a topic with which Percy had a lot to talk about. It seemed that Percy had had to take care of his younger brothers from a young age. At the age of six, he was expected to help look after his three younger brothers and when he became the oldest child in the house at the age of seven and even though his father had had help from his friends and coworkers with childcare, a lot of the responsibility had fallen on the shoulders of the young Percy.

The pair reached the potions classroom and Percy bid Harry farewell with a pat to the head. Harry felt that after that conversation he had gained an ally in the older boy and to have a Gryffindor prefect on his side was nothing to be sneered at. However as Harry approached the line of Slytherins that is exactly what Malfoy did, sneered. He looked at Harry in disgust and that showed in his voice as he said:

"What were you doing with a Weasley, Potter?! A Weasley of all people, do you have a shame?" Malfoy’s hatred of Percy was palatable in the air.

Harry really didn't understand Malfoy's attitude. He had heard the boy wax lyrically about the importance of allies and how the Malfoy family always took any advantages afforded to them. So what Harry didn't understand was why this was any different? Harry did not understand why one ally should be valued above another simply based on their house and their upbringing. You never knew where someone might end up. Harry himself was a prime example of that; brought up in an abusive and neglectful household, only to have it all changed, he was now one of the top students in the year. He never judged someone by their current position, only by their potential and Percy seemed to have plenty of that. Harry did not give Malfoy the satisfaction of a response and simply walked to the back of the queue away from the boy.

A few minutes later and Professor Snape stalked down the corridor, robes billowing and ushered the children into the classroom. Harry sat down in his usual position at the back of the room. It turned out that unlike last week there were no spare seats in the room and so the space next to Harry had to be filled. A Gryffindor by the name of Neville Longbottom had missed his first lesson due to an incident during a flying lesson. The boy had broken his wrist falling from his broom and had had to stay in the hospital wing for the rest of the day, therefore, missing the lesson. The boy approached the only empty desk in the room, the one next to Harry, extremely nervously. The boy mumbled something about sitting down and then took the seat to the right of Harry.

Professor Snape then drew the attention of the class back towards him, writing the instructions for the potion on the blackboard. Today they were making the Forgetfulness potion. Harry looked at his potions text book and then compared it to the instructions written on the board. He noted the differences down in the margins of his text book and made a note to query the difference with
Professor Snape when he finished his potion. Harry then went to the supply cupboard and started gathering his ingredients. He prepared them all before starting the potion. However just as he finished he noticed that the boy next to him had mis-prepared several ingredients and if they were placed in the cauldron in their current condition they would cause an explosion. This explosion may very well cause his own potion to be ruined and so Harry tapped the boy on the shoulder.

The boy looked ready to wet himself as he turned to Harry with fearful eyes. Harry took a handful of the boy’s unprepared Valerian Sprigs. He shook his head, making eye contact with the boy as he did so and then showed the boy the proper way to cut it. It needed to be sliced into strips, rather than into cubes as the boy had previously done. Next Harry picked up the Mistletoe berries and showed the other that instead of trying to to chop the thing with a knife directly he should instead crush them with the side of his knife, getting more juice out of it. Harry nodded at the boy and then moved back to his own work station. Throughout the course of the lesson he continued to stop the boy’s cauldron from exploding while still managing to make his own potion. As the potion making drew to a close Harry had made another good potion while Longbottom had managed to make a passable one. Harry was clearing up his equipment and bottling up his potion when Professor Snape approached him.

"It seems you have made another good potion while managing to prevent Mr Longbottom here, from blowing up his own. For that amazing feat I award twenty points to Slytherin, Mr Potter." Severus said, his voice sounding less vicious than usual. However as he turned toward Neville his voice returned to its normal acidic tone.

"However you, Mr Longbottom, are a disaster. If it wasn't for Mr Potter here that potion would have been blown to smithereens on no less than six different occasions. I expect to see improvements by the next time I see you. Is that clear?" Neville nodded at the man in front of him, absolutely terrified of the Professor. As Harry continued to clear up his equipment Neville made his way towards him.

"Hi Harry" he stammered out. "I was...wondering if you would be able to tutor me in potions?" the boy finally got out. Harry raised his eyebrow at the boy, questioning why he would do that to help a Gryffindor. "I wouldn't expect you to do it for free." the boy said, unexpectedly perceptive.

“I...I'm pretty good at Herbology. I have a flower garden at home so...so I could help you with that if you want? In exchange for the potions? Does that sound o...ok?” the boy finally managed to stammer out.

Harry thought about it for a few minutes, assessing the value that he could get from this. It may take time away from his own independent study, but he was still not very good at Herbology. It was one of the subjects that all the reading in alone did not explain. It required a ‘magic’ touch, as it were. The Longbottom family was also one of high repute within the Wizarding world. To have the heir to the house as an ally may be advantageous in numerous ways. Therefore Harry nodded at the boy and took out a sheet of parchment. He wrote

'Tomorrow morning, 8.00 am, Library' on it and showed it to the boy.

"O..ok, I'll see you tomorrow. Oh and I...I'm Neville Longbottom, by the way. Pleased to meet you" Harry nodded and walked out of the classroom, making his way back to the common room.

Harry had a free period before dinner and so after dumping his bag on his bed he started to make his way outside. He had decided to take Balthazar out so that the snake could go for a hunt. The adder did not want Harry to go around the school himself, especially after he had been beaten up by the people that Harry could not remember. Balthazar blamed himself for the hurt that had come to his master as he had not been with him at the time of the attack. He proclaimed that he would never leave Harry again, unless he was on a hunt of course. Harry made his way towards the forest,
deciding that today was the perfect time to go exploring. He unwound Balthazar from his arm and placed him in the grass. The snake flew off, to ensure a good catch before the sky darkened. Harry entered the forbidden forest, taking out his wand as he did so. He knew that the forest was dangerous and even though seeing the creatures he had read about in real life was worth it, he still wanted to be able to defend himself.

The deeper Harry got into the forest, the darker his surroundings became. He decided to try a spell that he had read about, the lumos spell. He made the wand movements and thought about a light coming out of the end of his wand and so it did. The light was bright and helped Harry to see the things around him much more clearly.

As Harry walked he was disappointed by the lack of magical creatures that he saw. There was nothing other than run of the mill forest dwelling creatures. A few rabbits made their way across Harry's path and a few deer could be seen through the trees. Harry had been in the forest for around half an hour when he managed to stumble across a rather disturbing scene.

He quickly ended the lumos spell to avoid unwanted attention and then took a closer look at the scene in front of him. There was what looked like a man kneeling over the body of an animal. The man's back was towards Harry and Harry watched for a few minutes as the man seemed to drink a silvery liquid. The only animal that Harry could remember reading about that had silver blood was a unicorn. The fact that the man seemed to be drinking the animal's blood was both disturbing and intriguing as the text had said that drinking the blood gave the drinker immortality. However there was a price that the drinker would pay and that price was said to be one many though too high to pay. The fact that the drinker had killed a creature of innocence meant that the drinker would live a cursed life.

Harry stepped around the tree to get a closer look and as he did so he stood on a twig. The snap made echoed through the silence of the forest and the head of the man whipped around to locate the source of the noise. His face was covered by a hood but Harry could feel the man's eyes burning into him. The man stood up and made his way towards Harry and Harry internally fought between running and staying to see what the man had to say. As the man approached a hand disappeared under his hood to wipe his mouth and as it came back down Harry saw silver blood adorning it.

"Mr Potter" a croaky voice said from beneath the hood. "What a surprise. I was not expecting such a young Hogwarts student to he in the forest at this time. Breaking the rules Mr Potter and only in your second week. Tut tut, Mr Potter, tut tut." the voice mocked.

The man seemed to be teasing Harry, but not in the malicious way that Professor Snape did. Instead it was said in a way that made it seem that the man was playing with Harry. He could sense no violent intent in the voice of the man; only curiosity and playfulness. Harry wasn't sure what to do as he hadn't planned on being spotted by the man. He had let his guard down and so found himself in this unfamiliar situation. A situation that was totally unplanned.

Suddenly something leapt from the bushes and began hissing at the hooded man, bearing its fangs as it did so. When it was sure that the man would not attack Harry it turned around towards him.

"Master Master Master Master." Balthazar hissed urgently. The snake shot along the grass, placing himself between Harry and the man before him. He glared at the hooded figure, hissing violent curses at him. The man let out a huffed laughter as he watched the Balthazar's aggressive stance before beginning to talk in parsletonge to the overly protective snake. Harry concealed the look of shock that threatened to make its way onto his face at the man's speech. It was an interesting development to find a fellow parsletonge as the only other historically recent parsletonge was Lord Voldemort himself. Harry had to wonder who this man was.
“Don’t worry snake. I will not harm your master.” The man face a small smile. Balthazar was not pleased at the man’s tone.

"Hey, whoever you are, I have a name you know! It’s Balthazar! You could at least do me the curtesy of asking me. Calling me ‘snake’ is rather rude you know.” the snake snapped at the man. Harry was a tad concerned for Balthazar’s safety at this point, he knew the snake could usually handle himself but with a strong Wizard in the mix there was no way of knowing what would happen. It therefore surprised him when the man started to chuckle to himself. He gave a small bow to Balthazar before addressing the Snake, humour audible in his voice.

"I apologise Sir Balthazar. I did not mean to cause insult, merely to clarify that your Master will not be harmed. I'm sorry for addressing you in such a fashion" the man said, sounding sincere but amused.

"As you should be." Balthazar hissed, sounding satisfied at the man's response. When talking with other snakes Balthazar rarely got the respect that he felt he deserved and so to be given this level of respect from an actual human would boost Balthazar's ego more than it needed to be. Harry needed to prepare himself for the endless bragging he would have to endure from the snake for the next few days.

"As Enchanting as it was to meet you Mr Potter” the man said switching back to English “I'm sad to say this conversation must be cut short. I should be going and so should you if you want to make it back in time for your meal. I'm sure we shall meet again.”

With that the man turned around and made his way back into the forest. Harry watched him go for several seconds. He then took a glance at the now dead unicorn, admiring the silver blood adorning its hide before realising the man's words had rung true and that he did in fact need to hurry if he wished to make it back in time for dinner. He knelt down to let Balthazar slither up his arm and then made his way back to the castle.

As he walked back he considered the man he had just met and his strange nature. It was obvious to anyone with half a brain that the man was not someone to be messed with. Anyone willing to drink unicorn blood had to have a dark soul, the type of soul that interested Harry. He wanted to learn more about the man and about his ability to speak parsletonge. He also made the decision to tell no one of the man. If he wanted to learn more about him then he would have to keep him as a secret for now.

Harry made his way into the great hall and saw Cassius waiting for him in their usual seats. He made his way over to the fourth year and took a seat beside him. Harry sat for a few minutes, lost in thought about the man in the forest until he felt a tap on his shoulder. He tuned to see Cassius' lopsided grin.

"Are you alright Harry?” the boy questioned "you seem more out of it than usual. Something on your mind?” Cassius queried.

Cassius may display, to Harry, the mask of a typical happy go lucky teenager but Cassius was in Slytherin for a reason and under the mask the boy was much more clever, insightful and perceptive then his mask made him seem. Harry was reminded of something he had vowed to always remember when Cassius voiced his observation. Never underestimate anyone. You never know what their true colours may be.

Harry nodded to Cassius and his attention was drawn back to the meal. He picked some food from the many platters: salmon, potatoes, carrots and green beans. He then turned his attention back to
Cassius, trying to appear at least mildly interested in the boy's chatter that had started up again. After Harry had eaten about half his meal silence once again made its way to the Slytherin table. Harry had a sense of deja vu as he turned around to see the shock of bright orange hair belonging to Percy Weasley. The Prefect looked more nervous than the last time he had approached the Slytherin table and like the Gryffindor he was he showed his heart on his sleeve so his nervousness was there for all to see.

"Hi Harry" Percy said trying to act calm and collected but failing miserably. "I have another letter for you from Dumbledore." the boy said, handing Harry a letter. This time Harry took the letter and placed it on the table behind him. Percy seemed to dig deep and grab some of the courage that Gryffindors were so famous for.

"How are you, by the way Harry? Did potions go ok?" Harry nodded at the boys question and then tilted his head in a manner that seemed to say 'and you?'. Percy responded, sounding much more confident than before "I'm fine thanks. I just had transfiguration and we were learning how to do the Gemino curse. It causes objects to multiply. Anyway, I better go and eat some dinner myself. See you later Harry." Percy said as he left with a grin on his face and a wave of his hand.

Harry turned back to his letter and opened it. The contents read that he was to go to Dumbledore's office on Sunday morning and that his parents would be there to meet him. Harry wanted to sneer at the very idea of having to be in the same room as his parents again. He did not want to spend anymore time with them then was strictly necessary. When he had arrived at Hogwarts he thought that he had seen the last of them, at least until Christmas.

Cassius was looking at Harry with curiosity twinkling in his eyes, he watched Harry read his letter and then was handed it and read it himself. He snorted and rolled his eyes at the content before finally asking the question that had been on his mind for several minutes.

"What's with you and the Weasley, Harry? He seemed nicer than I've ever seen him with any Slytherin." Harry merely shrugged his shoulders in response and went back to eating.

"Oh come on Harry, tell me." Cassius whined. Harry put his knife and fork down and turned to look at Cassius. Harry looked the boy in the eyes for a few seconds before he shrugged again and went back to eating. Cassius huffed and an overly dramatic frown made its way onto his face. The next few minutes were the quietest that Harry had ever know Cassius to be. He sat with his arms folded and a scowl on his face like a petulant child. Harry just wanted laugh at the boy, but instead he just ignored him. Cassius seemed to get bored when Harry gave no acknowledgement of his little tantrum and so gave up on it. He then simply began to talk nonsense again, as though nothing had happened.
Harry woke on Saturday morning, ready to meet with Neville. He sat up, casting a tempus and noted that it was seven in the morning. He had an hour before he needed to meet the boy and so he got out of bed and went for a shower. None of the other boys in his dorm room were awake as they were taking the day that was not a school one to catch up on lost sleep. Harry dressed in his school trousers and shirt but he didn't put on his tie. Instead he threw on one of the casual robes that the Potters had bought him. It was half past seven by the time Harry was ready and so he picked up his bag with placing Herbology and Potions texts books and some of his homework in and made his way down to the great hall to grab a quick breakfast. He sat in the almost empty great hall eating a piece of toast at the Slytherin table when Neville made his way over to him. The boy in his typical nervous fashion spoke to him.

"Hi H-H-Harry. Are we still going to meet in the library today?" he questioned, his voice filled with hope and nervousness as he did so. Harry gave a nod and went back to buttering his next slice of toast. Neville seemed to shift slightly, trying to find the courage to voice his thoughts.

"Is it ok if I s-s-sit with you?" the young Gryffindor questioned. Harry was amused by the boy's bravery, he had not expected the timid boy to ask him that. Harry considered the implications of allowing him to sit. He wondered how the rest of Slytherin house react to a Gryffindor sitting at their table, even if he was the most timid of the Gryffindors. They may not react too well but Harry realised that he didn't really care all that much. Neville was someone that may be worth knowing; he was perfect for Harry to mould into someone that he could use for his own gain. The boy was shy and appeared to be friendless meaning that he would jump at any and all attention. He was also the heir to the house of Longbottom and would become the Lord of the house in the future. To have this boy in debt to him and to be someone the boy considered a friend would be invaluable. Harry nodded at the boy and he sat down to Harry's right.

Neville grabbed his own piece of toast along with sausages and bacon and then proceeded to make a sandwich. He seemed happy at being allowed to sit with Harry but he was still shy by nature. He only said the odd word to Harry but mostly the eating was done in silence. At ten to eight Harry stood up and grabbed his bag, indicating to Neville that it was time to go. Harry had ignored the stares that greeted the two boys as they ate their meal and continued to ignore them as he made his way out of the great hall and towards the library. Neville had been oblivious to the stares both during and after the meal. Neville stumbled after Harry as he clumsily clutched his bag and managed to tumble off the bench without falling over. The two made their way to the corridor, Harry confident in his strides, with the taller boy lagging behind. The two entered the Library, one after the other and Harry made his way to the table that he had claimed as his own. It was at the back of the ground floor, secluded amidst the rows of twisting book cases. Old and dusty tomes surrounded it, that seemed to have not been removed from their shelves in many years. Harry found comfort in the secluded corner and thought that showing in to Neville would only strengthen the growing trust that the taller boy had in him.

The two sat down at the table and began to take out their books. Neville queried as to which topic they should start on, Potions or Herbology? Harry pointed at the potion text book that he had just taken out of his bag. This meant that for the next two hours Harry worked on explaining the basics of potions to Neville. Harry would hand Neville a book and point at a passage for the other boy to read, while Harry worked on his other homework for the week. Neville would then write down any questions he had on the passage he had read and hand them to Harry. Harry would then either write down an answer to the boy's quires or hand him another book or point to another section. Numerous times Harry had left their corner to find one of the books that Harry, himself, had read to explain the
basics of potions. He had then returned and pointed at the passage for the other boy to read. Neville seemed to be developing a better understanding of the topics he was reading and his questions became more advanced the more time he spent working. At the two hour mark Harry decided that Neville had learnt as much as he was going to learn today and so wrote down the words 'break and then Herbology' on the back of the parchment Neville had been writing his questions on. Neville nodded and the two made their way out of the Library, gathering up their things and replacing their books in their proper place as they went.

After a trip to the bathroom and the collection of a glass of water each, the two were ready to start studying again. Neville proclaimed that the Library was too quite a place to learn Herbology effectively and that they should, instead, go to one of the greenhouses. Neville had been told by Professor Sprout, his favourite teacher, that some of the greenhouses were open at weekends for students to grow their own plants. Also in some there were safer plants already growing which the students could practice caring for. Harry nodded his consent to the idea and so the two made their way to the greenhouses. Each one was marked with a sign, proclaiming them the work space for a certain year group and that any other age of student was prohibited. As Neville and Harry made their way into the first year greenhouse they noticed numerous plants lining the walls. Many which Harry recognised from Herbology class. The place was empty of any other students. Once they were settled and Neville had collected the plants they would be studying Neville spent the next few hours explaining to Harry the different needs of each plant and in some cases demonstrating these through use of the live specimens. Neville treated many of the plants as thought they had their own individual personalities and by the end of Neville's tutoring Harry was half convinced that they just might have. It seemed that each different species favoured different types of soil and different amounts of water. Some of them even required specific plant food types. Harry was a tad dubious at some of the things that Neville claimed that plants liked. When he had done the gardening for his Aunt it had been as simple as a watering can and some compost. Although, Harry supposed, the facts the plants were magical must be the reason that their needs were so much more complex than that of muggle plants.

The time in the greenhouse seemed to fly away and before Harry knew it it was lunch time. Harry was feeling rather peckish so he wrote 'lunch' on the sheet of paper in front of him and handed it to Neville. Harry felt he had a better understanding of Herbology now than he had had this morning and so the time he had spent explaining potions to Neville had not been wasted. He felt that the two of them had also developed a tentative friendship through the time spent studying. Neville looked up at Harry after reading the paper in front of him.

"Do you want to do this again? I-I-I mean it's really helped me in understanding potions and I'd really like your help again." Neville said sounding uncertain. Harry nodded at the boy. He wanted to maintain this facade of a friendship that the two of them had developed, the friendship that Neville would perceive them to have. Harry took back the paper that was in front of Neville and wrote 'Wednesday, after dinner. Meet in the Great Hall.' Neville grinned at Harry's response and nodded his head enthusiastically. The two of them then made their way back to the Great Hall. The doors were pushed open and as they made their way inside, Neville waved goodbye to Harry and went to his own house table. Harry nodded, acknowledging the wave and then made his way back to his own table. He knew that the reactions from the Slytherins would not be good.

That evening Harry made his way into the common room, with Cassius at his side. All faces turned to him but none made a move, reluctant to make a move when Cassius was by Harry’s side. The room was tense and Harry observed the different groups that could be seen throughout the room as he entered. Lawrence Carrow sat in a high backed chair with several other seventh years, a few sixth years and even fewer fifth years sitting with him. Draco Malfoy sat in a much smaller group with all the first years, minus Harry and a few second years surrounding him. The rest of the house members also had their own small groups dispersed around the common room. Harry recognised a few of
them, mostly fourth years, but a few third years as well. Cassius patted Harry on the head and then made his way towards the other high back chair in the room that had remained empty for him. Harry, instead of following, moved to the back of the common room towards the book shelves. He selected a random book from the shelves and sat on a battered sofa in a darkened of the room. These seat were usually reserved for those that were not accepted in a group, or were seen as an outcast, however Harry had claimed them as his own. Harry opened the book but instead of reading it he continued to observe the dynamic of the Slytherin house. As Cassius sat in the high back chair many from the small groups around the room came to join him. They mainly consisted of fourth years but there were people from almost every year. All except first year, that is. Harry had been offered a seat with the group by Cassius, but had declined. Harry did not want to be involved in the power plays of the other Slytherins unless he had to be. House politics did not interest him. He was content to gain knowledge and make allies where he needed them. Cassius was a strong enough ally, Harry need not join his group when he knew he already had Cassius’ loyalty.

The night dragged on and as the hours ticked by more and more people made their way out of the common room. For the most part Harry remained unnoticed, only the occasional heated glare was sent his way as most others were busy converting with one another. However the glares that were given gave Harry a feeling that there would be consequences for letting a Gryffindor sit at the Slytherin table, he just had no idea what they may turn out to be. People began to slowly make their way out of the common room. Draco Malfoy and his group were the first to leave, followed by several other small groups. There was no set bedtime at weekends and so people could stay up chatting until the early hours of the morning, however the hierarchy within the house itself lead to the expectation that the younger you were the earlier you must retire. At around eleven thirty Cassius stood up, proclaiming himself tired and he made his way towards his room. The only people left in the room at this point were Harry and the group of Lawrence Carrow. On his way out Cassius went over to Harry and bid him goodnight. He wanted to tell Harry to be careful and that he should go to bed also, but Carrow wanted to have a little 'chat' with Harry. As Harry had refused to be a member of Cassius’ group as well as being a first year and so lowest in the rankings there was nothing the young man could do about. He just hoped that Harry would be okay tomorrow. He had sworn to protect the boy and so would not be able to forgive himself if the boy got badly hurt. However due to Carrow’s orders there was nothing he could do.

Carrow and his group the only people left in the room. A few minutes of silence followed Cassius’ departure before Terrance Higgs made his way over to Harry. Harry knew the older boy by reputation only and had never spoken to the boy. He was said to be a bit of a brute who enjoyed causing pain to those weaker then himself. Harry did not like the look the boy gave him one bit. His eyes glinted with hunger and malicious intent. Harry looked up from his book and raised one solitary eyebrow at the boy in front of him. Higgs sneered and took a few more steps before he spat out

"Potter, The King wishes to speak with you. Get up and go. He does not like to be kept waiting." The tone was vicious and demanding but Harry had heard worse. This boy did not scare him. Not one bit. Harry stood up, placed his book on the chair behind him and made his way at a leisurely pace towards the King of Slytherin. Carrow was tall and lithe, he had an aristocratic air about him and had the regal face of a noble man. His hair was dark golden brown and reached his shoulders, his blue eyes twinkled in amusement as he watched the tiny first in front of him. This boy, this Potter, had challenged the traditions of Slytherins on numerous occasions since his arrival in the house of the Snakes. The boy didn't look like much, but Carrow knew that looks could be deceiving, threats could come in all shapes and sizes.

"Nice to finally make your acquaintance Mr Potter. It seems that I've been remise in my duties to this house and that some of its members if you have not properly learnt the rules." as he said these words Harry's arm was roughly pinned behind his back by Higgs. The others in the group watched on in excitement. "You have made many offences against this house and disregarded many of our
traditions." The grip on his arm became tighter. "However your most recent transgression is significantly more serious than any that have gone before. To let a Gryffindor sit at our house table. To let him eat our food and treat him in such a civil manner is something that I cannot and will not overlook." Carrow's tone sounded deadly and the look in his eye showed Harry would be on the receiving end of a lot of pain and soon. Harry was not about to let that happen.

Harry knew that as long as no one died that Professor Snape was unconcerned with the inner workings of the house, injuries were fine if given in discipline. Cassius could not help in matters involving The King and so Harry knew the only way he was going to get out of this was to do it himself. Harry swiftly lifted his foot, hitting Higgs in the balls, hard. The boy crumpled to the ground, a muffled fuck making its way out of his mouth, but still kept his grip on Harry's wrist. Turning his back to Carrow Harry grabbed Higgs' hand with his, yanking it from his wrist. Then he violently twisted the wrist and with a sharp snap that echoed through the room the bone was now visibly sticking out from the boys arm. Higgs fell to his knees with a cry of pain. Dumbstruck faces met Harry as he turned around. Carrow himself seemed unmoved by Higgs' pain and merely indicated for another to take his place and disable the boy. Marcus Flint, seventh year prefect, made his way forward. The man towered over Harry but Harry would not be intimidated. With a flourish he took his wand from his pocket and aimed it at the man. Flint took out his own wand and did the same.

Harry's mind flicked rapidly through all the spells that he had learned or simply read about and started firing them at the man: expeliarmus, bombarda maxima, Incarcerous, Confringo. The spells were all either dodged or a shield was put up to stop them and all the while Flint edged closer. Harry was trying more and more difficult spells, all were working but none seemed to pierce the shield that Flint had erected. Flint then threw a Diffondo at Harry, causing a gash to appear on Harry's left shoulder. Harry winced in pain but then tried to calm himself. He breathed in and out, slowly. He tried to remind himself that intent trumped all else. He gave up on any wand movements and instead simply focused on his intention to cause pain to the man making his way ever closer. Channelling all his hatred into a wave he pushed this force towards his wand with the intention of hurting Flint. For several seconds Harry focused on this and with all the hatred welling up in his wand. A red light shot from the end of Harry's wand. It pierced the shield and struck the man in the chest. The effect was instantaneous. Flint began to writhe in pain and then dropped to the floor. Screams seemed push their way from his mouth. Harry ended the spell, surprised at the results that it had caused, dropping his wand to his side. He had read about the unforgivables, of course, but was amazed that he had been able to cast one just with the focus of his hatred at the man in front of him.

Many of the group of people by Carrow were looking at the Harry with open mouths, wide in disbelief. They were shocked, utterly shocked, that a first year had been able to cast an unforgivable and one that had been powerful enough to cause Flint, the notorious tough guy, to act in such a way. Carrow, meanwhile grinned. He then brought his hands together and clapped, drawing the attention of all of the people in the room back to him. The group’s heads turned towards the King. Their mouths still wide, but this time at their leader rather than Harry.

"I have to say that I'm impressed Mr Potter, no, Harry. Yes I feel that I have earned the right to call you Harry." he said more to himself than anyone else. A grin adorned his face that actually more creepy than reassuring. "A first year managing to cast a cruciatus curse and wordlessly at that. All I can say is well done Harry," the seventh year said the grin becoming impossibly wider. "Well Harry, I feel that your amazing skill set will let you off the hook. At least this time anyway. You have already injured two of my men, you need not injure any more. Now off to bed with you Harry. Tomorrow is a new day." the King said. The grin still adorned his face as Harry walked towards his dorm room.
Severus sat at the head table looking towards his Slytherins. Even for a Sunday morning, when many of his house members didn’t even make an appearance, the lack of people sitting there was surprising. It was approaching eight thirty and with breakfast finishing at nine Severus wondered where the majority of the members of his house were. He considered the fact that two members of his house had required his medical expertise last night and wondered if this may somehow be contributing to the lack of people. A broken wrist and the after effects of the cruciatus curse were not what one expected early on a Sunday morning. The only people at the table seemed to be first years, second tears and few thirds years. As eight thirty struck the doors of the Great Hall burst open and Severus’ queries were answered. Walking through the doors were the majority of the missing Slytherins. At the front of the group stood Cassius Warrington and Lawrence Carrow. Seeing the two of them walking together was unusual enough but the person that stood between them was even more shocking. Seeing one Harry Potter walking between the leaders of the majority of Slytherin house sent a clear message to everyone watching; the boy was protected. Severus was mystified at the scene. He had no idea how Potter had gained the respect and protection of the two most powerful people in Slytherin house, but he had. It also sent a message to the rest of the Slytherins, it let them all know that Harry was favoured. Be in the favour of one Harry Potter and you were in favour with both The King and The Prince of Slytherin, otherwise known as Lawrence Carrow and Cassius Warrington.

The structure of Slytherin house was a complex maze that any Slytherin had to learn to navigate around. At any one time there were as many as thirty different groups in Slytherin made up of many people of different ages and statuses. There were, however, two groups and their leaders that managed to make their way to the top of the pecking order. There were many criteria that determined these groups. The most important being the amount of support that the individual had in the house. The bigger a groups numbers the more chance the leader had of claiming the position of either 'King' or 'Prince'. Other things taken into consideration were age and importance of both the individuals in the group and the leader. A group of first and second years only with a leader in one of those years could never hope to become even a Prince. It took commitment, luck, popularity and many other things to ascend to the coveted position of Prince or King; but as Severus watched Potter sitting between Warrington and Carrow he knew the boy had taken the first step to becoming a one of them.

The rest of breakfast went smoothly, with only the occasional murmur or glance at Harry from one of the other house tables. At ten to nine Harry stood up from his seat to bid farewell to both Cassius and Carrow and to make his way to Dumbledore's office to experience the torture that was his parents. Both Cassius and Carrow, however, had other ideas. They both stood up along with Harry, each putting a hand on his shoulders, and escorted him out of the hall. All eyes were on the three of them, but the eyes of one Draco Malfoy were filled with hatred rather than curiosity and awe. Malfoy was jealous of Potter and believed that it was he who should be sitting between the two most important Slytherins in the school. The three Slytherins continued out of the door, ignoring the stares. They made their way up to Dumbledore's office and to the gargoyle. They both wished Harry luck and then bid the boy farewell as the gargoyle moved to the side.

Cassius and Carrow had spent a large part of the morning before breakfast discussing the matter of Harry. The King had informed The Prince of the series of events that had occurred the night. Cassius had been surprised by Harry's use of an unforgivable but not by the boy's will to defend himself or his strength of will. Cassius knew that Harry was not about to let anyone walk all over him, no matter what people thought. The morning had been spent discussing who had the better claim to Harry's loyalties and which one of them would have him in their group. Cassius had brought up that he had already asked Harry to join him and the boy had rejected his proposal. Cassius didn't believe that Carrow would do any better in persuading the boy to join him when they had no real relationship. Eventually the two made a decision between them that both of the would watch the boy.
They would both be allies to the boy that they were sure would do well in the future. Cassius had threatened Carrow a dozen times throughout the course of the conversation. He may see Harry as a valuable ally but above all else he saw him as a little brother. If Carrow hurt the boy in any way then he would not live to see another day. The idea of joint protection of Harry had lead to the commotion at breakfast. They had decided to proclaim their intention to the school in a way that they would all understand. It had worked a treat.

Several hours later found Harry in the village of Hogsmead, sitting in a the Three Broomsticks with Lily and James Potter, eating their lunch. After their talk with Madame Pomfrey the two Potters had decided that they needed to get Harry some new glasses. A trip to the optician and Harry had gained a new pair. Thin, silver, wire framed rectangular glasses now adorned his face. Being able to see properly was defiantly worth the price of spending the morning with the Potters. It was also a major relief that Edward was not with them, the older boy had been grounded after the comments that he had made about Harry and had to stay on school grounds only, for the next month. Harry felt a great sense of satisfaction when he had been told this. The Potters had spent the rest of the morning taking Harry around numerous shops, including a Spintutches Quidditch Supplies, Honeydukes and Zonko's joke shop. This meant that by twelve o'clock Harry had manage to acquire a large selection of things from each of them. His parents appeared to fill, almost to the brim, with happiness whenever Harry selected something he wanted. Therefore they bought Harry more of that thing then he could possibly need. When they had walked into Honeydukes Harry had picked up a chocolate frog. He remembered the fun that Balthazar had had chasing them around the dorm room when Cassius had brought him a few back from his trip to Hogsmead last weekend. As soon as the Potters saw Harry pick up the chocolate, they had piled at least fifteen of the things into the basket that James held.

This pattern continued around the rest of the shops and by the time they sat down to eat Harry was sick of both the shopping and the Potters, after only three hours. After eating the three of them walked back to the castle. Lily and James attempted to talk to Harry but the boy was not in the mood to respond to them. He could not care less if he made his stupid parents happy or not. He saw no gain from interacting with them. They had left him to be abused and neglected and for that they deserved to be punished. He did not want to give them anything when he knew they would fawn over him until all their money ran out. However that would never happen as the Potter family were one of the wealthiest in the wizading world. Harry would do nothing to relieve their guilt. They did not deserve that.
Chapter 14

Harry had now been at Hogwarts for just over three months and Christmas was looming ever closer. School had been going well, with Harry's magic only getting stronger and the amount of knowledge that he had becoming greater. This led many of Harry's teachers to think him unsuited to first year classes and there was talk of him possibly moving up a year in Transfiguration, Charms, Defence and Potions. The other option that had been talked about was for Harry to be given extra classes. The rate of improvement that Harry was showing seemed to go above and beyond the expectations of all the teachers. All except Professor Binns, that was, the Professor seemed oblivious to anything except the goblin wars. Because of this Harry spent all of his time in History lessons doing the homework for his other subjects rather than listening to the pointless babble the man spouted.

After the event with the King of Slytherin Harry’s status in the house had changed dramatically. Harry had become respected by some and feared by others. Even though the hierarchy in Slytherin was secret, for the most part, that remained within the house, the members of the three other houses had noticed the changes in the attitudes of the Slytherin’s around Harry. If their grand entrance had not been enough, the fact that Harry was almost always escorted places and that there were people falling at his feet to get his attention was enough to tip them off. Harry was a tad unnerved at the attention. Yes, he wanted to be respected and feared by all, but there was unwanted attention that was coming his way. Not all of it bad, it was just not what Harry wanted.

Harry's allies had, however, increased in number over the past few months. Study sessions on Saturdays and Wednesdays between Harry and Neville had continued. Neville's potions had become less abysmal and the boy was no longer the worst in the class, in fact he was now in the top half of the year. Harry's Herbology had also improved. He now understood a lot more about the subject and was second in the year, behind Neville that is. The Ravenclaw by the name of Hermione who Harry had met on the train had continued to try and communicate with the boy. Charms and Astronomy were classes that the Slytherins and Ravenclaws had together so each lesson the girl seemed to feel the need to tell Harry the 'right' way to do something. Each and every time Hermione manage to force her way next to Harry in a lesson, her input was unnecessarily given. It annoyed Harry to no end that just because he didn't speak, the girl thought that she could have an opinion on everything. The girl may be intelligent but her attitude made it so that Harry want nothing to do with her.

Percy Weasley had been another person whom Harry had developed good relations with. The fifth year seemed determined to redeem himself in Harry's eyes. The Prefect's Gryffindor sense of morality meant that he felt he had to make amends with the boy he had wronged. The two had ended up spending time studying together as well as Percy talking to Harry about many things. Harry's silence seemed to give many people a false sense of security; it led to many secrets being spilled that people would never have felt comfortable sharing otherwise. Percy also spent some time introducing Harry to a few of his friends. Harry met Penelope Clearwater and Alex Sykes from Ravenclaw, Robert Hawking and Nicolas Grimmett of Hufflepuff and Oliver Wood of Gryffindor. Meeting the fifth years, many of whom were Prefects, gave Harry many new connections. To know and be on relatively good terms with many of those with power in the school was a definite advantage. It put him on relatively good terms with the older members of the three houses, other than his, even if he was a Slytherin.

Harry and Cassius still remained close; together at every meal, tips for lessons from Cassius, accompaniments to lessons and studying together. The only change to the pair's expeditions was a new member to their small group. Carrow, call me Lawrence, had joined the pair in much of their
time together. As The King of Slytherin, Lawrence spent a large amount of his time with his other duties but he spent as much time as he seemed able to with the pair. This had also helped to contributed to the Slytherin’s view of Harry. Having the two powerhouses of Slytherin follow him around and be seen in his company almost every day made them feel both intimidated and in awe. A boy who was able to, in a few months, make the Prince and the King get along, was nothing to be sneered at.

Both Cassius and Lawrence had a history of fighting and disagreeing on almost everything. If any decision was to be made on the running of the house the two would always take opposing sides. They would spend hours and sometimes days fighting on the issue. It would usually end with Lawrence pulling rank and saying that as King he had the final say on the matter. However, since Harry had been taken in by these two young men the arguments had been few and far between and the two of the actually opted to spend time together. Even if the time together was only with Harry around. The fact the boy could change two people that had been fighting for three years was inspirational.

However, there were times when Harry had been left to his own devices. Cassius and Lawrence did have lives of their own and often had homework and house duties. This lead to several other Slytherins approaching Harry during these periods. Most of them Harry had totally ignored, yet a few he had found interesting. Interesting enough to consider an ally. Two in particular had caught Harry’s eye. They were Blaise Zabini and Daphne Greengrass. Blaise was smart and quite and if he and Harry were together one would wonder how the two of them ever become companions as neither of them ever spoke a word to the other.

The story was actually quite a simple one; It had been a few days after the Great Hall entrance and mostly people had been reluctant to talk to Harry. Harry had, in the middle of History of Magic run out of ink due to Balthazar’s antics that morning. The snake had been hyper after finding one of Harry’s hidden chocolate frogs. He had chased the thing around Harry’s room and had ended up smashing several bottles of Harry’s ink as he chased the thing. The reparo may have fixed the bottle but the ink staining the floor had not returned to it. Harry had sighed and resigned himself to boredom for the next half an hour. It was then that a bottle of ink had appeared in front of him, on his desk. Harry looked to the right to find a boy with a black afro, his head was tilted to the side. He had looked into Harry’s eyes and the two reached an unspoken understanding. From then on the two had been what some may call friends. They sat next to each other in lesson, in the common room and when studying. A word was barely said or written between the two, but they seemed to understand each other well enough.

Another week had gone by and another ally had been made. Daphne Greengrass, also known as the ice queen of Slytherin, even though she had no official rank within the house, she was welcomed into Harry’s fold. It had been Blaise who had brought her to Harry. He had brought her to a few of the study sessions. Well he had her sit next to him in a few lessons. Harry was initially indifferent to her presence. The Greengrass family may be an old pureblood family but their current reputation and power within the wizarding world was nothing special. There were many other families with the same status as her’s. However it was the girl herself that made Harry change his views. One look from her and crowds scattered, one glare made others tremble in fear. These qualities were ones that Harry looked for in people. She was strong, independent, ferocious and devious. She was an amazing individual even at the age of eleven. Harry was intrigued to see how she would develop and what other than wisdom age would bring her.

Harry had also met with the man from the forest several more times. Conversations had taken place between the three of them: Harry, the man and Balthazar. The man had explained many of his Philosophies and ideas on magic. This was usually after the man had consumed copious amounts of unicorn blood so Harry took the man’s ramblings with a pinch of salt. The man didn’t seem sane at
the best of times but the unicorn blood seemed to make the many giddy and excitable. According to
the man it was the effects of the unicorn blood, the rush of power made people seem a little crazier
than usual. There were however a few things that the man said which interested Harry. The man’s
ideas on dark and light magic were interesting indeed. In fact, one statement the man had made had
stood out. He had said that there was no good and no evil but only power and those to weak to seek
it. That had struck a chord with Harry. He felt that those words were ones that held truth, real truth. It
was a sentiment that Harry wished to live by.

No matter how great Harry’s life seemed to be going. No matter how much power he was gaining
and how many allies he was making there was still one issue that he could not solve. His family. His
family were something he could not escape. They had come up with a routine of sorts. They would
pick him up every Sunday morning at 10.00am and do ‘family activities’. They were tedious and
they meant that Harry had to spend time with his annoying parents and his pompous brother. The
‘family’ had been to numerous places and seen numerous things and yet Harry still dreaded each
minute he would have to spend with them. After Edward’s punishment the older boy’s hatred for
Harry only seemed to grow. He did not say anything to Harry directly and yet Harry could feel the
glares directed his way. If anything it was a relief rather than a burden. It was actually the only
source of entertainment that Harry had on this Sundays. He could aggravate ‘Ed’ as much as he liked
and there was nothing that the older boy could do.

Harry was currently sitting in the Great Hall, eating yet another boring meal and half listening to
Cassius’ ramblings, whom was sitting next to him. Lawrence sat on his other side, with Blaise and
Daphne in front of the three of them. Harry stabbed a piece of chicken with his fork and lifted it to
his mouth. Just as Harry was about to consume it an alarm began to blare. A loud, shrill, head
splitting alarm. It exploded across the Great Hall. Hands clutched ears and heads lowered, trying in
vain to get away from the noise. Harry, instead, glanced at the teacher’s table. Dumbledore’s face
was a surprising shade of white. Snape had a slight smirk curling on his lips that the man was trying
to repress. McGonagall looked ready for battle, with a stern scowl on her face. The other teachers
simply looked dumbfounded and slightly scared. Harry tried to repress his own smirk at the chaos
that was bound to ensue, if the looks on the teachers faces were anything to go by.

Dumbledore stood up from his overly ornate throne and with a swish of his wand the siren came to
an end. All of the eyes in the Great Hall turned to the Headmaster, curiosity and anticipation dripping
from them. The man composed himself and then yelled out in a loud, booming voice.

“Everybody please make your way to your dormitories. Prefects, ensure that all members of your
house are accounted for. As quickly as you can now, go.” The headmaster sounded a tad agitated.
Pupils began to make their way back to their dorms. Some of the younger years were beginning to
panic, the thought that there may be danger inside the castle was a scary thought for one who only
had a small repertoire of magic under their belt. They had thought that Hogwarts was safe and to
bring their beliefs into question was no small thing. Harry himself was unconcerned with the idea
that he could be in danger. There was no reason to be scared, he had been in worse situations. In fact
Harry was eager to find out what the possible danger might be and what he may be able to gain from
it.

Harry made his way out of the Great Hall with the rest of his house mates, but instead of following
them to the common room he veered off course to hide in one of the alcoves. He knew that both
Cassius and Lawrence would question him about it later but as of that moment they would let him do
as he pleased. They may not approve of Harry putting himself in danger but they knew that Harry
was his own person and there was no way to stop him from doing something that he had set his mind
on doing. If they stopped Harry now their friendship would most likely end and so they continued to
the common room. Harry watched as all the students left. As the corridors cleared he saw a group of
staff members striding purposefully out of the Great Hall, along the corridor and up the stairs.
Leading the group was the Headmaster, followed closely by the deputy Headmistress. The rest of the
teachers, all but Professor Binns, followed behind them with worried faces. Harry, after casting a
notice me not on himself made his way up the stairs after the group. He stayed a good distance
behind them and was careful not to be seen. None of the teachers seemed to notice his presence as
they were all preoccupied with thoughts of what was to come. Harry did however notice that
Professor Quirrell was not a member of the group and in fact, thinking back, the man had not been in
the Great Hall either.

The group of staff and their tag along made their way to the third floor corridor. There they made
their way through a small wooden door that looked to be that of broom closet. At least to Harry's
eye. However as each and every member of staff made their way through the door Harry suspected
that there was more too it than that. After a few minutes passed by Harry finally made his own way
towards the door. Harry peaked through the key hole of the door. What met his eyes was a giant
enchanted harp, playing itself and a snoring three headed dog, but no teachers. Harry slowly pushed
open the door, ready to fight if the dog moved. As Harry entered the room he saw a trap door on the
floor that had been hidden by the angle of the key hole. Harry tiptoed towards the trapdoor and
opened it. A loud creak filled the room. Harry spun around on his toes, resembling a ballet dancer, as
the dog grunted slightly but continued to sleep. Harry smirked and then slipped through the trap
door, swinging it shut behind him.

Harry continued through different rooms and through, what Harry assumed, were challenges.
However it appeared that each of them had been disabled, enabling Harry to simply walk through the
rooms. Harry was careful to wait several minutes at each challenge as to avoid any sort of
confrontation with the teachers. When Harry made his way through the last set of doors a scene of
carnage met his eyes. The room appeared to be on fire and bodies were sprawled around the room.
Blood coated the floor and flames licked at the walls. No one noticed as Harry entered the scene.
At closer examination the bodies were those of the teachers. Professor Sprout was crumpled against
one of the walls; blood dripping from her ears and her right arm was twisted and useless by her side.
The woman’s breathing was shallow and her eyes were shut. Professor Flitwick was face down on
the floor and Harry saw blood seeping out from under his small form, with each small breath he took
the more the blood spread. Harry spent several minutes watching, entranced, as the blood spread
further and further. Harry snapped himself out of the trance and began to walk forward and saw
more of the teachers collapsed on the floor. Professor McGonagall, Professor Trelawney, Professor
Vector. All unconscious and all injured in some way or another. McGonagall had a bone protruding
from her leg, Vector a slash across her chest that was oozing blood and Trelawney’s head was at an
odd angle, her back seemingly twisted out of shape.

Finally, after staring at the mangled forms of his teachers, Harry began to hear voices, yells and
shouts. Some, Harry recognised as spells. Harry quickly cast a notice me not charm and keeping to
the walls he tried to get closer to the voices. As he got closer he made out the forms of three
Professors. Professor Snape, Professor Dumbledore and Professor Quirrell. It appeared that Professor
Quirrell was fighting with Dumbledore and Snape. Spells flew back and forth between the three as
well as the occasional taunt or jeer. However the voice that Professor Quirrell spoke with was not his
own. In fact it was a voice that Harry recognised. It was the voice of the man that Harry had talked to
in the forest. The one that had taught him the meaning of magic and had become a mentor of sorts to
him. Having been distracted by his own thoughts Harry’s attention was drawn back to the three men
as a flash of red filled his vision. The red light hit Snape in the chest and he dropped to the floor, his
natural grace fleeing from him as soon as he was struck. He appeared to pass out within about ten
seconds and then the curse was lifted from him. The red light vanishing as though it had never been
there at all, Snape’s collapsed form being the only sign it had been there at all. That left only
Dumbledore and the man that had the face of Professor Quirrell but the voice of another.
“You can’t win Tom.” Dumbledore said to the man in front of him. “You will never win.” The other man, now dubbed Tom, snorted at Dumbledore. The voice that was not Quirrell’s said

“You know nothing old man. I have already won.” Quirrell’s face twisted into a terrifying smile that looked unnatural on the man’s face. The eyes were filled with pain and insanity but the smile just seemed to stretch up the face, as though going on forever. As Tom said these words a hand reached into the pocket of his robes drawing something out. A red sparkling stone was revealed. It gave off an aura of power that drew Harry to it. His eyes were fixated on it. However as soon as it appeared it was gone. Gone with a pop, as was Tom. They had Disapparated. Harry had to restrain himself from grinning manically at Dumbledore’s reaction. The man looked dumbfounded and totally bewildered. It was hilarious.

The thoughts running through Dumbledore’s head were confused and panicked. He did not understand how Tom had got the stone and how he had disapparated on Hogwarts grounds. Both seemed impossible. However, both were easily solved if only one had the right information, which Dumbledore did not. Dumbledore had always misjudged the intelligence that Tom possessed. The stone had been easy enough to obtain. All he had had to do was to use Quirrell. Quirrell wanted the stone, yes, but he did not want to use it for himself. This meant that the stone could be easily obtained through the use of a minion. As for the disapparation, there were some things that even the great Albus Dumbledore did not know.

During the creation of Hogwarts the wards had been fashioned in such a way that anyone with the blood of the founders had free admission in and out of the grounds. Hogwarts had been the home of the founders and the four thought that it should be the same safe haven for all their future generations. Tom had discovered this in his readings of Slytherin’s library. The library was in the chamber of secrets, well attached to it. A hidden door that could be reached, as the other rooms could through the speaking of parseltongue. All the books located there were written in parseltongue. So much knowledge was located there, most of it thought lost to the ages. Tom had utilised this knowledge to its fullest, learning all that he could about a variety of topics. The knowledge had been invaluable in getting him out of trouble at school; knowing the secret passages and the ways to avoid the teachers had meant that he could spend his nights learning more and still be in time for class the next morning. As Voldemort forced Quirrell’s body to disapparate he thought that he must ask Severus for the memory of the old coots face, or he could ask Harry. He had known the boy was there and he also knew the boy had potential to be an amazing dark wizard. He knew he would have to meet the boy again. That was only, of course, when he had his body back.

Before he could be noticed by anyone, Harry made his way back out of the labyrinth and back towards the common room. What Harry did not however know was that Professor Snape was less unconscious than he had made out. He had not wanted to cause any harm to his Lord and yet he could not raise the suspicions of Albus Dumbledore. Therefore as soon as the Crucio had hit him he had prepared to convincingly feign unconsciousness. This meant that he saw the small form of one Harry Potter exit the burning and bloodied room. A slight smirk made its way onto his aching face, the cruciatus curse had not left him totally unaffected. He had not expected the boy to follow the teachers down the secret passage way. He didn’t know if the boy was just plain stupid or if he was brilliant. It may seem that an eleven year old going into the unknown was nothing more than foolhardy but with Harry Potter no one knew. One could never underestimate Harry Potter and Severus could not wait to see what the boy’s future would hold.

The next morning seemed to pass like any other day, other than the fact that Professor Quirrell was nowhere to be seen. There were no signs of the numerous injuries that the teachers had displayed last night. Other than a look of exhaustion that adorned a few of their faces there was no indication that anything was amiss. Some of the defence lessons were cancelled, those for first, second and third
year were not to be had. However for the rest of the school the lessons were covered by the four heads of house in whatever gaps there were in their timetables. This system, the Headmaster claimed, would continue for the next few weeks until Christmas. Then over the holiday a new staff member would be located. The excuse that was pushed upon them for Professor Quirrell’s absence was that he had taken an impromptu sabbatical back to Albania. Harry knew that that was a lie and thought that the majority of students at least suspected this as well. There was no way that Quirrell would go back to the places where the vampires that had scared him half insane were.

Christmas was upon them and Harry was about ready to smash his head into a wall. The eleven year old was currently sitting on the train which was far too quickly making its way towards King’s Cross Station. Harry was in a compartment with Cassius, Lawrence, Daphne, Neville and Blaise. There was also a rather regular stream of people that made their way in and out of the compartment wishing those in it a good Christmas or Yule as it was called by the traditionalist families. Currently Percy Weasley and Oliver Wood had come by to wish Harry a good holiday. The two young men were ignoring the glares of Cassius and Lawrence and instead tried to be as cheerful as possible. They would not let on that they were in fact intimidated by the glares from the most powerful members of Slytherin. After a few minutes they left and Harry slumped back in his seat relieved to be rid of the too cheerful smiles. Now was not a time to be cheerful. There was nothing to be cheerful about.

Neville watched as Harry’s face turned dark as the other boys left. He knew that the boy must not have a happy home life but he had never considered the impact that it would have on Harry. Harry had always seemed strong and powerful, even if he could not talk. He had powerful friends and could do amazing magic all without saying a word. Neville was still intimidated by almost everything. It had taken all of his nerve to sit in a carriage with Harry and Harry’s friends. To be surrounded by Slytherins, in a small space, with not many other people around, was more scary than anything Neville had ever done before. However one look at the calm and collected air that surrounded the boy he called his friend and he had know that he could do it no matter how much it scared him. He would do it for Harry, in fact he would do anything for Harry. Harry was his only friend. So as Neville watched Harry’s face drop he wished that he could do something. He glanced over at the others in the carriage and guessed that the others were thinking the same, or similar things. They all adored Harry as much as he did. Cassius stood up from his seat and crossed the carriage. He glanced at Harry’s face and then crossed the carriage. He caught the eye of Blaise as he did so and the boy stood up as well, leaving a space next to Harry for Cassius to take. Cassius gently settled himself down next to Lawrence while Cassius seated himself besides Harry. Cassius looked at Harry his gaze forcing Harry to meet it.

“Harry” Cassius said gently. Harry inwardly sighed at the older boy who was treating him like some delicate flower. “You know that we are all here for you right?” Harry wanted to roll his eyes. “If you need us over the holidays we will all be here for you. If you have any trouble with your family we can always help.”

The unusual display of emotion made Harry want to sigh. Weren’t Slytherins meant to be secretive and cunning? What the hell was Cassius doing?

“Harry, I know you don’t like all of this soppy stuff but we really do care about you.” Cassius said in a much more jovial tone then he had before. He slung his arm over Harry’s shoulder and ignored the flinch that went through the younger boy’s body. Cassius put his other hand into his pocket and pulled out a slip of parchment. He placed it in Harry’s lap and spoke as he did so.

“This is a list of all of our floo addresses, so if you need to see a friendly face or if you need to get out of the house then you can use these addresses.” Harry looked down the list and saw the addresses of all those in the carriage as well as Percy Weasley’s, Oliver Wood’s, Marcus Flint’s and Terence Higgs’.
“Now I know you can’t speak the addresses” Cassius continued “so we all researched another way to use the floo. It turns out that you can write the address on a slip of paper and throw it into the fire along with the floo powder and it’ll still connect you.” Cassius grinned as he finished and looked far too pleased with himself. Harry felt a tad awed at the thoughtfulness of the others in the carriage. It felt strange to have people that seemed to genuinely care for him. He had never had that before. His eyes met with Cassius’ and he knew that his emotions were clearly visible.

After a few seconds Harry managed to pull himself together and broke his gaze away from Cassius’. Harry fixed his mask that had started to show the part of him that was still a vulnerable and scared little boy that only wanted to be loved. He internally scalded himself for his break down. He then looked at each of the individuals in the carriage given them a barely perceptible nod to show his appreciation. He knew that to anyone else it would be insufficient to show anything at all but to those in the carriage it would be clear as day exactly what he meant. They knew how much he appreciated it, even if Harry himself tried to deny it.
Three days. Three whole days. Three days and now Harry was ready to torture and kill every single member of the household. Yes, each and every one of them. There were currently five other people occupying the house and Harry had already thought of at least ten ways to kill each of them. The longer he thought about it the more creative the ideas became. Yesterday evening, while he had been forced to eat dinner with 'Mother', 'Father', Edward, Sirius and Remus he had been sitting opposite Sirius. He had stared at the man, menace filling his eyes, for the whole meal and come up with numerous creative solutions to kill the man and rid the world of his stupidity. One idea had involved a lot of needles, another a very rusty spoon, another a cheese grater and the final one some sand paper and a ballpoint pen. Harry had to resort to muggle ways of killing the Potter family, in his imagination, as he had used up all his magical ideas within the first day and a half. Harry could close his eyes and picture the Potters in pieces around the room and it calmed him down considerably.

Harry was now sitting on his bed, trying to think of anyway to distract himself from the disgusting people that were surrounding him. The people were loud, brutish and seemed to have no idea what the word subtle meant. It was late afternoon but Harry didn't think he could take another moment with any of them. Harry had been dragged out of the house at seven in the morning. The entire household had been there and ready to go. All of them seemed to know where they were going, all but Harry that is. He had not been informed of anything. The group had arrived at the Weasley’s house a few minutes later. Harry had been dragged through the floo by James. Breakfast had been consumed in amounts that Harry had never seen before. The youngest boy, Ronald, who was in Harry’s year ate like some sort of pig, although Harry thought that was insulting to pigs. The very sight of it put Harry off his food. He had pushed his plate away after a mere two mouthfuls of toast.

It was with a little relief that Harry discovered Percy was there. Harry had managed to seat himself next to the older boy and Percy nodded at him in acknowledgment. Percy had chatted to Harry for a bit and had even encouraged the boy to eat some more. However as Harry looked from Ronald and then back to his plate Percy seemed to understand and didn't push it any more. By nine Harry found himself sitting in the stands of a Quidditch field. A cold, damp, crowded, noisy Quidditch field. Harry was not looking forward to this at all.

Harry had tried to sit next to Percy, knowing that there would be little to no talking if he did so and that his suffering would be significantly less than it could be. He was, however, unsuccessful as Sirius grabbed his arm and pulled him next to him, ignoring the very obvious flinch that Harry gave at the contact. Sirius placed Harry between himself and James. This lead to some of the worst three hours that Harry could remember having since he left the Dursley’s. The two men talked on and on and on about the moves and skills that the Quidditch players on the pitch were showing and Harry had no chance of leaving. Harry really could not care less about any of it and yet the pair would not shut up. Harry thought that his eardrums might burst if they didn't stop soon. The pair had to shout to be heard over the crowd and so shout that did. Harry tried to block out their voices and instead went back to his favourite past time; thinking of ways to kill the pair.

After the game, that seemed to go on forever, finally ended the group went to Diagon Alley to have their lunch. Harry didn't have any clue on who had won or who was even playing and yet all of the people in the group insisted on talking about it. Harry dropped to the back of the group as they walked along Diagon Alley. Percy had been talking to an older boy, Harry thought he may have been called Charlie and Harry could not handle the level of noise. He did not want to stand with Percy when the boy was in the centre of all that noise and was making some of it himself.

As Harry dropped back he found himself face to face with his bratty brother and the obnoxious
twins. With the adults distracted by their conversation the older boys started to push Harry between them, a game began and the three saw who could push him fastest. The three were laughing heartily at their new found fun. Harry was powerless to stop them as he could use no magic outside of Hogwarts. He also had no way to attract anyone’s attention to get help, not that he would have even if he good have, but Harry had no way to defend himself. He knew that he could easily start a fight with these boys but he was pretty sure he would not win. Harry did not want to get beaten bloody in the middle of the street. Harry did not want to look weak in front of all the people that lined the street, even if three against one was unfair. As Fred, or was it George, pushed him towards his ginger counterpart he stuck his foot out causing the younger boy to trip. Harry fell onto the cobbles scuffing his hands and knees on the uneven ground. The three older boys laughed and simply walked away, leaving Harry on his knees.

Harry pushed himself into a kneeling position and looked at the blood trickling from his palms. He could also feel blood causing his trousers to stick to his knees. Thankfully, however, the trousers were black and so the blood could not be seen. Trying to look as dignified as he was able to Harry managed to push his frail body up from the pavement and into a standing position. He could still see the mass of red heads making their way down the street, none of them having noticed that Harry wasn’t with them. Even Percy was oblivious. Harry could feel his anger bubbling and raging inside of him. He was angry at the three boys, angry at Percy, angry at Lily and James. A lot of the anger that Harry felt he couldn’t explain. Why was he feeling anger towards Lily and James, sure he had an ingrained hatred for them that was always there but why had this sudden flare of anger arisen? In truth, although Harry did not know it himself, Harry still had a wish for parents that would care for him. That would help him up when he hurt himself and would clean his wounds. Harry wanted to feel important and special and, even though he had repressed it, he had thought that he may have this attention when his parents had picked him up. Harry’s resentment for the Potters was even further cemented as he pushed himself up off the pavement and followed the group in front of him.

The group, followed shortly by Harry, entered a restaurant by the name of ‘magic and mayhem’. The next few hours were spent with more talking, more eating and more laughing. Harry was forced to endure the noise and endure both Edward’s and Ronald’s company. It had been the only seat left at the table when he had arrived. It seemed that Percy had forgotten Harry’s existence, that was not something that would be forgiven easily. It would take some serious grovelling until Harry considered giving the older boy another chance. If Percy had betrayed Harry the story would be another entirely. An ally who forgot you could be retrained, however an ally who betrayed you had no right to life anymore.

The meal consisted of Edward ignoring him, while Ronald consumed all the food within his reach like some sort of wild beast. Harry, again, ate nothing. He didn’t even order any food, too put off at the thought of Ronald’s piggish behaviour. Although even if Harry wanted to eat, the waitress and the rest of the people on the table overlooked his existence. Harry simply nursed a glass of water throughout the meal. When Harry finally got back to Potter manner after the Weasleys had made their way home he made his way back up to his room. That was where Harry currently found himself.

Harry’s mood was a melancholy one as he thought over the day. It was days like this that made Harry feel like a small, weak child that was trapped at the Dursley’s again. Harry hated feeling like that. The idea that he could be reduced to such a miserable state again made him scared, angry and disgusted at himself. Harry had not had these thoughts or feelings in months. When at Hogwarts he felt powerful, unique, valued. He felt like a human being and here, with Potters he felt no more than a dog. Harry was missing his friends and he knew that. Harry tried to deny that he needed anyone and yet now that he had had a taste of friendship he did not want to give it up. So for the next thirty minutes Harry assessed whether or not he could justify floo calling Cassius. He knew that the older boy would be happy to see his face and tell him all about his holiday so far and yet he did not want
to seem weak. Harry knew he needed the boy’s company but he had no desire to admit it.

Harry finally folded and gave in to his desire to floo called the older boy. Harry had a fireplace in his room with a supply of flow powder ready and waiting. Harry was pretty sure that it was the house elves that had supplied the floo powder as there was no way any members of the household would be considerate enough to do so. Harry wrote the address that Cassius had give him on a scrap of parchment and along with some flow powder threw it into the fireplace. Green flames filled the fire place and Harry stuck his head into them as they formed. He waited, in darkness, for a few seconds for a connection to form and was then met face to face with Cassius.

The older boy was grinning madly at Harry and after greeting Harry enthusiastically the young man started to talk to Harry and as he did so Cassius’ smile seemed to grow impossibly wider. Harry spent a long time with Cassius, listening to the boy’s ramblings and feeling each little piece of his self worth being built back up. Cassius made Harry feel needed and wanted, a feeling he had missed in the past three days. After chatting for a while Cassius had been joined by Lawrence who was, according to Cassius, there on business purposes only. It was for a discussion of house policies. Harry was not so sure though. If the light blush that had adorned Lawrence’s face when he had seen Harry was anything to go by the older boy’s visit had been for more than just business. However, once the boy had composed himself he joined Cassius and Harry in their interactions. The conversation only became more lively after that.

Suddenly Harry felt a hand on his shoulder and nearly jumped out of his skin. The surprise must have shown on his face as both Lawrence and Cassius stopped their chattering and looked at Harry seriously.

“Do you have to go?” Cassius asked, the smile dropping from his face and his voice tinged with worry. Harry nodded, the nod filled with emotion: gratitude, anxiousness, hopefulness and other things that no-one, not even Harry, would have been able to decipher. Harry then quickly pulled his head out of the fire, trying to compose himself. He was met with the unpleasant sight of Lily Potter’s face staring at him looking concerned. Harry stood up, shaking the stiffness from his legs and back from being in the same position for so long. Harry ignored Lily as she continued to stare at him, concern and curiosity on her face. Harry sat down at his desk and waited for the idiotic woman to either leave or tell him why she was here. However it appeared to take several seconds for the woman to realise she was just standing there. Suddenly she seemed to realise that she was simply staring at Harry, a light blush adorned her cheeks and she managed to compose herself enough to speak.

“Oh…Oh Harry Dinner is ready. Everyone is waiting so we should probably make our way downstairs.” Lily stammered, somehow managing to force a smile onto her face as she said these words, although her mind was still fully occupied with other thoughts. According to Edward, Harry had no friends at Hogwarts and spent all his time by himself, mostly in the Library. It therefore surprised her and baffled her that Harry had been floo calling someone and this someone had been so engrossing that Harry had not heard her yells and shouting for him from downstairs. Who was it that had so captivated Harry’s attention? She also questioned how Harry had managed to floo call anyone when he could not speak? How had he even made the connection? These thoughts still swirled in her head as she fell asleep that night.

Harry stepped out of the fire place and back into his room. He stripped off his dress robes, dropping them into his laundry basket. Standing only in his boxers he threw on a t-shirt and collapsed into his bed. He was asleep before his head hit the pillow. It was early on Christmas morning, probably around three. Harry had spent the night at the Carrow’s Yule-Eve Ball. He had received the invitation a few days ago and had decided to accept, without letting the Potter’s know of course.
They would never let him go to a ball of dark magic users and sympathisers. Harry had retired to his room at seven the previous night, this was normal practice and so none of the Potters had thought anything of it. Half an hour later he had stepped through the floo and into Lawrence’s bedroom. Cassius, Blaise and Daphne had already been there and had greeted Harry enthusiastically.

For the next hour, before the ball began, the three had caught up, chatting and joking. After that they had made their way down to the ballroom. The night had been an experience for Harry. Harry had mingled with many high members of society, while still spending most of the night with his friends. Harry had also had his first alcoholic drink, or drinks. He had been coerced into drinking them by the others and after several of a rather tasty drink that Harry did not know the name of he felt slightly disorientated, by around one he had become rather unsteady on his feet. Cassius seemed to notice. He laughed and took Harry back to Lawrence’s room, giving the boy a steadying hand up the stairs. He lay Harry down on the bed, a nap was sure to sober the boy up. Cassius made his way to the kitchen to fetch Harry a glass of water. When he returned the boy was curled up at the centre of the bed, fast asleep. Cassius gave a smile at the adorable and innocent scene of Harry sleeping and settled himself down, waiting for the boy to awake.

About an hour later Harry began to stir and Cassius was there waiting for him. The others had joined him and as Harry awoke there were four sets of eyes that met his. Cassius handed him the glass of water and told him to drink. Harry did so without question and this seemed to shake off the fuzziness that remained in his head.

“Harry” Cassius said gently “It’s just two in the morning, it’s officially Yule, we can open the presents now.” A small smile adorned Cassius’ face as he said that, it was full of affection for the small, dishevelled looking boy. Daphne and Blaise had large smiles on their faces and an air of the excitement had filled the room. It seemed, that even for Slytherins, who tried to maintain an air of disinterest, the thought of presents was still an exciting prospect. Harry indulged in a small smile himself as Cassius and Lawrence placed the pile of presents onto the bed. Harry pushed himself up into a sitting position, stretching the stiffness out of his limbs as he did so. After Harry had rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, finished his water and was much more awake they started to open their presents.

“I think you should all open mine first.” Lawrence said gruffly. He didn't meet anyones eyes as he said it but instead handed each of them a package wrapped in black paper with a silver ribbon tied neatly with a bow adorning it. Harry, looking at his first proper gift with an emotion he could not quite place, carefully he untied the silver ribbon and delicately peeled off the wrapping paper. Inside was a black book that had Harry’s initials embellished in silver on the front. Harry flicked through it, to see it was filled with blank parchment. At the point when all four had examined the books Lawrence spoke up.

“I have one as well.” Lawrence said placing a nearly identical book on the bed. All but the initials were the same. “They’re all connected, you see, if one of us writes in the book it will show up in the others. Look, I’ll show you.” Lawrence picked up the book and walked over to the desk in the corner of his room. He picked up a quill and began to write. When he had finished and closed the diary all of them began to emit a slight silver glow. Harry opened his book and saw the following:

‘LC: Happy Yule everyone. I hope you enjoy the gift.’

“Wow that’s amazing” exclaimed Daphne. The display of emotion was unexpected from the Ice Queen and caused Lawrence to smile at the positive reaction to his gift.

“Thank you Lawrence. This will be very useful for us all.” Cassius said with a wide grin. A slight blush shone from Lawrence’s cheeks as Cassius said this. Harry and Blaise both nodded at
Lawrence to show their appreciation of the gift.

The next thirty minutes were spent opening each others presents and thanking each other for what they received. Harry had given all four of them books, depending on their interests. He got Blaise ‘A Fully Illustrated History of the Flying Carpet’ as the boy had expressed an interest in all the ways that one could fly, he loved it. For Daphne ‘Blood Brothers: My Life Amongst the Vampires’ as the girl had some strange fascination with vampires. Lawrence was given ‘Alchemy, Ancient Art and Science’ as the older boy had an interest in obscure magic. Finally Cassius received ‘The Healer's Helpmate’ as Cassius’ aim was to become a healer after he left Hogwarts.

Harry himself received a set of inks and Quills from Blaise, the irony of it was not lost on Harry. He received a wizarding chess set from Daphne. She said it was to improve his strategy and that the better he got at the game the higher the level of play from the opposite side could be set. It meant that when he was by himself Harry could still play the game and be challenged by it. Finally from Cassius he received a necklace; a silver chain with a silver medallion on it. The medallion had numerous engravings on it. In the centre of it was a snake engraved into the metal, it reminded Harry of Balthazar who was currently still wrapped around his arm asleep. There were also symbols on the back of the medallion, some of which Harry recognised as Runes. According to Cassius the runes were for protection, good health and good luck. The Medallion would heat up if Harry were in danger of harm or death. Cassius said it was protection for when he wasn't around.

Before Harry left he did something that he could never remember doing in his life. He didn't know whether it was the alcohol still effecting him or if it was just that he realised how much these people in the room meant to him. He had never had friends before and he felt a tad overwhelmed at it, and friends they were, they were no longer allies. Harry needed them and not just for power. He needed them because they made him feel safe, loved, welcomed and special. All these emotions had bubbled up and they caused Harry to give each of them a hug. Physical contact was not something Harry was comfortable with but he felt he needed to show these people how much they had done for him. They had changed him in the few months that they had known each other. Of course Harry, being who he was, still did not trust them completely. Any hint of betrayal and Harry would end their relationship and end the betrayer by any means necessary. The hugs were short, barely touching, but they meant a lot to the others and a lot too Harry. For the others, the moment that they hugged Harry, each of them strengthened their resolve to protect and help the young, fragile boy. If possible they became more loyal to him and their feelings for him strengthened. They knew they could never stand by and let this abused little boy be hurt by anyone or anything. They would never let him become as broken as he had been when they first met him. They would only help to heal him further. They all promised themselves that.

Harry was woken, later that morning, to the sight of three small faces with shocks of bright red hair. One pair of green eyes and two pairs of blue stared into his as they flickered open. Harry sat up and rubbed said eyes, wondering if he was seeing things. He looked to the clock and saw that it was just past ten am. He groaned, his head was aching and all he wanted to do was roll back over and go to sleep. He turned his attention back to the small faces of the three children and he realised that they weren't an illusion of his tired mind. Instead there was a little girl and two little boys. As Harry met their gaze the two little boys hid behind the taller girl. Harry assumed that they were siblings, the two boys appeared around three and five and the girl around seven or eight. The little girl stepped forward with a determined look on her face.

“Hi, I’m Faye Weasley. These are my younger brothers Alfie and Marshall.” She grinned, showing that her two front teeth were missing.

“You are Harry, right? Edward’s brother?” Faye tilted her head to the side and looked up at Harry
with innocent, questioning eyes. Harry gave a small nod to the little girl, he was not sure making the little girl cry would end well so responding seemed like the best idea.

“You’re not mean like Edward are you?” the little girl said pouting at Harry. Harry shook his head, assuring the girl he was nothing like Edward. Harry was willing to dispel that notion from anyone, no matter what their age. Harry was nothing like his brother! For the next few minutes the little girl asked Harry more and more questions, some of which he wasn’t even given time to answer before her train of thought moved onto something else.

Alfie and Marshall had also gained some confidence and had been talking a little bit as well. Faye had moved her and her siblings to sit on Harry’s bed with him. Harry marvelled at the little girl’s subtle manipulation. She had given Harry no time to protest to her questioning and invasion of his personal space. Also, each and ever time Harry gave a slight hesitation in answering her questions she would pout, tears threatening to spill done her cheeks. She knew that if she cried Harry was screwed and used that to her full advantage. No matter how subconscious it was Harry marvelled at it.

Marshall, the youngest of the group, seemed to get bored of his sister’s nattering. He also seemed to get over his fear of Harry and instead saw the older boy as a mountain to be climbed. He launched his small body at Harry, surprising the older boy and used his small feet to climb up Harry’s body. Harry was careful to let not the small boy fall as crying was bound to ensue if he did, but also stopped the boy from using his left bicep as a foot hold. Balthazar was still wrapped around his arm and the snake would not take kindly to a foot in his face. Harry assisted, if somewhat reluctantly, the little boy in his mission and Marshall ended up on Harry’s shoulders. The little boy then started to play with Harry’s already messed up hair. Alfie started to giggle at the mess that Harry’s hair had become with Marshall’s ministrations. Marshall did the same and then Faye joined in. A few minutes later had Faye and Alfie clutching their sides on the bed while Marshall clutched Harry’s hair giggling in Harry’s ear.

However the door being, rather violently, pushed open cut through the noise of the children’s giggles. Harry turned his head around, careful not to displace Marshall, and was met with the sight of two figures in the doorway. One was very obviously Lily Potter while the other was a tall man. The man had the same shade of hair as the children did, a fiery red that fell just past his shoulders. There was a panicked look in the man’s sparkling blue eyes but as soon as he saw the three children the panic left them and the tension left his body. As Faye ran towards the man shouting Daddy the man knelt down and spread his arm engulfing the little girl into a hug.

Lily, meanwhile, was staring at her son in shock, not that anyone in the room noticed this. She was amazed at the sight that had met her eyes as she opened the door. The sullen and cold boy that she had spent time with was not the boy she saw in front of her. Instead her son’s eyes seemed to sparkle with emotion and seeing the three year old Marshall on Harry’s shoulders, playing with his hair made Lily feel as though she had stepped into another dimension. There was even a slight smile curling up Harry’s face and although the young boy seemed to be trying to repress it, it was the first time Lily had ever seen such an expression on Harry’s face. It shocked Lily so much that no words escaped her. Lily watched as Harry gently lifted Marshall from his shoulders and placed him on the bed. Marshall and Alfie still sat on the bed giggleing as their Daddy picked up Faye and made his way over to them. The man then addressed Harry.

“I’m sorry to disturb you Harry, my three children are little rascals.” the man said grinning and ruffling Alfie’s hair “I’m Ryland Weasley and it’s a pleasure to meet you. I’m Arthur’s younger brother and I thank you for taking care of my three little rascals. I was so worried when they went missing but I’m glad they were in safe hands.”
Harry nodded in response to the man’s praise, feeling rather awkward in the situation. He was dressed only in his boxers and a t-shirt and did not feel appropriately attired to meet anyone, children were one issues, but adults were another entirely. However his worries were quickly put to the back of his mind as he heard a tapping on the window. An owl was asking to be given entry into the room. Harry swung his legs over the side of the bed and his bare feet padded on the floor towards the window. He let the owl in and it dropped the parcel it had carried into his waiting hands. Harry placed the parcel on his desk and then picked up one of the owl treats that he kept in his desk for occasions such as these.

He fed it to the owl and then it flew off back to its master. The first owl seemed to be the signal for the others to arrive. As soon as it had left another four arrived. Harry administered the same method with the other owls and within a few minutes there were five presents on the desk and no owls in sight. When Harry turned around from the desk he saw that the family of four were still hugging each other as well as the children receiving a good telling off from their father for running off. Lily was still staring at Harry totally confused as to who Harry could be receiving Parcels from. First had been the floo call and now five presents. Who was sending her son these things when Edward reported that he had no friends?

“Well, I suppose we should leave you in some peace.” Ryland said somehow managing to pick up all three children simultaneously. “I suppose I shall see you at the meal in a few hours” the man said before making his way to leave. Harry quickly scribbled a small note on a scrap of parchment and handed it to the man. It read ‘Merry Yule’, Ryland smiled and said

“The same to you Harry, the same to you.”

Harry made his way down the stairs of Potter Mansion and as he did so he prepared himself for a day of torture. The Potter’s Yule meal consisted of all the family and friends that the Potter’s had gathered in one place, gossiping, eating too much and exchanging gifts. From what Harry had heard from Neville, it was tedious and was held to show off the Potter’s wealth and status more than anything else. Harry entered the ball room, seemingly unnoticed by everyone. He made his way across the side of the room, trying to remain discrete and inconspicuous. He believed himself to have been successful until he felt a tug at the bottom of his robes. He looked down to see a shock of ginger hair and a toothless grin. Faye Weasley had been the only one perceptive enough to see Harry enter the room. But then again she was most likely the only one looking for him. Still Harry was surprised she had seen through what most people would not have. This little girl could definitely grow up to be a fantastic Slytherin.

“Harry” she exclaimed excitedly, a smile lighting up her face. “Come on Harry.” the little girl said tugging at Harry’s robes. Harry obliged, not wanting draw any of the adults attention and was led by the little girl to a group of other children. The children were sitting on a mixture of sofas and beanbags. It was obviously, what it would have been dubbed in the muggle world, the children corner. A variety of toys and games littered tables and some of the floor. There were children ranging from the age of three to around ten. Marshall, on seeing Harry, toddled over on slightly unsteady legs and raised his arms to be lifted up. Harry sighed in exasperation and picked the little boy up, placing him on his hip. He did not want a crying toddler on his hands. The boy was surprisingly heavy for Harry’s weak body and so he sat himself on one of the sofas, sitting Marshall in his lap. Alfie and Faye amused themselves, Alfie playing with the toys and Faye telling the other children the little she knew about Harry. This did lead to quite a few stares aimed at from the children as well as several of them coming over to him and sitting next to him and asking him shy questions. Mostly he just shook or nodded his head at them.

Harry was so engrossed in entertaining Marshall and the other children that he did not notice
someone approaching him until their was a tap on his shoulder. He whipped his head around to see who had disturbed him and also seen him playing with a small child. He had already had enough people see him weak today, both his mother and a Weasley. It was a disgrace, what was wrong with him today. He was met with the face of Neville. The boy had a smirk on his face and looked amused as he met Harry’s eye.

“I never knew that you liked children Harry.” Neville said, trying to hold in his laughter. “I’ve been trying to get your attention for a few minutes now but you were so engrossed with this little fellow” Neville pointed at Marshall “that you didn't even notice me.” Harry sent a scowl at Neville and with that Neville burst into loud and uncontrollable laughter. Harry only glared harder at the slightly older boy. Finally Neville managed to get himself under control and wiping the tears from his eyes he handed Harry something he took from his pocket.

“Here Harry, Happy Yule.” Neville said grinning. Harry placed Marshall on the seat next to him and then took the gift from Neville. The little boy pouted at being put down but he soon got over it and went to play with his older brother. Harry took the gift from Neville and gave him one of his own in return. Harry gave Neville a book by the name of ‘Flesh Eating Trees of the World’ even with the gory title it was an Herbology masterpiece and Neville looked overjoyed at receiving it. Harry received his own book ‘Магичен Теория’ a rare copy of the translated Bulgarian rune manual. Neville, knowing of Harry’s love of runes had gone to great lengths to procure the book. Harry gave a nod in acknowledgment to show his appreciation to the other boy.

Soon after the boys had exchanged gifts the light tinkle of a bell rang through the room signalling that dinner was ready to be served. Harry and Neville made their way through to the dining room. The room had been transformed into a Winter Wonderland. Harry sneered at the room in disgust, the whole thing was a waste of time, money and effort. Snow was falling from the ceilings and yet it disappeared before it hit any of the guests or the tables. A giant christmas tree was situated in the centre of the room, it was so large it almost touched the ceiling and was covered in thousands of baubles and miles of tinsel. At least fifty tables were placed around the room, each with name tags for the places to show where people were to sit. A table plan was also situated at the entrance to the room to show the guests which table they were to sit at. Harry wished he didn't have to look, didn't have to affirm what he already knew. Harry would have loved to sit with Neville and maybe Percy. Although Percy was still in his bad books. Anyone but the Potter’s really. Even Ronald’s hideous eating would have been better than that. Neville checked the board and then came back over to Harry.

“You’re on table one” Neville said glumly “with the Potters.” A look of disgust worked its way onto Harry’s face. “But…” Neville said teasingly as a small grin making its way onto his face “I'm on that table too.” he said cheerfully. “I mean…my Grandma is there as well, but she shouldn't be too bad. At least I hope so anyway.” Neville’s face began to adopt the nervous look that had been all too common when the two had first met. Harry looked into the eyes of the other boy, pulling him out of the conditioned self doubt his Grandma had caused. Harry broke the eye contact and then made his way over to table one.

Harry and Neville arrived first at their table. This meant that they had some time to make some slight alterations to the seating arrangement before the others arrived. Harry put himself between Neville and Remus instead of between Edward and James. He then put Lily next to Neville as she was the least likely to cause the other boy any problems. With that the two sat down and waited for the others to arrive, well more dreaded it. Neville and Harry talked about their holidays so far, well Neville talked and Harry nodded or gave a look that asked for more explanation. At some points Harry also wrote a few words down in the notebook that he had retrieved from his pocket, it was one from the set that that Blaise had got him. A retractable Quill and a set of notebooks to make it easier for him to
communicate with others. Harry managed to ascertain that Neville had also received one of the Diaries from Lawrence and so would also be included in their conversations. He felt glad that the boy was considered one of them, even though he was a Gryffindor.

The other members of the table arrived about ten minutes after the two boys had. The boys simply ignored them and continued with their conversation. As the meal continued and the courses were given and taken away the boys only interacted with each other ignoring the others. What the two of them didn't notice was that almost all of the members of the table had spent most of their meal staring at the two boys. They had eaten little of their meal and spoken even less. They had simply stared at the two eleven year olds.

Lily had noticed the two of them conversing almost instantly. A few minutes after she had sat in her seat she had seen Harry’s face look more animated then it had ever looked before, even more animated than this morning. Her son was making smiles, frowns and quirks of his brow. No matter how small the expressions were, no matter how unnoticeable they would have been to a normal observer, Lily saw every single one of them. Remus, having been seated next to Harry had heard the scratch of the boys quill on several occasions, at first he had ignored the noise but when he finally paid it attention he could see Harry’s graceful penmanship and even though the words on the paper were not directed at him, Remus became enthralled by them. Each and every stroke of the quill showed some of the inner maze of his godson’s thoughts. He felt that he could become more connected to the boy through those words and so he could not draw his eyes away from them, not even for a second.

James and Sirius had noticed that Remus was being surprisingly unresponsive to their conversation. Even though their friend was usually quite, this was a turn up for the books. They had not heard Remus say more that two words in the past half hour. They both turned their attention to the man to see what it was that had the man so engrossed. James saw his son looking more alive then he had ever seen him. He and the Longbottom boy seemed totally engaged in what the other had to say. James could only stare open mouthed at the boy that he could not recognise as the boy he’d picked up a few months, or even the boy he had had dinner with last night. The same emotions were mirrored on Sirius’ face. Augusta was staring at her Grandson rather than at Harry. Neville was looking more confident and more like Frank than she had ever seen him. Her eyes widened in awe at the boy sitting before her. His eyes twinkling with excitement as he talked to the Potter boy. She could not believe this Neville was her Neville, he seemed like a totally different person. Edward, along with Fred and George had not even noticed that anything was amiss with the adults on the table. They ate their meal, chatted and joked without noticing the adults strange mood at all.
Chapter 16

Lily Potter sat in her room, the Christmas presents that she had bought for Harry lay on the bed in front of her, not given and not opened. She looked at them, a sad smile on her face as she did so, her eyes filled with unshed tears. The party had drawn to a close a few hours ago but Lily felt no joyful tiredness that usually followed these Christmas parties. Instead Lily only felt sadness. A sadness that consumed her; it choked her, making her breath catch in her throat, it constricted her heart and made the blood in her veins freeze. It made her feel like she was dying. It was uncontrollable. Lily had come to a realisation that day. The realisation that she was a terrible mother. The realisation that she had destroyed her sons life. The realisation that he would never forgiver her. The realisation that she didn't deserve that forgiveness.

These thoughts swirled through her head like a raging storm, constantly engulfing more and more of her thoughts until it was all she could think about. All thoughts were about how she had failed her son. Memories flashed through Lily’s head, memories of Harry as a baby. Her little boy, with shiny black hair and sparkling green eyes so full of life. Her little boy that always had a smile to reveal his toothless gums. She remembered her little boy’s first word, it had been ‘Mooey’. Lily and Remus had fought over whether or not Harry had said Mummy or Moony. It had been a long standing joke, well, it had until Harry had been sent to the Dursley’s. It had always been something that had the whole room laughing until it had been forgotten, until it had been repressed as it was too painful to think about. Another memory rushed into Lily’s head. Her two little boys playing in the garden. Edward, at three trying to get a one year old Harry to catch a football. The ball only dropping to Harry’s small feet, he would then pick up the ball and attempt to throw it. It would go a tiny distance before dropping again and so the process would start all over again. Lily’s mind flicked through more and more memories and with each one her sadness only intensified. She sat on the bed, unseeing as tears trickled down her cheeks. The forgotten memories had been remembered and Lily felt nothing but grief.

Soon after that James walked into the room and saw Lily’s unseeing eyes. Worry filled him as he saw the tears dripping down his wife’s face and onto the bed sheets. He shook her gently, calling her name, trying to get her out of the state that she was in. She blinked, once, twice and then her eyes seemed to regain some focus. She stared at James for a few seconds before she violently flung herself into his arms. He nearly collapsed under the unexpected weight and yet he managed to stay on his feet. He sat down on the bed, holding his hysterical wife in his arms. Most of what the woman was saying was incoherent but James heard one word being said over and over again, Harry. The only thing that was clear was that their wife was distraught about their youngest son.

James sat for a while, stroking his wife’s back and thinking. He too had had Harry on his mind ever since lunch. The boy had seemed so different. He had seemed like a real person rather than a breathing doll. The boys eyes had glimmered with emotions that James had not seen in over nine years. He began to think about when it was that the light had gone out in Harry’s eyes. How long had the boy spent at the Dursley’s before he lost his laughter? Before he lost his smile? Before he lost who he was? How long had it been since the boy had last spoken? James had had a similar realisation as Lily had. The realisation that it was his fault. That if only he had protected Harry, if he had cared for him as he had Edward and if only he had realised his mistake sooner then Harry would be real. Harry would have been able to have a childhood and have the life he was meant to have.

In another room, on another bed sat another man, having similar thoughts as one James Potter. Remus Lupin had his head in his hands, not knowing what to do. Remus’ life had been flipped around and turned totally upside down. Every right thing he thought he had done for Harry had been proved wrong. Remus had thought that living with the Dursely’s would ensure Harry would be
protected, cared for and loved. He had not realised until a few hours ago just how wrong he had been. He knew as soon as he had seen the boy, for the first time in ten years, that he was not happy. The boy was quiet, reserved, scared, confused and so much more. Harry also appeared to have so much anger in him. Anger that in truth scared Remus to the core. How could one so young have such strong feelings? Remus, up until now, had thought that these were all natural reactions to being moved from his home. Even when signs of abuse had been discovered Remus had managed to convince himself that it had still been that right decision. He had not seen the scars and not seen the bruises and so had not realised how wrong he had been. However now he had seen the truth. The boy had been so alive today, so amazingly real and Remus loved seeing it. He hadn't realised how broken the boy had been before. Seeing Harry being fixed, even a little, made reality come crashing down on him. He had been stupid. So stupid that he hadn't noticed. He had simply fooled himself into thinking that everything was ok with Harry. But now he had realised it wasn't and he didn't know what to do with himself.

Another man sat drinking away his sorrows in a small pub. The pub was a muggle one and the man sat with a bottle of whiskey and a glass, pouring shot after shot. Similar to the others, Sirius Black felt as though his life had come crashing down around him. In fact, it was more likely, that his world had collapsed a long time ago and was only just now noticing the rubble and debris that remained in its place. Sirius, therefore, distracted himself from his collapsed life in the only way that he knew how to; drinking. The pub was mostly empty, the only people occupying a hovel like this, this late on Christmas day, were as fucked up as Sirius had become. It was surprising that the place was even open. Only those who had nowhere else to go came here. Sirius took another shot. He was not ready to face reality right now.

Harry woke the next morning as light streamed through the curtains and Balthazar hissed at him impatiently. Harry pushed himself up and out of the bed. The clock on his bedside table read nine am. Harry was surprised that he had slept for so long. He had collapsed, exhausted, on his bed after Neville had left at around eight o’clock. Although Harry supposed that having a very late night and then an exhausting day full of people he hated would do that to a person. Harry was a little surprised that none of the Potters had woken him but he shrugged it off. It should be considered a blessing and not pondered over. Harry looked to Balthazar to see what the annoying snake wanted. The snake was complaining of his extreme boredom and asked for Harry to open a chocolate frog so he could practice hunting. The snake was not hungry but he still wanted to have some fun. Harry had bought the snake a few of the frogs as a Yule present although Harry thought that such a choice had been an unwise one as Balthazar would end up destroying at least five things in his chasing of each and every frog.

Harry sighed at the obnoxious snake. He got out of bed and quickly threw on some clothes, brushed his teeth and washed his face. Harry then put away all breakables to ensure Balthazar could not get to them, although Harry suspected the snake would find a way to anyway. Harry then grabbed a chocolate frog from the snake’s pile of them. The snake looked poised, his fangs were revealed and he started hissing the word ‘yes’ over and over again in his excitement. Harry released the frog, it jumped and began to climb the wall. Balthazar lunged for it, his tail whipping around and hitting the clock knocking it from its place. Harry sighed at the mess the snake was already making and exited the room quickly, making his way down the stairs to find some food and appease his rumbling stomach. As Harry slowly peaked through the door to the kitchen he was greeted enthusiastically by a number of the occupants. It confused Harry, he had never been greeted by any of these people in any such way. What the fuck was going on?

Lily and James both stood up as they saw Harry’s head peak around the door. They greeted him with smiles, asking how his morning was and ushering him to a seat at the head of the table. Lily went to serve Harry breakfast before realising that she had no idea what the boy liked to eat. The smile
temporarily dropped from her face at that realisation before she managed to compose herself. She supposed the best way to find out was to ask her son. Something that she had never thought to do before.

“Harry what would you like for breakfast?” Lily questioned, smiling so much that she looked slightly insane. Harry could only stare at the woman in front of him, trying not to gape at her. He was totally baffled. What the hell was the woman thinking? Harry had to wonder if she had gone totally insane. She had never acted this way before, so why now?

“Well?” Lily said, slightly put off at her son’s unresponsiveness “We have toast, bacon, eggs, hash browns, fresh fruit and more, so what do you fancy?” Again Harry had no inclination to reply to the woman in front of him that may or may not have gone insane. He simply looked at the table and fiddled with his t-shirt sleeves. Lily gave a sharp intake of breath at the boy’s lack of reaction. James took control of the situation knowing that Lily was about to lose her composure.

“Why don't we just give you some of everything, eh?” James said with a lopsided smile being forced onto his face. “That way you’ll be able to decide what you like best for next time.” James said and started filling up a plate for Harry. Remus helped, passing plates to James as they were needed. Within a few minutes there was a plate piled high with everything and anything. The plate was then placed in front of Harry along with a glass of orange juice and a mug of tea. Harry glanced at the plate unbelievingly. How in Merlin’s name did these idiots expect him to eat all of that? There was about ten times the usual amount that Harry ate on the plate.

However Harry was hungry and there were three pairs of eyes watching him expectantly. Harry picked up the orange juice and took a small sip, the three pairs of eyes widened in happiness and slight surprise at the small action. Harry was utterly bewildered at the adults reaction. This bewilderment, however, quickly turned to anger. He was not a circus show to be watched. Harry preferred being ignored. Anything rather than the insanity that currently surrounded him. He had no idea what the fuck was wrong with these people. Less than twenty four hours ago they had acted as though Harry did not exist and yet here they were acting like fools.

Harry sat for a few more minutes picking at his food and slowly contemplating what had changed and what to do next. When the boy had finished what little he could actually eat he made his way to stand. He wanted to rid himself of this weirdness as quickly as possible. However it seemed that today luck was not on his side. He was interrupted from his departure by the irritating and over caring voice of one Lily Potter.

“Harry dear” she said in a voice so sweet it made Harry feel a tad queasy. “we have some things that we would like to give you.” Lily gestured to the rest of the room as she said that. She also seemed more nervous than she had a few seconds prior.

“I suppose that we should have given them to you yesterday, but…well…we were distracted with the party…and…well…anyway…here they are.” With that the rest of the members of the room placed numerous presents on the table. Harry didn't even have time to wonder where they had appeared from and how they had been concealed so well before they had been piled in front of him and he was being urged to open them. The expectant gazes were being directed at him.

Harry felt like a rabbit in headlights or, as was said in the wizarding world, a dementor caught in a Patronus. He managed to pick up one of the boxes that was wrapped in gleaming gold, an obnoxious colour, thought Harry. He gently peeled the paper back, ignoring the looks from the others in the room. For the next ten minutes or so Harry continued this process, however mechanical it was, opening the presents one after the other. He barely looked at their contents before moving onto the next item. He wanted this ludicrous facade to be over with as rapidly as possible.
By the time Harry had finished there was a line of presents and a pile of neatly folded wrapping paper occupying his end of the table. The presents consisted of numerous sweets, Harry supposed the chocolate frogs would be useful for Balthazar, several items of Quidditch memorabilia, useless in Harry’s opinion, two books, both on basic magical theory which Harry had long since mastered and finally a wand holster. The wand holster was the only thing that may even have a small amount of value or utility to Harry. It ensured that he no longer had to carry his wand in his pocket and keep it under his pillow at night. Instead it would be strapped securely to his wrist at all times. It was a safer and more efficient way to carry his wand. The holster seemed well crafted out of dark brown, almost black leather. Harry spent a few minutes examining it. He placed it on his wrist, and the straps adjusted automatically to fit. Harry then removed his wand from his pocket and placed it into the holster. He now felt prepared for any eventuality.

Harry snapped out of the thoughts about the holster as he realised that there were still four sets of eyes staring at him. He looked up and into the eyes of one Sirius Black. The eyes were filled with hope, wonder and worry. Harry could not believe these emotions were being shown by this man. They looked so foreign on his face. Harry could have very easily thought he was in a dream, or a nightmare, as a nightmare was more probable. This man was a piece of shit who only thought of Harry as a mini James and nothing more. This man did not deserve to look at Harry. Not with those eyes. Harry wanted to gouge those eyes right out of the man’s face. Harry felt his magic begin to spark and tingle beneath his fingers. His anger developing a physical manifestation. If Harry did not leave soon he would hurt the people in the room and hurt them to the extreme. Harry stuffed his hands into his pockets and gently flexed his fingers to calm himself. His teeth clenched and his jaw stiffed as he tried to gain control of the magic that wanted nothing more than to destroy everyone and anything in his path.

Harry forcefully removed his hands from his pockets and thrust his chair backwards violently. The magic in his fingers causing the chair to hit the floor with extra force causing a loud crash to fill the silent room. Harry needed to get out of this house and he needed to do it now. Harry ran from the room down the corridor and out of the front door. None of the occupants of the room realised what had happened till they heard the door shut loudly behind Harry, but Harry didn't care he was already running as far away as he could get. Running from the gardens and past the boundary of the property. Harry ran into the forest that bordered the house and kept running. Past trees, rocks, streams, rabbits and flowers. His lithe body and small frame only allowed him to run faster and so he pushed and continued to push until he was on the verge of collapse he ran until he could run no more and then stood panting leaning against a tree.

It took Harry several minutes to get his breath and look around to judge his surroundings. He didn't know how long he had run for or how far he had got but it had felt like hours as his heart still beat erratically in his chest. Thump Thump. Thump Thump. Thump Thump. Harry felt the adrenaline pumping through his veins and the oxygen filling his lungs, his heart desperate to return to its normal rhythm. There were trees scattered about and a small lake surrounded by narcissus flowers peering at themselves in the water as well as a few small shrubs accompanying them. Harry stepped lightly and gracefully towards the lake. He peered into the lake and saw several fish darting under the surface. Harry continued to make his way around the lake, examining the area. Harry’s anger seemed to have faded. The calm area seemed to take his mind off the stupid Potters and their stupid friends. He could feel the anger coiled like a snake ready to attack at a moments notice but for now the snake was satisfied to remain in its coil as there were no Potters in sight.

Harry continued around the lake and spotted the entrance to a cave. Their was a small arch revealing nothing but darkness beyond. The rock surrounding the arch was covered in moss and seemed to be crumbling. The cave looked old and unused for a long time. Harry edged closer and closer to the cave. His feet were slowly taking him through the arch and into the darkness in front of him. Harry seemed to have no control over his body or of the movement of his feet. However he did grip his
wand tightly in his hand, removing it from his holster, knowing that he could need to use it at any moment. He may be curious but he was not foolish. Harry’s eyes gradually adjusted to the darkness as he made his way further into the cave.

Suddenly out of the corner of his eye Harry saw a figure lunge at him through the darkness. Using nothing more than his instincts honed through years of practice he elbowed the figure in the area that he hoped was their face. The figure dropped to the floor and let out a decidedly male grunt of pain. Harry peered at the figure who’s hands were now clutching his face. Harry’s wand was pointed at the figure ready to be used if the man tried anything. The man pushed himself up onto his knees and locked his black eyes with Harry’s green ones. The eyes widened slightly as they saw Harry’s small form.

“Wow kid, you are tough. That was one hell of a hit” the man said, his voice coming out muffled as the man’s nose appeared to be broken. “I thought you were one of those damned Aurors, although you do look a bit small for that, hey kid?” the man said laughing at his own joke, however it came out as more of a choked cough then an actual laugh. “Anyway, my name is Sanguini. Pleasure to make your acquaintance young sir.” Sanguini finished before he collapsed again with a thud as his already broken nose hit the floor yet again. Where had Harry heard that name before? He knew that he recognised the name and the fact it was so unusual peaked Harry’s interest. Harry looked at the man slightly concerned that he might be dead. He knelt down next to the man. Harry didn’t want the man to die, not unless it was by his own hand of course. Harry managed to pull the man over, with a lot of struggling and checked that the man was still breathing. He was, but slower than normal. The man was pale and had dark shadows under his eyes. He also seemed to not have had a good meal in several days, if not weeks. The man’s mouth was slightly ajar and inside Harry could see a set of elongated canines.

Harry stepped back, his legs almost buckled under him as he realised what he was seeing. The man, no creature, in front of him was a vampire. A real life, blood sucking vampire. After a few deep breaths and several seconds recovering from his initial shock Harry grinned. The grin was wide and filled with excitement. He now knew where he had heard that name before. He knew and this was brilliant. Harry’s grin widened, this opportunity was one he had only dreamed about and he was about to take full advantage of it. He was amazed the coincidence. The man before him was royalty. Vampire royalty at that. He was the crown prince of the Dracula family and was to take over the throne with the death of his father Deimos Dracula. There were many stories of Sanguini and his younger sister Sisuca causing all types of chaos and winning many battles for ‘evil’ as the papers had put it. Harry could use this man as an ally and an ally Harry would make him.

Harry wasted several precious seconds scrabbling on the floor. He finally found what he was looking for after what felt like hours of looking. A small rock, sharp enough to pierce his skin. Harry violently slashed the rock down on his own wrist. Harry couldn’t feel the pain as all his concentration was on the task before him. Harry then positioned the dripping wound over the mouth of the vampire. The drips from the wound went in and around the vampire’s mouth. One of the drops slowly trickled the side of Sanguini’s face and onto the floor. Harry watched in fascination as what kept him alive slowly trickled away. It took several seconds before the vampire seemed to regain his senses and react to the blood filling his mouth. His eyes flickered minutely behind closed lids and then shot open as his hands came up to grab Harry’s wrist. The vampire’s mouth clamped over the wound, sucking the blood violently from Harry. Harry’s life force becoming his own as he sought to fix his wounds.

After several minutes of the theft of Harry’s blood the boy became light headed and dizzy. He pushed the vampire away with his free hand but the vampire didn’t budge he just kept sucking. Harry pushed harder and pulled his arm away from Sanguini’s blood stained mouth. The vampire was dislodged from his place on Harry’s arm. He bared his fangs and hissed, his eyes becoming
animalistic and violent. However the pale visage of the small eleven year old boy seemed to snap him out of whatever daze that he had been in. The vampire’s eyes flickered back into the realms of sanity and his grip released Harry’s arm, his hands falling to the floor besides him. The vampire pushed himself up. His movements now seemed much more fluid. The vampire gracefully rose to his feet and examined the small boy, now too weak to stand steady on his feet, who had given him his blood.

“What?” the vampire said in a confused tone, his eyes squinting as though trying to see if the boy was really there.

“What…Why…What?” the vampire continued and the thought crossed Harry’s mind that Vampire royalty should really be more eloquent. The vampire seemed dazed and confused, his head tilting to the side as he continued his gibberish. However Sanguini seemed to, after several more ‘What’s and ‘Who’s’ get his thoughts in order. He finally said:

“What the fuck kid? Why did you do that?” However before Harry had a chance to respond Sanguini lurched up and grabbed Harry, covering Harry’s mouth with his large hand. The vampire placed his lips to Harry’s ear and in a quiet voice, almost Harry couldn't hear it said

“Be quite kid. There’s someone out there” the voice was gentle.

The vampire slowly walked backwards, Harry in his arms, deeper and deeper into the cave in an obvious attempt to avoid the looming threat. His steps were silent as he moved. His back finally met the wall of the cave as he stepped forward he thrust Harry behind him, adopting a defensive position. Harry sagged against the wall, missing the support from the vampire’s strong arms. He was weak from the loss of blood he was experiencing. However, even in his weakened state he managed to remove his notebook and self inking quill. He felt that self sacrifice would make him appear as a much more attractive ally. Therefore he scribbled a note reading;

‘You should go. They are looking for me.’

Harry quietly tore the page from his notebook and then tapped the vampire on the back, attempting to gain his attention. The vampire whipped around faster than was humanly possible and stared at the boy. Seeing the note in the boy’s outstretched hand he swiped it from him and his eyes quickly scanned it. The vampire raised his eyebrows and sent a contemplative look at the boy. Sanguini brought his lips back to Harry’s ear and again in a nearly inaudible voice asked Harry ‘why?’ That one word was explanatory in and of itself and yet Harry was a little nervous to answer the vampire. Even though he felt they already had some sort of alliance, no matter how unstable, as Harry had willingly given up his blood. However the Potters were known enemies of any and all dark creatures. He could not be sure that the vampire would not kill him instantly when he informed the creature he was of Potter blood. Harry mulled it over for several seconds before deciding that the risk was worth it. Having an ally this powerful was worth it. Risk was a necessity in gaining power. So Harry scribbled onto a new piece of paper.

‘My name is Harry Potter. I’m a Slytherin. I hate my family. I wanted to get away from them hence why they are now looking for me.’

He then thrust the note at Sanguini and chewed at his lip, the only outward sign of his inward turmoil, as the vampire read the note. A smile slowly spread its way across the vampire’s face. One filed with glee at his new discovery. His lips at Harry’s ear, yet again, his voice filled Harry’s senses.

“Well young Harry, I have indeed heard of you and I’m glad to make your acquaintance. You know you have to go back to them Harry.” the vampire said, the smile still on his face but a sadness filling it slightly. “However, I am in your debt young Master Potter.” The grin was reenergised and Harry
felt a puff of warm breath on his ear as the vampire chuckled lightly. “I think I have a suitable way to pay you back kid.”

With that Sanguini drew back from Harry, his smile rising even further to reveal his fangs. Maintaining eye contact with Harry the vampire pierced his index finger of his left hand with his right fang. Sanguini removed his hand from his mouth and rotated his hand, his palm placing the floor. A drop of blood fell from the wound and hovered in the air. Harry watched it float in the air for a few seconds before a wave of magic, strong and penetrating, covered Harry and went into him. The forceful magic mingled with his own core and pulled at it. It pulled and pulled until it was almost painful.

Harry tried to struggle against the feeling. However he felt a reassuring hand on his shoulder and through the uncomfortableness he managed to relax. A small part of Harry’s own magic was then pulled out of his body by the vampire’s own and them mingled with the stationary drop of blood. A flash of red appeared as the three combined together. The red light moved towards Harry and struck him in the breast bone. A sharp pain filled Harry’s chest and the front of his shirt was partially burned away. On Harry’s breast bone a rune of protection glowed red before turning a deep, dark, black.

As the pain faded and the foreign magic settled in Harry, Sanguini stepped closer to Harry. The vampire caressed the spot where the rune now adorned Harry’s chest, gently. He then ran his hand down Harry’s chest and as he did so Harry’s t-shirt reformed itself. Sanguini’s mouth at Harry’s ear the vampire explained the rune to the boy.

“It’s for protection kid. If you’re in danger I’ll know.” Sanguini winked at Harry before saying “Now get out there and face the Potters. Good luck my young friend.” With a pop the vampire was gone. Harry was left fingering the new rune emblazoned on his chest under his newly formed t-shirt and dreading the reunion with his so called family.
Out of the cave and into the fire. Not quite how the saying went but it was most definitely Harry’s situation. He knew that Sanguini had been right. Harry needed to face the family that had betrayed him, however that did not make it any less painful. Harry had stepped out of the cave only to be faced with a mass of people; their faces filled with worry that Harry felt was most definitely fake. The Potters, Lupin and Black were accompanied by several others that Harry would rather watch being mauled by a wild Hippogriff. Dumbledore, Shaklebolt and McGonagall had joined in the search for him. The welcome that Harry had received when he exited was one that he would have rather not had. Hugs from Lily and James and tellings off from the rest of the group. He was now sitting back in the living room of the Potter’s household being stared at by all the occupants of said room. Harry’s thoughts again turned to his most common past time at the Potters; thinking of ways to kill them.

The silence was finally broken by the Headmaster, of course. The man seemed unable to stop meddling in other people’s business. Why was the old coot even here? What had possessed the Potters to invite him on the search for Harry. The whole situation was ludicrous. Harry had only been missing for about three hours so why was the full out search needed? It was not like they had ever noticed Harry’s comings and goings before. As Harry watched the Headmaster stand to address the room in his usual pomp and glory he imagined the man’s tongue being cut from his mouth and hammering nails into each of eyes. He was just imaging sticking needles underneath the man’s fingernails when said man started talking to Harry.

“Mr Potter, we just want to understand why you ran away. Once you tell us we can forget that this ever happened. Now my boy, please, explain it to us will you?” Dumbledore’s grandfatherly facade fooled Harry as much as Malfoy’s nice facade did, that is to say that Dumbledore was not pulling the wool over Harry’s eyes. The man’s smile continued to widen as the boy continued to ignore him. For several seconds it got wider and wider until it looked almost painful on the man’s wrinkled face. Harry was enjoying the look on the man’s face. It was obvious that Dumbledore’s demands did not often go ignored. Harry would have continued this enjoyment if Lily Potter had not interrupted the scene.

“Harry sweetie, maybe you could answer the headmaster?” she said with a patronising smile and overly sweet voice. Lily stood up and walked over to the chair that Harry sat in. She knelt down before the boy, her eyes meeting his for a second before Harry broke the contact.

“Come on baby, you can just write in your notebook” she said looking meaningfully at the paper in Harry’s lap “and tell us all what made you want to leave. Please Honey.” Lily said pleadingly. Her eyes filled with unshed tears. Harry only pulled at his sleeve. He could feel his black t-shirt sticking to the cut on his wrist that had, thankfully, stopped bleeding about thirty minutes ago. The dark shirt hid the blood stains that coated it rather well. Harry stayed in his own mind, mulling over the events of the day and the rune now emblazoned on his chest.

Meanwhile the other people in the room seemed perturbed by Harry’s lack of response. The boy seemed to only be staring into space. After ten minutes of total unresponsiveness the group decided that they would get nothing from the boy in the near future. Dumbledore was frustrated that the boy constantly kept his eyes down. It was as though Harry knew that any hint of eye contact and Dumbledore would dive into the boy’s mind and pry the secrets of his whereabouts from him.

After several minutes of frustrated silence the group seemed to unanimously decide that the best way to deal with the situation was to leave the boy to his own devices for the moment. Dumbledore,
Shaklebolt and McGonagall flooed back to their own homes leaving the Potters, Sirius and Remus to relocated to the kitchen. The group calmed their nerves, in a traditionally British manner, through the consumption of numerous cups of tea. During which time Edward returned to the premises.

The older boy had been sent to the Weasleys’ residence during the debacle with Harry. Edward still had no understanding as to why the group of people who were his family were acting in such an insane manner. They were actually concerned for the wellbeing of his younger brother. The weirdo, mute, Slytherin brother. The brother that had no right to be fussed over by his family. Edward had been in the kitchen with his family for several minutes before he felt that the silence was crushing him. This was not the family he was used to. The family he had lived with for the past thirteen years were happy, funny and always pulling pranks. However the family in that room were sullen, moody and depressed. He did not want to be in an atmosphere like that. Therefore Edward had retreated to his room to avoid the stifling atmosphere.

However after another hour of nothing happening and the depressing atmosphere rising through the house and then hanging in the air like a bad smell Edward decided to do something about it. He needed to fix his brother before his family would, itself, be fixed. His brother didn’t deserve to be a part of the family anyway. He’d fucked the family up and now Edward was going to fuck him up. Edward stomped, out of his room, down the corridor and along to his brother’s room. He pulled the door open, violently, ready to give his brother hell. However, what the young man did not know, was that Harry was not in his room. In fact Harry was still in the living room contemplating the day. Balthazar was, however, in the room and had become bored. The snake had caught his chocolate frog several hours ago and was now bored of waiting for his master to return. Therefore when he smelled a scent that was not his master’s, approach the room and enter without his master’s permission, he decided to have some fun.

As the door opened Balthazar lunged for the boy, not planning to bite him, but simply scare him. The adder bared his fangs, dripping with poison. Edward made a high pitched scream and forgetting about being a wizard he ran down to his parents screaming and shouting wildly about a snake in Harry’s room.

Harry heard the commotion and made his way out of the living room, quickly and quietly while Balthazar was still explaining the situation to his family. Harry entered his room and picked up the chuckling adder. Harry then pulled up his top and quickly wrapped Balthazar around his waist before pulling the top back down. He then grabbed a book from his bedside table and collapsed on his bed, careful not to hurt Balthazar. Keeping his back to the wall Harry opened the book at a random page and pretended to read.

Just as he had settled down the door burst open to reveal the Potters, Black and Lupin. Edward was hiding behind the group of adults, a fearful look on his face. Harry could not see the faces of the group but he was sure that they were brilliant sight to behold. Harry sat up and turned around. He tilted his head to the side in a quizzical way, his eyes large and filled with innocence.

“Ummm…Sorry Honey” Lily said, the confusion showing in her voice. “We’ll just…just leave you to your…reading.” she said in an unsure voice. With that the group backed out of the room, shutting the door behind them. Harry then heard a commotion as the group made their way back downstairs. James was shouting at Edward for making up a ridiculous story and causing them to disturb his brother. Harry lay on his back and pulled up his shirt. He glared fondly at the snake in fake anger. Balthazar continued to laugh, hissing himself into a frenzy. Harry began to unwrap the snake from his body, careful not to jolt his own wrist too much.

“It was so funny Master. You should have seen the boy’s face Master.” The snake broke down in another fit of giggles. “He nearly pissed himself” another fit of laughter “I wish you could have seen
The snake continued to giggle and wriggle around on Harry’s stomach in his hysterics. Harry stroked the snake’s head gently to calm the erratic snake down a bit. He knew that if left to his own devices Balthazar would remain loud for the next few hours. He would continue to laugh at the prank he had pulled for longer than Harry deemed acceptable.

Harry had not had another conversation with the Potters at all since the debacle on the day after Yule. He had managed to avoid the people that he despised for all of two days. For those two days he had stayed in his room and spent his times discussing many different matters with his school friends, via the diary from Lawrence. Harry had managed to wrap his wrist in a bandage that had been procured from the first aid kit in the kitchen. He had had to do so in the early hours of the morning after he had received the injury to avoid any suspicion from the people in the house.

However the peace that Harry experienced was to shatter on the morning of the third day. Harry, as usual, had woken up early that morning, around six and had quietly made his way to the kitchen to make himself and Balthazar some breakfast. Balthazar was feeling particularly sluggish that day due to the sudden decrease in temperature and the snake was in no mood to go outside and hunt for his own food. Harry, unable to call or ask for a house elf for help, prepared the food by himself. He set out a plate for Balthazar consisting of two raw eggs, still in their shells and a chunk of raw beef. He set the plate on the counter where Balthazar proceeded to sluggishly remove himself from Harry’s waist and gobble down the food.

Harry then proceeded to make his own breakfast. He picked up a frying pan, putting it on the heat and cracking two eggs into it. He then stuck two pieces of bread in the toaster and readied a plate to place his creation on. Balthazar, after finishing his own meal, curled back around Harry’s waist muttering to himself about the stupidity of the cold weather. As Harry was putting his eggs onto his freshly buttered toast a crash sounded down the hallway and a drunken Sirius Black staggered into the kitchen. Dark circles weighed heavily under his eyes and the man smelled strongly of whiskey and cigarette smoke. His clothes were disheveled and he collapsed into one of the kitchen table chairs. Harry looked at the man awkwardly as he wondered what to do with his breakfast.

“It’s alright kid. Come…sit…eat…whatever the hell that is.” Sirius said, his words mumbled and a drunken lopsided smile appearing on his face as he gestured to Harry’s food. Harry picked up his plate and set it down opposite the intoxicated man. Harry then sat down, setting a mug of coffee next to his plate as he did so.

“Soooo Harry, having a nice morning are we?” the man said giggling at his own extended vowel. Harry could smell the alcohol on his breath “Well I’m glad you are. I don’t think that I am.” the man said, his face falling as he did so, slumping further into his chair.

“All I can think about is what an utter bastard I have been. The only way I can live with myself is to drink and yet it still doesn’t change a thing now does it?” the question was obviously rhetorical but Harry still raised an eyebrow at the man. What the fuck was he talking about? Sirius’ no longer seemed to realise that Harry was there and yet he still continued to talk.

“Poor little Harry. All alone in the world. No one to care for him. Why? Why did we do that to him? How could we do that to him? He was only a baby. Just a tiny little baby. Poor baby Harry.” Sirius’ ramblings then became incoherent, only the words Harry and Baby were intelligible.

Harry quickly left the room, unwilling to be in the same room as a man reduced to such a state. He placed his empty plate in the sink and in a moment of unexplained empathy he placed the still full mug of coffee in front of the drunk and broken man. He was not sure why and he wasn’t sure he
New year was the next major event that required Harry to socialise. However the socialising, this time, was Harry’s own choice. To Harry’s relief it turned out that the Potters did not celebrate the ritual of Samhain. This meant that Harry was able to make other arrangements for the night. The Potters were having a few friends over who also shared the ignorant idea that Samhain was not worthy of their attention. They were having drinks and celebrating a countdown in the traditional muggle way. Harry had, instead, made plans with the Warringtons. Even though Samhain was, usually, an exclusively family affair Cassius had explained the situation to said family and they were happy to help the poor boy from the uncultured family.

Harry, therefore, excused himself early from the meaningless social niceties that the Potters engaged in. Instead he flooed to Cassius’ manner. Harry was greeted enthusiastically by Cassius and ushered into a room that several people occupied. Harry was then introduced to the group. Alden Warrington, a tall, muscular man, with dark brown hair and matching eyes was introduced as Cassius’ father. Edith Warrington, a petite woman with sparkling blue eyes and blonde hair was Cassius’ mother. Cassius’ older sister, Angela, had long blonde hair, warm brown eyes and was taller than her mother, coming up to her father’s shoulder. Then finally, Cassius’ uncle, on his mother’s side, Edmund Beckett, from the Beckett family and the man’s son, Graham. Edmund Beckett was thin and of average height with blue eyes and brown hair. Graham was around seven years old and tonight would be his first participation in the ritual of Samhain. He had wide, innocent, grey eyes and shaggy brown hair. The group seemed acceptable. They were strong and powerful people that Harry hoped to have as allies in the future. The Warringtons were a house with influence and prestige. Angela was currently working in the ministry and was on her way to great things. Edmund, meanwhile, was the Lord of the Beckett family. The man was a widower and his only child, Graham, was the heir to the title.

After several more minutes spent talking to the group it was time for the niceties to end and the ritual to begin. Cassius, Harry and Graham were sent to an empty room where three robes were hanging up, ritual robes. While the adults prepared themselves in another room the three boys stripped and then put on a set of the robes each. The robes were slightly big as Harry put them on but they altered to his size as he pulled up the hood. The robes were black, covered in white, embroidered runes. The runes ranged from the ones for protection and life to the ones for death and destruction and covered the robes in all different shapes and sizes. After Lawrence helped Graham pull up his hood the three of them made their way out of the sparse room and into another.

The room Harry found himself in was large, as large as the Great Hall at Hogwarts. The room had stone floors and walls with a large dome shaped ceiling. The three boys walked barefoot, their steps echoing as they went. Cassius led them to the centre of the room, just below the centre of the dome. The echoes were more pronounced here. A runic circle was painted in white on the floor at this central point. An intricate design that radiated power and commanded attention. Harry stared at the design in awe. It really was a magnificent sight. As Harry lost himself in the beauty of the rune work the four adults entered the room, bringing with them the items needed for the ritual.

Harry had read about the intricacies and history of the ritual that the group was about to preform. The ritual of Samhain is one used to reconnect with dead ancestors and to connect the family as a whole. Although it was difficult to do correctly.

According to Harry’s studied, many ignorant muggle thought the ritual was one that should be performed on Halloween as that was the night that the dead had the most freedom to walk the earth. However that was all a mistake. Another blunder made by the ignorance of the non-magical. The rituals were in fact meant to be made on the turn of the new year. This was due to the fact that even
through the change and turmoil that came with the coming year there was one thing that stayed constant and that thing was family. Family had never been a constant for Harry but he thought that the idea sounded logical and showed commitment to Mother magic. Therefore the group gathered tonight would respect and honour their dead and show that they were remembered even with the passage of time.

Cassius snapped Harry out of his thoughts by placing a hand on his shoulder. Harry looked over to the older boy, the question clear in his eyes. Cassius gave a nod, the answer clear as well. Yes, they were ready to begin. Harry was led to his place in the circle. The group knelt, each in their own designated position, ready and waiting.

An apple for life, a pomegranate for death. Both placed in a cauldron of dirt and buried to show their unity and the magic that ran through them all. Placed in the centre of the circle. A silver knife, a cut to the finger tip. A drop of each blood in the dirt, to show their willing sacrifice. Connection of hands; unity. The chant of the leader.

The moon is bright, the Crone is old
The body lifeless - the bones so cold
We all live and pay our dues
To die in ones and threes and twos.

Death, dance and play the harp
Piercing silence in the dark
The Woman's old with withered limbs
Death beckons Her to dance with Him

Speak to us of things unknown
Lend your energies to this rite
To speed your journey, we have joined
On this sacred Samhain night

All ye spirits who walk this night -
Hearken! Hearken to my call
I bid you in our Circle join
Enter! Enter - one and all.

The stroke of midnight. The smell of cinnamon wafted through the air. Harry’s eyes closed without his consent. Hands tightened. He wasn't sure whose hands they were. A face flashed before Harry’s closed eyes. A small boy with a curious look on his face looked at Harry, his blue eyes shining with life. Another face appeared, a much older and more wrinkled one. Then another face and another and another until Harry could not distinguish one from the other. Hands grew tighter and tighter, the air grew thinner as the smell of cinnamon grew stronger. More and more faces of more and more people until it all became too much. Harry couldn't breath and he couldn't think. When Harry thought he was going to pass out the hands let go and Harry was thrust back into reality. Harry's eyes snapped open and he looked around him. His hands were newly disconnected from Cassius' on one side and Graham’s on the other. The rest of the members of the group seemed to be coming to their senses as Harry did.

The room was dark and all the people in the room seemed exhausted. In the short few minutes that the ritual had ended Graham had fallen asleep on his father’s shoulder. Cassius turned head towards Harry and a sleepy grin adorned his face. Cassius eyes were filled with joy and Harry was unsure as to why. That was until the situation was explained to him.

“Welcome to the family Harry” Alden Warrington said, with the same tired glee that Cassius
displayed on his face. Harry was utterly confused as to the reason behind this statement. What was the man talking about? The confusion must have shown on the boys face as Mr Warrington continued his explanation.

"You see Harry" the man was serious and yet there was an air of kindness in his voice. “the ritual accepted you as one of our own. You saw our history and we saw yours. We are now family in spirit if not in blood. Mother magic has seen fit to make you one of us” with an end to the explanation Mr Warrington gave a large smile to Harry.

“Now Cassius has told us a lot about you but we would like to get to know you a little better so would you like to stay the night? We can talk the whole thing over at breakfast when we are all a little more awake. Is that ok?” the man said in a kind voice. Harry nodded, unsure of what else he could do. He still had no real understanding of the situation. He was out of his depth and that was not something Harry liked to be. He wanted control and had none so he decided to do as the group wished and see how this panned out.

While mulling over the complexities of the family that he had stumbled into Harry was led to one of the spare rooms by Cassius. Harry was too tired and too caught up in his thoughts to pay any attention and so he instead collapsed to the given bed after stripping his robe and fell into a deep sleep. His thoughts flickered to Balthazar before he fell into the realm of Morpheus. The snake was back at the Potters, even though he knew the adder could defend himself, deep in the realm of his subconscious Harry was worried for him.

Harry opened his eyes as the sun started to stream through the windows. It took him several minutes to remember where he was and why he was here in the first place. Harry realised that he was dressed only in his underwear and had no idea where Cassius was. He also did not have his wand, as any and all magical items were prohibited from being on ones person during the ritual. Harry pushed himself from the bed and found the ensuite. He carried out his morning ablutions.

As he reentered the bedroom the vulnerability of the situation he was in struck him. Harry may know Cassius but he had no idea what the older boy’s family was like. He was without a wand or clothes in a total strangers house. He could be targeted at any moment, a moment he did not want to occur. Harry looked around the room, assessing the most viable escape route. As Harry was assessing the possibility of jumping out the window a small house elf appeared in the room.

“Flopsy be bringing Young Master his clothes and his wand. Flopsy be placing thems here for Young Master” the house elf, Flopsy, said as it placed the items in its hands down on the bed. The elf then said:

“If Young Master be wanting breakfast Flopsy be showing him the way?” the elf questioned, turning its head to the side, its eyes widening at Harry. Harry nodded at the elf. Harry then grabbed the pile that the house elf had placed on the bed, finding the pile contained his clothes from last night and his wand with holster. He quickly pulled the clothes on and strapped his wand to his left forearm before glaring at the house elf to show he would not be kept waiting.

The house elf seemed to shake slightly at the glare before leading Harry from the room and down to the dining room. The family, that was now supposedly his, sat around the table in different states of dress eating their breakfast. Cassius was in a robe and slippers, Graham was wearing black pyjamas covered in small golden snitches that whizzed around the material; whereas Mr Warrington was wearing a casual robe.

“Morning Harry” Cassius said bright and joyful smile on the older boys face. Graham gave Harry a small wave and a shy smile before Cassius continued. “What did you do to poor Flopsy Harry? You
look like you scared her out of her wits” Cassius said laughter in his voice.

“Enough with your joking Cassius.” Mrs Warrington interrupted the smiling young man, a smile on her own face. “Now Harry dear, why don’t you sit down and eat some breakfast” the woman said with a good natured smile. She indicated to one of the empty seat at the table and Harry sat down in said seat.

Cassius sat to Harry’s left and an empty seat to his right. As Harry sat a small notebook and self inking quill appeared by his plate. Harry gathered a few things onto his plate while the others around him talked. He had decided to play along with the weird happy family scene that was currently playing out. He needed to understand more about the situation before he acted outside of the set parameters that had been set the moment he entered the room. He ate a small amount, listening to the chit chatter going on around him. As Harry finished his meal Mr Warrington addressed him.

“Now Harry I think that it’s time we explain to you what’s going on as I fear the explanation was a tad unclear last night. Come now, let us retire to my study and you will understand the true consequences of last night’s ritual.” With that the man stood.

“Oh and please bring your quill and paper Harry, if you would be so kind.” Harry stood, along with Mr Warrington and the pair made their way towards the study. Harry was ready for some sort of explanation but made no outward sign of the anticipation he felt. He must show no weakness.

The study was a grand room, with many book shelves and a large ornate mahogany desk situated in the middle. Said desk was covered in papers filled with the same scrawling writing that Harry assumed was that of Mr Warrington. Mr Warrington gathered the papers and put them on a side table before indicating towards the seat on one side of the desk.

“Now Harry please take a seat and I shall explain. You see this is a complex matter” he said with a sigh as he resigned himself to a long explanation.

“You see, the ritual last night was one that required the blessing of Mother magic for it to work. We do said ritual at a time when there is already a stronger connection between the dead and the living then there would usually be. However” the man leaned forwards placing his chin in his hands. “even using runes and sacrifices means nothing without Mother magic accepting the sacrifice that we gave. I had given up hope of my sacrifice ever being accepted. However last night, it was.” Mr Warrington shifted again leaning backwards in his chair, his emotions overcoming him.

“It was, thanks to you that for the first time since he died I saw the face of my little boy” a single tear trickled down the man’s face “not just a picture, his real face, it was him, I just know it.” Another tear. After several seconds the man composed himself, getting his emotions back under control. He took several deep breaths and wiped the tears from his face.

“In accordance with magical lore the only time a blessing can occur is when a true family comes together as one to respect mother magic. This therefore means that in the eyes of mother magic and in the eyes of the Ministry of Magic we are family in magic and in spirit. However we have reached a bit of a grey area within the magical community as you are under seventeen and so a minor. You have your biological family, of course, but it seems that you now have your magical family as well. In cases where this has happened before the individual in question will decide which family they wish to stay with. However I feel that the Potters have too high a social standing for you to become a Warrington or Beckett only. But there may be a case for joint custody. Under magical law it would seem that you living with both families for part of the year is lawful and would avoid the unwanted attention of the media.”

Harry had a lot to think about. The man’s explanation did make some sense and yet there were still
things that Harry questioned. The idea that he had been blessed by magic was something that made no sense to Harry. Why of all the people in the magical world was it him who was chosen? Harry spent the next several minutes, under the scrutinising gaze of Mr Warrington, bouncing thoughts and questions around his mind. Harry also assessed what the best way to word said questions were. He needed to remain calm and yet still stand his ground to Mr Warrington. The questions that Harry finally wrote down were:

What do you mean by Warrington or Beckett?
What are you going to do about the Potters?

Harry then slid the paper with the questions written on it to Mr Warrington. The questions may seem ineloquent but they reflected the mindset and concerns of a normal eleven year old boy. It fitted with the persona that Harry was trying to fit with. Mr Warrington picked up the paper and scanned through the two questions on the page. He then set the paper back on the desk and looked up at Harry, his eyes sparkling in an emotion Harry was not sure he recognised, before the man answered.

“The answer to your first question is that usually the receiver of the blessing takes the family name of the family they were blessed with. Not to say that this happens very often. I believe it has only happened twelve times before and only four times with a minor involved. Well, those are the cases on record, there may be more that have not been recorded. Anyway, I digress, you would have had the option to either keep the name Potter or become a member of either the Warrington or the Beckett family. However in these circumstances I believe it will not be so simple. Now the answer to the second question is dependent entirely on your own decisions. Harry I would love for you to become my son and to take the Warrington name. Nothing would give me, or the rest of family, greater joy. However Edmund feels the same way about you. He would willingly make you his heir over Graham as the boy has no real interest in ruling a house. He may only be seven but it’s clear he would not want that responsibility in the future”

At this Mr Warrington shifted in his seat, as though it pained him to admit such a thing. Harry was now even more baffled about the man’s intentions and his family. Why would someone choose to have Harry in their family when they gained nothing from it? Also, why would someone choose him over their own son as Lord of their house? Harry sat baffled for several seconds before Mr Warrington began to speak again.

“However as the Potters are such a powerhouse we should most likely arrange an informal meeting with them to discuss this new development. But, no matter what happens, Edmund and I would like to tell you that you are a part of both the Warringtons and the Becketts, even if not in name. You are now and forever a part of both our families Harry.”

With that a grin lit up Mr Warrington’s face and Harry felt utterly out of his depth.

Several hours later found Harry and the Warrington/Beckett family standing outside the Potter mansion, poised to knock at the door. Harry had spent the past two hours before they arrived talking to Cassius about the new and strange situation that they now found themselves. Cassius appeared happy with his new little brother. The fact they were now connected through magic cemented the relationship more solidly with the boy Cassius already considered his baby brother. In Harry’s explanation of his thoughts on the situation Cassius had explained that his parents and uncle would want Harry to call them by their first names. Harry therefore attempted to correct their names in his own mind to the less formal alternative. That was what they expected so that would be what he did.

As Alden rapped his fist on the door Harry prepared himself for the inevitable battle that was sure to ensue. There was not a werewolf’s chance on the night of the full moon that the Potters were going to give him up to either of the families that he had arrived at the house with. As soon as the door
opened, with the face of Lily Potter greeting them, Harry pushed passed the crowd dragging Cassius along with him. Graham latched onto Cassius’ arm, therefore being pulled along with both of them.

Harry led the group up the stairs and into his room, leaving the adults to talk over the mess that had been created. The door was pushed open and Harry pulled the pair behind him inside. Balthazar was lounging on the bed when then three walked in. He reared his head and hissed at the unfamiliar people in his room. Cassius and Graham froze at the sight of the snake, scared that any sudden movements would cause the snake to strike. Harry merely ignored the two and moved towards the agitated snake, who was more worried about Harry than angry at the intruders. Harry stroked Balthazar’s scales gently to calm the creature down. Cassius and Graham only continued to stare. So, after several seconds of silence and stares, Harry grabbed his notebook and scribbled a note to the two boys.

‘This is Balthazar, he’s an adder and he will not hurt you. You may stroke him if you so wish.’

Harry gave a small smile to the two boys as he handed the note to Cassius who then read it aloud to Graham. The small boys eye’s lit up as he heard the news and he looked towards the snake in awe. The little boy tiptoed towards the snake as one would a scared animal, seemingly scared to spook the adder. The little boy raised his hand slowly as he edged further forward. After several seconds, that seemed to stretch on forever, the boy’s small fingers met with the snake’s cool scales. Graham let out a small giggle as he began to stroke the snake gently. Balthazar preened at the attention he was gaining and Graham moved his small form onto the bed and continued to indulge the snake.

Leaving Graham and Balthazar to entertain themselves Cassius and Harry moved their conversation to the other side of the room. They sat on the rug, Harry’s notebook between them and talked about the upcoming return to school and their plans for the new term. They discussed Lawrence’s departure from the school in the near future and which allies were to be accepted and which to be denied. Meanwhile Graham and Balthazar seemed to be getting along splendidly. The young boy was lying on the bed giggling while Balthazar twisted his coils around the boy.

The peace was however interrupted by an annoying little shit, also known as Edward Potter. The first indication that their was a disturbance was when Balthazar shot over to Harry and curled under the boys shirt, wrapping around his torso. This left Graham on the bed, looking sad, with tears forming in his eyes as the snake he had newly befriended disappeared. There was no time for a tantrum, however, as the door burst open to reveal the scowling face of Edward fucking Potter. The boy who lived to be stupid. The boy seemed oblivious to the other two boys in the room and stormed towards Harry. He grabbed the younger boy by his shirt, lifting his up from his sitting position. Harry’s shirt rode up and Harry was a tad concerned that Balthazar’s tail may be revealed.

“You piece of Shit” yelled Edward, spittle flying onto Harry’s face. “Your fucking snake got me in so…” however before the boy could get any further in his insults a fist connected with his cheekbone; the fist of one Cassius Warrington. Edward dropped Harry while his own head crashed into the wall. His body crumpled and he fell to the floor, dazed and his head pounding. Cassius, however, had no time for the-boy-who-lived. Instead the young man went to Harry’s side and ensured that the boy was not hurt. Graham, who was now in full blown tears, ran to Cassius’ side and began to whimper slightly as he pushed himself into his older cousin’s side. While Cassius was engaged in ensuring the two younger boys safety Edward had been regaining his senses.

“What the FUCK! Why did you do that you bastard?” Edward shouted, his eye swelling and his breath coming out in fast puffs. Cassius said nothing, instead he tried to comfort Graham who was becoming more and more anxious as Edward’s yells and swearing continued.

“Come on, answer me you stupid fucker!” Edward came closer to the group on the floor, his anger
blinding his own sense of self preservation. It did not occur to the idiot that the young man in front of him was a year older than him and half a foot taller. Cassius also had five years of duel training under his belt as his family held training sessions over the holidays. Therefore when Cassius stood to defend his cousin and his brother, in all but blood, the boy did something very stupid.

Edward lunged for Cassius, ready to tackle the taller boy to the ground. Cassius, however, dodged to the side, avoiding the lunge. As he went he pushed Graham to the side, ensuring the small boy was not hurt. Cassius was now pissed. Cassius was, in normal circumstances, a cheery guy. He tried to keep his cool and just laugh the stupid people off. However when someone threatened his family Cassius lost all sense of composure. Edward picked himself up and lunged at the older boy again. This time Cassius didn't dodge the charge but instead met it head on. Cassius’ knee met with Edward’s most sensitive parts. Edward fell to his knees, his hands clutching at the pained area. While the boy knelt in pain Cassius gripped the boy’s left arm violently. He quickly rotated the arm anti-clockwise, pushed it forwards and up. Cassius’ movements were filled with hatred and a malicious smile lit up his face as a loud pop filled the room. The sound of a high, piercing scream followed. Cassius stood over the boy as he lay writhing on the floor in agony. He, again, gripped the boys arm and rotated it, popping it back into the socket. Cassius left the boy panting on the floor as he went back over to Graham and Harry.

“Well” Cassius said to Edward, after ensuring the safety of his family. “It seems that we’ve established that to say you are useless in physical combat is a total overstatement. Now if you tell anyone about this I will dislocate the other arm. It doesn’t matter if you think you’re safe you will not be. I have my ways to make your life a living hell. Now piss off out of here and if you mess with my family again you will not live to see another day.”

It had been several hours and several heated debates later when the Potters, Warringtons and Becketts finally came to an agreement. It also involved the arrival of one Albus Dumbledore to help settle the matter. The Potters, not wanting any political backlash, had fought for the keeping Harry’s surname as the traditional Potter. The Warringtons and Becketts had agreed on this front, not wanting Harry to have to choose a side and not wanting the media attack that would surely follow the change.

The agreement they had come to was that Harry would spend half of the holidays at each of the respective households. The time spent at the Potter’s would make up half the time and the other half would be split between the Warringtons and the Becketts, dependent on Harry’s choice in the matter. Harry would be free to write letters and have floo calls with the other family dependent on where he was staying. Harry could also spend time with friends and stay the night if he so wished. The conclusion was made that Harry would spend the rest of the holiday with the Warringtons/Becketts as he’d already spent around half of it with the Potters.

With those decisions made Edmund made his way up to Harry’s room, at the direction of James Potter, to collet the boys. The man opened the door and was met with the sight of the group playing chess, sitting on Harry’s bed. Graham was being taught the rules by Cassius as he played Harry. The boys looked up as Edmund entered the room. A happy smile lit up Edmund’s face as he saw his usually reserved son playing with his family. Edmund sat on the end of the bed, the grin still firmly in place and explained to the boys, in simple terms, the agreement that had been reached between the three families.

“Come on now boys. Cassius, Graham, why don’t you two stay here and help Harry pack the things he needs. I’ll be back upstairs in a few minutes to help with the shrinking charms. Don’t bring too many things now Harry” he said ruffling the boy’s hair as he did so. “we can always buy you whatever you need. Only bring the essentials.” With that Edmund departed, the grin still on his face.
As the man left, Harry’s face adopted a scowl, before he quickly forced it into a smile. He was uncomfortable with physical contact and did not like people who thought that they had the right to initiate it without his consent. In normal situations Harry would have the offender in agony, under the cruciatus curse, their limbs twitching so much that they were unable to lift a hand to touch him without his consent. However under the current circumstances and company Harry believed that to be inappropriate. For one it was illegal for that specific spell to be used and Harry was only eleven and so could not do underage magic. Also Edmund was a member of the family he was now an unwillingly a member of. He did not want to make his life more difficult then it needed to be.

Harry had no desire at all to enter into this new situation. Harry wished to kill the Potters whenever they were near him and so Harry did not want any more complex relationships developing that he had no investment in. The relationship that he had with the Potters was one that Harry understood, mostly. The entirety of the relationship was based on a mixture of guilt and hatred. No love, friendship or care were involved in any way. Harry wanted nothing more than that. He did not want to be somewhere that involved the expectation of two way social interaction that was not on his own terms. He had no desire for the love or the compassion that both the Warringtons and the Becketts seemed to be promising. Harry didn't even understand why these people wanted anything to do with him. What did they gain? They had not seen the power of his magic and they owed him nothing. They had only been forced together with a ritual. Why did they not just leave Harry with the Potters? What were their motives?

In truth Harry was scared. He had never had someone do something only for his benefit. Harry had never had someone that cared. The Potters had thrown him away, the Dursleys had seen him as a burden and nothing more. Then the Potters had taken him back and thrown him into a school where he had a brother who hated him and people who beat him up and then wiped his memory. He had no concept of what it was to have a relationship with no strings attached. He was not sure that he wanted one. Harry didn't know how to cope with the intricacies of a real family relationship and the thought of having one terrified him.
Harry rubbed his eyes, yawned and stretched his arms above his head unwilling to get out of bed, yet knowing that it was a necessity. Harry had already put off getting up for as long as possible. Balthazar made a grumpy hiss as Harry moved to get up, also being unwilling to wake up, just like his master. Harry threw on an outfit, readying himself for his return to school, his expensive and elegant robes fitted him perfectly. It was the first of September and Harry was ready to return to Hogwarts for his fifth year. A sadistic grin lit up Harry’s face as he realised the significance of today, today would be his official initiation as King of Slytherin. A sparkle lit up Harry’s eyes at the very thought. He had been Prince since Lawrence had left and now that Cassius had finally finished school he was King. Harry, granted, would be said not have his company this year and yet he was ready to become King. He wanted to have that power and he wanted it now.

Just as Harry was putting the finishing touches to his packing and polishing his appearance an excited boy ran into the room, a grin lighting up the younger boy’s face. He ran over to Harry, excitement glittering in his eyes and his body a coil of excitement.

“Harry, Harry!” Graham yelled. “Come on, we need to go. It’s time to go back to Hogwarts. Come on Harry” the younger boy said, radiating happiness and tugging at Harry’s sleeve to motivate him to leave.

It was to be the start of Graham’s second year at Hogwarts and the younger boy was full of anticipation to see all his friends again. Graham had been sorted into Ravenclaw, to the surprise of no-one, as the boy had always loved to learn. He may have little to no knowledge on Astronomy or Charms but ask the boy about Music, Alchemy or Magical creatures and he could talk for hours on end. Hogwarts had made the quite boy finally come out of his shell. Meeting people that had similar interests to him and being able to discuss whatever he wanted and have a willing ear had done wonders for him. He no longer cared if others saw him as different or strange.

In part Harry put that down to Luna Lovegood who had taken his little cousin under her wing and had showed him that life was not only about conformity. Harry and Luna had become acquaintances in the girl’s first year when he had found her wondering the hallways, shoeless, talking of finding a Gulpimg Plimpy. When Luna had seen Harry she had tilted her head to the side, a curious look filling her eyes and talked about him. Telling herself that he needed help with his Nargles. Harry had been baffled by the girl, confused as to what the fuck she was talking about. In Harry’s confusion the girl had come forward and laid a hand on his shoulder. Their eyes met and Harry felt his whole body jolt at the intensity of the stare, it seemed to pierce his soul.

“Don’t worry Harry” she whispered soothingly “No matter what you’ll find what you need. It’ll be waiting” a small smile made its way onto her face before she turned around and left Harry to his thoughts. It had been another week before the two had seen each other again. Harry and Luna had become acquaintances in the girl’s first year when he had found her wondering the hallways, shoeless, talking of finding a Gulpimg Plimpy. When Luna had seen Harry she had tilted her head to the side, a curious look filling her eyes and talked about him. Telling herself that he needed help with his Nargles. Harry had been baffled by the girl, confused as to what the fuck she was talking about. In Harry’s confusion the girl had come forward and laid a hand on his shoulder. Their eyes met and Harry felt his whole body jolt at the intensity of the stare, it seemed to pierce his soul.

“That was silly of you Harry” Luna said in a floaty voice “Your’e never going to be able to get into someone’s mind when your’e being so obvious about it” the tone was not mocking but simply matter of fact. As though explaining to a small child why they shouldn't eat pudding before dinner. Friendly and yet slightly patronising. However Harry was still too dazed to fully comprehend the words that
were being spoken. Harry’s only aim at that moment was to get air back into his lungs.

“Here, let me help you up” Luna said, extending a hand towards the collapsed older boy. Harry’s eyes connected with the girl’s again as he took the hand and stood up. It took Harry several seconds before his mind connected the dots. He tilted his head to the side, question clear in his eyes as they met her’s. For Harry this was a test, he wanted to know if the girl was the real deal. Luna looked back and smiled at him

“Of corse I’ll teach you Harry. The Nargles may finally leave you alone if you succeed”.

From then on Luna had helped Harry to understand the complexities and intricacies of his mind and of others. The two had bonded even though Harry had never spoken or written a word to her. Luna just always seemed to know what was going on in the older boy’s head. So when Luna had taken Graham under her wing he had given her a grateful smile and she had nodded in understanding as she had already known the worry Harry had felt over not having the boy in his own house. With Luna there Harry knew that Graham would be protected no matter what.

Harry came out of his thoughts with another shake from Graham and he gave the boy a glare. Yet it had no force behind it, it was merely to get the boy to stop his annoying behaviour. Harry, having missed breakfast due to his desire for sleep, wrapped the now much larger Balthazar around his waist, picked up his trunk and made his way out of the room, following Graham. The rest of the family was downstairs waiting for them both. A grin lit up Edmund’s, Alden’s and Edith’s faces as they saw the boys. Alden then spoke in his rumbling tone.

“Now boys, Cassius is going to take you to the station so we all need to say our goodbyes now. I hope you both have a wonderful year.” he said. A grin lit up his face and he pulled Harry into his arms and a bear hug was had. This then occurred with the rest of the group as the two boys were pushed and pulled by the rest of the family until they finally made it to the fire place where Cassius was waiting.

“Come on you two” Cassius said, trying and failing to hide the humour in his eyes at his little brother’s treatment. “We need to go, so grab some floo powder and we’ll be on our way.” With that Cassius stepped into the fire and left with a puff of green flame. Harry and Graham quickly followed, preparing themselves for new year at Hogwarts.

The doors to the Great Hall were flung open with a boom and Harry made his way though them leading his students inside. The Slytherins followed behind him on mass. The other three houses watched as the last house of the four made their way into the Hall for the Welcoming Feast. Harry seated himself down at the centre of the table, with his back to the wall ensuring he could survey the room. To his left sat Nathaniel Flamel, the great-great-great-grandson of Nicholas Flamel. The boy was a fourth year, a star in Potions and Defence as well as being a natural leader. He was the current Prince of Slytherin and was next in line to be king.

Flora and Hestia Carrow sat to Harry’s right. The two were in fourth year and were Lawrence’s younger siblings and were therefore under Harry’s protection and yet the two were still worthy Slytherins in their own right. The space in front of Harry was left empty out of respect but in the near vicinity sat Blaise Zabini, Daphne Greengrass and Zachary Nettles, the only seventh year of Harry’s inner circle. Along with Sebastian Diggory, a sixth year and the younger brother of Cedric Diggory. On the outskirts of the group where those considered to be elite but not trustworthy enough to become the inner circle. That group consisted of Faye Weasley, a second year, Astoria Greengrass, Gawain Hornby, a seventh year, Theodore Nott, Demond Lima, a sixth year and finally Draco Malfoy. Draco had realised the error of his petty jealousy and had attempted to gain favour with
Harry at the start of third year, although Harry still did not trust him fully and so he was kept at a distance.

As the group sat down the rest of the Slytherins poured in behind them, sitting in their designated seats and ensuring that room was left for the potential first years, and so the sorting began. For the most part Harry ignored the whole thing. There was little to no point in the affair as it did not concern Harry in the slightest. There were only a couple of students that Harry actually cared about. One of them was currently being sorted, Samuel Rosier, becoming a Slytherin. Elise Rowle also became a Slytherin and the final point of interest, Alfie Weasley, became a Ravenclaw. As Harry’s new Slytherins made their seats he gently probed each of their minds, assessing their capabilities and motivations. They all seemed to have the basic thoughts and feelings that all children had. All except Rowle. The girl seemed to be dangerous and full of dark thoughts. Dark as night. It intrigued Harry to think that there was one so young, with such dark thoughts. A twisted smile made its way onto Harry’s face that sent shivers down the spine of any and all watching.

Once the feast was over Harry stood up, his robes billowing and made his way from the Hall, Nathaniel following close behind him. Harry led his Slytherins’ back to their common room in preparation for the introduction of the new students. As he arrived he seated himself in the King’s chair, with Nicholas sitting to his right and the rest of the inner circle sitting around him. The rest of the Slytherins made their way to their different positions in the common room while the first years stood in the centre of the room looking nervous and awkward.

When the awkwardness became too much Professor Snape entered the room with a swish of his robes. He did the usual speech about Slytherin having a united front and ensuring unity was shown to the other houses. There was also an explanation of the hierarchy of the house; the identity of the Prince and the King and their roles within the house and with that Snape left the first years to it. That was the cue for the prefects to take their new housemates to their rooms. As the group left Elise Rowle’s eyes met Harry’s. The look was filled with hatred and envy. Harry simply grinned. This was going to be fun, he thought to himself.

Harry was sitting for breakfast the next morning when an owl he did not recognise swooped down in front of him and dropped a letter before making its way back out of the Hall. The bird didn't even stop for a moment to try and get some food. Instead it was gone in an instant. Harry was aware of the curious glance he was getting from the members of his house and that of his inner circle. Harry slid the letter into his pocket and made his way back to his room, signalling for the other Slytherins to remain sitting. He needed to see who the letter was from. Therefore as soon as he had left the Hall and ensured he had no-one was watching he ran back to the common room. Sitting in the empty common room Harry ripped open the letter open and his eyes scanned the letter. After his first reading Harry was in shock and after the second he felt gleeful. This was brilliant, this was exactly the opportunity that Harry had been looking for.

Harry picked up the feather that the letter contained. He then tapped it three times with a wand, then, with a small pop he was gone from the room. As it was a Saturday Harry had the freedom to be gone all day. His inner circle would most definitely cover for him if anyone queried his absence. Harry reappeared several seconds later in an empty room. According to the letter Harry was to wait here until someone came for him. The wards would have been triggered by his arrival. Harry sat down on one of the chairs situated within the room. Balthazar popped his head out from Harry’s collar, tasting the air and asking numerous questions, all of which Harry simply shrugged off.

Several minutes passed and then a door was pushed open to reveal a towering man. Harry guessed he was around seven feet tall. The man had long, messy, silver hair and a shaggy beard. He was wearing black robes and his eyes shimmered black. As soon as these eyes met Harry’s he lunged at
the younger boy. He pinned Harry to the floor and raised his fist, ready to strike Harry in the face. Harry managed to overcome his shock at the man’s violence and punch the other man before he had a chance to punch Harry.

A growl erupted from the man’s lips and he clawed at Harry’s face, his sharp nails ripping through the delicate skin. Harry wriggled under the man’s weight, attempting to get free and yet the man overpowered him. Harry’s right arm was trapped under the silver haired man and so he was unable to attain his wand. That was when the man’s hands clamped down around Harry’s throat and pushed, his grip getting tighter and tighter with each passing second. Harry’s vision became fuzzy at the edges and black spots began to form. Just as Harry was about to pass out a booming voice filled the room.

“Fenrir!” the voice rippled with anger but was controlled. “Let. Him. Go” Each word was filled with authority and power. Each a stab through the now silent room. Fenrir’s grip relaxed around Harry’s neck and Harry gasped, air rushing into his lungs. He felt like a drowning man finally reaching the surface of the water. He took gulp after gulp of air until he no longer felt as though he was going to pass out. Although the fact that Fenrir still sat atop him and was growling loudly did very little to help.

“Fenrir” the voice said again “I would much appreciate it if you removed yourself from young Mr Potter here immediately.” Even though the words were polite, the tone promised pain if Fenrir dared to disobey. The silver haired man stood up, purposely stepping on Harry as he did so. He then knelt in front of the other man and tried to explain what had happened.

“But, my Lord he’s a vampire, he must be. I can smell the stench of Vampire all over him” he said with a growl and glare at Harry. “He shouldn’t be allowed to…” However before the man was able to continue a red bolt shot from the other man’s wand and struck Fenrir in the chest. Fenrir collapsed to the floor, his body spasming and screams being ripped from his throat. Harry pushed himself up and smirked in satisfaction at the way Fenrir writhed in pain.

“I care not for your excuses Fenrir. I told you to bring him to me and you did not. That is worthy of punishment, no matter what drivel you spew. Now go.” the man said with wave of his hand. Fenrir pushed himself up and tried to maintain his dignity as he limped out of the room. Harry watched him go and revelled in the pain displayed on his face. It was immensely satisfying.

“Now Mr Potter, a seat if you will.” the man said as Harry got his first real look at him. The man had piercing red eyes, brown wavy hair and a youthful look to his face. He was wearing well fitted black, open robes with a black suit underneath them. As Harry observed this he relocated himself onto a seat and waited for the man to speak.

“Mr Potter, I’m sure you know who I am and If you don’t then you are not worthy of my time.” the man said and Harry nodded. He did indeed know who this man was. He was the whole reason Harry had come in the first place.

“I feel that you and I are a lot alike Mr Potter. I also appear to be in your debt. I’m sure that without you, madness would have engulfed me at a much faster rate.” As he was speaking the man sat down in a chair opposite Harry and then continued.

“You see, intelligent conversation stimulates the mind and it is extremely hard to come by. I’m thankful for that Mr Potter.” Harry watched as the man leaned forward in his seat. “Now I feel that I owe you for that. So if you are willing to come with me I think you’ll find something to your liking.” A small smirk lit up the man’s face and he stood up and moved to exit the room. Harry debated with himself over the pros and cons of following the man. This was the Dark Lord. He was about to follow the Dark Lord somewhere. He was alone with the Dark Lord, anything could happen. Harry,
after several seconds of deliberation, stood up and followed the man. He wanted to know what it was that he was getting. What was his reward?

Harry followed the Dark Lord down corridor after corridor and down numerous sets if stairs until they finally reached their designated location. The dungeons. Screams rang through the halls and echoed off the walls. Harry was revelling in every second of it. The Dark Lord lead Harry to a cell of his own. He opened it to reveal a man chained to the wall. Voldemort walked up to the man clicking his fingers in front of the man’s face, one on either side. The man’s eyes flickered open, fear radiated from him as he saw the two people in front of him. He started to shake in terror and mumble over and over, words Harry could not understand. Voldemort then turned to Harry, a wild grin on his face.

“Here you go Harry, a nice muggle for you to play with. There are tools over in the corner but feel free to use your magic as the ministry cannot detect it through the wards.” With that Voldemort waved his hand and conjured a chair, before sitting down to watch the show.

Several hours later found Harry utterly high off his most recent kill, lounging in one of the numerous rooms in the Dark Lord’s house, a towel wrapped around his waist. Harry had killed before, this was not his first. That kill had been when he was thirteen. Cassius and Lawrence had, gradually, found out the truth of Harry’s life before Hogwarts. Of course they never learned the full details of Harry’s life. No-one would ever have that sort of insight into Harry’s life. However after they had discovered some of the atrocities committed by the Dursley’s they had decided that all three of them would love to play out some of Harry’s fantasies. The summer of third year had seen the three arrive at number 4 Privet Drive. Lawrence had been nineteen and Cassius had recently turned seventeen meaning the two could apparate in and out as well as stunning the Dursleys for Harry. The whole day and most of the night had been spent maiming, torturing and then finally killing the three bastards and Harry had enjoyed every second. He had had the honour of killing all three of the fuckers. First had been Dudley, making his parents watch as the light left his eyes, then Petunia had been next and finally Vernon. Harry had loved every second.

From then on Harry had developed a taste for killing. The high from killing the Dursley’s may have lasted months and yet the feeling eventually faded and Harry wanted more and so more he had had. He was not picky about who he killed, just that it was someone. Harry had killed many muggles but had also helped Cassius and Lawrence in their mission to destroy any who opposed them. The two had made their way up in the world of politics, climbing higher and higher up the ladder. Although they may have skipped a rung or two. Both Lawrence and Cassius were of much higher esteem in the Wizarding World then their age would suggest.

Harry had not had a kill in several months and this was therefore the reason for the current bliss he was feeling. The cutting, burning, slicing and tearing had felt amazing and Harry was now enjoying the post kill bliss. Harry heard the door open and sat up to see the Dark Lord entering the room. The red eyes burning as they scanned his partially naked form. A step forward, then another, and another. The Dark Lord was standing in front of Harry. His hand reached out and with one element finger he stroked the rune engraved on Harry’s chest.

“Well now I see what got my little werewolf so riled up.” he laughed a cruel smile creeping up his face. “A vampire rune indeed. I wonder who it is that gave it to you” humour filled the man’s voice as he spoke.

“Now I know you won’t tell me” he said, his finger running up and down Harry’s chest. “but I suppose I could force it out of you” he said with a glint in his eye and danger in his voice. His other hand gripped Harry’s shoulder as he said the words, pulling him closer, looking into the depths of his
soul. After several seconds the Dark Lord dropped his hands and took a step back.

“Come now Harry, you really must be going. I’m sure the old coot will notice if you’re missing. Now get dressed and you can go back.” Harry did as told and was then transported back to Hogwarts. Before leaving the Dark Lord told him that he would look forward to Harry having another visit. Harry couldn’t say he felt any differently.

Harry knew that he needed to speak to Cassius about the new development with the Dark Lord. The young man was his point of council. He knew that he needed his brother. Without him Harry would have spiralled into insanity and let it overcome him. Harry had, overtime, come to accept that Cassius was necessary for him. He was the first person that Harry could claim he had feelings other than hate for, or at least feelings that he could remember having. Any feelings Harry had before his stint at the Dursley’s did not count.

Harry sat in the Great Hall for dinner mulling over how was best to contact his brother. Harry did not want to be in the Hall at that current moment but it was necessary for appearances sake. Lunch was something easily missed as many Slytherins ate at different times. However, dinner was had as a united front and so Harry had to attend, although the food gave him no interest in the slightest. He merely sat pushing it around his plate as he thought about how to contact the older boy. Harry could either write in the journal that Lawrence had got them all, the one from several years back that they all still used. Although he wasn’t sure he wanted the others with the diary to know of this development. A letter was another option, but it was too likely to be intercepted.

As Harry continued to mull over the other possible options a pair of eyes fixed on him and glared. Hating his very existence. One Edward Potter would have been able to kill the boy he was staring at if his glare was anything to go by. He utterly hated Harry, he hated every fibre of the other boy being. Harry had destroyed his life. He had made it so that Edward’s parents were different. Edward wasn’t sure the two of them would ever be the same. They had shut themselves off from the world and were not planning on coming back anytime soon. It had all started when Harry, the utter bastard, had decided that the Potters were not good enough for him. He had to go and get magically adopted, didn't he. From then on it all went to shit.

Edward was not as stupid as peoples thought, he knew that even before the adoption his parents had seemed a little different, they had talked less and seemed to worry more. However when Harry had his holidays split they seemed to get worse. The second half of the Christmas holidays of the first year had been a nightmare. The pair had spent it moping around the house, along with Sirius and Remus. They had sent letter after letter to Harry with no replies coming. Edward had actually been grateful to go back to school. He had wanted to be back with the twins and to pull some pranks. For the first time in his life Edward felt he had needed a break from his parents. However the situation had only got worse. The time Harry did stay at home became less and less. He was supposed to spend half of the designated holiday time within each household. However it seemed that Harry spent as little time actually in the house as possible. He was always off doing something, Melin knows what, or seeing someone. The only time he seemed to spend at home was to sleep and even that was becoming more infrequent.

Edward thought back to last Christmas. It was Harry’s year with the Potters after spending the previous year with the Warringtons. The Potters, Sirius and Remus had been exited for the family Christmas. At nine that morning Lily had gone upstairs to collect Harry, ready to open all the presents. Harry’s bed had been empty, cold and not slept in. Lily had come back downstairs looking sad and shocked. The day had dragged on as the family had unwrapped presents, eaten and played christmas games. They may have been doing the actions themselves but any enjoyment they felt was simply not there. Lily remained reserved, she barely spoke a word and the gloom filled the room.
Harry arrived back in the house at around seven in the evening he entered through the main fireplace and was met with the face of the three Potters, Lupin and Black. They saw the slight smile on his face as he entered and the new set of robes that Harry was sporting and their eyes widened. Shock and sadness filled Lily’s but only anger filled Edward’s. He was so angry at the boy before him who had ruined their Christmas.

“Where have you been son?” James asked softly, the sadness was audible in his voice. “We were worried about you.” Harry just shrugged and made his way upstairs to his room ignoring anything else that was said. Edward’s blood boiled as he watched the younger boy go. He wanted to beat the shit out of him. He wanted to make him suffer like he had made them suffer. However the last time Harry had found out that Edward had hurt him the consequences had been extreme. The very thought sent shivers down Edward’s spine. So he had sat with his fists clenched in his lap and watched the boy walk away. From that moment onwards Edward had not seen Harry for more than a couple of minutes at a time when at home. In fact sitting there, staring at Harry was the longest he had seen the boy over the whole of summer. As Edward watched at him his rage only grew and he wanted nothing more than to hit the bastard and tell him to get his shit together. The boy was hurting his family. He just wanted it to be back to the way it was before they had got the worthless little shit back from the Dursleys.
Harry’s feet made no noise on the stone as he made his way through the halls of Hogwarts. Like his voice, Harry had learned to keep himself silent. A handy disillusionment charm kept him invisible to the portraits lining the walls. Away from the dungeons and towards the second floor Harry walked. He pushed open the door to the girls bathroom and made his way towards the sinks. With a hiss from Balthazar, at Harry’s prompting, the sink sank into the floor and the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets was revealed. Harry had discovered the place in his third year. In his mission to investigate the entire school he had searched all the rooms within the school, including the bathrooms. Balthazar, being the loud obnoxious snake he had always been, began to chatter to Harry as the two entered the room. As Harry explored the bathroom Balthazar continued his babbling. As the two approached the sinks, Balthazar’s hissing trigged the sinks to move and reveal the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. After Harry had found the Chamber he had visited when he could. He had met Solomon, the King of the snakes and the last known living Basilisk. After Solomon’s initial attempt at killing Harry, Balthazar had explained the situation and Harry had since got along rather well with the snake. Solomon had told Harry how to navigate the chamber and had shown him the secret rooms that lined it. One of these rooms was, of course, Slytherin’s own personal library and that was where Harry made his way to now.

Harry pushed the door open to reveal the splendour of the room before him. Books lined the walls, situated in elegant, delicately carved, African Blackwood bookcases. A desk sat by the back wall, draws filled to the brim with parchment. Harry spent several minutes selecting numerous books from the shelves. He then sat behind the desk and removed several pieces of parchment from the draws. He opened the books and started to translate. The books Harry was reading were written in Parsel, the written form of Parseltongue. Information in the books Harry was reading was thought to be lost to time, detailed and revolutionary notes by Salazar Slytherin himself and many of his decedents. Harry’s current reading material was concerned with one of Slytherin’s own potion creations and his tests of said potion on selected others. The potion’s processes were complex and yet the results were well worth it. The potion was one that, when taken, made everyone around you believe the things that you tell them to be the truth for the 72 hours that it was in your system. According to Harry’s research on the matter, in theory, the potion should be able to counteract the effects of veritaserum, at least while it was in the system. Harry scribbled down the notes at a rapid rate. His writing was legible but far from neat.

Harry wrote what he needed to and then ordered the sizeable pile of parchment. Before leaving Harry scribbled a quick note and placed it on top of the pile. Harry then made his way out of the chamber and down into the dungeons, pile of paper secure in his hands. Three rapid knocks on a door and the face of one Severus Snape was revealed, the scowl that perpetuated his face still in place. When he saw Harry before him, the scowl deepened and he ushered the boy into his private rooms. Harry handed the man the note on the top of the pile of papers and then flopped down in to one of the leather chairs that the man kept in the room. As Snape read through the note the scowl lessened, a look of glee gradually replacing it.

Placing the note down on the coffee table Snape made his way out of the room. He returned several minutes later, a singular sheet of parchment in his hand. He lay the sheet down on the table beside the boy and took the pile of parchment from Harry’s hands. Snape then sat in another chair opposite Harry’s. Snape leafed through the sheets, briefly scanning each page. Harry, meanwhile, picked up his own sheet, read it and then watched as Snape scanned over his own reading material. Snape placed the sheets down on the coffee table next to Harry’s note before standing.

“Pleasure doing business with you Mr Potter. Now I think it’s time for you to return to the Slytherin
Dormitories.” Harry stood from his seat, parchment still in hand. However instead of leaving Harry made his way toward the fire place. He dropped the parchment into it and watched as the words:

‘Grindelwald’s Location: Numengard Fortress, Apriltsi Forest, Bulgaria’ faded away into the flames as the paper turned to ash.

Harry called a meeting for the first Hogsmeade weekend of the year. The Hogshead was the chosen place and noon the chosen time. Harry and his inner circle arrived at eleven in preparation for the arrival of the others. Harry had rented out one of the back rooms. The room was spelled with privacy wards and an intruder detection ward as well as enough space to comfortably seat 20 people. Soon after eleven the rest of the Hogwarts students attending the meeting arrived: Luna, Neville and Graham. Around half an hour later Cassius and Lawrence arrived. The two greeted Harry as though they had not seen the younger boy in months when in fact it had been a little over three weeks. Harry had to restrain himself from the eye roll he so desperately wished to do. The group waited patiently for the final two members to arrive. At five to twelve the two walked in.

“Cutting it fine aren’t we Weasleys” Cassius said, his voice filled with humour and a grin splitting his face. Charlie gave Cassius the finger and moved to sit next to Zachary Nettles, swinging his arm to rest partially on the back of the older man’s chair and partially on the older man himself before giving him a light peck on the lips.

The two young men had started dating at the beginning of last year. They had met at the annual Summer party of one Newton Scamander. Charlie had been there at the request of his boss to establish any advances that Newt may have made in the field of dragons and Zachary had been there at his father’s insistence. The two had been bored and felt out of place, meaning that conversation between them had flowed like a river. That meeting had sparked a few more and then a few more. Finally, with a lot more dancing around each other, the pair had become a couple. The Weasley family had not taken Charlie’s revelation that he was dating a Slytherin and a male Slytherin at that, very well. Ron and Bill had been disgusted, Fred and George angry and Arthur had been disappointed. This lead to Percy becoming the only member of the family that Charlie could talk to. The combination and influence of both Percy and Zachary ensured that Charlie’s attitudes on the world became altered and over the past two months the man had proved to Harry that he could, in fact, be trusted enough to become one of Harry’s chosen few. This meeting would now be the first direct meeting that the man would be involved in.

Percy on the other hand had eventually been forgiven by Harry. After a long and of course, painful process. Harry had forced Percy to realise his mistake and had then become a point of refuge for the older boy. Harry had ensured that Percy needed his council. The older boy was ostracised and taunted by his own family. He was made to feel that he was unwelcome in his own house. Harry had become someone Percy relied on. A time when he could be himself and a person to be it with. Harry had been there for him and shaped the boy into the man that he had become. The dark thoughts that Percy kept in the back of his mind had been coaxed out. The darker side of him coming to the front. Percy had become an ally that Harry was glad to have. Percy sat down in the final remaining seat next to his brother and so the meeting began.

Harry and the rest of the group took out a sheet of parchment. Harry, running with Lawrence’s ideas for the journals, had created a system whereby he could write on his own sheet of Parchment and the words would appear on the other sheets. The writing would then disappear after it had been read. Harry could also direct his writing to one person only by writing their name at the top of the parchment before he began his writing. The System was a one way one, meaning that only Harry could write messages and his group could not reply to him. Initially Harry started his meeting by asking if the group had any issues or points of concern that they wanted to discuss.
Charlie spoke of the of his concerns for the increased persecution of creatures that the ministry considered ‘dark’. Dragons, in particular, were being portrayed as dangerous animals that could kill you as soon as you looked at them. Lawrence brought forward more examples of Fudge’s incompetence. The man was clearly in Dumbledore’s pocket and every decision the man made came through Dumbledore first. For example Fudge had recently vetoed Lawrence’s proposals concerning the regulation of the Hogwarts curriculum. Finally Neville informed Harry of all the plans that the Gryffindors had made concerning their newest pranks. The Weasley twins in particular were ones to watch out for.

The meeting continued and Harry told his followers what they needed to know. He disclosed nothing of the deal he made with Snape and little of his meeting with Voldemort. He told them that Voldemort and himself had come to an arrangement, of sorts and that they were very possibly on their way to an Alliance. Reactions were mixed at this revelation. Several of the members, including Sebastian Diggory and Blaise Zabini raised their concerns that they did not want to become Death Eaters, but Harry quickly put their fears to rest. There was not, as he put it, an Ashwinder’s chance in the arctic, that Harry would make any of them swear allegiance to anyone but himself. The alliance was merely a way to ensure that all their plans played out successfully. Harry also informed the group that he was well on his way to finding Dumbledore’s weaknesses. The plans to find the weaknesses completely would take place over the course of the Yule holidays. Harry had yet to decide who would come along with him but all that did, needed to be seventeen and over.

As the meeting wrapped up Harry signed for Charlie to come to the front of the room. Today was Charlie’s time to be marked. Harry removed his wand from it’s holster, the piece of wood being the perfect weight in his hand. He stood and waited as the man unbuttoned his shirt. The man turned his back to Harry and knelt before him, facing the others in his room. His shirt dropped to the floor. Harry touched his wand to Charlie’s temple and then flicked his wrist in an arch. A small dragon flew from the wand, Harry recognised it as a Common Welsh Green. Harry smirked at the fitting image. The man may be obsessed with dragons, yes, but his character fit surprisingly well with that of the Welsh Green. Charlie was easy going and avoided socialising where possible. However if the man was provoked the only thing you could do was run. Harry watched the small green dragon flap its wings for several seconds before he brought the tip of his wand to Charlie’s right shoulder. The small dragon flew at Charlie’s shoulder and become imprinted onto it. The Welsh Green blinked a few times, assessing its new surroundings before folding its wings and sleeping.

The mark that Harry had given to Charlie was one that all his closely trusted followers received at the completion of their first meeting. The mark was different for each individual as it reflected the animagus form of each of them. The creature had a low level of sentience and so was able to move around the body of the person that it was given to. The thing that Harry was most proud of in his creation of his marks was the fact that they could detect disloyalty.

If any members betrayed Harry then the creature would die, turning black and becoming immovable. The creature was sadly not able to detect deceitful thoughts, but only the actions done by the person who's skin they resided on. Harry replaced his wand in its holster and then tapped Charlie on his bare shoulder indicating the completion of the task. Charlie stood up and turned towards Harry, giving a small bow. He also, in the process, revealed the new creature to the rest of the room. Percy let out a small snort of mirth as he saw what now resided on his brother’s back.

“A dragon Charlie. How very original” the sarcasm was audible in Percy’s voice and it caused the rest of the room to chuckle. Charlie only rolled his eyes and picked up his shirt. He then turned around and threw a lopsided grin at Percy. He knew that the younger man’s mark was an Ocicat and chose not to comment on the similarity in colourings between the cat and the man.

The meeting finished and the members of the group left in twos or threes, not wanting to be seen
together. Cassius, Lawrence and Percy apperated out of the room. Not wanting to be seen in a place
they had no right to be in. Neville, Luna and Graham left together, followed by the Carrow twins,
then Blaise and Daphne. Next was Sebastian Diggory and Nathaniel Flamel and finally Harry left
with Charlie and Zachary. The three of them walked from the Hog's Head at a sedate pace, back
towards the centre of Hogsmead. Charlie and Zachary, in a world of their own, discussed Charlie’s
new position as one of Harry’s most trusted did not notice the upcoming disaster until it was upon
them. Harry, however did and he was ready for it. He repressed a smile as he watched the scene
unfold.

In the mass of students in front of the three stood Ronald, Fred and George Weasley, their ginger hair
like flames amid the sea of students. As the youngest of the three redheads spotted the two men, arms
around each other, Harry walked over ready for a fight. Harry felt the glee rise within him as he
readied for the confrontation that was bound to ensue.

“You traitor!” yelled Ronald at the top of his lungs, spittle being spewed from his mouth. “How dare
you show up here and with that slimy Slytherin bastard.” The young man’s face was red, puce even.
He looked as though he was about to explode as he continued.

“Why don’t you just die you piece of shit. You’re…” before Ronald could say another word a wand
was at his throat. Harry’s eyes were filled with hate, dark and threatening as his eyes zeroed in on the
boy. Any Slytherin in the vicinity took a step back, feeling the dark magic spewing from their leader.
Ronald, however seemed oblivious to the danger that he was in.

“What do you want you ugly git. This has nothing to do with you.” Ronald continued to spew. At
that moment the Weasley twins joined their younger brother, ready to defend the idiot. The two drew
their wands and walked toward their stupid brother. Edward Potter and Angelina Johnson joined the
pair to defend the youngest Weasley.

However, as they moved forward so did several others. Charlie and Zachary made their way
forward, wands out, ready to defend Harry. As the twins got closer several others stepped forward to
defend Harry as well, Demon Lima and Pierce Ollerton, sixth year Slytherins, the Carrow twins,
and finally, Caleb Parkin, a sixth year Hufflepuff. Caleb was a wildcard, an excellent dueller and the
best Quidditch players in the entire school and yet his ideals on morality had ensured that he rebutted
any advances Harry’s forces had made on him, up until now. It seemed that the sixth year had
changed his mind, he was declaring his decision to join Harry for the whole world to see. Harry,
though keeping a calm face, rejoiced internally. Caleb’s true loyalties were revealed and he couldn’t
wait to exploit this fact for all that it was worth. Harry had a Hufflepuff and by God was he going to
use him. As both groups continued to advance towards each other one Professor Snape made his
way around the corner.

“Weasley” Snape snapped at the youngest ginger. His dark eyes glaring into the boy’s soul. As the
Professor had walked into the altercation Harry had removed his wand from said Wealey’s neck.

“You are not above the school rules, no matter the location you find yourself in. Threatening another
student is not acceptable’” venom dripped from the potion master’s tone. “Come with me. Now!” the
man spat out before turning on his heel and walking from the group of students, his robes billowing,
with the youngest Weasley following behind him.
Today’s lesson would be a revision of Boggats. A bit simplistic for a fifth year class, but Lupin was going over every possible thing that could come up on the O.W.Ls and due to the hectic schedule that the classes had been put through, as they tried to catch up for the lost lessons in first year, they had neglected certain aspects of the curriculum. One of the aspects was the basic creatures that were to be covered in Defence. This led to the class being taught about Redcaps and Hinkypunks in their previous lesson and now Boggats in this one. Lupin explained the Boggat, its habitat, foods, preferences and so on. Lupin then showed the class the incantation and the wand movements for the Ridikulus charm. The class were made to practice the wand movement and incantations before Lupin deemed them ready to test it out on the real thing.

The class was made to stand in a line, behind a chest, with several locks on it. Harry remained seated, watching the others preceded with the given task, like sheep, he thought. Harry refused to lower himself to the level of his class mates. Ronald Weasley was first in line and Lupin flicked his wand to open the chest. A giant Spider Crawled out, the Spider’s body and spindly legs seeming bigger then the box that it came from. Harry rolled his eyes at the boys stupid fear. Ronald made a small squeal at the giant spider before trying the charm. The spider was suddenly wearing rollerblades, unable to stand. Laughter poured from the queue and the next student stepped forward.

Harry watched as the students continued, each revealing to the class their deepest fears. Draco Malfoy’s father appeared, an obvious yet embarrassing revelation. Blaise’s boggat was a hooded figure, the figure said nothing but merely advanced towards the boy, wand outstretched. Many Gryffindors suggested the figure was Voldemort but Harry knew better, as did most of Slytherin house. Daphne’s turned into the bloodied body of Astoria, still and cold on the stone floor. It took several minutes for the girl to compose herself enough to rid the room of the image. Neville’s boggat became his Grandmother, the woman yelled at him, telling him his was a traitor and the scum of the earth. It then changed into Luna who yelled the same thing and as it was changing for the third time Neville managed to spit out the incantation and the next person stepped forward.

As the line thinned and the last person was stepping before the boggat Lupin walked over to Harry’s desk and signalled for him to face the creature in the room. Harry wanted to protest, this was not something he wanted to be doing, but instead he rose gracefully and followed the professor to the front of the class. Harry faced the boggat, eyebrow raised, daring it to do his worst. The boggat’s form changed from that of the snake, turned jack-in-the-box into a Harry look alike. This new Harry, however, looked slightly different from the one it was standing in front of. Red and gold robes adorned the figure, a bright smile lighting up his face. The copy of Harry was taller and more muscled then the true Harry. Harry sneered as the boy began to speak.

“Anyone up for some Quidditch, I sure know I am.” the copy said grinning as he, pulled a snitch from his pocket, letting it hover around his head before plucking it from the air. The class sat in stunned silence as they heard the Harry lookalike speak. The voice was light, pleasant and filled with humour as he spoke. It was the first time anyone in the room, except Remus, had heard any sort of sound from the boy’s mouth. Even if it was the copy that spoke, it was still a shock for the rest of the occupants of the room. Harry quickly cast a Ridikulus charm, not allowing another word to be spoken by the Harry copy. He then walked back to his seat, ignoring the stares and gapes from the Gryffindors.

Another day, another disaster. The Boggart debacle had been atrocious and the fifth year Gryffindors were still shooting Harry funny looks, unable to comprehend the copy Harry that they had seen. However, the day had become worse, but in the typical way that dictated Harry’s life, it seemed to get better before it got worse. A lunch time letter. Not a usual occurrence in the Great Hall but not so unusual as to raise any suspicions. Harry delicately opened the letter, reading the missive inside before snapping his fingers. The letter disintegrated into dust as though it had never been there. The
letter had been from Borgin, concerning a book that Harry wanted, no needed. He had been looking 
for the thing for months. Now Harry knew where the book was and he knew what needed to be paid 
for it, but of course all this didn’t mean that he could get it. A fire place, a name and a pinch of floo 
powder was all it would take and yet often things do not go to plan.

Harry continued his day normally, he went to lessons and then to the Great Hall for dinner. There 
had already been enough drama for the student population to talk about, they need not see him acting 
out of the ordinary so that more rumours could be spread. Harry ate his dinner at a sedate pace, 
engaging with the people around him, particularly Nathaniel. Nathaniel was an odd character, the 
boy had long, shaggy, silver hair and twinkling grey eyes. He also always seemed to have a blood 
pop in his mouth. Harry had no idea where he got the things from but there was always a readily 
available supply in his pockets. The boy also seemed to never be paying any attention to anyone or 
anything. Nathaniel always had a sheet of paper in front of him on which he doodled a wide variety 
of things from the traditional stick figures to what may be called masterpieces. However the younger 
boy always seemed to know everyone’s business and when teachers questioned him in class, trying 
to catch him out for not concentrating, he always knew the answers no matter what level they were.

This is what had first attracted Harry towards the boy. He was a bit of an outcast, not that anyone 
outside of Slytherin knew that, due to his antisocial behaviour and his never ending knowledge of 
others. Luna had been the first to point the boy out during Harry’s third year. Luna’s intuition had 
told her that the boy was one to watch and although Harry had previously heard of the boy’s 
outstanding test results he had not found out the true nature of the boy until he started investigation 
his life. Harry had spent several weeks observing the boy and learning all that there was to learn 
about him. Harry was not one to ignore Luna’s advice. It came infrequently enough that he knew it 
important when she gave it to him.

After around a month of dancing around each other the boys finally came to a confrontation. The 
boy was sick of the constant eyes on his back of his neck, the second shadow he seemed to have 
developed and the constant whispers. Harry had not been subtle about the attention he had been 
giving to Nathaniel, not that he was trying to be. Harry, having made his interest know, had ensured 
the boy had become less of an outcast and more of a celebrity. Everyone, having noted Harry’s new 
favourite, had been throwing themselves at the boy, subtly of course. Harry had enjoyed watching 
them squabble like children over a new toy. It also made the gathering of information much easier as 
the entire house was finding details about the young Flamel and all of it was being brought directly to 
Harry. Nathaniel had cornered Harry in the empty common room, late one Saturday night. Of course 
it was actually the case that Harry had told the rest of Slytherin to have an early night, ensuring their 
privacy. Nathaniel had walked, shoeless and with a blood pop in his mouth, towards Harry. The boy 
held a rigid posture and his gaze was strong.

“Sooooooo” Nathaniel said, removing the lolly from his mouth and twirling it between his fingers

“It seems that I have caught your attention, my Prince.” He made a mock bow and giggled musically 
as his silver locks fell into his eyes. “What can I do for you, oh wise one?” he said, another giggle 
pushing its way through his lips. Harry gave a stern glare to the boy in front of him and yet this only 
caus[ed another giggle.

Harry, rolling his eyes at the ridiculous youngster, signalled to the younger boy, ushering him 
towards a table where a quill and parchment were placed. Harry sat and tilted his head waiting for 
the other to sit. Nathaniel popped the blood pop back into his mouth, before skipping over to join 
Harry. Before the boy had even sat down, Harry began to write. As he finished he pushed the sheet 
towards the silver haired rascal.

‘What I want from you is an alliance of sorts. We both have similar goals and aspirations, so why not
work together to get them?"

Nathaniel read over the sheet. As he read a grin developed on his face. He took the blood pop from
his mouth and leaned forward, a giggle filling the silent room.

“Ohhhhh. So you want to be friends.” Nathaniel exclaimed. He stuck his hand out to Harry in an
exaggerated manner. Harry ignored it.

“Sure Harry, we can be friends.” Nathaniel said wiggling his fingers, attempting to draw Harry’s
attention back to the hand. Harry reluctantly took the hand in his own, accepting the alliance.
Nathaniel, however, didn’t let go of Harry’s hand. Instead he pulled the older boy up and forced him
into a hug. Harry stiffened at the contact until eventually Nathaniel pulled away.

“Well Harry, now that we’re friends you can call me Fia. It’s what Grand-papa Nick calls me. He
say’s I’m his little flame” a fond thoughtful smile filled the younger boy’s face.”and I always liked
that name better than Nathaniel anyways.” With that the boy skipped away, his bare feet making no
noise on the stone floor.

From then on the two had become allies. Harry had also, eventually, accepted the younger boy as his
friend as well as adopting the name Fia for him, as per the boy’s wishes. Harry was the only one
who called the boy this and as it was never said aloud no-one even knew it was Nathaniel’s preferred
name. Harry needed Nathaniel for the plans concerning today. The young Prince was required as the
distraction. So as the meal progressed Harry surreptitiously slipped a piece of parchment to Nathaniel
beneath the table. Nathaniel read said note he had been given before folding it back up and placing it
in his pocket. The note read;

‘Fia. Distract the Bat after dinner. I need about forty-five minutes.’

After reading the note Nathaniel gave a small nod, subtle enough that no one else around the table
noticed. The conversation then continued as though nothing had happened. The silver haired boy
continued his nonsensical chatter to Harry as though he had not a care in the world. It turned out that
Fia was an extremely talkative individual once he felt confident enough around you and he therefore
talked Harry’s ear off every chance he got. Not that Harry minded. As with Luna the boy’s talk often
had an underlying meaning or message and was worth listening to.

After dinner had ended the Slytherins left the hall, the group making their way back towards the
common room. As they entered they encountered Professor Snape standing in room watching over
his house. Nathaniel broke off from Harry and moved towards Snape. The boy grinned manically
and greeted the Professor before diving into a long and complicated explanation of a topic within
potions that he didn’t quite understand. It was a topic beyond the boys year and yet Snape was
always ready to help someone in understanding potions.

With the man distracted Harry made his way back out of the common room and towards Snape’s
own private quarters. He was friends with the portrait and so it would let him in. He wanted to use
the floo and did not want to owe Snape any more favours then he had to. However as he stepped out
of Slytherin common room his plans for that evening were destroyed. An old, withered hand grasped
Harry’s shoulder and Harry looked up to see the face of one, Albus Dumbledore grinning at him, his
eyes twinkling.

“Harry my boy.” Dumbledore said. Harry clenched his jaw. The man was always popping up at the
most inopportune moments.

“I would like to have a talk with you Harry. Now, please accompany me to my office if you would
be so kind.” The man twirled around, his multicoloured robes ruffling in the light breeze and made
his way down the hall. His healed boots clicked as he walked. Harry, with little other choice, followed behind the old fool of a wizard. He clenched his fists as he walked, anger filling him to the brim. Another day and another set of plans ruined by Dumbledore. Harry couldn't wait for the day that he destroyed the man.
Harry neared the office of one Albus Dumbledore, his feet dragging on the floor in his reluctance. Harry did not want to be here, he never wanted to come here again and yet it seemed that every year the man fabricated a reason for him to be invited up the stupid spiral staircase. The click, click, click of the Headmaster’s heeled boots echoed off the walls as they made their way up those stairs. Harry following a few steps behind unwilling to be nearer to the wrinkled old man than he had to be. The door swung open as the Headmaster made their way to the top revealing the familiar grandeur of the room. Dumbledore strode into the room and sat behind his desk, inviting Harry to sit across from him. Harry did so at a most leisurely pace. He may have to obey the Headmaster but he didn’t have to make it easy for the stupid old coot. The portraits lining the wall made comments, chattering amount themselves about the boy in front of them. Some tutted, others smirked and Harry was sure he heard a few snorts of derision as they appreciated the fact that someone was able to get one up on the headmaster that they despised.

“So Harry my boy, you must be wondering why you are here?” the old coot said a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his face. The face only made Harry more angry. He had to restrain himself from lashing out at the stupid twinkling he saw in the man’s eyes. Dumbledore was one of the only people that could make Harry angry. He wasn’t sure why, even his parents never made him feel this angry and frustrated. Harry supposed it was due to the fact that the man presented an obstacle. One that he had presented for the past four years. He had also been so close to the information that may rid him of this obstacle and yet it seemed the man had flawed his plans even without knowing it. The rage was rolling in his stomach like a storm. Harry regulated his breathing, attempting to calm his anger. He Tilted his head to the side, his fringe falling into his face to show that the Headmaster could continue his explanation.

“Well my boy, I have brought you here to discuss your rejection of the role as a prefect. I received your letter, returning the prefect badge and recommending” Dumbledore paused and leafed through a few sheets that were seated on his desk, his eyes scanning them before he continued.

“Oh yes, young Mr Malfoy for the role. Now I know that Mr Malfoy would be a perfect candidate for the role but I fail to understand why you have rejected it my boy.” Harry restrained himself. The headmaster knew exactly why he had rejected it. It was the same reason that the headmaster had given it to him in the first place.

Dumbledore knew of the position of power that Harry held within the house. Of course he didn't know the full extent of his influence but he was trying to limit it as much as possible. By giving Harry the role of Prefect he was trying to take up the boy’s time as much as possible, reducing the time he could spend as the leader of Slytherin. As a prefect he would need to spend three nights a week patrolling the corridors as well as seeing that all younger students were getting along well with others and were doing all of their work. Normally neither a King or a Prince were ever offered the role of Prefect or of Head boy or Girl as Snape knew of their numerous other duties. However in appeared that Dumbledore had pulled a few strings and had most likely pulled rank on Snape, ensuring the Prefect role was given to Harry. However that did not mean that the boy had to accept it. Harry didn't respond to Dumbledore’s probing, he was sick of this man’s bullshit. Instead he merely raised a solitary eyebrow at the man in front of him. Dumbledore sighed in resignation and looked pleadingly to Harry.

“Come now my boy, there’s no need for such hostilities. I just want to know why you will not take an offer that will surely help you school career and your reputation.” Again Harry only looked at the man. No answers would be forthcoming without Dumbledore using considerable force which Harry
knew he would never do. Dumbledore waited in silence for several seconds, each one becoming more and more awkward as they ticked by. Finally the old man broke the silence.

“Well Harry if there is nothing that you wish to tell me” the old man said sounding very tired “then you better be off. Mr Malfoy shall be informed of his new position tomorrow at breakfast. Good night Mr Potter” Dumbledore said trying to keep a strained smile on his face. The conversation seemed to have aged the man fifty years in the space of five minutes.

Harry, glad to be able to leave, stood from his chair and made his way back to the Dungeons. He hoped that he had not lost his chance to get one up on the old coot. His steps were quick and purposeful as he made his way forwards. He did not run, Kings of Slytherin did not run. At least not where they might be seen. As he skidded around the corner of the passage way that lead to Snape’s quarters he pushed himself against the wall and hid in the shadows. He slowly inched his way along the corridor, his back remaining glued to the wall and finally he reached the portrait on the wall. A large snake reared up and greeted him.

‘Good evening speaker, would you like me to inform Professor Snape that you are present?’ Harry cursed, he was too late. His fists clenched and his body tensed. He shook his head a single time and then made his way back along the corridor, his jaw clenched and all pretence of hiding thrown away. He made his way up to the astronomy tower. His form shaking with anger at his missed opportunity.

As he reached the top of the tower his fist met with a wall and made a loud crunch at the amount of force that was behind it. Harry’s magic flared. The dark intent swirling though the air like a storm as Harry seemed to lose control of his emotions. Another thud and another echoed through the empty room as the magic clogged the room. Chocking the air, the violence and anger as well as the smell of blood filling the air. After several more thuds Harry set his palms on the wall revealing the bloodied and bruised knuckles that he had caused. He slid to the floor, his breathing ragged and rested his head on the rough stone. His nostrils flared as they smelt the blood that was slowly flowing down from his knuckles and towards his wrists.

Harry spent several minutes attempting to regain his composure. He strengthened his occlumency shield, reining in his magic and regulating his breathing. He had lost his chance. Borgin would not hold the book any longer than he had to due to how dangerous a piece of merchandise it was to be caught with and so by the time Harry would finally be able to get to Knockturn alley the book would be long gone. Harry was screwed. His plans were going to be utterly off kilter if he did not get hold of the book. Harry sighed. He knew that his anger wasn't really at the fact that he didn't have the book but rather what he would have to do to get it. He would have to ask for a favour and Harry really did hate being asking people for help. Harry picked himself up and cast a wandless Episkey on each of his hands. He then brushed off his robes and banished the blood staining both his hands and the wall before making his way towards the Owlery.

As Harry arrived he pulled out a sheet of parchment and a quill. Resting against one of the window ledges, after casting a quick Scourgify, he wrote his letter. His writing was elegant and flowed easily. He signed his name at the bottom of the letter knowing the receiver would expect nothing less. He delicately folded the paper before placing it in an envelope. He cast several wards on the letter, ensuring that only the intended reader was able to read it and that anyone else who tried to read it would be on the receiving end of a rather slow and painful death. Not that they would be able to read the letter if they did manage to open it, it's code was far too complex for that.

Harry’s eyes fluttered open and snapped to the end of the bed and he raised an eyebrow as he saw Fia seated on the end, his grey eyes, staring, unblinkingly at Harry. Harry pushed himself up and rolled his eyes at the boys antics. It was not unusual for the boy to do this. If Fia was worried or
concerned for Harry’s safety Harry would wake to find the boy staring at him, ensuring that his first and best friend was safe and his worries were unfounded.

Harry pushed himself from the bed after pushing Balthazar from his chest. The snake hissed in annoyance, the years having not changed his desire to sleep and Harry made his way towards the shower. Harry, as King, had his own room and own bathroom and so was unconcerned of his shirtless form. The faint scars still covered his body from his time at the Dursley’s. As soon as Harry left the room Fia collapsed onto the bed in a messy tangle of arms and legs and proceeded to try and play with Balthazar. However the attention only seemed to annoy the snake as he hissed at Fia and slithered under the bed away from the annoying boy that his Master seemed to have around him all the time. So Fia resigned himself to eating his blood pop while waiting for Harry to finish his shower. He lay on his back and kicked his feet up into the air, staring at the ceiling, his eyes bored and unfocused.

Fifteen minutes later Harry came out of the shower, a towel wrapped around his waist and he walked towards the wardrobe. He dressed in his school robes and then walked back over to the bed to check on Fia. The boy was still staring at the ceiling aimlessly, but as Harry made his way next to him his eyes flickered towards him and a grin filled the younger boy’s face even with the new blood pop in his mouth. He sat up, his silver hair falling around his face in messy strands, his robes crumpled from resting on the bed. He stood up and waved his wand, straightening his robes and then heading for the door. Harry rolled his eyes and followed behind him. The two then made their way towards the Great Hall for breakfast; Fia, skipping besides Harry, his feet making no sound on the floor. The doors swung open and Harry seated himself down in the space that was left for him, Fia sitting next to him.

Harry’s eyes flickered around the Hall. First they landed on the Malfoy heir. His chest was puffed up and a new prefect badge glinted on his lapel. Nothing else seemed amiss on the Slytherin table. His eyes flickered from table to table, looking at both his allies and his enemies. Other than a few unknown faces of first years all seemed normal. However as Harry’s eyes observed the Hufflepuff table he saw something that displeased him. Observing the newest shaky addition to his fold, Caleb Parkin, he noticed that the boy, even though he was an extremely powerful in his own right, seemed isolated today. It seemed that his usual friends and fellow house mates were choosing not to sit with him. Instead they were throwing looks of disgust at him and laughing into their goblets.

Harry stiffened. This was not the way that one under his protection should be treated and it showed to Harry that, as he had thought, Caleb was the one of the only Hufflepuffs worth his time. Harry was not about to let his Hufflepuff become the mockery of his house. Harry’s eyes moved from the table and met forcefully with those of Demond Lima. Demond had made the initial contact with Caleb and had been creating the fragile alliance with the young man. Harry’s gaze flickered from Demond to Caleb and back before resuming his observations of the Hall.

Demond seemed to have understood Harry’s wishes and for that he was to be commended. Harry was currently debating as to whether the young man was worth promotion but due to the unstable nature of his home life Demond was required to prove himself to the utmost. This was just another test to asses his capabilities. Demond stood, causing fellow sixth year Harriet Vaisey to stand also, under his unspoken orders. The pair made their way over to the far end of the hall. On their way they were joined by Marietta Edgecombe, sixth year Ravenclaw and Bartholomew Morgan, sixth year Gryffindor. The four seated themselves at the end of the Hufflepuff filling the empty space that had been left around Caleb. Harry watched the looks and confusion and anger that filled the faces on Hufflepuff table at their new additions. However none of them said a word. The message was clear, Caleb was one of them now.

Harry had many allies through the castle, in all the houses and even having some leverage over
several of the teachers. However many were hidden or secret, they were needed to gain the trust of others. Harry needed to have both known and unknown allies in each house. Those that his supporters could go to, safe in the knowledge that anything told to them would get back to Harry and those who could listen in and find the secrets of those who were avoiding Harry’s attention. The group that currently sat with Caleb were the most well know of Harry’s allies in the other houses. They were the ones to recruit others. They became a shoulder to cry on for new students, someone who they looked up to, someone they could confide in, almost like an older sibling of sorts. Each of them had a prefect role and so had a natural advantage over others that may try to influence the younger ones.

Harry had easily managed to gain footings in Ravenclaw due to their curious natures. In fact several had approached him themselves, attempting to learn his secrets as well as exiting and new information. Gryffindor had, however, been a little harder but had been managed with the help of Percy and by playing on the hatred that many of them felt for Edward Potter. Hufflepuff, had for the past few years seemed like a dead end. The puffs were very loyal and disliked any type of change in their house. Therefore they had rebuffed any and all attempts at making allies that Harry and his followers had made.

That had, however, only been the case until the beginning of last year. In Charms class, Flitwick had decide to put a Slytherin and a Hufflepuff together for a project. Demond had been placed with Caleb and seeing his opportunity had spent as much time with the other boy as possible. The two had struck up a tentative friendship, Caleb seeming to find pleasure in Demond’s company. Over the next year they had talked more and more. Over summer a series of letters had been passed back and forth between the two of them. Caleb had become more and more inclined to the ideas that Demond had talked to him of. They had discussed the need for change in the wizarding community, the outdated laws and the corrupt politicians. The discussions had been mostly secret, however due to the Hogsmead debacle Caleb’s true alliances had been revealed.

For the past few days the puffs had seemed to be deciding what their verdict was on this revelation and now they seemed to have come to a conclusion. Caleb had been dubbed as an outcast. However, Harry was not about to let anyone that was his be treated in such a way. Instead he was declaring his intentions to all of Hogwarts. No matter that it was only with a single individual, Harry was a part of Hufflepuff and he intended to grow strong roots within the house.

Harry’s eyes met with Caleb’s and understanding shone in the older boy’s eyes. There was also a flicker of gratefulness there. He was glad not to be alone. To be alone in a house that prided itself on friendship and loyalty was not an easy thing to deal with. He was thankful that Harry had not left him out in the cold. He had the support that he needed. He forced a smile onto his face and greeted the new people at his table, ignoring the looks of disgust from his fellow house mates. True loyalty was better than having to act like someone he wasn’t anyway. He picked up a piece of toast and chatted with Demond.

Harry was getting agitated. It had been two days since he had been forced into Dumbledore’s office and had missed his opportunity and there had still been no conformation that his book had been secured. His frustration was obvious to all of the Slytherin’s and the majority of the rest of the school. Harry was more inclined towards violence and mockery when he was in such a state. He also became silent and brooding. This led to a bad combination, as anyone that ended up approaching him would have a wand in their face and anyone that annoyed him would end up on the end of one of Harry’s numerous plots.

This led to the current view that many were enjoying in the great Hall on the gloomy Saturday morning. A large number of Hufflepuffs and several Gryffindors were currently in a rather painful
situation. Large patches of their skin were covered in green. The green itched intensely to anyone who had it, however the more you scratched it the itchier it got. Many visible heads were also bald, the green patches extending across said heads. However many individuals had opted to wear hats to hide this fact. Any individual that had ill-intent towards Caleb had not chosen a good time to do so due to the Harry’s current mood. This bad mood had led to around thirty people with the lovely skin disease that Harry gifted them with.

The spell used to bring around such a rash was borderline dark and yet due to the fact the spell was in parseltongue and Harry had used no wand to preform it, it was untraceable. The spell would wear off in around three days and there was no known cure to it. This therefore left the group in their painful state for the next few days.

As Harry sat eating his breakfast a large barn owl swooped in before him, letter in his beak. Harry took the letter, but not before checking for any curses. The owl then flew off and Harry stood, leaving the Great Hall, letter in hand. Harry entered his room and threw himself into his chair. He then turned his attention to the letter in his hands. The writing was distinct and easily recognisable. Harry tore the envelope open and read the four words that innocently resided on the page.

‘It was not easy.’

Harry sighed at the content of the letter, this was not going to be fun. He wanted the book as soon as possible and yet what would the cost be for it? He shook from the envelope, a small, grey, feather that rested lightly in his palm. He stroked it with his wand, once, twice, three times and then cast a cutting curse at his finger. A single drop of blood fell onto the feather and with a small flash of light Harry was gone from Hogwarts and found himself in a very familiar room.

A black and white, checkered, tiled floor. Heavy blood red curtains hung in front of the windows and several large, black, wing backed chairs were scattered around the room. Harry rolled his eyes, just as he did every time he saw the room, it was just far too stereotypical. Harry sat in one of the chairs that were dotted around the room and waited. A door was pushed open to reveal a disheveled figure making his way into the room. The figure was dressed in a crumpled shirt that was open half way down his chest and a pair of rumpled black trousers. His feet were bare and his hair was ruffled, pieces falling into his face. Harry met his eyes and gave him a look of disgust. This was not the reception that he had been expecting.

“Well hello Harry. You must be eager to have arrived this early. I wasn't expecting you for at least another two hours.” Harry sighed at Sanguini’s antics. The vampire was such a drama queen. He knew that the only reason that Harry would ever ask him for anything was because he was in dire need. The vampire must therefore have purposely left Harry in suspense, knowing that the book meant a lot to him. But then again if you were an ancient, immortal being what else could you do to entertain yourself? Harry’s eyes met with Sanguini’s and saw the twinkle of amusement that hid behind the pretence of surprise. The vampire was such a child at times.

“Well, how’s my little Harry doing anyway?” The vampire said, a large grin beginning to split his face. “It seems like so long since I last saw you.” Sanguini said, his voice adopting the tone that one would usually use on a small child. He then pinched Harry’s cheek, tugging at it. Harry endured the torture. Sanguini knew that Harry hated this treatment and yet he loved to annoy the young boy. Especially when he had something that said boy wanted. He liked to see how long he could push the boy before he snapped. That was one of the reasons that he had invited him to his abode at such an early hour of the morning. Even if it did disturb his normal sleeping pattern. Sanguini let go of Harry’s cheek and grabbed his wrist.

“Come now Harry, we should have some Breakfast. I’m sure you’re hungry.” the vampire said
It had been four hours. Four long hours that Harry had endured. Sanguini had forced breakfast down his throat, then he had insisted that Harry inform him of how he had spent his time since they had last met. He had complained of how little time Harry spent with him, when in fact it had only been a little over two months since they had last spent time together. He had then wanted to play a game of chess, so Harry obliged him. They had ended up playing four games. Harry had almost lost it half way through the third game when he had purposely left himself open, letting Sanguini win the game and yet the man had utterly ignored this and continued playing for as long as he could. Now Sanguini was in the process of showing Harry the new wing of his mansion pointing out artefacts and the architecture. Harry was somehow maintaining his composure and yet as each minute ticked by he became more and more frustrated. He knew Sanguini could tell this and yet the man seemed perfectly happy to continue letting Harry work himself up. The two finished their tour and ended up back where Harry had arrived.

“Well Harry, I think I may have tortured you enough for today.” Sanguini said, his face full of humour. “But you do know how I love to annoy you.” the vampire said. Sanguini pulled a book from his robes and handed it to Harry. Harry looked at the cover, examining the embossed words, Gellert Grindelwald, on the cover.

“A lot of trouble for such a small book, Harry. Although I see the appeal that it holds.” Sanguini said, another smile making its way onto his face. This one however showed his fangs and was much more sadistic then the ones earlier.

“It is interesting indeed Harry. What plans you must have.” Sanguini said, playfully. “Well Harry, if you ever need me, you know where to find me.” the vampire said as he gently places his hand on Harry’s chest, the rune on Harry’s chest warming under his shirt at the vampire’s touch.

“Also, don’t do anything too stupid without me. You know I enjoy a good slaughter as much as the next vampire.” he said cheekily, grinning. “Now here. Off you pop, back to school.” he said handing Harry another grey feather. Harry let a drop of blood fall and then he was gone again.

Back in his room, Harry flicked through his newly acquired book. Devouring the knowledge that it contained in a matter of hours. He then read it again and again, finding what he had missed. At seven o’clock Harry emerged from his room and moved his way down to the common room. His eyes were swirling with knowledge and he felt a sense of power that he had never had before. He had knowledge, more telling then any he had ever had before.

The book had been a diary of one Gellert Grindelwald spanning from his teenage years and through part of the first war. There was information in there about the relationship between Grindelwald and Dumbledore and many of the deeds that the pair had committed. Some such deeds found there were highly illegal and many were considered very dark. Harry was feeling on top of the world. He had something on Dumbledore, something that he was pretty sure the Dark Lord didn’t even know.

A smile was forced from his face as he entered the bustle of students that filled the common room. He seated himself in his chair and waited for the rest of his inner circle to join him. They were to make their way down to dinner by half past and Harry needed time to think over all he had learned. He felt as though he was on floating, his eyes were closed and his thoughts swam. Dumbledore had used the imperius curse, he had assisted in dark rituals and he may have even killed his only sister. It was a joy to have such forbidden secrets on the leader of the light. Harry was in heaven.
Chapter 21

Lily’s eyes filled with tears. Another day and another disappointment. She didn’t know if she could take it anymore. In her hands she held an unopened letter with her son’s name written on it in her own handwriting. It was the third letter of this kind, this week, that she had received. Harry’s name became distorted as the tears running down her face dripped onto the words, making the ink run. As she saw this she clutched the letter to her chest and the tears came thicker and faster. Her breathing becoming difficult as her emotions overwhelmed her. All she wanted was her son back, her little baby boy who had laughed every time he saw her face. The baby that chewed on her hair and clung to her neck as though he never wanted to let go. The little boy that had never wanted anything more than a hug and a kiss. The baby that she had loved and who had loved her in return. She knelt on her kitchen floor, the tears the only way she could show her remorse. The only way that she could show that she had left that baby. She had killed his innocence his hopes and his dreams the minute that she had abandoned him. She knew she could never be forgiven. Never change what she had done and yet that didn’t stop her from trying.

After the tears had dried up and her eyes had become dull and unfocused she stood from the floor and pulled out a box, placing the letter with the many others that she had. Each and every one she had written for her baby. All of them he had never read. The box contained around a hundred letters, each and every one of them broke her heart. Since her little boy had gone to Hogwarts she had been religiously sending him letters whenever she could. For the first term she assumed he had received them all, even if she had not received a single reply. However after Christmas came and went during their first year back together every single letter had been sent back to her. Each and every one remained unopened and came back with the same owl that she had sent them with.

The box also contained a few other things. Lily removed a picture that she cherished more than any of her other possessions. It was a picture of a laughing Harry held in her arms, her own face lit up with a smile. The little boy would move from pulling her hair into his mouth to reaching for the camera, his green eyes filled with joy as he explored everything that he saw. It was one of the very few pictures that Lily had of Harry. Her baby just looked so happy, so free, so real. Every time she saw the picture she remembered how broken Harry was now. How broken she had made him. She just didn’t know how her life had come to this. How was it that she had left something that she loved so much? She remembered Harry as baby. He had been the perfect child. She had always wanted to spend time with him and even seemed to care for him more than Edward. He had been the only thing that seemed important in her life. Everything she had done had always been for Harry.

She looked at another picture. A baby Harry sat on the lap of an unseen individual. A soft toy stag was clutched in his little hands as though if he let go he might die. His mouth was latched onto the stag’s antler as his toothless gums chewed on it with all his might. His green eyes sparkled with determination as he attacked the poor stag. A small watery smile made its way onto Lily’s face until she remembers that she would never seen that look on her baby’s face again. She often wondered what had happened to the stag in the picture. She knew that Harry, as a baby, had worshiped the Stag that James had modestly called Prongs. Harry had never let the thing out of his sight and had cried when he could not find it. She wondered how something so precious to the little boy could be forgotten. Had it been lost, thrown away or maybe taken? It was so heartbreaking to know that something her son had loved so much was gone forever. Tears began to drip again and Lily quickly put the picture away ensuring that she did not spoil it with her tears. After several more minutes of crying Lily stood from the floor. It was too hard. It was just all too much.

How could she have let herself loose her baby? He was her’s! He had been apart of her and she had just given him up. She was the worst human imaginable. She had done nothing to help the most
innocent of creatures, a defenceless and loving baby. She often wished herself dead, but she wouldn't
do that to Harry. Even if the boy did not care for her at all she would still stay living in case he ever
needed her. She would do anything that he asked of her. She would do anything just to spend ten
minutes in his presence, just to see him and watch him live the life that he had made for himself and
yet she knew that she deserved none of it. She cared not for the rumours that circled about her baby
being dark. So what if he was. He had a reason to be that was as clear as glass. It was her fault,
James’ fault, Sirius’ fault, Remus’ fault, Dumbledore’s fault, but not his. Lily didn't think that she
could blame her baby for anything. He had been tortured, starved and goodness knows what else for
ten years. It was not his fault that he had become who he was now. No, it was everyone else, but
mostly her. Lily sighed and made her way out of the kitchen. She cast a glamour on herself and
flooed to Diagon Alley. She needed a drink.

James Potter returned home at around seven to find his wife collapsed on the sofa, stinking of alcohol
and snoring loudly. James sighed and pulled the woman into his arms, she didn't even stir. He took
her to their bedroom and gently undressed her before placing a kiss on her forehead and leaving her
to sleep off the alcohol. James made his way into the kitchen and saw Lily’s box open on the floor.
He now knew what had got her in such a state. Four and half years and Lily had got worse and
worse with every letter that came back to her. He gently placed the box on the kitchen table and
flicked through the contents. Letter after letter after letter until he finally reached what he knew to be
several pictures. He picked them up and delicately looked through the pictures of a happy and
healthy baby Harry. How he wished that Harry was like that now. Another sigh and he replaced the
pictures in the box. They were just too painful for him to look at.

Ever since Harry had re-entered the wizarding world everything had become a nightmare. Lily had
become more and more depressed, in fact James didn't think he could remember the last time he had
heard her laugh, a proper laugh. Not the empty and emotionless laughs that had filled their house for
the last four years. Lily had also started drinking and frequently. Every time her emotions became too
much her answer was sure to be at the bottom of a bottle. Lily had lost her job and so all day
everyday all she thought about was Harry. She, however, refused to see a Mediwizard even though
James was sure that she needed one and desperately. But James was just so tired as well. Everything
seemed meaningless and there was no reason to keep going. Most mornings it felt almost impossible
to get out of bed and all his work seemed to just be a way to spend more pointless time. He felt no
spark, no love of life anymore. It all just seemed so pointless.

Harry breathed deeply, calming his beating heart as he pushed his naked body into a sitting position.
Another notch for his bedpost as the muggle saying went. Harry’s ecstasy at finding such secrets
about Dumbledore had needed an outlet and sex had seemed like the easiest and most accessible
method to achieve this. Harry stepped from his bed and made his way into his bathroom. He
expected the body in his bed to be gone by the time he got back and they would be if they knew
what was good for them. Harry let the hot water run over his body, enjoying the feel of it. When he
did make his way out of his shower his bed mate had gone and the only sign that they had ever been
there were the specks of blood that littered his sheets, a quick cleaning spell fixed that and Harry
collapsed onto his bed. He banished his towel to the bathroom and cast a quick drying charm onto
his hair and quickly fell into a deep sleep. His day had been long and stressful one, even if the end
result had been a positive one.

Harry awoke the next morning feeling refreshed and ready for the day. Today was the perfect day to
further find the extent of the validity of the claims in the diary. Harry quickly wrote notes to
Lawrence and Cassius, through the diary, explaining to them what he needed and where they were
to do it. He also told the pair to contact Percy Weasley. The two of them may be loyal to Harry but
two Slytherins were much less suspicious when accompanied by the bright shock of ginger that indicated a Weasley.

The three were to make their way into the Hogshead and spend the day there, only to observe of course. Harry knew that the owner of the Hogshead was Aberforth Dumbledore and so the three of them needed to find out as much dirt as they could on the connection to the old coot. It was unlikely they would find anything of importance so early on but as Percy was already on relatively good terms with the old man and becoming closer with him wouldn't hurt. If the diary were to be believed then there was also a chance that they could turn the man even more against his brother. That was sure to be fun. He would love to see the look of betrayal and heartbreak on the face of the Headmaster as his own brother betrayed him. That was sure to be a stab in the chest.

Harry would leave the trio to their mission and would spend the day in the forest with Balthazar. The snake had told him of a nest of newly hatched Occamys. The Occamy, a type of winged snake, had silver shells for their young and these were valued very highly. They were also extremely useful in potion brewing due to how thin the silver was, meaning it would dissolve easily in potions. Harry had therefore decided to spend the day following the snake to find these valuable egg shells. It was worth a day of the snake’s annoying chatter.

As Harry’s feet crunched through the dead leaves and broken branches littering the forest floor he heard the sound of hooves clopping on the ground. Unconcerned Harry continued on. His wand was already in his hand as a precaution but there were so many creatures in the woods that most sounds were of no concern. Harry continued his trek, following Balthazar’s instructions as to where he was going. A right by the creek, a left by the tree stump and then straight on for around a quarter of a mile. The sound of hooves echoed around the woods again, closer this time. Harry continued walking, now raising his wand in preparation for any threat that may appear before him. Closer and closer the sounds came and Harry’s eyes hardened as he attempted to locate the source of the noise.

“You do not belong here” the centaur growled out. “The stars do not speak kindly of your coming.”

As Harry attempted to unravel what the man was talking about he heard more steps behind him. He slowly stepped away from the first centaur, attempting to keep the new arrival in his vision at the same time as the first. This second centaur was shorter then the first and yet seemed much more aggressive. An arrow was knotted on his bow, the string pulled back, aimed at Harry's heart. A wild look filled his eyes and his blond hair flared around his face as his strode forward. The blonde centaur growled low in his throat as he got closer and closer. Harry raised his wand towards him, ready to defend himself from what appeared to be an attack.

“You do not belong here” the centaur growled out. “The stars do not speak kindly of your coming.”

As Harry attempted to unravel what the man was talking about he heard more steps behind him. He slowly stepped away from the first centaur, attempting to keep the new arrival in his vision at the same time as the first. This second centaur was shorter then the first and yet seemed much more aggressive. An arrow was knotted on his bow, the string pulled back, aimed at Harry's heart. A wild look filled his eyes and his blond hair flared around his face as his strode forward. The blonde centaur growled low in his throat as he got closer and closer. Harry raised his wand towards him, ready to defend himself from what appeared to be an attack.

“Coban.” Another voice called out. Again Harry’s head was turned to face a chestnut centaur, white markings painted onto his face, arms and chest. The centaur looked stern and as he spoke the blonde centaur lowered his bow. However none of the hatred left his eyes.

“This is not what was foretold.” the newcomer proclaimed. He appeared to be the leader of the group as the other two centaurs looked to him with respect and followed his movements with their eyes. As the time passed two more centaurs congregated at Harry’s location. Both with bows in their hands and hatred in their eyes. When it seemed that no more centaurs were going to arrive the one that Harry assumed was the leader stepped towards him. His eyes were dark and as they met with
Harry’s he spoke.

“Harry Potter, you are not welcome in these woods.” the centaur boomed, his voice commanding. Arrows were pulled from their quivers by those in the clearing. “You have upset the order.” he said, alarm colouring his voice.

“If Algorab and Maaz are to unite then shadows will fill the sky. If Asterope crosses their path arrest is inevitable. But if Asterope is joined by Thuban then the shadows will consume us all.” Harry had no idea what it was that the centaur was talking about.

“Now, you shall leave or be forced.” the centaur said, a glare in his eyes. Harry decided that the fight was not worth fighting and so he gave a nod to the leader before walking back in the direction he had come from. There were huffs and grunts made by the other centaurs as Harry left. When Harry was about ten paces away he heard a shout from one of the centaurs.

“If you return, Harry Potter, I will kill you.” Harry quickly looked over his shoulder to see the blonde centaur, Coban, was the one shouting at him. His shoulders were being held by the centaur that had arrived first and Harry was sure that if said centaur had not been in position then Coban would have already attempted to kill him. Harry scoffed to himself. There was no chance that he would be killed by a lowly centaur. If he wished to come back to the forest he would have to do so with a little more backup. He could have easily defeated the centaurs but he did not want word getting back to Dumbledore about the fight. He would simply have to kill them all at once and that required more than just him and Balthazar. For now, the best course of action was a tactical retreat. He would have to get the Occamy shells on another occasion.

Harry spent the rest of his day doing homework. The work was laughably easy and yet it was something that was required of him. At around three thirty he was still sitting in the library, working on a tedious potions essay that was simple and yet by its nature it took a long time to write. As he passed the twenty inch mark of writing his essay he was joined at his table by a young Ravenclaw. Harry looked up at Graham and raised an eyebrow at the boy. What did he want? The boy looked up to Harry, giving him a large smile and pushed a letter towards him. He then stood from the table and made his way out of the library, giving Harry a small wave as he left. Harry rolled his eyes. That boy did nothing for his reputation and yet he was family. Harry would protect the boy as he was his. Just as Cassius and Lawrence were his. But also as the rest of his inner circle were. People that were his were not to be trifled with.

Harry picked the letter off the table and leafed through it, reading the informations written on the pages. He was disappointed with the content. It seemed that there had been very little progress in the mission of the day. Aberforth Dumbledore had been silent, even when prompted for the simplest conversation topic. He had been guarded and glared at both Cassius and Lawrence the moment they opened their mouths. He had been slightly more accepting of Percy but seeing the young man with a Warrington and a Carrow had done nothing to help raise the man’s opinion of the Weasley. Instead he had only grunted a response to his greeting and then retreated to the back room.

Harry sighed. He had expected nothing less. The man was a brother to one of the greatest light wizards of the age. He was sure to be secretive and seducing him to Harry’s side was bound to take time. It seemed that Percy was the one that Aberforth had a soft spot for and yet there was no way to justify the Weasley being at the Hogshead on a regular basis. The old man was sure to be suspicious if a ministry worker were to go out of his way to drink at the pub when it was a large distance from both his home and his work. However it was possible that the man was inclined to be friendly towards other Weasleys, other than Percy. Charlie had reason to be at the Hogshead at least twice a week and especially at weekends. He could use the excuse of visiting Zachary, claiming that he
wanted a drink before he went home. Of course said meetings would have to occur just in case anyone were to question Charlie’s testimony.

Harry was already planning to arrange these meetings and Charlie’s subsequent trips to the Hogshead afterwards. Another meeting in said Hogshead was planned for next week and there would be the perfect time to arrange these meetings. If one thing that Harry knew about Aberforth was that the man was willing to turn a blind eye if he was given enough money. The man knew not whom was meeting in his back rooms, only that he was to leave the door open, that led directly to the rooms, for when the meetings were and that when the meeting was over there would be a generous amount of galleons left on the table. Therefore they had no need to worry that the man would suspect Charlie’s involvement with any other groups and due to the man’s self imposed exile from the light he would know nothing of the young man’s relations with his family. Charlie was therefore the best chance that Harry had at wooing the man.

It had been three days since the letter from the trio had been received and Harry was bored. The first years were less exiting then he had expected and the curses that he had placed on the Hufflepuffs and the Gryffindors had worn off. He had had a spat with Elise Rowle, the girl having decided to challenge his ruling on allowing Luna, a Ravenclaw, to enter the common room. Harry was sure that the girl would find her way in even if he did not let her. Luna was just the sort of person that could get anywhere that she wanted. Rowle had approached the group of seated Slytherins and their friendly Ravenclaw tagalong. The girl’s fists had been clenched and her face red. She had brought out her wand and in front of the entire of Slytherin had preceded to point said wand at the King of Slytherin. The girl had then begun to yell of the blasphemy of allowing an eagle into the serpent’s den. She had alternated pointing her wand between Harry and Luna.

After several minutes of her ranting her wand had returned to it’s original position, pointed at Harry’s head. The girl had looked Harry in the eye and, with venom in her voice, told him that he was a disgrace to Slytherin house and that he was nothing more than a filthy mudblood. Harry could tell that the words had not been received well by anyone in the room. There had been utter silence, so much so that Harry could hear his own breathing. Every member of Harry’s inner circle, most of his outer circle and several other members of the house had had their wands drawn, clenched in a tight fist at their anger.

The girl had made a big mistake and yet her wand was still pointed at Harry’s head as she failed to notice her blunder. This fact alone disappointed Harry. He had expected more awareness from the girl. Her brashness and lack of awareness of the danger she was in were just embarrassing. She was showing the worst qualities of herself in that very moment. As the girl had begun the wand movements, incantation on her lips at least a dozen stunners had hit her from all directions. Several body binds and a mixture of other, more harmful spells had also made contact with her body. The girl had therefore been thrown across the room, her body flopping to the ground like a rag doll. Her skin turned a sickly purple, her hair fell from her head, the black locks falling in clumps across the room as she had been flung about. Her eyes became glued shut, yellow pus leaking from the closed lids and similarly pus filled spots filled all the visible skin of her body. She looked disgusting.

Harry did not wish to look at such an unsavoury sight just before he was to have his dinner. It was a sight that would put anyone off their food. With a look of disgust on his face he stood and made his way from the common room. As he stood so did the rest of the common room. He made his way towards the great hall, all of the members of his house following behind him. A united front, as they left the first year on the floor. She was in a situation of her own stupidity and stupidity was something that was not forgiven easily in Slytherin.

Later that evening the girl had been rushed to the medical wing. Daphne had discreetly told Professor
Snape that there had been an issue in the common room. No names or details of the situation had been given. No questions would be raised due to Dumbledore’s utter disregard for the wellbeing of the Slytherins. If the man cared not for the abused, malnourished, bullied first year that Harry had been then he would give no regard for the daughter of a dark family that had been injured in her own house. Dumbledore therefore cared not that Rowle was still in the hospital wing due to the extensive nature of her injuries. The girl had had no visitors as any allies she may have made had abandoned her the moment she had threatened the King of Slytherin in any way.

However these facts did not make Harry any less bored. He had nothing to do. He was used to waiting and anticipating the reactions of others but as of the current moment all his plans seemed to be frozen. He could not move forward until he could have a meeting and he could not have a meeting for several more days. It was tedious to have to wait. As Harry was thinking about how he wished that time would move more quickly the post owls swooped through the Great Hall.

Over at the Gryffindor table, Edward Potter watched as his parent’s owl swooped before him, letter in its beak. It dropped the letter into his outstretched hand, stole some bacon from his plate and then flew back out of the hall. Edward opened the letter and as he read the contents, his eyes widened and filled with tears. The letter informed him that his mother had finally snapped. She had had a mental breakdown due to the stress of it all. Well, more like James had finally admitted her to St Mungo’s as he could no ignore the problem. Lily had not been well in a long time, she had severe depression and a serious drinking problem. She needed help. She had been put on a detox programme as well as receiving counselling and being put on medication. James predicted that she would not be let out of St Mungo’s for at least the next three months. Possibly more.

Edward’s thoughts swirled as his eyes ran over the words again and again. How was this possible? His mother was fine, she was normal. She didn't need any help. She was a warrior against Voldemort. A strong, fiery, independent woman. Edward didn't understand how she had got like this. This woman wasn't his mother. She wasn't who he remembered her to be as a child. This woman was a stranger, how had this happened? It couldn't be her fault and it sure as hell wasn't his father’s fault so who’s was it?

One name immediately popped to the forefront of his mind. Harry. It was all Harry’s fault. If the boy had not returned then none of this would ever have happened. His mum would still be at home, living a normal life and he would not have to worry about her. Edward crumpled the letter in his hands. Angry tears streaming down his face. Several of his house mates looked towards him in concern. The Weasley twins along with Lee Jordan looked to the boy in curiosity and worry. It was extremely unusual to see The-Boy-Who-Lived in such a state.

Edward Potter stood from his seat, his chair clattering to the floor causing many in the hall to look around to him. As they saw his angry tear streaked face their conversations quieted, the words dying on their lips. Soon almost all of the members of the Great Hall had their attention on the boy. Edward’s breaths were ragged and his face was becoming more and more red as the seconds ticked by. His eyes were fixed on the Slytherin table, more specifically at his younger brother. He purposefully stepped forward, his steps echoing through the now silent hall. However before he could make more than ten steps in Harry’s direction he felt himself being held back. Two sets of arms were gripping him, preventing him from moving anywhere.

“It’s not worth it…”

“You won’t get anywhere near him….”

“Just give it up.”

The Weasley twins maintained their tight grip on Edward’s arms and were not letting go for
anything. They had heard enough about the current situation that Slytherin was in to know that there was no way they should let their best friend start a fight with them. He would never get anywhere near Harry who seemed to be protected on all sides. The boy was also an incredibly powerful wizard in his own right. They were sure that Edward would not come out of a battle with him unscathed. They both looked to Harry who had a small smirk on his face as he watched the turmoil of his elder brother. The boy was dangerous. The twins had heard rumours of what Harry had done to a member of his own house that had betrayed him. The thought of it had made them shiver. The pair were sure that what ever he would do to Edward would be a hundred times worse. They could not let their friend suffer in such a way. They dragged Edward from the hall, Fred grabbing all three of their bags as they went. Edward let himself be taken and yet he knew that this was not the end of it. He would get Harry back, he needed to. It was all the Harry's fault. All of it.
Harry was panicking. His heart was racing and his breath came raggedly. His feet echoed loudly through the halls as he ran. Students rapidly moved out of his way as they saw the panicked form of the leader of Slytherin making his way towards them. Harry reached the hospital wing and pushed the doors open, a boom echoing through the room before him. He didn't slow down as he entered instead running through the open doors. His eyes wildly scanned the room, his panic causing the speed of the movement to seem superhuman. His eyes latched onto one of the beds and he ran forward towards the small figure sitting up in the bed. Harry, without thinking, threw his arms around the small boy before him. His arms tightened around him as he tried to calm his breathing that had somehow got out of his control.

A minute had ticked by before Harry finally released the boy. Graham’s eyes were wide as he looked up the older boy that meant so much to him. Harry was his mentor, his brother, his friend, his family. Graham had never thought that Harry felt the same way. He thought that Harry only had him around because of Cassius and Lawrence, however here he was giving the boy a hug. Harry had never liked touching people and so for Graham to be embraced in such a way meant so much to him. Graham’s eyes began to water slightly as his emotions overcame him. Harry gently patted the back of Graham’s hand as he saw the boy’s tear filled eyes. He was unsure as to why he was showing this uncharacteristic amount of emotion, however as of that moment he didn't really care enough to think about it. He was just glad that Graham was safe.

Harry had been in his transfiguration lesson when he had received the information about Graham. Neville had heard several of the Gryffindors bragging about how they had put ‘the Beckett scum in the hospital.’ The group had described in great detail how they were pretty sure they had broken both his legs and that he had paid for being friends with disgusting Slytherins. Neville had not been able to get the information to Harry without revealing his spy status within Gryffindor until around thirty minutes into the double period. Neville had knocked the dinner plate that he was supposed to be transfiguring into a mushroom off the table and across the room, shattering it into pieces. As he knelt down to pick up the broken pieces he rested his hand on Harry’s desk, slipping a note from his hand onto it before standing and making his way back to his own desk.

Harry quickly picked up the scrap of paper and scanned it. The note told him that Graham was in the hospital wing and that the situation was serious. Harry felt his stomach churn at the news. He didn't know what this feeling was and yet he knew that he needed to see the boy. There was a problem and it needed to be fixed right now. Harry stood gracefully from his seat. None of his inner turmoil showing on his face. He slowly made his way towards the exit of the classroom.

“Mr Potter return to your seat.” Professor McGonagall snapped. She had never liked Harry and took any and all opportunity that she had to scald him. Harry raised an eyebrow at the woman, he was not about to let her stop him. He turned back towards the door and made a few steps forward before her voice interrupted him yet again.

“Mr Potter!” she said, raising her voice. Again Harry ignored it. “Mr Potter I suggest that you either return to your seat or I will drag you to the Headmaster’s office by your ear.” the woman growled out. Harry gave a sharp intake of breath. He wanted to see Graham and yet he knew that a trip to see Dumbledore would possibly mean he would never be able to see Graham. It could be hours before he was freed from the man’s company. Harry clenched his fists as he stomped back to his seat. This was going to be a long hour and a half.
Time passed by at a snail’s pace with Harry’s emotions taking more and more control over him. He didn’t understand why he was feeling this way. It was as though there was a drum in his chest and butterflies in his stomach. He knew that if Graham was in the hospital wing that he was being cared for and would be fine but still his body seemed to take control over his logical mind.

Harry no longer listened to the lesson that went on, ignoring the dinner plate before him and instead attempting to restrain his magic. He could feel it bubble beneath his skin attempting to lash out at the woman before him as she kept him from Graham. Harry’s subconscious knew that violence solved problems and even with Harry forcing the magic within him to submission his own desire to hurt the woman was still there, growing stronger with each passing minute. As the lesson finally ended Harry had rapidly stood from his seat making his way as quickly as he could to the hospital wing.

Harry remained sitting on the young boy’s bed, letting the Ravenclaw calm down. The boy then began to talk about how he had ended up in the infirmary in the first place. It turned out that the boy had decided to go to the library in his free period. As he had been making his way from the tower he had been cornered by three Gryffindor third years, one he had recognised as a Ronald Weasley. The three had cast a silencing charm on him and dragged him down an empty corridor. They had then proceeded to kick the shit out of him, his screams going unheard by anyone. The boys had kicked and punched him for several minutes. One of the three had heavily stamped on both his legs, casing audible cracks to fill the corridor. As Graham was sure that the trio were about to kill him footsteps were heard at the other end of the corridor. The three older boys looked to each other in panic before skittering away down the corridor. One of them had thrown a quick spell backwards, over their shoulder. The aim had been off and just missed Graham’s head as the boy remained clinging to consciousness. He had woken up in the infirmary, his injuries mostly healed but Madame Pomfrey had told him that he would be unable to leave his bed for at least a week.

As Graham finished his story he threw himself into Harry’s arms and sobbed. Harry, unsure of what he was doing gently rubbed the boy’s back. It seemed to calm him as the sobs turned to hiccups and eventually Graham’s breathing slowed down and Harry laid the now sleeping boy back down into his bed. He stood up and turned around only to be faced with a group of people that he had not realised had arrived. Harry cursed himself for his lack of awareness as he schooled his features into a mask. Before him stood Cassius and Lawrence. The show of weakness was less humiliating in front of such people, however it was the sight of the others in the room that caused Harry to curse himself. Behind his faux brothers stood Albus Dumbledore and Poppy Pomfrey. The two were looking at him in curiosity and Harry could see a bright twinkle in the eyes of Albus Dumbledore. This was not good. He had revealed a possible weakness to the biggest threat that he had. This could end very badly for the shy Ravenclaw asleep on the bed.

Due to Graham’s injuries the boy had been unable to make it to Hogsmead and therefore unable to make his way to the meeting that was currently beginning in the Hogshead. Harry scowled at the members of the room before him becoming impatient as the last few members failed to make an appearance. Fia was flitting around the room, little flame was an apt name for him. He moved from person to person making comments, greetings and the occasional question. Harry knew that the boy was a rather social creature but he needed to gain a modicum of control. Even if the boy was in friendly company he was acting like a small child. At least there were still two and a half years in which to ensure the boy was prepared to take up the mantel as Slytherin’s new King. Harry’s attention was drawn away from Fia and to the doorway as the final members of their group joined them. The scowl that adorned Harry’s face caused the two to sheepishly look to the floor and mutter their apologies to the boy. Hestia and Flora were never usually late but the addition of their elder brother behind them indicated to Harry the reason for their late arrival. Lawrence threw a smirk at Harry before taking his seat seeming to have no remorse for holding up the meeting. This made Harry feel like nothing more than a petulant child. He sent a wandless, wordless stinging hex
towards Lawrence. The young man gave out a small yelp as the spell connected with his leg, however he seemed otherwise unaffected, he merely continued chatting with Cassius who was seated next to him.

Harry began the meeting with a wave of his hand, silencing all the occupants of the room and bringing their attention to him. Harry began to write down several lines of text and then watched as the group read through it. It explained the attack that Graham had experienced and also his slow but steady recovery. The boy’s bones had been fixed and yet it appeared that they had grown back weaker than before. Graham would have to spend the next few months in rehabilitation and would have difficulty walking until his muscles strengthened enough to compensate for his weakened bones. Graham would also be much more susceptible to leg breakages for the rest of his life. Not to mention the psychological damage that the boy had suffered from being attacked in a place he believed to be safe. He also told them of how Harry had told the boy to say that he could not remember anything about the attack. This would lead the three attackers to think that their pathetic attempts at an obliviate had worked and would leave them vulnerable to attack. He also informed the group that the other two members involved in the attack had been Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnigan.

Many of the faces in the room crumpled in anger as they read of their youngest member’s predicament. Lawrence and Cassius, of course, and many others had known that Graham was in the hospital wing due to some unknown attackers. However they had not been informed of the entire situation. The pair of Weasleys looked to each other and then to Harry, anger and sadness filling their faces. They couldn’t believe that their own brother had stooped to such a level. They knew that the boy was still indoctrinated to believe that all Slytherins were evil but to attack a boy, two years his junior, three on one was beyond the pail. The pair were sure that if they saw the boy again they would be hard pressed not to kill him on the spot.

Harry continued his meeting after letting the group have a few minutes to calm themselves after the news about Graham. He was sure that the young Ravenclaw would no longer be allowed to travel alone again if the looks on his inner circles face’s were anything to go by. However before he could start two of his members fell from their chairs, their knees hitting the floor as they leant their heads forward. They hid their eyes and both young men began to unbutton their shirts.

“Harry.” croaked the voice of Percy Weasley. “We…we had nothing to do with it.” The voice was rough as though the man had swallowed glass. Harry could hear the emotion in his voice. Next to him his brother seemed equally as shaken. The boys pulled their shirts to the side to reveal their animals who were equally subdued. Charlie’s dragon curled tightly around itself on the left side of his chest. Percy’s cat, on his stomach, looking wide eyed at the man who had created him. The ginger speckled ears flat against his head. Harry walked forward and gently rested a hand on the head of each of the two Weasleys before him. The young men wanted, no needed, to prove to Harry that they had had nothing to do with the attack on Graham. The very fact that their names were the same as the ring leader of the attack made them feel somewhat responsible. They had shown themselves and shown Harry that there had been nothing they could do to prevent the events that had occurred. Their brightly coloured animals were signs of that.

As Harry stepped back from the Weasley’s heads eleven thumps of knees hitting the floor were heard. The rest of Harry’s inner circle were knelt before him. All with their heads down, all willing to show Harry that they were still loyal. Harry looked at each one. He trusted them and knew none of them had initiated the attack on their youngest member. However it seemed that each and every one of them was willing to prove themselves. Harry kept his eyes hard as he looked at them. He then turned his back to the group. His footsteps echoed through the quiet room as he made his way back to his seat. Harry gracefully returned to the front of the room, returning to his chair. The group before him also returned to their seats and many let out a sigh of relief. It seemed that Harry trusted them.
Harry watched the expressions that passes over the faces of all of the members of the room. Relief and pride were the two main ones that seemed to feature. However there was a big goofy grin on Fia’s face that made Harry want to sign in exasperation. The boy was far too enthusiastic for his own good. Instead of returning to his own seat Fia skipped across the room and sat by Harry’s feet. It seemed that the boy was in a clingy mood today. The boy could still see and be seen by the rest of the room, even with the table before Harry in the way. Therefore Harry decided to let the boy be. It was more hassle then it was worth to move him. Fia was far too stubborn to go without a fight.

The meeting progressed with Fia remaining in place as each member of the room started as they usually would. They gave Harry any updates of importance that they had had since their last meeting. It seemed that ministry updates had been few and far between. Fudge, being incompetent as he was, simply hid his head in the sand as chaos rained around him. Fudge only seemed to listen to those from ‘light’ families and ignore anything that anyone else said whom he considered unworthy. Percy was currently the closest to the fool of a man. As a member of a light family he had become the man’s personal assistant. Percy knew who the man met with and what it was that he discussed with them. It seemed that the man was having an un-regularly large number of meetings with Albus Dumbledore. Percy was unsure on the content but in the last week the pair had met three times. Harry wanted to shake his head in exasperation, Fudge was nothing more than a joke.

There was, however, something of interest that had happened within the ministry building even if it had not been on official ministry business. Lawrence told of how he had been approached by Lucius Malfoy. The man had seemed insistent on talking to him about a private matter. When the two had gone to the man’s office Lucius had told him that the Dark Lord had asked for him to pass on a message to his leader. It seemed that the man had managed to get his hands on something that the boy may be most interested in. Lucius wanted Lawrence to pass on a message that the Dark Lord would be most pleased to see Harry. Of course Lucius had no idea who the real identity of this leader was even if he indeed had an inkling. Lucius’ own son may be part of the outer circle of Harry’s group but Harry told nothing to anyone but his inner circle and he only told them what he deemed important. The outer circle also knew that if they said anything to anybody that was even remotely telling they would never stand a chance at becoming anyone. In fact they would probably be removed from the outer circle all together. Maybe even be rejected from Slytherin itself. The meeting with the dark Lord was something that Harry needed to deal with but at the current time he had more important matters to discuss. He would contact the Dark Lord when it suited him and not let the man threaten him into it.

Harry then began to tell those gathered of the part that they had in the plans he had. Harry’s plans may be complex but that didn’t mean that each of the members of his inner circle needed to know all the details. They only had to know what they had to do, not why. Harry needed to have eyes on both Albus and Aberforth Dumbledore wherever possible. Harry told Charlie and Zachary of their new responsibilities. He told them that any and all meetings that they had were to be natural and to be done with permission of Professor Snape. It would be advantageous to have the meetings at least once a week, preferably twice. However Harry made it very clear that the pair were not to make any arrangements that would be remotely suspicious. If that meant that the pair couldn't meet for a month then so be it. Charlie needed to have no reason to seem even remotely suspicious from the eyes of either Dumbledore. That would only lead to more complications.

Harry wanted Neville to keep his ears open, fully open. Harry wanted any and all information on further attacks that the Gryffindors were planning. He no longer cared who it was the Gryffindors attacked, be it those close to him or an innocent bystander they were all under his protection. They had attacked Graham and that was a declaration of war. Harry told Neville to tell his followers within Gryffindor that there were targets on the back of several of the Gryffindors. The list included Ronald Weasley, Dean Thomas, Seamus Finnigan, Cormac McLaggen, the Weasley twins and of course Edward Potter. The seven individuals had either been involved in the attack directly or they had been
overheard talking about it and how great it was. They would, therefore, become excluded from
Gryffindor house as much as Harry’s influence would allow. They would not be told the new
passwords for the common room, no-one would acknowledge their existence, they were to become
ghosts. Harry’s control over Gryffindor had become stronger over the past week. Many Gryffindors
had already started to ignore those they suspected to be involved in the boy’s attack. Harry wanted to
furtherer exacerbate this.

Harry also wanted for the same thing to be applied across all the houses, where possible. Of course
Slytherins knew there would be a war moment they had heard of Graham’s attack. They just needed
to be told who it was on their target list. Ravenclaw house also seemed to be more than willing to
involve themselves. For the past few days their hostility towards the Gryffindors had been stronger
than ever before. The fact that a member of their house, a young one at that, had been in a three
against one situation with students that were far older than himself did not seem fair at all. Luna had
been approached by many a Ravenclaw asking over the wellbeing of Graham. That was unusual for
the girl but not unwelcome. The larger number of students in contact with her helped to increase the
hatred for targeted Gryffindors. A whispered word here, a gentle prod there and the flickers of flames
turned into a burning inferno. Hufflepuffs were also seemingly more hostile towards Gryffindors.
Attacking a young, defenceless Ravenclaw did not sit well with many of them. Loyalty was, after all,
the name of the game.

Dumbledore’s supervision would be placed in the hands of everyone in the room, Harry himself
included. All of them were to be aware of the man’s movements. Even a passing in a corridor or the
man missing a meal. It was all important and was all worth reporting back to Harry. Harry wanted to
know every step the man took and if there was even a remote possibility that he was in Hogsmead
then Harry needed to know about it instantly. The relationship between Albus and Aberforth was
key to Harry’s plans.

As the meeting finished Harry stood and thanked his inner circle. He wished them luck with their
missions and told them to keep him updated on any and all details, no matter how small they may
seem to be.

Severus Snape stood before his Lord and Master. He could feel the power radiating from the man
and he let it wash over him. It felt glorious, the magic was intoxicating and Severus had to steady
himself not to let himself be dragged towards the man. He stopped several feet from the dais on
which his Lord was standing and fell to his knees, feeling utterly content with the position.

“Severus.” the man purred and Severus had to repress a shudder at the sound. “my most loyal
follower. What is it that you wish to tell me?” the Dark Lord said just above a whisper. The sound
was enticing and for a second Severus almost forgot how to speak. He felt reverence at kneeling
before his Lord, as though he was in the presence of a God.

“My Lord.” Severus said, his voice coming out in a husky whisper. However due to the silence of
the room it sounded much louder than it should have. “It seems that there have been some advances
with young Mr Potter.” The Dark Lord gave a vicious smile as he heard these words. “It seems that
the boy is attempting to further change the workings of the school. After the attack on Graham
Beckett there seems to have been a revolution of sorts my Lord.” Severus took a deep breath before
speaking. Trying to steady himself.

“It seems that a large number of the Gryffindors have become outcasts. Ravenclaws and Hufflepuff
seem to be flocking to Slytherins. I have heard murmurs from many of the younger students claiming
that Gryffindors are evil and that they should be avoided at all costs.” Severus nearly choked as he
heard a huffed laugh come from the Dark Lord. He however managed to continue his report.
“Dumbledore seems at a loss, especially when people are constantly pranking and cursing his precious Boy-Who-Lived.” a sneer made its way onto Severus’ face as he spoke of the boy but he quickly dropped it. “Dumbledore is planning to give the boy a guard if the attacks continue.” Severus stopped having finished his report. He waited for several seconds, his head down and his breathing slightly erratic.

“Is that all Severus?” a voice came from by his ear and Severus almost fainted at the noise. He had not heard the man move and so the breath he felt tickling his cheek was utterly unexpected. Severus gave a shaky nod at the question. He felt a cold hand grip his chin and pull it upwards. Severus’ eyes were brought to meet the Dark Lords. He instantly lowered his mental shields, showing the Dark Lord he was utterly willing for the man to see what he wanted.

“There is no need for that Severus.” the man said gently. “You have done well my servant. Now… off you go.” he said, letting go of his chin and walking back towards his seat. Severus scrambled up and bowed to his Lord before making his way from the room. His heart rate did not return to normal for at least half an hour.

Harry’s footsteps were silent, his breathing regular and his pose regal. A small smile made its way onto his face, the smile was not kind in the slightest. It was filled with menace and the promise of pain. Neville shivered, sharp shards of ice stabbing him in the back as he let the boy pass. He was glad that he was not on the receiving end of that smile and he vowed never to be. He watched Harry’s back as the boy made his way up the stairs towards the fifth year Gryffindor dorm room.

Harry twirled his wand through his fingers gently caressing the runes that lined his surface knowing each one by heart. Death was Harry’s favourite but he had no intention of fulfilling the promise that his touch would imply. Instead he felt the deep groove of the lines that indicated destruction. That he was sure to use, in fact he had already started. To destroy another life was enjoyable enough even if the end result would not be death. The rune tingled beneath his thumb as he ran more harshly over it. It was as though the wand knew that tonight they would be furthering Ronald Weasley’s decent into madness. Harry pushed the door open and felt a spark of anticipation run through him. This was sure to be enjoyable.

As Harry pulled back the curtain of the bed of Ronald Weasley he engulfed the area around him in a silencing charm. He did not wish for his work to be disturbed. He delicately ran the tip of his wand down the sleeping boys face, forcing him into a deeper sleep. The sleep was not however a peaceful one. Any dreams that the boy had were sure to have would be filled with terror. Harry would twist and warp them to his will. The boy would be begging for Mercy within a few minutes.

This was the third time this week that Harry had Neville let him into the Gryffindor boy’s room. Ronald was already showing signs that his efforts were succeeding. The boy seemed more twitchy and nervous around people than normal and had dark circles under his eyes. His usually large appetite was much diminished and his lack of attention in class was even worse than usual. Harry gave a flick of his wand and an image appeared above the sleeping boy’s head. It was from the ginger’s point of view and it appeared that the boy was running through the Forbidden Forest terrified for his life.

Harry pulled the sheet down from Ronald’s body. He unbuttoned the boys shirt, pulling his arms from the sleeves. He then pulled the boys trousers down glad that he had suggested to the boy, subconsciously of course, that he start to wear boxers under his pyjamas. The first night that Harry had begun to strip the boy he had nearly vomited at the sight of the boy’s genitals. Harry looked at the scars and bruises that already littered the boy’s body. It seemed that last night’s work had been as effective as he had expected. He gently ran his fingers over a large scar that now ran across the boy’s
stomach. It seemed that the boy had been attacked by a rather vicious death eater, or so he thought.

Harry turned his attention to the boy’s dreams and watched them for several seconds, revealing in the fear that he saw. The boy was panting quickly, his footing unsure as he tripped over roots and leaves that covered the ground as he ran faster and faster. With a flick of Harry’s wand a large spider appeared behind the boy. It leapt for him. The boy’s mouth opened in a silent scream and tears began to stream down his face. Harry quickly removed the knife that had been tucked in his pocket and sliced across the boy’s shoulder. Harry then watch as in the dream the spiders leg came up and scratched the ginger in the same place. Harry let out a smile. It seemed that it was working just as well as yesterday.

Over the next hour Harry littered the boys body with many more bruise and cuts that were then copied by the creatures that Ronald managed to dream up. As Harry sat elated and panting on the bed he decided that that was enough for tonight. He therefore stood and began to cast the delicate and intricate spell work that he had, himself, invented. Using the blood that was still seeping from the boys shoulder wound he drew runes for healing, secrecy, mystery and hardship. The combination of the runes along with the chanting that Harry was currently doing made for a lovely outcome. Ronald would remember all his dreams, every second of them. The cuts would heal, leaving angry red scars and the bruises would fade to look several days old. Ronald would be able to see these lovely reminders but no-one else would, well except the caster of the spells, Harry. It was already obvious that Ronald was slowly spiralling into the insanity that Harry hoped he would reach. People had started looking at him oddly as he asked them if they could see this scar and that bruise, becoming angry when they denied it. It was a joy to see the boy questioning whether anything was real. Harry hoped that tomorrow he would see further fruits of his labour.
Harry sat in the Great Hall Graham pulled close to his left side. The two almost knocking shoulders. Fia sat on his right, as usual, with Flora sitting next to Graham. The group all looked protectively at the boy who's blue and bronze robes stood out vividly against the sea of green and silver that surrounded him. Whispers had rustled through the Great Hall, like the leaves that fluttered as the wind rushed through them, as Graham had entered the Hall for the first time since his admittance into the infirmary. Graham had walked in amidst the Slytherins, all of them surrounding the boy showing that he was protected. Graham’s limp was pronounced as he walked however the determined look on the young boy’s face countered any weakness that the walk may have demonstrated.

At the end of the Gryffindor table sat a haggard looking Ronald Weasley. His robes hung off him limply, looking to big for his thin frame. Black circles ringed his eyes, so dark that they looked like bruises. Ronald had not looked in the mirror in days, the reason being that he no longer recognised the face that he saw reflected back as his own. Large blistering scars had formed over the left side of his face, running from the top of his forehead and down to his cheekbone. A dream of boiling water, melting the skin off his face, had been the reason for the monstrosity on his face. Ronald had, however, long since given up on asking if anyone could see the scars. It seemed that it was only him that could see the angry red puckered skin and black bruises that now seemed to make up almost all of his body. The boy looked up wearily at the entrance of the Slytherins. His eyes met with an older boy, he thought was called Nettles and he flinched violently at the hatred he saw directed at him. The goblet of water that had been clasped in his hands was lifted from the table, the droplets splashing over the edges and soaking into his dishevelled uniform. However he didn’t seem to care. He simply looked back down at the table and gently fingered one of the scratches in the table. So often overlooked and yet such a permeant and damaging mark to the wood.

Harry’s eyes scanned the Hall as they did everyday. He looked for abnormalities in the small kingdom that he was building around himself. All seemed well. A month had gone by and his message had been received loud and clear by all. At one end of the Gryffindor table sat a terrible looking Ronald Weasley. At the other end sat the Weasley twins along with McLaggen, Finningan, Thomas and of course Edward Potter. The rest of the Gryffindors were ignoring the existence of the boys. Their attention anywhere but the group of rejects that had been banished to the end of the table. The Hufflepuff table was returning to the united front that it should be. Caleb sat with the rest of his Quidditch team mates in the middle of the table chatting and laughing. The Ravenclaws seemed subdued, many trying to fully emerge themselves in books and others throwing worried glances at Graham. Harry, allowing himself a small sign of affection, brought his arm up to rest on Graham’s shoulder. At least Harry could convince himself that it was a sign of ownership to the rest of the hall. As Graham felt the arm lightly come to rest on him he let a small smile grace his face, hiding it as he took another bite out of his toast. It appeared that the results of his injuries would not be all bad. Harry had become more protective than Graham had ever seen him. He had also been assured that all those responsible or involved in his attack would pay and although Graham was reluctant to admit it, he was looking forward to seeing them suffer.

As Harry was sipping his tea he noticed the wide eyed face of Sebastian Diggory entering the hall. The older boy was making steady strides towards the Slytherin table, his attention directly focused on Harry. His breaths were uneven as he reached Harry, his breath puffed out onto his King’s cheek. Sebastian’s words were fast and quiet as he whispered them to Harry. It seemed that Dumbledore had left the school. For the man to leave the school on a school day was rare, however for him to leave as the day was only beginning was almost unheard of. Harrys eyes filled with curiosity. What was it that the man was doing? What could be so important that he would leave Hogwarts to do it? Harry removed his arm from Graham’s shoulder. He gave a look to Flora and Hestia. The two were
strong enough to ward off any attacks that might be thrown their way. They were to guard Graham, ferry him to and from classes and take him to lunch and then back to the common room in the evening if Harry was still unavailable at that time.

Harry made his way from the hall, giving a quick squeeze to Graham’s shoulder as he left. He rapidly made his way towards the exit, heading for the Slytherin Common room. He needed to set a few of his spies into place before his first lesson of the day started. He grabbed the diary from his desk, the pages still as crisp and fresh as the day that he had received it. He lightly stroked his embellished name on the cover before flipping the diary open and writing to Cassius and Lawrence. The two were now on Dumbledore check. They were also to inform Percy of his duty. Harry wanted to know what business the old coot had outside of Hogwarts.

After writing the instructions down Harry placed the diary gently into his bag. He then brought his hands together, placing them beneath his chin. A perturbed look adorned his face. He was in a difficult situation. He was sure that the man would find out soon enough about the situation and yet Severus would be unable to give any information for at least the next two hours. If he gave the man the information that he had then the man would be in his debt. However it meant that the man would know another of his secrets. Was it worth it? The next thirty seconds ticked by as Harry mulled the problem over in his mind.

Finally he decided. It was worth the risk. A favour from Lord Voldemort was worth the risk. Harry quickly grabbed a piece of parchment. The lines that filled the page would look unintelligible to any normal human being and yet to Harry and Voldemort the characters would look like english, plain and simple. Harry was not about to send any information by owl that could be intercepted by unfriendly eyes. If anyone else were to read the page before him they would think of it as nothing more than the delusion ravings of a mad man. Harry’s normal communications with Lord Voldemort were through Severus Snape. This meant that all letters thus far had been written in English. Therefore to send the letter would be to reveal that he was a parsletonge. He was sure that the company of Balthazar may have made the man suspicious and yet the letter was cold hard proof of the ability. Harry sealed the letter and then quickly made his way to the owlery before heading to his first class. He kept the diary close to him at all times, waiting for any updates that he may receive.

Harry sighed as the hand resting on his shoulder tightened. It was leading him down the corridor, quickly and urgently. Harry ignored the grip and let his fingers wonder over Balthazar’s scales as the snake hissed indulgently under his shirt, enjoying his Master’s attention. Harry continued the gentle strokes until he reached his destination. Severus Snape’s eyes bore into the young man standing before him as he looked with annoyance and worry at the Slytherin. The boy was a handful. To have the Dark Lord summon Severus with such glee twinkling in his eyes was something that warranted fear. To see that glee intensify as his Lord spotted him had sent a shiver down Severus’ spine. Severus’ Lord had asked for the Potter boy to be brought to him at once and any delay was sure to end in punishment.

Severus had run through the corridors, his robes swirling behind him like a hurricane, ready to leave destruction in his wake if any disturbed him. As he reached the common room a look was all that he had needed. His eyes met with the King of Slytherin’s and the boy stood up elegantly. His own robes fluttered lightly at the movement. He made a small step forward and Severus did the same, the two meeting before Harry’s inner circle. The potions master gave a glare and a sharp movement of his head, to show what he wanted Harry to do. Severus noticed the small figure of Graham Beckett finch slightly at the sudden movement. As Harry made another step forwards, Nathaniel Flamel and Blaise Zabini stood up, their wands shooting into their hands. Severus, not at all threatened gave them a hard glare. Before the confrontation could escalate into something that either party would regret Harry raised a hand. His palm greeted the potions master’s gaze and with that small movement
the two boys behind him reseated themselves, their wands returning to their holsters.

Severus now stood before the raven haired teen. In his hand he held a used potions vial. Harry gave a self-satisfied smirk as he saw the look of frustration on the man’s face. Severus’ impatience was flowing from him in waves that threatened to crash into Harry, knocking him from his feet. Harry stood strong against the tidal wave, his amusement only growing. Finally, after the time had stretched out before them, like a vast chasm, Harry gently placed his hand on the vial. Severus muttered out a quick word, the frustration showing itself in the low grumble. With a small pop the two disappeared. The amused smirk still fixed on Harry’s face.

As the pair reappeared Harry was met with the sound of whispers filling the large room. He turned around, sedately, his face showing none of the nervousness that he was internally experiencing. As his eyes saw the sight before him, he hardened his eyes and straightened his back. Before him stood a crowd of death eaters. Many staring at him and many others muttering to those staring. Harry’s glittering green eyes met with shimmering red. It seemed that Lord Voldemort was done with playing the games of a child.

“My dear followers” the man proclaimed, voice booming through the hall, echoing and forcing quiet from all those standing. Many heads whipped around, before lowering in submission as their Lord spoke.

“It appears that today we have a most special guest.” A smirk marred the handsome features as the words rolled easily from the man’s tongue. Harry gave a glare to the powerful wizard before him. This was not a game that Harry wanted to play. “May I introduce to you Mr Potter, the younger.” A smile crept up the man’s face as he made this proclamation.

Multiple wands were drawn from their holsters and aimed at Harry and before he had a chance to give more than a glare several spells rocketed towards him. Harry dodged two, one an angry red and the other a sickly purple. Harry then blocked the others with a strong shield. He watched as the rainbow of colours crashed against the golden haven that he himself had created. It seemed that Voldemort was not pleased with discovering the enormity of the secret that Harry had kept from him. A few hexes from his followers was, in the man’s mind, a reasonable punishment.

“Now now my dears, that is not how we are to treat a guest.” Voldemort’s voice was sickly sweet as he spoke, honey hiding the venom beneath his words. The false indignation would have been amusing had it not been for the danger that the man was known to be. He was to be treated as a wild beast. Never should one let their guard down around him. Never feel comfortable.

“Harry, if you would be so kind” the man said smoothly. Harry let his feet move of their own accord. He kept his face calm and his stance protective as he made his way through the crowd of death eaters. Harry reached the raised dais and noting the relaxed shoulders and the calm look on the Dark Lord’s face he made his way up the steps, stopping as he was level with the man.

“Mr Potter here is an esteemed guest and is therefore not to be harmed.” As Voldemort said this, his eyes hardened, loosing their earlier mirth they had expressed. “I shall allow this first transgression to be…forgiven.” he hissed, the threat clear in his tone. “However if it happens again I will not be so…merciful.” Harry looked on in satisfaction as many eyes filled with fear and shivers ran down the backs of others as red gaze fell upon them.

“Now go.” Voldemort said, snapping many out of the fear that had filled them. Scuffled feet and mummers filled the hall as the large group shuffled out.

Left in the hall was a much smaller group. Voldemort’s own inner circle, consisting of: Severus
Snape, Lucius Malfoy, Fenrir Greyback, Regulus Black, Amicus and Alecto Carrow, Bellatrix, Rodolphus and Rabastan Lestrange and Antonin Dolohov. Harry had met several of these people before him under different circumstances. Amicus Carrow was the father of Lawrence, Flora and Hestia and during house visits he had been introduced to the man, even if it had been nothing more than a passing glance. The same could be said for Alecto Carrow, Harry had met the woman at one of the many formal functions that the Warringtons had held. A bow and a curtsey exchanged, but nothing more.

Lucius Malfoy had been in correspondence with Harry on several occasions, not that he had known it of course. The man had been given letters by and then given letters in return to Percy. Harry had exchanged information with the man for the past two years. The two sharing of information that may be beneficial to each party. Even if Lucius had not know with whom he had corresponded it had still been advantageous and Lucius Malfoy was not one to miss out on opportunity.

The inner circle looked to their Lord with curiosity. Only Severus and Fenrir knew of their Lord’s correspondence with the Potter boy and only Severus knew of its true nature. Unsure whether or not to address the situation on all of their minds, the room felt thick with their curiosity. Voldemort ignored the curious glances of his inner circle and instead turned his attention towards Harry, standing besides him. He let a single finger trail down the side of the boy’s face, his cool skin contrasting with the heat of Harry’s.

“It seems there is much more to you then first meets the eye, young Harry” Voldemort hissed out in Parseltongue. His gaze flowed over the boy before him, as though only now seeing him properly. Harry merely raised an eyebrow at the self-proclaimed Dark Lord before him.

“I wonder what else you are hiding from me.” Voldemort hissed again. His long finger rested against Harry’s heart. The action may have seemed innocent enough and yet to Harry the threat was clear. If Harry didn't give the man any vital information that he may have then Harry’s life was no longer secure. Death was as sure as life and if Harry ever betrayed the Dark Lord that death would be imminent. Drawing his hand away from the teen’s chest Voldemort turned back to his followers.

“My loyal followers, I see your curious looks and for once I am feeling generous.” Voldemort threw a mirthful glance at Harry. He knew that the boy before him had wanted to keep his secrets just so, secret. However Voldemort wanted to punish Harry for his lack of transparency. The Dark Lord did not like to be ignorant of anything, no matter how small.

“It seems that we have a new ally. Young Mister Potter here has agreed to help us in any way that he can.” Voldemort’s emphasis on his words made it clear to Harry that he had fucked up and fucked up a lot. It seemed the Dark Lord would make him suffer for his transgression.

Harry let his head drop back and a puff of breath emerged from his mouth. Balthazar slithered from under Harry’s shirt, onto his lap, begging for Harry’s attention. Red eyes watched as Harry ran his fingers along the snake, indulging his will. It was best to do that, avoiding the inane hissing that was sure to follow if the snake did not get his way. Harry supposed that he spoiled the snake.

“What were you expecting Harry?” Voldemort questioned as he looked to the slightly disheveled boy before him. Harry was siting in a black leather wingback chair. His collar was undone, his tie, green and silver, hanging limply around his neck. The meeting had gone on for an hour and Harry was sick of dealing with death eaters. The inner circle had been distrusting and suspicious of Harry’s motives and yet it seemed that Voldemort was insistent that Harry no longer remain an anonymous bystander. He wanted to involve Harry in the war and he was sure that it would not be too far in the future when the man would want to reveal this to the entire wizarding world. Having a Potter on his side was sure to draw support from many of those still on the fence as well as shocking many light
supporters into questioning their loyalties to Dumbledore.

As Voldemort continued his observation of Harry, the boy’s mind flickered back to the past hours. The inner circle had been told that he was their newest ally in the war against the light wizards. He was to be informed of everything that was happening; any raids, new information on the order of the Phoenix and changes that there may be within the ministry at the hands of the Death Eaters. For all intents and purposes Harry was now a member of the inner circle. He would be attending meetings that he could and Voldemort expected his most loyal to show a united front before the rest of the Death Eaters. Harry was one of them now. The fact that Harry was free of the Dark Lord’s mark was not well received by the rest of the room, however with a quick glare from their Lord none of them dared to protest.

“You left me waiting Harry. For a month. Then I find out that you failed to mention that you are a parsletonge. I would have been willing to discuss the situation in which you would have been revealed to my Death Eaters, however you left me with little other choice.” Voldemort’s tone was filled with mild annoyance. It seemed that rather than being angry the man had merely become impatient with the boy. He had, after all told Lucius to request a meeting with the boy a month ago. Not directly of course. It was fun to see the elegant Malfoy Lord squirm as he realised he was ignorant of certain things. Things that, if what Voldemort had told him was true, were of much importance. A month was ample time and he had not even received conformation that Harry had received the letter. So when an opportunity to display his annoyance had arisen he had taken it. Harry would not be able to protest and that was just the way that Voldemort wanted it. The little snake may be clever but he needed to learn that, at least in part, he owed his success to the Dark Lord. It was fun to play with the boy but occasionally he needed to be shown his place. Voldemort was exited for a time when Harry would truly challenge him. The boy was only growing in power with each passing day. The game was sure to only get more interesting as the boy got older.

It appeared the both Harry and the Dark Lord had information on Dumbledore’s comings and goings of the past day. Of course the man had been to the Ministry but his motives for the most part were unknown. Although it must have been of a great importance. The man had not appeared to have spoken with anyone other than a brief good morning to Fudge. From what Lawrence and Cassius had been able to gather the man had gone down to the hall of prophecies. For what purpose, though, they were unsure. Percy had also heard Fudge muttering over the fact that Dumbledore had been to see the Unspeakables when he, the Minister of Magic, could not. It seemed that the old coot was planing something. Harry and Voldemort were both striving to find out what.

Harry watched in satisfaction as the two fifth years sat in isolation. Their heads hung and their shoulders slumped. It seemed that the isolation was getting to them far more quickly than Harry had predicted. Harry sent a gentle tendril into their minds, skimming over their thoughts, caressing them like one would a lover. He revelled in the fear and pain that he felt there. Gently he eased his way deeper into their minds. Deeper and deeper he pushed, delicately enough so they wouldn't feel a thing. He finally found what he was looking for. The strands that each of them had, showing their emotions towards the other. Their friendship was relatively strong, it seemed that their banishment had only made their relationship stronger. Harry couldn't be having that now, could he?

Harry latched onto the strands, gently twisting them. Turning the once growing branches into crumbling, blackened stumps. Harry forced the notion of paranoia onto both of them. He planted the seeds and prepared to watch them grow. Soon Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnigan would be utterly alone in the world. Their thoughts would gradually be filled with hatred and suspicion of the one person that they thought they would always be able to trust. They would be utterly alone in a school that hated them, unable to trust the only person that may be able to understand them. Harry wondered how much longer it would take for them to crack. To break beyond repair.
Harry sat before the black lake, looking out at the frosty ground before him. A blanket was laid out on the floor on which Harry had seated himself. In his hands he held a book that his eyes were gently skimming over. The topic was that of the Animagus transformation. Harry had taken an interest in the subject ever since his informants had revealed to him that Rita Skeeter, the famous journalist, was capable of turning into a bug. It would be fantastically useful to be able to become an animal. Once Harry had mastered the skill he could also teach it to the rest of his inner circle.

As Harry engrossed himself in his book Luna was sitting next to him on the blanket. The girl was running her fingers along Balthazar’s scales as the snake hissed contentedly. Luna talked to the adder, about what, Harry did not know. The conversation only had meaning to the blonde herself. Graham and Fia sat on another blanket next to Harry and Luna’s. The young Ravenclaw was attempting to do his homework, with Fia assisting him in any areas that he was struggling in while he doodled in his note book. Fia’s doodles were much more than that. The boy may call them nothing more than scribbles but to any normal eye they were small masterpieces in their own right. Fia was currently in the process of drawing a small blue tit, his inspiration coming from the small creature perched on a branch not ten feet away. Graham gave a small shiver as a light gust of wind blew across the lake’s surface. Harry’s sharp eyes picked up the movement but before he could react to the action Fia began to unwrap the scarf from around his neck. He then gently wrapped the green and silver around the young Ravenclaw. Graham gave a small smile to the older boy, muttering a shy thank you, before continuing with his work.

Another hour passed in this manner, the group of four satisfied with their own tasks, none of them feeling the need for any conversation other than Luna’s mumbling and Graham’s occasional questioning on his work. However their small haven was inevitably interrupted. Not that the interruption was an unpleasant one. Alfie Weasley stepped nervously into the clearing that the group had made for themselves.

“H-h-hi Harry.” the boy stuttered nervously, Even if the boy had met Harry several times before while in Hogwarts, it seemed that the young man was terrifying. Alfie knew that his sister, Faye, would often talk to Harry, but he, a Ravenclaw, was much more nervous about the whole affair. The first year tugged nervously at his sleeve before speaking again.

“I just wanted to see if Graham was okay.” With this Alfie glanced at his fellow Ravenclaw before returning his attention back towards Harry. “Is it okay if I…” Alfie trailed of, looking at the space on the blanket next to Graham. Harry raised an eyebrow at the first year. It seemed that he was braver than he had first expected. Harry flicked his eyes to Graham. The boy seemed comfortable with the idea that Alfie was present. Harry therefore gave a small tilt of his head. Alfie scrambled onto the blanket. A large smile splitting his face as he started to chat excitedly with Graham.

Luna leaned her head against Harry’s shoulder as Balthazar slithered onto his Master’s lap so she could continue her petting. Harry stiffened slightly, unused to the contact that he himself had not initiated. Luna ignored the obvious tension that Harry’s body radiated and instead focused on telling Balthazar of the nargles that were floating around the head of far too many of the Hufflepuffs these days. After several seconds Harry finally relaxed. The weight of the younger girls head on his shoulder felt less and less offensive as the seconds passed.

Another hour passed and Harry turned the last page of his book. As he finished he placed the book into his bag and stood up from his place on the blanket. Balthazar was displaced and hissed in displeasure at the sudden movement. As he stood the others looked to him, wondering what Harry was doing. Harry raised his brow slightly and then made his way back towards the castle. Balthazar quickly slithered after his Master, twisting his way up his legs and under his shirt as the snake reached him. The others looked as the boy walked away. Their invitation was an open one. They
could follow him if they wished but were free to stay as they were. After a few more steps Luna stood up. She didn’t, however, follow Harry but wondered off another direction. Fia continued to doodle, sucking steadily on a new blood pop as he did so. His tongue was dyed a bright red which only intensified as he started his eighth pop of the day. Graham and Alfie looked at each other, unsure of what to do.

“Shall…shall we go back to Ravenclaw tower?” Alfie questioned hesitantly. Graham’s eyes filled with a slight fear at the mention of it. Alfie hastened to reassure him, his ginger locks bouncing as he spoke animatedly.

“We all really miss you. Everyone has been asking if you're okay. Please come back. Only if its for an hour or so.” Alfie pleaded. The two had become friends over the first few months of school and even though Graham had very few friends within his own house he wanted to trust the younger boy before him. He knew that Harry trusted the young Weasley and that was, for Graham, a guarantee that the boy was a good one. A pensive look marred Graham’s features before he gave a small, almost imperceptible nod at the young Weasley. Alfie gave a small squeal of joy before grasping Graham’s hand in his own and pulling both of them up.

“Nathaniel.” Graham said, attempting to gain the older boy’s attention. However before Graham had even finished calling the older boy’s name, his bag was being packed up, his sketch book being put into it. He stood and with a quick flick of his wand the two blankets folded themselves into small piles before shrinking to the size of a notebook. Fia picked them up and then placed them into his bag, next to his sketch pad. He followed the two young Ravenclaws to the tower, always remaining a few steps behind them. Even as he entered the Ravenclaw common room he remained away from the pair. He sat on one of the chairs in the corner and started his doodling again, keeping one eye firmly on Graham.

Graham was greeted with the warmest welcome that any Ravenclaw in the history of the school had ever been greeted with. Initially eyes were wide in shock, none of them having seen Graham close up since he had been admitted to the hospital wing over a month ago. Graham had been staying in the Slytherin dorms since he had been released from the Infirmary, a member of the snake house with him at all times. Even with Nathaniel sitting in the room it felt as though Graham had returned home. Back to his true house in what felt like forever. Graham was ushered into a seat and surrounded by people asking him how he was and if he needed anything. Several blankets were quickly wrapped around him and many different types of sweets were placed in his lap. He looked up with a gentle smile, greeting many of the people that surrounded him. It felt good to be home.
Harry lay back on the sofa, Balthazar curled up in his lap and a book between his hands. He scanned the pages, letting his eyes flick lazily across the page. It was Yule tomorrow, well today, as it was about half twelve. Harry had been home for several days and it felt amazing to have the peace and quite to do all the work that he needed to do. Although he would of course let Yule be a day that was family only, or at least the morning anyway. In the evening they were having a ball at the manor. Many of Harry’s friends and allies were coming as well as many that Harry hoped to soon add to that list. It was an event that was sure to be exiting.

Harry looked at the Sanskrit on the page attempting to deduce the meaning of the words before him. Harry’s work into runes had developed to a stage where he needed to examine more complex areas. Sanskrit, being one of the oldest known languages, was a great basis for Harry to explore many of the lesser known runes that had been used throughout the Wizarding world. Harry had, over summer, delved into Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics. It seemed the Egyptians were very violent in their creations meaning that Harry had discovered many a new torture method in his studies. He had found himself wondering what the ancient Indians were interested in, hence his current path of study. Harry felt the sofa dip down beside him and glanced from his text and towards its origins.

“Hey little brother.” Cassius said with a wide grin. “How’s it going?” the older boy questioned. He slung an arm around Harry’s small form and gently petted Balthazar’s head. The snake preened at the attention, leaning into Cassius’ touch. Harry gave a small smile and a nod to the boy besides him. He didn't flinch away from the contact that Cassius made, he would have done when the two first became a family. Instead he let the man pull Harry into his side. It was Yule after all. He would allow his pseudo brother this slight indulgence.

“So, school’s been going okay?” Cassius queried. Harry gave another nod and set his book down next to him. It seemed Cassius was in one of his talkative moods. There was no way that he would get anymore reading done tonight.

“Well that’s good.” Cassius said, ruffling Harry’s hair as he did so. Harry let out a puff of breath, more in exasperation than annoyance. Cassius would always be the same. Exuberant and Enthusiastic about everything. Harry always found it humorous that his brother’s mark was a Wolverine. As Harry had branded it into the young man’s skin he had marvelled at the ruffled face that had appeared. The animal matched the brown of Cassius’ hair and the blue of his eyes. The normal attitude of the small bear was happy go lucky and yet if disturbed the creature’s fur would bristle and his sharp teeth would become bared. The bear reflected Cassius’ personality perfectly. Lawrence had laughed himself silly at the initiation. However Lawrence’s Bechstein's bat was something that the man had also been mocked about. Although Harry thought that cleaner of the night and power within the shadows was something that suited the man down to a tee.

“It’s getting a little late isn’t it Harry?” Cassius said, breaking Harry from his thought. It seemed the young man had been talking for the past half hour and it was nearing one in the morning. Harry looked to Cassius with wide eyes as he came back to reality. He gave a small nod to his brother before placing Balthazar onto his shoulder and picking up his book. He made his way towards his bedroom, Cassius calling wishes for a good nights sleep after him.
that was little more than a quirk of his lips before pushing himself up, his eyes still blinking as they became accustomed to the light.

“Happy Yule Harry.” Graham said gently. “Shall we go downstairs? Everyone is waiting.” the young Ravenclaw asked in little more than a whisper. Harry gave a nod to the boy, grabbing his dressing gown. He let Graham lead the way down to the rest of the family as Balthazar gently wrapped his way around Harry’s waist. Harry indulgently let his fingers trail along the snake’s scales. It appeared that Harry was in a rather good mood this morning. Not that it was obvious to many. Harry was sure that Cassius would notice but most others were considerably less observant.

Harry, following Graham, entered the living room. The room was large, high ceilinged and elegant, just like all the other rooms in the manor. The difference it had, however, to the rest of the rooms was the enormous christmas tree and the pile of presents that sat under it. On the coffee table there was also a large array of drinks and foods. The fresh toast and pastries gave off a delicious scent that filled the room. Alden Warrington, along with his wife already sat on one of the sofas delicately sampling some of the spread. The newly named Angela Flint sat next to her husband, Marcus Flint, of two years. The two had married at twenty in a small ceremony over the summer, meaning that the whole family could attend. Between them sat their fourteen month old daughter, Amelia. The little girl had sparkling brown eyes, matching her mother’s and chocolate brown hair that matched her father’s. Amelia was looking so exited that it was amazing that she didn’t explode.

Harry gave the girl a small smile. She squealed as she noticed his presence in the room. Harry was sure the excitement was, however, more about the presents that she was about to open than the fact he had arrived. Graham had found a seat next to his father, leaving Harry the seat next to Cassius, which he took, managing to look dignified, even in his current state of dress.

“Pwesents?” Amelia squealed loudly, causing every head to turn her way. Laughter filled the room at the question of the little girl. It seemed that she could wait no longer to get the gifts that she knew were coming.

“Yes sweetie.” Angela chuckled. “I think its okay that we open presents now.” she said with a grin. With that Amelia leapt from her seat and waddled on unsteady feet towards the pile of presents under the tree. Marcus and Angela were hot on her heels, making sure that she didn't fall over.

Amelia plopped herself down and then began to pick up presents before passing them to her parents. The Flints passed the presents around to the rest of the room, reading the labels and giving them to their intended recipient. Most of the bigger gifts went to Amelia while smaller gifts were passed around to the others. There was one long rectangular package that went to Graham. A new nimbus 2002 came out of the box followed Graham’s exited exclamation. The broom was not the newest on the market yet it was considerably better than the Cleansweep that the young Ravenclaw had been riding since first year.

Harry received a variety of standard presents: books, robes, sweets. Harry looked around to see similar results for the rest of the room, except Amelia, who was currently crawling after an animated soft toy kitten. Harry was left with two small boxes in front of him. He delicately removed the ribbon from the first. Inside was a ring, sitting unassuming in the small velvet container. Harry looked wide eyed at the ring before him. The platinum ring was intricately engraved with a boar’s head. The boar looking majestic and elegant in its detail. Covering the rest of the ring was an assortment of delicately carved runes. Harry looked over them in awe as he managed to translate several of them, although some were so complicated and ancient that Harry was unable to translate them. Harry gingerly picked up the ring and slid it onto the little finger of his left hand. The magic of the ring tingled as it contracted to fit his finger, runes connecting Harry’s own magic with the line of the Becketts.
Harry looked down at his hand examining the two rings that now adorned it. On Harry’s left index finger sat a ring that had been a permanent resident there for the past four years. The ring was platinum, matching the new edition to his hand. However, instead of a boar a wolf was delicately engraved inside a shield. The shield was surrounded by delicate vines that twisted around the helmet that was crowned the shield. It was the Warrington family ring. It meant that Harry was the third in line to the Lordship, behind Cassius and Angela and yet it was still a meaningful gesture. It declared to all that cared to know that Harry was a member of the Warrington family and that he was protected.

The new addition to his finger was, however, much more significant. The Beckett ring was much more powerful than the Warrington one. It held a promise. Edmund had been true to his vow he had made to Harry when the boy had been eleven. Harry was, under the stipulation that he was to care for Graham, to inherit the Lordship when the death of the current Lord was to occur. Of course, Harry knew that that would not occur for many years.

Harry’s eyes flickered up from his hand and towards Edmund’s seated figure. The man was looking to Harry, curiosity and trepidation radiating from his form. Their eyes met and Harry looked into the blue pools feeling a sense of belonging. To give Harry the Lordship over Graham was unheard of in pureblood circles. It had been hundreds of year since the biological heir of a family and been replaced in the stead of an outsider. However both Harry and Edmund knew that Graham was not right to lead the Beckett house. The boy wanted to spend his time experimenting on alchemy and enjoying life. He was not meant to be a Lord. However, to let Harry become the Lord was special.

The Lordship could have been given to a cousin, a niece or some other distant relation and yet Edmund had allowed Harry to take the role. Harry stood from his seat, placing the other box onto the sofa. Edmund mirrored his movements and the two walked towards each other. As the two met, Harry extended a hand. Edmund took it and pulled the young man forward. He embraced the teen, patting his back affectionately before releasing him and returning to his seat. Harry let a small smile grace his face before returning to his seat. He was the Beckett heir now. That moment warranted a hug if none other did.

Harry looked to the second box as he sat back down. He swiftly pulled the wrapping paper from it. There was no name on the name tag other than Harry’s. Harry may have been suspicious in a normal circumstance and yet he knew that if there was any chance that the gift was dangerous then there would have been no way for it to enter the house. The wards on the mansion were impeccable. As the box clicked open Harry heard a low hiss come from it. A small silver snake made its way up his arm, the cool metal feeling peculiar against his warm skin. It wrapped itself around his right wrist, its head resting over his pulse point before stilling. Inside the box sat a small card that had been under the snake when Harry had opened it. The note was written in parsletonge. There was only person that it could be from.

‘Little snake,
It seems that I need a way to track you. You're always going off on your own and you never seem to tell me where. I feel a little neglected. This little beauty will tell me where you are and act as an emergency portkey. Feel free to try and remove it. I promise you, you wont succeed. Enjoy your night, little snake.’

Harry clenched his teeth. The man was a total and utter bastard. Harry glared at the snake that now encased his wrist. He knew that the snake was little more than a point me spell on his person and yet it was the principle that annoyed him. The snake wouldn't hurt him and yet it hurt that the man was attempting to control him. Harry would have to find a way to fight the Dark Lord for this act of control. He wouldn't attempt to take the bracelet off, the Dark Lord would know immediately, he could however have a fiddle with the spell work on it. There were a lot of things that a few runes
could change. Harry was pissed at the Dark Lord but this didn’t mean that he wasn't going to have some fun with this.

Harry looked at himself in the mirror. His hair was smoothed down as much as possible and tied in a small pony tail at the base of his neck, his green eyes popping from his pale face. His dress robes were black, silver emblems of both the Warrington and the Beckett family emblazoned on each lapel. He looked elegant and graceful. He looked like a pureblood heir. Harry felt ready for the schmoozing that the night would consist of. He picked the non existent fluff from his robes, attempting to soothe some the thoughts bombarding him. Harry did not know the full list of invitations that had been sent out but he did know that many influential families would be there. It was a great time for his inner circle to make contacts and find out what they could. New news was as precious as gold in Harry’s world.

Harry made his way down the stairs, ready to greet the guests as they arrived as was his responsibility as the Beckett heir. It would make it clear to all the guests just where it was that Harry’s status within the family lay. Over the years there had been many a dispute over Harry’s legitimacy as a member of both the Warrington and the Beckett families. Many relatives of both families objected to a Potter having a more legitimate claim to titles than them. There was sure to be even more outrage within the families now that Harry had become the heir over Graham. Harry just hoped that there would be none of that tonight. Tonight was a night of sophistication and Harry would not allow it to deteriorate into name calling and money grabbing.

Cassius gave Harry a grin as he walked over to the younger boy. He moved a hand to ruffle Harry’s hair and yet before he could get close enough Harry slapped the hand away. He had spent too much time making himself look presentable for his pseudo brother to mess it up. Harry listened to Cassius as he made snide comments about the families entering. Some were highly respected and it was, Harry had to admit, amusing to hear the mockery of them from Cassius. The last of the guests arrived and Harry left with Graham to mingle. The younger boy was excited beyond words at having Harry becoming a Beckett. An official Beckett. Harry was sure that the young Ravenclaw would have started calling him brother if Cassius hadn’t already claimed the title.

Harry spent the next hour listening to conversations around him. Graham introduced them both and dealing with any questions directed at Harry. Most people did, however, know who the pair were and several adults had a chuckle at the formal introductions. Especially if said introductions were coming from a small thirteen year old boy. As the time ticked by Harry ended up stuck in the company of an extremely tedious ministry worker. The man was fat, sweaty and balding. Harry assumed he had only been invited for someone to play their manipulations out on him. Every time Graham attempted to make their excuses to leave the man would increase in volume and block out the quiet Ravenclaw’s polite attempts at conversation. Harry felt an arm snake around his waist and a whispered voice broke through the hideous ministry man.

“Sorry to disturb you kind sir,” the voice purred out. “but I require a moment of little Harry’s attention.” The ministry worker only stared, mouth slightly ajar at the vampire that stood before him. With a grin Sanguini twirled Harry away from the man and Graham took the moment to excuse himself as well. Harry watched as the boy made his way towards Astoria Greengrass before turning his attention back to the vampire that had him by the waist. He raised a judgemental eyebrow at the vampire, questioning him.

“Now don't look at me like that Harry-kins.” Sanguini said chuckling at the boy before him. Harry may think that he looked threatening and yet to an ancient vampire he looked nothing more than a pouting toddler.
“I wanted to see how my favourite little human was doing.” Sanguini said as he ruffled Harry’s hair. Harry attempted to stop the Vampire from his mission and yet the being’s hands moved so quickly that Harry’s neat pony tail was in a mess around his head in several seconds. Harry let out a small puff of air in frustration. The vampire was always one to embarrass him, even at a Yule party the vampire was there to cause him frustration.

“You’ve grown” the vampire exclaimed waving his arms enthusiastically followed by pinching Harry’s cheeks. “My little baby is growing up.” Sanguini squealed as he pulled one then the other of Harry’s cheeks in time to his speech.

Several of the members of the room looked around at the squeal, ready with looks of scorn on their faces. It was not acceptable to act in such a way at a sophisticated party. However as they saw the Vampire Prince their faces turned into fear and slight apprehension. Sanguini was one of the most powerful beings in the entire Wizarding world. His family, being that of vampire royalty, was involved in almost every political decision that was made and their allies were spread throughout the world. Due to this fact Sanguini was allowed to act any way that he wanted to and no one would say a word. No one wanted to anger him so he was allowed the freedom to do as he pleased. As Harry’s suffering continued he failed to notice a tall imposing figure making their way towards him and Sanguini.

“Sanguini, what in Satan’s name are you doing?” Sanguini’s hands stilled in Harry’s hair but he didn’t let go. He looked around to see where the voice was coming from. Harry looked at to the man as well. He was tall and muscular, around six foot five. He towered over Harry’s petite form, his black eyes assessing the scene before him.

“Daddy” Sanguini exclaimed, a wide grin spreading across the vampire’s face. Harry raised a brow at Sanguini. The vampire may be thousands of years old and yet he sounded like a small child

“You simply must meet Harry, the bestest little human” Sanguini said, ruffling Harry’s hair again and cooing as though one would at a small pet or a baby. “Harry, this is my father Deimos, daddy dearest this is Harry Potter, the boy that saved my life.” Deimos nodded to Harry in acceptance of the introduction and Harry gave a bow. Meeting the King of the vampire world was not a situation in which you did not show your respect, even with Sanguini’s informal attitude.

At Sanguini’s words Draco Malfoy let out a small gasp. The boy had been listening in to the conversation, attempting to figure out what it was that had made Harry and the vampire so close. To hear conformation that Harry had saved the life of the heir to the vampire kingship was surprising to say the least. He may have been trying to become a part of Harry’s inner circle yet he was still a Malfoy at heart. His alliances would always lie with his family.

The Malfoy heir scuttled away from the trio, making his way towards his father. He was sure that the Dark Lord would be glad to know of Harry’s connection to vampire royalty. Draco, of course, didn't know that the Dark Lord already had any and all information relating to Harry. The careful bridges that he had built with the Slytherin King were now crumbling. If the Dark Lord decided to tell Harry of Draco’s information then Draco’s life could become a living hell within his house. Draco was destroying himself and he didn't even know it yet.

“It’s a pleasure to meet the human that my son seems to have become so obsessed with.” the vampire king purred out, his eyebrow raised and a look of amusement filling his dark eyes. The vampire’s fingers brushed through his hair, the dark strands being smoothed down minutely. The move only made him look more elegant.

“He seems unable to stop talking of you.” Harry looked to the King unsure as to whether the Vampire was mocking him or scorning him. He could not imagine a vampire speaking of a human
frequently would be something that others approved of. However Harry’s worries were quickly shot down as the vampire spoke again.

“I wish to extend my thanks.” the vampire said, a small smile lighting up his face. Harry attempted to hide the shock in his eyes. He knew he had failed, however, when the ancient vampire gave a smirk before continuing. “My son has changed in the past few years. It seems that he no longer dreads the continuation of his own existence.” Harry looked to Sanguini, wondering how the man before him could be saying such things about the flamboyant man who still had his arm draped around his shoulder.

“Now now Daddy, no need to put a downer on the party. Little Harry here doesn't need to be hearing all of this.” Sanguini said hurriedly. The tone was jovial and yet underlying it was a flicker of panic. It seemed the vampire Prince did not want his earlier life revealed to Harry. Harry could relate to that. He had things in his past that he didn't want to re-live.

“I’ll see you later.” Sanguini said loudly with a grin and a wave as he dragged Harry over to the other side of the room. King Deimos watched the pair go. He was grateful to the small human that now accompanied his eldest son. The man had been ready to give up on life until the human had come into his life. Sanguini had seen the endless stretch of time before him and thought that his life had looked bleak. Deimos only hoped that the human didn't destroy his son. If the boy was to die Sanguini may soon follow.

An hour later found Harry in the company of Fia and the boy’s family. The Flamels were an interesting bunch, their intelligence rivalled by none, but their company valued by few. They were a rather eccentric bunch. Their idea of polite conversation very different from that of the rest of the noble families. Harry supposed that it was having had the key to immortality in their possession for such a long time. It was sure to warp perception of what normalcy was. However the group seemed to have restrained themselves this evening. Fia was in formal dress robes, smart, with his family crest vibrant on his chest, the red and orange standing out on the black robes. However it appeared that the boy could not be fully swayed from his ways. A blood pop still tickled the boy’s tongue, a new one seeming to appear in an endless stream from his pockets as he finished the previous one. Harry was, however, surprised that the boy had managed to keep his shoes on for the entire evening. Fia usually didn't manage more than a few hours in shoes. He really hated the things.

The Flamels were currently in a debate over the effects of dragon’s blood and their uses in runes. Harry was listening to the conversation with interest. It seemed that the family had several issues with the way in which Albus Dumbledore had narrowed the views on what the substance could be used for. Twelve uses, the blood may have, but there were sure to be more than those formulated uses. Albus Dumbledore had stopped ideas and views on what dragon blood could do. Establishing one of the only uses of the blood as a spot removal or as an oven cleaner devalued and made a mockery of the powerful life force of a dragon. The blood was filled with magic. The magic of the dragon that it came from. The Flamels agreed on the notion that it was disrespectful to such a powerful beast as a dragon to use their blood for anything more than a feat of great magic. To use it for little more than cleaning was a travesty and an insult.

Runes it seemed could be made to be more potent or powerful dependent on the substances used to create them. This was something that Harry had touched upon in his earlier studies. Harry had used ink, pencil, his own blood and the blood of several others. However hearing the Flamels’ discussion on the subject made Harry rethink his methods. What if one were to use blood of magical creatures other than dragons. Thestrals, centaurs, pixies. Harry wondered what the results would be of creating such runes. The unique magical properties of the magical creatures was sure to change the effects of the runes on the object that they were drawn on. Would the blood of a werewolf support the runes
for stability and sanity? Would the blood of a flobberworm support the runes for strength? The possibilities seemed endless.

Harry felt a slight tingling in his wrist. His eyes flickered open unwillingly. He didn't wish to be awake at the current time. Looking to the clock on his bedside table he read the time, it was just past six. It was the morning after Yule and Harry had only fallen into bed at three after a night of entertaining and information gathering. Three hours sleep was not nearly enough. Harry looked down to the snake encompassing his wrist. It was sending small pulses of magic into Harry’s wrist, the pulses becoming more frequent as the seconds ticked by. Harry sighed, he did not want to see the Dark Lord. The man was obnoxious and was sure to be up to something. Harry needed more sleep to be able to deal with the man.

Harry pushed himself out of his bed, his back cracking as he forced himself into a sitting position. The tingling increased, becoming more of an annoyance as Harry stretched out the stiffness in his joints. Harry got the message. He increased his speed, quickly pulling on a pair of black slacks and a white shirt. He then pulled on his robes and slipped a pair of leather shoes onto his feet. Harry quickly scribbled down ‘Riddle Manor’ in parsletonge before grabbing a handful of floo powder and throwing them into the fireplace. Harry stepped into the green flames, stepping out again into the large foyer of Riddle Manor.

His eyes were hard, his brain still fuzzy with sleep as he entered the room. He was not in the mood to deal with an overly possessive Dark Lord, an overly violent Fenrir Greyback or an overly bitter Severus Snape. This morning was not the time for that sort of shit. Harry hoped that Voldemort would realise that right now Harry would relish in torturing anyone who gave him anything more than a respectful welcome. Harry was therefore thankful that the visitors entrance was empty. Harry’s footsteps echoed as he walked through the manor. Harry made his way towards the library, at least if he was here he could do something useful with his time. Deciding not to knock Harry pushed open the door. Harry decided that if the Dark Lord was calling him at such an ungodly hour then there was no reason for Harry to give the man the courtesy of announcing his arrival. He would wait for the man to find him.

As the door creaked open Harry heard muffled voices and a loud thump. As the room was revealed Harry raised a brow at the sight before him. Alecto Carrow was seated on one of the large couches in the room. One that was supposed to provide comfort to potential readers. Her clothes were held in her arms, covering her very naked form. On the floor before her lay a dazed looking Severus Snape. The man was thankfully dressed in a pair of underpants, however Harry was sure he was seeing far more of the man then he had a right to. Severus’ eyes went wide as they met Harry’s, the man realising for the first time who was standing before him. The Professor quickly pushed himself off the floor, attempting to look dignified in so little clothing.

“Potter’’ the man spat out. The man’s tone was bitter and harsh but the light shade of pink that covered his cheeks stood out in the sallow man’s face. It was an obvious statement to the man’s embarrassment. Harry gave a small nod to the man, his eyebrow still raised. Harry knew that the man could detect the amusement twinkling in his own eyes. Giving another nod to Alecto Harry walked away from the pair and down one of the many rows of books.

As Harry walked he found himself wondering if Lawrence knew about the strange relation between the two inner circle members or whether the relationship was as new to the two behind him as Harry’s knowledge of it was. It was strange for Harry to realise that his Professors had such complicated and secretive lives. Of course Harry knew that they were people too but to be faced with his head of house outside of a schooling or death eater meeting situation was off-putting to say the least. Especially when said Professor had been half naked.
Harry seated himself onto one of the benches that lined the library walls, pulling a random book from the shelf and scanning his eyes over it. He wasn't really reading the book, rather he was letting the thoughts swirl around him, taking him where they willed. Harry had no real interest in reading anything at the current hour, his brain still far too fuzzy to take in any information. Looking at the bookshelves Harry found himself noting the differences between the cases at Hogwarts and the ones that lined the walls of Riddle Manor. Harry noted the sleek, polished wood that stood tall in the room. Hogwarts’ cases were far more battered, well used and well lived with.

Harry found his mind wondering back to a session spent with Fia one evening in the scruffy school library. Harry’s mind had been as fuzzy then as it was now, again from lack of sleep. Harry had watched indulgently as Fia lay on his belly in front of Harry. Harry had been in the library for the past seven hours analysing the family runes that had been intricately etched into the small jewellery box he had found during his explorations of the attics. He had finally finished his translation, only to find that the runes were nothing more than an overly complex anti-thief ward. This lead to Harry tiredly watching as Fia, knife in hand, carved, what looked like a wolf, onto the back of the bookcase, having removed the books from the shelf. The wolf was surrounded by a forest that lined the back of the shelf, littered with more and more animals with each passing week. Many of the different shelves held a different story: a castle, a desert, a battle. Harry wondered how many of these shelves were filled now. He and Fia had not been in the library for some time.

Harry shook himself out of the thoughts. When had he become so fucking sentimental? He didn't need people. He didn't want to have people other than to use them and yet he found himself becoming more and more attached to people each day. He had a young man that called him brother. He had another who called him cousin. He had people constantly surrounding him who saw him as family, or as something more. Both old and young loved him. They saw him as son, older brother, younger brother cousin, friend, best friend, leader, follower, lover. There were so many roles that Harry played. The problem that Harry had was that he found himself enjoying these roles. He may love the power that came as a leader but he also found himself enjoying ones he thought that he never would have. The protection that came from being the younger brother. The mutual trust that came from being a friend. The pleasure that came from being a lover. The guidance that he gave as an older brother. Harry felt. He felt things that he had never felt before. He wanted to be there for the people that needed him and that was a scary thought. He had never wanted these kind of things before. It terrified Harry more than he wanted to admit.

Harry’s eyes flicked back to the book in his hands. To his surprise it was a children’s book. The tales of Beedle the Bard was opened before him. Babbitty Rabbitty looked out from the page, the rabbit blinking up at Harry, waiting for him to engage in the story. Harry ignored the animal as his thoughts flickered to another rabbit on another occasion. A much more forlorn looking Rabbit but a rabbit none the less. Balthazar had been out hunting when it had started to rain and Harry had decided to search for the snake. He knew that if the reptile got stuck in the rain for too long then there would be nonstop complaining for the next day. It was therefore better to avoid the whole situation and risk getting a little wet in the process.

When Harry had found the snake he had been cold and damp, wrapped around a live rabbit that seemed rather disgruntled at its predicament. Harry watched for several seconds and yet it seemed that Balthazar had no intention of eating the rabbit. Maybe it was a source of warmth for the cold snake. Harry pulled both the snake and the rabbit into his grasp. He held the rabbit by the scruff of its neck and wrapped the snake around his waist. Balthazar clung for dear life, attempting to suck all the heat from his master. Harry decided that the rabbit may make a convenient snack for Balthazar later. If the snake woke up hungry then Harry would be in for yet another earful. That was preferable avoided. Harry could handle keeping a scared rabbit for a few hours.

As Harry had walked back into the Manor he had been greeted by Graham and a few of the boys
friends; Harry approved friends of course. Astoria Greegrass and Malcolm Baddock were the two Slytherins present. Both were fellow third years that Graham had taken a liking too after Harry had introduced them to each other. Another boy, a Ravenclaw, by the name of Solomon Murphy sat with the group as well. His hair was cropped short against his head, the strawberry blonde locks complementing the boy’s pale complexion. The boy’s eyes were a moss green and looked to Harry with nervous respect. Harry approved. It seemed that the boy knew his place. A small Hufflepuff was the final member of the group. The girl, Celia Morgan, was the younger sister of Bartholomew Morgan, a sixth year Gryffindor that was a supporter of Harry’s cause. The girls small frame radiated uneasiness. It seemed that the young girl had heard of Harry’s reputation from her brother and from her house mates.

However, as the girl saw the shivering rabbit that Harry had roughly clutched in his hands, much of that fear seemed to fade. A small squeal had made its way from her mouth and before she could stop herself her feet had taken her towards Harry. Hands outstretched in a sign of longing. She caught herself before she could get further than a few feet, her brown eyes filling with unshed tears as she realised what she had done. Her fear for Harry was back and back in full force. Harry looked from the girl to the rabbit and back again. Harry may be cruel, but only to those that he deemed to deserved it. Graham did not. Harry ungraciously dumped the now struggling rabbit into the girls hands before returning to the safety of his room.

Harry had returned several hours later, having decided to grab a snack from the kitchens. Passing through the corridor Harry heard childish giggles echo from the walls. Quietly Harry followed the sound. It was unusual to hear Graham express his feelings so freely around people, his shy nature usually leading him to avoid most human contact, other than that which was necessary. To hear the boy’s giggles was surprising to say the least. Harry walked into the room to see the rabbit, now decked in an array of brightly coloured ribbons, seated upon the head of Malcolm Baddock. The boy had a scowl on his face, his eyes glaring at the rest of the children as they laughed uproariously at his expense. Harry did notice, however, that the boy sat extremely still, careful not to dislodge the delicate rabbit from his head.

The small rabbit hopped from the boy’s head and scampered across the floor. Before Harry could do anything to stop it the rabbit was clambering up his own form, its claws desperately clinging to fabric of Harry’s robes. The small creature plopped itself down on Harry’s shoulder, content to end its climb there. Five sets of eyes widened as they trained their way onto Harry in shock, following the rabbit’s movements. Graham’s hands shot up to his mouth as giggles threatened to spill from behind his lips. However, the peculiar sight was too much for the younger boy. A snort rippled through the silent room as Graham could no longer contain himself. The boy struggled to stand as laughter shook his form. Several seconds passed before another laugh joined Graham’s, then another and another until the group of young teenagers were left laughing so hysterically that they were on the verge of collapse.
were clear and blood rushed though his ears but he was ready for whatever Voldemort had for him.

“Good morning to you as well” Voldemort said, mirth audible in his tone. Voldemort had seen Harry’s unguarded form. The seconds when the mask had slipped and the fear had been visible on his face. Voldemort was pleased that the boy had that attitude towards him, sometimes he had found himself wondering about it all. The boy was well adept at hiding his feelings while reading all of those around him. It was a rare moment where Harry’s true feelings were expressed so freely. Voldemort felt lucky to have seen the boy in such a state of weakness. It stroked his ego that the boy, who many saw as a future equal to the Dark Lord, was healthily scared of him. The boy didn't seem terrified but rather wary and full of suspicion. It was only to be expected.

Harry gave a small nod. No more than a twitch, signifying he was paying attention to the figure before him. By the grin on the Dark Lord’s face it seemed that he wanted to play. Harry would do everything that he could to stop that happening. He would not reward Voldemort by indulging in the man’s favourite past time. Harry was not about to play when he had been woken at a stupid hour by the egotistical bastard that stood before him. He was not in the mood for games.

“Come along then Mr Potter.” the Dark Lord purred. He was trying to rile Harry up. The use of his surname a blatant attempt to anger Harry. Harry did nothing. His mask had slipped once today, he was not about to let it happen again. Voldemort had to restrain himself. The boy was just too entertaining for his own good. He may think himself a master of deception and yet the stiffening of his jaw and the steel in his eyes told the Dark Lord all he needed to know. Harry was annoyed, but not with the Dark Lord. Mostly he was annoyed at himself for having looked so vulnerable in front of the strongest wizard in Britain and possibly the world.

The Dark Lord turned and his robes rippled as he stalked out of the library. Harry watched as the bane of his existence walked away from him. After a moments hesitation he followed behind him. Harry hated how this made him feel. He felt like a naughty puppy trailing after his master. He did not like that. He wanted to be the Master. He wanted to be the leader and have all others follow him. But for now he supposed it was the only way. Voldemort was a burden that he had to bear. He didn't care for the man, merely wanted to use him. However with a monster like the one before him it was never certain if you were the one being used or the one doing the using. Harry followed the man down the corridors until the pair reached their normal meeting place. Voldemort’s office. Harry elegantly sat in a seat, the one furthest from the desk, before being asked. Any control that Harry could take was a second well spent.

“Well my little serpent, it seems that your new accessory is working just as well as I had hoped.” the man said with a grin. Harry kept his face as neutral as possible. There was no way he would let the man know how frustrating it was that the man had yet another thing hanging over his head. Another thing that could be used against him.

Harry hoped that there was another reason for the man to force this visitation but with the Dark Lord you never knew. It could just as easily be a complex power play. Voldemort stalked toward Harry’s seated form. A smile curling at his lips as he approached. His arm shot out and a strong but controlled hand gripped Harry’s wrist. He tugged up Harry’s sleeve with his free hand and gently let his fingers run up and down the length of the silver serpent that adorned Harry’s wrist. Harry repressed a shudder as the cold fingers made contact with his skin. The light strokes like a brush on a canvas. It sent tingles down Harry’s arms.

“How…lovely” Voldemort hissed out. His last word rolling of the man’s tongue, a look of pleasure adorning his face as he savoured the word. Keeping one hand firmly on Harry’s wrist the Dark Lord let the fingers of the other trail gently along Harry’s cheek. Voldemort’s face inched closer and closer to Harry’s, his red eyes twinkling. The fingers trailed unknown patterns along the pale skin. Harry
felt his breath catch in his chest as the amused eyes seemed to utterly consume him. The red was deep and Harry felt he was being pulled into the whirlpool of deception and lies that made this man who he was.

Voldemort’s grip on Harry’s wrist tightened. Harry could feel the nails digging into his skin, he could feel his blood blooming to the surface and yet he still didn't move. His eyes became lost in the deep red before him. Voldemort’s fingers trailed along Harry’s lips, following their contours while drawing Harry deeper and deeper into his eyes. A smile crept up the Dark Lord’s face, full of self satisfaction and malice. A predator having found his prey. Voldemort’s face came closer and closer. His lips were no more than an inch from Harry’s ear and as the man whispered Harry could feel the puffs of hot breath on the skin.

“Happy Yule Harry.” the man purred. Harry felt the man’s teeth on his ear lobe as they clamped harshly around the soft flesh. A tongue ran along the skin and Harry let a shiver run down his spine at the contact. As soon as it had come the mouth was gone leaving Harry with no answers and a lot more questions. The Dark Lord drew back from Harry’s frozen form, straightening up and smoothing his robes. “You can use the floo to get home.” the Dark Lord said before leaving Harry, still seated, in his office with nothing more than a closed door.
Tonight was the night and Harry hoped this was an indicator of what the future was to hold. Charlie had done well. So very well. Harry couldn't have been happier with the man. The look of delight on Charlie’s face as Harry had praised him had well reflected the joy that Harry had felt at the message the ginger had brought him. He had done everything right and lead Harry to this very advantageous position. Harry sat at a table in the Hogshead, to his right sat the very man himself, Charlie Weasley, Zachary sitting to the man’s right. On Harry’s left sat Fia. To say he was sitting may have been generous, the boy was more sprawled. His chair was turned the wrong way, his chin resting on the back of it. One leg was tucked under himself and the other hung over the edge, swinging back and forth. A blood pop was being sucked violently as the boy looked to the man sitting before them. Abeforth Dumbledore was said man. A man that Charlie had been wooing to Harry’s cause for weeks. The man had finally agreed to meet with them. Finally decided to go over what it was that Harry stood for. Charlie had been sowing the seeds of doubt for the man for months now. Showing him the flaws in society, gently twisting the old man’s thoughts into ones that fitted with the way that Harry wanted them to be. Harry couldn’t be prouder.

“So.” the old man grumbled out, his voice gruff and harsh. It seemed that he was still not as willing to have this confrontation as Harry had wanted him to be. Still the very fact that he had agreed to this meeting was proof enough of the man’s willingness to involve himself in the great game that was to come. The future was looking brighter with each passing day.

“What are we doing here?” the man huffed. He may put on a tough exterior but Harry could see that he was nervous. Harry respected that. He would have to be a fool to not be cautious. Harry himself was nervous. They were going against some of the most powerful in the wizarding world. Harry didn't want to be in such a perilous situation with a fool.

“The plan.” Zachary spoke officially, his eyes hard and filled with concentration as he spoke. “Is that we shall be publishing a history of your younger brother, written by you.” All members of the room had been briefed on the plan. They all knew how to answer any of the questions put to them. Harry wanted only to sit back and watch as the fireworks went off.

“We will of course assist in this endeavour, even if our names will not be directly linked to this.” Zachary finished. He looked down over his glasses at the man, elegant eyebrows raised. He was now ready for the outburst that was sure to follow. However it seemed that Abeforth did not.

The man simply sat for several seconds, the cogs turning in his brain as he thought of what to say next. It seemed there was more to the man than Harry had first expected. Several seconds passed before the man hummed. A sound of approval or one of question? It was hard to tell.

“Well, that sounds…interesting” He finally muttered out.

Harry flickered through the pages, his heart pounding as he did so. It seemed that connections within the Daily Prophet were not something to be scoffed at. Every single copy of the newspaper would have the lovely surprise in it that Harry currently held in his hands. A small flyer, the words Albus Dumbledore printed in shimmering purple on the front. ‘The Truth Behind The Legend’ written much smaller letters. It appeared, to the casual onlooker, to be nothing more than an insert, marking the man’s 115th birthday. It was today, after all. However as soon as the leaflet was opened it was clear that it was far from that.

Harry’s eyes, along with almost all of those in the school, watched the man. He kept his normal
cheerful facade, yet the flickers in his eyes was gone. It seemed that the man’s golden reputation was
gone in only ten pages of writing. No one would ever look at the man the same again. He was a
murderer, a traitor, a liar, or so the leaflet would make it seem. Harry, of course, knew that the truth
was not so black and white.

The public was outraged. They didn't even wait for the next day before howlers were coming in
thick and fast. It went on for months. Many pupils now avoided breakfast knowing that the
cacophony of yells that filled the room would only make them lose their appetite anyway. It was
exactly what Harry had hoped it would be. There were investigations being launched into the
Headmaster, ministry officials constantly at the school gates demanding copies of Dumbledore’s
records. They may not have had any evidence to prosecute him for anything and yet they were
watching his every move. Dumbledore couldn't sneeze without a note being made about it by
someone. All these notes, of course, got back to Harry as well as the majority of the wizarding
world. Rita Skeeter seemed to be doing rather well out of all of this; always having the most recent
information ready and waiting to be published. It seemed that any secret meetings that the man might
have to host would have to be postponed. Harry smirked at the thought. His plan was working
perfectly.

Harry walked with his pseudo uncle and adoptive father into the meeting room. His robes were
sophisticated, costing about as much as a months wages of a lower level ministry worker. The black
and silver contrasted perfectly with the pale complexion and the sparkling eyes. He kept his gaze
hard as he surveyed the other members of the room.

“What are you doing here Harry?” a harsh voice choked out to Harry’s left. His head twisted
around to see the pale face of James Potter. “You need to leave, you’ll get in trouble” he huffed out,
panic filling his tone. He had not seen Harry in months and yet here the boy was in a confidential
meeting that was for Lords only. Lords could also bring along their heirs if they chose but as many
were in school it was often not done. Edward was not here for this very reason. James wondered
how the hell Harry had even managed to get himself here.

“Lord Potter.” Edmund purred out, his voice composed and gentle as he spoke. It contrasted harshly
with James’ previously panicked tone. He gave a small bow, as was the custom. “A pleasure I’m
sure” the tone was smooth but filled with insincerity.

“Lord Beckett” James grumbled through clenched teeth, a similar bow following his words. He had
never forgiven the man and his family for taking Harry away from him. Edmund gave a small smile.
He knew that James had to follow protocol. If not he could very well be dismissed from this very
important meeting.

“I see you have met my ward and heir.” Edmund indicated to Harry, his hand making fluid motion as
he did so. James’ eyes almost fell from their sockets as they widened; neglecting to inform the man
that of course he knew Harry, he was his son after all. He couldn't believe what he had just heard.
Harry gave a small bow, the custom, keeping his eyes firmly glued to James. As he stood he ran a
hand through his hair flashing the heir ring to the still gaping Potter Lord.

“Although I’m sure that you haven’t been informed of his new official name and titles.” Edmund
smirked, knowing that if James was ignorant to the new heirship he would also be ignorant to the
new name that Harry had been gifted with by Edmund before going back to school.

“May I introduce to you Heir Harrison Warrington Beckett, first heir to the house of Beckett and
third heir to the house of Warrington” Edmund finished. His eyes were twinkling with humour at the
pain that he could see in James Potter’s face.
“Come Harry, we need to take our seats.” James watched as his son walked in the other direction. Was he even his son anymore? The boy had not called him daddy in nearly fourteen years. He sighed. This was not the place for him to break down. There were more important things to be doing.

James pushed aside his thoughts of his not-son and took a seat at the right hand side of the hall, ignoring any attempts at conversation from those around him, he didn't have the energy. However his attention was snapped to the other side of the hall as whispered rippled around the room, the same words repeated over and over again.

“What in Merlin’s name are they doing?”

A small group of Lords and Ladies had arranged themselves in a format that seemingly broke the format that had stood for so long. Tradition dictated that to avoid confrontation Light Lords sat to the right, Dark to the left and Grey in the middle. The policies votes were often decided by the votes of the Grey, Dark and Light always voting in opposition to one another. However it seemed that Harry was aiming to change that.

Edmund and Harry moved away from the rest of the seats, placing themselves at the very back of the rows of seats that were usually left empty. Families with strong former allegiances to all three parties quickly seemed to join them, lining themselves across the back wall. Traditionally Dark families: the Carrows, the Zabinis, the Averys, the Limas and the Flints families sat side by side the traditionally light families: the Longbottoms, the Flamels, the Parkins and the Morgans. Amongst them were intermingled the traditionally Grey families: the Warringtons, the Lovegoods, the Greengrasses and the Nettles. This was a change. This was new and something new at such a time of uncertainty was not a good thing.

The meeting began, the whispers settling. People payed attention to the speaker, the minister of magic, Cornelius Fudge. Every Lord, most of their heirs with them, listened intently, waiting for the man to get to the point of the meeting. They all knew why they were here today. There was no reason for the man to bore them with trivialities.

“Now, the reason you are here today.” Finally. Tension filled the room as the man spoke. “We shall be taking a vote today. All of you must vote as this is a matter of great importance. As many of you are aware Albus Dumbledore has been under intense scrutiny over the past few months and the Wizengamot has passed the motion to vote for his continuation of the position.” He let out a sigh.

“The votes will be counted by the raising of hands. The counter at the front” Fudge motioned to the floating gold numbers that currently read as two zeros. “will tell us the numbers of you that voted for each position.” Fudge dropped his hand. “Now we shall commence” he said pompously, attempting to make himself appear to be in control. They all knew that he wasn’t.

“All in favour of keeping Albus Dumbledore as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot please raise your hands.” All the hands to the right of the room raised, they watched as the counter went up, the gold numbers flashing as it assessed who had voted. Seconds passed and finally the counter stopped at twenty. It seemed as though Albus Dumbledore's fate was sealed.

“All those in favour of dismissing Albus Dumbledore from the post?” Edmund gave a smile. It seemed that they had won. The gold numbers flashed, rapidly flickering between numbers, before finally resting on twenty-eight. Harry couldn't help the malicious grin that spread across his face. Dumbledore was out. A new reign was sure to follow. One that Harry would have fun creating.

A Hogsmead meeting was finishing. The Hogshead now the official place for all of Harry’s
correspondence. Abeforth’s alliance had been more beneficial than Harry could have immediately assumed. Abeforth had embraced his new role as Harry’s new go-to man. He had been keeping Charlie updated on any information that he heard through the grape vine. A shady pub was the perfect place for overhearing things that people didn’t want to be heard. The man seemed to be flourishing now that his brother was stumbling down the path of public hatred.

Harry made his way through Hogsmead, looking at the students that were excitedly chattering with disdain. Their attitudes were far too upbeat when their Headmaster was slowly being destroyed. He had been expecting a more somber attitude but it seemed that the joy of childhood was hard to dim. Especially when magic literally sparked through the entire town. Fia dragged Harry along to Honeydukes insisting that he purchase more blood pops. He still had a store back at Hogwarts but you could never have too many.

However, before they got more than a few paces the world exploded. Screams rippled through the streets, a rainbow of colours flashed, thuds sounded as people hit the floor, the acrid smell of blood stung at Harry’s nostrils. Fia’s hand clutched at Harry’s as the boy pulled him down the alleyway that was immediately to their left. However before they could fully immerse themselves in the relative safety of the alley another explosion rocked the street. Ringing filled Harry’s ears, his vision becoming blurred. He could only let himself be pulled this way and that by Fia. Finally the pair stopped. Harry’s feet jolted painfully against the floor. His legs gave way and he slid down the wall, his back scraping down it.

“Harry” Fia called out worriedly, his face flitting into Harry’s still swimming vision. Harry couldn’t focus as the younger boy whipped out his wand, placing it gently on Harry’s forehead. The boy muttered a spell and Harry felt pain ripple through his forehead. He winced. His vision cleared. Fia’s worried face was replaced by a grinning one as Harry scowled. Harry let out a huff and pulled himself up, his legs aching as he stood.

“Harry.” Fia panted out. There may be a grin on his face but his eyes were still fearful. Harry was sure that they were in a perilous situation right now.

“Harry its death eaters. They’re attacking Hogsmead” The smile dimmed. “What are we going to do?” Fia looked for guidance.

Harry’s gaze was hard. He removed his wand from his holster and straightened his back. This was war. They were attacking him in his territory. Hogwarts was his. Voldemort knew that, so what the hell was the man thinking.

“So, we’re doing this?” Fia growled out, a vicious smile puling at his lips. Harry gave a single nod. “I’ll go find the others.” With that Fia scurried off. He knew what to do.

Harry was not worried about him. The boy could take care of himself. There were others, however, that were less fortunate. Harry was still shaky on his feet and yet there was no time for him to stumble. Adrenaline thrummed through his veins and his pace picked up. He ran. He ran faster and faster. The streets were littered with glass and rubble, evidence of the battle that was still taking place.

Harry finally reached a large group of sixth and seventh years. They were hidden in the ruins of a shop attempting to protect the younger students that were sheltered behind them. A group of death eaters stood further down the street shooting off spells at the group of students. They were doing little more than toying with them, the spells easily defendable as the group edged towards the terrified students. Harry crept towards the students, settling himself among the first years, he crawled toward the older students. Harry did not want to be seen by the death eaters.
However what Harry didn't realise was that he was mostly unrecognisable as the young, sophisticated Slytherin heir that he was. His hair was coated in dust, the usual black, now filled with dust making it a chalky mix of grey and white. Blood was smeared down the left of his face. A deep, partially healed cut marred his forehead which was still trickling blood. His green eyes were dulled, his pupils wide with anticipation. His expensive robes were ripped, covered in blood and dirt. He brought a finger to his lips as he caught the eye of the girl who appeared to be the leader of the group.

The girl was equally filthy, coated in blood and dirt. Her honey coloured eyes were filled with terror as she looked to Harry. She gave a shaky nod at his signal. Harry spent the next several minutes attempting to explain to the older students his plan, using only hand gestures. With much difficulty he finally managed to get the idea across. Five of the older students would take the group of, around twenty, third and fourth years back to Hogwarts. Meanwhile the remaining students would stay and create a distraction; drawing attention away from the other group, giving them a chance to escape.

Hearts raced, breaths came quickly. The fear was thick in the air. Harry counted down on his fingers. Three, two, one. They ran. Harry's feet jolted against the broken paving stones. Spell after spell, shot through the air. Harry twisted and dogged, ducked and dived. Blood welled up, the essence of life slipping away. Bruises littered his body. Harry was thrown back. Grazes formed along his legs and back. He pushed himself up. He could not afford to stay down.

Finally the battle was over. Death eaters lay wounded and dead, littered around the street. So did students. There were seven dead death eaters, the remaining five still clinging onto life. Ten dead students, from all four houses, eight injured and fifteen managing to stay on their feet. Harry and the other students still standing rushed over to the injured. Harry watched as a pair of Ravenclaws cautiously made their way toward the death eaters that were groaning in pain. They held their wands before them as they neared the prone forms.

As they reached the nearest living death eater the smaller of the pair pulled the wand from the man’s grasp. They then began to mutter spells, attempting to assess the injuries of the man lying on the floor. Bandages wrapped their way around his waist after casting a Tergeo that helped to partially heal the gash cross the man’s stomach. They propped him up against the partially broken wall before scurrying to the next figure.

After seeing to their fallen school mates the rest of the students, still able to, began to help the two Ravenclaws. They patched up the wounded death eaters, after removing the wands from their owner’s grasp. They then began to cast levitation charms on all those still living, death eater and student alike, attempting to bring them back to the safety of Hogwarts. Harry ensured that all the death eaters were secure in body binds. A death eater running around the halls of Hogwarts was the last thing that he wanted.

A long and gruelling walk back to the castle finally ended in the sweet relief of the familiar stone walls that thrummed with comforting magic. The group was greeted by several panicked seventh years that had been tasked with helping any that managed to make it back, to the hospital wing. The wide eyed Gryffindor Weasley twins along with a stern faced Gawain Hornby ushered the group to the hospital wing, recasting the levitation charms and helping to keep one very exhausted Hufflepuff on his feet. The group shuffled through the corridors, unable to do anything but focus on keeping one foot in front of the other.

The doors banged open and yet the noise went unheard above the shouts and wails that filled the manic hospital wing. There were people strewn over beds and floors. Madame Pomfrey was rushing from bed to bed, attempting to heal anyone that they could; keeping as many people from death as she could. As she saw the new group of students enter she sighed before barking out orders.
“I want anyone that is severely injured to come straight with me. Anyone with minor injuries, place them in any space that you can find. There are blankets to keep them warm in the store cupboard. Any of you still standing I need you to check on the others in the hospital wing.” The words came out in a rapid, panicked string. It was obvious that the Matron was out of her depth.

“Do any of you have any other medical experience, any at all? As long as you know how to cast an Episkey I can use you” All but two hands shot up. The Hufflepuff that Fred held up and a small Gryffindor girl were the only ones that didn't raise their hands.

“Right. All these who know how to cast Vulnera Sanentur and above, with me and bring the severely injured, the rest of you do as I just told you. Then help anyone to the left of the room with minor injuries. Go!” the matron boomed out. The chaos continued. Harry, two Slytherins and three Ravenclaws followed Madame Pomfrey. Harry knew the Slytherins as Edmund Spiers, a seventh year and Harriet Vaisey, a sixth year. The Ravenclaws were all sixth years: Marietta Edgecombe, Eddie Carmichael and Marcus Belby. Harry had learnt their names throughout the course of the fight.

The five death eaters and six students were quickly examined by Madame Pomfrey, the Matron barking commands to the six students surrounding her.

“Belby, hold this here!…Spiers clean this wound…. Carmichael get me a blood replenisher” and so it went on.

Harry was, however surprised when the Matron simply yelled ‘boy’ at him. He had met the Matron enough time that he was sure she knew his name. He brushed it off. He assumed that the woman was either too stressed or too exhausted, or both, to remember. The day continued at a ridiculously fast rate. Injury after injury was treated. More and more people filling the already bursting room. The sun began to set and yet there were still more and more injuries, more and more people that needed to be treated.

“You should leave.” An exhausted Madame Pomfrey finally sighed out as it reached twelve. “Thank you all so much for all your help. I couldn't not do it without you.” She handed a piece of paper to Belby. “Please write down your names. I fear that I will forget them. I will make sure that you're all rewarded for your amazing efforts today.”

The group nodded, too tired to do anything more than push the doors open. They stumbled toward the kitchen. Madame Pomfrey had given the group permission to get some food before they made their way back to their common rooms. The group of six collapsed at the table. House elves flitted around them, placing generous portions of food before them. After several minutes of almost inhaling the food the group began to attempt conversation.

“So, what house are you guys in?” Edgecombe smiled, tiredly.

“Slytherin” Vaisey sighed out, ready to face the disgust that was sure to follow on their faces. She was too tired to put up any sort of fight. However as she raised her eyes she did not see what she had been expecting; a smile.

“Oh wow, I’m Marietta Edgecombe, but you can call me Maria. This is Eddie Carmichael and this is Marcus Belby” the girl grinned, her eyes drooping in exhaustion. “It was great working with you today.” Vaisey was still shocked by the girl’s acceptance, but managed to stutter out a response. She was a Slytherin after all.

“Yeah…it was. I’m Harriet Vaisey, this is Edmund Spiers and that’s Harrison Beckett, but everyone calls him Harry” she said, indicating to the two boys that sat by her side. As Harriet pointed at Harry
the Ravenclaws’ jaws dropped.

“That’s Harry Beckett?” Eddie whispered out, in a mixture of awe and fear. They had all heard of the way the world had changed since Harry had entered it. Many families had changed allegiance, many people knocked from their positions of power due to the boy in front of them. Edmund however was unfazed by the boy’s question. He attempted to quickly deescalate the situation.

“Yes.” he said popping the P. “He’s really good at healing spells.” With that the conversation quickly descended into a debate and discussion of all the different healing spells used that day and which ones worked the best. The Ravenclaws soon forgetting the power that Harry yielded. As it neared half one the group decided to make their way back toward their common rooms. Their beds were sounding like the greatest luxury as their exhaustion finally caught up with them.

The next morning Harry awoke reluctantly. His entire body ached. Scabs covered his knees and arms, grazes covering his back and bruises covering what felt like the rest of his body. Harry placed Balthazar back on the bed, unwilling to let the snake wrap around his sore body. Harry had taken a shower last night and looked a lot more human than he did yesterday. However, a large cut still marred his brow, running from just above his left eye, diagonally along his forehead, disappearing into his hairline.

He made his way into the common room. He assumed that the rest of the Slytherins would be waiting for his arrival. They would desire to know what to do. As he stepped into the room all mouths closed and silence reigned. Harry was handed a sheet by Fia, the boy looking worn out as he made his way back to his seat. Harry followed the boy, sitting on his own chair before reading the parchment had been handed.

It seemed that thirty-seven students had been killed in the attack yesterday with many more still in the hospital wing. Seven of that number had been Slytherin, fifteen Gryffindor, six Hufflepuff and nine Ravenclaw. A few names that Harry recognised littered the page: Alicia Spinnet, Cho Chang, Hannah Abbott, Zacharias Smith. However as Harry looked over the list of the dead Slytherins. His breath was forced out of his lungs and his hands clenched, gripping the parchment before him. His heart began to thump to life rapidly as his eyes scanned over the names again and again. Of course it was horrible to see any of the names and yet two names stood out against the page. Harry found himself wishing that the ink on the page would just disappear. He blinked. The names remained.

Blaise Zabini and Faye Weasley flashed before his eyes.

How had this happened? How was it that two of his own Slytherins were allowed to die? Blaise was a member of his inner circle, Faye being readied for the position, her loyalty unquestionable. Harry clenched his jaw as anger rippled through his form. He forced himself up out of his seat. He balled up the paper and let it fall to the floor. In the corner of the room sat Draco Malfoy. Harry knew that the boy was not loyal, had known for months. He had kept the boy out of the loop and so when he had not gone to Hogsmead yesterday he had thought nothing of it. Now he knew better. The boy had known. He had known about the attack and done nothing to warn any of the Slytherins. Now his house members were dead. His school mates were dead and he had done nothing.

Harry stormed over to the smug looking blonde and before the boy had a chance to blink he raised a fist and smashed it into the Malfoy’s nose. A satisfying crunch filled the room. Harry sneered before he raised his fist again. He thrust his fist into the blonde’s stomach, forcing the wind from the other boy’s lungs. Harry grabbed his shirt, pulling him up from his seat and throwing him to the floor. He kicked him in the ribs, casing the boy to groan deeply. Harry finally placed a foot on the boy’s breast bone, pressing his heel down hard before stalking out of the room. The message was clear. This was Draco’s fault. The rest of the house knew what to do now.
Harry made his way to the Ravenclaw common room, his heart still thrumming with rage with each step. Harry couldn't believe it. His people were dead. People he had claimed as his, marked as his. Voldemort had killed them. The man was not to be trusted. He had gone too far. Harry would not allow the man another chance to do this to him. He was not an ally any longer. He was as good as dead. He had declared war on Harry. There was no going back.

Luna was waiting for him. Her blonde hair shimmered, her smile small as she let him past. The Ravenclaw common room was solemn, not a smile in sight. Eyes looked curiously as Harry made his way through the room. He ignored them. He marched past the students and made his way up toward the first year dormitories. The room was empty, only pulled curtains around one of the beds and the faint sound of sobbing. Harry pulled the curtain back, letting light shine on the small boy on the bed. The watery eyes looked up at the sudden movement.

Before Harry knew it his arms were filled with a young Alfie Weasley. The boy’s arms clung tightly around Harry’s neck, his tears soaking into Harry’s robes. He clung to Harry for dear life, never wanting to let go. Alfie’s father had been unable to reach Hogwarts, unable to comfort his son. A travel ban was in place meaning that no one, other than Aurors, were allowed to enter or exit Hogwarts until all death eaters had been transported off school grounds and back to the ministry where they could be held for trials. This meant that no parents were allowed to bury their children. No one could comfort the eleven year olds that were experiencing more loss than they had ever known. No-one could do anything. So Harry would do something.

Harry walked back down the stairs, Alfie still clutched to his chest. The boy rubbed against his grazes and sent pains shooting through his body with each step. However, Harry pushed the pain away. Alfie needed the comfort that Harry could provide and Harry needed to show the rest of the world that Hogwarts would not fall so easily. Without a word Harry made his way from the common room and down to the great hall, Alfie still in tow.

As soon as Graham saw Harry he scuttled to his side, sticking close to his adopted brother and his best friend. He clutched at Harry’s arm, almost hanging from the older boy. Luna quickly followed, her face filled with a sad dreamy smile. The rest of the Ravenclaws watched as the Slytherin and the trio of Ravenclaws made their way through the exit. They were unsure of what to do. This was a pivotal moment for Ravenclaw house. Would they stand with Harry or would they not?

Marietta Edgecombe, Eddie Carmichael and Marcus Belby looked toward each other. The three had not had a restful night, their dreams plagued with corpses of their friends, family and school mates. However the sleepless night had given them time to think. They had thought about what they had witnessed that day and what it meant for the future. They did not want a future where they could not walk the streets without the threat of being attacked just around the corner. They wanted safety and protection. It seemed as though Harry could give that to them.

The three sixth years stood up, following Harry from the room. The rest of the Ravenclaws looked in suspicion. They saw that their housemates, their family within the school as they stood with Harry.
Seconds ticked by, looks were exchanged. The seventh years stood. It seemed a decision had been made. The first years shot up and enthusiastically scampered after Harry, happy that they could follow the young man that had helped their friend. They pushed past the rest of their house mates in their enthusiasm. Alfie may have been shy but that didn't mean that his year mates didn't care for him. Second and Third years needed no further prompting, they stood at a more sedate pace. The room cleared out, leaving only a few hesitant fifth and sixth years.

They were unsure as to whether they were willing to follow a fifth year. One that had such controversial ideas. One that had made such an impact in such a short space of time. It may be dangerous to be seen publicly supporting such a figure. However, would it not be worse to be seen not supporting him? The future that lay ahead of them could be easily destroyed, piece by carefully crafted piece. They were not stupid. They knew that Harry’s reach of influence was far greater than anything they could ever hope to achieve. They walked out of the room, quickening their pace.

Harry was at the front of the pack of Ravenclaws as Luna pushed open the doors to the Great Hall. It seemed that they were early. As Harry walked in, Alfie still clutched to his chest, the only eyes that met theirs were those of the house elves that were still attempting to prepare the Hall as a place that the students could eat. As they saw the group of students entering, several of them let out a squeak of surprise.

“Young Masters” one said as they saw Harry, Graham and Alfie. However the younger boy did not look up. He only continued to bury his head in Harry’s shoulder and let out small sniffles. The house elf scurried forward, bowing repeatedly and fiddling with its big droopy ears.

“the Great Hall nots be ready for breakfast yet Masters” the house elf shrieked in a high pitched and worried tone. At this Graham stepped forward.

“We shall wait” the boy grumbled out, his voice rough and his eyes filled with sadness. The house elf scurried forward, bowing repeatedly and fiddling with its big droopy ears.

The next fifteen minutes were spent in absolute silence. No one spoke a word, not a whisper. The only noises that filled the room were the sounds of tables and chairs being dragged along the cold stone floor. A snake of tables was made crossing the hall in a twist. Harry remaining fixed in the centre.

The silence was broken as several members of Hufflepuff entered the Hall. All eyes became fixed upon them. Every Ravenclaw stared. Their mouths snapped shut. The group of four fourth years quickly assessed the situation and seemed to know what to do. They did not speak another word. They found a space at the tables, mingling with the Ravenclaws. Silence reigned again.

After that a trickle of Hufflepuffs and Gryffindors found their way into the hall. They all seemed to know what to do. More tables joined the snake and after a few mumbles and whispers, silence once again fell on the Hall. It was not until the half hour mark passed that the members of Slytherin entered the room. Nathaniel led the silent procession that was visibly lacking Draco Malfoy. Harry knew that there was a very real possibility that the boy was lying on the floor of the common room, barely clinging to life. Fia looked to Harry, receiving a nod and a meaningful look from his King.

Nathaniel Flamel puffed his chest up, stood straight and meaningfully made his way toward a group of five Gryffindors that had secluded themselves slightly from the rest of the Hall. Their table at an odd angle and they being the only ones sitting at it. Fia changed that. He marched toward the table and situated himself directly next to a female Gryffindor who looked at him in shock. There was no hostility, only curiosity. Fia gave a meaningful nod to the girl. She gave a slight smile in return. They
had all lost people yesterday. They needed to be together. They needed to be a school that was united, not divided.

The rest of the Slytherins soon followed suit. They filled up the spaces, sitting with Ravenclaws, Gryffindors and Slytherins, before they began to pull up tables when the space ran out. Not a word was spoken as they silently remembered those that had fallen. They were mourning the loss of their friends, relatives and school mates as one. There were hoping for the

It was another fifteen minutes before the Hall had been fully prepared by the house elves and another ten before any of the staff arrived. The heads of house, minus Severus Snape, filed in, looking shocked at the silent students that followed them. They seemed unable to speak themselves as their footsteps echoed through the Hall. Remus Lupin walked in, exhausted. There were bags under his eyes and his shoulders were slumped. He was too tired to talk, too tired to look at the students, too tired but do anything other than slump into his seat at the teacher’s table. The rest of the staff looked equally exhausted. Harry watched as they trudged to the tables.

The Headmaster was the last to enter. A bright smile was on his withered face. It was fake. Harry held back a scowl as the headmaster made his way toward the ornamental throne. Harry knew that the man’s days were numbered. He was sure that the rest of the members of the Hall knew that too. Harry’s green eyes watched every step that the decrepit man took. He watched as he fell to his seat, his bones creaking and a sigh escaping his mouth.

Harry stood. He took his wand from his holster. Alfie was still on his hip, so it was a bit of a struggle and yet he managed to still look graceful as he lifted a foot and placed it on the bench he had just removed himself from. He pushed himself up, so that he was standing at his full height. He raised his wand toward the enchanted ceiling and cast a nonverbal lumos. A bright white light shot from his wand. All around him students were doing the same. All were standing beside him, shoulders bumping and feet scuffling as they raised their own wands. Muttered words filled the room as their spells were cast. Blinding light caused many to close their eyes as hundreds of balls of light now floated through the Great Hall. It was a union, It was a memorial, It was a prayer and then it was over.

Harry stepped down. He ignored the food that had been presented on the table. He cast one final look toward the Headmaster. The man was broken. He then walked form the Great Hall. The entire Hall followed him. They were his now. He held his head up high and didn't stop utnil every single student had left the Great Hall with him.

Harry’s wrist had been burning for three and a half days now. The waves of pain becoming more intense and more frequent. Why was the man so insistent? He did not want to see the Dark Lord, now or ever. Blaise was dead. Faye was dead. The man deserved nothing. Harry would spit in his face if he had the chance. The man was a worthless traitor. Harry did not deal with such people.

On the morning of the fourth day at, around seven thirty the burning intensified even more. It was a heat that rippled up Harry’s arm and across the rest of his body. Each nerve seemed to tingle as the heat continued to spread. A peak was reached, Harry clenched his teeth as the pain became intense. It felt like there were prickles all across his body. He closed his eyes.

Suddenly the pain in Harry’s body vanished. The burning disappeared as quickly as it came. Harry let his eyes flicker open as the pain left him. He was not, however, in the same room that he had been in only seconds before. His eyes scanned the familiar office of the Dark Lord. The man was also in the room, sitting behind his desk. A smirk was on his mouth and his red eyes twinkled. Harry grabbed his wand and quickly fired off a curse. A green light shot from Harry’s wand.
The Dark Lord ducked out of the way of the light, letting it hit the wall behind him. As he stood back up his own wand was in his hand. He fired out several spells quickly that were blocked and dodged easily by Harry. The two spared for several minutes, neither letting a spell get within a foot of them. The office became more and more hazardous as spell after spell turned over the furniture, splintering it to pieces and scattered the ordered papers across the room.

Harry was suddenly engulfed in pain. It seemed that the Dark Lord was up to his normal tricks and was cheating. His wrist was burning hotter than it ever had. Harry was sure that the skin was blistering. He fell to his knees and let out a silent scream as he clutched at the burning skin. The pain suddenly disappeared as Harry’s wand was pulled from his grip.

“Tut tut, Harry. Tut, tut” the man before him said with a grin. Harry ignored him, examining his wrist. It seemed that there was no damage other than the fact that the skin was bright red. He looked up to the Dark Lord and gave him the harshest glare that he could.

“Come, Mr Potter or is it Beckett now” the Dark Lord said with a laugh and a grin. “There’s no need for such violence.” Harry sprang up from the floor and lunged at the man before him, attempting to push him to the floor. He managed. He straddled the man and began to bring his fist down in an arc to wipe the smug grin off the Dark Lord’s face. However he was thrown off. His hands were forced to the ground as the Dark Lord now pinned Harry to the hard wood floor. His face was more serious now.

“It wasn’t me Harry” he said. The smile was still there but it was lessened now. His eyes were filled with sincerity. However Harry had learned to distrust such looks. It was not good to trust those that looked honest. Harry had learnt that they were often the people that were the most likely to lie.

“It was Lucius Malfoy.” Voldemort spat out the name, as though it were a bad taste. A look of disgust filled his eyes. “Come. I’ll show you.” Voldemort stood, using Harry’s chest to push himself up. He then pulled the young man up with him. His hand clutching Harry’s wrist, fingers running over the silver band that encased Harry’s wrist and the red skin.

Harry reluctantly followed the man as he lead them down toward the dungeon. The man had Harry’s wand after all. He wasn’t going to leave before he had an explanation and he had his wand back. The pair stood before a cell. Harry’s eyes needing time to adjust to the darkness, he failed to notice the form in he cell until Voldemort pulled open the door.

“Lucius, I have a visitor for you” the Dark Lord purred out. His voice was dangerous.

A man was strapped to the back wall, his arms and legs in chains. His head was slumped down to his chest, the mangled, dirty blonde hair hung over his face. The man flinched as he heard the words left the Dark Lord’s voice. Then let out a groan as the movement let a wave of pain ripple over his body.

“Look Harry. Here’s the man that instigated the attack on Hogsmead” The man’s eyes hardened. “Against my orders” he growled out dangerously. The man hanging on the wall whimpered again.

“Do you want to have a little fun with him Harry?” Voldemort tilted his head. He reminded Harry of a puppy. On second though he was more a wolf. Able to put on a non-threading smile but give him ten seconds and he would rip your throat out.

Harry thought about it. Was this what he really wanted? However images of Blaise and Faye popped into his head. The man deserved this. He had killed those innocent children. He glared at the man, stepping forward. Harry held out his hand, needing a wand. Voldemort was happy to oblige. Harry gave a wicked smile as the blonde whimpered.
It was three hours later when Harry finally finished his torture. He retreated to Voldemort’s private rooms, keeping his wand clutched tightly in his hand. He stripped and cast cleaning spells on his robes before entering the shower. He came out of the bathroom, towel around his waist, to see the Dark Lord lounging on the bed, a smile on his face.

“Well Harry, did you enjoy that?” Harry only raised a brow at the man. He still did not trust him. He did not fully trust that the man before him had not had something to do with the attack. He was Dolos, the spirit of guile and trickery. He would make a statue as glorious and magnificent as the original. Sculpt until the copy was no longer distinguishable from the reality. However, unlike Dolos, Voldemort had enough clay. He would not let his statue go unfinished, not let anyone see the unfinished work. He would instead perfect his masterpiece before revealing it to the world in a ceremony of pomp and glory.

“I can ensure you that I had no part in this my little serpent” the smirk was one filled with amusement that made Harry’s scowl deepen. “I was attempting to breach an agreement with the Veela in France. I had been out of the country for three days.” Voldemort frowned. He was loosing the amusement in his voice and in his eyes. It appeared he was disappointed and angry with his followers and the fact that they could not listen to him while he as not there.

“It seems that was enough time for the Malfoy scum to form a plan” he growled out in disgust. Then he did something that Harry did not expect, he stood from the bed and approached him. His hand splayed out on his chest, pushing him backward. Harry could feel the heat of skin on his own. He pushed him backward. Pushing his back against the cold wall behind him. He brought his face to Harry’s, his lips by his ear.

“I apologise.” Voldemort whispered out. His voice was snake like and he drew out the s. Harry’s eyes widened at the words. He had never heard the Dark Lord apologise with such sincerity before. No apology had ever been meant in such a way. It had not been serious, never serious.

“My trust in my followers, it seems, is misplaced” he whispered. ”I know that you lost people. I can promise that it will never happen again” the man hummed. “At least not by my hand.”

Harry’s breath hitched as he felt fingers grasp in his hair. His head was pulled back. Eyes met, red eyes burning the green of Harry’s. His head came closer. Their lips almost touching.

“I promise” he whispered.

His lips were on Harry’s in a blink. The Dark Lord brought up his other hand. With one he pulled Harry’s head further back, the other clamped around Harry’s neck. He squeezed gently as he forced his tongue into Harry’s mouth. Harry forced his own tongue into the other man’s mouth. Fighting for dominance as the two twisted. Voldemort tightened his grip. Harry’s lungs were screaming by the time the Dark Lord pulled away, a smirk on his lips.

Harrys breath was fast as the lips were removed from his. He took several deep breaths before the Dark Lord’s grip tightened further. His air supply was breached and his breaths came in small gasps as the grip tightened. Lord Voldemort’s grin became vicious as he tightened even further. Harry gripped his wand tightly as he felt his breath no longer able to pass through his throat. However just as Harry was getting spots in his vision, preparing to blast the hands away from him, they released him. He gasped dramatically, comically even, as he searched for air that his lungs screamed for. Voldemort chuckled.

Voldemort let his fingers trail along the bruises that now started to bloom on Harry’s throat. He brought his head down to the bruises, running his tongue along the thumb print that was vividly forming. He smirked into the skin before biting down, hard. Harry’s hands scrabbled into the man’s
hair, attempting to pull him away. However he simply bit harder, blood was soon running down
Harry’s neck in a small stream. Voldemort’s teeth were removed soon after, his tongue lapping at the
blood that trickled slowly.

Voldemort lifted his head, his lips shiny with Harry's blood. He brought his face forward, smirk
firmly in place. He kissed him again, smearing Harry’s own blood on his face. He pushed the boy
harder against the wall. However as he readied himself for another kiss the door was pushed open.

“My Lord” a panicked voice called out. Voldemort whipped around a growl on his lips. His
movement revealed to Harry, the panicked face of one Severus Snape. However as the dark haired
man saw Harry before him, he seemed to visibly deflate.

“This better be important Severus.” the Dark Lord growled out.

“Yes My Lord” the man said with a bow. “I’m sorry to disturb you….They are looking for Mr
Beckett” he said averting his eyes from the violent red. “The staff noticed he was missing and…well
there has been quite the search. I believe that James Potter and….Sirius Black have been called.”
Severus finished. There was audible disgust as he talked about the pair. The word was like poison in
the room, filling it with a thick fog of disgust. The Dark Lord scowled and took Severus’ chin in his
hands, forcing the man’s eyes to meet his.

“You will take him and tell them he was in the Forbidden forest” he growled out, threat in his voice.
The promise of pain rippled over Severus’ skin as though a stunning hex had been cast. He shivered.
“Tell them what they want to hear.” Voldemort dropped the man’s chin before he barked out a
command to the man before him.

“Wait outside!” Severus scuttled from the room, with a mumbled yes before he shut the door behind
him.

“Get dressed little serpent” Voldemort said with a lecherous smile at the partially naked boy. He sat
don one of the couches that lined the room, staying in a perfect position to watch as Harry
dressed himself. Harry gave a sigh as he pulled on his spell-cleaned school robes. He could feel the
red eyes on him, dancing over his skin as he bent over to pull on his pants. As Harry buttoned up his
top shirt button and tightened his tie. He felt the man behind him.

“I hate to see my marks so callously covered” the Dark Lord growled out, his voice lustful, his breath
warm on Harry’s ear. Harry turned and pushed the man backward. His eyes hard. His brows
scrunched into a scowl. He then made his way toward the door. However before he could reach it he
was pinned to the wall. A fist was in his hair and it tugged at his black locks. Harry glared, his wand
was brought up, he placed it to the man’s neck. The message was clear. The Dark Lord only
laughed. Even with a wand to his throat the man could not be intimidated.

“Go little snake” he whispered in parsletonge, the language dangerous, filled with venom. He let go
of Harry. Harry’s wand fell from the Dark Lord’s neck and he made his way out of the room. His
hand clenched angrily on the door handle as he pulled it open. He was greeted with the face of his
potions Professor. He gave a nod to the man and they left, a portkey hidden in the Professor’s robes.

Harry and Severus appeared in the Headmaster’s office, not thirty seconds later. The pair were met
with the frustrated face of Albus Dumbledore. The man looked older than ever. Next to him was a
man dressed in formal robes. His brown hair was slicked back and his head was buried in a notebook
as he scribbled notes. Harry guessed correctly that he was from the ministry. The man was furiously
writing about the Headmaster’s failings. Loosing a student less than a week after an attack on the
weekend of a Hogsmead visit was not good.
“It seems” Professor Snape drawled out “that Mr Beckett decided to take an early morning walk in the woods ” the mockery was clear in his tone. Harry knew it wasn't genuine. “It seems he got himself lost.” The Professor scowled at Harry before giving Dumbledore a look that signified death to all those that stood in his way.

“Thank you Professor Snape. Would you please send a Patronus to James. I’m sure he’ll want to know that Mr Potter here has been safely found.” Harry ignored the snide comment of the Headmaster, instead only watching as the Professor cast a Patronus. The silver form of a snake was produced, its red eyes sparkling. Severus muttered a message of confirmation that he had found Harry, before the snake slithered through the sky.

It was fifteen minutes later as Potter and Black came running through the entrance to the Headmaster’s study. For the first time in over four years James Potter embraced Harry in hug, without Harry’s consent, of course. Harry tensed. He pushed the man back, a scowl on his face.

“Oh Harry we were so worried. We didn't know where you were. We thought that you’d been kidnapped.” James babbled as he looked down at the boy, his son. The one that he had not seen since the meeting at the Ministry. He knew that in name he was no longer his son, but in blood he would always be. He may have forced the boy to a life of abuse and neglect but he wanted redemption, he needed it. James Potter fell to his knees before the boy. He reached for one of Harry’s hands. Harry shook him off, retreating from the man that now had tears streaming down his face.

“Harry…I….Harry…” the man managed to choke out between sobs. Harry only raised a brow at the broken man that he had once called Father. He did not ever want to see this man. In fact as Harry stood there looking at the pathetic excuse for a human being, he realised that he wanted him dead. He was broken, he was worthless. He was nothing more than dirt beneath his shoe. He was disgusting.

Sirius Black stood behind his best friend as the man broke down. He watched as his youngest son stepped away from, like he was nothing more than a deranged stranger. His mind felt blank and he found himself longing for the vodka that had become his go to drink whenever his emotions overwhelmed him. He could do nothing more than stare and try to stop his hands from shaking as he watched the pitiful sight of his best friend and his broken life.

Harry looked to the two pitiful men, a sneer on his face. He turned up his nose before he made a decision. He gave none of the members of the room another glance as he made his way toward the door. He ignored the shouts from Black, Potter and Dumbledore. He ignored them as he opened the door and as he made his way down the stairs.

It was lunch. So Harry instead made his way toward the Great Hall. He slammed the doors open to reveal a sight that filled him with satisfaction. It seemed that his message had been taken on board. Before him was the epitome of unity. Well, mostly. There was a group that seemed to be apposed to embracing the fact. In the corner of what had once been the Gryffindor table there were a group of about ten Gryffindor. Among them, of course were the three youngest Weasleys and Edward Potter. The rest were members were known to Harry. Ones that he and his followers were still in the process of eliminating.

Another nonconformist that caught Harry’s eye was the broken from of one Draco Malfoy. His arm was in a sling and bruises littered his face. Both eyes were blood shot, pink, purple and blue bleeding from one to another, covering the boy’s face. He was shrunk in on himself. His shoulders were hunched in as he clumsily used his left arm in an attempt to eat the small amount of food that he had managed to get onto his plate. Harry let out a smirk. It seemed that even the mighty name of Malfoy could fall.
Harry made his way forward. Leading by example he found a space among a group of Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws. Among them was Caleb Parkin and Bartholomew Morgan. He was greeted by the group and he gave a nod of acknowledgement. Less than a minute passed before a small boy was tucked firmly at Harry’s side. Alfie, who had been sitting with Fia and Graham had made his escape, scuttling to Harry’s side. The boy had refused to go home with his father. He had insisted that he stay, needing to be with people that knew his sister. Needing to be with those that had protected him and attempted to protect her. He needed to be with Harry. Harry didn’t mind.
Chapter 27

Remus Lupin was crumpled in a heap on the floor as he read again and again the news articles that were strewn around him on the floor. He had had enough. He grabbed the pamphlet that clearly outlined the lies and deception that Albus Dumbledore had so clearly paraded as gospel. He looked at the smiling face of the old man on the cover and could not help it as his hand tore the pages in two. The smile was ripped with them.

Remus threw the papers to the floor on top of the latest articles that had been published by the Daily Prophet. He didn’t want to look at them anymore. Dumbledore was no more than a fraud. He was a liar, a trickster. A piece of shit. Remus had lost all faith in the man. Thirty-seven students dead; thirty-seven lives lost and the man had been nowhere in sight. Where had he been when the students that he had sworn to protect were being slaughtered?

It had been Snape, McGonagall, Flitwick that he had fought side by side with. It had been Sprout that had rushed the students back to the castle. It had been the students. Remus let out a choke at the thought. It had been the students that had died defending each other while the great Albus Dumbledore had been nowhere near them as they were cut down and slaughtered.

It had been Harry. Remus had seen the boy. He had saved so many on both sides. It was him that had ensured that it had not been sixty students that had been killed or a hundred for that matter. How was it that a fifteen year old boy had been able to do what the self proclaimed leader of the light could not? If it was children that were to be sacrificed then it seemed that the man did not deserve the title. Remus had seen it all up close. He had seen the life go out of his students eyes as he fought side by side with them. He had not been able to protect them.

Weeks had passed since then and yet Remus had still been unable to stop thinking about it. His quarters were littered with the news articles that spoke of every student. All their faces and all the destructions that their deaths had caused were well documented on his walls. Remus had been distracted from it all by lessons and comforting the grieving pupils. However now it seemed that all his thoughts were piling up, everything crashing down on him.

It was Easter. A week where he was alone in the school. All the pupils had gone home, every single one. Even the ones that usually stayed had retreated to the safety of their own houses. It seemed that the Hogsmead events had made them realise that very often life was shorter than you expected it to be. It had made Remus realise that. It reminded him of the family that he had once had. Of the life that had once been his so many years ago.

Remus had been in a pack. He had embraced his werewolf nature and let himself run free for two years. For two years he had been free, gloriously free. Remus had, after his finally year, decided that the prejudice and racism within the wizarding community had been too much and so, he had fled. He had graduated and then left it all behind him. His intention had been to leave forever. However he had been less fortunate than he had hoped. Things never turn out the way that you want them to.

Remus had, as a young and inexperienced wolf been seen as a liability and a danger to many packs. He had not grown up as a wolf and so he was distrusted by most packs. His ideas also clashed with those of many of the packs within the UK. He was therefore not given many options when it came to joining a pack. However there had been one Alpha that had been generous; Keena. She was strong, powerful and ferocious. But it seemed that she had been willing to accept those that had no other place to go.

Remus’ first full moon with the pack had been one of beauty. He was free to run, for the fist time in
his life. He had a pack like none that he had ever had before. For the first time in his life he felt wanted. He felt as though he belonged. Even with the Marauders he had not felt like this. He had been different, he had been a danger to those around him. He had not been like he was when he was with his real pack.

After six months he had fallen in love, just as his wolf had. A female wolf, the same age as Remus, younger only by a few months had become the fixation of his obsession. Both for him and his wolf. Rose had been beautiful. The way she smiled, the tinkle of her laughter and the quirk of her brow as she was thinking. She had become Remus’ everything. Their wolves had been a perfect match as had their human counterparts.

The two had taken the leap and a month later the two had been married. Two months after that and Rose had become pregnant. Remus and Rose were overjoyed. Remus had always thought that he would never be able to have kids. That he would not be able to justify bringing a life into the world that may have the same curse as him. However he no longer saw himself as someone that was afflicted. No, he was happy. He now knew that any children that he had would be happy to. A pack was different. He wanted to bring children into a world like this. A world where they would be accepted. He had that now.

The nine months passed quickly and soon a little girl had been born. She was as beautiful as Rose and Remus could not take his eyes off her. She had sparkling amber orbs and beautiful black hair that was little more than a puff on her head. However, to Remus she could not be more perfect.

They had lived together in peace and comfort for five beautiful months. They had named their daughter Aurelia, Aurelia Rose. A beautiful name for a beautiful little girl. Her development had been rapid due to the fact that she was a natural born wolf. Her first full moon had been painless. For that Remus could not have been more grateful. She had her mother’s fur, a deep dark black that shimmered in the moonlight. Remus could not have been prouder of her and with each passing day he only fell more in love with both her and her mother.

The first time that Remus had left them had been the last time that he had seen them. He regretted that day every single minute of his life. There had been a celebration. Lily had found out that she had become pregnant with another little boy. Remus had seen the Potters and Sirius intermittently for the past two years. He had seen Edward on his Birthdays and he sent Christmas gifts. He was still deemed a close enough friend that they wanted him at the party.

Aurelia, however, had not been feeling well. The young babe had an ear infection. Nothing serious but her pained cries had been woeful. Remus had wanted to stay. He had not wanted to leave his little girl alone when she was in such pain. However Rose had insisted that he go. Remus had not seen the Potters in over five months and Rose wanted her partner to see his friends. He had few enough as it was and she wanted him to keep those he had. Therefore Remus left.

The next morning Remus returned to his home, a smile on his face. The party had been a fun one and it had been amazing to see all his friends. However the smile soon vanished as he looked up from his apparition. Black. That was all Remus could see. Ashes were all that was left of the place that he had once called home.

Remus had run and run, screaming for Rose, for anyone. There had been nothing. They were gone. The next six months had been spent in a blur. Remus ran from pack to pack, exploring every forest and every pack that resided within them. He needed to find his family. But his family was gone. In his heart of hearts he knew that and yet he could not let them go. He was the reason for their destruction. He should have got there sooner. He should have never left in the first place. He had failed them and for that he could not forgive himself. Remus had been broken from his desperate
searching when he had been attacked by a fellow pack. They had not taken too kindly for his questioning or his presence for that matter.

The next time Remus had awoken he had been back at the Potters. It was as though nothing had ever happened. He was in the same room that he had been in hundreds of time through his childhood. The room that had been designated as his during many holidays. However Remus knew that he was not the same man that he had been when he had first been in that room.

However Remus was broken from the spiral of despair as he heard the cry of a baby echo through the room. His eyes widened as he was reminded of Aurelia. He rushed from the room as fast as his weakened legs would carry him, following the sound of the cries. He pushed open a door to find a small baby situated in small crib. A shock of black hair and sparkling green eyes won Remus over in an instant. He picked up the small baby and gently rocked him back and forth, letting his fingers trail along the babies face. The little boy had stopped crying and it seemed that Remus had found a new purpose in life.

However it soon came to an end when Harry was ripped away from him and Remus was again forced into a spiral of depression. His first full moon was one of the worst that he had ever experienced. His wolf had been desperate to find the young boy that had become his only remaining cub. He had broken down bars, climbed over fences and pushed through wards before he had run. He had run tens of miles, trying to reach the boy, only to collapse in exhaustion and wake up far away from his home.

From that day on Remus had had to take instinct suppressors as well as the Wolfsbane potion, before every full moon. They dulled his senses and repressed his wolf, in both normal form and wolf form. He would no longer spend his full moons in the woods. In fact he would spend them pacing in his room, pacing back and forth, waiting for the night to be over.

Remus had, for nearly fifteen years, been repressing who he truly was and ignoring what he truly cared about. Harry. His instincts had been dulled and his thoughts sluggish but now he felt that he could see clearly for the first time in over a decade and a half. The death of so many children and the sight of Harry at the forefront of that had brought up feelings that Remus had not felt in many years; the anger, the pain, the grief, the desperation. For weeks it felt as though these were the only feelings that Remus had been having.

Drawing himself from the swirl of memories and emotions Remus pulled himself up from the floor. He knew what he needed to do. He had to find his cub. Remus threw himself toward the fireplace and with a handful of floo powder and some muttered words he thrust his head into the fire.

He was soon connected to the desired address and the face of that he had seen many times before. Alden Warrington’s brown eyes looked at him in confusion and slight disgust.

“What do you want?” the man sneered. He was not disgusted by the fact that Remus was a werewolf but rather the fact that it was Remus himself that was there.

“I…I need” Remus choked out. Tears began to leak from his eyes as emotion overcame him. “Please” he begged. “I need to talk to Harry….I….I”

Alden’s face softened as he saw the face of the man before him. They were the eyes of a broken man. A man that had lost all but a flicker of hope. Alden knew that feeling. It was one that he had felt when his own son had died. The only things that had kept him going were Cassius and Angela. He knew that if that light had been snuffed out he would not have been able to go on. He felt the same despair radiating from Remus. It seemed that Harry was the man’s last chance. Alden didn’t know why, but he knew that he had to give the man a chance.
“Wait here” Alden spoke, much more gently than before. With that he walked off, leaving Remus with his head still sticking out of the fireplace.

The minutes ticked by slowly for Remus. Each one feeling like an age and as Alden returned, he felt like a dog happy for the return of his master. He looked up with wide eyes and he was sure, that if he had a tail, then it would be wagging.

“Come through” Alden said. His face was straight, unreadable and there seemed to be no emotion in the words as he spoke them. Remus didn't be need to told twice. He pulled his head from the fireplace as quickly as he could. His feet rocketed up from the kneeling position. His legs tingled at the movement as the blood flow returned to them. However he ignored it as he grabbed another handful of floo powder.

“Warrington Manor” he shouted out and let the green flames engulf him.

Remus was kneeling, head down and tears still streaming down his face. This position was not one that he had been in for many years and yet it was not one that he felt uncomfortable in. In fact he felt that this was the only position that he was worthy in. He deserved nothing more than this. He should not be standing.

Before him was Harry. A boy, who was no longer a boy, that he had not spoken to properly in a long time. A teacher was the role that he was forced to play, but that was not the one he had wanted. He had let the young man down. He had repressed his feelings and forgotten his true self. He was a failure and as such deserved nothing more than to be begging at his Godson’s feet.

Remus let the tears continue to stream as he felt a force in his mind. It was Harry. He was sure. He was also sure, that even if the attention was not friendly, that it was the most attention that Harry had paid him in fifteen years. That thought was painful. However what was more painful was the emotions that surfaced as Remus was forced to watch, in vivid detail the life that had once been his. Harry flicked through each thought, feeling, sight and smell that Remus had felt both before and after Harry had been born. All his emotion surrounding the baby that he had been and right up to him becoming the young man that stood before him now.

As Harry pulled from his mind Remus collapsed to the floor, his body shaking. Sobs racked through him as his muscles twitched with the emotional exertion of what he had just seen. The movements were remiss of the aftereffects of the cruciatus curse. Although it was Remus’ mind that was in pain.

Remus was forced up, a hand pulling at his collar. His eyes were glassy as they tried to take in the sights before him. A pair of strong hands of an unknown individual were holding him under his armpits, ensuring that he stayed in a suitable kneeling position. Before him stood a large group of people. All looking with scorn and mistrust in their eyes. Remus’ mouth was forced open by another set of hands and a liquid was forced down his throat. The hands held his nose and Remus had no choice but to swallow or choke. He swallowed.

“What is your name?” an unknown voice questioned. Remus’ head was fuzzy, it lolled back and forth, a queasy feeling filling him. However as he heard the words his lips moved without his consent and answer was forced from them.

“Remus John Lupin” he said monotonously in a voice, not quite his own.

“When were you born?” Another question and another answer was forced out of Remus’ lips without his consent and so the pattern continued. Remus could barely remember the questions as his lips responded. However one question broke through the fog that was slowly filling his mind. His
eyes blinked, hard and he attempted to focus. It was hard. He felt as though his mind was filled with honey and his thoughts were attempting, slowly, to push their way through it.

“What are your intentions toward Harrison Beckett, previously known as Harry Potter?”

“I…” Remus was forced to say. “I want my cub back.” the words were rough and unconscious tears leaked from the hazy eyes. “I want redemption and…and I will do it anyway that I can.” Even though the fog Remus’ voice was desperate. “I need him.” he choked out.

With that Remus sank back into the fuzz that had consumed his brain, the questions coming too fast for him to remember or keep up with what was being said. Slowly his connection with reality became more and more tenuous until he was finally aware of nothing at all.

The next time Remus awoke he was in a room that he didn't recognise, in a bed that was not his own. His head was still fuzzy and he was unable to recall much of the events of the day before. However he was able to remember Harry. He had seen his cub. That was all he really needed to remember.

Remus forced himself from the bed, his whole body aching as he tried to get his legs to obey his command. He felt weak and drained, even with the sleep that he had evidently had, even if he had no relocation as to when it had started. He managed to force himself into the bathroom that was attached to the room. Looking at his face in the mirror he looked as bad as he felt. His face was pale and deep black circles were prominent under his eyes. His hair was a mess, mostly grey as it stood up at odd angles. He looked older than he could ever remember being, the scars and wrinkles on his face making him seem to be twenty years older than he was. Remus knew, however, that the blame for his appearance rested, only, on his own shoulders.

A knock shocked Remus out of his self-evaluation and he painfully stepped from the bathroom to be greeted by the very boy that he wanted to see. Harry stood before him, his figure, even though significantly shorter than Remus’ own, was an intimidating one. His robes were expensive and his figure was polished. It made Remus feel a tad inadequate in his rumpled, slept in, second-hand robes.

Harry gave a raised brow and a meaningful look before he turned and left the room. Remus quickly followed behind him, even through the pain of the steps. He would not let his Godson again. Even if it was only walking he would do it to the best of his ability. Harry led Remus down corridors that he did not recognise until they finally reached a set of double doors. With a flick of Harry’s hand the doors opened and Remus marvelled at the display of wandless magic.

The doors opened to reveal a large hall, that Remus assumed was the ballroom. The ceiling towered above them, decorated with intricate carvings and supported by elegant pillars. A decedent wood floor spread across the floor, light pouring in from the windows, creating a dance of shadows across it. However Remus’ look was drawn away from the elegant architecture and toward the group of people that stood at the other end of the room.

Harry lead him toward the group and took his position between two figures that Remus recognised as Cassius Warrington and Lawrence Carrow. There were several other members of the room that Remus recognised, both currently teaching and having taught many of them in the past. Nathaniel Flamel, Percy Weasley and the Carrow twins, but to name a few.

A figure stood forward, a sheet of parchment in their hands and a smile on their face. Caleb Parkin was a recognisable figure, but not one that Remus had been expecting to see in a situation such as this. Remus could see the nervousness in the form, but also the excitement that glittered in his eyes.

“We have come to a decision, Remus John Lupin” his voice was confident and purposeful. It was
not a voice that he had heard from the boy before. The Caleb Parkin that Remus knew was popular, yes, but he was shy, well spoken and modest. He was not the young man before him.

“It seems that your wish for redemption is genuine. Yet you must prove that your wish to join us, is also a genuine one. There is more to this than just Harry. We need to make sure that you realise that.” Remus’ eyes went wide as he heard this. They were…were they…accepting him? He didn't know. They didn't seem to know either. But it was worth a start.

Remus took a deep breath. He fell to his knees before Harry, the same position that he had been in hours, or was it days, before. His eyes were to the floor and his breaths were shallow. But he didn't speak a word. He didn't know how to show what he felt. He didn't know what it was that he felt. It was a blur of emotions, of repression. He could not know what it was that he truly felt when he was not truly himself. He needed time. He wanted to show Harry that he was his. But he didn't know how.

Unseen to Remus Harry gave a look to Caleb. The young man could continue.

“You will go home now Remus Lupin. You will keep up your normal day to day activities. You will act as though nothing has changed. That includes going to the meetings of the Order of the Phoenix.” Remus’ breath hitched as he heard those words. They knew of the Order? These people knew far more than he had been expecting.

“We will contact you soon.” Caleb continued “However” the boy’s voice soon turned gruff and filled with the promise of pain. “we will know if you betray us.”
Chapter 28

AN: Hey guys sorry for the wait for this chapter. I found out recently that my mum has cancer and so I've been under a lot of stress lately. She's going to be fine but I've found motivation to write a little hard. Anyway sorry to unload on you all and I hope you enjoy the chapter :D

Severus let the potions fumes fill the room, too intent on the next step in the process for there to be any room for him to be distracted by them. He waited, watching as the potion changed from one shade of blue to another. He held his breath as he dropped the ground dragon claw. Gently letting the flakes dissolve into the blue mixture.

Severus breathed again. Even as an experienced potions Master it seemed that he was still unable to fully judge the intricacies of certain potions. There was always room for mistakes in this game, even for one such as himself. It was a tightrope that he walked on. A constant battle to stay upright and not to lose his nerve or his footing. He wasn't sure that he would be successful. But everyday he tried. For that was all he could really do.

Severus watched as the blue slowly faded, becoming lighter and lighter, the blue becoming a distant memory as white overtook its form. It was done. Severus waited for the next half hour as the potion cooled to a suitable temperature and the white continued to brighten. Severus gently poured the potion into a small vial, ready.

Severus hurried down the corridors, the vial clutched protectively to his chest. It would not do to drop such a precious burden. Not after all the work that he had put into it. His footsteps were quick and if he were a lesser man than his breathing may have been called panicked. However Severus was not panicked, merely flustered. Or so he told himself.

Severus pushed through the large double doors that blocked him in his mission. Silence as the only reply that met his entry. However it seemed that every eye was on him. The silence was more defining than any noise could have been. However Severus ignored them. The lowly ranks of his Lord’s army did not matter. No. It was only his Lord. Severus threw himself to the ground before the man, his Master, the potions vial still clutched tightly to his chest.

“Out” the Dark Lord growled out viciously. Severus did not look up. The sound of scuffling feet quickly arose and finished even more quickly as all of the Death Eaters rushed to do their Lord’s bidding. Severus never moved, barely breathing as he heard them leave.

Before Severus knew it the man was before him, his chin in his Lord’s hand. His head was forced up, however the black eyes skittered away, unwilling to meet the piercing red that he knew he would see.

“You have it?” was the forceful question that spewed from his Lord’s lips.

A croak was all that escaped Severus as he attempted to speak. Unable to get his vocal cords under
control he thrust his hand forward, his eyes skittering away once more. Severus uncurled his fingers from the precious potion, letting the vial rest on the palm of his hand. Severus had to suppress another shudder as he felt the gentle and yet deadly touch of the fingers of his Lord as they picked up the potions vial.

Voldemort brought the vial up to his line of vision, examining the white liquid. Every line of his face participating in the scrutiny. After several seconds, that to Severus, seemed to drag on for years, his Lord finally looked up. A small smirk made its way onto his face.

“You’ve done well Severus.” Severus felt a warmth tingle though him at the words. His aim in life was to please his Lord.

“It’s perfect” Severus had to repress a flinch as he felt the hot breath of his Lord caress his ear.

“Go” the Dark Lord barked as he turned to leave, the potion still clasped firmly in his hands. Severus let out a sigh of relief. He had pleased his Lord. A small smile crept its way onto his face as he picked himself up from the floor.

Severus flooed back home for the first time in days and collapsed into his bed without a thought of anything else. Within minutes he was fast asleep. His mind was empty, satisfaction radiating from every part of his being. He had pleased his Lord. He was satisfied.

Remus Lupin’s hands were sweating, his palms clammy as they rested on his trousers. He looked around the room, attempting to avoid eye contact with the members that occupied it. The Order of the Phoenix had diminished in the time since Voldemort had risen from the dead. Lily Potter was one of the more prominent members who’s seat now remained empty. She was still in St Mungo’s. Her mental health had been deteriorating more and more over the years, so much so that no-one could ignore it any longer.

James was there, sitting in silence as the meeting went on around him. The man had changed as well. Having forced his wife into rehab he was now having to deal with a son that thought himself superior to even other person in existence. Therefore the boy thought that he had a right to do whatever he wanted. James was exhausted from having to stop the young man from constantly trying to take his mother out of the hospital.

Sirius Black was his usual self, a grin on his face and a growl in his voice. However Remus could see the sadness hidden behind those eyes. There was a twinkling there that spoke of despair. Remus wanted to help. Remus did not want to see the man that he loved suffer in such a way. But there was nothing that he could do. He could not help the man. The animagus would have to seek out happiness on his own now. Remus knew that Sirius needed to find Harry’s redemption. Remus could not help him do that.

There were, of course, a few new members of the Order, that had joined since it became clear that Voldemort’s influence was once again growing. There was a Weasley; Bill, having joined from the promoting of his father. Fleur Delacour had joined with Bill. Her loyalties seeming to lie with her boyfriend. Remus was sure that the part Veela was someone to watch out with. She was sure to change allegiance if Bill became threatened in any way.

Nymphadora Tonks was another addition. She was young and filled with moral outrage; unable to see that there was more to life than right and wrong. The girl was also constantly eyeing Remus. Her attention was obvious and Remus hated every minute of it.

Albus Dumbledore was a shell of his former self. The man had lost much of his power. Much of
what had been fighting for had become shattered, the shards becoming smaller and smaller with each passing day. The man was older, weaker and becoming smaller with each passing day; both stature and within the world. Remus did not care. In fact Remus found himself enjoying watching the man shrivel as he thought of what he had done to Harry.

Severus Snape was there, the scowl that perpetuated his face sitting in its reserved location. He was, as Remus was attempting to do, watching the proceedings with a calm facade. His face was unreadable and yet Remus knew that the man was taking in every word, attentively. Remus wished that he could be that calm and collected. Remus felt that every second was a second closer to him being discovered.

Remus let out a slow, partially controlled breath as he forced himself to listen to the talking that went on around him. He was sure that Harry would need this information later. Even if he didn't then Remus was still going to ensure that he gave the young man whatever he could. It was the least that he deserved.

Harry clenched his fists, watching the knife as it cut into his skin. Blood trickled down his arms, making it difficult to see what he was doing. This was taxing work. It was a strain both mentally and physically, but he had to fight through the pain. He was used to doing that. Distraction from pain or from blood was not what Harry needed right now. He could not afford to let the blade, or his concentration slip, for even a second.

Harry dabbed the blood away before beginning his work again. He was carving a set of intricate runes on his wrist, below the silver that had been situated there for longer than Harry would have liked. However, even with all his research it still seemed impossible for him to remove the band. The Dark Lord was simply too good with spell work for him to have left any loop holes. Harry clenched his teeth, as with the final twist of the blade, the runes were complete. However the process was not over.

Harry then drew a set of identical runes on the band using the drying blood from his wounds. His breath shuddered as he attempted to quickly and efficiently re-create the design. As Harry finished the painstaking work two small flashes of identical light met his eyes before they were gone in an instant.

The blood dried, indented onto the metal. Yet there was no heat to indicate the change to the metal. The wounds on Harry’s wrist were now healed, leaving fresh, angry, red scars in place of the deep wounds. Harry was sure of their permanence just as he was with the bracelet on his wrist. However the scars were a far more welcome addition.

The Easter holidays were over, Harry was on the train, his allies, his friends, surrounding him in his carriage. Fia, Graham, Luna and Alfie sat together on one bench, the four of them talking very little and yet saying a lot. Next to Harry sat Flora and Hestia along with Neville and Theodore Nott. Harry’s eyes flitted between each member of the carriage. They all knew of the plan and were ready for their part in it.

A small explosion rocked the train, one of the carriages being the source of the noise. Black smoke filled the train, slowly making its way down from the front of the train in thick waves. Harry’s smirk went unseen, as did the flourish of his wand as black smoke filled their carriage as well as all those surrounding it. The smoke got thicker and thicker, filling the senses of all on the train. Noises were muffled, sight blurred and smell a distant memory.

However after several minutes of stumbling, loud and violent screams broke through the darkness. It
seemed his plan was working. Harry’s feet pounded as he made his way toward the noises. He was sure in the knowledge that his followers were living up to their name and responsibility that he had bestowed on them. Harry knew that had found their desired location as the screams were louder now.

Harry smirked as he fired a spell at the source of the noise, knowing that even such a harmless spell would be all that was needed. The next ten minutes were spent in a flash of lights in all direction, the spells uncaring of where they hit. Harry watched as a cutting curse shot toward him. He smiled. Harry let the spell hit him, blood blooming to the surface of his skin. Harry fell to his knees, his tattered robe falling with him. A flick of his hand and the smoke cleared.

Harry’s act was ready. As the smoke disappeared Harry forced a look of pain onto his face and let tears fill his eyes. Blood smeared across his arm and his breath came in sharp gasps. It seemed that many of his circle were in similar states of injury and fear. Their acting was fantastic.

At the front of the carriage their stood several shell-shocked looking adults. Order members. Kingsley Shacklebolt’s face was ashen, Arthur Weasley was frozen in place, Nymphadora Tonks looked like she might be sick. However Alastor Moody was emotionless as always, the only sign of his agitation being the rapid movement of his magical eye.

The seconds ticked by, empty seconds filled with only the occasional moan of pain from either one of Harry’s followers or one of the innocent students caught in the crossfire. It seemed the order members were far too shellshocked by their circumstance to do anymore. The train continued to chug along, slowly making its way toward Hogwarts.

The surreal silence was suddenly shattered as a swarm of Aurors popped into existence. Alastor Moody quickly vanished, his vigilance as consuming as his paranoia as he disappeared with a pop. The other order members, it seemed, were not so lucky. Seeing the carnage that had been left by the five adults they quickly engulfed the remaining four in disarming and disabling spells.

Harry schooled his features, preventing the smirk that threatened to spread across his face as he continued his act of the injured innocent. Harry was pleased. It seemed that Remus had proved himself. The man had been an integral part of this plan. A plan that had been executed fantastically.

Remus had played his part well. The plan for this event had been Remus’ first stepping stone toward redemption. The planning had been intense. Each step needed to be perfect. Nothing could be linked back to Remus. Harry had tasked the werewolf with leaking information to the order that Death Eaters were rumoured to be meeting in Knockturn Alley. The day and time were given. How to get the members there without any suspicion was down to Remus.

Three days passed and it had seemed that Remus had done his job well. Tonks, in a rather obvious disguise. The girls metamorphmagus abilities may have been phenomenal and yet her clumsy behaviour and general lack of tact made her an obvious candidate for the spy that was in their midst. Harry had acquired the hair of several Death Eaters. Amycus and Alecto Carrow had been easy targets; Lawrence being in close contact with them. Evan Rosier and Alexander Nott had been a little harder to procure. While Lucius Malfoy had been near impossible. However, Harry had managed it.

Tonks had watched, while Harry watched her. She had heard the conversation between the five Death Eaters. She had heard their plans to take the Hogwarts express. Their plans to show the world that Voldemort was weak. Harry had to laugh at that. The plan was exactly that and yet Tonks was only aiding them in their endeavour. The woman took every word as though each were a thread of gold that she grasped at preciously, protecting each one. She questioned nothing. Everything she took at face value. Everything that she heard was a precious jewel.
As forty minutes passed the group left. They had little time left for the polyjuice to maintain its effectiveness and so needed to vacate the premises. They had, however, put the seeds in Tonks’ mind. They had given her all the information that she needed. The order would do the rest.

Remus’ next part to play was far more dangerous. The risk of being caught was a phenomenal one. However if he wanted to prove himself it was merely a risk that he would have to take. Remus had to first ensure Edward was gifted with some rather specific pranking gifts; spontaneously of course. Sirius had been the chosen target. The man was relatively easy to manipulate and Remus had practice in making him believe that he had ideas that were his own.

The next part of the plan involved some more subtle manipulation. Remus had ensured that Edward had not used several of the pranking materials. Instead he had needed to place them in his trunk. That in itself was a challenge, however, Remus had needed to set a timer on the partially used box of pranks. He needed the darkness powder to explode, forty minutes into the journey. However it needed to appear to be an accident. It needed to be untraceable. A harmless prank gone wrong. It was nothing more than a mistake. That was all anybody would ever think. That was all anyone ever needed to know. It had all gone just as hoped.

It was weeks before anything was firmly settled on the matter of the order and their attack. The time that it was released found Harry and Fia busy in the library. Harry was half revising and half watching the young man that shuffled around. He was currently lying on his back below one of the many bookcases. This was not an unusual sight. Therefore no-one gave a second glance to the eccentric boy. It was, however, a different situation to the usual ones that Fia found himself in.

Rather than drawing his usual landscape Fia was drawing something far more complex. There were a large number of complex runes that littered numerous surfaces in the library. They had been at this mission for weeks. Fia, attempting to remain as discrete as possible with the runes. However there was little to no need to be discrete. Harry was sure that the boy could dance naked through the great Hall and everyone would simply think nothing of it.

The runes that Fia was carefully crafting were one of Harry’s making. They were a mixture of many different runes, interwoven. Harry had researched. He had spent much of his spare time on the design, testing it on various animals and several humans in his travels to the perfect rune. The most effective substance for the rune was also, apparently, Harry’s own blood, hence the reason for his own presence in the library with Fia. The occasional vial of blood was passed to the boy by one of the other members of Harry’s inner circle that littered the library.

Harry’s runes were ones that promoted loyalty and disloyalty in equal amounts. Loyalty to Harry, disloyalty to Dumbledore. However there was no way to manipulate emotions in such a way as to utterly fabricate them by runes alone. No, the only thing that Harry was doing was increase the already present feelings. It further exacerbated the hatred and love that the students had an inclination toward Harry and Dumbledore.

Fia was, however, interrupted from his delicate task as Flora Carrow rushed across the library. She held a letter in her hands which she quickly handed to Harry. Harry’s eyes scanned the letter quickly before he gave a sharp nod to the girl before him. He walked from the room, giving Fia a look that indicated business. The boy skipped to Harry and pulled a blood pop from his hand before just as quickly pulling the letter from Harry’s hands. He gave a bright grin as he read the words.

Harry met with his most loyal. He sat in the Slytherin common room. The letter that he had received was from Lawrence, it was good news. It was passed around the group that sat there. Harry knew that the others were as satisfied with this news as he was. Even Percy, Lawrence, Cassius and everyone else that was not here would be satisfied with the events that had occurred that day.
The letter told of the sentencing of the order members. Kingsley Shaklebolt was, due to his position within the ministry and his connections, suspended from his work for six months. That was a positive in Harry’s book and was a good an outcome as any as it ensured Dumbledore’s influence within the ministry was further depleted. Alastor Moody was still on the run, having managed to avoid the Aurors up until now. That was fine. It meant that he could not show his face in public. He could do nothing to assist the Headmaster. Arthur Weasley had been fired from his job at the ministry and put on surveillance by the ministry along with Nymphadora, who had been kicked out of Auror training.

It seemed that all four members that had involved themselves in the incident were now the most mistrusted members of the wizarding world. Even more mistrusted than those that had fought against them in the first wizarding war. They had attacked children. They had violated the perceived safety that was Hogwarts. They had shattered the illusion of security that many parents had. The belief that once they waved them off at the platform that no danger would befall them. For shattering that illusion they were hated more than feared.

Dumbledore was also under even more criticism than he had been before. There were massive concerns from all the parents. Their children were not supposed to be susceptible to such invasions. Where was the security on the train? Where were the protections that they had been assured of? Their children had been put in danger with no attempt of defence from the Headmaster or any of the Professors. Where had they been?

It had been decided that further surveillance on the Headmaster was a must. It was evident to all parents that the man was unfit to keep his position. He was neglecting his duties to protect the students. He was too old, he was forgetting things, his mind not what it used to be. Many believed that the once great Albus Dumbledore was no longer so great and was a Headmaster in only name. It appeared that the Ministry’s role in Hogwarts was only to increase.

A new member of staff graced Hogwarts halls in the following weeks. A member of staff that Harry did not entirely approve of. One Dolores Umbridge was introduced into Hogwarts under the guise of a teaching assistant. She was to sit in on certain lessons, assisting where necessary. However in reality it was clear that she was nothing more than a spy. She was present in many lessons, interrupting the carefully structured plans of Professors with comments on the attitude of student and teacher alike. As well as proposing alternative curriculums, causing further aggravation for both pupil and professor.

It was eight days into the woman’s stay at the castle that really made Harry decide that despising the woman was the only option that she had given herself. Harry was sitting in his defence class. Theodore Nott sat by his side, Neville in front of them with Daphne Greengrass at his side. Since the events of Hogsmead and the death of friend and enemy alike it was no longer uncommon to find Gryffindor with Slytherin or Hufflepuff with Ravenclaw. It seemed that the house prejudice that had stretched for decades were finally beginning to crumble.

However it now seemed that it was individuals were the basis for judgement. People were judged on their actions not the colour of their uniforms. Harry simply helped guide these sentences in the right direction. There was direct evidence of this new form of justice as they sat in that very room. Most occupants of the room were clustered together in the centre, the rows from front to back being filled. However, lining the outer reaches of this group were those that had been alienated. Both through their own actions and through Harry’s.

Draco Malfoy’s face was shadowed as he sat alone on the outskirts. His face was thin, his skin pale. His hair hung limply around his face. No-one could muster even the slightest amount of sympathy for him. He was the reason that there were so many dead. He was the reason that they had all lost
friends and family. No-one cared if he suffered. In fact people found themselves rejoicing in the fact that he was.

The other outcasts of the room were Ronald Weasley, Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnegan. Ronald was a shadow of his former self. His skin was so pale it was near translucent and to his own haunted blue eyes his skin was so marred that scars were covering every inch of the skin. He no longer looked human to his own eyes. Dean and Seamus sat at opposite sides of the room. Their bond was broken. They were also equally as broken now. They could not look at one another without being filled with an irrational hatred. They had no justification for these feelings and yet anger seemed to be the only thing that they could feel any more. White hot anger was all that there was anymore. Everything else was empty.

Harry paid no mind to the four students that had brought these sufferings on themselves as Remus entered the room. Umbridge was quick to follow. Harry sat through most of the lesson with distasteful indifference. The comments that the woman made regarding Remus were far from pleasant. Constant degradation of non-human and part-human beings was causing the werewolf to become irritable. Harry watched as his eyes flashed gold. It seemed the usual tolerant man was nearing the end of his patience.

However it was not the insults that solidified Harry’s opinions. It was something else.

“Mr Nott” Lupin said with a small smile that spoke of his frustration with the woman that stood by his side. “Can you please tell me where I would go if I wished to find a zombie?”

However before Theo had a chance to respond a piercing shrill filled the room.

“I think that Mr Potter may know the answer to this one, don’t you Professor Lupin?” the woman’s voice was sickeningly sweet to match the sugary smile on her face. The question was evidently no such thing. It was an order. An order that Harry would not be responding to.

Harry did nothing. He did not acknowledge the fact that this woman was attempting to address him. His name was no longer Potter after all.

“I don’t believe that Mr Potter is in this class Madame Umbridge” Remus smiled in response, the look forced, the lips painful.

The woman gave a giggle that would only have been suitable for someone much younger than herself. She took a step toward Harry’s desk, her shoes clicking on the stone floor of the classroom.

“Mr Potter” she said with a smile that attempted to hide the vicious glint in her eyes. “Can you answer the question?” her voice was sickly and made Harry want to sneer at the disgusting woman that stood before him. He, however, simply continued to ignore her existence.

“Mr Beckett” Remus breathed out. It was evident to everyone in the room that the man was angry. His teeth were clenched as were his fists. He forced the next words to come from his mouth in a calm a voice as he could manage. It was not calm at all.

“If you would be so kind would you please inform me where it is that you would be able to find a Zombie?” The anger was clear in his tone. The frustration building up to an almost intolerable level. Remus may be able to stand insults toward himself, god knows that he was used to them. His werewolf status had followed him nearly all his life. However when someone began to attack his godson. That he had a problem with.

Harry looked to Remus with a blank expression, a slight nod giving the man the relief that the
situation required. Harry reached for parchment, a quill in his hand.

“Hem hem” again interrupted the process. Harry was halted in the movements of his quill as more venom spilled from the evil woman’s mouth.

“A verbal response will be required Mr Potter.” The woman smiled. Her face was twisted, her eyes glittering with sadistic pleasure.

The silence that filled the room from her words was tense. The most tense that many of the students had ever been. It was as though every atom of their being was frozen in place. Remus himself was unable to even blink as amber slowly filled his irises. How dare she? How fucking dare she?

“Mr Potter, I’m waiting” the woman hummed. Harry could feel the sadistic pleasure radiating from her in waves.

“S-S-South Am-m-merica” a voice cut through the silent room. “They l-l-live in S-South America” This seemed to break everyone out of their self induced trances. All eyes turned to the now standing Amber Noel. The young Gryffindor was glaring at the woman, her brown eyes sparking with anger. The girl was small in both stature and presence. Her stutter made her a quite spoken individual that often avoided speaking so not to embarrass herself. It was therefore even more of a shock that the young woman was willing to speak out for Harry.

“Well seeing as Miss…Noel is it?” Umbridge paused, a sickly smile sent to the now reseated young woman. “Has deemed to steal your question from you I shall have to give you another.” The smile widened. “How can you tell the difference between a zombie and an inferi?” She giggled as she looked to Harry. However it seemed that Amber’s actions had sparked a small revolution.

“Inferi are controlled by another. Zombies are independent of that control” Lily Moon spoke out the Slytherin glaring at the woman before her.

“Another interruption” Umbridge scowled, a small crinkle marring her forehead. “I believe we should let Mr Potter answer his own questions.”

However before she had an opportunity to ask another question the clock on Remus’ desk chimed, the sound echoing off the walls, filling the ears of each individual that sat there. Remus was quick to act.

“Thank you everyone. I believe that you better be going if you wish to make it in time for your next lesson.”

The students shot up, quickly packing their things into their bags. Remus and Harry shared a look as the young man made his way from the room. It was a clear message. They needed to get rid of the woman in pink.
Chapter 29

AN: I'm sorry it took me so long to update. My life has been a little hellish at the moment with being in my final year at University so I have not had much time to write. I really hope you all enjoy the new chapter and thank you all for such positive updates. If you have any questions feel free to DM me or ask in the reviews. I will attempt to answer. Although if they are a spoiler for the story I'm sorry to say I won't be able to tell you ;P

Warning: this chapter has mentions of rape/non-con. There is nothing graphic but just a warning

Remus was back to himself, a werewolf again for the first time, well the first time ever. His true nature was peeking through the hard shell that it had sealed it in. He had had a full moon that had been full of beauty and control. His senses were sparking, his smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing. They were so much more intense. As he lay in his bed, catching up on some much needed sleep he was unable to believe how much more vivid everything had become. He had stopped suppressing his nature and his wolf was more thankful for that than it had ever been for anything.

The next morning, or afternoon, he supposed, Remus woke with a yawn, feeling surprisingly well rested. It was a Saturday and so unlike the normality of his hated existence, he was not required to work. He had two whole days in which he could relax, rest, recuperate and simply get back on his feet. He sat up and was again struck by the sheer clarity of everything around him. The way that the sun sparkled through the small slit in the closed curtain, dazzling, almost blinding his sensitive eyes. There was a smell of pine, mixed with the soothing aroma of fresh cotton. However that light smell was juxtaposed by the very obvious smell of mud.

Remus looked down and realised that the smell of mud was himself. Looking down at his form he realised that after the exhaustion of the previous night he had collapsed into his bed without bothering to wash. He sighed in a mixture of fatigue and happiness as he stood up from the bed and headed toward the bathroom. He stood under the water and let it rush over his body with a feeling of elation. Each drop of water felt like a new sensation; a brand new experience. Remus spent far longer in the shower than he would on any other day. He emerged ready to face the day, feeling like a new person. Dressing, Remus decided to spend the day outside. It was too nice a day to waste. He walked through the corridor with a smile on his face and a spring in his step. It felt like he was seeing everything for the first time.

Remus made his way to the forbidden forest, intent on experiencing the trees and the animals for the first time with his new senses. However as he neared the edge of the forest he smelt something that made the wolf within him growl and bay for blood; a vampire. Remus was not willing to let such a creature near. Not now that he had almost succeeded in gaining a new pack. Not now that Harry had almost accepted him once again. He was not about to let any filthy vampire ruin his chance at redemption.

Remus chased after the smell. Running felt easier than it ever had as he rushed toward the source of the smell. His eyes were hard as he sought out the intruder in his domain. Remus stopped on instinct as he heard voices coming from a clearing that was not too far from where he currently was. Remus edged closer and closer, attempting to see who it was that was talking.

Remus' eyes widened as he saw the two people that stood in the clearing. One of them was obviously the vampire, the other Harry. The wolf inside Remus shouted with indignation. Harry was
his. This vampire had no right to him. Before Remus had much time to think he lunged forward with
a vicious growl; pushing his way between the vampire and Harry. He faced the vampire, Harry
defended behind him.

"Get away from him" Remus shouted at the vampire.

"Hmm" the vampire purred "I really think that it's you that should be getting away from him" the
vampire threatened equally as viciously, before he lunged at the werewolf before them.

Harry stood behind the pair, sighing in exasperation. He watched for several seconds as the pair
rolled around on the floor. Alfie was more mature than the pair before him and he was only eleven.
Harry watched as Sanguini easily pinned Remus to the floor. It seemed that hundreds of years of
experience made a fight much more easily won.

Harry stepped forward and pulled the vampire's ear sharply. He forced him into a standing position,
even though the vampire's head was bent low toward Harry's hand as there was a significant height
difference between the two men.

Harry used his free hand, motioning to Remus to stand. Seeing that the boy before him was under no
threat, with the vampire seemingly under his control, Remus followed Harry's command. Harry
glared at both of the men; looking like a disappointed parent that was scalding their misbehaving
children. He stood between the pair; letting go of Sanguini's ear and looking between them in
displeasure.

Harry pointed from one of them then to the other. He raised a brow at Sanguini before once again
pointing at Remus with a stern look in his eye. Sanguini gave a lopsided grin. He nodded at Harry
before giving a dramatic bow. Harry's eyes only became sterner as he glared at the vampire before
him.

"Well Mr Wolf, I assume that you know what time it is, so I'll just introduce myself" Remus' could
only look at the vampire with suspicion and slight disgust. With his heightened senses Remus could
smell the vampire on Harry. That fact annoyed him more than anything. He did not want this filthy
animal to touch Harry. Harry was his.

"I'm Sanguini. I'm assuming that you are Mr Remus Lupin" the vampire's voice was more of a hum.
As though he were considering the situation as he spoke. Yet Remus could tell by the twinkle in the
Vampire's eyes that he knew exactly what was going on and that every word had been meticulously
planned.

"I'm Sanguini, Vampire Prince, at your service" The words were accompanied by a small tip of the
vampire's imaginary hat. Remus froze at the words. A vampire prince? He was in more trouble than
he immediately assumed.

"How..." Remus stumbled. He took a breath before straightening his posture and addressing the
Vampire with more composure. He hardened his eyes and glared at the being before. Prince or not, if
this vampire was a threat to Harry Remus would rip his trachea from his pale neck.

"Why are you here?" the werewolf growled out, this time far more steady with his words. However
the vampire still only gave a childish grin; even as Remus' gave promised death. He threw his arm
over Harry's shoulder ruffling the black hair. Harry scowled. Sanguini only laughed and ruffled the
hair again.

"I'm here to see my little Harrykins of course" the man grinned wider. Remus found himself struck
by the thought that the man was almost exactly the same as Sirius was when he was around Edward.
He was overly affectionate and would seemingly do anything for the young man. Remus could see how much this vampire cared for his cub. Yet he was still sceptical of the vampire. He needed to know more about him.

"Why would you be seeing Harry?" Remus queried, his eyes still filled with suspicion.

"Well" the vampire drawled "Why wouldn't I be seeing my favourite little human?" Another ruffle of Harry's hair was followed by an annoyed huff. "He saved my life after all. So when he calls me in for a favour who am I to refuse him?"

Remus raised a brow at that. He knew Harry had secrets. But to be the 'favourite human' of one of the most powerful vampires. That was something that Remus had not been expecting.

"A favour?" Remus queried. He knew that he was playing with fire. He was still on Harry's list of potential betrayers. One wrong step and Remus knew that Harry could very well eliminate him. Yet sometimes his curiosity was too much for him. He wanted to know what plans it was that were to involve a vampire. Remus looked to Harry as he made the question, looking from approval for knowledge from his cub.

Harry raised a brow and from his undignified position in Sanguini's arms, he tilted his head. The challenge was obvious. Harry was testing if Remus was still worthy of the trust that he had placed in him.

Remus rapidly fell to his knees without a thought. He threw his head back, revealing his neck and spread his arms out. There was no way that he could reach his wand or defend himself in anyway. Harry threw Sanguini's arm from his shoulder with distaste as he stepped toward the prone form of the werewolf.

Harry drew his wand from his holster and placed it at the werewolf's neck. Remus did not even flinch as he felt the wood lightly dance across his skin. Harry seemed pleased with the response. Harry looked into Remus' eyes and quickly dove into his mind. There was no resistance. Thoughts flickered through Remus' head; a quick flash of all the things that he had seen in the past few days. All the thoughts that he had and all the feelings that he felt. Harry retreated from the mind of the man before him, seemingly satisfied with the things that he found there. In fact he was more than satisfied. He was pleased.

Remus let out a shocked breath as he felt a hand reach for his shirt and begin to unbutton the buttons there. However he remained perfectly still. He was sure that the young man knew what he was doing. Harry turned to Sanguini as the last button fell open revealing Remus' scarred chest.

The vampire stepped forward and looked at Remus in the eyes.

"Do you swear to put Harry above all others?" The vampire asked solemnly. Remus steeled his eyes. It seemed that Harry was testing him. Remus would not fail.

"I swear" the werewolf promised

"Do you swear to do as whatever he asks, no matter the cost to yourself or to those that you care about." Sanguini demanded.

"I swear" Remus growled out with no hesitation. His voice was low and he meant every syllable that he spoke.

"Do you swear to die or kill for Harry if he asks?" Remus' breath caught in his throat. A wand came up to his temple and tears filled his eyes as he choked out his words.
"I swear"

The wand was pulled from his temple and with it a string of silver. Remus' eyes widened as a small grey wolf danced through the air. It had streaks of white and black running across its form. Its amber eyes glittered as it followed the path of Harry's wand. The shirt that sat on Remus' shoulder was violently pulled away as the wand was thrust toward Remus' chest. The wolf dived onto the skin and Remus watched entranced as it imprinted itself onto the expanse of flesh that was his left pectoral. It shook itself before pacing down Remus' body; disappearing onto Remus' back.

"W..What?" was all Remus could stutter out. Sanguini huffed out a laugh before he threw an arm over Remus' bare shoulder, just as he had done with Harry earlier.

"Welcome to the family Mr Wolf" Sanguini purred.

Harry watched as the silver on his wrist began to become speckled with black. He, however, felt nothing from the bracelet. There was no burning or tugging at his magic. It was always a pleasure to know that runes that one had created were working. Harry was currently lying in his bed, a book in his hands as he read through the intricate text on ways in which to sustain consciousness in a severed head for several hours after it had been separated from the rest of the body.

Harry sat up, pulling the dozing Balthazar from his stomach and placing him on his bed. Harry had to act quickly. He threw his clothes from his form before rapidly pulling open his wardrobe and replacing them with a set of jet black robes. They covered him from ankle to neck, perfectly fitted against his skin. Harry pulled his hood up, covering his face. The hood was enchanted so that the only thing that would show beneath it was a glint of green from Harry's cursing eyes; a gift from Sanguini. One of the few that Harry appreciated.

Harry pulled Balthazar from the snake hissed in mild annoyance as he was wrapped around the elegant robes. Balthazar soon tightened his coils around the mid-section of his master; settling back to sleep in a few seconds. Harry gave a fond look to the snake that he would deny ever giving were anyone to ask. He would wake Balthazar when they arrived. He wished for the Death Eaters to know that the snake was his. He was as vicious and violent as his familiar.

Harry bit his thumb harshly, letting blood bloom from the small cut that had formed. It was time for Harry to test out another function of the bracelet that the runes were supposed to install. He smeared the blood across the runes; first on the silver band and then across his own skin. He cleared his thoughts, imagining only the entrance hall of the Dark Lord's manor.

Harry had altered the portkey in the bracelet. It was now not subject to the will of the Dark Lord, but rather to that of Harry's own wishes. Harry could dictate, through a blood sacrifice, when it was that he wished for the portkey to activate. He then simply pictured the location within the manor that he wished to appear and so he did. It was, in essence, a risk free trip through the wards of the Dark lord Voldemort.

Harry felt his feet thud to the floor, a stumble the only indication of the distance that Harry had traveled. He smoothed down his immaculate robes, ensuring that Balthazar was comfortably situated on the expensive midnight material. Harry ran a hand across the snake's head, disturbing Balthazar's head. The snake let out a small hiss before looking at his Master.

"Master" The snake hissed as he looked around his new surroundings. "We are at the mean man's house" Balthazar had been here before; but never out in the open for all to see. Balthazar's head
curled upward, resting on Harry's shoulder and hissing in his Master's ear.

"I can scare the little mice" The glee was obvious in Balthazar's tone. "Watch them run?" the snake questioned. Harry gave a small nod to the mischievous snake and received a hissed laugh in return. The snake twitched happily; in anticipation of the promised torture of a few Death Eaters.

Harry raised his head and marched toward the double doors that stood several steps in front of him. Harry knew that at this time of night, the only reason that he would be called, would be for a Death Eater meeting. He had after all been claimed an ally. The Dark Lord now deemed that it was only appropriate for Harry to attend the gatherings. If Harry deemed it otherwise? Well, the Dark Lord still assumed that he could force Harry's presence at any moment that he so desired. Harry was not willing to enlighten him in this illusion. However Harry was not willing to be taken to the Dark Lord's manor unprepared. He could dress in his desired apparel and bring Balthazar along so that he was a little extra, persuasive.

Harry's hands came up to the doors. He pushed them open, the clatter drawing the attention of every individual in the room. Voldemort stood in pride of place; at the head of the hall. His eyes pierced Harry as he entered. The man weighed up Harry's appearance with an appreciative eye. Harry could see the huger in them as they ran up and down Harry's clothed form.

Balthazar slid from Harry's figure, ready to carry out the promised teasing of the Death Eaters that parted at Harry's entrance. The snake hissed at the nearest Death Eater; watching as the unnamed figure flinched and took a hasty step back from the amused snake.

Harry stepped forward with delicate but precise steps as he made his way toward the platform that stood at the front of the hall. The majestic throne stood at its centre. As Harry approved the Dark Lord placed himself in the decedent throne with a smirk curling at the side of his mouth. The man pulled his wand from within the expanse of his robes. With a flourish of the piece of wood and a whispered word a throne; near equal in majesty appeared beside Voldemort's own.

Harry's eyes hardened. The man was once again placing Harry in a position that he had not agreed upon. One that Voldemort's own followers may not be happy with. Harry had a target on his back now. Any Death Eater could see that the Dark Lord valued Harry above themselves; many would not take kindly to that state of affairs. In their eyes he was a child and little more than an annoyance. They would not stand to see their Lord taken by someone that they deemed unworthy. In their eyes Harry would need to prove himself or he would need to be eliminated.

"Harrison" the word purred from the Dark Lord's mouth. It was said quietly but it echoed through the silent room. There was hunger in the words that came from him. Voldemort's eyes flashed dangerously. He was playing with the young man before him; revealing in the game. Harry, however, was not phased. He continued toward the platform, his eyes hard; daring the man before him to try something.

Harry stepped up onto the platform; feeling every set of eyes glued to him. He barely acknowledged the powerful man that stared at him with dangerous amusement. Harry placed himself in the newly created throne with a small huff of air through his nose. He could feel the smirk from the man to his side dance across his skin. However the feeling was actualised as cold fingers griped at Harry's wrist.

"I'm glad that you could join us Harrison" the man purred as he pulled Harry closer to him than was strictly comfortable. The Dark Lord's thumb ran across the silver band that still encased Harry's wrist. Harry was now out of view of the death eaters, his face hidden behind the Dark Lord's own. In a moment of recklessness Harry bared his teeth in challenge, a small, almost imperceptible growl escaped his throat. Harry almost immediately regretted his action as a satisfied smirk met his lack of control. He didn't know what it was about this man. He made his loose his composure.
The Dark Lord sat back as though nothing had happened. Although Harry could feel the self-satisfaction radiating from his form. Harry wanted to rip the look from the man's face. Slowly pealing his skin off his smug face. Harry took a breath. He really needed to get his temper under control.

The meeting progressed with no further issues. The only thing of note was Balthazar's antics. The snake had found Professor Snape within the crowd. The snake had a surprising fondness for the sullen professor. Harry would often find himself forced into the professor's quarters; the man demanding that he retrieve his errant had wrapped himself around the masked man, pulling his way up the robes and wrapping himself partially around the man's leg; the rest of his body around the man's waist. The rest of the Death Eaters had left a wide birth around the man; fearful of such a large snake. However the Potions Professor did little more than shift to a more comfortable position for both himself and the snake.

The meeting ended as quickly as Harry's summoning had been. The Death Eaters were dismissed with their orders given. Torture had remained at a minimum; only one or two new recruits being put under the cruciatus curse for their minor infractions. Harry didn't acknowledge their pain. It was not a way in which he motivated his own followers but he supposed that if it worked for the Dark Lord then that was a matter for the man to deal with himself. He watched with nonchalance as the recruit remained twitching on the floor as the leaving Death Eaters stepped around him.

Harry followed behind the Dark Lord with precise steps. Balthazar was in the manor; most likely chasing the remaining Death Eaters with Voldemort's own snake. Either that, or he was still entangled with Severus. The man would be unable to leave until the snake deemed him no longer interesting, or until Harry freed him from the snake's grasp. Harry was not sure how long that would take. It seemed that his evening may be otherwise occupied.

The Dark Lord lead Harry to his chambers, pushing the door open with a gentle intensity. He didn't look behind him as he entered being certain that Harry was on his trail. Harry felt a wave of annoyance at the assumption. Was he really so predictable? Harry hovered in the doorway; one foot over the entrance, the other reluctant to follow.

However it seemed that even his own trepidation was predictable.

"Come now Harrison" The Dark Lord purred. "No need to linger in the doorway." Voldemort's eyes never met his; his back remaining firmly to Harry even as the young man dithered. Harry clenched his teeth his jaw tense. His teeth began to ache as he stepped forward. His face was a storm; his mind a man was infuriating. Harry didn't want to look at him; so he didn't. Harry instead made his way toward the book case that lined the walls; browsing the numerous titles that filled the shelves. He let his finger run along the old and sometimes priceless books that held pride of place in the Dark Lord's own rooms rather than finding a home in the library.

Harry put on the pretence of loosing himself in the books as he sought a fitting title to antagonise the Dark Lord. However he was aware of every action that the man made behind him. The man's steps got closer. Harry could feel the body heat radiating from the body that edged closer toward him as Harry's fingers closed on a book. Harry attempted to pull out 'The Seduction the Dark Arts' from the shelf; feeling the tingle of dark magic dance along his fingers. The feeling was a mix of the lingering magic on the book before him and the power of the man before him.

Harry kept his eyes focused on the book in his hands as he turned around. His fingers ran along the title imprinted on the hardcover. He made a step forward; ignoring the presence of the Dark Lord before him. However it seemed that the Dark Lord was less than impressed at being ignored.

"Now now little Harrison" the man's grin glinted in the light even as Harry avoided his gaze and took another step forward.
"Let's not be so eager" Voldemort's hands clutched onto Harry's shoulder. His nails digging into the skin below. "To get away." He shoved Harry backward. The book fell from Harry's had as his back was forced into the bookcase behind him.

Voldemort pushed himself forward his smile vicious as his leg found its way between Harry's legs. His mouth crept closer and Harry could feel the hot breath on his face. Suddenly his lips were engulfed in the heat of Voldemort's own.

However Harry was not about to so easily submit. His hands snapped up and pushed harshly at the man before him; forcing a stumble from the usually steady legs. However the grin on the man's face only curled up further. It was the look of a starving man as he saw a feast before him.

"Oh" his voice was breathy as he looked at the young man before him. "That's how you want to play it" he purred. In a flash Harry's hands were pinned above his head and Voldemort had once again captured the lips. A tongue was forcing its way into Harry's unresponsive mouth.

Harry's jaw clenched down on the intruder. Blood bloomed from the wound that Harry had created. Yet it seemed not to phase the man as he only deepened the kiss, even as his own blood was poured into Harry's mouth.

As Harry tasted the blood on his own tongue a spark flared within him, unbidden. He felt something flare as the sharp metallic taste filled his mouth. His breath came quicker even as he attempted to force his hand from his wrists. His vision seemed to cloud as the tongue pushed itself further and deeper into his mouth. It caressed gently; mapping out the wet pink cavern. Harry found himself unable to stop himself from responding.

His thoughts were clouded as his tongue danced along with the Dark Lord's. The two intertwined with each other. Harry had to suppress a gasp as his own tongue was pulled into the Dark Lord's mouth. Harry didn't know what he was feeling. It was as though he were underwater. He had no control.

As Voldemort lost himself in the kiss his hands loosened their grip on Harry's wrists. However Harry's mind felt clouded and confused. He didn't want to fight. He didn't want to stop whatever what it was that was happening. His hands dropped to his sides as they were released. However Voldemort's own were soon touching him again.

They trailed along his body; finding the buttons on his robes and quickly undressing him with efficiency even as the kiss was broken. Voldemort's hand caressed the expanse of skin that they had revealed. His eyes glued to the unblemished canvas that stretched out before him. He was going to ruin it.

Harry's feet felt unsteady and his head felt fuzzy as he attempted to grasp the wrongness of what was happening to him. He...he...he didn't want this. But the words felt painful in his head. As the hands caressed him it was as though any thought of resistance seemed to be drowned by the feeling of the skin on his.

His robes were quickly stripped from him, leaving him standing in only a pair of black trousers and boots; revealed before the Dark Lord. Harry's skin felt on fire and his breath was coming in hot and heavy pants. He was feeling things that he was not able to control. His mind was hazy and he swayed slightly; unsteady on his feet. He didn't...he couldn't grasp the thoughts that were seemingly screaming at him; just out of reach. He could see them, hear them even but they made no sense.

The Dark Lord took a step back to examine his handiwork. The boy looked disheveled and disoriented. It seemed that the aphrodisiac that now laced his blood was working exactly as expected.
He would have to thank Severus for its effectiveness.

"Now Harrison" he purred. He pulled Harry's wrist into his own hand; examining the now blemished silver snake that sat there. He ran his fingers along the new scars that were also situated just below the silver band.

"You must be punished in some way for your disobedience" the voice was sickly sweet and even if Harry's brain was clouded by desire he could still hear the menace in those words.

"I thought that this was rather fitting" With that the Dark Lord once again captured Harry's lips humming with satisfaction as the boy responded to his touch.

Harry woke the next morning his head heavy and his body aching as he attempted to sit up. He repressed a groan as flashes of the previous night suddenly bombarded him. His hands clutched his aching head between his hands.

Harry was still in the Dark Lord's chambers but they were obviously lacking said man. Harry pulled the covers back and examined the state of his body as the pounding in his head seemed to become somewhat tolerable. Bite marks and bruises littered his chest and thighs. Harry gritted his teeth in anger. How dare he, how fucking dare he. The man had obviously drugged him and then very forcefully taken what he wanted.

Harry let a hand run across his face. This had not been part of his plan. This really not be part of the plan. He let out a calming breath and then schooled his features. It would not do to let his pain show. A mask with cracks was not a mask at all.

Harry looked around the room. He needed to find his wand and his clothes as well as a way to get home. Not Hogwarts; Harry needed to see Cassius. He didn't want to admit any weakness but the older boy would, well he would know what to do next. He would be able to help Harry come up with an effective plan for avoidance of this sort of thing in the future. At least that's what Harry told himself. Comfort was not something that Harry let himself indulge in.

A sheet of parchment sat on the bedside table and Harry quickly snatched it up.

'Dear Harrison

I assume that after last night you have learnt your lesson. I hope that you don't decide that defying my decisions again is a wise thing to do.

Your clothes and wand are in the bathroom. Your snake is back at Hogwarts in Severus' quarters. You can use the floo in my office when you are ready to leave.

I hope you've learned your lesson'

Harry felt sick as he read the words written in perfect cursive. The words made him feel weak as he read them. They made him feel dirty. They made him feel as though he were back at the Dursley's; a weak and pathetic child with no control. Harry had not felt like that since he had entered the wizarding world.

Harry pushed himself from the bed and rushed toward the bathroom. His stomach turned and his body filled with pain as he vomited into the toilet. He felt violated and weak. This was never a situation that he wanted to be in again. Harry needed to get out of here as quickly as possible. He
threw his clothes on, wiping the bile from his mouth as he grabbed his wand.

He pushed his way into the Dark Lord's study, each step painful as he forced his body to move, even as it screamed against him. However Harry was used to dealing with pain. He was thankful that the study remained empty as he quickly scribbled the Warrington address on a piece of paper and then stepping into the green flames.

Harry stumbled through the flames, feeling the wards wrap around him as they let him enter his house. He did not care for the slight on his dignity. There was no-one around to see him and right now he was in too much pain to care.

Harry forced his way up the stairs. He pulled open Cassius' door. The young man was not there. On a Saturday morning that was slightly unusual although Harry's mind was too unfocused to think about it overly much. He forced himself into the shower in his brother's room. He scrubbed his skin viciously and let the water run too hot to be comfortable. He reentered the bedroom in a towel, he pulled open one of his brother's draws, a pair of boxers being removed. He pulled the silk up his skin, throwing the towel on the floor.

Harry let out one last shuddering breath before he crawled into Cassius' bed. Letting the soothing smell of his brother encompass him his eyes flickered shut. Within minutes Harry was asleep.
Cassius tumbled through the floo rubbing his eyes. He had had a late night, work being hectic. He simply wanted to fall into bed and sleep through the majority of his weekend. He sighed as he trudged up the stairs and pushed the door to his room open with a creak.

However what he saw in the room was not what he had been expecting. A small bump lay under the covers of his bed. It was curled in on itself and Cassius could see a flop of black hair peeping above the top of the covers. Harry. His tired mind filled in. He wasn't sure for the reason that the boy was here but he was too tired to think about it. Harry was obviously not in a good situation if he was here in Cassius’ bed. The boy need support and Cassius would give it to him in any way that he could. However as of right now the boy was sleeping and Cassius would join him in that endeavour.

Cassius stripped lethargically, his eyes already threatening to shut as he pulled off his robe and shirt, followed by his trousers; dropping them on the floor and stepping out of them. He gave a final rub to his eyes before he pulled the covers back and fell asleep before his head even hit the pillow.

It was a few hours before Cassius was awoken, is brain feeling slightly less lethargic. What woke him was the young man next to him. However the young man himself was not awake. Harry was thrashing in the covers, tangling himself into the duvet. His breath was coming rapidly and Cassius could detect water on the reddened cheeks.

Cassius was quick to action. He sat up and pulled the thrashing boy’s head into his lap. Running a gentle hand through the black hair he let out soothing words attempting to calm his brother. He didn't attempt to wake the boy as that could only cause further aggravation. However he did attempt to reduce the harm that Harry would call to himself. It took several minutes before Harry seemed to snap out of the nightmare; his eyes fluttering open.

“You’re okay Harry, you’re okay” Cassius soothed gently. Harry quickly shot up from his position in Cassius’ lap, his green eyes sparking with fear and what Cassius could only recognise as disgust. Cassius knew that that disgust was not directed at him. As Harry sat up it was then that Cassius noticed the bruises and bite marks that littered his little brother’s body.

Cassius clenched his teeth as he saw the marks on the boy and his nails dug into the skin of his palms as he saw the wince that his brother made at the sudden movement. He let out an angry breath as the young man turned around to reveal the red eyes and the pale skin. He took in a shaky breath and closed his eyes as he attempted to soothe himself. He needed to help his little brother, not loose himself in his own anger.

Cassius stood from the bed, letting Harry clam himself as he searched through his discarded clothes for his wand. He held the wand between his fingers and help it out clearly as he approached Harry whom was sitting on the edge of the bed, attempting to regulate his breathing.

“Harry” Cassius soothed gently as he approached the boy that did not seem to be himself. However Cassius was used to dealing with Harry in both the good and the bad. Harry’s first year of school had been a seesaw of emotion. Cassius would often find Harry in the middle of the night sitting in the common room reading a book after having a nightmare. He found him on the edge of destruction, wand pointed at the downed form of someone that he viewed to have wronged him. Cassius had averted many a crisis and prevented Harry from committing several crimes. He had also been there to soothe Harry’s nerves after nightmares.

Cassius knew that he needed to take each situation with a new mindset, that each one of them was a
new experience. They were different each time. It was never possible to predict how Harry would react to a situation. Cassius needed to take each one of these situation with cautiousness. He knew one thing for sure though, showing pity would lead to Harry either shutting down or threatening to kill him.

“Harry, I need to look at your injuries” Harry looked up at the man before him with a harsh glare. It was at that moment that Cassius knew that this was not a soft and gentle moment. Harry was not about to respond to any sort of soothing words. He would find it patronising and not respond to anything that the man before him would say. Cassius took a frustrated breath. HE was not annoyed at the boy before him but the monster that had done this to his little brother.

“Lie down Harry” Cassius said. His tone was flat and his eyes were hard as he looked at his brother. Harry’s eyes seemed to hold some relief as he heard the tone. He did as ordered.

Cassius waved his wand over the young man that lay in only his boxers and the bruises covering his body. Cassius had always wanted to become a healer and so had studied many healing spells and worked on his bedside manner. However as he was need elsewhere he had put his healer plans on hold. His work in the ministry was more important. However that did not mean that he had given up on his dreams of a healer. Cassius knew that once Harry’s plans had been realised that he would be allowed to do as he wished. So he did not give up in his study of healing in his spare time. It seemed that his study would now be valued.

It took Cassius the next hour to heal the young man beneath him. In that time Harry’s eyes had grown heavy and his mind had once again been engulfed by sleep. Cassius’ allowed his eyes to soften as he saw his brother fall asleep. The wounds on his brother were not gentle, in fact they were invasive. They were made to shame him. Cassius knew that there was only one person that would do this to Harry. He had to stop himself from finding the Dark Lord and ripping his heart from his chest. However he knew that in all likelihood he would be killed in his attempt and he had no wish to leave Harry alone when the young man needed him. So he continued with his healing and let his little brother sleep. He would need to speak with Lawrence about the situation.

Harry didn't go back to school for nine days after the incident, four of those days being the weekend. He had not wanted to see anyone; not when he was so obviously so weak. The only people that Harry allowed to see him were Cassius and Lawrence, both of whom had taken the week off work to care for their little brother. The two of them were, angry was not an appropriate word, they were furious. They were inconsolable. Cassius had had to stop Lawrence from flooing to the Dark Lord’s manor in an attempt to kill him on five separate occasion. Lawrence having to do the same for Cassius on three.

The pair had ended up taking out their frustrations on each other, with each receiving numerous injuries from the other. On one occasion the two had been forced to retreat to St Mungo’s after Cassius had inflicted internal bleeding and a broken arm on Lawrence. While Cassius himself had been hit with a flesh eating curse that was slowly spreading across his chest and down his arms. After the incident they had decided to duel training dummies, rather than each other. That was far more sensible.

Remus and Sanguini had both attempted to contact Harry over the past week. Remus’ correspondence had been one of query and concern for Harry’s safety. Harry had burnt it. Sanguini’s however had been far more welcome. The content of the letter had given something for Harry to focus on and plan. He and his vampire had sent numerous letters to each other, creating a coherent plan for when he returned to school.

Harry had not necessarily been coping well with the situation; at least not in the first few days.
Neither Cassius or Lawrence had been able to get through to Harry. The boy had not written a word
to either of them and had barely acknowledged their presence in the first three days after the incident.
Lawrence had however found the boy sitting in a bath that was far too hot; making his white skin
turn a bright red. This was further accentuated by the vigorous scrubbing that Harry had subjected
his skin to. Blood was blooming to the skin but Harry only scrubbed harder.

Lawrence had pulled Harry from the bath and wrapped him in a towel followed by wrapping his
arms in light bandages until Cassius returned from his supplies run. Lawrence did not feel competent
even to attempt healing when Harry was in such a fragile state. Lawrence had instead brought out
a book that he had been reading and set himself down next to the frozen Harry. Lawrence began to
read the description of different methods in how to cause as much harm as possible to an individual
while keeping them conscious. He hoped that it gave something for his brother to focus on.

After seven days Harry had seemingly regained some control over his emotions. That was however a
result of rather unsavoury circumstances. Lawrence and Cassius had found Harry during the middle
of the night wandering the woods at the back of Warrington manor, covered in blood. He had a
toothy smile on his face and faraway look in his eyes. Neither of the men were sure where the blood
had come from; but they were sure that who or whatever the blood belonged to had had a painful
ending.

Harry returned to school on Monday morning with a new sense of purpose. His clothes were
polished, perfection radiated from his form. He was poised, his eyes hard and his jaw tense. He had
decided that he would never let anyone manipulate him again. He would not be weak, he would not
be taken advantage of. He was strong. He was the one in control here.

Harry marched through the corridors, head held high as he entered his first room of the day. He was
the only member of the student body in the room as he entered. However he was greeted by a look
that he was not ready for. He was greeted by eyes that he had not seen with the emotions that they
held before. Severus Snape stood before him with sympathy and guilt seeping from behind his mask.
Harry glared at the man. He knew. He knew what had happened. Harry felt an anger rolling in his
stomach and his teeth threatened to show themselves from underneath his lips.

“Mr Becket” Snape’s voice was harsh as he spoke. It was filled with his own emotion. It was a tone
that Harry did not recognise. “Please come to my office”

Harry gave a hard glare toward the man. However being in a student at that current moment, he
should follow orders of the man that was a professor and therefore had the illusion of authority.
Harry followed behind the man. However as he walked toward the office he took his wand from his
holster, ready to defend himself if Snape now deemed it to be open season on Harry.

Harry closed the door behind him with a click before turning to the Death Eater that stood before
him. However the man was no longer standing. As Harry turned the man had unexpectedly thrown
himself to the floor. His head was down and his arms were pinned behind his back. Harry raised a
brow, waiting to see what the man was planning. What was it that he was going to do?

“Mr Beckett” A pause “Harrison, I am sorry.” The words sounded unnatural on the man’s lips.
Although there was a sincerity in his tone that Harry had not heard there before.

“It’s my fault that you ended up in the situation that you did. I did not wish for things to happen as
they did. But I had no other choice.” Severus let out an unsteady breath. “No matter how your life
has panned out, you are still Lily’s child. You have become the person that Lily could have been and
I….” Severus sounded tense, his voice sounding painful as he spoke.
“I want to… I want to” Harry was surprised to hear the stammer in the man’s voice. The man’s acting was either impeccable or he was serious. Harry was inclined to hold the former as the truth. He was, however, considering giving the man a chance. Although he would obviously take control of every step that the man took.

“I want to get away from him.” Severus whispered. There was pain in his voice.

Harry stood before the man. His thoughts were quickly flashing, his plan becoming more and more formulated as the seconds ticked by. His plans for the Dark Lord were already forming. He was not sure as to whether a man on the inside would be beneficial or not. He already had Lawrence’s father, Lawrence able to get information from the man easily. He also had any information that any Hogwarts student overheard from their own parents. He was not sure that he wanted this man to have the ability to report to meetings. He didn’t want the man anywhere near Voldemort.

Harry took a note book from his pocket. He scribbled a quick word and placed it before the man on the floor. ‘Balthazar’ was written on the sheet that he placed by the prone man’s feet. Severus snatched up the note and gave a nod as he read the note.

“He’s still in my chambers. I will get him if you allow me.” Severus looked up at Harry for a response. Harry nodded, giving the man permission.

Severus quickly stood up and returned seconds later through the back door in his office. Balthazar was now draped around the man’s shoulders. The snake slithered toward Harry as soon as they exited through the door. Severus resumed his position on the floor.

Harry stroked Balthazar’s scales, the soothing feeling of familiarity calming him. Harry stepped toward Severus and pulled up the man’s sleeve. His Dark Mark was revealed; dark black against the pale skin. Harry ran a finger along it. The man below him shivered.

Harry took Balthazar in his hands, directing the snake toward the Dark Mark. The snake had a conversation with the sentient tattoo. Harry listened intently. Each word was interesting; anything the tattoo had given, important. The conversation concluded. It seemed that the snake was rather unwilling to leave Severus’ arm without a fight. There was a blood ward preventing anyone from removing or controlling the mark. Harry gave a sigh. It would take longer than he had to fix this problem.

‘Meet back here after the lesson’ Harry scribbled on the piece of paper before retreating to the almost full classroom.

Severus and Harry quickly adopted the same positions that they had been in before the lesson as it concluded. Double potions meant that there was now an hour and a half break for lunch. Harry and Snape also had a free period after lunch meaning that they had nearly three hours to play with. Harry decided that that would be enough time to do what he needed. Both would be drained but that was of no import.

Harry brought out his knives and his wand. He set himself on the floor, Balthazar by his side. This was going to be a painful process for the man before him. Harry rolled the sleeve of the robe up as far as he needed and then rolled up his own to the same position as his Professor’s. Harry pushed Severus back, indicating for the man to lie down. Harry did not want the man to move during the process, so this was simply the easiest thing to do.

Harry picked up the knife and beginning at the centre of Severus’ wrist he began to carve runes into the pale skin. He created a spiral around the wrist. Even as blood poured from the wounds he
continued the delicate procedure. The runes curled across the Dark Mark. In Harry’s other hand he gripped his wand.

Severus lay still through the process, clamping his teeth at the pain. It was only mild to begin with but as more and more runes were drawn the pain increased. It spread up his arm. His Dark Mark started to burn intensely as though in protest to the runes that were now covering it.

Harry began to chant in his head, the words of the runes mixing with parsletonge of the language that he possessed. He brought the knife to his palm and ran the knife across it. He let his blood run down the length of the wand before digging the bloodied wand into the runes carved onto Snape’s flesh. He pushed it hard into the bloodied skin and ran it across the carvings. Light, blinding and filled with heat spread across the room as Harry finished following the lines that he had carved into his Professor’s skin.

Harry felt the burn building further and further. It spread along his own arm, like a rope wrapping around him, as though the professor’s own wounds were now burning into his own skin. His breath caught in his throat, knocked out of him by the intense pain that radiated through him.

The light cleared as quickly as it had come. Harry could finally breath again as the pain receded. Harry looked down at the arms that were still connected through the wand. The scars that now lined Severus’ arm were red and angry, but other than that the arm was clear. There was no dark mark there any longer. Harry, however, also had a new addition to his arm. Black ink in the shape of the runes that were now carved in his Professor’s arm also wrapped around Harry’s own.

Severus gasped loudly. He attempted to sit up but as he did so his head thumped back to the floor. Pain radiated through his body and stabbing thrummed through his head. He took several deep breaths before he tried again. He struggled up, straining to look at his arm that seemed to still be burning in pain each time he attempted to move it.

Severus finally managed to look at his arm and the air was taken out of him again. From the first time since he was eighteen his arm was no longer blemished by the black of the dark mark. Severus’ fingers caressed the angry red scars like they were the delicate petals of a rose. Severus looked up Harry’s own arm with trepidation. The black was stark against the skin on the boy’s arm.

“Harry…I…” Severus choked out as he looked at the beauty that was his arm.

“Thank you” Severus looked at the boy before him with reverence. There was near worship in his eyes.

However what the man before Harry did not know was that the removal of the dark mark had not come cost free. The blood wards within the mark were not able to be removed completely. Instead they were only able to be transferred. Harry now had the control that the mark had. He was able to track Severus’ whereabouts and summon the man. He could cause the mark to burn at different levels of intensities and summon the man to him if necessary. Harry was sure not to use the summoning until absolutely necessary. However he would be tracking the man. If he went anywhere near Voldemort without his express command the man would be dead within seconds.

It was a week before anything of note happened. No-one dared ask Harry the reason for his disappearance and anyone that needed to know, did. However people had still been concerned over Harry’s wellbeing. As he had returned to his room on the first night he had been bombarded by cards and gifts; chocolate, sweets, cakes and teddies. Many had been from nameless benefactors, with only a few signatures on cards. Harry was not sure if he appreciated the show of loyalty or was disgusted by the show of sympathy. The jury was still out on that decision.
Harry was sitting at the Great Hall table, as his plan, weeks in the making, finally came to fruition. Conveniently there had a seeming ‘emergency’ of sorts within each house. None of those in years one to four had had the inclination or the capability for that matter to turn up to breakfast that morning. They had been confined to their common rooms, meaning that the hall looked surprisingly empty that morning. However that went seemingly unnoticed by the teachers that sat at the head table. Severus had ensured that Dumbledore was present that morning, meaning that most attention was on him. The Headmaster that many no longer trusted to run the school.

The hall doors slammed open, loud and ominously. Harry had to suppress the grin that threatened to spread across his face. He was ready for this. Horses hooves echoed through the hallway, approaching the great hall. All eyes focused on the entrance as the hooves echoed louder and louder. They sounded as ominous as a funeral march. However Harry knew that the results would be much more satisfying.

Through the doorway an image of glory displayed itself. Dolores Umbridge, or what was left of her, was seated atop a horse. However her body had been mangled. Her limbs were no longer where they should be; parts of them replaced with what looked like prosthetics. One arm was missing; replaced by what looked like the leg of a wolf. Her ears had been torn from her head; houseelf prosthetics now sewn in replacement. A leg had been mangled to now be lined with scales, the glimmering gems bloodied and sticking out at odd angles. Her head had obviously been removed as her chest had been replaced with skin similar to that of a troll. The head had then been sewn back on.

However the most disturbing part of the tableau was the head. The addition of the elf ears was disturbing enough. However the tongue had been removed and a unicorn horn sewn to the forehead. But these failed in comparison to the eyes that still fluttered about the skull. The panic was obvious in them and the silenced mouth was attempting to scream with vocal cords that were no longer there and a tongue that was absent.

Everyone in the hall could only watch in stunned silence as the hideous creation appeared before them. Seconds ticked by before a member of the Ravenclaw table finally let out a horrified scream. That was all it took. The teachers were flung into action. They rapidly ushered their pupils from the hall, the children cleared in seconds. Several of the teachers were already attempting to still the horse. Harry cast one final glance over his shoulder at the beautiful image that he and Sanguini had created.

It only took two days for Albus Dumbledore to be removed from the school after the event. A member of staff that had been required to work at the school due to an investigation into the man himself had been killed on school property. The board of governors felt that it was no longer safe for the man to be in the position of headmaster. Many members of the public and reporters were also very vicious in their agreement with their hatred for the now ex-headmaster.

McGonagall was placed in the role of temporary Headmistress until the role was filled. Of course the woman may end up with the job in the end although the process required for the successful inheritance of the role was an application and an interview with the board of governors. However Harry was attempting to ensure that someone he had a little more influence over was in place. There were also now a new job position that needed to be filled within the staff. The transfiguration would need a suitable replacement. Harry was sure that Charlie or possibly Percy would be able to find someone if he required it of them.

Harry called a meeting of his followers, a week after the Umbridge incident. The meeting was, as was now the tradition, held at the Hogshead. However there were several new additions to the meeting. Sanguini, Remus, Alfie and Severus were all invited to their first meeting. Remus was now marked, Severus had not been anywhere near the Dark Lord or any Death Eaters for the last two
weeks, Alfie was there as he still felt uncomfortable being at the school by himself. He was therefore sitting with Graham, his head on the boy’s shoulder. Sanguini, had been an integral part of the Umbridge plan and therefore insisted on seeing the outcome in the meeting.

Harry let his people gradually trickle into the meeting. Sanguini had refused to be placed anywhere but directly next to Harry. His arm was slung over Harry’s shoulder in a very possessive manner. Fia was also stubborn about his seating arrangement. He was laying on his stomach at Harry’s feet. A blood pop hung from his lips as he sucked on the red, letting it dye his tongue red.

Remus was sitting nervously at the front of the group of chairs, looking out of place with the rest of the members of the room. Charlie and Zachary walked into the meeting room together, their hands intertwined. However their eyes widened as they saw the Professor sitting at the front of the room. Remus glanced at them in curiosity. Zachary, used to prejudice from all sides found himself subconsciously pulling himself behind his boyfriend. However Remus only gave a nod at the Weasley before him and the student behind him before averting his gaze.

The last member of the group to arrive was Severus. The man’s footsteps were quite yet they still drew the attention of each member of the room. Remus was rapid to his feet as he saw the man enter; his wand drawn. Lawrence and Cassius, followed by Flora and Hestia and then the rest of members of the room. All of their wands were pointed at the dour man that stood before them; all except for Luna and Fia who remained sitting and lying respectively. Sanguini of course also remained leaning on Harry.

Harry looked toward Sanguini with a meaningful look. The vampire gave a lopsided grin and a hair ruffle. He stood up and cleared his throat, drawing all the eyes in the room to him.

“Good day Severus” the vampire said with a purr. Sanguini may not often be around but he was sure to keep a note of all of Harry’s acquaintances. Especially the ones that were a possible threat and an ex-death eater was just that. Severus looked up to the vampire and gave a small nod. He was unsure of who the man before him was, but by the looks of death that he was receiving from the rest of the room, the man was a safe bet.

“Good day” Severus replied.

“Come now Severus. You have a seat next to Remus” The vampire indicated to the front of the room. Severus nodded. The command was a veiled one but it was one that Severus was still willing to follow. He slowly made his way forward and sat in the designated seat.

The rest of the members of the room saw Harry’s acceptance of the man as his own wand remained firmly in his holster as their professor sat at the front of the room. The meeting continued as usual. Updates within the ministry and throughout the rest of the wizarding world were the focus of the meeting for the first half hour. It seemed that since Dumbledore’s fall in the public eye that there had been several changes within the running of the ministry.

There were many new positions available within the ministry since the disgraceful step-down of Albus Dumbledore. There was also an apparent overhaul of the minister underway. It seemed that no-one any longer trusted Fudge after the man had placed such a large amount of trust on Dumbledore. The man was in charge of their children, their siblings, their grandchildren. Many of the individuals in power positions within the ministry had strong ties with Hogwarts. They believed that the minister should have got rid of such an incompetent Headmaster with much more speed. It seemed that Lucius Malfoy was running for the position. However Harry was tasking Percy with the inhibition of this project. Harry wanted no Death Eater in any position of control within the ministry. Percy was working from the angle that neither did the public.
There was also the matter of teachers. Harry was tasking Remus with the job of applying for the role of the Headmaster. He knew that the werewolf was under confident and did not wish for the job, however he was loved by pupils and many members of the public and staff. He would also have the Order of Phoenix’s support. However, unlike McGonagall he had no public connections with Dumbledore. He was therefore a prime candidate. Remus would do anything to please Harry and therefore willingly agreed for the application.

This therefore meant that suitable applications were needed for both a defence teacher and a transfiguration one. If Remus was not successful in getting the job, then they still needed another member of staff within the ranks that was sympathetic to their cause. The best choice for the job would be an Ex-Gryffindor that could take up the post of the head of Gryffindor if Remus was unsuccessful with his application for Headmaster.

It seemed that Charlie had found a suitable candidate for the defence position. Her name was Hazel Spinnet. She had been in Charlie’s year at school and the two kept in close contact. Recently her sister had been killed when the Death Eaters had attacked Hogwarts. This meant that she hated the Dark Lord and any ideals that he held. However she was also immune to the influence of the Order of the Phoenix as she had a hatred for Dumbledore and partially blamed him for her younger sisters death. She had finished her masters in defence in the last few months and was looking for a job. Charlie had pointed her in the direction of the Hogwarts position hinting that there would be a job opening if she waited for a few more months. She had seemingly taken his advice. The man was, however, still on the hunt for a suitable transfiguration replacement.

The message seemed to have spread through Harry’s group that the Dark Lord was no longer connected through the tenuous friendship that the two of them had initially created. Harry was not sure how much it was that each of the members of his circle knew what it was that had happened. He knew that Lawrence and Cassius would not share the details unless commanded to. However they had seemingly spread the message that the Dark Lord was no longer to be trusted.

As the meeting progressed Harry found himself thinking back to the night that Cassius and Lawrence had found him in the manor grounds at three in the morning. The events that had transpired before he had been found had been a way for Harry to take out his anger and frustration on those deserving of it. Harry, still being updated on any and all events that may be deemed important, had been informed of an induction mission for several of the new recruits of the Death Eaters.

The new Death Eaters had been tasked with a simple mission to instil fear in some people that were unwilling to follow the Dark Lord’s demands. It was deemed an easy mission and therefore three of them had been sent on the mission to break into the house of the resisting family. Harry had however managed to disable them before they managed to get there. He had easily but violently killed all three of the new recruits before they even entered the house, managing to use some of the tips from the book that Lawrence had been reading him for the past week. Harry had clearly shown the dark mark on each individual destroying their entire body except for the clear sign that allied them with the dark.

Harry was sure that Cassius and Lawrence had realised what he had done as the news story had been the front page of the Prophet the next morning. The individual that had committed the crime had been hailed as a hero by some for preventing a Death Eater attack. However the method of execution had been criticised and others saw the perpetrator as a villain. The amount of suffering caused to the individuals seen as excessive. Harry cared not for public opinion, simply feeling better that he had destroyed a part of the Dark Lord’s plans as the man had destroyed Harry’s own.
Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

Hi Everyone. I am sorry that this took so long to write but I have been super busy. I have just graduated and I got a job in Japan! I am moving next week so have been a little stressed in preparing to write. However, I managed to sit down this weekend and write this. I hope that you enjoy it! Sorry it’s not that long. Thank you all for still reading!

Percy Weasley stood before the crowded room. Each individual looked up and down his form; assessing and judging him. He supposed that was the reason for this meeting in the first place. He looked at them with authority. It would not do to be intimidated now. His look was not, however, hostile. It needed to be a meeting of civility.

“Why is it that you, Percival Weasley, should be accepted for the role of Minister Magic?” A rather pompous voice sounded.

Percy gave a small smile. He straightened his back as he spoke to those that sat above. He would soon be sitting with them. He had got this far. It was only a few more steps.

“I believe that there are many reasons as to why I am the most suited individual to hold the role. The first of these being that I have no affiliations with either the Dark or the Light. I have no connections with the former Headmaster of Hogwarts and have none with the Dark Lord. I have no marks that mar my skin.” Percy gave a small embarrassed smile. “Well, other than a small cat that was a misguided folly of youth.”

Several of the members of the room gave small chuckles. That was a good sign. This was a serious topic discussion. It was good to lighten the mood in any way possible.

“I believe that there are many reasons as to why I am the most suited individual to hold the role. The first of these being that I have no affiliations with either the Dark or the Light. I have no connections with the former Headmaster of Hogwarts and have none with the Dark Lord. I have no marks that mar my skin.”

The year of the goblet of fire had been, to put it nicely, an absolute fiasco. The tournament had been hosted as a sign of solidarity against the dark forces that seemed to have increased over the past years. Although, it had not gone as planned. Barty Crouch Jr, escaped from his father during the attack at the Quidditch World Cup and had been set on killing his father. He also wished to destroy the threat that Edward Potter had presented to the Dark Lord, the one that he viewed as his master.

Barty Crouch, pretending to be Professor Moody had infiltrated the school. He had placed Edward Potter’s name in the Goblet of Fire; forcing the young man to compete. He had then killed his father during the first task; making it look as though the man had simply abandoned his post. That was when Percy had stepped in. He had run the tournament ensuring that each task ran well. He also had much contact with the rulers of magical France and Russia. As well as having some contact with those from around the world to arrange the possession of several magical creatures that would, without Percy’s amazing persuasion skills, have remained unavailable for the final task.
The final task had, however, had not gone as Percy had planned. However that did not mean that he was not prepared. Crouch had infiltrated the maze; locating himself at the centre while fully invisible. The plan had been to kill Edward Potter as soon as he came anywhere near the cup. However his plan had been foiled. Due to Percy’s foresight the magical wards that had been placed around the entire maze had alerted Percy to the unidentified magical signature that had made its way into the maze.

Percy, along with two Aurors had tracked the magical signature; careful not to interrupt any of the competitors. It would not do for the tournament to be ruined. Percy had tracked the man to where the cup was located. The two aurors and he himself had quickly disabled the disguised Barty Crouch. They had easily dragged him from the maze and successfully interrogated him.

The tournament had been a success with Cedric Diggory taking the cup as his own. Which had, as intended, caused the hedges the disappear and the area that Cedric had been standing on to light up. It was clear to all who had won and it had been managed with all the competitors still in one piece. Edward Potter, Fleur Delacour and Viktor Krum had all retired home safely for the summer.

“I believe myself a representative of those that make up our world. I have strong ties with members of every generation and wish to see their needs met. However I believe that as a previous member of a Hogwarts as it was under Dumbledore I can prove to the magical community that the Ministry is still strong.” Percy took a breath as he hastened to explain.

“It proves to both parents and students, family members of all those that have a relative attending Hogwarts, that we have not been forced to one side or the other. Appointing me as the Minister of Magic will prove to every person that there is still hope for them. That we can still strive for a peaceful existence that is free from the tyranny of the Dark Lord, but also free from the manipulation of Dumbledore.” Percy’s gaze was firm.

“I believe that I can show each and every member of the wizarding world that there is still hope.”

The members of the Wizengamot looked to each other, some eyes wide as they took in the words that Percy had just spoken.

“All those in favour of appointing Percival Weasley as Minister of Magic?” Every hand went up.

“It seems that the vote is unanimous. Welcome Percy Weasley, new Minister of Magic.”

Harry looked up at the dais and scowled at the man that now sat there. He supposed that with some wins, came some losses. The information of who would fill the new position of headteacher had been announced mere hours before the minister of magic position had been filled. This meant that Percy had had no opportunity to change the verdict as it was no longer within his jurisdiction. It had been a decision made by the council, not by himself.

However Harry supposed that Remus had been a little too far off the mark. A mere week into the interviews for new headteachers, it had come out rather publicly that Remus was a werewolf. A dark creature. Of course it was non-other than Lucius Malfoy that had discovered this little nugget of information. He had of course found it to be his duty to share the information with the prophet right before the candidates for the position were to appear before the Wizengamot.

It was something that Harry had not foreseen and due to his ties being cut with the Dark Lord he had not been privy to the information. The man was showing him that Harry was still lacking in power. That there were many ways that the Dark Lord could still destroy his well formulated plans. Harry supposed that this was a way for the Dark Lord to get back at him for stealing the best potions master
in the world, right from under his nose.

Harry straightened out the aggravated lines on his face as he looked away from Sirius Black who was sitting in the throne. What the actual fuck was this school coming to. Harry had thought that he had been managing to get the awful institution back on the straight and narrow. However now there sat an utter moron in the seat of the headmaster. Harry could barely comprehend how it was the the man had got the position over any of the other candidates. Well, actually he did.

It seemed that both Harry and Voldemort had blacklisted the others candidates. Harry had firmly cemented the connections that Rachael Fawley had with several known death eaters and several other suspected ones. Lucius had obviously black listed Remus. That had left for both apparent parties; the dark and the light to look for another candidate.

However as soon as Sirius Black had been put forward as a candidate by, not the order of the phoenix, the, not dark side, had decided that they would rather not put a candidate forward. Harry had not been able to put anyone else forward without everyone questioning their motivations. The light would call them dark and Voldemort would find someway to affirm that. Harry had been out of options; as had the Wizengamot. Harry had regretted the decision to take McGonagall out of the race so early on. He had ensured that a very dear relative of hers had contracted a seemingly life threatening disease, with a cure that had not yet been discovered. She would not die, but she would be in rather a lot of pain for the next two months and appear to be at death’s door.

Sirius Black may have had no experience teaching within a school, however he had had it within the training of new recruits to the Auror programme. Additionally there was no need for the headmaster position to require any teaching. Black had strong connections within the ministry and with the boy who lived, without having too many major links to Dumbledore. He had been the best option in an awful situation. The Wizengamot was given nearly no other option. It was him or waiting at least another six months before more candidates were rounded up.

The moronic man stood up from the ornate throne and it was as though an entire cloud of disdain rained through the room. There was no-one in the hall that wanted that man where he was. Well, except the other idiots, namely the boy that was once his brother and the friends that the idiot had. They grinned at the surprisingly somber man that now stood before him.

“Welcome back everyone,” his voice was slightly dulled from what Harry remembered. However he had not seen the man in many years, so it was no surprise that the man had changed. Harry was sure that he had changed beyond recognition.

“I hope that you had a pleasant Easter and that you are all ready to come back to work. Remember those of you that you have OWLs and NEWTs are facing a big challenge in the next few months. I hope to see you all working hard. I also hope that you will all welcome me with open arms as your new Headmaster.” He sat.

Cheers rang, loud and boisterous from the Gryffindor table. Black only gave a small smile in return. Harry gave a quite applause, along with the rest of the hall. Well, except for the obnoxious Gryffindors.

Harry ran a critical eye over the man that sat in the throne. It seemed that the man had changed. He seemed far more reserved and much less vibrant than Harry remembered him being. It seemed that Harry might be able to work with this. Remus had told him that the man had been effected by Harry’s leaving. However Harry hadn’t realised just how much the man had changed. It seemed that Harry had an opportunity here. Having the headmaster in his pocket would be rather advantageous.
Blood dripped from Harry’s nose; a hand to his head as bruises marred his forehead and left temple. His right arm was flopping limply at his side as he stumbled down the corridor. Harry had to give it to Cassius and Lawrence; the medical potions that the two had concocted were a marvel. Harry looked, for all intents and purposes as though he had been brutally beaten. Healing spells would react to the wounds as they would with any normal ones. However Harry felt no pain from the injuries that the potions had inflicted on him.

The past month and Harry had had Astoria and Graham, along with his new tag along, Alfie, watch the patterns of the new Headmaster. The rest of Harry’s allies were rather occupied with their NEWT and OWL preparations. Neville in particular was rather stressed and so Harry was needing to look for a few younger Gryffindors to introduce into his ranks.

The trio had done had asked. The first week or so and Black seemed to be, well, a mess. However as the days ticked by it seemed that he managed to form some sort of a schedule for his new role in a position that he had no right being in. He worked in his office until just before curfew. He would make a quick scout of the corridors, before heading back to his own chambers.

Harry had placed himself in the corridor nearest the chambers that were designated for the headmaster’s personal use. However he was far enough away from their true location that there would be no suspicion as to his true destination. Harry was walking along the corridor in a way that would suggest that he was heading for the Slytherin common rooms.

Harry limped violently as several drops of blood pattered to the floor. He flinched as though pain rippled through his form. Of course, Harry felt nothing, although it was rather difficult to walk with his body as broken as it was.

A gasp rang through the empty corridor. It seemed that there was his cue. Harry pulled a pained look onto his face. However he kept an edge of steel to it. Black would not be fooled by the innocent school boy act. The man had long since known that there was more to Harry than that.

“You, stop right there” A voice that Harry recognised as Black’s called down the corridor. Harry carried on walking, picking up his pace a little. However due to his battered form it was nothing resembling anything that called be called fast.

Harry heard the sound of running feet approaching from behind him and suddenly a hand was on his shoulder. Harry’s flinch at the contact was only half fake. He did not like people touching him without permission, however the situation did warrant such contact.

Harry one again ignored the contact and attempted to take a step forward. However he did it with little conviction. So he was easily turned around as the hand of one Sirius Black insisted on the movement. Harry knew that he looked a mess, that had been the intention after all. However the look on Black’s face was just too good for words. The man looked almost broken as he saw who it was behind the injuries. It seemed that this might be easier than Harry had thought.

“Har-“ Black attempted, his mouth slightly agape. However he quickly seemed to remember himself. He cleared his throat and although his eyes were still wide, his mouth clicked shut.

“Mr Pot-“ another clearing of the throat “Beckett” Black finally got out. Harry had to suppress the smirk, covering it by forcing a small look of pain pattering across his face. The man was utterly hopeless. How was it that he managed to function again? Oh yes, he didn’t. He just relied on James Potter and now that the man was crumbling and Harry had hooked his claws into Remus the man was falling apart, piece by piece. It was beautiful.

“What are you- what happened?” Black stumbled out. It was like watching someone drowning.
They continued to thrash and struggle for air, long after they should have given up. Harry wondered how long it would take for Black's own lungs to fill with water. He would definitely suit the shade of blue that came from oxygen deprivation.

Harry merely raised an eyebrow at the man before him, before trying to make a move away from him again. He took, what looked like a shaky step. His footing was off and he stumbled slightly, before righting himself. Black looked even more broken at the sight. His arm was quickly around Harry’s waist; giving support to the student that could, at one time, have been family.

Harry sneered at the touch. What was this man, a muggle? He could have had a far more effective outcome if he had used a simple levitation charm. Additionally if Harry had actually been feeling the injuries that littered his body, then it would also be much less painful. However it seemed that the man was the furthest thing from intelligent. However Harry could deal with that. He was, after all, not looking for the man’s intelligence, but rather his loyalty.

“We should get you to the hospital wing Ha-“ Black shook himself “Mr Beckett.”

The journey was a rather painful one. Not physically of course. However Black insisted on attempting to hold some form of conversation for the entire journey. Harry ignored him. He didn’t even give a nod in response. This man needed to know that he was not forgiven. That he may never be forgiven. However that did not mean that the man was useless. He was a powerful piece that at this current moment was off the board. Both himself and Voldemort could fight for him, however Harry was sure that the Dark Lord was no real competition for the man’s loyalty. All Harry had to do now was keep the precious piece away from Dumbledore’s ever loosening grip.

As soon as Harry entered the hospital wing Madame Pomfrey rushed toward them with the force of a whirlwind. Black was quickly relinquished of his control of the situation as the woman ushered her patient toward a hospital bed. Harry was quickly fussed over. He saw Black reluctantly slink from the room. However Harry was sure that he would be seeing the man soon. He was not about to let the matter of Harry’s assault lie. Harry supposed that he was better than Dumbledore in that way. If the man had been Headmaster when Harry had joined the school, the students may have been, at least, a little safer.

Sirius Black sat behind his desk with his head in his hand. Less than a month and he was already in the mess. Harry, no, the boy was just another one of the students. He could view him as otherwise. He sighed. Mr Beckett had been beaten and severely at that. He had had the reports back from Madame Pomfrey and the boy had had internal bleeding, an arm that had been fractured in three places, a rather badly sprained ankle and a concussion. The level of injury that had been inflicted on the boy resembled many of the torture victims that Sirius had come across in his auror work.

That had happened three days ago and the young man had been confined to the hospital wing since. Seeing such a broken boy limping down the corridor had hurt Sirius more than he cared to admit. He had tried to block Harry from his mind as the boy had chosen to abandon the Potter family. Not to say that Sirius could blame him. He had abandoned his own family. He wasn’t stupid enough to not recognise the similarities. Families that left their children to fend for themselves. Sirius rubbed his tired eyes.

That was not to say that he did not think about the boy, but merely that he had managed to block out the majority of said thoughts due to the boy’s absence. However Harry, once Potter, had left a hole in the Potter family and in the lives of their friends. Christmases had never been seen the same since the boy had stopped spending them in the Potter manor. Sirius had never seen James look so broken as that first Christmas without the youngest Potter in the house. Lily had never recovered. She had let herself be dragged into the depressive spiral that was the loss of her son. Sirius didn’t know if the
woman would ever be stable enough to be released from Saint Mungo’s.

Sirius shook himself from his thoughts. His office would be filled in under an hour. He needed to re-read the medical reports and the statements from Harry as well as the evidence from the auror investigation, before the people arrived. He rubbed at his temples and focused back at the numerous sheets of paper that lay before him.

It was far too soon that the expected members began to file into the room. Harry was of course there. However he was still pale and he averted his eyes from himself and the others as they entered the room. Sirius felt his heart clench at the sight. His nails dig into his leg as he attempted to prevent himself from running over to comfort the boy. Harry’s adopted father; Edmund Beckett accompanied Harry, along with his nephew Cassius. Cassius’ hand lay on Harry’s thin shoulders as he walked in with the young man. Severus Snape followed a few paces behind the trio.

Next to arrive were Ronald Weasley, his father Arthur and his older brother Bill. The three were accompanied on either side by two aurors. Sirius recognised Kingsley on the right and Williamson on the left. Sirius knew of Kingsley’s low-key involvement with the order of the phoenix. However Williamson was an unknown. She was a good auror, however she kept to herself. Therefore meaning that Sirius knew very little about her and where her loyalties lay.

The floo flared green as the final members of the gathering appeared. Percy Weasley, the recently appointed minister of magic appeared; flanked by two more Aurors, both of whom Sirius did not recognise. They must have been newly appointed to their positions as Sirius knew all the top Aurors. With the number of aurors, Lords, heirs and ministry workers that were in the room Sirius was beginning to feel as though it was him that was in trouble. He had to repress the shudder at the thought of being put in Azkaban. He just hoped that the youngest Weasley, well the youngest living Weasley, managed to avoid such a situation. At least he had his brother on his side, Sirius thought.

Harry sat timidly as his eyes quickly roamed the room. He took in the expressions on all of the faces around the room. Ronald looked more pale and sickly than Harry had ever seen him. Well, he thought, it wasn’t as though the young man had much more time to destroy himself. Harry was sure that with the planted evidence it would be a straight ticket to Azkaban for the ginger; especially with Percy residing over the proceedings. As if on cue the man stood with a proud look on his face and addressed the room.

“Good morning everyone, I thank you all for attending.”

Cassius gave a small snort and whispered “Well, it’s not like we had a choice” to Harry. Who in turn threw the older man a playful scowl.

“Now, to be on with business” Percy looked to Black, the new headmaster, with a meaningful stare. Percy was the minister of magic and he would not let the past become the present. He was in charge of the situation, as he was of the country. This meeting was being held as an olive branch not as an acknowledgement of any power other than his own. Percy held the gaze for second before continuing. Harry was pleased with the power play. It seemed that Percy was fitting into his role rather well.

“As you all know, as of Wednesday night a violent attack took place against a student; one Harrison Beckett” Percy gave a small indicator to the rest of the room as to where Harry sat. Harry faked shyness as he shrunk into his chair and made an act of attempting to hide the arm that was now encased from shoulder to wrist in crisp white bandages and supported by a sling. Percy quickly drew the attention back toward himself.
“The testimony of said student indicates that one Ronald Weasley is responsible for said attack.”

Arthur frowned at the accusation and Bill puffed his chest up daring anyone to touch a hair on his brother’s head. Harry had to repress his smirk at the ridiculous sight. A lot more than hair touching should be on William Weasley’s agenda. He should have run with his brother, as far as he could get. But he was too late now. Harry was sure that the family would be lucky if Ronald saw the end of the year.

“There is also evidence from Mr Weasley’s wand that such spells as to cause the extreme to damage to Mr Beckett were cast.”

Harry saw a flicker of the old Ronald fan into existence as he sat straighter and yelled at his brother. However wasn’t important that he was his brother. It was in fact more important that the man that stood before him was now the minister of magic. It seemed that Ronald had still failed to rid himself of his stupidity.

“I didn’t cast those spells you stupid prick” he yelled. “What would you know poncy Percy, you’re an utter git and you’re just making things up! I didn’t do it!” he roared at his brother. Harry bit the inside of his lip. Well, it seemed that Ronald had just shown to the whole room that he had quite the temper. Violence would not be much of a step. Percy ignored the red faced young man as he continued.

“Now due to the delicate nature of the situation it has been decided that the initial hearing shall take place within Hogwarts. Legal parents of both students are present and we are ready to proceed with the assessment of the committed crimes. Is that understood?”

There were several nods and murmurs of yes minister from the aurors. Sirius looked with a new found respect at the young minister. He, himself, had been unable to attend the man’s swearing in and so he had not been truly aware of the charisma that the young man held. He had captured the attention of the whole room in a rather spectacular way.

“Right” Percy continued. “Lord Beckett, I believe that you and your son are the deciding factors in this trial. Do you, Lord Beckett and your son, Heir Beckett wish to press charges against Mr Weasley and the Weasley family?”

Edmund schooled his face into one of casual indifference before he spoke. It was as though he didn’t realise that he was about to destroy a young man’s life. Or that he simply didn’t care.

“I do Minister Weasley” he gave a curt nod. “I believe that the damage inflicted upon my son has been done with malicious intent and that he has suffered greatly from it. I do not wish for such a dangerous individual to roam the halls of Hogwarts or the streets of civilised society for that matter.”

Percy gave a short nod in response to Lord Beckett before turning to his own father and brothers.

“Lord Weasley, Heir Weasley, can you offer Lord Beckett and Heir Beckett any reason as to why he should not press charges against Mr Weasley?”

Arthur Weasley blinked, before taking in a breath. It seemed that he had not been prepared for the utter indifference that his son would hold toward him and toward his youngest son’s plight, even if he had been prepared for the words that the new minister would speak.

“Minister, I do not believe that my son is guilty. He claims that the spells were not cast by him and that he was no where near Mister-Heir Beckett,” he corrected himself. “when the events took place. I believe him.”
“Yet” Percy frowned in faux confusion “his wand clearly shows that he cast spells that are consistent with the injuries Heir Beckett received and within the timeframe he received them.” Percy met his father’s eyes. “How would you explain that Lord Weasley”

Arthur had to repress the flinch from the look of disgust mingled with hatred that his son gave him. However, he supposed that he had brought it on himself. By disowning Charlie it was clear that Percy would soon follow. Arthur told himself that it was not a loss. That a gay son was no son at all and anyone that supported him deserved the same treatment. However the utter disgust he saw in Percy’s eyes still hurt. It was why he had not been able to disown his third son, well second now. He had lost a wife, a son and a daughter already. He could not admit to himself he had lost a fourth and now what might be a fifth. Molly would be rolling in her grave.

“Maybe” Arthur tried, taking a breath “Ron’s wand was tampered with, it is possible-“

“Are you suggesting” Percy interrupted with a sneer “that one of the professors tampered with Mr Weasley’s wand?”

“No.” Arthur gaped and gave a rapid head shake. “Of course not, I-“

“Then how else do you explain your accusation of such tampering?” Percy raised a hand to stop his father from speaking further. “None of the students are capable of such an act. Extensive training in both wand lore and runes is necessary for such a deception to occur. I believe the only people in Hogwarts capable of such acts would be Professor Sinstra, Professor Lupin and Professor Snape. Is it one of these members of staff that you are accusing?”

“Snape” Ronald shouted out, standing from his seat even as Bill tried to pull him down. “I bet you anything it was Snape. He’s a slimy Slytherin. He wants me expelled” The boy jeered as he pointed toward the man that was standing behind the Becketts, along with one of the unrecognised aurors.

Williamson stepped forward and placed a heavy hand on the young Weasley’s shoulder. She sneered at the boy and pushed his hand down, forcing the boy back into his seat.

“I would keep your mouth shut, until you are asked to speak Mr Weasley. Otherwise you will find yourself unable to stand from that chair.” She hissed loud enough for even Sirius to hear. The young ginger’s face went a paper white before he slumped further into his forced seating position.

“As I was saying, Lord Weasley, is this the accusation that you were making?”

Arthur looked slightly dumbfounded. He did not want to accuse a member of staff, be he also did not wish for his son to be incarcerated.

“Because if it was, the auror report clearly shows that Professor Snape was not within Hogwarts walls at the time of the attack,” Percy gave a look of hatred to Ron as he said this, before continuing. “and both Professor Sinstra and Professor Lupin have had their wands tested and rooms searched. Neither have come up with even a shred of evidence to suggest that they were involved.” Percy rubbed at his temple, as though as exhausted by having to explain the situation.

“Now, Lord Weasley, I shall ask again, can you justify Mr Weasley’s actions?”

Arthur seemed to deflate. It seemed that all the will had left him. He shook his head and gave a sad smile to the minister before him. It seemed that he had given up.

“No Minister, I have nothing to say.” A tear trailed down his face. Five it was. Today would mark the day that he lost the fifth member of his family.
“Lord Beckett” Percy addressed the man once more. “Is there any way in which you would be willing to overlook the charges? I believe that Mr Weasley is rather young to spend the rest of his life in Azkaban.”

Edmund hummed as though assessing the situation. Of course he and Harry had established what it was that the offer would be. It was one that would be advantageous to have, however they were sure that the Weasley Lord would never agree to it.

“I believe, that the only thing I will find myself satisfied with is if the Weasley line were to swear fealty to the Beckett line. Otherwise I believe that my son’s life may still be endangered.”

A small gasp escaped Kingsley’s mouth and Black’s mouth only remained shut due to his strict pureblood upbringing. This was not something that could be taken lightly. It bound the two lines together for eternity. It was a complicated and dangerous ritual and if the intention was not pure than often participants could die. It was a life threatening task for both Lords involved. By the shade of white that Lord Weasley had turned, it seemed that even he knew the risks.

“I-I-I” Arthur stumbled over his words. He had no idea what to say or what to say. This was just too much to handle. He wished that Molly was here. She would never have let Ron be falsely accused. His breathing speed up as Edmund spoke again.

“I believe that a consideration period of three days is only fair. After all this is a rather large decision,” he smirked.

Percy gave a small nod of agreement in answer.

“Yes Lord Beckett, that seems acceptable. We shall schedule another meeting three days from now.” Percy turned to Sirius. “If that is acceptable, Headmaster Black?”

Sirius blinked at the address. He gave a small nod, before remembering himself.

“Ah, yes, that is acceptable. Three days, after lessons I believe. If four o’clock would be acceptable?”

“I believe so Headmaster Black. We shall see you then.”

Sirius watched as every member of the room flooed away. Soon it was only he and Harry that remained in the room. Weasley had been taken to a holding cell in the ministry and the others had returned to their jobs. He let out a small sigh.

“You may go Mr Beckett.” Harry gave a small nod. Sirius watched his retreating form go.

The Dark Lord sat in his study, a cup of tea at his side as his eyes skimmed across the morning’s headlines.

‘Weasley Family Enslaved to the Becketts’

‘Becketts Force Fealty’

‘Weasley’s Only Way Out’

All held similar titles. All claiming that the Weasley Lord, had, as of yesterday night, permanently bound himself to the Beckett line, along with all his offspring. I meant, in a nutshell, that they had to do exactly as Harry said, forever.
The Dark Lord took a sip his tea as he skimmed the article. It seemed that no-one had died during the ritual, although the youngest boy, Ronald, had been in rather a lot of pain. It was magic’s way of punishing him for previous slights toward the one that he was now bound to. Or so the Quibbler said.

A picture of a group of pale looking gingers was emblazoned on the front of the prophet as the group walked from the ritual room within the ministry. They all look terrified. The Dark Lord hummed to himself. He wanted to watch this play out. He wanted to know what Harry’s plans for the group of redheads was. He took another sip his tea.

He took another look as the picture changed to show Harry and Edmund, walking behind the redheaded mob. He gave a small smirk. Whatever the Dark Lord wanted he got and right now he wanted Harry back.
Chapter 32

Percy stood in the hall of representatives, one from every country in magical world, the youngest member there. He watched as the minister of South Africa conversed happily with the president of Australia. Percy took a step further into the room; ready to talk with the people that led countries around the world. However this time it was without the burden that his name had always stood for. He was not a Weasley any longer. He did not have to go through the tortuous exercise, the disgusted smirks and hushed whispers that had always followed the Weasley name.

Percy had disowned himself, mere hours before the ceremony that had bound the Becketts to those that Percy has, or had, a blood connection to. It had been the only way. The only way in which he could save face against a further disgraced family. It was also the only way that Percy could viably maintain his position as Minister. It was not legal to remove him from the position for the mere technicality that his family was bound to another. However, his word would not have been trusted. Harry already had Percy’s undying loyalty. He did not need a magically binding contract to prove that.

Therefore, Percy’s magic was no longer intertwined with that of the Weasley’s, not that Percy had ever displayed many of the traits that were present in his blood line. Protection and regenerative magics were strong in the Weasley line. Percy excelled in neither. He was not about to miss being part of a family that was looked down upon for their blatant disregard of Pureblood customs. As well as their abuse of those that still held them as important.

Having disregarded his own heritage and therefore his position within the inheritance of the Weasley Lordship, Percy had subsequently been able to take up ownership of another line; one that was nearly as ancient as the Weasley line. The Prewetts. It seemed that due to Percy’s voluntary abandonment of his name, he was eligible to claim it. The vaults, that had remained untouched since his mother had died, once again had an owner.

Percy smiled slightly. Percival Prewett was ready to face the world. He straightened his back. He was sure that his mother would be proud of him, if she were still here. He remembered her in vague snippets. Her smile, her laugh, her frustration at the twins. Her love. She had always told him to be himself. As long as he was true to who he was, that was all that really mattered. He could still hear his mother’s soothing singing and the small giggles that had once been issued from his sister’s small, toothless, mouth. Percy was ready to show just how important magical Britain would be in the events of the future.

Harry sighed. He raised his arms above his head and felt as each of the bones in his spine cracked. He stood from his desk. His OWLs were over. Now he could get back to the real hard work. Harry had worked for his OWLs, of course he had, he had appearances to keep up. However, that did not mean that he cared about them. He had more important things to deal with than a set of stupid exams.

The school year was over. The summer was stretching out before him in weeks of opportunity. He made his way from the great hall, where they had been having their exams. Harry could feel the eyes of Ronald Weasley on him as he walked toward the exit. Yet the boy could do nothing. Harry merely turned and raised an eyebrow at him. The boy’s eyes quickly looked away. Harry wondered how the young man was still functioning, let along taking his OWLs. Harry still had plans to kill the boy and make it look like an accident. It was merely at the bottom of his list at the moment.

Neville, Theodore and Daphne were three people that Harry was less inclined to murder. The three of them approached him, each giving a small nod. Harry kept walking. The three merely fell in line
behind him; chatting about their answers and their possible NEWT choices for next year. Harry was unconcerned with their talk. He was too busy thinking about his next step in his plans and the man that he needed to visit to carry them out.

However as Harry walked toward the common room, he was stopped by another individual whom he would rather not have to talk to; Hermione Granger. Harry wanted to roll his eyes. This girl was such a nightmare.

“Harry” she called. Harry kept on walking. “Harry.” He was evidently not fast enough. The girl was right by him. She was talking rapidly about the exam. Neville, Theo and Daphne had all stopped talking. They were only watching the girl. Waiting to see if they needed to take action.

“Well, question seven was obviously a trick one. But I totally answered it correctly. Then there was ten…” Harry zoned her out. The girl was rather irritating, but she didn’t cause any direct problems, so Harry let her be, more often than not. He never engaged her in conversation and tended to ignore her existence. That did not make her any less persistent.

During his first year, Harry had managed to mostly dissuade Granger from forming a friendship with him. He was, after all, a mute Slytherin, with very little going for him. However, after the results of the first year exams, Harry had managed to, in a sense, shoot himself in the foot. The girl had come third in the rankings for the year. Before her had been Blaise Zabini who had managed to claim second place. Harry felt anger at the thought of the young man. Those Death Eaters had caused such pain and heartbreak. He was disappointed that he hadn’t spent more time in torturing them.

In first place had been Harry. The girl, having had, what she saw as a connection to Harry, had chosen to ask him for advice. Well, more like demand it. However, even if Harry had spoken, the girl would not have let him have a word in. She didn’t tend to want to actually listen to the advice that she asked for. Instead it was more like she spoke at Harry. She seemed to think out her ideas at him, to realise herself where she had made a mistake. It was her usual procedure after any exam or if there was anything that she found challenging.

When Harry was not busy, he usually indulged her. She was too loud mouthed and big headed to be allowed anywhere near Harry’s inner circle. However it was evident that she felt some connection toward Harry. Harry was not one to dissuade loyalty, no matter what form it took. He was happy, well, not happy, more that it was advantageous, for Harry to let her have her way. When Harry was in total control of this shit hole, it was better to have as many people as possible that saw him in a fond light. Hence the reason that he allowed her inane chatter.

Harry continued on his way toward the Slytherin common room. Granger recognised the path and veered off in her own direction; back to her own common room.

“Bye Harry, have a good summer” she yelled after the young man. Harry didn’t even blink. He continued along his path toward his common room without a backward glance. Neville, Theo and Daphne followed behind him.

Harry was under strong wards. Ones so strong that they were carved into the skin of each arm. They had been carved with a ritual knife made from dragon bone. They went from his shoulder to his elbow. The runes enabled utter invisibility; avoidance of detection from any of the senses and any revealing spells that might be cast. Even magical eyes were not able to detect him. The runes were activated through Harry’s own magic. It was a rather painful and permanent procedure. However it was worth it for the show that was about to go down.

Strategically placed around the ground floor of the building, were six others, five of them with the
same runes carved into their skin. Severus, Lawrence, Cassius, Remus and Zachary all had runes that were near identical to the ones that Harry had. However there was a special stipulation in the runes of the others that were not present in Harry’s. It was a ward that enabled Harry to detect the others, no matter if their runes were activated or not.

Additionally Sanguini was present. However his presence was more due to a request from Harry. He also had no wards carved into his skin. Instead he had his own methods of remaining undetected. Vampires had their own ways of doing things, after all. Sanguini would not be intervening unless necessary. Harry had warned him off it. This was his mission. He did not need the help. Sanguini was only there to transport the restrained Dumbledore as well as the others, back to the dungeons of his manor.

Harry stood in the Hogshead. He had separately heard from Remus, Sirius and Severus that Dumbledore was planning to get in contact with his brother today. The order of the Phoenix was still under the impression that all three of them were still to be trusted. Such fools. Dumbledore had gone mostly underground for the past few months, other than the occasional order meeting. Harry finally had a chance to corner him, to get information out of him and if his plans went well, to kill him. Not that Abeforth knew the entire plan. Harry was not sure that the man would be willing to let his brother by killed by a group of young people, some of whom were over one hundred years his junior.

Harry heard a knock on the door. It seemed that the main event had arrived. Harry stood still as he heard the door open. He heard the pleasantries exchanged and then he heard as footsteps entered the room. However the people that entered were not the only people that they were expecting.

Dumbledore was there. That was someone that they were expecting. However along with him were Sirius Black and Kingsley Shaklebolt. That was…rather unfortunate. This was not the time to test out Black’s loyalties. The man may have been feeding him information. Yet it was not the same as kidnapping someone. Someone that had once been his headmaster. Someone he had all but sworn loyalty to. It was also not the time for a rather powerful addition, to an already high risk plan. Well, plans ever went the way that you expected. Harry and the others would merely have to work around this.

Harry watched. Abeforth left the door open as he singled for his three guests to sit down on the sofa. Severus entered behind the group, quickly followed by Lawrence. It seemed that the runes were working perfectly. Dumbledore didn’t even look up as Lawrence now stood directly behind him. Severus stood on the opposite side of the room, behind Kingsley. The group were already adapting to their situation. Cassius had moved to stand on one side of the doorway of the room, wand ready. Zachary was standing at the other side. Remus should be standing by the front door, if he was doing as planned. Harry was unsure as to Sanguini’s location. The man was, in all likelihood, hidden somewhere around the room, messing with people. They all knew he was there, but none of them could see him, not even Harry.

Harry drew out his own wand. All he needed now was the signal.

“Is this really necessary Albus?” Abeforth questioned. “All this security? What do you think I’m going to do?”

“I don’t know Abe.” Albus’ eye still twinkled, even as he questioned his brothers integrity. “No one but you could have written such a leaflet. Although I’m sure that you were not the one that spread it. There’s obviously someone that you are on the side of.”

“Albus” Abeforth raised an eyebrow “You wound me. I would never hurt you.”
There it was. There. The spells fired off quickly, in rapid succession. Five spells hit Dumbledore directly in the chest; three stunners and two body binds. Five more were fired mere seconds after, before any of the occupants of the room even had a chance to react. Three stunners were on Kingsley and two body-binds were on Sirius. The two thudded to the ground; one unconscious, the other immobile. Dumbledore was slumped in his chair. It seemed that the plan was going just as it should.

Harry quickly leaped into action. His wand remained pointed at the stupid old coot. Harry needed to be ready for anything. The man was unpredictable. The man was far more powerful than he looked. Harry was not sure that the three stunners would keep him down for long.

Harry’s magic shifted as he let it trickle away from the runes on his skin. He was now visible to the others in the room. Well, the two that were conscious. Abeforth barely acknowledged his existence. He merely sat down on one of the spare seats within the room. He let out a tired sigh. He was far too old for this shit.

Sirius, on the other hand, froze, not that he could move anyway. His eyes were wide and his mouth was slightly agape.

“Harry…?” It was a question. Harry ignored it. He didn’t have time for this. Dumbledore was too much of a threat. He needed to secure him. Sirius could be dealt with later. Be that execution or explanation.

Sanguini chose that moment to appear. Harry felt the weight of the man on his shoulder. The vampire’s mouth was right by his ear. Harry could feel his breath.

“Oh little Harry, what a mess you have here.” the vampire cooed.

Harry harshly jolted his shoulder and used his hand to push the vampire off him.

“So touchy” the vampire sounded jovial. The smirk was teasing.

Harry glared.

“Yes, yeah, I get it.” The vampire’s face was now more in a pout. “I’ll take him.” Sanguini looked nowhere near his thousands of years. In fact, at that moment, he looked around three.

The vampire took a graceful step forward. His hand touched the still unconscious ex-headmaster on the floor of his brother’s house.

“See you soon my little Harry.”

He was gone.

Harry wanted to curse the vampire. But, he supposed, at least that part had gone to plan. Now to deal with the unwanted addition. It seemed that this man was always going to be a thorn in his side. Now to decide whether to pull it out and crush it underfoot, or attempt something more elegant. Maybe creating a rose from the blood crusted pieces.

The rest of the carefully crafted work, was going on behind him. Kingsley had quickly been removed as were his memories of the whole affair. Abeforth’s mind was being, well, altered. He need not have a recollection of this encounter. Harry let his followers do as they should. He moved toward Sirius.

“H-Harry” the man’s eyes were wide as he looked up toward the man that he should have treated
like a son.

Harry merely raised an eyebrow and looked down on the man. This was not up for debate. There was no conversation to be had here. There was an answer. That was all Harry needed.

Harry stood. He waited. He watched the cogs in the man’s brains turn.

“You’ll kill him?”

Harry’s eyes were blank.

“No, I suppose it doesn’t really matter. That’s what all this is.” Sirius was starting to see it. “It’s what we made it.”

Harry only looked at him. The man on the floor, the man that should have done better.

“I will.” Sirius’ head tilted away; dropped to his chest, he averted his gaze. It was the only part of him that could still move. “I’ll do it, If you ask me.”

Severus was there, by Harry’s shoulder. He knew what to do. They all knew what to do. Harry had trained them all well.

Dumbledore still managed to look cheerful, even in the state he was in. His robes and skin were coated in several layers of dirt. His wrists were tightly secured together in magic surpassing cuffs; a vampire speciality. All his rings and jewellery had been removed; you couldn’t be too careful. Chains connected him to the wall.

However, even though the man had been there for three days with no food and only a few gulps of water he still had that smile on his face and that twinkle in his eyes as he saw Harry enter the cell. Harry felt like he had done when he was eleven. There was a slight look of disappointment mingled with an overall fondness. Harry hated that look.

The door slammed behind Harry with a clink; Sanguini standing on the other side. The old coot looked up at Harry. He thought that it was just him and his ex-student in the cell with him. He was wrong. There had been at least one member of Harry’s circle within the cell over the past three days. Now there were two of them.

Severus stood beside Harry, invisible. At the back of the cell was Cassius, he waved at Harry, sticking out his tongue. Of course his brother would have figured out the alterations that Harry had made to the wards carved into his arms. Harry’s face remained stone.

“Good evening, my dear boy,” The man sounded far too composed. “If it is in fact evening. I find myself a little lost on the matter.”

Harry said nothing.

“Now what exactly can I do for you?” It felt like a school meeting. As though Harry were there to merely ask for a new textbook or change a class. That was certainly not what they were here for. Dumbledore needed to realise the position that he was in.

The cell clattered open. Lawrence walked in, dragging a figure behind him. Harry just hoped that they could both play their parts well enough.

“Mr Carrow” Dumbledore raised an eyebrow, yet he didn’t seem too surprised at seeing the young
man before him. Harry did, however, catch the flicker of worry that was sent Sirius’ way. Harry would have grinned if he had not been a better man. It seemed that they had him.

“Headmaster-” Lawrence paused, tilting his head to the side. “Oh, apologies, Mr Dumbledore.” It was a petty jab. Yet it was rather satisfying for the oldest Carrow.

“A pleasure to see you again.” Lawrence was grinning viciously.

Lawrence threw Sirius to the floor before him. There was space enough between Black and Dumbledore. Sirius moaned in pain. Harry was sure that the pain was real. Lawrence had really done a number on the man.

Black’s eyes were swollen; blue and purple. His clothes were ripped and blood was caked onto the ragged material. His skin was pale and he looked skinnier than he usually did. Voluntary torture, what a treat. Harry couldn’t find it in himself to feel sorry for the man. Sirius had left him to fend for himself in much worse conditions. It was the man’s time to prove himself.

“Headmaster, I…” Sirius’ broken voice was cut off by a well-timed kick. Cassius’ foot connected with Black’s stomach, forcing the air from his lungs, his breath coming unevenly. He moaned.

“Shut up you piece of shit. You’re not here to talk.” Lawrence sneered.

Dumbledore had lost some of his twinkle.

“You’ve heard of a whipping boy right, Mr Dumbledore?” Lawrence asked with an air of mockery. “Well that’s what Mr Black here is gonna be” that was said in nearly a growl. “You answer the questions we have, or I torture Mr Black”

“Headmaster, no” Sirius tried. He stretched forward, nearly desperately. Harry had to applaud the man on his acting skills. Another well placed kick quickly halted his progress.

“Now, what do you know about Tom Marvolo Riddle.” Dumbledore’s eyes widened. Harry was sure that it was mostly in shock.

“Too slow.” Lawrence grinned as he shot a red curse from his wand. Sirius screamed, his body writhed in pain, saliva ran down his face.

Harry didn’t pay attention to the questioning. That was not what they were really here for. No, they were here for Severus to carry out his work.

Dumbledore’s mental shields were already weak. Magical suppressants, as well as food and water deprivation, will do that to a person. But the man was good at hiding things. Thoughts and memories were hidden below layers and layers of barriers. Even if they were weakened, it was rather labyrinth like. It was far too easy to get lost.

They needed to create an easier route. The best way to do that was with a directed trauma. The questioning would create a direct link with the thoughts. The man would be accessing them, even if it was unintentional. The trauma would weaken the defences that were in place around said memories. The path would be easier to follow. That was all that Severus needed to do.

Harry watched. Severus’ face became blank; his eyes were focused, meeting Dumbledore’s without the man even knowing. Sirius’ body was becoming bloodier, his whimper becoming quieter.

Severus suddenly reeled back. He blinked. He smiled. They had what they came for.
Harry turned to the cell door, it snapped open. Everyone followed behind him as he left. Sirius was on the verge of unconsciousness. Severus seemed almost drunk with glee. Cassius remained in the cell. Harry would have someone take over from him. The information that was about to follow was sure to be interesting.

"Horcruxes?" Lawrence questioned. "You’re sure?"

"Of course I’m sure you imbecile. Who do you think I am? Questioning my methods.” Severus spat with a sneer. How dare an upstart youngster question him. He had been doing this before the little shit was old enough to walk.

Harry raised a hand from his seated position; stopping the ensuing fight. Harry then tilted his head in question.

“A Horcruxes is a part of one’s soul placed in an object.” Harry raised a brow. What a clever little thing Tom had turned out to be. “It requires you to murder an individual with no remorse. The object can be one of your choosing.” Severus explained

‘What are the Horcruxes?’ Harry wrote on the paper connected to those in the room; Severus, Lawrence and Cassius.

Severus answered.

“There are seven.” Severus paused, considering his next words. “Two of them are already destroyed. Dumbledore saw to that. He engaged Edward Potter’s help in attempting to procure the third. He failed. Severus hesitated. That was not something the man tended to do, especially twice in as many sentences.

“Most of them are objects. The first two a diary and a ring. The third they didn’t find was a locket. Dumbledore does not know the others. Well, he knows one.”

Harry looked at the man. He was skirting around the subject. How very unusual. Finally Severus said what he had to say.

“The last one is your brother, Edward Potter.”

Sirius lay in the infirmary within Sanguini’s manor. The place had been equipped at Harry’s request and Sirius was currently the only occupant. However he was rather well attended for being such. He was checked on every few hours. Lawrence, Snape and Charlie had been tasked with his care. He had been drugged up on more potions and spells than anyone had any right to be. His healing was rapid and he was nearly fully painless. It helped that Remus was there.

Remus Lupin had been sitting at Sirius’ bedside since the man had been brought there around twelve hours ago. Sirius had instantly been knocked out and his wounds seen to. He had not woken up since. However, once the broken fingers had been healed and the fractured wrist set, Remus had tightly taken the swollen hand in his and he had not let go.

He had not let go as potions were spelt into Sirius’ stomach. As his face turned from blue, to white, to grey and finally to a healthy shade of pink. As bones cracked and reshaped, as new ones grew after old ones were vanished, he still kept a tight grip on the hand. He wasn’t letting go of him again. He had done it once, he had had to. He had Sirius back now. He was not letting go again.
A groan drew Remus from his swirling thoughts. Grey eyes fluttered open and Remus saw the confused look in his best friend’s eyes. He smiled.

“Hey Padfoot”

“Hmmm” was the only response he got. The eyelids fluttered and a slight frown of disorientation covered his face.

“Hey now” Remus smiled fondly. “Here, take a drink.” He held the glass of water up to Sirius’ lips. He used one hand. He was not ready to let go. Sirius brought his free hand up. They guided the cup together.

“Moony?” Sirius’ voice was still confused and his eyes blurry.

“Yeah, Padfoot. It’s me.” Remus smiled.

“Tired Moony” the very drugged up Sirius mumbled.

“Well, then sleep, Sirius” Remus’ look was filled with affection.

Sirius shook his head. It was a slow movement and his eyes were filled with a sort of confused determination as he did it. His frown had deepened.

“Missed you Moony.” Sirius nodded and squinted.

“I missed you too Padfoot.” Remus squeezed his hand.

Sirius tugged at the hand; pulling it closer toward him.

“You should sleep too Moony.” The tugging was insistent.

“I’m okay Padfoot.”

“No Moony. Get in the bed. Sleep” he was mumbling now “Sleep with me.”

Remus felt the words in the pit of his stomach. He had not heard anything like that for so long. This man had not spoken to him like this in years. Not since Harry.

“Moony” Sirius whined.

Maybe this was a chance at a new start. They were together again. Maybe they could be like they had been.

“Moony”

Remus clutched his hand tighter. He got into the bed. He lay down next to Sirius, his chest to Sirius’ back. His arm over him. Their hands were still clutched together. The pair were asleep in seconds.

Balthazar sat in his master’s lap, curled into a tight ball, seeking the warmth and comfort of Harry’s body heat. There were far too many people. Too much noise, too many smells and tastes. Yet Balthazar knew that he could not leave. It was his master’s hatching day, after all. That was why he was in his current position. Although that did not mean that he was above complaining. Every time Harry shifted, or a human came to close he would hiss and whine to Harry. That had, several times, resulted in a large rat to shut him up. That was how he was in the near coma from the three rats that he had eaten. He was warm and satisfied. He could ignore the humans. He therefore couldn’t find it
in him to complain as he was set down in another’s lap. A hand was running across his scales. He was falling asleep.

Harry watched the lazy snake as he set him down in Alfie’s lap. The boy seemed a little overwhelmed by the noise and the people. Harry couldn’t say that he liked it much better. But he was being celebrated. He supposed that there was at least one day a year he could let people indulge themselves. There was a rather a lot to be thankful for after all. At least Alfie seemed a tad more at ease with the snake in his lap.

“Time to open presents little brother.” Cassius was grinning wide. He was sitting on the arm of the one seater sofa that Harry had occupied. There was a reason for that. It seemed Cassius was ignoring the unspoken demand for privacy. Cassius reached up to ruffle the boy’s hair. Harry glared at his brother. It did nothing to stop him.

Many of the members of the room had been drinking for the last few hours. Those that were of age and a few that weren’t. The Warrington’s were hosting the gathering, along with Edmund who was looking between his two sons affectionately. It seemed that Cassius was under the influence of a little too much fire whiskey.

There were around twenty people in the room and around half of them had indulged in several drinks. Theo was laying on his back, feet on the sofa, giggling. Remus and Sirius were in a similar position to that of Charlie and Zachery. They were snuggled next to one another, their affection for one another making everyone else in the room want to scowl. Severus was doing just that; standing in the corner of the room, looking rather unsatisfied with the proceedings of the day. Harry had no idea whether the man had been drinking or not.

Percy was there, sitting and talking with the youngest Beckett. Graham and Percy seemed to be having a rather detailed conversation about the complexities of some law or another. Graham may not have an interest in pursuing a career in the ministry, however that did not mean that he was not intelligent enough to understand the concepts. Percy had not been drinking.

Fia, who had been lying by Harry’s feet had popped up at the mention of presents. Harry hadn’t seen the boy drink, but he did seem a little more hyper than usual. He was sucking at the lolly with vigour and he had a twinkle in his eyes.

“Presents?” Fia’s eyes were sparkling. It was as though it was his own birthday. Harry wished it was. Then he could be the one dealing with all this shit. The young firecracker, barefoot as usual, walked over to the table that currently housed the large number of presents that lay there. He picked one up. Here we go, Harry thought.

It seemed endless but it really only took around half an hour. Harry was forced to open presents and put up with the inane drivel that followed as an explanation to the gift. To be fair, the gifts weren’t bad and it was rather satisfying to see the effort that had been put into the creation of these gifts. It showed to Harry that the people showed him the respect that he deserved. However, deep down, in a part Harry often told to shut the hell up, Harry knew that it was showing him that they cared and even though he wanted to deny it, he loved that.

Harry opened a variety of gifts ranging from books, potions, from Severus of course, journals, sweets, clothing, weapons and much more. However the best gift of the lot came as an owl fluttered through the window and dropped a newspaper in his lap.

It was a copy of the daily prophet. The publish date for the next morning. The headline was tantalising. A picture of a Dark Mark flashing through the sky and the shocked faces of the auros at the scene played on a loop, backdropped by camera flashes.
‘Death Eaters Destroy Dumbledore’

Harry looked at Cassius. Their eyes connected. His brother really did give the best birthday presents.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!